CONTRADICTORY FORCES:
Ezra Pound's Italian Correspondence 1925-45

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The heart of poetry leaps to the search for coherence, to the attempting of all things, to the reduction of all things. On the back of facts she flies, cleaving the heavens with the sound-point of abstraction.

Adrian Stokes, *Sunrise in the West.*[1]

The contradictions cover such a range.
The talk would talk and go so far aslant.
You don't want madhouse and the whole thing there.

William Empson, *Let It Go*.[2]

[1] Adrian Stokes, *Sunrise in the West: A Modern Interpretation of Past and Present* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926), p. 40.
[2] John Haffenden (ed.), *The Complete Poems of William Empson* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2000), p. 99.

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Abbreviations

A number of key sources are repeatedly referenced. For ease, the following abbreviations are used:

BD: Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University and available digitally.
Beinecke EP: Ezra Pound Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
Beinecke OR: Olga Rudge Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
Borah: Sarah C. Holmes (ed.), *The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and Senator William Borah (*Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press*,* 2001).
Bunting: Alex Niven (ed.), *Letters of Basil Bunting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
Cummings: Barry Ahearn (ed.), *Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E. E. Cummings* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
Cutting: E. P. Walkiewicz and Hugh Witemeyer (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Senator Bronson Cutting: A Political Correspondence, 1930-35* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).
EP/DP: Omar Pound and Robert Spoo (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Pound Letters in Captivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
Globe: Michael T. Davis and Cameron McWhirter (eds.), *Ezra Pound and* Globe Magazine*: The Complete Correspondence* (London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
Helicon: Mary Barnard, *Assault on Mount Helicon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
Japan: Sanehide Kodama (ed.), *Ezra Pound and Japan: Letters and Essays* (Redding Ridge, Conn.: Black Swan Books, 1987).
Kulchur: Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen, 1978).
Laughlin: David M. Gordon (ed.), *Ezra Pound and James Laughlin Selected Letters* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1994).
Literchoor: Ian S. MacNiven, *Literchoor Is My Beat* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2014).

Nott: Miranda B. Hickman (ed.), *One Must Not Go Altogether with the Tide: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Stanley Nott* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).
Paige: D. D. Paige (ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-41* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).
Parents: Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody and Joanna Moody (eds.), *Ezra Pound to his Parents Letters 1895-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
P/F: Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (ed.), *Pound/Ford* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).
P/J: Forrest Read (ed.), *Pound/Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1970).
P/L: Timothy Materer (ed.), *Pound/Lewis: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis* (New York: New Dimensions, 1985).
P/W: Hugh Witemeyer (ed.), *Pound/Williams: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1996).
P/Z: Barry Ahearn (ed.), *Pound/Zukofsky Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky* (New York: New Directions, 1987).

A note on quotations from the letters

Ezra Pound's letter writing is unique in style and format. With their misspellings, typographical errors and various flourishes and emphases, the letters are quoted as closely to the original as possible. They were largely typewritten—though often with scribbled additions and corrections. The effect intended by Pound is mimicked, though modern technology is sometimes less willing to be as flexible as that used and enjoyed by the poet.

Abstract

This thesis examines the letters written by Ezra Pound between 1925 when he settled in Rapallo, Italy and his repatriation to stand trial for treason in late 1945. While they do not provide the raw material to create a reliable chronology of the poet's work, feelings and activities, the letters offer another interpretative lens. The fragments of opinion, experience, prejudice and polemic in the correspondence expose a series of contradictions: the poet utilises the most personal of literary forms—the letter—and yet does so in a largely impersonal way; seeks to create literary groups and yet is an individualist; wishes to re-invent civilisation but chooses isolation from centres of power; with correspondence essential to pursuing his expanding agendas, as well as overcoming isolation, writes in a way that is often unintelligible; preaches collaboration and is a generous networker, but is dictatorial in what people should read and think; emphasises clearly stated beliefs and action while embracing the vague and inconsistent abstractions of fascism; has a high opinion of his own power and ability to connect to the powerful, yet his influence is largely illusory; and regards literary knowledge as something acquired diligently, but announces himself a master of other disciplines.

The contradictions offer an alternative chronology which allows for an understanding of Pound according to his preoccupations, passions and objectives repeated over decades. In so doing, this exploration of his correspondence suggests a significant disconnect with biographies of the poet.

The letters dominated Pound's time in the 1930s and the *dramatis personae*, style and tone of the letters specifically influenced *The Pisan Cantos*. This thesis concludes by exploring the relationship between the contradictions in Pound's Rapallo correspondence and the precarious equilibrium of *The Pisan Cantos.*

1: Introduction: Pound, the Letter Writer

1.1: Grand narratives

I have brought the great ball of crystal,
who can lift it?
Can you enter the great acorn of light?
but the beauty is not the madness
Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
And I am not a demigod,
and I cannot make it cohere

Ezra Pound's plaintive lament in Canto 116 can be interpreted as a verdict on the disjointed nature of *The Cantos*, the poetical cornerstone of his life's work, 'the great ball of crystal' which is impossible to lift, 'the great acorn of light' which is thanklessly opaque. Within Pound's lines is a feeling of frustration, perhaps even of failure, based on the belief that any extended poetical movement requires or is improved by coherence.[1] A similar (and understandable) quest for coherence can be seen in the work of the biographers making sense of the poet's life and work.[2] The biographies portray the poet as an artist whose work projects a unique vision of the world, implicitly a coherent one. The modernist who could not make his major work cohere, or many elements of his life and thinking, is viewed through a lens dedicated to providing coherence and unification.

Echoing Thomas Carlyle's notion of the poet as 'a heroic figure'[3] and Pound's self-image, his life is interpreted by biographers and others as a heroic and coherent project—albeit one which goes wrong—based on a vision of what the great artist is. In his book on the poet Alec Marsh talks of 'Pound's heroic mission'.[4] His fall from grace is thus routinely described as a 'tragedy'. Covering a conventional narrative arc, the three parts of Moody's

[1] Pound's translation of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* includes these lines spoken by Herakles as he is dying: 'It means that I die./For amidst the dead there is no work in service./Come at it that way, my boy, what/SPLENDOUR/IT ALL COHERES.' Pound noted: 'This is the key phrase, for which the play exists.' Ezra Pound, *Sophokles: Women of Trachis* (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 50.
[2] In chronological order the biographies of Pound are: Charles Norman, *Ezra Pound* (New York: Macmillan, 1960); Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge, 1970); Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988); A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet I: The Young Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), *Ezra Pound: Poet II: The Epic Years 1921-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and *Ezra Pound: Poet III: The Tragic Years 1939-72* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); and Alec Marsh, *Ezra Pound* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).
[3] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (online: Electric Book Company, 2000), p. 92.
[4] Alec Marsh, *Ezra Pound* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

substantial biography are entitled *The Young Genius, The Epic Years* and *The Tragic Years*. More recently he has argued that Pound's quest in *The Cantos*, to create 'a life-enhancing and life-directing vision of the cosmos', is somehow coherent in the purity of its aspiration as much as its content.[5]

The heroic idea of the poet offers coherence and, the more incoherent the life's material, the more biographers struggle to create a narrative which fits the idealised template. The biographer Craig Brown observes that a 'shortcoming of biography lies in its bias towards coherence. In their drive to create a seamless narrative, biographers are forced to conceal the randomness of life, the contrived nature of "character" and the unpredictability of human beings'.[6] A similar critique has been made about the use of letters to make coherent sense of people's lives.[7] In *Epistolary Selves*, Rebecca Earle notes:

> A major problem in the reading of letters has in fact to do with the way letters are made to cohere as narrative. Letters tell stories centered in the experience of historically real individuals, but the stories they tell depend on the context in which they are read, the manifest interventions of editors and readers.[8]

More broadly, Leon Surette has questioned the urge to impose coherence on modernism—'The literary history of modernism has often been motivated by the desire to expose a grand narrative'[9]—and describes the task of literary scholars as 'to reconstruct the engagement of literary figures with the world contemporary with them so as to expose or articulate *their* predilections, prejudices and desires'.[10]

Through the 1920s and 1930s, correspondence was to a great extent how Ezra Pound engaged with the world. Defying coherence, his correspondence reveals him as a highly nuanced, contradictory and sometimes confused character awash with 'predilections, prejudices and desires'. As his poetry makes use of shards of beauty, knowledge and illumination, his life and work can be usefully understood in the same way. The contradictions and complexities evident in Pound and expressed most extensively in his correspondence are what make his life and work so alluring—and the poet such an

[5] A. David Moody, 'Baudelaire and Pound', *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 June 2022.
[6] Craig Brown, 'Nothing is real', *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 September 2021; *Haywire* (London: 4th Estate, 2022), p. 247.
[7] Such as in Philip Horne (ed.), *Henry James: A Life in Letters* (London: Penguin, 1999).
[8] Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 9.
[9] Leon Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), p. x.
[10] Ibid., p. ix.

attractive subject for literary researchers as well as readers. The lack of a clear resolution of these contradictions not only makes him an intriguing figure, but also has a direct influence on his poetry.

Pound's own faith in coherence, having created one of the most challenging and fragmented poetical works of the century, is but one example of the unresolved contradictions.[11] While, perhaps naively, yearning for *The Cantos* to offer coherence having set out on its creation without a clear and understandable plan, elsewhere the poet delights in the challenges in meaning it presents—'As for the theology of the CANTOS/ I don't spect a dod damn low down Christianly perverted animal or in fact anyone to git ANY idea of if furr years and yearrrs,' he writes to T. S. Eliot.[12] In his correspondence Pound layers intolerance on contradiction. He is critical of others who embark on a similar poetical journey to his own with *The Cantos*. He writes to Basil Bunting in 1935 damning the ambition of Louis Zukofsky who 'set out on a full length poem TOO soon', concluding Zukofsky is 'dead as Yeats/ and MORE static/ Yeats at least worried/ by subconscious / feeling he is dead, and / the stuff slop; but / clinging to habit of / being a writer.'[13] Pound himself could be accused of setting off on a lengthy poetical odyssey prematurely. His own correspondence provides an early mention of his own ambitions. Aged 27, he writes to Margaret Cravens: 'I'm trying to do a long poem, much more important than anything I've yet affected.'[14] Pound's letters repeatedly show a lack of consistency and self-awareness combined with a willingness to dismiss people—in the case above both his disciple, Zukofsky, and his own mentor and Rapallo visitor, W. B. Yeats—in exaggerated terms. Contradictions, inconsistencies and intemperate outbursts run throughout the correspondence.

Of course, such contradictions are not exclusive to Pound. For example, in her study of D. H. Lawrence, Frances Wilson notes: 'His fidelity as a writer was not to the truth but to his own contradictions and reading him today is like tuning into a radio station whose frequency keeps changing. He was a modernist with an aching nostalgia for the past, a sexually repressed Priest of Love, a passionately religious non-believer, a critic of genius

[11] His lines on coherence in Canto 116 are contradicted later in the canto—'i.e. it coheres all right/ even if my notes do not cohere'—adding further confusion.
[12] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 2 October 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 658.
[13] Ezra Pound to Basil Bunting May 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122529.
[14] Ezra Pound to Margaret Cravens 2 January 1912, Omar Pound and Robert Spoo (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship 1910-12* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 105.

who invested in his own worst writing.'[15] There are strong echoes of Pound in this description of Lawrence. What differentiates the poet is the frequently extreme nature of the contradictions, and that they play out very publicly and openly across all of his literary endeavours and campaigning activities but are most clearly and consistently seen in his letters.

1.2: The course of correspondence

Throughout his life Pound was a prolific letter writer. His correspondence with a wide range of literary and non-literary friends and foes, family, contacts, editors, publishers, people in power, and many more, was substantial in scope and scale. This was especially true of his time living in Rapallo. He and his wife moved to the Italian town in 1925 and lived there until he was arrested in 1945, imprisoned, charged with treason and later transported to the United States. The years 1925 and 1945, therefore, are vital points in Pound's life and literary career. For this reason they are the chronological parameters of my research.

Yeats entitled his Rapallo piece 'A Packet for Ezra Pound' and this must have been a constant refrain. Similarly, in his 1926 poem 'Visit Postponed', Adrian Stokes observes: '*Il miglior Fabbro*/Busy as the Post Office/on via Garibaldi.'[16] Pound's incoming mail was so substantial he had a vetting arrangement with the town's post office. When his letter fails to reach the poet, Pound explains to the publisher Stanley Nott: 'Sorry yr/ letter of the eleventh was returned. Porter has orders to send back all advertisements from Eng/ that have ten pence postage due on 'em, but I am supposed to SEE all letters and wd/ certainly have spotted up on yours had I seen it.'[17]

While *The Cantos* was the literary work which dominated the last fifty years of Ezra Pound's life, his correspondence offers a broad legacy in which he explores and educates people in the vital knowledge required to be a poet, connects members of his network, enables aspirants to develop their craft and careers, and campaigns on the topics he is passionate about. Writing and receiving a letter—an 'episll'—was a constant through Pound's adult life, a source of connection, stimulation and also of reassurance. 'Comfort to

[15] Frances Wilson, *Burning Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 3.
[16] Peter Robinson (ed.), *With All the Views: The Collected Poems of Adrian Stokes* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), p. 86.
[17] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 31 December 1934, *Nott*, p. 13.

feel a letter in the hand once again,' he writes to his wife Dorothy after a gap in their letters when he is imprisoned.[18]

More than simple human reassurance or of literary record, for Pound correspondence had the power to ferment and further civilisation. His faith in the power of letters to shape the world may be traced back to his admiration for Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, as well as Sigismondo Malatesta. He sought to convert this into practice with gusto. His outgoing mail was enormous, a constant stream of postcards, letters, notes, poems and articles. For example, there are 430 surviving letters between Pound and Louis Zukofsky. They only met face to face three times—in Rapallo (1933), New York (1939) and at St Elizabeths (1954)—and exchanged 272 letters before their first meeting.[19] In total, it is estimated Pound wrote some 100,000 letters.[20] These include his correspondence with his parents, with his wife Dorothy Shakespear (amounting to some 1,250 letters),[21] regular and irregular correspondence with a host of others, and campaigning and often vituperative correspondence with politicians, magazines, newspapers and publishers, as well as others who ventured consciously or unconsciously onto his sensitive radar. Those caught in his epistolary web include Jacob Bronowski, John Buchan, Jean Cocteau, John Dewey, T. E. Lawrence, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells and Alfred North Whitehead.

Even in an age of letters and letter writing, his output was prodigious. As benchmarks, Ernest Hemingway's letters are estimated at some 6,000[22] and the seven-volume letters of D. H. Lawrence number 5,534 (though he died aged 45).[23] The most similar in epistolary output to Pound was W. B. Yeats whose collected letters are projected to fill 12 to 15 volumes. A substantial percentage of Yeats' correspondence is taken up with the administrative work relating to his various public roles in politics and culture (as well as the logistics of constantly moving and maintaining homes). Similarly, T. S. Eliot's letters are extensive. The ninth volume of his letters takes his published correspondence up to 1941 when he was only 53-years old.[24] Eliot's epistolary output, however, is largely related to his employment as the editor of the *Criterion* and as a publisher at Faber and Faber. In

[18] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 4 October 1945, *EP/DP,* p. 107.
[19] *P/Z*, p. x.
[20] Timothy Redman, 'Review of Ira B. Nadel's *Ezra Pound: A Literary Life*', *Modernism/Modernity*, 13.1, January 2006, pp. 935-6.
[21] Dorothy Shakespear Pound (1886-1973). Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 369.
[22] 'The Hemingway letters project', https://hemingwaysociety.org/hemingway-letters-project.
[23] James T. Boulton (ed.) *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979-93).
[24] John Haffenden (ed.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot 1939-41* (London: Faber and Faber, 2021).

contrast to Yeats and Eliot, Pound's correspondence was not instigated by administrative or logistical needs, or the demands of holding down a job.

During his decades in Rapallo Pound's production of letters intensified. This was partly due to the town's relatively isolated location as well as the international nature of his network and aspirations. His correspondence with China fills a volume—there are 162 letters between Pound and Chinese correspondents included in *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends*.[25] Among his strangest correspondence is with Edith Madge, an English missionary in Changsha in Hunan, China. (Always viewing letters as potential content for publication, the poet adapted one of Madge's letters on a 'China wedding' for a magazine and she received a cheque.)[26]

As his campaigning accounted for more and more of his time, it added hugely to the poet's outgoing and incoming correspondence. 'Pardon brevity/ but if I dont abbreviate I cant get thru days work AND days letters,' the poet writes to the literary critic, biographer and historian Van Wyck Brooks[27] in 1938.[28] To T. E Lawrence[29] he issues a challenge to justify himself: 'Tone of this letter due to haste, and having other jobs to do before lunch. Spose YOU answer a few questions (enclosed) so as to show me whether yr/ edkashun covers anything but the second aorist and a few aesthetic art tricks.'[30] In the 1920s and 1930s Pound sends off postcards, letters and notes, in the same way as people now send emails and text messages. To Paul de Kruif he describes himself as 'typing almost uninterruptedly' to further his economic causes.[31] 'I am so in media s/ with flood of economic correspondence .... that I cant keep track of everything,' he tells Laurence Binyon in 1934.[32] 'I have been receiving more than 500 letters a day... only one and one half percent in favour of proposed repeal of arms embargo,' he boasts to the journalist Ian Munro in 1939.[33] While Pound is prone to unscientific exaggeration to support his argument, the letters are certainly numerous, often hurried, condensed and regularly comic (sometimes deliberately) in their juxtapositions of people, places and events. A letter to his mother Isabel Pound reads: 'D just back from dip in the gulph of Tigullio—summer

[25] Pound's Chinese 'friends' are F. T. Sung, Fengchi Yang, Achilles Fang, Veronica Huilan Sun, Carsun Chang, C. H. Kurock, Tze-chiang Chao, David Wang and P. H. Fang. Zhaoming Qian (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[26] G*lobe,* p. 128.
[27] Van Wyck Brooks (1886-1963).
[28] Ezra Pound to Van Wyck Brooks 4 June 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122528.
[29] T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935), British archaeologist, author, soldier and diplomat.
[30] Ezra Pound to T. E. Lawrence 29/30 November 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122586.
[31] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 1 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[32] Ezra Pound to Laurence Binyon undated 1934?, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122523.
[33] Ezra Pound to Ian Munro 4 November 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.

at last. O. S. [Olivia Shakespear] here with us. will write of last week in Paris sometime soon. Tell dad. I met very fine Cherokee chief just before leaving.'[34] Often he sends more than one letter to an individual during a day as more thoughts occur to him.[35]

Some of the Rapallo fraternity correspond with each other—Bunting and Zukofsky most notably—but Pound is the dominant figure throughout. The British author Ronald Duncan[36] found that proximity did not necessarily stop the torrent. In February 1938 he and his future wife Rose Marie visited Rapallo. 'Although we were living next door to Ezra he constantly bombarded me with notes during the day, even though we met for lunch and dinner,' Duncan recalled.[37] Even when telephones became more widely available both Pound and his wife preferred a note, card or letter to a telephone conversation.

Never a casual endeavour, the sheer time and energy the poet spent on letter writing demonstrates the importance he gave it. Likewise, his keenness to archive the letters, with carbon copies carefully stored, suggests they were written for public consumption as much as personal communication. As early as 1915 the 30-year old poet was dispatching packages of letters back to his father in the United States to save for posterity.[38] Other authors were more unsure of their likely place in literary history, attached less importance to letters or were simply administratively cavalier and did not preserve their correspondence. Basil Bunting, a visitor to Pound in Rapallo, had a particularly negative view of retaining letters: 'I disapprove of manuscripts, letters, etc...alive or dead.'[39] There are 800 letters from Bunting extant and only around 20 from the period 1920-1930.[40] Adrian Stokes—a Rapallo resident in the 1920s—left a mere six letters from Pound in his papers. In contrast, in Yale University's Beinecke Library there are 18 letters covering 60 pages in dated envelopes from Stokes to Pound which the poet archived.[41]

The poet's remarkable productiveness required organisation. Defying stereotype and outward appearances, Pound was extremely well organised in his epistolary affairs.[42] This

[34] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 14 October 1924, *Parents*, p. 542.
[35] As one of many examples, Pound wrote two letters to Mary Barnard on 13 August 1934. *Helicon*, p. 71.
[36] Ronald Duncan (1914-82), British playwright, poet and author.
[37] Ronald Duncan, *All Men are Islands* (London: Hart Davis, 1964), p. 183.
[38] 'I am sending you a bundle of letters to me from various people. = which same I want kept. I send them because some few of them may amuse you & mother.' *Parents*, p. 345.
[39] Basil Bunting to Denis Goacher 4 September 1965, *Bunting*, p. xxvi.
[40] *Bunting*, p. xiv.
[41] Richard Read, 'The letters of Adrian Stokes and Ezra Pound', *Paideuma*, Vol. 27, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter 1998, p. 69.
[42] He writes in Canto 13: 'And Kung said, and wrote on the bo leaves:/If a man have not order within him/He can not spread order about him;/And if a man have not order within him/His family will not act with due order;/And if the Prince have not order within him/He can not put order in his dominions.'

ensured that a substantial percentage of his correspondence survived. Even his letter to reassure his benefactor Margaret Cravens that he destroys almost all his letters is preserved— 'I always burn letters except when there's some very especial reason for preserving them.'[43] Never short of self-justification, his own authorship of a letter was usually 'especial reason' enough. It is also worth noting that the science of archival preservation was one of the poet's many interests. He championed the study of Vivaldi's scores and retained an interest in the growing ability of technology to copy and store manuscripts.[44]

The publisher James Laughlin recalls Pound's study:

> Current filing of worldwide correspondence was done on spindles or in clip folders ranged along the wall behind his desk chair. Pencils and scissors hung on strings from the ceiling so they could not get lost in the papers on his desk.[45]

In his Foreword to *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-41*, D. D. Paige notes:

> After he settled in Rapallo, his private correspondence became, in fact, public in extent as it had always been in interest. By the thirties it had taken on Napoleonic proportions and he began to keep a file of carbon copies of the letters—'otherwise I couldn't remember what I wrote to this or that bloke'.[46]

Even so, the poet's filing system creaked under the weight of correspondence. In 1936 he replies to a letter from Camillo Pellizzi[47] complaining of the disorder: 'persisting from bdy/ letter of yrs/ lost in bdy/ mess that no system of files will keep in order.'[48] Aside from the bureaucratic act of storing letters, the correspondence served as the poet's intellectual filing system, an arena where he could air and develop ideas, opinions and prejudices, where he could bind his networks together. Pound's careful preservation of his

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[43] Ezra Pound to Margaret Cravens 27 November 1911, Omar Pound and Robert Spoo (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship 1910-12* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 100.
[44] In 1936 the poet's lover Olga Rudge catalogued Vivaldi manuscripts in Turin and later became secretary to the Accademia Musicale Chigiana which Pound's interest and her work played a part in founding in 1932. It still exists. www.chigiana.org. Pound's interest in archival technology can be seen in his correspondence with Iris Barry who became an early film archivist. See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10778606.
[45] James Laughlin, 'Ezuversity', ndbooks.com/article/ezra-pound-s-mermaid/, 30 October 2017.
[46] Paige, p. 19.
[47] Camillo Pellizzi (1896-1979), Italian author and propagandist, author of *Fascismo-aristocrazia* (Milan: Alpes, 1925) and President of Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista.
[48] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi 2 April 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.

correspondence suggests that he saw it as a part of his legacy, perhaps one offering the coherence which proves elusive in *The Cantos*.

