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The Luminous Detail: The Evolution of Ezra Pound's Linguistic and Aesthetic Theories from 1910-1915

John J. Allaster, *The University of Western Ontario*

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THE LUMINOUS DETAIL:

THE EVOLUTION OF EZRA POUND'S LINGUISTIC AND AESTHETIC THEORIES
FROM 1910-1915

by

John Allaster

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The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

In this study John Allaster traces the evolution of Ezra Pound's linguistic theories from the method of the Luminous Detail during 1910-12, to the theory of the Image in Imagism during 1912-13, to that of the Vortex in Vorticism during 1914-1915. By tracing the similarities and differences in Pound's theoretical claims regarding the role of language and history in poetry, Allaster demonstrates that the roots of Pound's Imagist and Vorticist articulations are situated in the underappreciated essay series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris." At the same time, Allaster also highlights the constructedness of Pound's theoretical frameworks, as well as the elitist tendencies of those frameworks, not to undermine their importance in the history of poetics, nor to call into question the beauty of Imagist or Vorticist poetry, but rather, to call into question the language Pound uses to posit these frameworks as natural. Allaster ends the study by demonstrating Pound's construction of a poetic Vortex in the poem "Near Perigord," which is a poetic enactment that demonstrates both Pound's attempt to create a poetic "renaissance" (especially in America), and also a poetic enactment of Pound's theoretical frameworks.

Keywords

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Preface

"The history of literary criticism is largely the history of a vain struggle to find a terminology which will define something." (Pound, *Spirit of Romance*, 13)

The purpose of this thesis is to define Ezra Pound's "method of the luminous detail" in order to trace its evolution into the separate concepts of "Imagism" and "Vorticism." It should be noted that the Vorticist movement should in no way be considered as a terminus for the evolution of the idea of "the method of the luminous detail[1];" however, due to considerations of length, this study must be limited to those three main periods. Nevertheless, Pound's concepts of "the luminous detail," "the Image," and "the vortex" each share among them Pound's philological interest in a transcendental poetic and historic consciousness, what he calls the "word beyond formulated language" (Pound, "Vorticism," 285). Each phase of this idea's evolution shares a drive towards linguistic objectivity and permanence, towards "something real because we know it directly" (Derrida, *Truth*, 40), which, if we were to borrow the terminology of the current theoretical milieu, we could tentatively refer to as a "transcendental signified" (Derrida, "Structure," 255); however, despite his intellectual interest in creating a more natural, objective, scientific, and acutely historic poetry, Pound is not so naïve to believe that one can overcome the arbitrary nature of the linguistic medium as he recognizes that poetry "is an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols" (Pound, "Osiris 9," 298).

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[1] In fact, I would argue that the idea underlying each of these three iterations also underlie Pound's later work, especially his magnum opus *The Cantos*.

The important concept to understand in Pound's conception of transcendental poetics is that linguistic knowledge is intimately connected with knowledge of the past, which can only be properly articulated by the greatest artists, who have an acute ability to create "luminous details," which "give one a sudden insight into circumadjacent conditions[2], into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law" (Pound, "Osiris," 1). For Pound, the greatest artists are able to create these "luminous details" because they have a particular quality or "*virtù*[3]," which differentiates them from all other men (Pound, "Osiris 6," 224). Because "the soul of each man is compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls" (Pound, "Osiris 6," 224), there must be some quality that differentiates certain artists from others. This quality or "*virtù*," which must be recognized and discerned in artists by poets and scholars alike, allows the artist to "draw down into the art something which was not in the art of his predecessors" as he/she "draws latent forces, or things present but unnoticed, or things perhaps taken for granted but never examined" (Pound, "Osiris 4," 179). By accessing this "latent" force or energy of a transcendental historical consciousness, the artist is thus able to create a more natural, objective, scientific, and acutely historic poetry and overcome the challenge of linguistic indeterminacy.

Although we must remember throughout this study that Pound's concept of transcendental poetics is an imaginative construct as he reminds us frequently in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris[4]," like any work of literature or art we must also not excuse it from

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[2] Circumjacent historical conditions.

[3] A concept borrowed from historian Walter Pater.

[4] For example, in the section 6 of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" titled "On Virtue" Pound states, "As contemporary philosophy has so far resolved itself into a struggle to disagree as to the terms in which we shall

critique as the terms of its constitution can often reveal undercurrents of thought, in our case

revealing the construction of his own aesthetic, by which he shall be judged to be

"[especially] virtuous" like the greatest poets of the past, whom he chooses and identifies.

How does an artist assert his or her worth in a nebulous system defined by a lack of either a

linguistic or artistic "centre?" The answer is simply that he/she must create the worth by

which he/she is judged. Or, in other words, these artists must create their own artistic and

historic "centres" (what Pound later calls a "vortex"), which act as gravitational bodies of

value around which the artist and his/her work can orbit. To make another analogy, we can

understand Pound's theoretical writings as a frame or "passe-partout[5]" (a metaphor borrowed

from Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*), which creates a space for Pound's artistic presence to

exist by attempting to legitimize and naturalize Pound's ideas and poetry, drawing our eyes

towards the art contained within the frame, and offering us a pass-key (passe-partout) for

understanding the material. Paradoxically, however, as Pound creates this theoretical

framework, he also highlights its constructedness, calling into question the ontological status

of the poet as "image"-maker, obliterating any pretence of the supposed scientific objectivity

or transcendental and natural truth, which he claims art should be oriented towards, and

occludes those artists whom he does not want us to value, thereby evoking an anti-

democratic and individualist political agenda.

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define an indefinable something upon which we have previously agreed to agree, I ask the reader to regard what
follows not as dogma, but as a metaphor which I find convenient to express certain relations (224).

[5] A "passe-partout" or "mount" is the mat used in framing to protect and frame a work of art inside of the
picture frame proper.

Chapter 1

The Method of the Luminous Detail

"No man hath dared to write this thing as yet,

And yet I know, how that the souls of all men great

At times pass through us,

And we are melted into them, and are not

Save reflexions of their souls."

(Ezra Pound, "Histrion," l. 1-5)

On Thursday, November 30th, 1911, Ezra Pound began publishing a 12-part series

in *The New Age* titled "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" (Pound, "Osiris 1," 107). The series

began with Pound's famous translation of "The Seafarer," which was accompanied by a

note from the editor that explained, "Under this heading Mr. Pound will contribute

expositions and translations in illustration of 'The New Method' in scholarship" (107).

Pound called this "new" method of scholarship "the method of the Luminous Detail,"

which is "a method most vigorously hostile to the prevailing mode of to-day [sic] – that

is, the method of multitudinous detail, and to the method of yesterday, the method of

sentiment and generalisation" ("Osiris 2," 130). Pound articulated his new method of

scholarship over the course of the 12-part series, which aside from the Anglo-Saxon

"Seafarer," featured interspersed translations of Cavalcanti and Daniel's poetry among

Pound's prose essays articulating his "New Method." Although, as James Longenbach

has pointed out, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" has been critically underappreciated (46),

the work should be understood as a wellspring for Pound's linguistic and aesthetic theories, especially in relation to his transcendental concepts of linguistic and historical knowledge, which thenceforth permeated his work. While there are some hints of these concepts in the poem "Histrion" and the study *Spirit of Romance* for example, these ideas found their first full articulation in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" before they evolved into differently articulated, but nevertheless similarly constituted, concepts over the course of Pound's career.

This chapter will explore the language used by Pound to articulate his "New Method" of the "Luminous Detail" and the accompanying concept of transhistoric and transcendental understanding of latent creative energy and historical knowledge, of which the "Luminous Detail" is an expression. While Pound acknowledges the constructedness of words as verbal signifiers produced by convention (Pound, "Osiris 9," 298), he nevertheless asserts that they can, as "hollow cones…charged with a force like electricity" access the transcendental realm of meaning when used properly by master poets in a type of equation, which is meant to augment their power (298). How then do poets access this transcendental creative energy? They must "gather" the poetic "limbs" of the greatest poetry in the tradition of literature in order to place the "*virtù*," or the predominating quality of the poets' souls, which are "compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls" (Pound, "Osiris 6," 224), of those poets in relation to their own, thereby creating the poetic circumstances by which the energy will radiate at the maximum energy, transmit meaning more directly and immediately as a "Luminous Detail," and thus not be overshadowed by the "*virtù*" of those great poets. In other words, they must actively reconstruct the poetic tradition in order to take part in it. However, the

act of "gathering" these poetic limbs highlights the subjective nature of their selection and collection by the poet, in our case Pound, and thus illustrates the contructedness of the tradition and aesthetic into which Pound places his poetry. In other words, when Pound identifies the especially "virtuous" poets of the past, which include Homer, Dante, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, as representing "four distinct phases of consciousness" ("Osiris 6," 224), and also defines the method by which that consciousness is transmitted (by the "Luminous Detail"), he creates his own literary tradition and simultaneously defines the aesthetic quality that defines that tradition, which Pound as poet and scholar is therefore heir. Pound's prose essay, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," by creating the values by which his poetry and translations are to be judged, thus acts as a frame that creates a space for his art to exist and draws our eyes in towards it by separating it from the art of his peers; however, the essay, as a frame, reveals the constructed nature of the frame itself, and therefore the space and values that are supposed to define his art. Consequently, Pound's personally constructed tradition, as he articulates it, should not be considered the authoritative or definitive tradition of literature, which his concept of transcendental energy would suggest (as the metaphor of a force of energy implies that it is natural and indisputable like the force of electricity), but merely his own personally erected tradition, which, as a product of his imagination, is still interesting in its own right.

Although Hugh Kenner asserted that Pound's "New Method" of scholarship "began with his title" in the figure of Osiris (150), it would be prudent for our study to begin with a thorough understanding of the concept of the "Luminous Detail" before exploring the significance of the mythological association with the story of Osiris. Pound

began his explanation of his "New Method" in the second section of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" under the uninspiring title "A rather Dull Introduction" by setting the "Luminous Detail" in opposition to the "multitudinous detail." Before explaining the characteristics of the "Luminous detail," Pound sets up the terms of his argument to favour his "New Method" over the "[methods] of yesterday" by setting in opposition one detail defined by luminosity ("Luminous Detail") and the other defined by plurality ("multitudinous detail") (130). Each term carries its own associations as luminosity as a measurement of literal brightness can be understood as a conventional metaphor of enlightenment, especially in the context of scholarship, while a detail defined by its plurality offers nothing but associations with commonplace mediocrity for Pound as he later compares "multitudinous details" to the tailings of a mine (130). The "Luminous Detail" is further made to seem more valuable and legitimate as Pound chooses to subtly capitalize "Luminous Detail," while not capitalizing "multitudinous detail," a technique he also used to differentiate his concept of "the Image" from both Henri Bergson's and T.E. Hulme's (Beasley, *Theorists*, 38). The difference between capitalizing and not capitalizing these ideas is the difference between a proper and common noun respectively. While common nouns refer to general classes of things, implying their lack of unicity, proper nouns refer to distinctive entities, therefore adding a sense of value to the unique articulation. Furthermore, in terms of scholarship, established movements such as "Romanticism," "Symbolism," or "Dadaism" conventionally tend to be capitalized, therefore, by capitalizing "New Method" and "Luminous Detail," Pound attempts to legitimize his ideas and give them a sense of authority, while disparaging those of the common historian or poet. It could be argued that this is too fine a

distinction, and that Pound only capitalized his theory because he was using the method

of the "multitudinous detail" as a straw man argument to set in opposition to his own

method; however, since, as James Longenbach has pointed out, Pound found inspiration

in Jacob Burckhardt for the method of the "Luminous detail" as Burckhardt similarly

offered "a defense[6] [sic] for his disregard of what Pound would call the method of the

multitudinous detail," there is a precedent for Pound's line of argumentation and it is

therefore more likely that he chose to capitalize his own concept to add a sense of

intellectual prestige to it (52-53).

Pound further emphasizes the sense of prestige and value of the "Luminous

Detail" as a distinct form of knowledge, as well as the ability to actually recognize and

discern it in both history and literature, through an analogy with a jewel mine:

> If a man owned mines in South Africa he would know that his labourers dug up a
>
> good deal of mud and an occasional jewel, looking rather like the mud about it. If
>
> he shipped all the mud and uncut stones northward and dumped them in one heap
>
> on the shore of Iceland, in some inaccessible spot, we should not consider him
>
> commercially sound. In my own department of scholarship I should say the
>
> operations are rather of this complexion. There are many fine things discovered,
>
> edited, and buried. Much very dull "literature" is treated in like manner. They are

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[6] Longenbach quotes Burckhardt: "The facts which we shall quote in evidence of our thesis will be few in number. Here, if anywhere in the course of this discussion, the author is conscious that he is treading on the perilous ground of conjecture, and that what seems to him a clear, if delicate and gradual, transition in the intellectual movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries may not equally be plain to others. The gradual awakening of the soul of a people is a phenomenon which may produce a different impression on each spectator" (Longenbach, 52-53; Burckhardt, 303)

dumped in one museum and certain learned men rejoice in the treasure. ("Osiris 2," 130).

This example is more nuanced than it seems at first glance. Clearly, the jewel stands for the "Luminous Detail," which is to be valued at a much higher rate than the common "mud" of "multitudinous details;" however, the fact that the jewel looks "rather like the mud about it" implies that there must be a lapidary to understand and appreciate the value of the jewel in order to separate it from the "mud" of "multitudinous details." Pound's "own department of scholarship," that of poetics or literature more generally, thus also needs such a figure to arbitrate the distinction between the "Luminosity" of a particular work of literature, which is "buried" and lost among the multitude of works, and that very multitude, which is "dumped" in the museum and celebrated by "certain learned men." The fact that Pound uses the verb "dumped" while associating these pieces of literature with tailings from a mine heightens the sarcasm of the phrase "certain learned men," at whom Pound is attacking for playing in what he would consider to be the waste material of literature. At the risk of sounding too removed from and opposed to scholarship in general Pound tempers his argument by stating:

> Obviously we must know accurately a great number of minute facts about any
> subject if we are really to know it. The drudgery and minutae [sic] of method
> concern only the scholar. But when it comes to presenting matter to the public, to
> the intelligent, over-busy public, bonae voluntatis, there are certain forms of
> civility, consideration, and efficiency to be considered. (130)

This example demonstrates that Pound does understand that scholarship is an involved

process, requiring careful attention to details, "Luminous" or not; however, he again

implies that there must be a certain judge of good taste, who saves the "over-busy" public

from wasting their time slogging through the corpus of western literature and art in order

to find a rare luminous detail[7]. In a certain sense, Pound is here calling for an

anthologization of the finest works of literature, and in some sense provides it in works

such as *Spirit of Romance* and "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," which collect disparate

works of literature fashioned by Pound through translation into "Luminous Details." This

type of literary scholarship, according to Pound, "will weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats

with one balance, and … will judge dull dead men as inexorably as dull writers of to-day,

and will, with equity, give praise to beauty before referring to an almanack [sic]" (Pound,

SOR, 6); however, before we explore the problems with this method of scholarship, let us

continue our study of the "Luminous Detail" itself.

While Pound's example of the South African mine illustrates for us the difference

between a "Luminous detail" and a "multitudinous detail" in terms of value, what exactly

distinguishes them in terms of their constitution? Pound states: "Any fact is, in a sense,

'significant:' Any fact may be 'symptomatic,' but certain facts give one a sudden insight

into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law"

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[7] We can see the influence of historian Walter Pater in Pound's example in two ways. First, the analogy of the Jewel mine recalls Pater's opinion of Wordsworth: "The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallised a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten" (*Renaissance*, xxviii). The reader must be able to distinguish these moments of intense genius from the rest of the "forgettable" verse. Second, the concept of a skilled critic distinguishing the "jewels" of literature from the rest of the corpus echoes Pater's role of the aesthetic critic: "the function of the æsthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impressions is, and under what conditions it is experienced" (xxvii).

(Osiris 2, 130). For Pound, a critical component of the "Luminous Detail" is that it must provide an instantaneous or "sudden" transmission of knowledge, differentiating it from a "multitudinous detail," which do not transfer knowledge immediately. These details are so revealing that they instantaneously contextualize themselves by illuminating the temporal "sequence," as well as the "causes" and "effects" of their particular point in history. Furthermore, Pound asserts that these details further provide a "law," which can be taken to mean the rules, customs, or thought patterns governing a particular point in history, of which we typically do not have access. Pound illustrates these concepts with an example taken from historian Jacob Burckhardt:

> So-and-so was, in such-and-such a year, elected Doge. So-and-so killed the tyrant. So-and-so was banished for embezzling State funds. So-and-so embezzled but was not banished. These statements may contain germs of drama, certain suggestions of human passion or habit, but they are reticent, they tell us nothing we did not know, nothing which enlightens us. They are of any time and any country. By reading them with the blanks filled in, with the names written, we get no more intimate acquaintance with the temper of any period; but when in Burckhardt we come upon a passage: " In this year the Venetians refused to make war upon the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither,'' we come upon a portent, the old order changes, one conception of war and of the State begins to decline. The Middle Ages imperceptibly give ground to the Renaissance. A ruler owning a State and wishing to enlarge his possessions could, under one régime, in a manner opposed to sound economy, make war; but commercial sense is sapping this regime. In the history

of the development of civilisation or of literature, we come upon such interpreting

detail. A few dozen facts of this nature give us intelligence of a period – a kind of

intelligence not to be gathered from a great array of facts of the other sort. These

facts are hard to find. They are swift and easy of transmission. They govern

knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit. ("Osiris 2," 130)

For Pound, this example ostensibly demonstrates the fundamental quality of

instantaneous transmission of the "Luminous Detail" as the quote from Burckhardt

supposedly demonstrates the transference of a "kind of intelligence" to the skilled reader

of a point in time that acts as a fulcrum between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in

Venice and Milan. We are not able to access this kind of "intelligence" by familiarizing

ourselves with the "multitudinous details" of this particular historical period; instead, we

can only access the ideological change in the Venetian zeitgeist by having this "portent"

revealed to us by a skilled historian or artist, which again emphasizes the "interpretive"

quality of the "Luminous Detail." Again we must recall the influence of Pater as these

facts, because they are "hard to find," must be collected not just by skilled historians and

artists, but by historians and artists who understand their significance in the overall

scheme of history and art.

Pound also anticipates a necessary rebuttal to his conception of the "Luminous

Detail" by beginning the paragraph of his example by dismissing the particular details of

the historical period. It would be reasonable to object: "can we really understand the

significance of the 'Luminous Detail' in history or art without a greater understanding of

the context?" Pound's response is that these details are interchangeable and do not matter

as much as the overall movement of history, which as a force of nature he compares to

electricity. The elected Doge, tyrant-killer, the exiled embezzler, and the embezzler, for

Pound, are all micro-historic minutiae to the macro-historic flow of time. These details do

not matter for him when weighed against the overall intellectual movement or

"development" of history and literature. Pound makes a similar analogy in *Spirit of

Romance*, except instead of electricity he uses water:

> Art or an art is not unlike a river. It is perturbed at times by the quality of the
>
> riverbed, but is in a way independent of that bed. The colour of the water depends
>
> upon the substance of the bed and banks immediate and preceding. Stationary
>
> objects are reflected, but the quality of motion is of the river. The scientist is
>
> concerned with all of these things, the artist with that which flows. (5-6)

Again, the micro-historic minutia of the substance of the riverbed and the riverbanks does

not matter when compared to both the material flowing through the riverbed and the

"quality of motion" of the river itself because these details are not unique in and of

themselves. You could perhaps see thousands of rivers in your lifetime, and while the

details of their beds and banks may seem unique, what matters is itself the river, the

electricity, or the knowledge, which flows through the river.

The metaphor of the electrical switchboard further emphasizes Pound's

conception of the force and flow of historical knowledge as a transcendental force of

energy akin to a river, which like art "is a fluid moving above or over the minds of men"

(Pound, *Spirit*, 6) and is both latent in the material and directed and steered by

"Luminous Details." While the fluid analogy works in a very similar way to that of

electricity, the electrical analogy seems much more appropriate for the "New Method" of

the "Luminous Detail" because of the particular qualities of electricity. Electricity is a phenomenon defined by the flow of an electric charge, exerting a force on other similarly charged forms of matter. It is incredibly fast, and in certain forms such as static charges, which include lightning for example, emit tremendous amounts of light. Since all human thought is a by-product of electrical phenomena occurring inside of the brain, it is especially appropriate for a metaphor of swift transmission of knowledge as well. Furthermore, as a property of physical matter, electrical charges and therefore electricity are also forms of energy that are latent in all physical material in the universe, which is a fact that adds to the sense of ubiquity that a transcendental force would require[8].

Pound picks up this sense of latent energy in the fourth section of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" titled "A Beginning." In this section, Pound compares the feelings of a man with specialist training in any field of knowledge to himself when he is taken into the "engineering laboratory and shown successively an electric engine, steam-engine, [and] a gas engine" (178). In this example Pound realizes "that there are a number of devices all designed for more or less the same end," which is to "produce power" (178). These devices all "gather the latent energy of Nature and focus it on a certain resistance" (178-79), and thus "the latent energy is made dynamic or 'revealed' to the engineer in control, and placed at his disposal" (179). In this analogy and in the context of Pound's specialized field of knowledge, these engines correspond with different forms of

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[8] A necessary question that this line of argumentation raises is what exactly did Pound know about the science of electricity in relation to his argument? While the answer to this question would not greatly affect my argument, as Pound's ignorance of some of the scientific principles would only demonstrate the appropriateness of his metaphor through the unintended associations, a study of Pound's exact knowledge of scientific principles would certainly be illuminating.

literature from different places and times, which like the engines, are "slightly more fit for use under certain conditions for certain objects minutely differentiated" (178). In this analogy the engineer, who creates the engines, corresponds with what Pound calls the "donative" author, as he/she is the one who "seems to draw down something which was not in the art of his predecessors" (179). Pound continues, "if he also draw from the air about him he draws latent forces, or things present but unnoticed, or things perhaps taken for granted but never examined" (179), or in other words, the engineer taps into the potential energy of the natural environment around him through his engine, thereby transforming one form of energy for another through either a chemical reaction as in a locomotive or automobile engine or by harnessing a natural force through a wind turbine for example. The Engineer "donatively" creates something new (kinetic motion, which can be manipulated into creating electricity) out of something that was already in the environment waiting to be harnessed. As an adjective "donative[9]" means "characterized by being given or presented; of the nature of a donation" (OED, donative, A.1). It is precisely the gift giving aspect of the "donative" artist that separates him/her from the "symptomatic artist," in whom "we find a reflection of tendencies and modes of a time" and "mirror obvious and apparent thought movements" (179). Instead of merely reflecting the aspects of a particular period, a "donative" author must access the latent unused, unnoticed, or neglected artistic energy of his/her period in time in order focus it

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[9] There is a secondary definition of the term "donative" as well, which means "A benefice which the founder or patron can bestow without presentation to or investment by the ordinary" (OED, Donative B.2). The concept of artistic patronage, while not fully explored in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," would become a much more central concept over Pound's career, especially in the concept of "the American Renaissance," which I explore in the third chapter of this thesis, and in The ABC of Reading, which I do not explore.

into a new concentrated work of art, which embodies a "Luminous Detail" in order to give it to us as a donation to the tradition of embodied forms of transcendental "latent forces." Pound is also careful here to distinguish between "donative" and "symptomatic" artists here because there is a danger of eliminating the artist as subject/creator in a system of transcendental historical and artistic knowledge that is latent in the air about him/her. For Pound, the creative act must include some form of active agency, which "does take some step further" from those artists who came before (179).

Pound also recognizes that the problem of poetic agency in relation to a transcendental realm of latent energy is compounded by the fact that poetry is "an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols" defined by words, which exist only "when two or more people agree to mean the same thing by [them]" ("Osiris 9," 298). In section 9 "On Technique" of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," Pound attempts to solve this problem as he imagines words as "great hollow cones of steel of different dullness and acuteness…charged with a force like electricity, or, rather, radiating a force from their apexes-some radiating, some sucking in" (298). Here, words, although products of convention, have a latent form of energy like the "Luminous Detail," which is more complex than the "merely positive and negative" force of electrical charges (298). Each type of word represents a different kind of energetic charge, such as "$+, -, X, \div, +a, -a, Xa, \div a,$ etc," and when they are placed together, the equation can "neutralise" or "augment" the forces of each word. It is the goal of the poet to not just add the forces of one word to another; rather, the goal is to multiply the forces of the words in the poetry in order to maximize their force (298). For Pound, since "three or four words in exact juxtaposition are capable of radiating this energy at a very high

potentiality," the Poet's role is therefore to amplify the latent energy of each word in order to create a poetic equation that becomes so powerful it becomes "Luminous" (298). This algebraic concept both echoes *Spirit of Romance* where Pound states, "Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for the human emotions" (14), but also foreshadows both the psychological formulae of Imagism and the mathematical formulae of Vorticism, which we shall explore later in this study. Furthermore, the concept of a formula that can evoke a transcendental creative energy or the abstract concept of beauty again echoes Pater as he states, "To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics" (xxv). In this example, Pater's influence runs deeper than just the concept of a formula to express the abstract. The distinction between a "universal" formula and an "adequate" formula also evokes Pound's admonishment of the Symbolist movement for having symbols with a "fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7" ("Vorticism," 281). Instead of creating a universal formula such as two and two equals four, Pater and Pound desire an adequate formula as "The imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, b, and x in algebra" (281). In this way, the artist can substitute any number of integers in any number of combinations to create new relationships of material, which are as true as those relationships in mathematics without being fixed and definite like those of a Symbolist.

In this "inspired mathematics," Pound values precision, specifically, the ability "to render emotions precisely," which the poet only achieves through technique ("Osiris

3," 155), again demonstrating the influence of Pater, who refers to the skill of defining

beauty in the most "concrete terms" as the ability "To see the object as in itself it really

is" (xxv), as Pound defines technique as "the means of conveying an exact impression of

exactly what one means in such a way as to exhilarate" ("Osiris 9," 298). Again, we see

the seeds of Imagism growing in Pound's works as he emphasizes technical precision in

relation to the "method of sentiment and generalisation," to which the method of the

"Luminous Detail" is opposed. Instead of presenting a detail in a vague, exaggerated,

indulgent, and emotional manner, "the artist seeks out the luminous detail and presents

it. He does not comment. His work remains the permanent basis of psychology and

metaphysics" ("Osiris 2," 130). The artist should not "comment" on the work because the

"Luminous Detail" itself should be able to precisely and instantaneously convey the

"circumjacent" details of the emotional state. For Pound, technique also means the

fundamental aspect of poetic composition: metrics, which as technique, Pound compares

to a musical performance. To Pound, a poet writing without any conception of metrical

technique reads as a fourteen-year-old child, having never had a piano lesson, sounds

against Italian pianist Ferruccio Busoni when playing the same piece by Chopin ("Osiris

9," 297). The child is able to play the notes, which like the linguistic "hollow cones of

steel" contain the energetic content of sound, but, she[10] does not have the requisite skill

to piece the notes together into a sustained work in order to delight the listener in the

same way Busoni can. For Pound, technique is thus "the protection of the public, the sign

manual by which it distinguishes between the serious artist and the disagreeable young

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[10] Pound is gender specific in his example.

person expressing its haedinus egotism" (298). In Pound's figure of the "[egotistical]"

and "disagreeable young person," we must be careful to recognize the dangerous elitism

inherent in the argument; however, it should also be noted that I do think Pound sincerely

wanted the best for most young artists because he adds that technique "is no less a

protection to the artist himself during the most crucial period of his development" (298).

Like the young musician, young poets may not be necessarily skilled enough to write at

the same level that Busoni plays, which for Pound is troubling not because they are poor

writers, but because their potential to become a great artist may be cut short by a market

for poetry that does not support burgeoning young artists[11].

Pound further imagines poetic technique in terms of musical apprenticeship[12] as

he states, "No great composer has, so far as I know, boasted an ignorance of musical

tradition or thought himself less a musician because he could play Mozart correctly"

(297). In this analogy poetic technique is akin to musical style. Just as each period of

western art music has prioritized different musical forms (fugue, sonata, free-form),

melodic styles (baroque, classical, 12-tone), and philosophies of composition

(Devotional, Absolute, Programmatic), which nevertheless arrange the same fundamental

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[11] "How many have I seen, how many have we al of us known, young, with promising poetic insides, who produce one book and die of it? For in our time, at least, the little public that does read new poetry is not twice bored by the same aspirant, and if a man's first book has not in it some sign of a serious struggle with the bases of the art he has small likelihood of meeting them in a second. But the man who has some standard reasonably high…does, while he is striving to bring his own work within reach of his own conception of it, get rid of the first froth of verse, which is in nearly quite like the first verse-froth of everyone else. He emerges decently clean after some reasonable purgation, not nearly a master, but licensed, an initiate, with some chance of conserving his will to speak and of seeing it mature and strengthen with the ripening and strengthening of the mind itself until, buy the favour of the gods, he come upon some lasting excellence." (Pound, "Osiris 9," 298).

[12] The concept of apprenticeship in historical forms will return again in Pound's concept of an "American renaissance" in the 1915 essay series "The Renaissance" published in *Poetry* magazine.

material of sound, so too have poetry and literature prioritized different stanza forms (sonnet, verse paragraph, free form), metrical styles (ballad, blank verse, free verse), and philosophies of composition (Realism, Romanticism, Transcendentalism), which arrange the same fundamental materials of verbal signification. While this short list of examples is not intended to be comprehensive as there are surely many other parallels between musical forms and forms of literature, they do nevertheless illustrate what Pound has in mind when he refers to a "musical tradition," which he then compares with a literary tradition. Just as a student of music will learn the forms, techniques, and styles of past musicians, so too should the aspiring poet study the literary forms of his/her predecessor. For Pound, this historical survey has a two-fold purpose. Aside from developing the writer's technique in the same way diligent practise forms a musician's technique; it also allows the artist to access the tradition itself, which for pound is again figured as a transcendental energy latent in both artistic material and the underlying consciousness of society. Pound makes this association clear as he asserts, "This peculiar energy which fills the cones is the power of tradition, of centuries of race consciousness, of agreement, of association; and the control of it is the "Technique of Content," which nothing short of genius understands" (298). In other words, Pound is able to control the "power of tradition," which he describes as "race consciousness," contained within words and is thus able to both create and discern "Luminous Details" from "multitudinous" ones. Consequently, he is therefore superior to other artists because this "technique" requires a particular kind of "genius" to understand.

The concept of a transcendental "race[13] consciousness," which is comprised of the historical dimension of literature, literally the literary consciousness of the human race, can be compared to T.S. Eliot's concept of a "historical sense:"

> It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity. ("Tradition and the Individual Talent," 14)

The "historical sense" is particularly important to Eliot's sense of tradition, it is an awareness of a linear progression of literature over time as well as the simultaneous presence of that tradition in the literatures of the past and for contemporary poets. In this passage by Eliot, a traditional writer must not be understood in the conventional sense of

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[13] I recognize that the term "race consciousness" could be interpreted negatively, especially in regards to Pound's notorious anti-Semitism; however, I take the term to mean "human race" as Pound recognized beauty in the literature of every culture with which he interacted.

the term traditional: established, orthodox, standard, normal; rather, a traditional writer is only truly of the tradition if he or she augments and changes the tradition itself in a profound way. In Eliot's words, "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them" (15). In terms of "race consciousness," Eliot argues that the writer must feel "the whole of the literature of Europe" in his bones, or in other words be conscious of the thought patterns that govern the literature of Europe, in order to write well. For both Pound and Eliot, deep historical literary knowledge is essential for poets to place themselves within that tradition of literature.