1.3: Contradictory forces

In the middle of the 1930s the poet's letter writing reached a frenetic peak. Correspondence to champion his various causes, and the related prose work it influenced in style and content, became the core of Pound's writing activities. Rarely discursive or personal, his letters are charged with a communication need, a question, a request, an introduction, a protest, an exchange of information, a furthering of a particular cause. Often many of these objectives are crammed into a single letter.

The fragments of opinion, experience, prejudice and polemic in the correspondence expose contradictions which are helpful in understanding the poet's life and work. This thesis identifies and explores these contradictions. As the letters make clear, the many contradictions in evidence mean that labelling or accurately describing and understanding Pound is far from straightforward. He described himself as 'Confucian and totalitarian'.[49] A. David Moody, notes: 'That Pound endorsed Mussolini's Fascism while explicitly upholding and recommending the principles of the American Constitution, and while also declaring himself Confucian, is a set of contradictions that need to be registered in their full complexity and not simply reduced to the thought-stopping stamp, "Fascist".'[50] Pound's manifest contradictions —a Confucian, fascist, American constitutionalist living in Italy—are not an excuse for his beliefs and prejudices, but go some way to explaining their lack of coherence and consistency.

Exploration of these contradictions does not provide a neatly linear narrative of the poet's life, but it does offer a measure of coherence in that the contradictions are usually long-standing and regularly repeated. Indeed, the contradictions could be said to offer an alternative chronology to the poet's life. This allows for an understanding of Pound according to his own preoccupations, passions and objectives. It is also in keeping with Pound's view of history. He did not believe in conventional interpretations of historical time. 'We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence,' he asserts in *Guide to Kulchur*.[51] Rather than becoming bogged down in the details of sequence, knowledge is a

[49] Ezra Pound, 'Death of Yeats: end of Irish literary revival', *Japan Times*, 5 June 1939, *Japan*, p. 152.
[50] A. David Moody, Letter to the *Times Literary Supplement,* 20 November 2015, Issue 5877, p. 6.
[51] *Kulchur*, p. 60.

means of making sense of the *process* of history. With chronology redundant, times and eras merge in the moment.[52] This finds its expression in what Conrad Aiken[53] describes as the 'universal history' of *The Cantos*.[54]

This thesis identifies and examines the following contradictions:

The first contradiction which shapes the topography of Pound's mind and work is that he utilises the most personal of literary forms—the letter—and yet does so in a largely impersonal way (see Chapter 2: A serious correspondent). His correspondence manages to be intimate yet distant. The most personable of characters writes in a way which appears full of life, but which is habitually and fastidiously detached. There is very rarely any sense in the letters of them being a private correspondence. Pound, instead, is belligerently public in his correspondence. This could be interpreted as a bold modernist challenge to literary convention. In the poet's hands the letter is a tool for public debate or pronouncement rather than an intimate record of personal emotions, feelings or experiences; the letter is challenging rather than confiding. This is in keeping with Pound's view of the writer as a public figure.[55]

The second contradiction is seen in the poet's lifelong interest in the creation of literary groups and movements (see Chapter 3: Correspondence with purpose). Pound's experiences in London and Paris exposed him to a variety of such groups. His correspondence from Italy—and much later— frequently agitates to create groupings of writers and others. He repeatedly lays out his thoughts on how these groups can work best. Yet, Pound is an individualist who functions best alone and, as his correspondence makes clear, is adept at compartmentalising his relationships. His interest in convening groups is contradicted by his personality, behaviour and experience.

A related contradiction lies in Pound's decision to move to Rapallo (see Chapter 4: Together alone: building the intellectual centre of Europe). In doing so, the man who wanted to ignite and create artistic movements distanced himself from the likely habitués of such movements. The poet who wanted to re-invent civilisation left the cultural centres

[52] In *Little Gidding*, T. S. Eliot writes, 'History is a pattern /Of timeless moments.'
[53] Conrad Aiken (1889-1973), American author and poet.
[54] Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 44.
[55] The public/private nature of any literary figure is a continuing debate. See, for example, Seamus Heaney's correspondence in which the poet charts his own rise to become a public figure while seeking to protect the privacy of his places of poetical inspiration. Christopher Reid (ed.), *The Letters of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 2023).

of civilisation for a town whose best-known literary inhabitant was the forever Edwardian figure of Max Beerbohm.[56] The literary networker chose isolation. His location in Rapallo meant that correspondence became ever more important as he sought to create and sustain a global network of disciples, students of what he labelled 'the Ezuversity', as well as bringing his arguments to as wide and influential an audience as possible.

The next contradiction concerns the writing style of his letters. With correspondence essential to pursuing his expanding economic, political and literary agendas, as well as overcoming his geographical isolation, Pound writes more frequently in a way that is unintelligible to many readers (see Chapter 5: The language of letters). In the poet's letters to E. E. Cummings, Barry Ahearn politely notes that 'obscurity of reference is often compounded with puzzling penmanship as well as untamed orthography'.[57] Increasingly argumentative and frustrated, the 'Ezratic lingo' becomes the norm for his written communication. This is highly fragmented and makes use of an often bewildering range of abbreviations, phonetic spellings, foreign languages and juxtapositions of people and prejudices.

As his communication becomes more difficult to comprehend, Pound continues to seek out collaboration. In particular, his generous networking gives a large number of authors connections to his global network of editors, publishers and fellow authors (see Chapter 6: A collaborative dictator). At the same time, he becomes more dictatorial in his interpretations of what people should and should not read and think. This contradiction is examined along with another contradictory area: the poet's attitude to education. The growing focus by Pound on education, and the development and practice of the Ezuversity, exposes contradictions in the relationship between educational institutions and authors, and the nature of knowledge and learning as expressed and practiced by the poet. While regarding literary knowledge as something acquired diligently over a lifetime, he is cavalier in announcing himself a master of other disciplines—most notably economics. Knowledge is thus simultaneously hard won and casually proclaimed. Likewise, his view of education is at once prescriptive and laissez faire.

Pound's fascination with and support of fascism also provides a contradiction (see Chapter 7: The great abstraction). The poet attaches his allegiance to a political philosophy which is

[56] Max Beerbohm (1872-1956), English essayist, parodist and caricaturist.
[57] *Cummings*, p. 7.

beset with its own contradictions and which never explicitly embraces the ideas on economics, education and culture which he so passionately and persistently embraces. While Pound espouses the need for concrete action on the issues he is passionate about, fascism is notable for its faith in abstractions and comfort with contradictions.

A further contradiction is evident in Pound's strong opinion of his own power and facility to connect to the powerful (see Chapter 8: Powerful illusions). His ability to influence thinking and practice diminishes in the 1930s in reverse correlation to his production of correspondence; the less powerful he is, the more powerful he believes himself to be. The poet's willingness to engage with political figures is undimmed by their silence.

The poet's behaviour and interactions with others also exposes a contradictory force. The range of Pound's opinions and hobby horses, as well as his fierce and stubborn dedication to them, suggest a unique voice and personality. Yet, the authenticity of a number of his stances can be questioned (see Chapter 9: The real thing?). Adept at donning different guises and voices, Pound's authentic self is elusive—both to the modern reader of his correspondence and to the recipients of his letters. This raises basic questions about the authenticity and originality of Pound's espoused beliefs and positions on a variety of issues. It also allows for an interpretation of the letters as performative, each an expression of Pound's feelings and preoccupations of the moment rather than of a coherent philosophy.

The letters and the contradictions they contain dominated Pound's time in the 1930s and the *dramatis personae*, style and tone of the letters specifically influenced *The Pisan Cantos* which were written immediately following the poet's arrest in May 1945—at a time when his ability to sustain his global correspondence was curtailed. This thesis concludes by exploring the relationship between the manifold contradictions in Pound's Rapallo correspondence and the precarious equilibrium of *The Pisan Cantos* (see Chapter 10: Part of the process). The correspondence has a direct impact on one of the twentieth century's most analysed and debated poetical sequences. Indeed, it can be argued that the correspondence enables Pound to rescue his poetry from the literary blind alleys of the 1930s, a time damningly appraised by Lawrence Rainey: 'Pound's poetic and critical voice

sank into a hoarse monologue, leading to the unremitting tedium of the poetry and prose written between roughly 1930 and 1945.'[58]

1.4: Related research

The work of Leon Surette (particularly *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia*), Matthew Feldman on Pound's wartime propaganda, Roxana Preda on Pound's economic correspondence and the other editors of the various collections of Pound's correspondence have proved essential in helping to understand the literary, political and social context surrounding the poet's correspondence.

More specifically, there is scholarly interest in Pound's time in Rapallo and the other literary and artistic figures who visited or lived in the town during that period. In *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (2020), Massimo Bacigalupo offers a personal perspective on the poet's time in Rapallo—his parents were friends of the Pounds, and he met the poet and his family.[59] His book portrays the poet as living in Italy but distant from contemporary Italian literature and absorbed in his work to the detriment of a wider readership.

In *The Poets of Rapallo* (2021) Lauren Arrington provides a perspective on those attracted to the town during the 1920s and 1930s. Her work is useful in establishing the chronology and the context related to some of those involved. She suggests that a coterie was formed around Pound and the visiting W. B. Yeats: 'Pound and Yeats's presence in Rapallo oriented their literary networks from Paris, Dublin, and even New York onto a small town on the Italian Riviera.'[60] My own research suggests other interpretations. Yeats was only in the town for two winters (1928-29 and 1929-30) and then briefly in 1934. During the second winter he was seriously ill. Those who visited Yeats—such as Thomas MacGreevy and Richard Aldington—did so for relatively short periods. In Pound's case the most regular visitor was Basil Bunting. Others who visited more than once, such as James Laughlin and Ronald Duncan, are not mentioned by Arrington. This was not a re-orientation of literary networks, but the establishment of Pound's own network with letters—rather than face-to-face meetings—as its vital sustenance. Visits to Rapallo from Laughlin, Zukofsky, Bunting, Duncan and others are punctuation points amid a mass of correspondence.

[58] Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 170.
[59] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020).
[60] Lauren Arrington, *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. vii.

Arrington also links the time spent by Pound and Yeats in Rapallo to their winters (1913-16) spent in Stone Cottage in Ashdown Forest, Sussex.[61] The parallels—apart from the involvement of the same people—are more appealing than real. The earlier time has the younger poet in a junior role with Yeats as his mentor—indeed, Pound was described as the Irish poet's 'secretary'. In Rapallo it could be argued that both poets were in decline. By the late 1920s, Yeats had issues with his health and Pound's place in the literary firmament had slipped from the modernist apotheosis of 1922 when his touch was sure and his involvement in groundbreaking works commonplace. As Arrington describes it, the relationship between the two poets was also compromised by diverging tastes, Pound's increasing dogmatism and an apparent social coolness. The work, lives, hopes and beliefs of the two poets had drifted apart.

Lauren Arrington further suggests that the lure of the Italian leader Benito Mussolini was an important element in attracting people to Rapallo—including Pound—and that by living in Italy at that time they are automatically complicit in fascism. Again, Pound's letters provide useful insights. There is little in them to suggest that his own move to Italy was politically motivated. He had talked favourably of the country for many years, his research on Sigismondo Malatesta necessitated spending time in Italy and, in the mid-1920s, his support for Mussolini was more general than dogmatic adherence. Indeed, it is notable in his correspondence how little Pound mentions what is happening in Italy during the 1920s. Leon Surette, for example, identifies the first positive comment on Mussolini by Pound as a letter to Harriet Monroe on 30 November 1926 and traces his conversion to greater support for the dictator to their eventual meeting in 1933.[62] Matthew Feldman provides a similar chronology: 'In contemporary parlance Ezra Pound was "radicalised" in Fascist Italy during Wintertime 1932-33 after living in Rapallo for nearly a decade.'[63]

It is also important to note that during the 1920s—in spite of the thuggery and intolerance which characterised his rule from its inception—Mussolini was frequently seen in a positive light by foreign commentators and politicians. The years before Mussolini seized power, including two years of socialist rule (1919-1920) were notable for violence, strikes

[61] See James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats and Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[62] Leon Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (Montreal et al: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), p. 222.
[63] Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), p. 25.

and political oscillation and vacillation.[64] Violence continued, but Mussolini was often regarded as a stabilising force.[65] The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, Winston Churchill, Ernest Hemingway, George Bernard Shaw and the American journalist Lincoln Steffens were among early admirers. Hemingway interviewed him and concluded: 'Mussolini was a great surprise. He is not the monster he has been pictured.'[66] The sculptor Nancy Cox McCormack believed him to be 'a creative force evolving and directing the beginnings of a renaissance'.[67] In May 1923 King George V and Queen Mary visited Italy and awarded Mussolini the Order of Bath. In 1925 the British foreign secretary concluded after meeting Mussolini that he was 'a strong man of singular charm and I suspected of not a little tenderness and loneliness of heart'.[68] Living in Italy during the 1920s cannot be interpreted as *de facto* support for fascism—and especially not of the more extreme version adopted in the 1930s.

1.5: Collecting letters

Considering the weight of scholarship on Pound and modernism, the attention given to the poet's correspondence is surprisingly limited and dispersed. Given Pound's enormous output, D. D. Paige's selection of the poet's letters is probably one of the most selective such collections in literary history.[69] Published in 1951 and drawing on 2,500 letters from between 1896 and 1947 which Yale University acquired in 1949, it offers a selection of the poet's letters between 1907 and 1941. This includes a mere 384 letters and none at all from regular correspondents such as Louis Zukofsky. Similarly, and perhaps understandably given that it was published only a few years after the end of the war, it overlooks Pound's correspondence with senior members of the fascist government in Italy, as well as many other epistolary relationships he established related to economics and politics in the 1930s. Having 1941 as the end point of Paige's selection would appear a diplomatic rather than a literary decision as some of the poet's most fraught and controversial letters were written during the war and immediately after his arrest. The selected letters can be interpreted as a first stage in the post-war re-invention of the poet as a coherent literary figure.

[64] See John Foot, *Blood and Power: The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).
[65] Christopher Duggan's *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* provides a rounded view of the dictator's popularity within Italy. He argues that Mussolini's popular appeal only waned in the second half of 1942 'as the inevitability of the disaster confronting Italy became almost impossible to deny'. Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 15.
[66] James R. Mellow, *Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1994), p. 184.
[67] A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound Poet: Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 54. She sculpted Mussolini and also Pound, the Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera and Gandhi.
[68] Peter Edwards, 'The Austen Chamberlain-Mussolini meetings', *The Historical Journal*, March 1971, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 157.
[69] D. D. Paige (ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-41* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).

A senior editor at Macmillan, managing editor of *Atlas* magazine and also a translator from French and Italian (most notably of the Italian novelist Cesare Pavese), the credentials of Paige[70] were credible His work in assembling the selection was influenced by the poet's wife, Dorothy.[71] Given her involvement it is not surprising that another notable omission is her husband's lover Olga Rudge.[72] Olga would have preferred that John Drummond (a fascist-supporting friend of the poet's) had edited the letters. Drummond had the advantage of knowing Pound and having spent time in Rapallo. Instead it was Paige who based himself in the Pounds' old apartment and began going through the boxes of correspondence left 'without even a string around them'.[73]

Pound's letters have appeared piecemeal in the decades since the publication of Paige's volume. The collected volumes of his letters to literary figures (E. E. Cummings, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky); politicians (William Borah and Branson Cutting); a magazine (*Globe*); and publishers (James Laughlin and Stanley Nott), as well as to Dorothy Pound when he was arrested and imprisoned, are the cornerstone of the poet's published correspondence during the period 1925-45. There are also collections of his letters relating to economics and to Chinese and Japanese literary contacts.[74] His correspondence with his parents is extensive but largely halted when Isabel and Homer Pound moved to Rapallo in 1929. Many other articles gather together small numbers of letters which have previously evaded scholarly attention. The publishing history of the letters adds to a feeling of fragmentation and yet the overlap in style and substance between the selections is significant with opinions continually being re-aired and evidence re-cycled.

In spite of Pound's literary stature and influence there has been no attempt to create a collected edition of his letters. The sheer scale of the task is daunting. Though this applies equally to other prolific letter writers such as Yeats and Eliot, Pound's letters are written and presented in such a unique way that they undoubtedly present a more formidable editing challenge. The frequent subject matter of the letters—fascism and economics—

[70] D. D. Paige (1917/18-1983).
[71] Their relationship continued after the book's publication. In 1953 Dorothy sent $100 to Paige who was then in Rapallo. This may have included a contribution to having some papers copied. Paige campaigned for an amnesty for the poet which irritated the Pounds for its suggestion that the poet had broadcast in support of the fascists rather than airing his right to free speech under the American constitution. Dorothy Pound to D. D. Paige 9 June 1953, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17233955.
[72] Olga Rudge (1895-1996), American violinist.
[73] Anne Conover, *Olga Rudge and Ezra Pound: What Thou Lovest Well* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 189.
[74] Roxana Preda (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Economic Correspondence 1933-40* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007); Zhaoming Qian (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and Sanehide Kodama (ed.), *Ezra Pound and Japan: Letters and Essays* (Redding Ridge, Conn.: Black Swan Books, 1987).

may have been an issue, especially when Pound was incarcerated. The level of repetition is also significant. This relative neglect of Pound's letters and the people it connected him to may change as the largest collection of the poet's papers, at Yale University's Beinecke Library, is digitised. My thesis has benefitted from this ongoing process which makes the poet's letters accessible as never before.

Another important factor likely to influence the study and publishing of Pound's letters is the language used and views expressed within them. The letters feature a great deal which is unpalatable to a contemporary audience. Anti-Semitism is a repeated feature. This was rife among his literary contemporaries, but the poet's constant repetition of this particular intolerance is especially and depressingly notable.[75] His very occasional attempts to explain or justify his anti-Semitism are among the most contentious lines in the correspondence. To James T. Dunn at the *Globe* magazine, he writes in 1937:

> New testament is the strongest anti-semitic propaganda ever published/ BUT of course it is so wrapped in the pink cotton wool of familiarity that that ASPECT is NOT and it has become UTTERLY innocuous/ whereas Ben Franklin's feelings of the subject have not. Even in Eng/ and Italy people are being forced into anti-semitism by jewish folly. I mean people who never thought of it before and who ON PRINCIPLE are opposed to race prejudice and race discrimination.
> This I take it is UNFAMILIAR ground in St. Paul.
> Damn hard to handle/ heaven knows I don't particularly want to tackle it.[76]

The impact of the idea of people 'being forced' into anti-Semitism is compounded by the sense of the poet having to highlight this under some form of sufferance. Elsewhere he separates anti-Semitism from usury—'NONE of the anti=jews seems able to concentrate or keep his mind on the essential evil which is USURY.'[77] In his work Leon Surette argues that anti-Semitism was a result of Pound's economic views rather than the other way around, but concludes: 'His anti-Semitism was a moral—as well as a cognitive—failure rather than a mental pathology.'[78]

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[75] The intolerances of major literary figures of the time are fulsomely described by John Carey in *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).
[76] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 18 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 29. Pound also cites Frankin in Canto 52 as anti-Semitic though there is no source for the quote.
[77] Ezra Pound to John Dewey 13 November 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122549.
[78] Leon Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (Montreal et al: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), p. 333. Surette also examines the poet's anti-Semitism in *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

Racist epithets are also used repeatedly by the poet. Racism is endemic in the letters of many of the leading literary figures of this era. (For example, T. S. Eliot writes to Pound in 1933: 'The only trouble with wops is that they are wops.'[79]) While this was clearly acceptable to many at the time they were written this is no longer true. For the modern reader this material is often extremely discomfiting. Throughout this thesis the most egregious examples of racist and sexual intolerance are pointed out and commented on. Again, while a different historical context provides an explanation of sorts, the regularity of their use by Pound in his correspondence is extreme.

The poet was, of course, sensitive to the use of language. Yet, his letters repeatedly display cultural clumsiness and crass insensitivity. He finds it difficult not to offend people. On good terms with the Japanese poet Katue Kitasono, he feels the need to enquire:

> Is the term JAP disliked? I mean do Japs prefer to be called Japanese? I personally prefer the monosyllable and consider it honorific.[80]

The ridiculousness of the idea of the term being in any way 'honorific' is self-serving in the extreme. With commendable diplomacy and clarity, Kitasono puts Pound right:

> We Japanese don't like to be called Jap, because Jap has been used more often with contempt than with friendliness.[81]

In reply Pound offers implausible clarification of his own usage of the term—'Incidentally I have never used (or heard used) the term Jap as derogative. Nihon Jin is O.K.', adding 'The -anese makes very bad sound, and movement of word very difficult to get into elegant sentence. However, let manners be manners'[82]—and then quickly begins to use the term again. The insensitivity and arrogance of this, having been put right by Kitasono, is considerable. The sensitivities of others were of little apparent concern to the poet.

[79] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 8/10 December 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 739.
[80] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 17 July 1940, *Japan*, p. 92.
[81] Katue Kitasono to Ezra Pound 22 August 1940, *Japan*, p. 92.
[82] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 2 October 1940, *Japan*, p. 97.