In relation to a transcendental force of historical energy, which the poet accesses and manipulates, how does the poet exercise creative agency? or in other words, how does the poet create something new by accessing latent energy? One answer, as we saw in the engineer / engine metaphor earlier, is through the process of energy transformation and manipulation; however, Pound does offer a second way to imagine the creative agency in the metaphor of "*virtù*[14]" ("Osiris 6," 224), which a concept that he borrows from historian Walter Pater[15]. He makes the importance of "*virtù*" clear as he states:

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[14] Longenbach notes Pound's distinctive Italian spelling of "*virtù*:" *virtù* "as he usually spells it, preferring the Italian because it is closer to the Latin 'virtus' and avoids the moral connotations of the modern English 'virtue'" (Longenbach, 56).

[15] Pater states: "The objects with which æsthetic criticism deals—music poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces they: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities…to [the æsthetic critic], the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book…are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure" (xxvi).

So far as mortal immortality is concerned, the poet need only discover his *virtù*

and survive the discovery long enough to write some few scant dozen verses--

providing, that is, that he have acquired some reasonable technique, this latter

being the matter of a lifetime--or not, according to the individual facility. (224).

A poet thus does not necessarily need to be a master of technique as long as he/she has

"discovered" his/her "*virtù*;" but what is this *virtù*? Returning again to the concept of the

"donative" and "symptomatic" artists, Pound attempts to clarify his ideas, especially in

relation to his concept of transcendental "race consciousness," through the concept of

"*virtù*." Pound states:

The soul of each man is compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls,

but in each soul there is some one element which predominates, which is in some

peculiar and intense way the quality or *virtù* of the individual; in no two souls is

this the same. It is by reason of this *virtù* that a given work of art persists. It is by

reason of this *virtù* that we have one Catullus, one Villon; by reason of it that no

amount of technical cleverness can produce a work having the same charm as the

original, not though all progress in art is, in so great degree, a progress through

imitation. (224)

The concept of *virtù* again attempts to solve the problem of agency in Pound's conception

of a transhistoric, transcendental, and guild-like tradition in literature. If an artist is made

up of all the "elements of the cosmos of souls," or in other words, "a general

consciousness[16]" that is shared by all humanity, how does an artist claim any agency over the creative act? How would he/she assert his/her creative effort when the totality of creation is a shared medium? The answer is through the predomination of a particular "*virtù*" or "trait," which is unique to the particular artist. Because the "*virtù*" is unique to each individual, and according to James Longenbach "in its specific manifestations, it is the essence of individuality" (Longenbach, 57), the poet who discovers his/her own "*virtù*" is able to erect an individual poetic "microcosmos" ("Osiris 6," 224) out of the greater "cosmos of souls," of which his/her own soul is part. The concept of "*virtù*" can thus also be understood as a particular type of "Luminous Detail" where the instantaneous transmission of the circumjacent conditions, causes, effects, sequences, and laws constituting a particular individual, who is simultaneously representative of their historical period. Furthermore, once an artist discovers his/her own "*virtù*" he/she "will be more likely to discern and allow for a peculiar '*virtù*' in others" (224). This ability is essential for the erection of the microcosmos as it "consists in discriminating these other powers and holding them in orderly arrangement about one's own" (224). In order for an artist to erect his/her own "microcosmos, he/she must consider the "*virtù*" of all the preceding poets and be aware of the positions of their "*virtù*" in his/her own "microcosmos." To go back to the analogy of the electrical switchboard, when a poet

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[16] Longenbach further asserts the connection between Pound's concept "*virtù*" and the historian Walter Pater's similar usage of "virtue:" "Pater was more important for Pound than the simple borrowing of a term would suggest; in both Pater and Yeats Pound found support for his own ideas about a "general consciousness" that links the present with the past. For, *virtù* … denotes both a realm of spiritual being and the specific elements on earth that correspond to that realm. In Cavalcanti's balata, the *virtù* is the light in the lady's eyes that reveals her position in the heavens. In Pound's historicism, *virtù* functions in much the same way that "spirit" or "life" functions in Dilthey's thought: as a transhistorical spiritual world, it links all particular individuals and makes understanding possible; in its specific manifestations, it is the essence of individuality" (Longenbach, 55-56).

attempts to create a luminous detail that will determine the flow of electricity through his/her own poem, he/she must first consider the schemata of the literary tradition in order to connect their own poem to the transcendental power source that runs through them.

Pound proceeds to illustrate poetic "*virtù*" with an example of four poets who were especially "virtuous," and represent "four distinct phases of consciousness" (224). These poets include "Homer of the Odyssey," "Dante, in the 'Divina Commedia,'" "Chaucer," and "Shakespeare" (224). In terms of "phases of consciousness" each poet represents respectively: "man conscious of the world outside him," "man conscious of the world within him," "man conscious of the variety of the persons about him," and "man conscious of himself in the world about him" (224). These "phases of consciousness," as Pound articulates them, trend inwardly until the psychological interiority reflects outward again to consider itself in relation to the exterior. If a poet is to write in the wake of these poets he/she must consider his/her own historical moment and its consciousness in relation to these distinctive moments. The latter of these three poets are great in part because "each of them swept into his work the virtues of many forerunners and contemporaries, and in no case do these obtrude or disturb the poise of the whole" (224). Aside from providing an example of how Pound's concept of "*virtù*" develops the concept tradition, this compilation of literary names and their significance, along with the Daniel, Cavalcanti, and "Seafarer" translations, also makes up a fledging articulation of Pound's personally selected literary canon, which he will more explicitly and directly assert during his "Vorticist" phase, as well as in the *ABC of Reading*, with both of these

texts developing the idea of literary apprenticeship, especially in terms of musical

apprenticeship, which we have already explored in terms of technical development.

It is important to note the subjective quality of Pound's personally chosen canon,

which is a quality that brings us to the title of the series "I gather the limbs of Osiris."

The title alludes to the myth of Osiris from ancient Egyptian mythology. Although there

is no authoritative version of the myth from Egyptian texts,[17] there are various versions

from classical literature[18] (Budge, 1), of which Pound was likely familiar. Since Pound

does not actually explore the myth in the text of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," despite

referring to it in the title, it is hard to be sure exactly to which version Pound was

referring; however, Longenbach points us in the direction of James Frazer's *The Golden

Bough*, which features an ending to the myth which is consistent with the gathering

action of the title and the reanimating quality of the "Luminous Detail[19]" (Longenbach,

47). Frazer asserts his version of the ending of the myth of Osiris is from "native

Egyptian accounts, which supplement that of Plutarch" (366). This ending picks up after

Osiris was "rent it into fourteen pieces" by Typhon, his brother, who "scattered them

abroad," and were subsequently gathered by Isis, his wife and sister (363). When she

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[17] E.A. Wallis Budge makes this point clear in his 1911 study of Osiris: "In no text do we find any connected history of the God, and nowhere are stated in detail the reasons why he assumed his assumed his exalted position as the judge of souls, or why, for about four thousand years he remained the great type and symbol of the resurrection" (Budge, 1).

[18] Budge is again helpful here: "The fame of Osiris extended to the nations around, and it is to the hands of foreigners that we are indebted for connected, though short narratives of his history. These, though full of misunderstandings and actual misstatements, are of considerable interest and value" (1).

[19] Both the action of gathering the limbs, which is absent from Plutarch (Budge, 7), but featured in Diodorus (10), as well as the reanimation of the corpse, which is featured in neither, are essential for Pound's allusion, lending credence to Longenbach's reference to Frazer's retelling of the myth.

"had found the corpse of her husband Osiris, she and her sister Nephthys sat down beside it and uttered a lament" which moved the "sun god Ra" who:

> sent down from heaven the jackal-headed god Anubis, who, with the aid of Isis and Nephthys, of Thoth and Horus, pieced together the broken body of the murdered god, swathed it in linen bandages, and observed all the other rites which the Egyptians were wont to perform over the bodies of the departed. Then Isis fanned the cold clay with her wings: Osiris revived, and thenceforth reigned as king over the dead in the other world. There he bore the titles of Lord of the Underworld, Lord of Eternity, Ruler of the Dead…as Osiris died and rose again from the dead, so all men hoped to arise like him from death to life eternal. (366-7)

Pound's allusion to "gathering the limbs of Osiris" in his title thus associates him with Isis, which is an association that Longenbach asserts "represents [Pound's] work as the reclamation and resurrection of the dead" and thus "this mystical faith in his ability to breathe his own life into the past underlies all his translations and poetic recreations of the past" (47-48). In relation to the "New Method" of Pound's "Luminous Detail" the association similarly attempts to deal with the poetic agency of a figure in relation to a transcendental and transhistoric force of latent creative energy by positing Pound as a figure who puts the pieces in place in order to let the force radiate from them. The poet as a scholar must search out the "Luminous Details" in the same way a miner must separate the gems from the tailings to allow life to be instilled into them again.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen Pound's "New Method" of the "Luminous Detail" asserts a transhistoric and transcendental understanding of latent creative energy and historical knowledge, which is only recognized by a few select individuals. While giving due credence to other art forms claiming that "any given work of art is bad when its content could have found more explicit and precise expression through some other medium, which the artist was, perhaps, too slothful to master" (10, 343), an expression that foreshadows the concept of the "primary pigment" of Vorticism (*Blast*, 153; "Renaissance 1," 285), Pound was especially concerned with how to directly access the latent energy through literature. In the wake of poststructuralism, it is taken for granted that the "transcendental signified," as Derrida called, is non-existant, and instead we are left with a "trace" of signification made up of all of the negative differences between one signifier and another ("Structure," 255). The concept of the "trace" would have likely proved to be no problem for Pound and his conception of transcendental literary and historical knoweledge as he recognized constructedness of the meanings of words as verbal signifiers. Despite the fabricated and conventional nature of words, Pound nevertheless believed that a very select few poets could use them to access a transcendental realm of knowledge. These poets are able to erect their own "microcosmos" from the "cosmos" of consciousness through a linguistic medium defined by instability by recognizing the "*virtùs*" or defining character trait of the great poets that come before and placing themselves in relation to them. The analogy of the cosmos is quite fitting as we can imagine the meaning of words gravitating around particular signifiers accreting over time, out of which the poet must create a poetic "solar system." Similarly, the "*virtùs*" of great poets who create their own "microcosmos" out of the

"solar systems" that are their poetry, must be incorporated into the "microcosmos" of a new poet. Thus over time the "cosmos" expands and if a poet's "light remains visible in this place where the greater lamps are flashing back and forth upon each other is of no mean importance; of him it can be said without qualification that he has attained his own *virtù*" ("Osiris 6," 224). However, the construction of a personal poetic "microcosmos" highlights the fact that it is itself a construction, which is entirely subjectively chosen by the poet him/herself. Instead of transferring the latent transcendental creative energy, the constructed "microcosmos" instead reveals an attempt to create a particular poetic tradition and aesthetic by which the poet should be judged through his/her association with particular historical poets and the disassociation with others. Thus, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," instead of conveying the "New Method" of scholarship, conveys Pound's "New Method" of scholarship, acting as a frame for both his poetry as well as his activities as a translator, which attempts to draw our eyes toward his poetry, creating a particular relationship to that of others, but also highlighting the constructedness of that relationship.

Chapter 2

imagism/Imagism:

The de/con-ceit of the Image as a Natural Object

The apparition   of these faces   in the crowd   :

Petals   on a wet, black   bough   .

(Ezra Pound, "In a Station of a Metro," 12)

The next significant phase in the evolution of Ezra Pound's theoretical

conceptions of language and poetry was his participation in the Imagist[20] movement

during 1912-1913[21]. One might wonder at the sequence of this chapter from the previous,

as Pound was involved with these concepts in 1908, 3 years before "I Gather the Limbs

of Osiris;" however, for the purposes of this study we are primarily concerned with

Pound's return to the "school of images" in October 1912, which was inspired by a group

of poems by the American poet H.D. (Beasley, *Theorists*, 16-17). In fact, Rebecca

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[20] The origins of Imagist movement are found in 1908 when T.E. Hulme, having been expelled from Cambridge "for participating in a tavern brawl," decided to form a group of poets, the second of which Pound joined in 1909 and later referred to as "the forgotten school of images" (Pratt 14). These poets were particularly interested in discussing French *Vers libre*, Japanese Poetry, and most importantly: the "image" (Beasley, *Theorists* 34).

[21] Although Imagism as a movement existed past this date, in this chapter I am specifically referring to Pound's involvement in Imagism and his subsequent essays articulating Imagistic concepts. Although Pound left the Imagist movement for Vorticism in 1914 "when he sensed a slackening of dedication in the [other members]" (Jones, 21), part of the argument in the third chapter of this study is that Pound's conception of Vorticism is in part derived from both "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris and his Imagistic concepts. In fact, Peter Jones goes so far as to call Vorticism a "stricter form of Imagism" (21).

Beasley argues, "'Imagism' was coined by Pound as a marketing ploy[22] for poetry by himself and his friends H.D. … and Richard Aldington…to underline a comparison with contemporary French post-symbolist movements, such as *unanimisme* and *impulsionnisme*" (*Theorists*, 37). The French associations with the label "Imagisme" may have been a successful marketing ploy, but what is more important for our study is both the relation of Hulme's concept of the "image" to Pound's, as well the development of Pound's concepts of transcendental poetics as argued in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" into those of Imagism. Although it is impossible to gauge the influence[23] of Hulme's concept of the "image" on Pound and his own concept of the "Image," especially since Pound attempted to distance himself from Hulme (Beasley, *Theorists*, 37) and "crap like Bergson" (Kenner, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, Appendix), a comparison of Hulme and Pound's differing conceptions of the "i/Image"[24] will illuminate both their similarities and differences. Combined with a thorough examination of Pound's essays on Imagism, this comparative approach to understanding the "i/Image" will allow us to more fully

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[22] Peter Jones again points us to a letter from Pound written September 26th, 1927 that supports Beasley's argument: "Pound had wanted to promote [H.D. and Aldington's] work – later he confessed that the name Imagisme 'was invented to launch H.D. and Aldington before either had enough stuff for a volume'" (Jones, 19; *Letters*, 213)

[23] It is quite possible that there is no influence at all as Peter Jones, in his introduction to the 1972 Penguin *Imagist Poetry* collection, draws our attention to a letter from Pound to William Carlos Williams written October 21st, 1908 that indicates that Pound "was already thinking along lines similar to those of this group, with their 'absolute presentation and no verbiage'" (16) in 1908 before he joined Hulme's group. In the letter Pound writes that the "ultimate attainments of poesy" are:

1. To paint the thing as I see it.
2. Beauty
3. Freedom from didacticism.

It is only good manners if you repeat a few other men to at least do it better or more briefly. Utter originality is of course out of the question. (*Letters*, 6)

[24] While Hulme does not capitalize "image," Pound does. There will be more on Pound's capitalization technique later.

explore the theoretical framework of Pound's Imagism in order to highlight the constructedness of the Imagist aesthetic, not to undermine the beauty of the aesthetic, but to call into question Pound's metaphors and language regarding Imagism, both of which often posit Imagism as natural, especially in the sense of "Existing in, determined by, conforming to, or based on nature" and also "Consistent with nature; normal, expected" (OED, "Natural," Adj.1; 2). More specifically, this chapter will argue that Pound's theoretical writings on Imagism act as a frame or "passe-partout," which creates the aesthetic by which Pound's poetry shall be judged in three ways. First, the theoretical writings create a space for Pound's poetry to be judged as art in the same way a frame creates a space for art within its boundaries, separating the material from the realities of the outside world. Second, like a frame, Pound's Imagist articulations draw our attention eyes towards the material contained within the frame: Imagist poetry, especially his own. Third, the writing acts as a parergon, meaning that it is a secondary work to the original work of art that aids our understanding of that work's value. In other words, Pound creates or asserts the Imagist aesthetic by which his poetry shall be judged and thus demonstrates its value for us as readers.

Although Pound attempted to distance himself from Hulme, the similarities between their concepts of the i/Image are striking, though there remains one important distinction, of which we should be aware before we explore either. While Hulme's concept of the image is decidedly visual, Pound's concept of the Image is non-visual (37). It "is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" ("A Few Don'ts," 200). However, if this distinction is explored closely, the concept of the visual image can be understood as one type of projection of the consciousness on

the visual and is thus much closer to Pound's non-visual image than originally thought. The concept of the complex, alluding to psychologist Bernard Hart's *Psychology of Insanity*, is the centre of Pound's definition of the image. Hart defines the complex as the "causes which determine the behaviour of the conscious stream, and the action which they exert upon consciousness may be regarded as the psychological analogue of the conception of 'force' in physics" (62). Pound imagines the "force" of poetry operating simultaneously in terms of psychology and physics in each of the major movements this study covers. In the essay series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," the relationship between the poet, poetry, and poetic and historical knowledge is compared to electricity connecting artist and reader; in "Imagism" that relationship is imagined in terms of a psychological reaction created by the poet comparable to a physical force (which broadly speaking refers to "An influence (measurable with regard to its intensity and determinable with regard to its direction) operating on a body so as to produce an alteration or tendency to alteration of its state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line; the intensity of such an influence as a measurable quantity;" and in Vorticism the figure of the "Vortex," derived from physics, becomes a metaphor for the mind, as wells as poems, physical places, and historical periods, which I will explore in the third chapter of this study. The poem and the visual images contained within are thus conceived of as the cause of certain emotional reactions or "behaviours," which exert themselves as the "force" or "image" on the consciousness of the reader. In other words, "the image is that which the visual description produces" (Beasley, *Theorists*, 39) and is thus, for Pound, a more natural and objective phenomenon; however, if the relationship between a visual signifier and a conceptual signified is arbitrary and conventional, then Pound's concept of

the Image must be understood as working in two directions rather than one. If for Pound "the Image is that which the visual description produces," then the "Image" simultaneously exerts a force on the visual signifiers as well. The interaction between poem and reader is not unidirectional in the sense that good art evokes images; but rather, the reader must project[25] an Image on the signifiers in order to interpret them as art.

Pound's conception of the image as a psychological complex, which evokes "that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits" ("A Few Don'ts," 200), and later as a vortex existing outside of the corporeal realm (while simultaneously acting as a metaphor for a physical artistic centre), further suggests his desire for an objective and stable "word beyond formulated language" ("Vorticism," 285), which Derrida appropriately calls a "transcendental signified" ("Structure" 255). We saw this drive towards a "word beyond formulated language" in Pound's conception of a latent transcendental historical force of energy in "I Gather The Limbs of Osiris." While the Image corresponds with the luminous detail, in that the creation of both in poetry are supposed provide the access to the transcendental real of consciousness, Pound's emphasis on the psychological aspect of the Image emphasizes that the access to that transcendental realm is in the minds of the poet and reader, rather than merely on the page, thus emphasizing the interpretive quality of the Image or Luminous Detail, which must be interpreted and appreciated by the skilled artisan.

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[25] This act of projection has a hermeneutic/interpretive aspect to it as well since a reader's associations are constructed over time depending on their particular learning and life .

Before we explore Pound's concept of the Image further, however, it would be prudent to have a solid understanding of T.E. Hulme's concept of the image. For Hulme, the concept of the image is important because language is an inadequate means of expression. Hulme aligns himself with contemporary linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure in the assertion of the disconnection between what he calls the sign (the linguistic expression, symbol, or marker), which "unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image" and the signified (the object or concept that the linguistic marker is intended to evoke) (Saussure, *Course*, 61). While the Saussurian model of language is taken for granted in the wake of much Post-Structural theory based upon its premises, and while its logic seems quite sound, I would still like to leave open the possibility that the lack of correspondence between sound and signification may not be entirely correct; however, what is more important for the purposes of this study is Pound's transcendental account of language, which is simultaneously Saussurian in that Poetry is "an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols…A word exists when two or more people agree to mean the same thing by it" ("Osiris 9," 298), but also paradoxically almost mystical as a "Luminous Detail" constructed of arbitrary signifiers is able to "give one a sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law" ("Osiris II," 130), and an Image is a psychologically evoked reaction, which instantly "gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of arts" ("A Few Don'ts," 200). Hulme's conception of language is similar to Pound's as he states, under the heading "Language IV," in his "Notes on Language:" "Thought is prior to

language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images" (84). Although one could argue with Hulme's assertion that "thought is prior to language" in the sense that the only way we can express thought is through a type of language, whether it is verbal or non-verbal, in these "notes," Hulme is specifically referring to the inadequacy of verbal language. Verbal language is a "feeble way" of presenting images because the verbal is secondary to the visual in the mind (84) and thus "the art of literature consists in this *passage from the eye to the Voice*" (86, Hulme's italics). Furthermore, the "passage" between a visual stimulus and a verbal representation of that stimulus is inadequate because of the arbitrary relationship between the sign and the signified. Saussure states that "The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" and by arbitrary he means "that it is unmotivated, i.e. [the relationship is] arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified" (62). What Saussure means by this statement is that the relationship between the sign and signified is the product of convention, it is "established in the linguistic community" as a constructed and rehearsed signification (62). Consequently, words do not contain a transcendental truth or definition, but rather represent tendencies of meaning, which are for the most part mutable. Compare Saussure's more verbose assertion to Hulme's terse statement, "Large clumsy instrument. Language does not naturally come with meaning" (Notes 83). They effectively say the same thing; however, Hulme is much more brusque.

Hulme actually goes even further than the contemporary linguistic attitude of Saussure when he states: "Very often the idea, apart from the analogy or metaphor which clothes it, has no existence. That is by a subtle combination of allusions we have artificially built up in us an idea, which apart from these, cannot be got at" (83). Hulme

deconstructs the very idea of a transcendental "idea" in language, which is "artificially built up" inside of the system of "metaphor which clothes it." This idea, present in the mind of the poet or the seer, does not exist outside of the system of language that hides the very lack of ontological solidity of the idea itself. In this sense, Hulme foreshadows the Post-Structuralist and Deconstructionist attitude of a thinker such as Jacques Derrida, who asserts that there is a lack of any transcendental signification existing outside of the system of language, which would guarantee and confirm a stable meaning. Instead, we are left with what Derrida calls a "trace," which is an absent and negative definition of a signifier made up of all of its differences from other signifiers (Différance 285). Derrida states:

> The first consequence to be drawn from this is that the signified concept is never present in itself, in an adequate presence that would refer only to itself. Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. (285)

What Derrida calls a "chain or a system," Hulme calls a "subtle combination of allusions," and both of these systems reveal that there is no real "presence" in the "signified concept" or "idea."[26] Furthermore, Derrida asserts, "The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace" (295). The

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[26] Note the word Allusion's etymology is related to a sense of play: "post-classical Latin allusion-, allusio game (4th cent.), play on words (6th cent.)" (OED, "Allusion"). Not only does this reinforce the similarity between Derrida's sense of "systematic play of differences" and Hulme's conception, but the fact that the term "allusion" has a built in sense of play makes the term extra appropriate.

effacement Derrida is referring to here is the obfuscating or opacifying effect of the trace, whereby it hides its lack of ontological reality. This effacement is what Hulme calls "the analogy or metaphor which clothes [the idea]." This Post-Structuralist attitude found in Hulme depends on the influence of philosopher Henri Bergson, with whom Hulme was quite familiar (Beasley, *Theorists*, 34-35). Bergson was particularly concerned with studying the inability of positivist sensory oriented science to "reveal anything about the essential nature of reality, especially the reality of human consciousness" (34). Because of the flawed nature of human perception, the observations and conclusions are tainted by the linguistic medium with which we understand them. Bergson "argues that, while we tend to think of our consciousness in the first way, as a series of discrete moments, it would be more accurate to describe it in the second way, as a succession of moments that interpenetrate each other and form an indivisible whole" (Beasley, *Theorists*, 35). This indivisible whole resembles the "text" of Derrida's famous assertion that "il n'y a pas de hors-texte," (There is nothing outside of the text/there is no outside text) (Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158). When Derrida makes this assertion, in one sense he means that because there is no transcendental and guaranteed signification outside the system of language, there is therefore no escaping that very system of language; we are caught in an endless chain of deferred signification that obfuscates the very lack of signification. Consequently, the universe becomes textual in that everything in the universe can be read and subjectively interpreted like a literary text, outside of which there is nothing (or at least nothing we can interpret or imagine).

In the wake of the realization of the triple defectiveness of verbal language (that it is secondary to visual perception; that the connection between the visual sign and the

verbal signifier is arbitrary; that the verbal actually hides the absence of the "real" visual)

what is the poet or writer to do? In "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," recall that Pound's

answer was that the poet or writer must attempt to write poetry in such a way as to

maximize the energy contained within words in order to access that latent transcendental

and transhistoric energy contained within words, or in other words create a Luminous

Detail. For Hulme, the answer is that the poet must attempt to get closer to the imagined

root of meaning: the visual image. He states in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry," "[t]he

direct language is poetry, it is direct because it deals in images. The indirect language is

prose, because it uses images that have died and become figures of speech" ("Lecture,"

74). While Hulme says we must remember, "the central idea is nothing" ("Notes," 81)

because it is an "artificially built up" "combination of allusions" (83), he also asserts that

"Poetry is always the advance guard of language" and "new phrases [are] made in poetry,

tested, and then employed in prose" (81).[27] Although the argument that poetry is the

"advance guard of language," reminiscent of Viktor Shklovsky's in his essay "Art as

Technique," places poetry in a questionable hierarchical relationship to prose, the

important concept to take from this quote is the emphasis on the use of the image in

poetry. Instead of searching for "perfection, either in verse or thought" because

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[27] While this idea seems contradictory at face value – that new phrases can be made in poetry even though they are ontologically empty – we must keep in mind that the ontological emptiness is merely the lack of a transcendental guarantor of meaning. The "artificially built up" ideas act as gravitational bodies with a tendency towards a particular meaning. This idea is comparable to Pound's metaphor in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" of the poet's construction of a personal poetic microcosmos out of the materials of the overall transcendental transhistoric cosmos as the he/she takes the arbitrary materials of signification and moulds them into his/her works.

"philosophers no longer believe in absolute truth," "the tendency will be rather towards a general effect" (Hulme, "Lecture," 71). This effect is to be created by the juxtaposition of visual images, which "form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both" (73). This juxtaposition of more direct, but by no means transcendentally true images, allows the poet to create new images, which Hulme asserts will provoke an "effect" in the reader. The metaphor of the visual chord, alluding to musical harmony, can be expanded on the grounds of musical theory as well. The simplest chord one can create is a dyad, that is to say a chord made up of two notes, forming a new sound or "interval." Chords can then be built by using more than two notes forming a complicated harmonic relationship between the notes, which could include conventional harmony or even modernist tonal clusters. The poet's role as composer is to arrange visual images in such a way as to create a new composition, which thereby creates new images out of a pre-existing material of sound or image, thereby eschewing formulaic expressions of language. However appropriate the musical analogy is, Hulme adds the caveat that "this new verse resembles sculpture rather than music" (Hulme, "Lecture" 75). This sculptural verse:

> Appeals to the eye rather than to the ear. It has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes. This material, the ὕλη of Aristotle, is image and not sound. It builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader, whereas the old art endeavoured to influence him physically by the hypnotic affect of rhythm. (75)

By using the term "plastic," Hulme's theory also alludes to Coleridge's theory of the artist's esemplastic imagination, which has "the function of moulding into unity;

unifying," and is opposed to the passive and recipient perception belonging to the senses (*Biographia Literaria*, 91). Pound uses the same term in his essay "Vorticism" to describe two different types of men: those who are like a "plastic substance *receiving* impressions" and those who are "directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as *conceiving* instead of merely reflecting and observing" (287). In a linguistic and artistic system defined by instability and fluidity in meaning, for Hulme and Pound the artist becomes the one who can style the "plastic" substance of artistic material to create an impression or an effect on the reader; however, one major difference between Hulme and Pound is that Pound would never undermine the auditory at the expense of the visual in poetry.[28]

As we move towards Ezra Pound's Imagist theories, it should be mentioned that although Pound "later claimed Hulme's importance for imagism had been overstated" (Beasley, *Theorists*, 37), the similarities between Pound's and Hulme's concepts of the image are quite remarkable. How much of the similarity we can attribute to their personal interaction is impossible to tell; however, many of their overlapping ideas, especially regarding the arbitrary nature of language, were part of the intellectual milieu of the period (27). For example, "Eliot and Pound had direct experience of the new emphasis in linguistic thought from their university studies: Eliot studied Sanskrit, Pound studied Romance Languages" (27). Furthermore, while it is much easier to trace a relationship between T.S. Eliot and Henri Bergson (41), it is a bit more difficult to ascertain if Pound

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[28] Pound's advice to his readers in his 1913 essay "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" includes this passage: "In short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music. The same laws govern, and you are bound by no others" (204).

had any formal interaction with Bergson's works[29] (38), although we do know he

considered Bergson "crap" (Kenner, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, Appendix). However, instead

of tracing a direct lineage between the two, what is more important for our purposes is

the study of the similarities and differences between the two. With that being said, we

shall now explore Pound's Imagism, which, as we have seen, was a part of Pound's

thought process since as early as the letter to William Carlos Williams in 1908, albeit in

an embryonic form, but began formally with *Riposte* in 1912, and was not codified in

prose until the 1913 essays "Imagisme," ostensibly written by F.S. Flint,[30] and "A Few

Don'ts by an Imagiste," written by Pound.

Flint's essay begins with a footnote from Harriet Monroe, which states that the

"note" by Flint and the "exemplification" by Pound have been written in "response to

many requests for information regarding *Imagism* and *Imagistes*" (Note to F.S. Flint's

"Imagisme," 198). Beginning his "note," Flint adopts a journalistic frame by stating that

he "sought out an imagiste [sic]" because he could not "find anything definite in print"

regarding the movement (198). While the note from Harriet Monroe may have been a

sincere response to inquiries about Imagism since Richard Aldington and H.D. had been

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[29] Peter Jones asserts that "In 1911 Hulme had…attended a philosophical congress at Bologna at which
Henri Bergson discussed 'the image' and Pound almost certainly attended Hulme's subsequent lectures on
Bergson" (17). Also note that the November 30th, 1911 edition of *The New Age* featured both Pound's "I
Gather the Limbs of Osiris: I" and T.E. Hulme's "Notes on Bergson: IV," while the February 22nd, 1912
edition of *The New Age* featured both Pound's "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: XII" and T.E. Hulme's
"Notes on Bergson: V."

[30] Ira Nadel asserts, "F.S. Flint is listed as author but Pound drafted the essay, which Flint partly rewrote.
The essay is done as an interview with an Imagiste who sounds much like Pound" (Pound, *Early Writings*,
390).

published as Imagistes in the November 1912[31] and January 1913[32] issues of Poetry

magazine respectively, the journalistic frame of the article was almost certainly part of

what Rebecca Beasley calls Pounds "marketing ploy" (37) for Aldington, H.D., and

himself, or as Hugh Kenner notes, the article "protracted the illusion that a movement

was gathering" and "Flint drew his information from one 'Imagiste,' Pound" (*Era*, 177).