1.6: A biographical disconnect

Pound's letters demonstrate that achieving a coherent interpretation of the poet's personality and life is an ambitious and probably impossible objective. Indeed, in terms of the chronology of the experiences, emotions and events in the poet's life and the broader context the letters are consistently unhelpful. Despite their idiosyncratic style, humour and personal energy, they are largely bereft of personal details. As a result, the letters are not the biographical resource they might be. They run directly counter to Janet Malcolm's observation:

> When we are reading a book of letters we understand the impulse to write biographies, we feel the intoxication the biographer feels in working with primary sources, the rapture of firsthand encounters with another's lived experience.[83]

In Pound's case, 'the rapture of firsthand encounters' is largely absent. In many instances he never actually met the people he wrote to, sometimes extensively over many years. They were not involved in his day-to-day life and yet were clearly a significant element of his intellectual life. It may be because of this that the letters, though clearly an important part of Pound's output, are somewhat neglected.[84]

My research suggests a notable disconnect between biographies of Pound and his correspondence. For example, during 1935 and 1936 the poet wrote 87 letters to Ödön Pór[85] (author of a book on fascism and well-connected among Italian fascists).[86] Pór replied with 73 letters of his own. The two corresponded until the end of the war with Pór providing introductions to members of the fascist movement and Pound expounding and explaining his arguments on social credit. The poet also translated one of Pór's books (*Italy's Policy of Social Economics 1939-1940*).[87] Despite these interactions over a decade, there is minimal reference to Pór in David Moody's lengthy biography of Pound—he merits three brief mentions. The same is true of other correspondents who were senior figures in the fascist movement—including Camillo Pellizzi, Luigi Villari (author of the 1926 book, *The Fascist*

[83] Lucy Scholes, 'Drops of poison', *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 October 2021.
[84] Among the exceptions are: Lawrence Rainey, 'The letters and the spirit: Pound's correspondence and the concept of modernism,' *Text*, Volume 7, 1994; Timothy Materer, 'Doppelgänger: Ezra Pound in his letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1982; and Miranda B. Hickman (ed.), *One Must Not Go Altogether with the Tide: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Stanley Nott* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).
[85] Ödön Pór (1883-1971).
[86] Ödön Pór, *Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 1923).
[87] Guido Franzinetti, 'Ödön Pór: from socialism to fascism, from Hungary to Italy', http://italogramma.elte.hu/wp-content/files/Guido_Franzinetti_Odon_Por.pdf.

Experiment) and Gaetano Polverilli—and those involved personally with Mussolini such as his son-in-law Galeazzo Ciano and Margherita Sarfatti (his some-time mistress and biographer).[88]

Other less contentious correspondents are also peripheral to the standard biographical approach. For example, Pound has a lengthy and wide-ranging correspondence over a number of years (1934-59) with Robert McNair Wilson,[89] a British surgeon, author of detective novels and non-fiction books, would-be liberal politician and medical correspondent of *The Times* (1914-42). There is extensive religious discussion in the letters as well as re-stating of Pound's economic themes. Among many other things in the correspondence, the poet links the British king's abdication to usury.[90] He also displays a willingness to re-write history suggesting himself as a much more significant influence than he actually is. The poet writes to Wilson of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and President F. D. Roosevelt: 'I shd/ like a half hour with Neville/ though I declined the suggestion that I meet Frankie in Washington.'[91] Pound retains a belief throughout his correspondence that he can persuade anyone—including Stalin—of the rightness of his own views given a face-to-face meeting with them. He was not offered an opportunity to meet Roosevelt. The poet also finds time, as he does with many of his correspondents, to reprove Wilson when he appears less useful in furthering the poet's agenda: 'I have no use for you if you REFUSE to keep in touch with what little IS going on.'[92] Presumably as he never met the poet, Wilson is not mentioned in Moody's biography (or other biographies) even though his correspondence with Pound is extensive and stimulated the poet to much longer and more discursive replies than usual.

Pound has a similarly lengthy correspondence with Paul de Kruif,[93] an American microbiologist and author of *Microbe Hunters* (1926) and *Men Against Death* (1932). Having criticised contemporary medicine as unscientific, Pound draws de Kruif into an exchange on economics. There are 27 letters from Pound between August 1933 and November 1935. Within them is a constant sense of frustration. 'Every thing is so god damned slow and NO use being made of my energies. I ought to be syndicated,' the poet writes expressing a

[88] Luigi Villari (1876-1959), Gaetano Polverilli (1886-1960), Galeazzo Ciano (1903-44), Margherita Sarfatti (1880-1961).
[89] Robert McNair Wilson (1882-1963).
[90] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 8 December 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[91] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson August/September 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[92] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 1 December 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[93] Paul de Kruif (1890-1971).

repeated theme of the 1930s that he deserves a wider audience.[94] In another letter he notes: 'we all got to hunt for the toe=hold that fits our particular toes/ gerdnoze I haven't got to the public or into ACTION.'[95] Converting ideas into action and communicating them to a mass audience are the measures of success the poet increasingly applies to his correspondence, prose work and broadcasting.

There are a host of other such figures who are important in an epistolary sense to the poet, but do not feature in his daily life or subsequent biographies. This is understandable as they were not physically present, but their involvement in and contribution to Pound's core intellectual activities is undeniable.

[94] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif July 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[95] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif undated 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.

2: A Serious Correspondent

2.1: Distant intimacy

Those seeking coherence and to establish a linear chronology in Ezra Pound's life face a sizable and contradictory obstacle within the poet's correspondence: in the most intimate of communication forms—the personal letter—Pound eschews personal information and descriptions of his feelings. 'Although a large portion of epistolary communication has always been businesslike and relatively impersonal, letters are inevitably associated with intimacy,' notes William M. Decker in *Epistolary Practices.*[1] Yet even writing to his closest friends and relatives Pound maintains a distance. Forthright and intemperate views on a host of issues are combined with extreme personal reticence.

For those who care about him and his feelings, Pound is a constantly frustrating correspondent. He was an extremely diligent letter writer to his parents—there are 134 letters from Rapallo to them (plus others as the Pounds travelled around Italy). After he and his wife arrive in Rapallo in Autumn 1924 the poet writes to his parents extensively. In October 1924, for example, he writes on the seventh, fourteenth, fifteenth, twenty-third, twenty-fifth and thirtieth.[2] Though their tone is comfortable and loving, the letters are notable for their lack of detail about Pound's non-literary life. For his parents the poet is irritatingly and repeatedly vague. He announces the arrival of his and Dorothy's son with brevity—'Dear Dad/next generation (male) arrived./Both D. & it appear to be doing well.'[3]—but without having previously informed his parents of Dorothy's pregnancy (or, indeed, that he is not the father).[4] Similarly, informing T. S. Eliot (one of his closest friends) of the arrival of his son, Pound writes: 'Infant no Hercules, but said to be sound in wind and limb.'[5] This is the extent of the details the new father imparts. There is no mention of Dorothy's well-being. The distance between Pound and the event is encapsulated in the phrase 'said to be'. It is unclear at this point in December if the poet has actually seen the child—Omar Pound[6]—born in September.

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[1] William M. Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications* (Raleigh, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 5.
[2] *Parents,* pp. 542-6.
[3] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 11 September 1926, *Parents*, p. 602.
[4] Isabel and Homer Pound eventually learned the name of their grandson when a family friend returned from Paris and his mother told Isabel. *Parents*, p. 608.
[5] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 21 December 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 368.
[6] Omar Pound (1926-2010), author, translator and educator.

Details remain sparse. 'I must confess we are puzzled as to why you leave all reference to D. and Omar out of your letters,' Homer Pound writes to his son in 1926.[7] At one point, the poet sends pictures of their grand-daughter Mary, his daughter with Olga Rudge—'Enclose another member of the family. Also canto 26.'[8] This mystifies his parents who have heard of the violinist but have never been told that she is their son's lover and has had a child by him. Pound simply includes a photo of a young girl in one of his letters. He does so again in June 1928 and Homer Pound replies with understandable confusion: 'You do not tell us who the photograph is, the child shown—is it the same one as you sent a year or so ago?' and carries on, 'Mama wonders why she is the recipient of strange children without name or habitation or connection.'[9] No clarification is forthcoming in subsequent letters from the poet. He eventually explains the situation to his father when his parents move to Rapallo. His mother is not, they decide, ready to understand such a 'European' arrangement.[10]

Similarly, in his extensive correspondence with Louis Zukofsky, personal issues are generally off limits. The first mention of Olga Rudge is in December 1931, over four years into their correspondence. 'Who's Olga?' asks Zukofsky in baffled response.[11] Pound gets round to mentioning his daughter to Wyndham Lewis in 1947 when she is already in her twenties and a parent.[12]

Very little of the poet's enormous correspondence can be described as personal. This is increasingly evident after his parents move to Rapallo in 1929 and are removed from his correspondence network. One exception is a regular correspondence with Viola Jordan who he met at a student dance at Hamilton College in 1905 and then again not until 1939. The rest of the time is filled with some 260 letters from the poet between 1905 and 1950, totaling 500 pages.[13] In these letters literary matters are largely avoided—though the poet's political and economic views increasingly infiltrate them in the late 1930s. Instead, Pound mixes practicalities with flirtatiousness and risqué digressions. In a 1933 letter he wonders: 'HAOW yew managed to have three chillen by a gori/llah before you found it out .... will

[7] Homer Pound to Ezra Pound 10 November 1926, *Parents*, p. 609.
[8] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 26 July 1927, *Parents*, p. 633.
[9] Homer Pound to Ezra Pound 10 July 1928, *Parents*, p. 670.
[10] Dorothy Pound was similarly, more understandably, reticent in mentioning Mary. She eventually tells Omar about Mary in 1945. *EP/DP*, p. 224.
[11] *P/Z*, p. x.
[12] Lawrence Rainey, 'The letters and the spirit: Pound's correspondence and the concept of modernism,' *Text*, Volume 7, 1994, p. 386.
[13] Barbara Scott Jordan, 'Viola Jordan and Ezra Pound: notes on their friendship', *Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 51, No. 2, October 1976, pp. 98-103.

remain a mystery to the mere male mind.'[14] Elsewhere, practicalities dominate in their exchanges: 'This to announce the TRIumPHant arrival of 5 lb/coffee four packets assorted puffs. with no customs charge.'[15] Sometimes the subject matter is gloriously mundane, such as a culinary request:

> I wish you wd/ git me a receipt for making them beans into sauce like the chinks use. Also fer makin peanut butter/ I ain't had any fer months/ I spose if I squash up some peanuts it wd/ pretty nigh make 'em into butter/ but do you add salt? or just hot water and serve (I mean can)? and do you roast 'em first or last?[16]

The need to think about food supplies is one of the few signs in the correspondence of a world war being underway—normally the Pounds simply ate at the restaurant below their apartment. The casual and repeated use of racist epithets—as above—is a notable feature of the correspondence no matter who the recipient.

In keeping with this lack of sensitivity, the sharing of personal details is rare. The correspondence of his peers—Eliot and Yeats most notably—creaks with their own mortality. Life is waged against a constant stream of illnesses and ailments both real and imagined. In contrast, there is no sense in Pound's letters of the advancing years. For someone reported to be something of a hypochondriac, illnesses are mentioned in passing or ignored entirely. In the 1930s there is no impression of diminished energy—or irritation—and no reference to mortality. In 1940 Pound recounts how he played five sets of singles tennis and also had a swim 'at age of nine hundred'.[17] He is highly dismissive when Yeats or anyone shows their age. Only the occasional comment slips through. To Zukofsky, he writes: 'Editing ought really to be done by the young (?? what age are you) not by the senile or even by the mature.'[18]

While largely eschewing the personal, the poet is happy to give practical advice in some detail. Before the arrival of W. B. and George Yeats in 1928 he briefs George on the realities of Rapallo life. He even offers to stay at the hotel they have booked to test it out and check whether it is as warm as the proprietor has promised it will be. Pound suggests he visits

[14] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 1933, Beinecke EP.
[15] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 20-21 December 1939?, Beinecke EP.
[16] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 16 September 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037894.
[17] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 27 August 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037887.
[18] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 5 March 1928, *P/Z*, p. 8.

with a thermometer. He also describes their daily routines, which restaurants to visit to escape the wind, and enquires about Yeats' relationship with Rapallo's other Nobel Prize winning resident, the German dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann.[19] Similarly, Pound provides detailed notes on hotels in Rapallo as the poet, critic and editor Louis Untermeyer[20] plans a visit in 1930—'The Europa is, I think the worst placed hotel in Rap. Savoia much better (I usually send comfortable bourgeois there, cook not so good this year as two years ago). the Moderno was good enough for Vail-Guggenheims. (No reports on the present cuisine available.)'[21] Such acts of personal, practical, helpfulness are common in the correspondence.

Elsewhere, Pound is quick to offer medical advice. This is in keeping with his willingness to transform his minimal reading on any subject into scientific certainty. For Desmond FitzGerald,[22] then an Irish politician, the poet interrupts observations on censorship in Ireland with input on dealing with a troublesome appendix—'THE OLDE REMEDY for appendicitis, and pains in belly-groin likely to be mistook therefore; IS to rub said belly with hot olive oil. Ere invention of 57 second operation thousands of appendices and inflamed BOWELS were cured in this manner.' The poetical apothecary's advice ends with a more worrying comment—'At any rate it can do no harm, NO matter what is wrong with your innards.'[23] Pound discusses rheumatism—'rheumatiz'[24]—with Paul de Kruif and proffers his input to Wyndham Lewis when he is (not for the first or last time) laid low with a sexually transmitted infection—'Unless you notice a definite soreness or pain I don't think you need to be in any way worried, and even a soreness, so that it be not pustulent, is not of vital import.'[25] Even when imprisoned Pound remains an enthusiastic armchair physician. Via Dorothy, he advises on treatment for Ronald Duncan's wife who has tuberculosis: 'Borax finest possible powder sprayed into air in any room, partic. bed room.'[26]

To T. S. Eliot, Pound offers his insights into the situation his friend faces with his increasingly unstable wife Vivien:

[19] Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946). Ezra Pound to George Yeats 20 January 1928, Warwick Gould (ed.), *Yeats Annual 7* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 11-12.
[20] Louis Untermeyer (1885-1977).
[21] Ezra Pound to Louis Untermeyer 2 January 1930, *Globe*, p. 21.
[22] Desmond FitzGerald (1888-1947). FitzGerald is mentioned in Canto 7 as 'The live man, out of lands and prisons'.
[23] Ezra Pound to Desmond FitzGerald 28 December 1926, Mary FitzGerald, 'Ezra Pound and Irish politics: an unpublished correspondence', *Paideuma*, Vol. 12, No. 2/3 (Fall and Winter 1983), p. 387.
[24] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 2 November 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[25] Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 180.
[26] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 4 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 105.

> I think you are 'under a curse' but not a kind that I have come up against before. I knew a 'doom of the house' once, but it proceeded from a known cause. I have also seen people 'in danger'; but from the 'powers of the air' or some sort of chaotic wind or torrent or unformed energy.[27]

It is difficult to imagine these observations being helpful to Eliot. Health beyond the simply physical was a stretch for Pound whose confidence in his own self was always sizeable but whose interest in the sub-conscious or emotions was negligible. While he appears comfortable with the notion of curses and 'unformed energy', the poet is repeatedly dismissive of Yeats' interest in spirituality.

Pound's medical diversions are eventually subsumed by his passion for the economic theories of C. H. Douglas.[28] The two are sometimes intertwined. In 1933 the poet begins to correspond with the microbiologist Paul de Kruif after reading his book *Men Against Death* (1932). 'Yr/ bk/ men vs/ death very interesting,' Pound opens and eventually reaches his point that sound economic policies have the power to prevent unnecessary deaths: 'YOU can stop more death with C. H. Douglas economics than with pills.' He goes on to point out editorial and production errors and suggests the need for a book, perhaps in line with *Guide to Kulchur, ABC of Economics* or *ABC of Reading*, offering 'horse sense of medicine'.[29]

Sometimes Pound's correspondence is practical in surprising ways. He supplies the Italian writer Emanuel Carnevali[30] (an associate editor at *Poetry*) with gratefully received supplies—'By the way you sent me so much pornography that I make bold to ask you something: that is, could you get me some real pornographic cards I am fond of such things as make a lively reading and others that make me alive and eager: now, pornographic cards have just that quality.'[31] A letter from Pound to Harriet Monroe provides a diplomatic report on Carnevali's state of mind and health: 'His letters SEEM active enough. Last one was to thank me for a pile of books and old magazines, which were what he had asked for.'[32]

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[27] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 24 November 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 385.
[28] C. H. Douglas (1879-1952), British engineer.
[29] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 30 August 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[30] Emanuel Carnevali (1897-1942), writer and editor.
[31] Emanuel Carnevali to Ezra Pound undated, Beinecke EP.
[32] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 30 November 1926, Paige, p. 279.

2.2: Holding back

Pound's acts of thoughtfulness and concern for the health of others are practical and scientific rather than personal or emotional. Letter writing on Pound's terms avoids the personal and private. During his time in Rapallo, his correspondence evolves into a form of communication that suits him. He tells Mary Barnard he prefers giving written feedback to communicating face to face. In her memoir she records Pound's awkwardness when they met in New York for the first time after years of correspondence.[33] In *The Verse Revolutionaries*, Helen Carr notes Pound's habit of 'holding something back' and wanting 'not to give himself completely'.[34] In his extreme old age, his withdrawal into silence can be similarly interpreted as an act of self-protection from the personal and emotional, an internal exile.

There are regular occasions in his correspondence when the poet declares his unwillingness to cross the line between the personal and public. In doing so, his tone is frequently either intemperate or defensive. In 1933 William Rose Benét[35] invites Pound to contribute to an anthology of poets writing about their own work. This receives short shrift: 'Yr. proposed anth. is merely another effort (however delicate) to shove over more god damn'd sob stuff, personal touch, anything, absolutely anything to shield yr. booblik from fact, what is printed on page.'[36] The thing itself is all that matters, and personal details are regarded by the poet as unnecessary distractions. He writes to Phyllis Bottome,[37] an old friend from London:

> I strongly dislike dragging in private life, either of myself or anyone else.
>
> apart from all question of your really knowing NOTHING whatever about my private life during 20 years/ and its being irrelevant. especially as I have very strong beliefs
> which I do not consider it opportune to publish.[38]

The final lines are risible in that much of Pound's energy is dedicated to publishing his 'very strong beliefs'. With its aggressive tone, it is easy to forget that this is a letter to a

[33] *Helicon*, p. 162.
[34] Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 28.
[35] William Rose Benét (1886-1950), American writer, editor and poet.
[36] Ezra Pound to William Rose Benét 23 January 1933, Paige p. 326.
[37] Phyllis Bottome (1884-1963), British novelist and short story writer.
[38] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome May/June 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.

friend with whom he has kept in touch. The poet is routinely defensive and protective of his private life—'Even that no[t] particularly lurid, merely different from the usual,' he tells Prince Ranieri.[39] Despite this and protestations of disinterest in the private lives of others, he is often happy to voice opinions on the relationships of royalty and politicians.

Quick to get to the point, there is no epistolary throat-clearing, no obeying of social niceties. When it does happen it is exceptional. He opens a letter to F. S. Delmer: 'Very sorry you've been ill. Even here there has been a bit of wet weather, diluvio, wash-out, and a few sore throats. Hope you are on the mend.'[40] To E. E. Cummings he announces his new magazine *Exile* by way of the state of the weather and his tennis game: 'Three week's of bad weather, driving one off the tennis court; and the general spread of Vinalism thru the "field of murkn licherture"; possibly resurgence of early and preneecious habit, have driven me to consider a infinitessimal review as "outlet".'[41] To Ödön Pór, excusing a cancelled visit, he ventures: 'Wife ill; and heaven knows when I can get to Roma.'[42] These are highly unusual instances of Pound conforming to epistolary norms by opening letters with commentary on matters social, personal and meteorological.

He is impatient of personal reflection or contemplation by others. There is irritation with any consideration of emotion in his letters—and, indeed, in his poetry. (In 1912 he anticipates that twentieth century poetry will be 'free from emotional slither'.)[43] The poet writes to Robert McAlmon in 1934:

> I think both you *and* Hem have limited yr. work by not recognizing the economic factor.
>
> Lot of damn rot and 'psychology,' people fussing with in'nards which are merely the result of economic pressure.....I think the whole of egoistic psychological nuvveling is gone plop because the people who go on imitating Dostoiev. and the whole damn lot of 'em *won't* look at the *reality.*[44]

[39] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 9 May 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[40] Ezra Pound to F. S. Delmer 4 December 1927, Beinecke EP. Delmer (1864-1931) was an Australian lecturer, translator and author who died in Rapallo.
[41] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 10 November 1926, *Cummings*, p. 15.
[42] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 14 November 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[43] T. S. Eliot (ed.), *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 12.
[44] Ezra Pound to Robert McAlmon 2 February 1934, Paige, p. 337.

The link between 'economic pressure' and psychological health is now widely understood and researched. This could be interpreted as a prescient connection by the poet, but a more realistic interpretation is that he saw economic factors as the dominant force and psychological matters as trivial, 'people fussing with in'nards'.

Pound is routinely dismissive of Jung, Freud (who also spent time in Rapallo) and authors such as Woolf and Proust.[45] Writing to Wyndham Lewis he refers to Freud as the 'Viennese sewage', 'in fact hoax for paralyzing the will of the victim, like the wopse or whatsodam that lays eggs in caterpillar, thus providing MEAT for its progeny'.[46] To Bunting, he notes: 'I dont think there is much pussy/ pissy/Freudology in the Cantos.'[47] To T. E Lawrence he offers a ridiculous dichotomy: 'Mussolini or Freud/ I am for the Duce. But not for liberalist sloth.'[48] The poet who lived principally off his wife's investment income in a Mediterranean resort had little time for the slothful who didn't, in his view, pull their intellectual or poetical weight. This is a repeated gripe in his correspondence with E. E. Cummings who he regards as indolent and somewhat wasteful of his talents—'ef you hadda listened to papa you wd NOT have written better poetry / BUT some of youh poetry would have been BETTER WRITTEN,' he admonishes Cummings taking on the comfortable but superior role of *pater familias* even though he was only nine years older.[49]

Some of these prejudices are shown in relation to Omar Pound who was brought up in England largely by his grandmother, Olivia Shakespear,[50] before attending the public school of Charterhouse. While at the school the radio broadcasts of his father, who he had met only a handful of times, were attributed as the cause of Omar being bullied and shunned by his fellow pupils.[51] Visits and financial support from Eliot and George Yeats helped. Later, with his father imprisoned (by the very army Omar is then serving in) and having only just been told by his mother of the existence of his half-sister Mary, Omar's mental condition is given minimal consideration by the poet—'Glad the kid seems so cheerful, thank god he hasn't been depressed etc. etc.'[52] When Omar considers undergoing psychiatric treatment Pound writes to Dorothy:

[45] There is some irony that the Bollingen Prize, which Pound received for *The Pisan Cantos*, is named in honour of Carl Jung who had a retreat in Bollingen, Switzerland.
[46] Timothy Materer, 'Doppelgänger: Ezra Pound in his letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1982, p. 250.
[47] Ezra Pound to Basil Bunting 17 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122529.
[48] Ezra Pound to T. E. Lawrence 12 December 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122586.
[49] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 21 March 1938, *Cummings*, p. 6.
[50] Olivia Shakespear (1863-1938), author and arts patron.
[51] Chris Jones, 'Help from Uncle Possum', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 September 2022.
[52] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 4 October 1945, *EP/DP,* p. 105.