Describing the Imagists, Flint states:

> The imagistes admitted that they were contemporaries of the Post Impressionists
>
> and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had
>
> not published a manifesto. They were not a revolutionary school; their only
>
> endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found it in the
>
> best writers of all time,—in Sappho, Catullus, Villon. They seemed to be
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> absolutely intolerant of all poetry that was not written in such endeavor, ignorance
>
> of the best tradition forming no excuse. (199)

This quotation immediately thrusts the reader into the paradoxical argumentation that

Pound uses in order to create the theoretical frame of Imagism, which legitimates and

naturalizes Imagism, delegitimizes his contemporaries (Futurists and Post

Impressionists), draws attention to the Imagists' work, aligns the Imagists with particular

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[31] A note in the back of the issue explains, "Mr. Richard Aldington is a young English poet, one of the 'Imagistes,' a group of ardent Hellenists who are pursuing interesting experiments in *vers libre*; trying to attain in English certain subtleties of cadence of the kind which Mallarme and his followers have studied in French. Mr. Aldington has published little as yet, and nothing in America" (*Poetry* 1.2, 65)

[32] H.D.'s poems are signed "H.D. '*Imagiste*'" (*Poetry* 1.4, 122) and an explanatory note in the back similarly explains, "'H. D., *Imagiste*,' is an American lady resident abroad, whose idenity [sic] is unknown to the editor. Her sketches from the Greek are not offered as exact translations, or as in any sense finalities, but as experiments in delicate and elusive cadences, which attain sometimes a haunting beauty" (135).

writers, and distances them from particular historical writers and styles. The first thing to note is the striking similarity of this mode of argumentation to that of "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," especially in regards to "write in accordance with the best tradition," which in the "Osiris" essays was made up of especially "virtuous" poets such as Homer, Dante, Chaucer, and Shakespeare (Pound, "Osiris 6," 224). We should also note Flint's peculiar lack of capitalization of the term "imagistes," which is accompanied by the punctuated Post Impressionists and Futurists, evoking the sense that, for him, the "imagists" are not a fully coalesced revolutionary artistic movement. While this may have been an editorial oversight on the part of Flint, Monroe, or Pound, Rebecca Beasley also notes that Pound, "unlike Hulme and Bergson," used a capital "I" to refer to the "Image" (Beasley, Theorists, 38). Pound thus uses capitalization in order to assert the Imagist movement as a fully formed artistic movement such as "Romanticism" or "Symbolism" in the same way he used capitalization to legitimate the "New Method" of the "Luminous Detail," as opposed to the "multitudinous detail" in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris ("Osiris 2," 130). Flint also notes that the Imagists "had not published a manifesto." This statement should be adjusted to "had not published a manifesto *yet*" since the first published manifesto[33] of Imagism was Pound's "A Few Don'ts" published on the next page of the magazine. The assertion that the Imagists "had not published a manifesto" de-radicalizes the Imagist movement by effacing the extremist tendencies of the "avant-garde" Futurists, who

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[33] Manifesto as in: "A public declaration or proclamation, written or spoken; esp. a printed declaration, explanation, or justification of policy issued by a head of state, government, or political party or candidate, or any other individual or body of individuals of public relevance, as a school or movement in the Arts" (OED, "Manifesto," n.1.a).

Pound claims attempted to "[abolish]…past glories" of other poets (Pound, "The Renaissance I" 230), thereby distancing Pound and the Imagists from them; however, instead of abolishing past glories directly, Pound abolished past glories in an indirect way: by writing in "accordance with the best tradition, as [he] found it in the best writers of all time." This position has two simultaneous effects. First, by asserting that the Imagists are writing in accordance with the greatest writers of all time, the imagists are placed in a line of succession from those great writers. Second, by asserting that particular writers are the "greatest of all time," a necessary consequence is the devaluation of figures that do not align with the Imagist conception of greatness. Thus, it is not surprising that the imagists seemed to be "intolerant" of any poetry not written in the spirit of their endeavour.

Flint goes on to state the three principles or rules of Imagism and also alludes to a "certain 'Doctrine of the Image'" (199), which Pound explicates in "A Few Don'ts." The three rules are:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. (199)

The first thing to note about these rules is their similarity to both the advice levied in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" and Hulme's recommendations for Modern poetry in "A Lecture on Modern Poetry." Consider these three statements by Pound in the "Osiris"

Series, which roughly correspond to the three rules of Imagism, especially in their concern of subject, style, and rhythm respectively:

> Guido Cavalcanti, born A.D. 1250 greatest of Dante's precursors in Tuscany. His poetry is interesting, apart from its beauty for his exact psychology, for an attempt to render emotions precisely[34]; emotions, uncommon, perhaps, save in a land of sun, where the soul and the senses are joined in a union different, may be, from that which occurs in other countries. ("Osiris 3," 155)

Regarding Arnaut Daniel:

> At a time when prose and poetry were loose-jointed, prolix, barbaric, he, to all intents and virtually [sic], rediscovered 'style.' He conceived, that is, a manner of writing in which each word should bear some burden, should make some special contribution to the effect of the whole. The poem is an organism in which each part functionates, [sic] gives sound or to sense something—preferably to sound *and* sense gives something. ("Osiris 4," 179).

Finally, regarding music:

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[34] While the concept of a "precise emotion" can be understood as an oxymoron; however, consider Pound's statement: "As for the arts and their technique—technique is the means of conveying an exact impression of exactly what one means in such a way as to exhilarate" ("Osiris, 9," 298). In relation to this statement, Pound could be sincere in his desire for a "precise emotion," which would refer to a correspondence between what Pound would consider to be a correct portrayal of a situation or emotion that in turn creates the correct emotional response to that emotion or situation. This "precise emotion" could be compared to T.S. Eliot's concept of an "objective correlative" in his essay "Hamlet and his Problems." Eliot states: The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative;' in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (92).

Yet it is quite certain that some people can hear and scan 'by quantity,' and more can do so 'by stress,' and fewer still feel rhythm by what I would call the inner form of the line. And it is this 'inner form,' I think, which must be preserved in music; it is only by mastery of this inner form that the great masters of rhythm—Milton[35], Yeats, whoever you like—are masters of it. ("Osiris 9," 298).

Note that Pound praises Cavalcanti for his "attempt to render emotions precisely," or in other words, Cavalcanti's "Direct treatment of the 'thing,' [emotion]." Further note the similarity between Pound's appraisal of Daniel's "manner of writing in which each word should bear some burden," which is a manner that corresponds with Pound's rule "To use absolutely no word that [does] not contribute to the presentation." Finally, note the correspondence between Pound's emphasis on the "inner form of the line," which must be "preserved in music" in order to be a great master of rhythm, and the rule that one must "compose in sequence of the musical phrase." Both ideas emphasize the musicality of rhythm as opposed to a strict adherence to a mechanical pulse.

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[35] Pound's Praise of Milton may seem surprising, especially since he refers to him in 1915 as "worst sort of poison" and a "thorough-going decadent in the worst sense" ("Renaissance I," 231); however, his praise of Milton's rhythmic ability has also been consistent as he states in the same essay "the definite contribution in his later work consists in his developing the sonority of the English blank-verse paragraph" (231), and later in ABC of Reading, where Pound offers Milton a back-handed compliment on his sound while insulting his style:

> When Milton writes
>   Him who disobeys me disobeys'
> he is, quite simply, doing wrong to his mother tongue. He meant
>   Who disobeys him, disobeys me.
> It is perfectly easy to understand WHY he did it, but his reasons prove that Shakespeare and several dozen other men were better poets. Milton did it because he was chock a block with Latin. He had studied his English not as a living language, but as something subject to theories.
>   Who disobeys him, disobeys me, doesn't make good verse.
> The sound is better where the idiom is bad. When the writing is masterly one does NOT have to excuse it or to hunt up the reason for perpetrating the flaw. (51)

While Flint presents us with the terms of "Imagism," we have yet to explore what the "Image" in "Imagism" is for Pound. At the beginning of "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," Pound states:

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

It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. (200-01)

It is tempting to immediately associate Pound's concept of the "Image" with Hulme's; however, as we have already noted[36] the key surface difference between the two is that Pound's "Image" is non-visual, as Rebecca Beasley notes (*Theorists* 39). Because the image is "an intellectual and emotional complex" it is therefore "that which the visual description produces" and "the effect that happens after the poem" (39). If we recall that Hulme asserted that "Thought is prior to language and consists in the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images" and that "the art of literature consists in this *passage from the eye to the Voice*," then Pound's "Image" can be understood as the intermediary step in that passage. Pound's image as a complex is what Hulme calls the

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[36] Also recall the similarity between the concept of the instantaneous transmission of knowledge by the "Luminous Detail" and the "Image," which we shall explore more closely later in this study.

"visual chord," which is created in the mind of the reader. Thus, the relationship between Hulme and Pound's concepts is much closer than originally thought. However, as Daniel Tiffany notes, there is an element of the "subversion of the visual and the empirical that [Pound] proposes in the name of the Image" (21). In other words, Pound overthrows and subjugates scientific empiricism in the name of Imagism in order to give credence to his and his fellow Imagist's theories and art.

What then do we make of the appropriation of the term "complex" from psychologist Bernard Hart's "*The Psychology of Insanity*?" Hart asserts, "Complexes, then, are causes which determine the behaviour of the conscious stream, and the action which they exert upon consciousness may be regarded as the psychological analogue of the conception of 'force' in physics" (62). In his explication of the term, Hart uses the analogy of a hobby, which exerts a tremendous psychological effect on the daily lives of individuals (61-63). For example, a photographer with a photography complex sees the world in a unique way that is filtered through a perception that the photography complex exerts itself on (61-3). A person with such a complex negotiates the world with the constant "introduction into consciousness of ideas, emotions, and trains of activity belonging to the complex" (63). Furthermore, of "the ideas, arguments, etc., presented to the individual, those which are in harmony with the complex are reinforced, whereas those not so in harmony tend to be inhibited and to lose their cogency" (63). With this concept in mind, we can explore Pound's assertion that in an Imagist poem "of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective" ("Vorticism," 286). Pound reveals here that he wants an Imagistic poem to capture the perceptive transformation between a

referent and the perceptual shift involving that referent in order to get closer to a

transcendental evocation of truth, since "good art" is "art that bears true witness" ("The

Serious Artist," 237). Pound recognizes that it is impossible for an artist to create

something truly objective because as soon as the object is perceived, it has already

become subject to the mind and "complexes" of the poet. However, by attempting to

create an effect similar to that of the paraconscious complex, Pound attempts to align his

concept of the Image with a more objective and natural phenomenon. Although the

complex is subjective in the sense that it is in the mind of the poet, it is more objective

than conscious thought because it exerts a "force" on the mind. Remember that Pound

asserted that there are two ways of thinking of a man: as one who is like a "plastic

substance *receiving* impressions" and as one who is "directing a certain fluid force

against circumstance, as *conceiving* instead of merely reflecting and observing"

("Vorticism," 287). Pound thus asserts the creative and esemplastic force of the image or

complex, which he asserts is able to evoke an effect or reaction in the reader that is

supposed to imbue the reader with a "sense of freedom from time limits and space limits"

because the image or complex should be "beyond formulated language" and thus more

natural and objective. This creative and esemplastic force of the image or complex that

conceives instead of "merely reflecting and observing" can be understood as being

similar to the idea of the *virtù* which is the predominating quality of the overall cosmos

that predominates in the mind of particular artists and allows them to create the Luminous

Details that "govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electrical circuit" ("Osiris

2," 130).

Pound was not alone in his "insistence of the secondary nature of language and the primacy of 'the real,'" or in other words an appeal to a transcendental reality outside of formulated language, since "Such abstract speculations about the representational power of language were widespread during this period" (Beasley, *Visual Culture*, 51-52). Figures such as Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hudson Maxim, Henri Bergson, Remy de Gourmont, and T.E. Hulme all participated in the discussion (52). The latter three especially as they each posited "poetry as a more ideal language, and all, to various degrees, locate poetry's greater power of suggestion in its allegedly heightened appeal to visual sense" (52). In the sense of the heightened power of suggestion due to visuality, the Image should be understood as a permutation of the "Luminous detail," which "is characterised as a 'fact' that is '[swiftly] and [easily] [transmitted]' and 'gives us intelligence of a period,' 'a sudden insight'" (Longenbach, 52), essentially acting in the same way as a synecdoche. The Luminous Detail, according to Pound, is able to suggest a more concrete and real historical knowledge than that of the "multitudinous detail," which is merely the collection and assortment of data (52). The Image, which "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," is a less historically oriented version of the "Luminous Detail." While the "Luminous Detail" is intended to evoke a truer more natural knowledge of history (52), the image is supposed to evoke a truer and more natural psychological and emotional knowledge, which pound asserts can be either subjective or objective:

The Image can be of two sorts. It can arise within the mind. It is then 'subjective'
…Secondly, the image can be objective. Emotion seizing up some external scene

or action carries it intact to the mind; and that vortex purges it of all save the

essential or dominant or dramatic qualities. ("Affirmations," 293)

Ignoring for the meantime the word vortex, which we shall explore in the next chapter,

Pound's idea that the Image can allow unmediated access between an external object and

the mind in the context of perception privileges his own poetry, which is somehow able

to accomplish this transcendental feat. However, even if the senses were not required to

perceive and transmit the sensory data of a phenomenon, as soon as the concept is

perceived by consciousness it becomes subjective. The reason for this subjectivity is that

in order for the mind to comprehend the data, which it has received, it must comprehend

it through a form of language, which as we have noted already is deficient and lacking in

definitive meaning.

A simple example of this transcendental perception taken from Pound is that of

the circle. Pound states that "the equation $(x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2 = r^2$ governs the circle. It

is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles."[37] This statement

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[37] Recall Pound's mathematical formulation of poetics from "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris:" "We must have a greater variety of activity than with electricity-not merely positive and negative; but let us say +, –, ×, ÷, +a, – a, ×a, ÷a, etc. Some of these kinds of force neutralise each other, some augment; but the only way any two cones can be got to act without waste is for them to be so placed that their apexes and a line of surface meet exactly. When this conjunction occurs let us say their force is not added one's to the other's, but multiplied the one's by the other's; thus three or four words in exact juxtaposition are capable of radiating this energy at a very high potentiality; mind you, the juxtaposition of their vertices must be exact and the angles or "signs" of discharge must augment and not neutralise each other" ("Osiris 9," 298); as well as Pound's statement in *Spirit of Romance* where Pound states, "Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations, not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres, and the like, but equations for the human emotions" (14); and finally Pater, who states, "To define beauty, not in the most

identifies the very subjectivity of the supposed transcendental circle "existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time" ("Vorticism," 288-89). Every piece of the equation, including the number system arbitrarily based on tens, the characters which signify values, the Cartesian plane on which the equation is expressed, and the concept of the circle itself are products of human convention; there is no transcendental circle free from time and space, there is only the tendency of "circularity," which can be approximated by our arbitrary mathematic expressions. As Derrida asks in *The Truth in Painting*, "How could a circle place itself *en abyme*" (24), or in other words, how can a circle, which lacks any agency, manifest and recognize itself in a system marked by absence? The simple answer is it cannot, it must be realized and projected by an agent. Furthermore, while Pound attempted to distance himself from the symbolists whose "*symbols* have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7" by stating "The imagiste's images [sic] have a variable significance, like the signs *a*, *b*, and *x* in algebra," his analogy does not hold because 1, 2, and 7 function in the same way as *a*, *b*, and *x*; they are both placeholders for a certain value, quantity, or quality of an object or objects; the algebraic letters merely hold the place for either numbers or expressions, which contain more symbols, holding their place for numbers, while numbers hold the place of a certain value. Seven? Seven what? Seven trees? Seven inches? Seven as a symbol is an abstraction in the same way "dims lands *of peace*" is an abstraction because numbers and

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abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of æsthetics" (xxv).

circles are not concrete because they must be realized. Pound comes even closer to symbolism when he asserts that "By the 'Image' I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about *a*, *b*, and *c*, having something to with form, but about *sea*, *cliffs*, and *night*, having something to do with mood" ("Vorticism," 289).

Again we see in these mathematic examples that Pound's theoretical writings concerning Imagism simultaneously perform three functions as a frame or "passe-partout." First, those writings create an opening for Pound's art to emerge against the backdrop of the contemporary literary scene as Pound defines his own poems against what he calls bad art. The frame highlights the fact that what is being observed should be considered art and not popular or vulgar material. Second, like a frame on the wall, the theoretical writings draw our attention toward what is contained within the frame: the poetry and ideas of Ezra Pound. Third, by defining the terms by which Pound's art will be judged in the same way a frame separates and highlights what is considered art on the wall of a museum, the writings offer us a "pass-key," which allows us to appreciate and interpret the material: the "Images" contained within Pound's poems must be valued as transcendentally truer than the "Images," which may or may not even be evoked by other poets, in order to be appreciated. Another example of this parergon-esque framing is found in the essay "Vorticism," where Pound literally frames and reads his own poem "In a Station of a Metro" so that the reader will gain a better understanding of the poem:

> The "one image poem" is a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it

because it was what we call work "of second intensity." Six months later I made

a poem half that length; a year later I made the following *hokku*-like sentence:–

"The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

Petals, on a wet, black bough."

I dare say it is meaningless unless one has drifted into a certain vein of thought. In

a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward

and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.

("Vorticism," 286).

When Pound states, "I dare say it is meaningless unless one has drifted into a certain vein

of thought" ("Vorticism," 286), he emphasizes the necessity of supplementary parergon

that his theoretical writing provides, while also revealing that the value of the poem is not

natural or inherent to the poem and must be made clear by him.[38]

The theoretical frame reveals not just the construction contained within the frame,

but also the political agenda of the artist creating the frame. Pound's theoretical writings,

as we have seen, reveal an underlying agenda of simultaneous subjugation and

legitimation or naturalization. Not only are the visual and the scientific subject to Pound's

program as Daniel Tiffany argues, but also individual poets who either align with or do

not fit the value system of Imagism or are not especially "virtuous" in Pound's opinion

such as Milton, Tasso, and Ariosto for example. Furthermore, Vincent Sherry argues in

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[38] The necessity of such a critical explanation may have been due to the poor reception of *Des Imagistes*. Peter Jones states, "*Des Imagistes* was badly received both in Britain and America; and in London many returned it to the Poetry Bookshop, who published it. There was no preface to explain the new techniques, and the title seemed too precious and cryptic" (19).

Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism that the "aesthetic material" of the

Modernists "spelled the language of a new political discourse" (3). The emphasis on the

eye and visuality "achieves the distinctions on which clear conceptual intelligence relies;

it thus provides the emblem and instrument of a ruling intellectual elite" (5). I agree with

Sherry's assertion, but I would modify the argument to emphasize that Pound's emphasis

was on transcending visuality to assert a more objective elitism. Rebecca Beasley also

traces the relationship between visual culture and Pound's elitist individualist politics in

Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism. Beasley notes that *The New Age*,

which published Pound's "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" series and "Affirmations…as for

Imagisme," and the *New Freewoman,* which published most of Pound's prose "during the

second half of 1913 and throughout 1914," including "The Serious Artist," were both

vehemently anti-liberal and anti-rationalist (81). "[W]hereas the *New Age* espoused

'Guild Socialism,' *The New Freewoman* was inflected towards individualist anarchism"

(81). Beasley further notes the "extent to which Pound was consciously invested in

Marsden's individualist programme…is illustrated by his well known article 'The Serious

Artist'" (83). "The Serious Artist" provides numerous pieces of evidence in favour of

Pound's elitist attitude. Not only does he refer to non-artists as the "aegrum vulgus"

(diseased public), but he also asserts, "you are a fool to aspire to good taste if you haven't

naturally got it" (239).[39] Again, Pound posits the argument in terms of "nature;"

however, as we shall see in the next chapter, he undermines his own argument in the

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[39] I do believe that underlying Pound's elitism was a genuine concern for producing great art and the numerous anecdotes of his willingness to help as many artists as possible confirms this for me; however, it is important to point out the language of and tendencies towards artistic elitism, as well as Pound's political tendencies because they are often troubling.

context of Vorticism and the instigation of an American Renaissance, which requires the

selected appropriation of poetic models in order to create a Vortex of art, from which,

and through which, and into which the primary poetic pigment is constantly rushing.

Chapter 3

The Borrowed Lady:

Vorticism, "Near Perigord," and the Enactment of Ezra Pound's American Renaissance

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?

(Ezra Pound, "Near Perigord," l. 82-6)

When Ezra Pound wrote in the 1914 Vorticist manifesto *Blast,* "All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us, RACE, RACE-MEMORY instinct charging the PLACID" (153), he was further articulating the line of transcendental and transhistoric poetics that we have been exploring in this study. We explored the idea of this latent creative memory and energy, what he calls in *Blast* "the energized past," in the first chapter of this thesis through a close examination of the underappreciated essay series "I gather the Limbs of Osiris;" however, in relation to Vorticism Pound developed several new terms and ideas such as the "Primary Pigment" (*Blast* 153; "Renaissance 1," 285) and the Vortex (*Blast* 153; Vorticism, 278), which both augmented and reinforced his transcendental conception of historical poetics. This chapter traces the evolution of

the concept of the "Luminous Detail" into Pound's articulations of Vorticism in *Blast*, "Vorticism," and "The Renaissance: I-III," and argues that the concept of the "Luminous Detail" is foundational to Pound's concept of Vorticism. Furthermore, this paper simultaneously offers a reading of Pound's poem "Near Perigord," asserting that it is a metapoetic enactment of Pound's concepts of a "Vortex" and "American Renaissance" which involve the selective imitation of certain disparate parts of Pound's own personally chosen literary and historical canon ("Vortisicm," 278). The borrowed pieces of the women in Bertran's canzone can thus be read as the borrowed pieces of poetry, which Pound attempts to subsume as "primary pigment" into his "palette," from which he asserts that "good" poetry should be painted in his 1915 essay "The Renaissance: I—The Palette" (228). Moreover, the borrowed lady also represents a stratagem on the part of Pound (in the same way he reads in Bertran), which subjugates the best parts of the poetic canon as chosen by Pound, while obfuscating the rest. Thus, Pound's theories of selective appropriation and imitation in relation to Vorticism can be read as a frame through which he attempts to both draw attention to his literary work and assert its artistic and aesthetic values in the same way as he did with Imagism and the "New Method" of scholarship from "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris;" however, just as we saw in the previous chapters, this framing process only highlights the lack of ontological surety of meaning and value contained within the frame.

Ezra Pound's poem "Near Perigord," published in the December 1915 issue of *Poetry Magazine*, has traditionally been read as a poetic investigation into the historical facts of Troubadour poet Bertran de Born's canzone "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal." "Is it a love poem? Did he sing of war?" These are the ostensible questions that Pound asks

through the fiction of his own poem ("Near Perigord," l. 82); however, because "Near

Perigord" is a metapoetic examination of "the riddle" (l. 4) of a twelfth century canzone,

we too can interrogate Pound's poem in the same way he questioned Bertran de Born's.

Is Pound's poem a love poem about poetry? Did he sing of war? Do we mark Pound a

"craftsman and a strategist" (l. 84)? In other words, when Pound asserts that "there is

precedent, legal tradition, / To sing one thing when your song means another," he signals

that we must question his "song" to tease out its secondary and strategic meaning (ll. 89-

90). When Pound supposes that there could be a potential military strategy hidden in the

selective blazon of Bertran de Born's "borrowed lady,"[40] we must consider why "Near

Perigord" is similarly assembled from fragments of appropriated Provencal poetry.

Furthermore, we must question what motivated Pound to chose to write and publish a

poem in 1915 during his Vorticist phase about the duplicity of a Troubadour poet, which

is also accompanied by Pound's own translation of Bertran's original canzone. Why was

Pound so interested in the Troubadours throughout his career as a Modernist poet? What

is their strategic value to Pound?

The answers to these questions revolve around the figure of Bertran's borrowed

lady, who he creates to rival the woman that has rejected him: Maent. Because the

borrowed lady of Bertran's poem "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" is a blazon made up of

different parts of different women intended to rival another woman, the poem "Near

Perigord" by extension can be read as a meta-poetic representation of the intertextuality

of Pound's Vorticistic enterprise of instigating an American renaissance, which involves

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[40] The figure of the "Borrowed Lady" is typically now read in feminist terms; however, I am taking a
different approach in my reading of the figure.

the selective imitation of certain disparate parts of Pound's own personally chosen canon. The borrowed pieces of the women in Bertran's canzone can be read as the borrowed pieces of poetry that Pound is attempting to subsume into his "palette," from which he asserts that "good" poetry should be painted in his 1915 essay "The Renaissance: I—The Palette" (228). The "pure color [sic]" that makes up Pound's artistic palette will ostensibly coalesce into a poetry that will rival the perfect, but unattainable, poetry that cannot be possessed by the artist in the same way that Bertran intends his "borrowed lady" to rival the unattainable Maent. This renaissance project will thereby create the "capital" or wealth in literature that Pound asserts America lacks (227). If we refer to Pound's selective appropriation of what he considers beautiful in poetry as the "love" aspect of both his poem and program, we must also deal with the duplicitous strategic aspect of them as well. With regards to military stratagem, the borrowed lady also represents Pound's attack on certain aspects of culture, which is implied by the selective process of creating a "borrowed lady" from disparate parts of different poetic traditions. In other words, if Pound is picking and choosing parts to be imitated and appropriated, he is also simultaneously discarding and thus attacking the parts of poetry of which he does not approve. Pound creates a poem that can be read strategically to an informed reader just like Bertran de Born's canzone. Those who are able to decode Pound the jongleur's poetic cryptography are thus able to understand which areas of the literary tradition are worthwhile to Pound and which are not.

Before we examine "Near Perigord," let us first examine Pound's concept of an American renaissance. In an essay titled "The Renaissance: I—The Palette" published in the comments and reviews section of the February 1915 edition of Poetry magazine,

Pound asserts that "America has yet no capital" (227). This tendentious argument makes

two assertions simultaneously. First, that America has no artistic centre of activity

comparable to "Paris and London" (227), second, that America has no artistic assets or

wealth, from which an artist can draw inspiration. Let us engage with the latter before the

former. Where does Pound assert we should find this wealth? In "[t]he study of

'comparative literature,'" which "received that label [the label of capital] about eighty

years ago" (227). Comparative literature for Pound is the interaction of poetic and literary

art between languages and cultures, which Pound asserts is much older than eighty years;

rather, it has existed for "at least two thousand years" (227). "The best Latin poets knew

Greek. The Troubadours knew several jargons. Dante wrote in Italian, Latin and

Provençal and knew presumably other tongues, including a possible smattering of

Hebrew" (227). Pound refers to this ability to read and write in multiple languages on a

sophisticated level as "a form of comparative literature called 'the classic education'"

(228). This "classic education" actually allows a "very ancient Oxford 'head'" to have an

"enlightened opinion" regarding the superfluous nature of adjectives in the "new poem…

the *Hownd* [sic] *of Heaven*" (227-8). The purpose of this "classic education" then for

Pound is to create keen readers and artists capable of creating and recognizing artistic

capital in a centre of imaginative production. At this point the metaphor of the title of

Pound's essay becomes apparent. Pound imagines interlingual artistic discourse such as

that which occurred in the European renaissance to be a critical component of artistic

inspiration and creation.[41] Taking the historical concept of the renaissance – the fifteenth

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[41] We can again see the influence of Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* on Pound as the concept of creating
the a general culture of favourable artistic condition Renaissance has become an explicit goal of Pound:

century European revival in artistic creation[42] inspired by the discovery of Greek texts[43] – as an example, Pound's project is to instigate his own "renaissance" or "awakening" (as he calls it) in America through the selective study of particular historical literary texts (228).

If the purpose of Pound's renaissance is to foster artistic sagacity, how does Pound suggest we establish this "awakening" in America? Pound answers this question directly as he states, "[t]he first step of a renaissance, or awakening is the importation of models for painting, sculpture or writing" (228). In other words, Pound asserts that contemporary American poets need to look outside of both American literature and the English language for models to "import" and learn from because artistic "movements" are "stimulated by 'comparison'" (228). Again, Pound's primary example is the fifteenth

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"There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture" (Pater, xxx).

[42] Of course if we look to Pater, we would recognize that "This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its qualities already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination" (xxviii-xxix); however, Pater does add: "The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras; and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:—it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. It is the unity of this spirit which gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence (xxx).

[43] Pound adds in an endnote to "The Renaissance I:" Undoubtedly pure color is to be found in Chinese poetry, when we begin to know enough about it; indeed, a shadow of this perfection is already at hand in translations. Liu Ch'e, Chu Yuan, Chia I, and the great vers libre writers before the Petrar chan age of Li Po, are a treasury to which the next century may look for as great a stimulus as the renaissance had from the Greeks (233).

century European renaissance, which was partly inspired by the rediscovery and translation of ancient Greek texts and "culminated in the Elizabethan stage, which produced the French Pléïade" (228). As we can see, Pound's example of poetic stimulation translates across four languages (Greek, Latin, French, and English) and roughly two hundred years, meaning that Pound understands literature to be both a diachronic and dialinguistic medium that is never detached from the literature that precedes it. However, Pound carefully uses the terms "model," "stimulant," and "comparison" because his concept of artistic appropriation does not relegate the modern poet to the role of mimeograph; instead, the contemporary poet must go beyond his or her models in order to produce artistic "capital." Going back to Pound's example, "the Elizabethan playwrights are more interesting than the Pléïade, because they went beyond their models" (227).

The literary models from which an artist draws inspiration form what Pound calls "pure color," which comprise what he calls in the subtitle of his essay "the palette" (228). This metaphor belongs to Pound as he states, "I can only compare this endeavor [sic] of criticism to the contemporary search for pure color in painting" (228). The metaphor of "pure color" comes straight from the 1914 issue of *Blast,* in which Pound called for a use of:

THE PRIMARY PIGMENT

The Vorticist relies on this alone; on the primary pigment of his art, nothing else.

Every Conception, every emotion presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form.

> It is the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred
> pictures, the most highly energized statement, the statement that has not yet
> SPENT itself it [sic] expression, but which is the most capable of expressing.
> ("Vortex," 153).

What then is the "Primary Pigment" of the poet? Pound makes this clear as he asserts later in the article that "The primary pigment of poetry is the IMAGE" ("Vortex," 153). Although this declaration makes the relationship of Vorticism to Imagism clear,[44] the seeds of Pound's Vorticist ideas can be found much earlier in the 1911-2 essay series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris." Note the similarity between the quote from blast and the following from "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris IX: On Technique:"

> When I say above that technique is the means of conveying an exact impression
> of exactly what one means, I do not by any means mean that poetry is to be
> stripped of any of its powers of vague suggestion. Our life is, in so far as it is
> worth living, made up in great part of things indefinite, impalpable; and it is
> precisely because the arts present us these things that we-humanity-cannot get on
> without the arts. The picture that suggests indefinite poems, the line of verse that
> means a gallery of paintings, the modulation that suggests a score of metaphors
> and is contained in none: it is these things that touch us nearly that "matter."

Note the similarity between Pound's conception of a "picture that suggests indefinite poems" and "the modulation that suggests a score of metaphors and is contained in none"

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[44] In fact, Peter Jones calls Vorticism "a stricter form of Imagism" (21).

in the "Osiris" essay and the "the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred pictures" in "Vortex." In fact the rhetorical structure of the of these examples would be identical if Pound did not curiously omit a reference to "the line of verse that means a gallery of paintings" in the passage from "Vortex." Further note the similarity between the Imagistic emphasis on "conveying an exact impression" in the Osiris passage and the concern for a "primary pigment," "the most highly energized statement…that has not yet SPENT itself it [sic] expression." Both statements call for a more precise form of art that appeals directly to the senses of the reader. Whereas the former calls for what Pound calls in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris III" an "exact psychology" (155), the latter calls for what Pound calls in "vortex" a "PRIMARY FORM," which "PRESENTS ITSELF TO THE VIVID CONSCIOUSNESS," (154), or in other words, a more "exact impression" to present to the psyche.