> I spose it will do no harm for him to see a psychiatrist if it amuses him, so long as never the same one twice. Nor often, not to degenerate into 'I liked confession' the advantage of conversation with friends being that one has to create their willingness to listen.[53]

This is a curious perspective—it would be usual to assume that one has to try harder to make people who are not friends listen. It might suggest that Pound was constantly seeking to prove himself even to those he knew. His comments do not suggest knowledge of or faith in psychiatry as a practical way forward for Omar.

Elsewhere, Pound observes to Katue Kitasono[54] that 'nothing is worse than having to write and rewrite one's own biography'.[55] There is a strange contradiction here in that Pound was an ardent self-publicist keenly focused on his career and ensuring his work and ideas had an impact. Yet, he is uncomfortable with the simple act of curating his biographical details. When it comes to his biography, all the propaganda-style bluster becomes real, a list of publications and achievements, a personal record of achievement.

Pound's idiosyncratic and largely forgotten 1923 book *Indiscretions* focuses on Homer Pound and family history but is as close to a biography as he ever came.[56] He gives a suggested autobiography a dismissive response in a letter to Glenn Hughes[57] in 1927:

> It wd. not interest me in the least to write my literary autobiography. You might put one of your students onto the job; wd. probably educate *him* a good deal, but I don't see how that form of retrospection cd. be expected to count as part of my own mental life, and I have no inclination to start dying before it is necessary.

After a few lines concerned with a number of his contemporaries Pound ends, 'Even this amount of reminiscence bores me exceedingly'.[58] This was a consistent message. He refuses to take part in a retrospective look at Imagism by Richard Aldington—'Aldington's

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[53] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 14 and 16? November 1945, *EP/DP,* p. 189.
[54] Katue Kitasono (1902-78), Japanese poet.
[55] *Japan*, p. 42.
[56] Originally published by Three Mountains Press in Paris in 1923, *Indiscretions* is included in Ezra Pound, *Pavannes & Divagations* (New York: New Directions, 1958).
[57] Glenn Hughes (1894-1964), American dramatist and poet, director of the drama programme at the University of Washington.
[58] Ezra Pound to Glenn Hughes 26 September 1927, Paige, p. 288.

Imagist mortology 1930 (or 1929 or whenever it appeared) ...“20 ans alres”).’[59] This might be related to his general aversion to anything that suggests a Freudian conspiracy to explore his unconscious. To Robert McAlmon he writes succinctly: ‘I ain’t a writin’ me memoirs YET.’[60] In 1936, he complains, ‘yet another pubr/ wants as usual an autobiography, MEANING one with all points of interests left out, and bar room saw dust inserted.’[61] James Angleton[62] suggests that ‘people don’t want articles calling people sons of bitches because they are Jews, but they do want things about Yeats and especially from his friends’.[63] Pound replies belligerently that he has no ‘intention of relapsing into reminiscence of the Celtic Twilight during a period when twilight sleep is NOT, by hell, being used, for the birth of a new Europe, or at any rate the bedamn best try at a NEW god damn it NEW Europe’.[64] The poet is uncomfortable with anything he regards as backward looking, personal or sentimental. ‘Distrust of introspection and its consequences, a naïve lack of psychological and moral self-awareness, is the great weakness in Pound,’ observes Daniel Pearlman.[65] The lack of self-awareness is apparent as the poet makes accusations of others which could very easily be made of himself. For example, he warns the editors of *Globe* against Zukofsky as he ‘wd. be too intent on literary experiment and possibly incapable of taking orders’.[66]

2.3: Talking turkey

Whether writing to his parents, editors, fellow poets or friends, Pound is insistent on letters remaining a serious forum for the discussion of ideas rather than ‘laundry lists’ of personal activities and feelings. ‘The FLOW of verbal bullets must NOT be interrupted for trifles,’ he writes to Prince Ranieri.[67] In the most personal of forms, the poet eschews the personal for the serious. ‘I am one helluva see/ reeYUS guy,’ he tells Robert McNair Wilson.[68] T. S. Eliot makes the mistake of venturing off subject and is soundly castigated by Pound:

> Why dunt you NEVER talk TURKEY!

[59] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 24 October 1930, *P/Z*, p. 45.
[60] Ezra Pound to Robert McAlmon 12 May 1934, Robert McAlmon Papers, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17202524.
[61] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi undated 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.
[62] James Angleton (1917-87) became Chief of Counter-intelligence at the CIA.
[63] James Angleton to Ezra Pound 31 May 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[64] Ezra Pound to James Angleton 7 June 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[65] Daniel Pearlman, ‘Ezra Pound: America’s wandering Jew’, *Paideuma*, 9, Winter 1980, p. 471.
[66] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 23 October 1936, *Globe*, p. 61.
[67] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 1 August 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[68] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 2 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.

> I don't mind earning the rent, but whazz use of a letter all full of irrelevance? If I interrupt the flow of soul, life of reason, luminous effulgence of internal meditation, stop playin tennis against Palmieri and, in general, lower the tone and the tenor of my life, I gotter be *paid.*
>
> Why don't you say: 'Will you do 10 quid worth of hack work?'[69]

The answer is, of course, that Eliot considers himself a friend of Pound and finds it uncomfortable to combine the personal and commercial. Pound has no such qualms.

If the letters are a place of record, emotions and feelings are of no relevance. The lack of intimacy in Pound's Rapallo letters is in keeping with the emotional strictures laid down by the futurist F. T. Marinetti in *Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine*. While the futurists sought an ascetic mechanical way of thinking and behaving—'a beautiful, steel-toned frame of mind.'[70]—Pound espouses artistic seriousness, unflinching commitment to creating art, a paradoxical (and perhaps impossible) blend of ascetism and aestheticism. He disapproves of artists having a life outside their art and even argues (mischievously to his mother) that artists shouldn't marry.[71] He is quick to criticise Harriet Monroe when she talks of closing *Poetry*: 'Dear Harriet: The intelligence of the nation more important than the comfort or life of any one individual or the bodily life of a whole generation.'[72] In Pound's mind, the study and creation of literature outweighs all other considerations.

Elsewhere, he writes to one of his Japanese correspondents, Ryozo Iwasaki,[73] who has told him that Katue Kitasono is depressed after the failure of a love affair:

> No poet shd/ be depressed by a love affair/ if accepted he can enjoy it/ if given the 'heave-ho' it shd/ improve his prosody and versification.[74]

Every experience is interpreted as an opportunity to hone literary skills. When the American poet and editor Ernest Walsh[75] tells Pound he is in love, he receives a postcard:

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[69] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 25 April 1936, Paige, p. 370.
[70] Günter Berghaus (ed.), *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2006), p. 87.
[71] Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 105.
[72] Ibid., p. 250.
[73] Ryozo Iwasaki (1908-76), translated Pound's *Selected Poems* into Japanese.
[74] Ezra Pound to Ryozo Iwasaki 11 April 1957, *Japan*, p. 139.
[75] Ernest Walsh (1895-1926).

'Corresponse suspended herwith until without'er of ((pssbl.?)) yu cummup fer air.'[76] Pound's lack of comprehension or sympathy for any emotional distraction is clear. This might explain how he was able to manage and survive prolonged incarceration (and also manage the fraught emotional balancing act in Rapallo with his wife and mistress during wartime). So long as he could continue his literary projects, the poet was able to bear whatever surroundings he was placed in.

2.4: Poetical feedback

With his personal life off-limits, the focus in Pound's letters is on literary administration and in advancing his causes. In terms of administration, much of this focuses on the nitty gritty of magazine and book publishing—for example, Pound's letters to Stanley Nott on producing social credit-related pamphlets. Again, this is so extensive it is collected in book form.[77] These letters repeatedly demonstrate Pound's attention to detail. His feedback on pages of proofs is detailed and punctilious.

Pound's responses to poets he has never physically met are often similar in their depth. To the Japanese poet Katue Kitasono he offers help in more accurate use of English in his translated poems: 'English is very ambiguous, the typewriter can mean either the *machine à écrire* or the *dactylo*; the young lady who types.'[78] He is equally—though less surprisingly—efficient in his feedback to more experienced authors. In April 1938 his feedback to Laurence Binyon, when he sends him a draft of his translation of Dante, is fulsome and precise. Three printed pages of corrections and suggestions follow as Pound goes through the translation line by line—'50, "was cried" rather bothers me', '76, "sage *one*" grits my teeth'.[79] It is detailed, respectful and constructive. More feedback follows soon after—'Cantos XXIII and XXIV pretty clean/ say tooth brush rather than rockdrill needed.'[80]

In his Rapallo years, Pound's most robust critical correspondence is with Louis Zukofsky. The New York-based poet's contact with Pound begins when he submits his poem, 'Poem beginning "The"' to Pound's magazine, the *Exile* in August 1927. Eventually, all 330 numbered lines were published in the Spring 1928 issue of the short-lived magazine.

[76] Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 188.
[77] Miranda B. Hickman (ed.), *One Must Not Go Altogether with the Tide: The Letters of Ezra Pound and Stanley Nott* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011). Similarly, his correspondence with Margaret Anderson, editor of the *Little Review*, merits a book-size collection: Thomas L. Scott, Melvin J. Friedman with Jackson R. Bryer (eds.), *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).
[78] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 11 March 1937, *Japan*, p. 41.
[79] Ezra Pound to Laurence Binyon 25 April 1938, Paige, pp. 403-6.
[80] Ezra Pound to Laurence Binyon 6 May 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122523.

Pound's enthusiasm for Zukofsky's work is immediate though undermined by his candid appraisal of the state of the magazine:

> My Dear Zukofsky:
>
> Thanks. First cheering mss. I have recd. in weeks, or months, or something or other.
>
> In the present anarchic state of the Exile's management I hesitate to say that anything will positively be printed; though I understand that No. 2 is actually about to see daylight INSIDE the burning cordon of our Custom's vigilantes.[81]

This initial letter goes on to provide detailed comments on the draft of Zukofsky's poem. The process of correction and suggestion via correspondence is both time consuming (especially by modern standards) and open to the vicissitudes of the postal service. Pound's professionalism is only offset by the suggestion that he is powerless in the face of the whims of the printer, the management of the magazine (himself) and the interference of Customs. Even so, to write to one of the foremost poets of the age and to receive a careful, original and detailed response is testament to Pound's generosity and openness to new authors and contacts. Once his interest was piqued or he identified a kindred, serious, committed spirit, the older poet's commitment was total.

This is what Wendy Wall describes as the 'poetics of exchange'.[82] Students of the Ezuversity (Pound's loose educational network), plus many others, benefit from his feedback on their work. Aspiring poets beat an epistolary path to Pound's Rapallo postbox. 'I can't teach novel writing, though I still, on sufficient indication of real intention, reply to rizin' potes,' Pound writes in 1934.[83] His generosity is a recurring element. Cheques are sent out to a range of friends and contacts in need. John Cournos[84] is a beneficiary[85] as is Emanuel Carnevali who thanks Pound for a gift of clothes as well as cheques: 'You do not look as a fierce fascist at all, let me tell you, there is peace and serenity in your face: how do

[81] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 18 August 1927, *P/Z*, p. 3.
[82] Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
[83] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 27 November 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2038246.
[84] John Cournos (1881-1966), author and translator.
[85] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122541.

you reconcile the two things.'[86] Carnevali's comment points to the dichotomy in Pound's behaviour and personality between fanaticism and kindness.

In 1935 a 19-year old from London called Arthur Cox writes to the poet bemoaning the fact that he is destined for a career in journalism but really wants to pursue more creative writing. Pound replies with various contacts, reassurance that journalism worked for Hemingway and Dickens and diversions into his usual themes—'Training AS journalist damn sight more use to anyone who wants to WRITE than anything they will have taught you in any god damn university', and 'I can't be bother with anyone who is too lazy to read at least my econ. and a dozen other books on the subject'.[87] The letter combines practical generosity with immodesty in suggesting that the required reading is largely made up of his own work.

The poet's open-door policy was not universal. Correspondence had to be justified. Pound had little time for letters which didn't justify investments of time and postage. 'You're a bit chary of news. And postage stamps now cost 7 cents,' he complains to Alice Henderson (formerly of *Poetry* magazine) as their correspondence dries up.[88] Some judgement was exercised and not all 'rizin' potes' received acknowledgement or feedback.[89]

Seriousness and a commitment to covering the canon of essential texts (as identified by Pound) are the basic requirements of entry. Among those seeking to establish a correspondence is Robert Lowell:

> I have been wanting to write you for several months, but haven't quite had the courage to until now. You will probably think that I am very impudent and presumptuous, but I want to come to Italy and work under you and forge my way into reality.[90]

[86] Emanuel Carnevali to Ezra Pound, 1933?, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2038246.
[86] Emanuel Carnevali to Ezra Pound undated, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10270296.
[87] Ezra Pound to Arthur Cox 25 August 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122542.
[88] Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson 10 October 1933, Ira B. Nadel (ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson (*Houston, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 234.
[89] Much later, to stem the flow of young authors to his door, Pound sought to clarify matters in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*: 'If the editor is overflowing with compassion perhaps he would correct a time-lag on a very old rumour. I am not interested in literary aspirants, but only in students of history. And I cannot provide further free lessons in prosody and related sorrows to young gentlemen (and/or ladies) who have not gained at least the rudiments of an education.' Ezra Pound, 'Mr. Pound regrets', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 4 April 1958, p. 183.
[90] Robert Lowell to Ezra Pound 2 May 1936, Saskia Hamilton (ed.), *The Letters of Robert Lowell* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), pp. 3-4.

Pound's reply no longer exists though it was plainly vague but negative to judge by Lowell's follow-up letter later in the same month in which he writes, 'I am still in the dark as to the exact meaning of "Why not try meditating on a few MORE of the implications of yrl letter." Probably you expected me to meditate for several months and not three days.'[91] In this, Lowell is likely correct. He goes on to offer flattery—'If the twentieth century is to realize a great art comparable to that of Chaucer or Shakespeare, the foundation will have to be your poems'—and even proffers editorial suggestions for some cantos—'For the exact word and the *fewest* possible *words* you ought to substitute Reality (boredom, religion, anything) expressed with the utmost vitality.'[92] This still fails to stir Pound and the two poets did not become correspondents until September 1947.[93] It might be that the older poet was wary of Lowell's disturbing and random candour (which may have reminded him of his own manic tendency to flit from subject to subject) or, perhaps, his shared surname with the poet Amy Lowell. 'I don't want the NEXT "movement" smeared over by Lowells and people who WON'T work,' Pound complains elsewhere to Mary Barnard.[94]

Outwardly flamboyant and colourful of speech and fashion, Pound was determinedly serious about his work and intellectual passions. He sought to instill this seriousness in those who asked his advice—and many who did not. 'It was this unrelenting professionalism in Pound that set, and continues to set, Englishmen's teeth on edge,' Donald Davie observes.[95] Davie argues that the diligently professional poet was the antithesis of the English amateur—as personified by his neighbour in Rapallo, Max Beerbohm.[96] Seriousness was inculcated into Pound's students via his letters. This partly explains his unwillingness to include any personal details. The correspondence was his professional context. For the poet, seriousness implies a willingness to engage with others in his global network in collaboration and communication.

Letter after letter from Pound seeks to link one of his literary group to someone he perceives as useful to them. After writing to Pound in Rapallo, in short order Mary Barnard is introduced to William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Morton Zabel at the magazine *Poetry*, H. D. and the classicist educator and translator W. H. D. Rouse. For the

[91] Robert Lowell to Ezra Pound May? 1936, Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[92] Robert Lowell to Ezra Pound May? 1935, Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[93] Not one to hold grudges, Lowell later had a portrait of Pound on his office wall along with James Russell Lowell. Frederick Seidel, 'Robert Lowell, the art of poetry No. 3', *The Paris Review*, Issue 25, Winter-Spring 1961. Among his best-known poems, coincidentally, is 'Sailing from Rapallo'.
[94] Ezra Pound to Mary Barnard 2 December 1933, *Helicon*, p. 55.
[95] Donald Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), p. 265.
[96] Donald Davie, 'Pound and the English', *Trying to Explain* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1980), p. 56 and p. 58.

young poet these are extremely useful connections. Louis Zukofsky is also a beneficiary of Pound's contacts. He writes to the poet in Rapallo for the first time in 1927. By March 1928 the older poet is offering up his address book:

> Do go down an' stir up ole Bill Willyums, 9 Ridge Rd. Rutherford (W. C. Williams M.D.) and tell him I tole you. He is still the best human value on my murkn. visiting list.
> (If ever you are in Phila. go see my dad. HLP.; assay dept. U.S. Mint.).[97]

As the correspondence develops more addresses are provided. In 1931, Pound encourages Zukofsky to contact 'H. Rella. now at 107 West 3d. suitable member I think for the Taupin/Zuk/Oppen circl'.[98] In the same letter he brings Zukofsky up to date on the activities of George Oppen, Amy Lowell, Kenneth Rexroth and the publisher Desmond Harmsworth. By November 1931, Pound contemplates his contacts and concludes: 'I spose I must have given you most of the names and addresses of nuclei of possible just men and cooperators in the U.S.???'[99]

Sharing contacts was instinctive for the poet. In 1936 he proffers a long list of names and addresses to the editors of *Globe* magazine. A single letter provides connecting details for an odd selection of literary and journalistic figures including Jean Barral, Basil Bunting, Guy Hickok, Harold Franklin, James Laughlin, D. C. Fox, E. E. Cummings, H. W. Hawk, Hugo Fack, Ford Madox Ford, Peter Fanning and Hilaire Hiler.[100] This constructive and helpful networking is not polite literary door-opening, but part of the fundamental drive Pound had to make a difference and have an impact.

2.5: An emerging agenda

The final function of letters for Pound is to share and further his agenda. During his time in Rapallo, the poet's correspondence increasingly has a campaigning element. This is particularly the case from the early 1930s. 'From 1931 to 1945 his poetry took a back seat to his activities as an economic reformer and propagandist for the corporate state,' says Leon

[97] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 5 March 1928, *P/Z*, p. 7.
[98] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 28 October 1931, *P/Z*, p. 103.
[99] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 29 November 1931, *P/Z*, p. 121.
[100] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 24 September 1936, *Globe*, pp. 50-1. Jean Barral (1912-?) was an anti-Semitic correspondent of Pound's (1933-42) and author of *La Suprématie universelle des juifs et la Société des Nations* (1924); Hugo Fack (1885-1976) was an economic campaigner and translator; Guy Hickok (1888-1951), a friend of Hemingway's and the Paris correspondent of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*; Peter Fanning (dates unknown) was a British writer.

Surette.[101] Magazines and newspapers are inundated with letters bringing Pound's economic passions to their attention. Twenty-five letters from Pound, nearly all on economics, were published in the *Morning Post* between 20 March 1934 and 13 September 1935. His letter and prose writing on economic themes reached a frenzy in 1935-36. His contributions to *New English Weekly* rose from seven articles in 1932 to a peak of 69 in 1935.[102] Between March and October 1935, the poet had 17 articles published in the *New Mexican*. More were left unused by the publication such was Pound's productivity.[103] His articles in the *New Mexican* display the poet's willingness to embrace any platform to air his views—and how the writing style of his correspondence infiltrates Pound's prose work. His idiosyncratic 1935 series for the publication was entitled 'Ez Sez, Being Some Pithy Promulgations by Ezra Pound'. A typical entreaty from the articles reads: 'Are you eddicatin yer kids, or merely trying to bring them up in a fog, like we was riz up and given DIPLoMAHS?'[104] Not for the first or last time, serious intent is disguised and undermined by Pound's faux folksiness, a style developed in his letter writing. It is difficult to square such writing with Pound's often articulated notions of his own professionalism.

The editors of *Globe* have similar issues with the stream of contributions from the poet which are not always to their editorial taste. 'We are sending to you "That League in Calvin's Home City" which is too serious for GLOBE. Many of the people and situations dealt with are beyond most of us here,' the editor James Dunn admits in a 1937 letter.[105] Over a year later the poet receives another editorial complaint: 'Your first article, "Abdication," definitely met the approval of many of our readers. Later letters, however, have been called "obscure." You cannot under-estimate the public's intelligence.'[106] Obscure or not, in his correspondence the poet is unapologetically and often impolitely direct as he canvasses and badgers politicians and others with his theories on social credit, the American education system and much more. In a 1935 letter to Gorham Munson,[107] the poet estimates he is putting 80 per cent of his energy and time into unpaid social credit propaganda.[108] His correspondence with New Mexico Senator Bronson Cutting alone is

[101] Leon Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 10.
[102] Pound's contributions to *New English Weekly*: 1932, 7; 1933, 12; 1934, 41; 1935, 69; 1936, 41; 1937, 7; 1938, 7; 1939, 7; and 1940, 5. Roxana Preda, 'Social credit in America: a view from Ezra Pound's economic correspondence 1933-1940', *Paideuma*, Vol. 34, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter, 2005, p. 225.
[103] *Cutting*, p. 8.
[104] *Cutting,* p. 204.
[105] James W. G. Dunn to Ezra Pound 20 February 1937, *Globe*, p. 85.
[106] James T. Dunn to Ezra Pound 27 April 1938, *Globe*, p. 167.
[107] Gorham Munson (1896-1969), literary critic and journalist who Pound converted to the social credit cause.
[108] Ezra Pound to Gorham Munson 27 April 1935, Roxana Preda, 'Social credit in America: a view from Ezra Pound's economic correspondence 1933-1940', *Paideuma*, Vol. 34, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter, 2005, pp. 201-27.

enough to make a book.[109] Others in his epistolary firing-line include Congressman George Tinkham[110] of Massachusetts ('Uncle George' to Pound) and Congressman William Borah of Idaho[111] as well as senior figures in the Roosevelt administration including Harold Ickes, Henry Morgenthau and Henry Wallace.

Increasingly during the 1930s, the functions of Pound's letters are fused. Letters often encompass social credit, literary administration, connecting those in the poet's network and feedback. Social niceties are overlooked as Pound becomes frustrated that his economic agenda is being ignored. Even with friends, he is increasingly argumentative, exasperated and frustrated. Critiques and edits of poetry become few and far between. This is especially clear in his correspondence with Zukofsky. In January 1931, Pound sounds hard done by:

> As you know, my first poems were pubd. abroad. A fukin disgryce to the onanystic States. It wd. have been a equal buggerin disgryce IF my prose had been pubd in Europe. The first seerious 'colleced prose.' It ought to be done by my bastud comphathriots.[112]

As their correspondence develops Pound is at his most argumentative and difficult. As a politically left-leaning Jew of naturally serious intent and demeanour, Zukofsky was unlikely to agree blindly with Pound's opinions. Marjorie Perloff is not alone in wondering why 'a proto-Communist Jewish poet [would] choose as his mentor the proto-Fascist, anti-Semitic Pound?'[113] The most persuasive reply is that Pound held Zukofsky's work in high regard and that they shared an ascetic and serious view of their art. Even so, their exchanges are often frank to the point of abusive. They agree to disagree, but with some vigour. In March 1935, for example, Pound writes to Zukofsky:

> I am getting an English opinyun on yr/ damn poems/ but I know what it will be/ and damn it I told you so, when you were here.

He ends the letter with a reproof to Zukofsky for not following up on suggested reading:

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[109] E. P. Walkiewicz and Hugh Witemeyer (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Senator Bronson Cutting: A Political Correspondence, 1930-35* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). Cutting (1888-1935) was a social credit convert who died in a plane crash.
[110] George Tinkham (1870-1956).
[111] Borah (1865-1940) is mentioned in Canto 84: '"am sure I don't know/ what a man like you/would find to do here"/said Senator Borah.'
[112] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 30 January 1931, *P/Z*, p. 88.
[113] Jules Smith, 'Frankly, fiercely', *Times Literary Supplement,* 24 July 2020.

> J/HEEZUSS, you aint even caught up with Jules Romains/ /
>
> and so on.[114]

Zukofsky replies with equal robustness and works diligently through the points of Pound's letter. He excuses the criticisms as more general than personal, but then promises to stand his ground:

> I mean your last hasn't concentrated on any particular shortcoming of L.Z. but is merely in the nature of general browbeating. Maybe it's time Sonny bawled out papa, since once upon a time Sonny seems to have had a certain insight into him.[115]

As the Zukofsky correspondence suggests, Pound's collaborative instincts are less in evidence as the 1930s progress. His comments and edits on specific pieces of work reduce in number. Providing comments on draft manuscripts beyond superficial headlines is forgotten. Instead, he is keener to pursue his ideas on economics and beyond as well as expressing dissatisfaction with how he has been treated.

2.6: Candidly yours

Emanuel Carnevali wrote that he identified Dostoevsky with sorrow, Whitman with joy and Pound with irritation.[116] Similarly, Basil Bunting describes Pound as having 'an irritable sensibility'.[117] Constantly frustrated and impatient to have an impact, with a growing number of correspondents Pound is unambiguous in his communication. To his former professor Felix Schelling[118] of the University of Pennsylvania he writes:

> Dear Doc Schelling: As one of the most completely intolerant men I have ever met, the joke *is* on you if you expected to teach anyone liberality.[119]

[114] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 6 March 1935, *P/Z*, pp. 162-3.
[115] Louis Zukofksy to Ezra Pound 15 March 1935, *P/Z*, p. 164.
[116] 'There is a word one associates with Dostoievsky's works—Sorrow; as we think of Walt Whitman the word may be Joy; for Mr. Pound the word is irritation. Irritation inspires him and he inspires irritation in his readers.' Emanuel Carnevali, 'Book review of *Pavannes and Divisions* by Ezra Pound', *Poetry*, January 1920, pp. 211-12.
[117] Basil Bunting to Louis Zukofsky 17 June 1949, *Bunting*, p. 190.
[118] Felix E. Schelling (1858-1945), educator, author and specialist in Elizabethan poetry and drama, member of the National Institute for Arts and Letters, the American Philosophical Society and the Modern Language Association of America.
[119] Ezra Pound to Felix E. Schelling April 1934, Paige, p. 341.

Almost identical sentiments could be targeted at Pound at this time. There is no sense of irony or self-perception from the poet which might acknowledge this. Sometimes he is simply abusive. Albert B. Franklin receives the full force:

> You always were dominated by envy, but you shdn't let it get the better of you on the edge of the grave.
>
> I recognized your limitations as a writer, but had hitherto considered you a man, not a shit.
>
> candidly yours.[120]

In their personal vitriol, such letters are unpleasant even by today's standards. Pound's correspondence of the late 1930s departs from cultural and epistolary norms. Rascist epiphets are commonplace. In 1932, after a negative review by Mario Praz[121] of the University of Liverpool, Pound complains to Wyndham Lewis:

> Why don't you keep your eye on Mario Praz? Why do you allow that semitic coxcomb to infect a Fascist State & misinform the Wops re. British Litterchur! Fie!' and 'What am I expected to do about one frousty li'l purrferrer in Liverpool/asphyxiated by Herb Read and Baby/crumby[122] and the rest of yr/Island songbirds? Blighter don't do it HERE.[123]

Praz and Pound had actually met—'I am glad you met Pound; I have heard from him about your meeting; and the pleasure was evidently mutual,' T. S. Eliot writes to Praz in 1930[124]—but any amicable personal connection was quickly cast aside by the poet. He also persists with such attacks for a matter of years in many cases. In 1937 he describes Praz as a 'half dead italian professor of wop in Liverpool university. full of Bloomsbury bug juice'.[125]

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[120] Ezra Pound to Albert B. Franklin 10 April 1936, Beinecke EP.
[121] Mario Praz (1896-1982), educator and author of *The Romantic Agony* (1933) among others.
[122] This refers to Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938), a British poet and academic. When Pound challenged Abercrombie to a duel, Abercrombie suggested they bombard each other with their unsold books. This took the sting out of the situation. *P/J*, p. 48. Undeterred, in April 1935 Pound challenged Norman Angell, author of *The Great Illusion,* to a duel. Norman Angell, *After All* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951), pp. 288-9.
[123] *P/L*, p. 191.
[124] T. S. Eliot to Mario Praz 24 January 1930, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1930-1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 57.
[125] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 4 May 1937, *Globe*, p. 117.

Praz's elevation to be associated with the Bloomsbury Group is typical of Pound's ability to regard all those he had crossed as members of the same conspiratorial set.

The list of correspondents the poet takes aggressive issue with grows rapidly. 'It damn swine like you that make the name PEACE stink in honest man's nostrils' he begins a letter to the classical scholar Gilbert Murray.[126] 'Your ignorance of Italy is as foul as your misuse of English versification. God damn and rot the lot of you,' he writes to the journalist Ian Munro, and adds: 'It is the preserved ignorance of you corn fed subsidized swine that passes all human language.'[127] In a humbler and more accommodating follow-up letter, the poet writes: 'I cant imagine my letters are an inevitable and unfailing source of pleasure, but still, if a word of sense CAN be rubb into England.'[128]

To the writer and journalist Sisley Huddleston,[129] the poet offers a hardly motivational call to improve the quality of his contributions to *Globe*:

> Having a natural affection for you, I am definitely disappointed in the stuff you are sending GLOBE.
> I know you are an Englishman and that England is 94% pure shit, and that you once wrote for the Times which is the worlds great bleeding arse hole, with the Telegraph a protruding ulcer. But you had the decency or luck to get out of that pissery.[130]

Pound's most vitriolic outpourings are often poorly targeted. Felix Schelling, Mario Praz, Sisley Huddleston and Gilbert Murray were reputable and established figures. Their areas of expertise hardly impinged on those of Pound. Not only were they undeserving of the vitriol, but its nature meant that positive or constructive replies were hardly to be expected.

[126] Gilbert Murray (1866-1957). Ezra Pound to Gilbert Murray December? 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17409019.
[127] Ezra Pound to Ian Munro December? 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.
[128] Ezra Pound to Ian Munro 5 April 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.
[129] Sisley Huddleston (1883-1952), British journalist and writer.
[130] Ezra Pound to Sisley Huddleston May 1937, *Globe*, pp. 134-5.

Very few of Pound's correspondents stand up in the face of his routine broadsides and insults. One who takes a more aggressive and humorous stance is John Holroyd-Reece[131] of the Albatross Press:

> The letter you sent on September 24th was opened and read by my office here and was not forwarded to me on my journey, for fear lest its contents might burst into flames.
> I did not think that your response would be so self-revealing as it turned out to be.[132]

The 'self-revealing' nature of Pound's often extraordinary correspondence is generally overlooked by recipients. They are either too polite or perhaps too fearful to take the poet to task.

Among the most glaring examples is the letter the poet writes to a young woman called Alice Steiner Amdur in 1937. She wrote her undergraduate thesis at Radcliffe College on 'The poetry of Ezra Pound'. It was later published by Harvard University Press and she despatched copies to William Carlos Williams and Pound.[133] Williams sent a good natured and encouraging reply. Pound, annoyed perhaps by her unfavourable comparisons of his work to Eliot's and her critique of the *Cantos* as 'largely obscure or obscene',[134] replies at some length. 'Wd/ you in confidence tell me whether Spencer the tutor is a pimp and hater of fact or merely a tutor, conceited and disliking new information?'[135] he enquires, continues with a typically swingeing attack on academia and then becomes more personal: 'some of yr/ statements are excessively silly/ question of whether you are another piffling pest or a commendable searcher depends on whether you care to learn better / or whether you are just a little girl pleasing professorial lice.'[136] And, 'you poor damn bleating little AMERICAN she sheep suffering from the pan American 15 years time lag.'[137] The letter is long, unrelenting and hysterical. What is perhaps most notable is that Pound displays no apparent awareness of the likely effect of such an aggressive, insulting letter on the young

[131] John Holroyd-Reece (1897-1969), co-founder of Albatross Press, launched in 1932 and publisher of, among other titles, Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*.
[132] John Holroyd-Reece to Ezra Pound 27 December 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122576.
[133] Alice Steiner Amdur, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936).
[134] Sebastian D. G. Knowles, 'Ezra Pound to Alice Steiner Amdur, 23 January 1937', *Paideuma*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Spring/Fall, 1992, p. 235.
[135] Ibid., p. 237.
[136] Ibid., p. 240.
[137] Ibid., p. 241.

recipient. It is the letter of a bully but written by a man of considerable intellect, sensitivity and generosity.

It was not an isolated instance. In 1930 Eliot pulls him up on 'the tone which you thought fit to adopt toward an accountant who is young and unmarried and has never heard such words as you have introduced into your invective'.[138] By Eliot's standards this amounts to a stern rebuke.

'You behave as though you have no talent,' Degas quipped of his friend and fellow artist Whistler.[139] There is a similar disconnect in Pound's behaviour between his sensibility and insensitivity. 'God almighty why didnt I try to kick a little manhood into you when I met you,' he writes to Bertrand Russell, ending the letter 'philosophicly yrs'.[140] The philosopher's main offence was doubtless his association with the Bloomsbury Group.[141] Even to friends Pound is unsparing, often unpleasant. Replying to a suggestion by Bunting that he and Zukofsky spend too much time on politics and economics, Pound writes: 'You really BLOODY fool/ "Go Douglas" your arse.' Bunting, in turn, replies: 'Calling me a bloody fool does me no good unless you attempt to show WHY.'[142] To George Antheil, Pound is considered and dismissive: 'I am not particularly interested in any thing you have done since Ballet Mechanique. The third violin sonata an excellent piece of work, but am not sure it needed you to write it.'[143] Such brief and contemptuous letters to friends suggest that either Pound didn't fully realise how far he had departed from behavioural conventions or did so and didn't care.

Pound's correspondence displays someone unwilling to share his own emotions and yet increasingly willing to ride roughshod over those of others. Often there is a sense of the poet working through his ideas and agenda rather than directly and personally communicating. In *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* Massimo Bacigalupo concludes: '*The Cantos* are primarily written for one reader—EP.'[144] And there is frequently a feeling in the correspondence that the audience of one in any of Pound's letters is not the recipient, but

[138] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 16 May 1930, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1930-1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 219.
[139] Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Harper & Row, 1976), p. 18.
[140] Ezra Pound to Bertrand Russell undated 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122624.
[141] Pound may also have known that Russell had an affair with Vivien Eliot.
[142] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 11 December 1935, Ezra Pound to Basil Bunting undated, and Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 'last of 1935', BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122529.
[143] Ezra Pound to George Antheil 30 October 1927, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122520.
[144] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. 188.

the poet himself. At the same time, a regularly repeated complaint in the letters is of his failure to understand or reach the mass market— 'Broadcast from Rome last week, wonder if anyone listened,' he writes to Paul de Kruif.[145]

The impression of the letters being written for Pound's benefit is emphasised by his occasional observation that replies are not necessarily anticipated. Simply writing the letter is enough—for the author at least. 'You aint expected to hand back the empty shells of every cartridge/ i;e; to answer my letters, save when I am gropin fer information,' he explains to Prince Ranieri after he makes the mistake of replying to a letter from the poet.[146] Indeed, Pound was well used to his letters disappearing into the epistolary ether. The flood of letters and articles he produces is often ignored. In Paris Pound deluged the *Paris Herald* with letters. 'Daily the *Herald* received from Pound a letter or postcard, and some days both, laden with maledictions, upon persons and events reported in the paper, as well as upon the paper itself. I was instructed, if I found nothing printable, to toss them in the wastebasket, which I did with the great majority of his angry scrawls,' a staff editor Martha Foley later recalled.[147] Michael T. Davis and Cameron McWhirter, editors of the poet's correspondence with *Globe* note: 'In the end, Pound's success as a writer for *Globe* was limited. Only half the articles that he wrote for the magazine where even published. Several were judged offensive. Others were considered confusing. Some were never published because of *Globe's* untimely demise.'[148]

The poet largely appears unconcerned when articles go unpublished, and letters do not elicit a response. It is as if he has done his work by writing the letter and the rest is someone else's responsibility. In his novel *Herzog*, Saul Bellow's protagonist, Moses Herzog, is undergoing a breakdown. One of the symptoms of this is a constant urge to write to people from his past and the wider world. A pile of notes and letters is accumulated. For Herzog the simple act of writing the letters is somehow therapeutic, part of the process. Likewise for Pound, the writing and posting of a letter appears enough.

Yet, at the same time, he desperately wants his ideas to have a wider impact. For all his emotional reticence, one of the poet's most consistent motivations in his letters is to enlist support for his various causes and to mobilise people. Having established his literary

[145] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 19 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[146] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 8 August 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[147] Anne de Courcy, *Five Love Affairs and a Friendship* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2022), p. 141.
[148] *Globe*, p. 30.

reputation, the poet wants to build something more, to create a legacy, to have an impact beyond his own work and, increasingly, beyond the confines of literature. This is the serious purpose of the correspondence and one which sits uncomfortably with Pound's unwillingness to display and share his own feelings.

3: Correspondence with Purpose

3.1: Creating something new

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a coterie as: 'A small group of people with shared interests or tastes, especially one that is exclusive of other people.'[1] A coterie has elsewhere been defined as 'a humanist refuge against temporality', a collective means of securing a place in literary posterity,[2] and described as 'community's evil twin'—a grouping unable to deliver the benefits of a naturally occurring community, liable to be beset by politicking and intrigue rather than collaboration.[3] Ezra Pound's interpretation of a coterie was somewhat freer than the dictionary definition. He was open to many who simply wrote to him or visited. He merely wanted to find what he described as 'the intelligent nucleus for a movement'.[4] (The word 'nucleus' with its scientific resonance was a favourite of the poet's.)[5] This quest was informed by his own mixed experience with the Imagists and Vorticists in London and the broader artistic milieu in Paris. He fell out with the Imagists, was somewhat peripheral to the Vorticists, and never fully integrated into the various overlapping groups in Paris.[6]

The creation of an institution, a group or a movement is a recurring theme in Pound's letters and prose. In the November 1914 issue of the *Egoist* the poet announces the launch of 'The College of Arts' with the intention of creating an institution to reach 'an intellectual status no lower than that attained by the courts of the Italian Renaissance'.[7] It offers 'contact with artists of established position, creative minds, men who for the most part have already suffered in the cause of their art'. The confident, but 'preliminary', announcement was as far as this new renaissance went.[8] Over two decades on from the putative College of Arts he suggests to Ödön Pór 'some sort of permanent "Academie

[1] Angus Stevenson (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, online version, 2015).
[2] Geoff Ward, *Statutes of Liberty: The New York School of Poets* (New York: St Martins Press, 1993), p. 61.
[3] Lytle Shaw, *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of a Coterie* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), p. 16.
[4] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 22 May 1921, *P/F*, p. 58.
[5] Pound's interest in science prompted a letter to the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)—'A query that may have been demoded by new ideas re/ electrons. BUT (and pardon amateur's enquiry) in dealing with what used to be called matter (solids, planets, metal etc)'—in which he also offers his unsolicited thoughts on Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* (1925). Ezra Pound to Alfred North Whitehead 19 February 1928, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122649.
[6] These experiences are described in Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013); J. J. Wilhelm, *Ezra Pound in London & Paris 1908-25* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); and Volumes 1 and 2 of A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 and 2014).
[7] Ezra Pound, 'Preliminary announcement of the College of Arts', *Egoist*, Vol. 1.21, 2 November 1914, pp. 413-14.
[8] Pound's imagined College of Arts owed more than a little to the Rebel Arts Centre in London where he lectured on 30 May 1914. Wyndham Lewis was one of the main movers behind the Centre. F. T. Marinetti and Ford Madox Ford also lectured there, but the Centre soon disappeared. Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 150.

Goncourt" of Econ.' and draws up a list of proposed names.[9]

The purpose of much of the poet's correspondence is not only to progress his economic and other arguments, but to agitate people to form groups and movements, to make things happen, to build something—even if there is often confusion over what he intends to construct. This partly explains the personal reticence observed in the previous chapter. For Pound, letters are a serious undertaking. More than a discrete personal communication, a letter is a call to action.

In parallel with his quest for poetic coherence in *The Cantos*, Pound sought social coherence through groupings of like minds. His experience of the literary coteries in London and Paris fostered his interest in the mechanics of establishing a group that could have a long-term impact. Pound's notion of an institution representing his ideas developed into what he labelled the 'Ezuversity', an ad hoc education delivered via letters from the poet and meetings in Rapallo. He was the sole faculty member. Once in Rapallo there is little sense that Pound sees himself as part of any of the host of groups that he agitates others to create. In contradictory manner, while championing the power of groups and their necessity to move literature and civilisation forward, the poet remains a steadfastly distant individualist.

How Pound describes what he wishes to create—or wishes others to create—varies. His output was so large that some vacillation and variation in terminology could be expected. At times in his letters he uses the words *cenacle*, French for coterie, and *gloire de cenacle*, salons or literary groups thriving in the Romantic period. Later he refers to a *corte letteraria,* Italian for a literary court. He would have been aware that in Italian *fascio* means *bundle* or *group* and—prior to being adopted by Benito Mussolini—was used to describe any association, such as a club.[10] Elsewhere, he talks simply of 'a group', 'a party of intelligence, a party not bound by any central doctrine or theory'.[11] More basically, in a letter to Louis Zukofsky, Pound encourages him to 'form some sort of gang'.[12]

[9] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 31 December 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[10] Yeats may have been referring to this association in the 1937 iteration of *A Vision* which notes, 'only dry or drying sticks can be tied into a bundle'. Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul, *Wisdom of Two: The Literary and Spiritual Collaboration of George and W.B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 339.
[11] Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 136.
[12] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z,* pp. 11-15.

There is a communistic air to some of his protestations in favour of group action. To Paul de Kruif he writes:

> Increment of association is the overplus of what a group of men can do by acting together, that is over and above the sum of what they could accomplish were each one acting separately on his own.
> examples, merchants clubbing together and loading a ship when no one of them cd. afford to hire the whole ship or make use of more than a part of it.[13]

More usually, the 'increment of association' is seen by Pound as dynamic groupings of artists creating civilisation. Such groups are, he repeatedly observes, absent in America. 'As to establishing any sort of milieu in America: it is not my job, and I can't be expected to see from this distance who *could* compose such a bearable milieu,' he writes to the American literary critic and poet R. P. Blackmur.[14] In another letter to the author, critic and editor James Vogel, Pound notes that 'murkn intelligentsia is soft. It is not organized, and hasn't the ghost of a suspicion of how much power (latent) it has'.[15]

The poet's correspondence is repeatedly taken up with how best practically to create such groups in order to transform latent into actual power. Writing to Blackmur, Pound advises: 'At the start a man must work in a group; at least that seems to be the effective modus; later in life he becomes gradually incapable of working in a group. But in any case no man can do everything, or be the whole of a milieu.'[16] Even so, Pound's tendency was to try to do everything himself and to 'be the whole of a milieu'. He was an instinctive group builder. 'No sooner did a disciple or group of followers fall away, or a magazine or journal he was trying to capture, prove unwilling, then he was busy gathering new followers, forming new groups, helping to establish or capture other publications,' observes his biographer Noel Stock.[17] 'Mr. Pound has founded and abandoned a mort of movements,' writes Ford Madox Ford, one of the few authors who appeared to share Pound's interest in movements and establishing the literary canon. 'They may possibly teach you little but they may well make you watch out and see that your powder is dry.'[18] Even when incarcerated in St Elizabeths

[13] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 10 March 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[14] Ezra Pound to R. P. Blackmur 26 March 1925, Paige, p. 271.
[15] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 26 March 1925, Paige, p. 297.
[16] Ezra Pound to R. P. Blackmur 26 March 1925, Paige, pp. 271-2.
[17] Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 569.
[18] *P/F*, p. 117.