The metaphor of the palette suggests that the artist should appropriate models of literature to use as the basis for his work of art in the same way that a painter uses colour as the basis of a painting. In *Blast* Pound makes it clear that mimeography is not acceptable for the Vorticist, as he/she "will not allow the primary expression of any concept or emotion to drag itself out into mimicry" ("Vortex," 154). What differentiates the painter or poet from the mimeograph is specifically the unique combination of colour that produces the individual work of art. The artist can thus selectively use the models that he has learnt in apprenticeship in a transformative way. Pound reinforces this argument in "The Renaissance" by stating, "I do not mean that one should copy the great poets whom I have named above—one does not copy colors on a palette" (232). To make another analogy, musicians must spend a period of time learning a standard repertoire in

order to foster the technical skills of music such as reading, dexterity, rhythm, touch, and so on.[45] Furthermore, they must study the compositional techniques of musicians who wrote before them in order to understand the rules of composition in music. These skills create what we might tentatively call a "foundation" on which artistic creation can begin. Each of these musicians subsumes the works they have learnt and the compositional styles that mark the tendencies of a particular period into their "palette." So when Mozart includes a fugal finale to his *Jupiter Symphony*, one could say he diachronically imports a model of baroque music onto his compositional palette, which he then uses to compose something novel and innovative. Poetry works in the same way for Pound: the poet must learn composition by studying form; rhythm by studying metrics; and poetic techniques such as imagery and metaphor by studying the poetic repertoire of the masters. Furthermore, to Pound, limiting oneself to one particular language would be akin to limiting oneself to a particular instrument. There are modes of poetic expression in Mandarin Chinese that are unavailable to an English speaker in the same way that musical notes cannot be expressed the same way with different instruments. For example, notes on a string instrument such as a violin can be played with vibrato, whereas on a piano they cannot. Moreover, limiting oneself to a national body of text such as "American poetry" would be like studying "American chemistry, neglecting all foreign discoveries" (233).

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[45] Pound uses the same analogy in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris IX: On Technique:" "No great composer has, so far as I know, boasted an ignorance of musical tradition or thought himself less a musician because he could play Mozart correctly. Yet it is not uncommon to hear practising [sic] 'poets' speak of "technique" as if it were a thing antipathetic to " poetry" (297).

Another reason this artistic palette is so important is that it allows the poet to create what Pound called in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" a "Luminous Detail," which is comparable to both the "primary pigment" and the "vortex" in Pound's Vorticism. A "Luminous Detail," when properly constructed, is supposed to achieve a special historical "insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence, and law" ("Osiris 2," 130), or in other words, a transcendental and transhistoric knowledge of the past unlike any other. Because Pound recognizes that words are "arbitrary and conventional symbols" ("Osiris 9," 298), he imagines words as "great hollow cones of steel…charged with a force like electricity, or rather, radiating a force from their apexes" (298). Pound refers to "this peculiar energy" in the "Osiris" essays as, "the power of tradition, of centuries of race consciousness, of agreement, of association; and the control of it is the 'Technique of Content,' which nothing short of genius understands" (298), and in *Blast* as "Race-Memory" ("Vortex," 153). In other words, the transcendental and transhistoric energy that words radiate is itself the artistic tradition and what Pound calls "race consciousness" is the awareness or understanding of the power of that tradition,[46] to which "Luminous Details" allow access. Pound asserts that these "Luminous Details" "govern knowledge as a switchboard governs an electrical circuit" (130), and later compares them to different engines which transform physical materials (such as words) into electricity (or the special artistic energy of the tradition) ("Osiris 4," 178-9). Pound

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[46] As we explored earlier, this "race consciousness" is comparable to T.S. Eliot's concept of the "historical sense:" "The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent," 14)"

revisits this analogy in *Blast* with the essential image of Vorticism: the vortex. Pound

compares the vortex with "THE TURBINE" and states:

> All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is
>
> living and worthy to live. All MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us,
>
> RACE, RACE-MEMORY, instinct charging with the PLACID,
>
> NON - ENERGIZED FUTURE. ("Vortex," 153).

As the title of the passage, "THE TURBINE," suggests, the Vortex is imagined as

generating energy through an interaction with the past. The Vortex focuses the latent

transcendental historical energy on the present in the same way that Pound imagined the

"Luminous Detail" instantaneously transmitting the energy of the past into the present.

Furthermore, just like the "Luminous Detail," the Vortex, "the point of maximum

energy" (153), must be constructed by the poet in order to create the proper

circumstances for the transmission of the energy of the artistic tradition or "race-

memory."

Since Pound's interest lies in creating his own personally constructed palette or

canon from which he can draw inspiration, or "pure colour," it would be prudent to

identify which pieces of poetry he wants to import for his renaissance program. In "I

Gather the Limbs of Osiris," Pound identified four especially virtuous poets in Homer,

Dante, Chaucer, and Shakespeare ("Osiris 6," 224), while also translating Arnaut Daniel,

Guido Cavalcanti, and the Anglo-Saxon seafarer in other articles; in *Blast*, Pound only

identifies one literary model in the Poet H.D[47] ("Vortex," 154); and In the 1915

"Renaissance I" essay, he includes: Homer; Sappho; Ibycus; Theocritus' idyl of the

woman spinning with charmed wheel; Catullus, "especially the *Collis O Heliconii*;" "a

few *sirventes* of Bertran de Born;" "a few strophes of Arnaut Daniel;" "Dante;" a

"medieval songbook" made up of "troubadour poetry, which also includes "one or two

works by Vidal and Marueil, six poem's of Guido's, German songs out of Will Vesper's

songbook, and especially some by Walter von der Vogelweide;" the "*Poema del Cid*";

The "*Sea-farer* [sic];" one passage out of "*The Wanderer*;" "some knowledge of the

Anglo-Saxon fragments – not particularly the Beowulf;" Gautier; Corbière; the Pléïade;

Heine; and Chaucer (228-32). While these eclectic examples are of models the Poet

should emulate, Pound also includes poetry that one should not emulate. These include:

"all the French poets save Villon;" Milton, who "is the worst sort of poison;" and "no

American poetry" (229, 231, 233).[48] The significance of Pound's renaissance program

listed above is that he simultaneously singles out the works that create a "color-sense" of

"pure color," but also discards the poetries that do not appeal to his personal aesthetic

(233, 228). Pound asserts that "no two men will agree absolutely respecting 'pure color'

or 'good color'" and that "There is nothing like futurist abolition of past glories in this

brief article," a sentiment echoing Pound's statement that "Futurism is the disgorging

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[47] That is Pound only identifies one literary model in the article "Vortex" explicitly credited to him. He likely had input in both the "Blast" and Bless" sections of *Blast*, which identify negative and positive artistic influences for Vorticists respectively

[48] Note the similarity between this list of poetic models and those listed in Pound's book *The ABC of Reading*.

spray of a vortex with no drive behind it, dispersal" ("Vortex," 153);[49] however, he also

claims that his selections will prevent "a man's sinking into contentment with a lot of

wish-wash that passes for classic or 'standard' poetry" (230). While he may not be

"abolishing" past glories, he is certainly denigrating them when he says, for example, that

"[n]o American poetry is of any use for the palette" (233).

In fact, I would argue that Pound's renaissance program requires a certain amount

of "impure" colour for his artwork to stand out against. The complete abolishment of

what he considers to be bad poetry would give him nothing to create a "borrowed lady"

from because the lady would have already been formed by a perfect canon. This ideal or

perfect poetry is of course the aim of Pound and his renaissance program, but it is

impossible to obtain just like the figure of Maent in Bertran's "Dompna puois de mi

no'us cal." Thus, the only recourse left for the artist is to attempt to reflect that perfection

through the selective appropriation of the most beautiful poetry. While we must

recognize that Pound defines the terms of "beauty" and "wish-washyness" himself, we

must also recognize that, by defining these terms, Pound situates his art in a spectrum of

beauty, thereby elevating his own art in opposition to the art of others by attacking it on

his terms. When Pound makes a statement like "[i]f mediocrities want immortality they

must of course keep up some sort of cult of mediocrity," the terms of mediocrity that are

shaping his renaissance discourse are of course his terms; however, this statement oddly

reveals more of Pound's anxiety regarding poetic immortality than that of the supposed

mediocrities.

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[49] Recall also F.S. Flint's statement that "The imagistes admitted that they were contemporaries of the Post Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools" (199).

Since we have engaged with the material implications of Pound's assertion that America lacks "capital," let us now engage with the physical. To reiterate: when Pound asserts that America has no capital, on one hand he means that America has no artistic wealth to draw upon, on the other hand he literally means America has no capital city or cultural centre of artistic production, which he also calls a "vortex" in "The Renaissance II" (286),[50] or what Pound calls in *Blast*, "the human vortex," in which "All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future, in pregent…NOW" ("Vortex," 153). Broadly speaking, a vortex is a phenomenon featuring a "rapid movement of particles of matter round an axis; a whirl of atoms, fluid, or vapour" (OED, "vortex," N. 1c). Pound's metaphor implies that a true capital features rapid movement of artistic production – whirls of words, images, and sculptures – around the axis of a wealthy audience. The value of the vortex is thus twofold. It lies first in the "value of centralization, in matters of knowledge and art, and of the interaction and stimulus of genius foregathered" (Pound, "The Renaissance: II," 286). In other words, having artists close to each other produces artistic interaction and stimulation between "geniuses," which should foster their growth into superior artists in the same way that forming a palette based on superior models of "true colour" should as well. The second value of the centralization of the arts lies in the economic patronage of the arts because "a great age is brought about only with the aid of wealth, because a great age means the deliberate fostering of genius, the gathering-in and grouping and encouragement of artists" (287). The term "aid" is very important because it emphasizes the anti-commercial aspect of

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[50] Pound's metaphor of the "vortex" can be applied both to poetry and to places as long as they act as "radiant node[s] or cluster[s]," "from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" ("Vorticism," 289).

Pound's argument. Without the "aid" of wealth, artists are doomed to the whims and caprices of the consumer market, which marginalizes the artist during "the worst two or three years of their career, the years when their work can't possibly pay," (Pound: "The Renaissance III," 89). If the artist consistently worries about how to satisfy a reading audience they fall into what Pound would call mediocrity because "all good art, goes against the grain of contemporary taste" (86). To be fair, Pound does admit that great art is possible without the aid of wealth, but "without such aid it will be individual, separate, and spasmodic; it will not group and become a great period" ("The Renaissance: II," 287).

Now that we have sufficiently established Ezra Pound's renaissance program, it is time to explore how he enacts it in the poem "Near Perigord." The poem begins with an uncited and untranslated epigraph, which Pound appropriates from a poem of Bertran de Born's that begins "A Perigord pres del muralh." Pound translates a portion of this poem in his work *The Spirit of Romance* as "At Perigord, near to the wall / Aye, within a mace throw of it / I will come armed upon Baiart, and if I find there that fat-bellied Poitevin, / He shall see how my steel cuts" (45). Pound's epigraph, which only uses the first two lines of this quote from Bertran, metonymically situates the poem in the troubadour tradition through its location: literally "near to the wall" of Perigord; through its author: Bertran de Born; and through the suggestion of Troubadour political intrigue as Bertran suggests he will kill "Baiart" and the "fat-bellied Poitevin" if he sees them there. It is important to note that Pound crucially situates himself "Near" Perigord in the first section of the poem, which is the section most concerned with the "facts" of Bertran's canzone. Pound cannot situate himself inside Perigord without an imaginative act of fiction, which

is exactly what he creates in the second section of the poem where he moves inside the walls of Perigord. The epigraph further metonymically situates "Near Perigord" in the Troubadour tradition through the omission of certain details. The omitted section of the epigraph, which Provençal scholars and readers of the *Spirit of Romance* would recognize, alludes to Bertran's violent and warlike side, for which Dante condemns him to "the last wallow of hell" (Pound, "Near Perigord," l. 23). With these details in mind, we see that the appropriated two-line epigraph contains many of the historical details that allow Pound to situate his poem in the Troubadour tradition, and is also an example of the true poetic colour that Pound subsumes into his palette in order to create the poem. In other words, the appropriated epigraph can be regarded as a borrowed fragment of poetry in the same way that Bertran borrows certain parts of women to create his work of art. But, before we discuss the implications of this action in more detail we should explore the figure of the borrowed lady more closely first.

The text of "Near Perigord" proper begins with the speaker asking a Messire Cino, a figure who can stand in for the reader, to "read between the lines of Uc St. Circ, / Solve me the riddle, for you know the tale" (ll. 3-4). This question immediately creates the expectation of poetic duplicity for the reader because the speaker of the poem simultaneously asks the reader of Pound's poem to "read between the lines" of Uc St. Circ and of Pound himself. In other words, Messire Cino and the reader are asked to solve the riddle of both Bertran's "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" and "Near Perigord." At this point in the poem though, if the reader is unfamiliar with Bertran's canzone, he/she will not have a clue what Pound is referring to. Fortunately, Pound provides two of his own versions of Bertran's canzone for us. The first comes as the condensed

summary of Bertran's borrowed lady in the second stanza, and the second as an appendix

in the back of the same edition of Poetry magazine that "Near Perigord" was published in

titled "On Near Perigord," which features Pound's translation of Bertran's full poem and

some supplementary commentary on it by Pound;[51] however, Pound still delays a direct

positing of the riddle until the final stanza of the first section. Instead, we are given subtle

and cryptic hints that are rewarded on a second reading such as, "for every lady a castle, /

each place a strong" (ll. 13-14); a reference to Dante's depiction of Bertran as a "stirrer

up of strife" (l. 22); and suppositions as to the strategic locations of various Troubadour

castles in relation to Perigord. The effect of these hints is to foreshadow and create

anticipation of the question of the riddle:

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 at Polhonac,

Singing a different stave, as closely hidden.)

Oh, there is precedent, legal tradition,

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[51] These supplements to "Near Perigord" are more examples of a poetic Parergons similar to that of the essays on Imagism and Vorticism.

To sing one thing when your song means another,

"Et albirar ab lor bordon—"

Foix' count knew that. What is Sir Bertrans' singing? (ll. 82-92)

Pound grounds his reading of "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" in this stanza on the question of Bertran's motives by asking: what is the purpose of the figure of the borrowed lady? Is Bertran's canzone simply a love poem that features blazon figure made up of disparate parts of other women to rival the beauty of Maent? Or is there a political "intrigue" to the specific selection of female parts? The inference of political intrigue comes from Pound's "own observation of the geography of Perigord and Limoges" and his recognition of the strategic value of the castles owned by the various women that are dissected for Bertran's blazon ("On Near Perigord," 145-46). In other words, Pound asserts there could be a possible secondary and ulterior motive to Bertran's canzone: it could also be a stealth communiqué of strategy between Bertran and his brother-in-law Tairiran, in which the selection of each woman and their specific part could represent coded locations on a literal geographic map of strategic importance for holding power in troubadour France. Bertran could potentially communicate this strategic importance only to those who would have been able to decode his blazon.

Because Pound understands that there is "no evidence" ("On Near Perigord," 145) of the political intrigue in "Near Perigord" save for his observations, he decides in the second stanza to "end fact" and "try fiction" (ll. 95). In doing so, he creates several fictional scenes that imagine the circumstances of the canzone's composition,

performance, and reception. To take one example of Pound's fictional questioning of

Bertran's canzone, let us examine:

> We come to Ventadour
>
> In the mid love court, he sings out the canzon,
>
> No one hears save Arrimon Luc D'Esparo—
>
> No one hears aught save the gracious sound of compliments.
>
> Sir Arrimon counts on his fingers, Montfort,
>
> Rochecouart, Chalais, the rest, the tactic,
>
> Malemort, guesses beneath, sends word to Coeur de Lion:
>
> The compact, de Born smoked out, trees felled
>
> About his castle, cattle driven out!
>
> Or no one sees it, and En Bertrans prospered? (ll. 118-127)

In this example Pound imagines that "no one hears" anything except the "gracious sound

of compliments" – the assembled parts of the various women – except Sir Arrimon.