Hospital Pound managed to surround himself with a daily gaggle of students and disciples.[19]

3.2: Practical coteries

Pound's thoughts on literary groups are often distinctly practical at the same time as distantly theoretical. As with all of his passions, there is a sense of momentum and need suggesting that establishing a group is a cultural imperative. In correspondence with Louis Zukofsky, he notes that 'a group is very useful, for gathering information, etc., both enlightenment and stimulus to action'. He advises Zukofsky 'find some cheap restaurant and dine together once a week', adding the warning that 'always 60% of group duds, but it don't matter'. The group is seen by Pound as a means of quality control, an antidote to the twin threats of popularity and mediocrity:

> To keep the group pure in heart, I think one must avoid tired and worn out personalities. I wont invidiously give a list. But some of my contemporaries have so institutionalized themselves, and make dignity rather than their mental activity (etc _____). Fill in the blanks to suit yourself.
>
> Must make a NEW grouping. and the older elements must be the uncompromised (either toward mediocrity or popularity.)[20]

While regarding 'popularity' as a compromising force, Pound spent a great deal of time and energy in seeking to increase his own popular reach in the 1930s from writing articles and columns for all and sundry to producing his guides to economics, reading and culture. His correspondence makes clear that the poet is continually perplexed by his failure to reach a mass audience and keen to understand how arch populists succeed. Over a number of years he writes to the American radio broadcaster Reverend Charles Coughlin[21] (who had a radio audience of some 30 million) at his Shrine of the Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan. Coughlin was the founder of the National Union for Social Justice which was anti-communist and opposed Roosevelt's New Deal. There is little encouragement in response from Coughlin and Pound's enthusiasm borders on sycophancy—'These Four Jan/ broadcasts are magnificent. Hardly any rhetoric', 'I think ur/book (Lectures on S/J) is

[19] This is described as 'the world's least orthodox literary salon: convened by a fascist, held in a lunatic asylum' in Daniel Swift, *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics and Madness of Ezra Pound* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. xxx.
[20] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 13.
[21] Reverend Charles Coughlin (1891-1979).

damn fine book, and hope my editors will soon permit me to print my opinion' he writes in 1935 and follows up in 1936 with a donation to Coughlin's organisation.[22] To *Globe* editor, James Dunn, Pound writes: 'Wouldn't it be better to try for a paying circulation among Coughlin's public than among those already fed to the gills by the N. York slop?'[23] He returns to this in a later letter: 'What you feel re/ Coughlin's public?'[24] Dunn was sceptical, probably aware that Coughlin's public were increasingly being fed a diet of anti-Semitism and anti-democratic sentiments. The mass market appeal exemplified by Coughlin remained stubbornly out of reach for the poet.

At the same time, Pound is routinely critical of the hugely successful *Saturday Evening Post* which under editor George Lorimer[25] reached a circulation of three million in 1928.[26] The poet writes to Ernest Walsh, referring to Kay Boyle, in his most obscure and lavatorial style: 'DEERye Boyle ever. Publ. Shat Rev you or Lavatory Broom. Your discov. sech as is. Yipe loudr. than Benet clique.'[27] Elsewhere, he castigates James Dunn for ignoring his advice to publish some Japanese poetry:

> Waal BEE/LEEVE you ME, Young Dunn
> It ZA ERROR !
> It za ERROR not to print that Jap stuff.
> You may run up to 500,000 circ/ but if you cut the BEST kind of reader, you'll end up on the shit pile with Lrimer and the Shat. Eve. Pust.[28]

Here the *Saturday Evening Post* is held up as an example of a publication which has lost 'the BEST kind of reader', meaning the intelligentsia. The fact that it published William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Stephen Crane and many others is ignored. So, too, is its opposition to Roosevelt and the New Deal which might have been expected to appeal to the poet.

Pound's formula for developing a group was consistent over many decades—and was also the antithesis of the mass market populism of someone like Coughlin. The Académie

[22] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122540.
[23] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 3 November 1936, *Globe*, p. 65.
[24] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 5 May 1937, *Globe*, p. 120.
[25] George Horace Lorimer (1867-1937).
[26] David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 29.
[27] Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 178
[28] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 17 May 1937, *Globe*, p. 115.

Goncourt (established in 1900 and still extant) with its members restricted to ten—*les Dix*—was more in line with Pound's thinking: highly selective, focused and influential. In 1950 he is still advising Louis Dudek: 'You've got to get together in a restaurant where the price isn't too high to prevent anyone from coming in. Then talk. Talk till you see if the other fellow understands what you've got to say. That's the only way to do it.'[29] The emphasis is on openness and accessibility which were not, as we shall see, embraced so enthusiastically by the poet in practice. Elsewhere, Pound describes his recipe for creating a literary movement:

> 1. Make up your mind what you want.
> 2. Find two or three men of your own generation.
> 3. Conspire, and incidentally find out what points you agree on, and what you consider essential, and what most important.
> 4. Invoke the nearest power, not necessarily a very large one. Say in your case, a chap like Gorman[30] who has some access to print.
> 5. Remember that you can only put across one or two things, or authors, at a time. (Imagism had three specifications, but the 2nd, i.e., the important one, was omitted by the time the noise reached the boobs.)[31]

Focus and simplicity are regarded as the cornerstones of literary groupings. The smaller the group the more manageable it is. In 1924 he writes to James Vogel: 'When you get five men who trust each other you are a long way to a start. If your stuff won't hold the interest of the other four or of someone in the four, it may not be ready to print.'[32] A decade later, writing to Stanley Nott, Pound notes:

> MUST be a SPECIFIC perception of LIVE thought, as distinct from DEAD.
> Cant have criteria, or program , until some sort of agreement is reached bwteen three or 4/ people re/ which is which.[33]

In a 1934 letter to E. E. Cummings he contemplates the potential for 'cohesion among the half doz or 12/ not utterly god damn idiots' suggesting 'Frobenius, Cocteau (yes, still on the

[29] Louis Dudek (1918-2001), Canadian poet, academic and publisher. Louis Dudek (ed.), *Dk/Some Letters of Ezra Pound* (Montreal: DC Books, 1974), p. 34.
[30] Herbert S. Gorman was the author of *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (New York: Rinehart, 1940).
[31] Ezra Pound to R. P. Blackmur 26 March 1925, Paige, p. 272.
[32] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 298.
[33] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 3 February 1935, *Nott*, p. 45.

map) Crevel, ole bill Wms/ a few technical writers, Marianne, what a wumman/ a half dozen young who are NOT (oh hell NOT, in the least satisfied with what is printed by the week'.[34] Later, advising the English writer Ronald Duncan on the formula for success in a magazine, he notes 'successful (intellectually) review is MADE by a small compact group of writers/should be at least FOUR'.[35] This was a regularly repeated golden number. To Stanley Nott, he advises: 'A magazine is made with FOUR writers. Less than that means paucity.'[36] To James Dunn he notes: 'Every mag. That has ever cut a NOTCH has started with the conviction that at least 3 or 4 writers were worth printing.'[37] And to Phyllis Bottome, he writes: 'NO man is so humble he can be EXCUSED from seeing at least TWO friends and thereby maintaining a centre of action, better a group of four/ improving it as one can.'[38] His location in Rapallo suggests that Pound had excused himself from such endeavours.

In 1928, he writes to James Vogel outlining his recommended operational plan: 'The science of GROUPS is as follows: at the start you must find the 10% of matters that you agree on and the 10% plus value in each other's work.'[39] It is interesting that Pound refers to 'the science of GROUPS', at a time when the study of groups—such as Georg Simmel's work on 'the common consciousness of a group'—was indeed becoming a science.[40] Given the breadth of his reading and knowledge, he is likely to have known of this emerging discipline. Writing to Vogel, Pound continues:

> *Anyhow* it requires more crit. faculty to discover the hidden 10% positive, than to fuss about 90% obvious imperfection. You talk about style, and mistrusting lit. socs. etc. Nacherley. Mistrust people who fuss about paint and finish before they consider girders and structure.[41]

Fussing was a particular bête noir for the action-oriented Pound. 'You are an IDEAL companion/ you do yr/ job and don't fuss/,' he congratulates Ödön Pór.[42] Consensus on the fundamentals, the 'girders and structure', was seen as the key. The rest would follow.

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[34] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 17 December 1934, *Cummings*, p. 35.
[35] Ezra Pound to Ronald Duncan 27 January 1937, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, The Pound Archive, Box 6, Folder 4.
[36] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott, 24 May 1936, *Nott*, p. 216.
[37] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 29 August 1936, *Globe*, p. 45.
[38] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome 1 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.
[39] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 296.
[40] Especially relevant is Simmel's *The Web of Group-Affiliations* (New York: Free Press, 1922). Pound is also likely to have been aware of Simmel's 1900 book, *The Philosophy of Money* (London: Routledge, 1990).
[41] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 296.
[42] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 20 December 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.

'Those of us who have a trace of intelligence and ?? impersonality, MUST stand toegter. we must find a basis of agreement AND a PAIDEUMA that will transmit what we learned,' the poet writes to Robert McNair Wilson.[43] The word 'impersonality' stands out. It appears an unlikely typographical error and is consistent with the impersonal nature of many of Pound's letters. The focus on transmitting knowledge out-weighed matters of emotion or the entanglements of personality.

In other letters he suggests how to achieve such agreement: 'Every generation or group must write its own literary program. The way to do it is by circular letter to your ten chief allies. Find out the two or three points you agree on (if *any*) and issue them as program.'[44] There is a rigorous practicality to this, a clear and unequivocal process. Pound hopes that the same logic can be applied to economics—'It seems to me extremely important that the dozen men who think AT ALL about econ/ shd/ try to find what are their points of AGREEMENT.'[45] There is no sense that Pound's aggressive, repetitive and often insulting letters might stand in the way of this quest.

3.3: The group as audience

The poet's correspondence makes clear that his ambitions to create influential literary movements and enhance civilisation were constrained by commercial reality. Self-publishing (as practiced by Pound on arrival in Europe) and publications targeted at very small audiences were commonplace. The circulations of some of the most lauded and influential literary magazines were often very small. *Criterion* had a maximum of 800 subscribers[46] and *Scrutiny* 750.[47] Deluxe editions published by small presses were the standard rather than the exception. The work of Pound and others was published by the likes of Elkin Mathews and his eponymous press, John Rodker's Ovid Press and Sylvia Beach (publisher of *Ulysses* and deluxe editions of *The Cantos*).[48] *A Draft of XVI Cantos* was published in 1926 by William Bird's Three Mountains Press in an edition of 70 copies with prices ranging from 400 to 1600 francs.[49]

[43] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 22 December 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[44] Ezra Pound to Charles Henri Ford 1 February 1929, Paige, p. 301.
[45] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 18 March 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[46] Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 248.
[47] This can also be interpreted as part of the quest to create an elite civilisation. F. R. Leavis was among those who campaigned against newspapers and other mass media: 'Films, newspapers, publicity in all forms, commercially-catered fiction—all offer satisfaction at the lowest level.' F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Cultural Awareness* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1933), p. 3.
[48] Lawrence Rainey, 'A poem including history: *The Cantos* of Ezra Pound', *Paideuma*, 21, Spring/Fall 1992, pp. 199-220.
[49] Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 44.

In 1931, Pound writes to Alice Corbin Henderson of another publishing project with Giovanni Scheiwiller[50] which was typical of those he became involved with:

> I have been asked to do a SMALL anthology, for Italian use. That is very limited 200 copies, no pay for anyone, can't be.
>
> Scheiwiller stands a loss on every book he prints but they are usually very nice books (neat, not de luxe).[51]

Pound approaches E. E. Cummings for permission to use some of his poems in the anthology warning 'there is no remuneration save a couple of nicely printed (not de luxe) copies. He don't want to print more than 200 including the gifts to the authors'.[52] In these instances Pound communicates clearly, taking the trouble to manage expectations ('not de luxe') and to have full permission from the authors.

Self-published, or published in small editions by specialist publishers, Pound's books were often collector's items rather than mass market products.[53] This is something which Basil Bunting brings to his mentor's attention: 'Why do you allow your works to be published at prohibitive prices, thus insuring that they shall be bought by bibliophiles only, who do not read them and dont allow other people to? Sixpence is the proper price for a book of poetry.'[54] The contradiction between the commercial reality of limited editions at exclusive prices and the poet's bold aspirations to re-shape the world remained unresolved. This becomes ever more apparent as his mind and output turns to propaganda during the 1930s.

At the same time, the poet is routinely critical of magazines—such as the *Saturday Evening Post*—and publishers seeking out a mass readership. In a letter to James Dunn he criticises the German publisher Tauchnitz and Albatross Books (also based in Germany and started by John Holroyd-Reece, Max Christian Wegner and Kurt Enoch): 'The Tauchnitz which cares only for money but pretends to other aims, issued *The Portrait* and the Albatross issued *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* in continental cheap editions, indicating that the books had

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[50] Giovanni Scheiwiller (1869-1965), Italian editor, art critic and publisher.
[51] Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson 24 January 1931, Ira B. Nadel (ed.), *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 230. The resulting anthology was Ezra Pound (ed.), *Profile: An Anthology Collected in MCMXXXI* (Milan: Giovanni Scheiwiller, 1932).
[52] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 24 January 1931, *Cummings*, p. 20.
[53] Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 40.
[54] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 10 April 1927, *Bunting*, p. 23.

passed out of the exclusive circle of people who think and want to know what is being thought, and into the general mass of people who read because an author has a "name", etc.'[55] A great deal of Pound's activities—on his own behalf (especially when he arrived in London) and for others—could be described as building up names and awareness of their work in the marketplace. There is a mismatch between his talk of exclusivity and his actions, as well as between his fascination with those able to communicate with a mass market and his continuing faith in a literary elite.

In a rare demonstration of self-awareness, the poet writes to the editor James Dunn responding to an issue of *Globe*:

> Never having edited a large circulation paper I do NOT set up myself as a teacher of others.
> My 'reaction was favourable' I will answer specific queeries if you have time to make 'em.
> But I DO NOT know how to git the man in the street.
> OR at any rate I have never been ALLOWED to go on when I thought I was about to do so.[56]

Of course, Pound continually sets himself up as a 'teacher of others'. His admission that the 'man in the street' remains a mystery is immediately undercut by the suggestion that he has never been given the means or freedom to connect with the mass market.

Putting talk of mass markets to one side, Pound's letters suggest that one of the points of a group is to serve as a ready audience.[57] Writing to Vogel, he notes: 'You "all" presumably want some sort of intelligent life *not* dependent on cash, and salesmanship.' The group exists as an antidote to money and salesmanship. He returns to this topic later in the letter: 'Point of group is precisely to have somewhere to go when you don't want to be bothered about salesmanship. (Paradox?? No.)'[58] A contradiction here is that while a literary group might enable authors to avoid having to spend time and energy in salesmanship, in

[55] *Globe*, p. 121.
[56] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 28-31 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 103.
[57] For Elizabethan literary figures—Sir Philip Sydney, Sir Walter Raleigh et al—the coterie was *the* audience for their work. Printing books or collecting poems to serve a bigger audience was regarded as inappropriate and grubby. For that reason, no collection of John Donne's poetry appeared until two years after his death. Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).
[58] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 298.

Pound's case salesmanship was one of his great skills. He was irresistibly drawn to self-promotion and was selfless and unceasing in his promotion of others. His letters are the most potent promotional tool in his literary arsenal. Writing to Stanley Nott, for example, he bemoans the lack of promotion of Montgomery Butchart's 1935 book *Money*: 'Damn it all SOMEONE has got to do some sales talk. Butchart's "Money" ought to (as I am telling 'em) be ON their list of required reading.'[59] While others, such as Yeats, had a general policy of not providing book cover endorsements, Pound could be relied on to step into the selling breach. He is soon offering Nott a choice of blurbs for Butchart's book—'Not a dull page in over **** 300. It ought to be required reading in every high=school. Non=doctrinarian , the fruits of over 150 of the best minds of the n/ race, recorded in a period of three centuries. An essential book for every economist or student of economics.'[60] While the poet was uncomfortable writing his own biography for a book's cover, his salesmanship on behalf of others was forceful and highly practical.

In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, T. S. Eliot observes that poets have to 'talk to a coterie or to soliloquise'.[61] While more willing—and stridently so in the 1930s—to impose or seek to impose his ideas, at the same time Pound does not suggest himself as the leader of any resulting group. He stumbled in the direction of leading the Imagists in London, but this led to a falling-out with F. S. Flint in 1915. 'You had the energy, you had the talents, you might have been generalissimo in a compact onslaught: and you spoiled everything by some native incapacity for walking square with your fellows. You have not been a good comrade, voilà,' Flint writes bitterly to Pound.[62] Caught between the coterie and the soliloquy (and wanting to do both), thereafter Pound appeared willing to take a backseat while still enthusiastically encouraging others to establish groups. Indeed, with the Objectivists—a group instigated and enabled largely by Pound—he allowed Louis Zukofsky, Basil Bunting and George Oppen to take the lead. The result was the Objectivists issue of *Poetry* (February 1931) which contained a hastily created manifesto for the new movement—almost exactly what Pound had done with the Imagists nearly two decades previously. The Objectivists was a ramshackle creation though it did give its members an identity they retained. 'Almost all the people Zukofsky picked as Objectivists didn't agree with him, didn't write like him or like one another, and didn't want to be

[59] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 30 March 1936, *Nott*, p. 204.
[60] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott July 1935, *Nott*, p. 163.
[61] T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 22.
[62] F. S. Flint to Ezra Pound 3 July 1915, Christopher Middleton, 'Documents on Imagism from the papers of F. S. Flint', *The Review*, No. 15, April 1965, p. 42.

called Objectivists,' observed Kenneth Rexroth.[63] In terms of its crumbling community and swiftly dissipating leadership, it was Imagism revisited and accelerated.

Pound's extensive correspondence with Louis Zukofsky during the creation of the Objectivists as a named group and the special issue of *Poetry* is illuminating. The older poet goes to great lengths to clarify that he is willing to help but wants to let the next generation take charge—'need hardly say that I am ready to be of anny assistance I can. I do NOT think it wd. be well to insert my point of view. I shd. like you to consider mckenzie's point of view and your own.'[64] Elsewhere, he writes: 'I continue to feel gratified: shall prob put my fingers into the matter too often, still.....you may as well have what I know, at yr. disposal to use or leave.'[65] Unable to resist, Pound is soon writing detailed and lengthy letters offering his advice on how Zukofsky should go about creating the issue of the magazine. On the day following promising not to 'insert my point of view' he writes two extended letters and then a follow up three days later. His advice (without apparent irony) includes 'Be takkful'.[66] Pound is caught between his rational belief that the younger poets should be left to make their own decisions and his natural instinct to take control. With each letter the urge to become involved grows as the contradictions within the poet battle each other. Throughout his life and correspondence Pound was a poet and person of action rather than contemplation. To John Dewey he writes: 'I think the great need , and IMMEDIATE need is agreement on ACTION. That overtops anything else.'[67]
Given Pound's dedication to action, encouraging others in the role of a provocateur, a mentor and a shaper of ideas, rather than an active participant, is an awkward role.

3.4: A contradiction in a coterie

Though unlikely, perhaps this willingness to offer directions from the sidelines may have been motivated by a degree of self-realisation. While Pound repeatedly considered the mechanics of literary groupings in his correspondence, he ignored the fact that he was ill suited to enjoy or succeed in traditional literary groups. They tend to revolve around social events—meetings in restaurants and over drinks at events hosted by influential individuals. They usually imply a democracy of ideas with formats that allow the

[63] Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Peter Quartermain (eds.), *The Objectivist Nexus: Essays in Cultural Poetics* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1999), p. 4.
[64] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 24 October 1930, *P/Z*, p. 45. Donal McKenzie was a Marxist literary critic and co-editor of the magazine *Morada*.
[65] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 25 October 1930, *P/Z*, p. 48.
[66] Ibid..
[67] Ezra Pound to John Dewey 13 November 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122549.

protagonists to discuss matters openly. Pound liked to take charge of social situations, preferring his own voice and those of people who agreed with him. In *The Verse Revolutionaries*, Helen Carr summarises: 'He was all his life devoid of conventional social skills.'[68]

The poet's experience in London gave him insights into the mechanics of literary groupings but might also have offered lessons in his own ability within such contexts. Wyndham Lewis compared Pound in London to 'a drop of oil in a glass of water. The trouble was, I believe, that he had no wish to mix: he just wanted to impress. The British in question were not of the impressionable kind—hated above all things being impressed and people who wished to impress them. I may add they also disapproved of Americans.'[69] Pound's success in establishing himself on the London literary scene was brought about by the sheer force of his personality as much as being liked or appreciated for his literary output. His behaviour and appearance certainly attracted attention—manifest in a variety of parodies, outright criticism and humorous comments.[70]

One of the central objectives of Pound's London sojourn was to be invited by W. B. Yeats to his weekly Monday evening gatherings. These also served as a potential model for any future group created by the younger poet. The invitation came in a letter from Yeats in May 1909.[71] The guest list was a sign of things to come including Count Antonio Cippico, an early supporter of Mussolini, the poet Francis Willoughby and Florence Farr, a keen champion of eugenics.[72] Douglas Goldring[73] expressed his astonishment at Pound's behaviour during the Monday evening social gatherings: 'He dominated the room, distributed Yeats's cigarettes and Chianti, and laid down the law about poetry.'[74] Pound liked to lead conversation—even when a relative newcomer to the literary scene. Yet, elsewhere, the poet confides to Stanley Nott: 'I never DID care about yattering ABOUT aht/ and letters.'[75] To James Laughlin, the poet similarly observes: 'if there IZ anything qui

[68] Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 25.
[69] Wyndham Lewis, 'Ezra: the portrait of a personality', *Quarterly Review of Literature*, 5.2, 1949, p. 136.
[70] His poetical appearance a la Whistler is described in Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 216.
[71] W. B. Yeats to Ezra Pound 8 May 1909, John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (eds.), *W. B Yeats Letters Volume 5 1908-10* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) pp. 522-3.
[72] Farr joined the Eugenic Education Society and told John Quinn: 'We have two objects to keep half the world from reproducing themselves and to get some value put upon the people that do get born in spite of us!!!' John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (eds.), *W. B Yeats Letters Volume 5 1908-10* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 467.
[73] Among other things Douglas Goldring (1887-1960) was involved in the publication of BLAST.
[74] Douglas Goldring, *South Lodge*: *Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the* English Review *Circle* (London: Constable & Company, 1943), p. 49.
[75] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 2 February 1935, *Nott*, p. 40.

ne m'interesse pas, c'est de la CONversation./ especially yawpin' 'bout licherchoor'.[76] This appears a clear contradiction as Pound's expounding on these subjects was a life-time's work. But, by this he is expressing a dislike for what he views as trivialising literary chit-chat. Pound regards literature as too serious an undertaking for casual conversation. It demands seriousness of intent. Others who later gathered around Pound in Rapallo proffered similar sentiments. Basil Bunting reflected of his repeated visits to Rapallo: 'I saw a good deal of Yeats. But of few others. I don't enjoy literary society or literary conversation.'[77] Many attracted to Pound in Rapallo, such as Duncan and Zukofsky, were temperamentally unclubbable, but found the lure of Pound's personality and intellect irresistible. They wanted to learn rather than idly converse or display their knowledge and ability.

In his letters Pound's interest in the formation of groups does not diminish though it is mentioned less regularly and in somewhat different contexts. To Senator Bronson Cutting the poet suggests that they start a club with the '12 literates in the senate...with me and Benito as honorary members'. To this imagined alliance, Pound adds Eliot, Gerhart Hauptmann, Yeats and Jean Cocteau ('wd. be an highly ornamental addition and have the advtg/ of being wholly incomprehendable to the electorate').[78] The selection of dream teams of intellectuals—as per the College of Arts—is humorous, but with a serious intent. Later he suggests to Cutting a group of like-minded senators could be a force for change:

> Why the devil cant a dozen senators form some sort of education committee. high brow books shop or whatever to import or have pubd/ the NECESSARY current books, that do NOT get into America quick enough.[79]

He makes much the same suggestion to Senator William Borah. Getting the right books into the right hands is a perennial preoccupation of the poet's. He writes to the Japanese poet Kitue Kitasono in 1940:

> Still interested in how groups work:

[76] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 20 December 1935, *Laughlin*, p. 50.
[77] Jonathan Williams (ed.), *Descant on Rawthey's Madrigal: Conversations with Basil Bunting* (Lexington: The Jargon Society, 1968), unpaginated.
[78] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 23 December 1931, *Cutting*, p. 66.
[79] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting July 1934?, *Cutting*, p. 140. Cutting provides a list of recommendations and this list is mentioned in *Kulchur*, p. 260. Presumably, Pound felt confident to go public with the list as Cutting had died in the interim.

> Another line of enquiry: do YOU, Ito, Mushakoji and Kita agree on ANYTHING? And if so what?
>
> or do you set around and NEVER meet (as in England different sects)
> Sometimes damn foreigners can introduce proper people across clique frontiers.[80]

Pound enters into clipped—almost pidgin—English, but in effect summarises his life's work of introducing 'proper people across clique frontiers'. Elsewhere he celebrates Kitasono's VOU group in Tokyo as a powerful literary gathering: 'I know that nowhere in Europe is there any such vortex of poetic alertness. Tokio takes over, where Paris stopped.'[81] In *Guide to Kulchur* Pound repeats his enthusiasm for the group.[82] These ringing endorsements of Tokyo as a poetical vortex are undermined by the fact that Pound never visited the city or Japan and his sources of information on what was happening there were Kitasono and a handful of other occasional correspondents. It is a triumph of salesmanship over knowledge.

3.5: Market forces

Pound's interest in groups and his habitual salesmanship had a more pragmatic motivation. The growing inaccessibility of his poetry combined with his political views, anti-Semitism and strident economic arguments meant that publishers and editors were no longer beating a path to his door. As early as 1923, Ford Madox Ford reflects in a letter to Yeats that the launch of the *Transatlantic Review* offers Pound 'a permanent place in which at his very wildest to disport himself—almost every other channel being now closed to him'.[83] The publication only lasted 12 issues (January-December 1924). Ford's death knell for his friend's career was premature, but throughout the 1930s Pound found it steadily more difficult to have his work published. In 1934 writing to E. E. Cummings, Pound bemoans what he regards as the general stasis in the market place. 'There are practically NO magazines / Eliot takes 9 months and a forcepps / ETC.' He continues: 'Now that Bitch and Bugl/ and Chimpanzeeum [Criterion] are extinct/ etc. do you see, feel or adumbrate, ANY nucleus or non=resistance to a monthly, for 1935, that shd/ at least consider the possibility of doing now something more or less nearly as active as the Little Review was

[80] Ezra Pound to Kitue Kitasono 30 December 1940, *Japan*, p. 107.
[81] Ezra Pound, 'VOU Club', *Townsman*, Vol. 1 No. 1, January 1938; *Japan*, p. 201.
[82] *Kulchur*, pp. 137-9.
[83] Ford Madox Ford to W. B. Yeats 23 November 1923, Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy with Alan B. Himber (eds.), *Letters to W. B. Yeats Volume 2* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 445-6.

yr/ infancy, back in 1917/19.'[84] As the age of influential little magazines came to an end, Pound is persistently interested in repeating the successes of the past. Writing to Cummings, he argues that there remains an appetite for what he describes as his 'literary' work. The trouble is that he prefers to write about economics:

> I don't spose there is any nooz service in them mountings/ or that you will have noticed that Muss/ went out on Oct. 6. and buried scarcity econ/ and damn well confirmed nearly everything I wrote in Feb. 1933 and can't bloody well get printed. requests from various that I send "literary material." LITERARY mat/ee/ree/ial.[85]

The sceptical might suggest that it is convenient that Pound's far-sighted work never saw the light of day, but not being able to have his latest thoughts printed is a regular complaint of the poet's in the 1930s. There is no apparent concern about the most appropriate outlet or channel, simply being in print is enough. In a 1936 letter to the author and theatre producer Joseph Macleod[86] he complains:

> Hell; Eliot won't print ME either, except when I am harmless (they have been trying to find something harmless for a year. meanwhile Routlege, Nott, and the yanks have had to print several items).
>
> AND my book on MONEY is held up/ AND the second vol of the MAKE IT NEW series has been split into segments.[87]

Pound does not pause to consider why one of his oldest friends is unwilling to publish him as readily as he once did, nor that the opposite of harmless is harmful. Paul de Kruif tries to interest the publishers Harcourt in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* and *ABC of Reading* but is unsuccessful. Pound remains upbeat, like any salesman, able to emphasise the positive—'4 books by E/P/ las' year in Lunnon/ and ONE in N.Y. and same ole story promised fer 1934.'[88] Only two books by Pound actually came out in London in 1933—*The Active Anthology* which he edited and his *ABC of Economics*. The following year saw the publication of *ABC of Reading*, *Make It New* (a collection of essays) and *Eleven New Cantos*

[84] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cumming 25 October 1934, *Cummings*, p. 29.
[85] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 25 October 1934, *Cummings*, pp. 29-30.
[86] As director of the Cambridge Festival Theatre Joseph Macleod (1903-84) produced some of Pound's Noh plays. He later became a BBC newsreader.
[87] Ezra Pound to Joseph Macleod undated 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122591.
[88] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 5 February 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.

XXXI-XLI in the United States.[89] His productivity was not matched by impact in terms of positive reviews or sales.[90]

Not only were publications and publishers unenthusiastic about Pound's non-literary obsessions, they were fewer in number and his affiliations had dried up. By the 1930s he was no longer associated with a particular publication after his connections with *Poetry* (1912-17), *The Little Review* (1914-29) and *The Dial* (1920-9) all ended. His own magazine, *The Exile*, proved short-lived—launched in 1927, only four issues were produced. In 1936 he became 'European correspondent' of *Globe* magazine, the brainchild of James Taylor Dunn and his brother who had no background in publishing and were based in Minnesota. Pound's willingness to become involved with *Globe* displays his desperation.

Given the poet's difficulties it is easy to see how James Taylor Dunn's initial approach proved effective: it contained an appealing level of vagueness—'As for subject, it is unrestricted—provided only that your article show relation between people and place. In other words, setting (background) should impress as much local color as possible on the characters.'[91] Contemplating the poet's motivation in becoming involved in a new magazine launched from the mid-West by young people with no experience, the editors of the letters between Dunn and the poet identify 'Pound's increasingly strained relations with the American literary scene throughout the decade' as a factor.[92] Among other things, they point out that for the most of the 1930s he did not have 'a consistent publisher in the United States'.[93] As *Globe* stumbles from one commercial disappointment to another, Pound's desperation is evident in his willingness to reduce his fees: 'If you are hard up and want to try THIS kind of mag/ and can give me as much liberty as I now have in "ACTION" and the British Union Quarterly, and dare use a monthly letter from me, I will cut my rate from 20 bucks to 5 bucks per article for a series of 12 articles.'[94] While the magazine was unsuccessful it does prove that Pound's networking and willingness to network were healthy. His editorial suggestions and connections led the magazine to

[89] *The Active Anthology* (London: Faber & Faber), *ABC of Economics* (London: Faber and Faber), *ABC of Reading* (London: Routledge and New Haven: Yale University Press), *Make It New* (London: Faber and Faber) and *Eleven New Cantos XXXI-XLI* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart).
[90] Some of the reviews are cited in A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound Poet: The Epic Years 1921-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 191-2. They include Samuel Beckett's comment on *Make It New*: 'Education by provocation, Spartan maieutics.'
[91] James Taylor Dunn to Ezra Pound 16 June 1936, *Globe*, p. 1.
[92] *Globe*, p. 2.
[93] *Globe,* p. 5.
[94] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 18 December April 1938, *Globe*, p. 175.

Sisley Huddleston, Paul Morand, Langston Hughes, James Laughlin, Erskine Caldwell and Hilaire Hiler.

Given the diminishing commercial opportunities on offer, there is a self-serving element to some of Pound's feedback in his correspondence. He encourages James Laughlin to open a publishing company rather than pursue poetry and is always keen for any in his network to launch magazines. Laughlin recalled his dismissal by Pound in a positive light:

> I stayed several months in Rapallo at the Ezuversity, learning and reading until Pound said it was time for me to go back to Harvard and do *something useful*. Being useful meant that I should publish books because at the time publishing was still suffering from the Depression and none of [Pound's] friends, except Hemingway, had steady publishers.[95]

Laughlin is probably repeating one of Pound's complaints. In fact, his older friends—Frost, Williams, Cummings, Eliot and Yeats—remained in demand. His newer and younger friends—Duncan, Zukofsky and Bunting—were the ones who struggled to make an impact, though that was understandable as they were in the early stage of their literary careers. Pound was left languishing between the old guard and the next generation.

From a contemporary perspective Pound's publishing standing can appear better than it actually was. Rebecca Beasley argues: 'The 1930s were years of consolidation for Ezra Pound. His poetry became available to a wider public as its publication was taken over by major publishers, Faber and Faber in Great Britain and Farrar and Rinehart in the United States.'[96] This does not take into account the often miniscule sales of the books—Eliot reports to Pound in 1930: 'We have on hand 236 copies ord. edition of Quia [*Quia Pauper Amavi*], having sold 4. We have on hand NO copies of limited edition having sold 6.'[97]—or the fact that the importance of Faber in the 1930s was less than it might now appear. While it published Pound, Joyce, Auden and Spender, none was recording significant sales at this stage in their careers. Faber's first commercial success was Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a*

[95] Linda Kuehl, 'Talk with James Laughlin: new and old directions', *New York Times Book Review,* 25 February 1973, p. 355.
[96] Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1.
[97] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 13 May 1930, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1930-1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 177. It is unclear which edition Eliot is referring to. *Quia Pauper Amavi* was published by the Egoist Press in 1919 and included 'Homage to Sextus Propertius' and three cantos. 'Homage' was published by Faber in 1934.

Fox Hunting Man (1928), but its poetry publishing had not had any notable success stories by the mid-1930s and the company lurched from one financial crisis to another.[98]

Pound's correspondence with Richard de la Mare of Faber and Faber illustrates the gulf between market realities and the poet's publishing expectations. In 1928 de la Mare and Faber offer Pound £25 as an advance for his book on Cavalcanti and suggest a signed limited edition.[99] The publisher and author than wrangle over the inclusion of facsimiles of the original pages which Pound is in favour of and Faber against. A compromise of a limited number of facsimile pages is agreed with an American publisher recruited. By January 1929 de la Mare writes that the printers 'have been struggling with your elaborate suggestions'.[100] There is increasing concern from de la Mare that Pound is steering the project in the wrong direction—'If we were to go ahead now on the lines you yourself suggest, I have no doubt at all in my own mind that we should end up very seriously out of pocket'. The American publisher then withdraws. It is clear from such examples that Pound's unrealistic and uncommercial expectations (not unusual for authors) actively work against his output being published. Equally, there is no sense that his work may appeal to anything other than a very small market.

Eliot's correspondence suggests that Faber's loyalty to Pound was based on their personal friendship rather than commercial rationale—though Faber did steer clear of the most polemical of Pound's economic writing.[101] Friendship went so far. Perhaps feeling guilty or at least aware of his friend's situation, Eliot continued to look for work for Pound—in 1932, he writes to the editor of the *New Statesman* suggesting that he pay Pound to review Adrian Stokes' new book *Stones of Rimini*.[102] Hearing nothing, he then suggests the same to *Adelphi* magazine.[103]

An additional element was the decline in the number of wealthy benefactors prepared to support artists and magazines. John Quinn, a supporter of a number of artists and authors, died in 1925. There was no new generation with the same willingness to invest in authors as

[98] Faber's turnover approached £100,000 by 1936 but up to that point it was in and out of profit. Toby Faber, *Faber and Faber: The Untold Story* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), p. 104.
[99] Richard de la Mare to Ezra Pound 21 September 1928, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31964621.
[100] Richard de la Mare to Ezra Pound 15 January 1929, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31964621.
[101] Faber published non-fiction and a book on social credit would have fitted into their list in the 1930s. It included, for example, A. F. Rickman's *Swedish Iron Ore* (1939) 'a new addition to our list of monographs on modern economic subjects'. Toby Faber, *Faber and Faber: The Untold Story* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019), p. 135.
[102] T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 325.
[103] Ibid., p. 358.

Margaret Cravens who supported Pound in his early career—giving him around $1000 a year after a couple days of acquaintance[104]—or Harriet Shaw Weaver who supported James Joyce through the inter-war years. The deteriorating economic climate in the 1930s brought an end to *Criterion*. Even Virginia Woolf was affected—she sold her share in the Hogarth Press in 1938 and lost control over publishing her work. The Ezuversity and Pound's prolific correspondence was a strategy—conscious or otherwise—to solve the problem of declining publishing channels and supporters with financial resources. It encouraged his disciples in their faith and created outlets for his work—such as Laughlin's publishing company New Directions,[105] James Angleton and Reed Whittemore's *Furioso* and Ronald Duncan's *Townsman*.

3.6: An expanding vision

As the market for his work decreased, Pound's ambitions grew. In Paris, he complains his objectives are out of step with the city's literary salons. His emphasis has shifted to 'thinking about civic order…and nobody in Paris was doing any of that'.[106] This expansion of ambition is a gradual transition. 'The symbolist position, artistic aloofness from world affairs, is no good now,' the poet writes in 1921.[107] Increasingly, he talks more broadly of what it would take to change civilisation, a planned renaissance: 'A Risorgimento means an intellectual awakening. This will have its effect not only on the arts, but in life, in politics, and in economics.'[108]

Clive Bell, something of a bête noir for Pound, was making similar claims using very similar language—'Few observant people will deny that there are signs of an awakening in Europe. The times are great with the birth of some new thing. A spiritual renaissance may be at hand,'[109] he wrote in 1911 and a year later was talking again of 'the New Renaissance'.[110] 'A renaissance is a thing made—a thing made by conscious propaganda,' writes Pound in 1915.[111] A renaissance is interpreted by the poet as man-made, an act of communication, a marketing exercise rather than a spontaneous cultural convulsion. The

[104] Omar Pound and Robert Spoo (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship 1910-12* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 6.
[105] New Directions was funded largely by a gift of $100,000 Laughlin received on graduating from his father, the holder of a fortune from Pittsburgh steel. Its first book in 1936—*New Directions in Prose and Poetry*—featured Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop and Henry Miller as well as Pound. Laughlin went on to correspond with and publish Pound for the rest of his life and created one of the most important literary publishing companies in America.
[106] D. G. Bridson, 'An interview with Ezra Pound', James Laughlin (ed.), *New Directions 17* (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 170.
[107] Ezra Pound, 'Review of C. H. Douglas' *Credit Power and Democracy*', *Contact* 4, 1921, 1.
[108] Ezra Pound (William Cookson, ed.), 'Patria Mia', *Selected Prose 1909-65* (New York: New Directions, 1975), pp. 111-12.
[109] Clive Bell, *Athenaeum,* 7 October 1911, pp. 428-9; Mark Hussey, *Clive Bell and the Making of Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 92.
[110] Mark Hussey, *Clive Bell and the Making of Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 90.
[111] Ezra Pound, 'The Renaissance II', *Poetry,* Vol. 6, March 1915, p. 285.

juxtaposition of a renaissance of the arts and the battering-ram communication of propaganda—'propagoose propaGander'[112]—is stark. Indeed, during the war Pound conflates the role of the group and propaganda—'What we must create is the air of there being a LOT of us/ having common views/ discussing them in an air of HIGH lucidity and amenity/ hell; yes, plenty of Amenity/.'[113] Increasingly through his years in Rapallo, 'conscious propaganda' sums up Pound's epistolary and prose style. Equally, there is a growing gulf between Pound's consciousness of the intent of what Gerhart Münch calls his 'propagandistical work' and his consciousness of its reception.[114]

Pound's belief was that the mobilisation of a relatively small number of people could be enormously powerful. 'It takes about 600 people to make a civilisation. There were umpteen billions of unbreached barbarians in the North woods when Athens etc.,' he writes to James Joyce.[115] Implicit is a notion of who these people might be and their importance in any resulting civilisation. In an era where mass appeal—of politics and products—was increasingly the way of the world, Pound's perspective was a throwback to societies controlled by an elite.[116] Artists were supposed to set civilised standards.

From the 1920s, Pound's ambitions move steadily and inexorably beyond literature. This might explain his unwillingness to provide direct leadership to the Objectivists: his agenda far exceeds their largely poetical focus. His belief is that the elite are the intellectual vanguard—'intelligentzia precedes the politicians.'[117] Adrian Stokes, a Rapallo visitor, echoes these ideas in his 1926 book *Sunrise in the West*: 'Art does not prosper when there has not been a body of men leading the full life, nor has a culture arisen without such a nucleus of favoured ones, without the personal service and respect that they have demanded and inspired.'[118] The 'nucleus of favoured ones' was small in number.

The increasingly apparent trouble for Pound in the 1930s was that very few of the intellectual elite cared about the economics of social credit. For all his canvassing, literary

[112] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 3 February 1935, *Nott*, p. 44.
[113] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 30 July 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[114] Gerhart Münch to Ezra Pound 2 April 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[115] Ezra Pound to James Joyce 1928, James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz* (St Paul: Graywolf Press, 1987), p. 42. This echoes a much earlier observation of George Moore: 'Democratic art! Art is the direct antithesis to democracy....Athens! a few thousand citizens who owned many thousand slaves, call that democracy! No! what I am speaking of is modern democracy—the mass. The mass can only appreciate simple and naive emotions, puerile prettiness, above all conventionalities.' George Moore, *Confessions of a Young M*an (London: Swan, Sonnenschein, Lowrey and Co., 1888), pp. 158-9.
[116] Friedrich Nietzsche, who spent time near to Rapallo, may have been an unconscious influence. The author and critic George Brandes wrote of his admiration of Nietzsche and his 'deep indignation against democratic mediocrity, your aristocratic radicalism'. Sue Prideaux, *I am Dynamite: A Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018), p. 292.
[117] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott undated 1935, *Nott*, p. 56.
[118] Adrian Stokes, *Sunrise in the West: A Modern Interpretation of Past and Present* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1926), p. 151.

figures did not flock to Pound's banner. Most remained aloof or bemused. Undeterred, the salesman-poet maintains his belief that things are moving to his agenda. He writes to James Dunn: 'Literature in the sense implied in the phrase "a literary magazine" is having a vacation. All the men with enough intelligence to write a good story or novel are concentrated on the problem of monetary and credit issue, the nature of money (not the tricks used in getting it out of others, but the way it gets into existence at all).'[119] Those underneath the banner could hardly be described as 'favoured ones', proving that Pound's experience of the Imagists was not an isolated instance of the dysfunctional nature of groups. He is critical of the social credit group in London and asks Stanley Nott for more information:

> I am of a irritbl and impatient nature...but I am also purrsistent.)
> Amsp any stray (and if you wish, confidential) information re/ the 57 varieties of fussing and quibbling, and mutuall biting social sreditors; a who ZOO of the fussers,
> wd. help me.'[120]

In response, Nott echoes some of Pound's intolerances and thinking about how ideas are communicated to the world:

> I hate almost all Social Creditors and so far I have kept clear of them. ....They don't want to be united. Now that the movement is growing they want to form as many sects as possible and capitalise their interest in Social Credit....A great idea, it seems, needs a noisy, fanatical minority to put it over.[121]

Increasingly Pound is a 'noisy, fanatical minority' of one, championing the benefits and mechanics of togetherness while wholly committed to his own individualistic interpretations of literature, economics and politics.

In Pound's mind, the civic and the poetic had the power to come together in Italy. A 1923 letter to the sculptor Nancy Cox McCormack is the most cogent explanation of his ambitions to utilise an artistic group to activate change in civilisation:

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[119] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 29 September 1936, *Globe*, p. 54.
[120] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott, 23 January 1935, *Nott*, p. 27.
[121] Stanley Nott to Ezra Pound 25 January 1935, *Nott*, p. 30.