While the rest of the audience receives and enjoys Bertran's flattering comments, which

ostensibly praise the most beautiful parts of each women, Sir Arrimon cunningly

"guesses beneath" Bertran's strategy, thereby "[smoking] him out." But, since this

fantasy is merely fictional, Pound also asserts that it is possible that no one was able to

read the subtext of his canzone as the speaker asks, "or no one sees it, and En Bertrans

prospered?" The significance of this example lies in the aspect of performativity, which Pound explains more thoroughly in his essay "Troubadours—Their Sorts and Conditions." He states:

> No student of the period can doubt that the involved forms, and the veiled meanings in the 'trobar clus,' grew out of living conditions, and that these songs played a very real part in love intrigue and in the intrigue preceding warfare. The time had no press and no theatre. If you wish to make love to women in public, and out loud, you must resort to subterfuge. (94)

The Troubadour "trobar clus" poem thus acts as a public disseminator of information, but only for those that are able to decode the "subterfuge" and "veiled meanings" of the fiction of the text. While the jongleur Bertran performs the poem for the court, a select few are able to understand its subtext and interpret the strategy such as Sir Arrimon, and Pound recognizes that "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal," as part of the 'trobar clus' tradition, potentially has this substratum of signification, but he can only conjecture as to its significance or meaning. By attempting to explore the potential veiled meaning through fiction he is able to closely approximate what he imagines could have been the circumstances of the poems construction, but in actuality is only left with a performance of historical details that he has personally constructed; he is left with a poetic enactment of history.

Ezra Pound's "Near Perigord" can be read as a strategic performance in the same way that Pound reads Bertran's "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" because Pound invites us to solve the riddle of Bertran's canzone in the opening stanza when he asks "Messire

Cino," who can stand in for the reader, to do just that. Because "Near Perigord"

metapoetically questions the motives of Bertran's canzone, we too can question Pound's

motives for assembling fragments of and allusions to Troubadour poetry, as well as

references to twelfth and thirteenth century French and English history. The appropriation

of these fragments and allusions can be read as Pound's enactment of his own renaissance

program. The fragments and allusions act as the colour on Pound's poetic palette as he

paints his own borrowed lady: "Near Perigord." Instead of borrowing pieces of women to

rival a woman that has rejected him, Pound borrows pieces of other poetic traditions in

order situate himself in his own personal canonical model, which he hopes to surpass,

thereby creating a poetry that comes closer to the always desired, but never attainable,

'perfect' poetry and poetic expression. Pound creates "capital" by attempting to import,

imitate, and surpass the valuable Troubadour model of poetry; in so doing he also situates

his poetry as the progeniture of the Troubadour canon. Philip Grover succinctly describes

how Pound's appropriative method (by which I argue his renaissance program is

exercised) works when describing "Sestina Altaforte" in his essay "Hang it all on

Pound—There can be One En Bertrans But *Your* En Bertrans?" He states:

> We have here in miniature Pound's particular understanding of cultural diversity,
>
> mutual interference and productive inter-action [sic]: creativity from multiple
>
> intertextualites. These references fuse in the creative act of poetry, and English
>
> poetry and sensibility is re-newed [sic] and enriched by the foreign and familiar in
>
> a happy dance of words and music. (47)

The key verbs here are "fuse, re-new, and enrich," which all speak to the method of

creating a "borrowed lady" of appropriated poetic models. The poet must "fuse" the

disparate models into a connected structure (in the sense that they are bonded together, but not necessarily intelligible in a cohesive manner). The poet must further "re-new" these models. It is particularly poignant of Grover to separate the re and the new by a hyphen because the separation simultaneously highlights the fact that the models are being brought back or born again (as in a renaissance) and that the models are being made new as well. These acts "enrich" English poetry creating the capital that Pound asserts America lacks. At this point, it would be prudent to acknowledge that "Near Perigord" only represents a small fraction of Pound's proposed list of models to imitate in order to bring about a renaissance. If the reader would like a more thorough rendering of the whole renaissance program as a borrowed lady, I would suggest *The Cantos*.

Nevertheless, if we are to read "Near Perigord" as an enactment of Pound's metapoetic renaissance enterprise we must also ask the question "Is it a love poem? [Or] Did [Pound] sing of war?" Again Pound forces to ask the same kinds of questions he did when reading Bertran: is "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" about the love of Maent or is it a stealth communiqué of war; or in our case is "Near Perigord" about Bertran's canzone or is it a stealth communiqué about which poetry to preserve and which to attack? Just as Pound's metahistoric exercise in the second section of the poem supposes a military stratagem or "political intrigue" in Bertran's canzone through the selection of women whose castles may represent strategic value, our critical exercise also supposes a tendentious subterfuge in Pound's selective appropriation of the Troubadour tradition. If Bertran's borrowed lady is made up of geographic cues that indicate strategic value, then his borrowed lady simultaneously indicates which geographic locations are not of strategic value. When we apply this logic to Pound, we see that when he creates a

borrowed lady out of selected models of poetry, which he asserts will create capital or wealth, he simultaneously suggests which poetries will not create value. We saw this same polemic in "The Renaissance: Part 1" when Pound asserted, "America has no capital." When he makes this statement, he asserts that there is no strategic value in American poetry, thereby dismissing an entire tradition of poetry written prior to 1915 in order to begin his renaissance program, and essentially enacts the "disgorging spray" of Futurism ("Vortex," 153). Pound situates his poetry in his own personally constructed canon as superior to the traditions he eschews. Because art cannot be reborn or rediscovered unless it has been absent for some time, Pound creates an absence through his dismissal of American poetry, in which his renaissance program can be born or "reborn."

Another important aspect of the strategic nature of "Near Perigord" is the coded nature of the fragments that Pound chooses to use. Of all the borrowed fragments, only the epigraph to part 3 of the poem is actually cited. The rest of the fragments and allusions, such as the paraphrased and translated excerpts from Dante, the untranslated Provençal of Bertran, and the names of various historical Troubadour figures, are left uncited and unexplained. The result is that Pound's sources are at first opaque to an uninitiated reader in the same way Bertran's poem would have been opaque to all but a few at court if Pound's suppositions about its subtext are correct. Just like Sir Arrimon, those who are able to decode Pound the jongleur's poetic cryptography are thus able to understand which areas of the literary tradition are worthwhile and which are not to Pound. Pound further asserts that one of the values of "capital or metropolis is that if a man in a capital cribs, quotes or imitates, someone else immediately lets the cat out of the

bag and says what he is cribbing, quoting or imitating" ("The Renaissance: 1," 227). In other words, a poetic capital defined by artistic wealth features a citizenry that is able to read what Pound defines as valuable on a sophisticated level; citizens of Pound's artistic capital recognize "true colour" when they see it.

If Pound really enacts his renaissance program by appropriating models of poetry to enrich his linguistic palette, what shall we make of the final image of the poem? Pound writes:

> There shut up in his castle, Tairiran's,
>
> She who had nor ears nor tongue save in her hands,
>
> Gone—ah, gone—untouched, unreachable!
>
> She who could never live save through one person,
>
> She who could never speak save to one person,
>
> And all the rest of her a shifting change,
>
> A broken bundle of mirrors…! ("Near Perigord," ll. 189-195)

If we approach the poem from the traditional reading – that Pound is attempting a historical inquiry into the facts of Bertran's canzone – this image can be read as representing the failure of Pound's inquiry to posit a satisfactory and legitimate answer to the riddle. We are left with a "shifting change, / A broken bundle of mirrors," which represents the fragmentary nature of the historical inquiry. For all of Pound's efforts to gather historical details and place them into a relationship together, they refuse to

coalesce into a stable historical knowledge. Hélène Aji acknowledges this interpretation as she states:

> However as Pound realises at the end of "Near Perigord", and as he concedes also at the end of the *Cantos*, the multiplicity of experiences and the variety of interpretations cannot be overcome by the poet. "Near Perigord" reaches nothing but the fragmentation of "a broken bundle of mirrors" made, among other things, of the contradictory accounts of Bertran's life which Pound's fusional technique proves unable to reconcile[.] (Aji 16)

On the other hand, James Longenbach, in his work *Modernist Poetics of History*, states that while a scholar like Nordau asserts that history "may afford aesthetic satisfaction, but not real knowledge," Pound asserts in "Near Perigord" that "real knowledge *is* aesthetic satisfaction…Pound reveals that the only way we know anything about the past is through imaginative reconstruction" (92). In other words, all historical texts are broken bundles of mirrors that the poet or historian assembles, and the "value of history does not lie in the philological accuracy of interpretation but in the very act of historical interpretation itself" (92). In addition to Longenbach's argument, Stuart McDougal offers a cogent argument regarding Maent and the "broken bundle of mirrors." He states:

> Here Maent is a being whose existence is defined solely through the person and art of Bertran de Born. If, of course, the "real" Maent can be interpreted and preserved only through the achievement of a poet like Bertran, then the "real" Bertran (or Peire Vidal, or Arnaut de Mareuil) can exist only through the art of a poet like Dante and Pound. (68)

McDougal's metahistoric interpretation of the role of poets like Pound and Dante here further reinforces Longenbach's argument that history is an imaginative reconstruction. If the only way we have access to the "real" Maent or "real" Bertran is through their representations, which are of course made up of fragmentary details and impressions, history itself must be understood in a similar way. Furthermore, Pound is not concerned with enormous amounts of facts and information; "Pound's ideal historian seeks those few facts that 'give us an intelligence of a period---a kind of intelligence not to be gathered from a great array of the other sort'" (Longenbach, 52). As we have seen throughout this study, Pound calls those few facts "Luminous Details," which are supposed to provide us with the special "intelligence" of history (52). This special intelligence is the interpretive or creative quality of historical inquiry, "which takes place in the mind of the historian as he brings those past events to life" (50).

In the context of Pound's renaissance program, the concept of the Luminous Detail can also be applied to the importation of models to inspire a renaissance. For example, the poetic epigraph that begins "Near Perigord" is a type of luminous detail because it provides us with a certain historical knowledge of the troubadour tradition, while simultaneously asserting the true poetic colour from which Pound wants his poetry to made. In other words, the colours on the poetic palette can be understood as luminous poetic details. For Pound, these details both situate his poetry in a poetic tradition, but simultaneously engender the renaissance he wishes to enact.

Regarding the regenerative aspect of the luminous detail, James Longenbach states:

Pound uses the myth of Isis and Osiris as a metaphor for his historicism in *I Gather the Limbs of Osiris*…In Identifying himself with Isis, pound represents his work as the reclamation and resurrection of the Dead…this mystical faith in his ability to breath his own life into the past underlies all his translations and poetic recreations of the past. (47-48)

As we see, Pound's appropriation of disparate parts of separate poetic traditions is simultaneously an act of historicism as he gathers the poetic "limbs" of Osiris in order reclaim history, and an act of renaissance "re-newing" as he "resurrects" the "dead" poetics by "breathing his own life" into them through the creative reinscription of them in his own poetry. Or to use a Vorticist metaphor, the figure of the borrowed lady acts as a vortex, which like a turbine, collects "the experience rushing into this Vortex… pregnant in the NOW," and focuses it, thereby "charging the PLACID / NON-ENERGIZED FUTURE ("Vortex," 153). Pound's historicism is a renaissance historicism that sees him awakening the beauty and "true colour" of dead poetry through his creative endeavour. When we read that Bertran reduces Maent's existence to a "broken bundle of mirrors," or a blazon of individual parts of other women, Maent thus represents a perfection that the poet cannot obtain, but must try to express. Since Pound reduces Bertran to a similar "broken bundle of mirrors" in "Near Perigord," Troubadour poetry, and by extension all the poetry that Pound wishes to gather, appropriate, and resurrect as poetic models to instigate a renaissance, are pieces that Pound must use in order to approach a perfect or ideal poetry that is unattainable. The models of poetry Pound chooses provide him with a vocabulary to approach that perfection, but since they are an unstable "shifting change," they can never coalesce into a factual truth statement; interpretation remains the only

stable value. Furthermore, the traditional interpretation of the image of the "broken bundle of mirrors" prioritizes the reflective nature of mirrors; however, mirrors also refract light. Refraction is the change of direction of an energy wave such as light due to the change in medium through which it is travelling and mirrors are able to refract and focus energy into what is called a focal point. This metaphor is quite appropriate because when it is applied to the "broken bundle of mirrors," we can understand the various pieces of disparate poetry as refracting the "true colour" of what Pound considers to be great poetics. The poet assembles or gathers these "Luminous Details" or "Vortexes" made up of "true colours" so that they can create a focal point in a new work of art.

Implicit in the figure of the "broken bundle of mirrors" is Pound's war on culture as well. If Pound gathers particular pieces of poetry, which can be understood as shards of mirror glass, to appropriate as models for his renaissance project, then the rest of the whole that the broken piece comes from is discarded. By picking and choosing which shards to use, Pound is implying which to discard like the shards of American poetry. By focusing the "true colour" of a particular poetics through refraction, Pound thereby obfuscates the colour of the poetry he has no interest in. Although, as we saw earlier, he asserts that he is not trying to abolish the past glories of art like the Futurists, the duplicitous nature of his program reveals a subtext of dismission. This act of dismission simultaneously enforces the norms of poetic value that Pound asserts as capital in "The Renaissance: I," while also subjugating the "wish-wash" of "mediocrities" to his spectrum of value.

There is one lingering issue in regards to the appropriation of Bertran de Born and the troubadour poets as represented in "Near Perigord:" why does Pound choose to

appropriate the technique, style, and history of twelfth and thirteenth century Provençal poets? In other words, why does Pound choose to add the "true colour" of the troubadours to his poetic palette? What is valuable about the poetry of the troubadours to Pound? While there are several possible answers, the most important comes from Pound himself in "The Renaissance: I—The Palette." Pound asserts, "there is no tongue like the Provençal wherein to study the subsidiary arts of rhyme and rhyme-blending" (229). In other words, Provençal poetry provides a technical exercise for Pound in the technique of crafting rhyme and its associated elements such as assonance and consonance. Stephen J. Adams, writing in the *Ezra Pound Encyclopaedia*, reinforces this argument as he asserts that Pound "evaluated the troubadours so highly because of their skill in what he eventually called *melopoeia*, the combining of 'motz el son,' words and music. When Pound discovered the troubadours in his college days, they seemed to hold the key to the art of lyric poetry" (244). One of the aspects of the "true colour" of the troubadours is their skill in *melopoeia*, which when appropriated and modelled after, will allow the poet to succeed in creating musical verse, which is highly valuable as poetic capital to Pound.

The political purposes of the figure of the borrowed lady of "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal" in "Near Perigord" are found at the heart of Pound's renaissance program, which evolved out of the essay series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris." The political purposes can be understood as the creation of an economy of art, which creates capital through the consumption and production of appropriated pieces of art, forming Pound's personal chosen canon. But by choosing these works, Pound simultaneously asserts which aspects of the canon are worthwhile and not worthwhile, thereby dismissing particular features and styles of art. By creating his own "broken bundle of mirrors"

reflecting and refracting his values of beauty into a focused work of art, Pound opacifies other artistic values, thereby establishing his own as the norm of beauty. For Pound, value and capital are found in Beauty, thus those not adhering to Pound's program are creating art that is significantly less valuable. America had been creating art as a nation for 139 years, but none of it has any value in his system. "Near Perigord" can be read as an enactment of his poetic renaissance program, which metapoetically makes itself aware to the informed reader by questioning the subtext of Bertran de Born's canzone "Dompna puois de mi no'us cal."

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Curriculum Vitae

Name:	John Allaster
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Seneca College Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2008-2009 Certificate in Arts. The University of Toronto (Trinity College) Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2009-2013 B.A. (Honours) The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2013-2014 M.A. (Candidate)
Honours and Awards:	Canadian Studies Scholarship Scholarship 2009 President's Honour List Academic Prize 2009 Dean's List Scholar Academic Prize 2011-2013 George Gray Falle Scholarship in English Scholarship 2011-2013 Trinity College Provost's Scholar Academic Prize 2013 The David Derwyn Owen Prize in English Academic Prize 2013
Related Work Experience	Student Archivist The University of Trinity College (U of T) 2011-2012

Research Assistant
The University of Toronto Ontario
2013

Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2013-2014