> To clear up what I said the other day, it would be quite easy to make Italy the intellectual centre of Europe; and that by gathering ten or fifteen of the best writers and artists. . . . I shouldn't trust anyone's selection save my own. There is no use going into details until one knows if there is or could be any serious interest in the idea; that is to say, if the dictator *wants* a *corte letteraria*; if he is interested in the procedure of Sigismundo Malatesta in getting the best artists of his time into Rimini, a small city with no great resources. I know, in a general way, the fascio includes literature and the arts in its programme; that is very different from being ready to take specific action.
>
> You have to avoid official personages, the deadwood of academies, purely pedagogical figures. The life of the arts is always concentrated in a very few individuals; they invent, and the rest follow, or adapt, or exploit.
>
> Italy has an opportunity *now* ... Germany is busted, England is too stupid, France is too tired to offer serious opposition; America is too far from civilisation. [122]

This letter, offering a fuller interpretation of the poet's perspective on civilisation than elsewhere, illustrates many of the issues which emerge over the next twenty years. The final listing of cultural stereotypes is often repeated. Pound is over-optimistic—achieving a new renaissance 'would be quite easy'. It requires seriousness which only he is equipped to provide, a willingness directly to learn from history and Malatesta's experience and a commitment to action. The future he envisages is built without existing artistic, cultural or educational institutions, but by 'a very few individuals', an elite, 'a noisy, fanatical minority' in Stanley Nott's words. To this, he adds a typical sense of urgency: the opportunity for Italy is in the moment and likely to be fleeting.

Writing to Richard Aldington shortly before re-locating to Rapallo, he reports: 'We are restarting civilisation, and have devised a new modus of making art and lit. possible.'[123] It is interesting to speculate what this 'new modus' might have involved. It is a theme he returns to in the 1940s—writing to his lawyer Julien Cornell in 1946, Pound says, 'Next

[122] Ezra Pound to Nancy Cox McCormack 15 August 1923, A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound Poet: Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 54-55.
[123] Ezra Pound to Richard Aldington May 16? 1924, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas 5.4.

point is to get Jas. [James Laughlin] to understand need of pub/ing a nucleus of civilisation, more organic than a "Five foot shelf," & the tooter the suiter.'[124]

While Pound sees the potential for a new civilisation in Italy, he never totally gives up on such a thing happening in America. In 1938 he writes to John Crowe Ransom holding out hopes 'for a revival of American culture considering it as something specifically grown from the nucleus of the American Founders, present in the Adams, Jefferson correspondence'.[125]

It is also notable that Pound's faith in an elite drawn from the intelligentsia was not an original position to take in the 1920s and 1930s. 'It is only when there came together enough civilised individuals to form a nucleus from which light can radiate, and sweetness ooze, that a civilisation becomes possible,' writes Clive Bell in *Civilisation* echoing Pound's own wording.[126] With an immodesty he shared with the poet, Bell goes on to suggest that he could send his thesis to the Russian leaders, Mussolini and Churchill so those 'despots' could protect a 'leisured class, from which may spring a civilisation'.[127] Elsewhere, Bell observed: 'Only artists and educated people of extraordinary sensibility and some savages and children feel the significance of form so acutely that they know how things look.'[128] In London especially Pound had immersed himself in an elitist literary culture. Leon Surette concludes: 'Pound was anti-democratic and elitist before Mussolini or Hitler or Franco or Oswald Mosley had appeared on the scene. Indeed, his political education in London had been in the company of anti-democratic elitists such as William Butler Yeats, A. R. Orage, T. E. Hulme, Major Douglas and Wyndham Lewis.'[129] John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses* and Surette's *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia* demonstrate how Yeats, Lewis, Eliot and D. H. Lawrence are among those who held what would today be considered extreme positions on issues such as universal education and eugenics.[130] In his book *Blood Kindred*, W. J. McCormack argues that Yeats was a fascist and complicit with the Nazis.[131] Wyndham Lewis' output during the 1930s included *Hitler* (1931), *Left Wings Over Europe, or How to Make a War About Nothing* (1936) and *The Jews are they Human?* (1939).[132] It is telling of Pound's

[124] Ezra Pound to Julien Cornell 20 March 1946, Julien Cornell, *The Trial of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 83.
[125] Paige, p. 319; Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 88.
[126] Clive Bell, *Civilisation, an Essay* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928), p. 166.
[127] Ibid., p. 231.
[128] Clive Bell (J. B. Bullen, ed.), *Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 80-1.
[129] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[130] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992) and Leon Surette, *Dreams of a Totalitarian Utopia: Literary Modernism and Politics* (Montreal et al: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).
[131] W. J. McCormack, *Blood Kindred: W. B. Yeats. The Life. The Death. The Politics* (London: Pimlico, 2005).
[132] Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), *Left Wings Over Europe, or How to Make a War About Nothing* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), *The Jews are they Human?* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939).

social and political skills that his name is habitually yoked to fascism while others with equally troubling views by modern standards are judged more generously. The major difference is that while others expressed short-term interest and curiosity—such as Yeats' dalliance with the Irish Blueshirts fascist movement—they speedily moved on to other interests and passions. Pound persisted. His intent was on creating something and making an impact. In contradictory manner while agitating for the mobilisation of collective intellectual forces, the poet moved to the isolation of Rapallo. He regarded civilisation as where *he* chose to make it and the practical civilising force at his disposal was his correspondence.

4: Together Alone: Building the Intellectual Centre

4.1: An isolated contradiction

In January 1925, Ezra Pound writes to his father from Sicily: 'I recon' it'll be Rapallo—Im sorry you have been ill again. This country is interesting. but not exactly habitable.'[1] Within weeks Ezra and Dorothy Pound were in their new home on the seafront of the Italian resort. On 10 March 1925 the poet writes to his father from their apartment at via Marsala 12, Rapallo, for the first time.[2] It was their home for the next twenty years.

The choice of Rapallo was an ordinary domestic decision, but one with much broader implications for the life and literary work of the poet. It was an unusual move with a number of apparent contradictions. These are chronicled in the poet's correspondence before and after the move to the town.

Rapallo had a population of around 4,000 who earned their incomes from tourism and also from tuna fishing, coral harvesting, olive pressing and lace making. The poet, who had been based in London and then Paris, moved away from the literary and artistic capitals of Europe to a small seaside town located firmly on the periphery, geographically and culturally detached from the avant garde setting the cultural agenda. In *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* there is the famous observation of Pound: 'Gertrude Stein liked him but did not find him amusing. She said he was a village explainer, excellent if you were a village, but if you were not, not.'[3] In Rapallo, Pound found his village. Eugenio Montale observed: 'Only in Rapallo, which he called "the world's navel", did he feel at home.' [4]

The poet's isolation fuelled the constant need to communicate via letter writing. Pound's already substantial output became prodigious.[5] The cumulative effect of the feedback to poetical aspirants, introductions to like minds worldwide and carefully maintained friendships, is that the role of letters for the group surrounding Pound is unique. It is more

[1] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 28 January 1925, *Parents,* p. 553.
[2] *Parents,* p. 559.
[3] Gertrude Stein, *The Biography of Alice B. Toklas* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 217.
[4] Eugenio Montale, 'Laurel fronds in an insane asylum', *Paideuma* 13, No. 1, 1984, p. 59.
[5] The peripatetic Basil Bunting also found that letters became more important to him, the nearest to playful friendly conversation: 'I would hate to have nobody with whom I could be unguarded or even foolish. Perhaps most people reserve such unarmoured self-exposures for conversations: but you mustn't forget that I've been out of reach of conversation now for—how many?—say, with very short intervals, sixteen years.' Basil Bunting to Louis Zukofsky 6 August 1949, *Bunting*, p. xvi.

of a modern network than a traditional literary coterie. Indeed, 'The Network' is what James Laughlin labeled Pound's 'academy by mail'.[6] A network is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'an interconnected group of people; an organization; *spec.* a group of people having certain connections which may be exploited to gain preferment, information, etc. esp. for professional advantage'. Neither Pound nor his disciples would have described their relationships as starkly as ones intended for 'professional advantage', but the correspondence adhered to his preference and remained professional rather than personal.

The move to Rapallo was not a casual undertaking. The Pounds travelled extensively throughout Italy over the preceding two years and regularly before then. The poet's correspondence offers a commentary on likely bases. The young Pound visited Italy with his Aunt Frank in 1898 and, as early as 1910, is extolling the country's virtues in letters to his parents—'Why Verona? Why Italy? simply if one were not bound by necessity one would live in Italy most of the time & visit Spain now & then.'[7] By 1922, he is offering further clarification: 'Re/dad's questions. When, if ever, I retire, I shall put for Italy or the Riviera. I dont see much point in Paris unless one is actually in the city.'[8]

Ezra and Dorothy Pound left Paris in March 1922 to spend three months traveling around Italy.[9] They returned early in 1923 and based themselves in Rapallo. In February-March 1923 they went on a walking tour in Romagna, the country of Sigismondo Malatesta[10] who was the increasing focus of Pound's attentions as he shaped the latest cantos.[11] A further pro-Italian voice in the correspondence comes from Nancy Cunard who writes to the poet in 1923: 'Ezra, dearest, Italy is for <u>us</u>, you know, we <u>should</u> live in it most of the year. Don't go back to Paris. Postpone that as long as you can.'[12] She includes a list of places they could visit. Undeterred by his (presumably) former lover's enthusiasm for the country, the pattern of Italian exploration continued in 1924. In January, the poet returned to Rapallo—joined by his new lover Olga Rudge. Florence, Perugia and Assisi followed before the Pounds returned to Paris. By July 1924 they had decided to move to Italy. It was only a

[6] *Literchoor,* p. 51.
[7] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound April 1910, *Parents*, p. 229.
[8] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 8 January 1922, *Parents*, p. 493.
[9] They visited (among other places) Genoa, Carrara, Siena, Florence, Perugia, Assisi, Cortona, Spoleto, Ravenna, Ancona and Rimini. Pound met T. S. Eliot in Verona in June 1922.
[10] Sigismondo Malatesta (1417-68), Italian condottiere and nobleman.
[11] Their travels covered Rome, Bologna, Ravenna, Venice, Florence, Cesena, Rimini and Fano. Dorothy went away with a friend for two weeks to Perugia, Assisi and Siena. They were re-united in April 1923 in Milan. A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound Poet: Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 46.
[12] Nancy Cunard (1896-1965), publisher and author. Anne de Courcy, *Five Love Affairs and a Friendship* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2022), p. 95.

question of where. They returned to Rapallo in October and then spent two months touring around Sicily where they were joined by W. B. and George Yeats.

Curiously, in his letters Pound does not explicitly mention that he is looking for a home for Dorothy and himself. Instead he talks of Italy as a potential retirement base for his parents. It is unclear when Homer and Isabel Pound decided on following their son to Europe. In their correspondence with their only child, Homer and Isabel often appear as good-natured bystanders to a brilliantly colourful display whose point and colours are beyond their comprehension. At one point, they considered retiring to California—but perhaps responded to their son's bluntly emotional response: 'I shall never see you again if you go to California.'[13]

As the Pounds traverse Italy, the poet offers his opinions to his parents on likely places to live. Siena is considered—'I suppose Siena is as good a place as any for permanent residence. Mountains enough presumably to keep it bearable in summer, and far enough south to make winter comfortable.'[14]—and then, without explanation, it disappears from contention. Rome is dismissed—'it is not habitable'.[15] 'General result is rather in favour of North Italy,' the poet concludes.[16] The attractions of Rapallo are diligently weighed up. The poet writes from the town's Hotel Mignon in January 1923:

> This place is very pleasant—but dont know how the sea air wd. affect one in the long run.
> If you were coming suddenly I still think Sirmione is about the best shot.
> So long as the exchange lasts Domenico will feed one for about a dollar a day.
> I might manage to rent a place that you cd. use for the year & in which I cd. stop for 3 months a year But the arrangement is about hopeless unless you have at least $ 500 a year sure & solid. [17]

To his father, Pound writes: 'Recon this place about solves the orful problem of "where to spend January" wish you were here.—Sea one side facing east or south east, and olive

[13] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 8 January 1922, *Parents*, p. 493.
[14] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, c.16 July 1922, *Parents*, p. 500.
[15] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 24 February 1923, *Parents*, p. 508.
[16] Ezra Pound to Isabel and Homer Pound 28 January 1925, *Parents*, p. 553.
[17] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 10 January 1923, *Parents,* p. 507.

yards the other, also palms & oranges.'[18] Elsewhere he notes: 'I think Rapallo is about as good a port as one is likely to find.'[19]

It can be assumed that the re-location to Rapallo was undertaken with similar motivations to Pound's earlier moves. These were driven by the needs of his career. He came to London in 1908 to meet the person he regarded as the pre-eminent poet of the day, W. B. Yeats, and to make his mark on the literary world.[20] Both were quickly accomplished.[21] And then the Pounds left London for Paris. The motivations for this were equally clear: Pound professed sudden and extreme dissatisfaction with literary London. By 1920, with an immodesty likely to have riled the literary fraternity, he was describing himself as the sole purveyor of originality and energy in the English literary world. In a letter to John Quinn he writes: 'What it comes down to is that I have "run" what intellectual life there is here, for the past six years, and now that les maitres, les vieux, are gone I don't see the point in ramming art against the dead mentality of England.'[22] The feeling was evidently mutual. F. S. Flint's farewell barb—'You have not been a good comrade, voilà.'[23]—was the culmination of Flint's acerbic criticism of Pound. For example, in 1917 he writes to Harriet Shaw Weaver: 'The truth is we are all tired of Mr. Pound. His work has deteriorated from book to book; his manners have become more and more offensive and we wish he would go back to America.'[24] After memorably describing Pound as a 'sinister Charlie Chaplin', Flint concludes: 'Those of us who were once associated with him are no longer, for very good reasons, [and] detest him with the healthiest of loathings.' Towards the end of Pound's stay in London, Eliot noted to John Quinn: 'He is becoming forgotten. I am worried as to what is to become of him.'[25]

The Pounds moved to Paris in 1921. The poet writes to Ford Madox Ford having just moved to the city and encountered 'Brancusi, Picabia, Cocteau all more free and flightful than the

[18] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound January 1923, *Parents*, p. 506.
[19] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound February 1925, *Parents*, p. 555.
[20] Pound first saw and heard Yeats when he was giving a lecture at the University of Pennsylvania on 23 November 1903. There is no evidence they spoke. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (eds.), *W. B Yeats Letters Volume 5 1908-10* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. cvi.
[21] Pound provides a running commentary to his parents—'Want to have a month up the Thames somewhere & meet Bill Yeats (& one or two other humans if convenient),' he writes to Isabel Pound 19-25 June 1908, *Parents*, p. 118 and on 30 April 1909 reports he spent 'about 5 hrs' with Yeats the day before. *Parents*, p. 170.
[22] Ezra Pound to John Quinn, Timothy Materer (ed.), *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 193.
[23] F. S. Flint to Ezra Pound 3 July 1915, Christopher Middleton, 'Documents on Imagism from the papers of F. S. Flint', *The Review*, No. 15, April 1965, p. 42.
[24] F. S. Flint to Harriet Shaw Weaver 21 February 1917, University of Texas Library, F. S. Flint Collection MS-1423.
[25] T. S. Eliot to John Quinn 25 January 1920, Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot 1898-1922* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 435.

moulting vultures of W.C.2./ I daily ask myself why the hell I stayed in Eng. so long'.[26] Using a familiar noun, he concludes: 'There is the intelligent nucleus for a movement here, which there bloody well isn't in England.'[27] For many years thereafter, Pound was quick to condemn England and the English. 'Went to Paris 4/ years and then here/ because there IS some mental life/ whereas London a mortuary,' Pound explains to Phyllis Bottome.[28] An element in leaving Paris was Pound's relationship with Olga Rudge. Their affair began in 1923, lasted the rest of his life and produced a daughter in 1925. It was indiscreetly pursued, and Dorothy Pound is likely to have known of the relationship from its early stages. The years 1923 to 1925 saw Pound, Dorothy and Olga Rudge involved in a trans-European dance with their paths crossing in a variety of combinations.[29] Even so, Pound was not easily discomfited by matters of desire and emotion—'Awfully surrounded by human complications,' he writes to Agnes Bedford in June 1926 at a time when Dorothy was pregnant with a child by another man and Olga was mother of a young baby of less than a year of whom he was the father.[30] Olga Rudge and the attendant 'human complications' soon followed the Pounds to live in Rapallo.

4.2: Why Rapallo?

What was the lure of Rapallo and how can the apparent contradiction between relative geographic isolation and Pound's ambitions to change the world be reconciled or, at least, understood? Rapallo was beautiful, warm, inexpensive and accessible, 'hard to beat on the whole Mediterranean coast', writes Pound.[31] Liguria, largely overlooked by the artistic masses, was an outlier from the increasingly crowded Côte d'Azur. 'Up to the early twentieth century Liguria had primarily seemed valuable as an infrastructural point of transition, and mainly as a consequence of Genoa's seaport,' notes Martina Kolb in her study of the time spent in the region by Nietzsche, Freud and the German poet Gottfried Benn.[32] She also observes, less persuasively for Pound, that 'Dante stigmatises Liguria as the most barren and inaccessible Romance terrain'.[33]

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[26] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 22 May 1921, *P/F,* p. 58.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome May/June 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.
[29] Pound had some practice in this—in 1922 Nancy Cunard was traveling around Italy at the same time as the Pounds and was artfully avoided.
[30] Ezra Pound to Agnes Bedford 3 June 1926, Lilly Library, Indian University, Bloomington, Indiana.
[31] Daniel Cory, 'Ezra Pound: A memoir', *Encounter*, 30.5, May 1968, p. 31.
[32] Martina Kolb, *Nietzche, Freud, Benn and the Azure Spell of Liguria* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 44. Gottfried Benn (1886-1956) described 'der ligurische Komplex'. Gottfried Benn, 'Ich finde', Bruno Hillebrand (ed.), *Szenen und Schriften in der Fassung der Erstdrucke* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990), p. 154. Hannah Baader and Gerhard Wolf with Davide Ferri of the Kunsthistoisches Institut in Florence are currently leading a research project into 'The Ligurian Complex. Case studies in ecology and aesthetics'. https://www.khi.fi.it/en/forschung/kooperationsprojekte/the-ligurian-complex-case-studies-in-ecology-and-aesthetics.php.
[33] Ibid., p. 3.

The newest Rapallesi would have been aware that Max Beerbohm had been based on the outskirts of the town since 1910.[34] He would also have registered the relative lack of other literary figures. In Paris, Pound was part of the literary crowd and the crowd was growing—in 1921 there were 6,000 Americans living in Paris; by 1924 there were 30,000.[35] In Rapallo there was no jostling for artistic positions. Pound had a clear run. He, alone, was the 'intelligent nucleus for a movement'.

Having just arrived, he reports: 'Rapallo empty and tranquil.'[36] Writing to his mother, the poet notes: 'Nearest neighbors being H.D. and the McAlmons, somewhere in Suisse. I suppose this state of tranquility can't last, but it is very comfortable while it does.'[37] At the same time, Rapallo had the infrastructure he required—a cinema, printers, a post office and a tennis club— 'When I am really depressed & want to call to mind a really happy vision I think of you in Rapallo writing a little in your room, going out to play tennis, and just absorbing the sun at the sea's edge,' Desmond FitzGerald writes to the poet.[38]

Having settled into their apartment, Pound outlines the financial costs of living in Rapallo:

> You can live here on 100 seeds a month; and whatever you get from house wd. be velvet an extras.
> We pay 600 lire a month, and this place is supposed to be furnished. All the necessary things are here. We are buying guyser and a few ornaments. That is about 25 dollars per month.[39]

Whether in seeds, lire or dollars, the costs in Italy compared favourably with those in France and elsewhere. Basil Bunting's wife Marian later reflected that they 'lived & lived pretty well in Rapallo on $35 a month'.[40] When they started wintering in Rapallo in the late 1920s, the Yeatses paid £98 a year for their apartment on via Americhe. When Homer and Isabel Pound arrived in Italy they lived off his pension which was $999 and rose to $1200 in

[34] Pound knew Beerbohm from London. When they met, Beerbohm commented that Pound would be 'a good subject for caricature'. David Cecil, *Max: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 329. This came to pass and Pound reports the results enthusiastically to his father in February 1914: 'Max Beerbohm said yesterday that he is doing a caricature of your only son. That IS immortality. I hope the Italian air wont put him off it, he goes back there in a few days.' *Parents*, p. 321. Beerbohm is mentioned in Canto 46: 'couple of Max's drawings,/one of Balfour and a camel.'
[35] Amanda Vaill, *Everybody was so Young* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), p. 96.
[36] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 15 October 1924, *Parents*, p. 544.
[37] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 30 October 1924, *Parents*, p. 546. Robert McAlmon visited Rapallo with the Hemingways and managed to miss Pound. He did not return, observing: 'Rapallo after the sun goes down struck me as dismal and depressing.' Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 158.
[38] Desmond FitzGerald to Ezra Pound 22 December 1926, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122560.
[39] Ezra Pound to Isabel and Homer Pound 18 March 1925, *Parents*, p. 561.
[40] Marian Bunting to Helen Groves 11 September 1968, Basil Bunting Poetry Archive, Durham University Library.

1930. This funded a very comfortable existence. The older Pounds eventually took over the lease of the Yeatses' apartment.

In *The Poets of Rapallo*, Lauren Arrington argues that Mussolini drew the Pounds to Rapallo—'Mussolini's rise to power in the early 1920s was of principal appeal.'[41] Given the poet's history of pronouncements on the attractiveness of Italy it is a difficult argument to sustain. Certainly, later in life Pound suggested this was not the case. 'Life was interesting in Paris from 1921 to 1924, nobody bothered much about Italy. Some details I never heard of at all until I saw the *Esposizione del Decennio*,' he noted referring to the celebration of Mussolini's tenth anniversary in power in 1932.[42] This is disingenuous in that the one person who was certainly 'bothered' about Italy during this time was Pound who spent many months in the country and was deep into his research into Malatesta. Lawrence Rainey suggests that it was during this research that Pound encountered what he interpreted as Mussolini-style fascism in practice. He writes to Dorothy in March 1923 from Rimini: 'I got to library here at 10 o'clock this a.m. Hotel-keeper ready to sack the place and have up the mayor if it isn't open; he is a noble Fascist.'[43] The willingness of fascists to open the doors of libraries may have been interpreted by the poet as evidence of a practical enthusiasm to embrace the arts. Certainly, Mussolini talked of Italy's civilising force especially during his rise to power. He argued that Italy had 'created modern civilisation with the Roman empire and the Renaissance and would now for the third time speak its word of light'.[44] This might have struck a chord with the poet if he had heard or read it (though there is no evidence that he did so).

Pound's letters, as he and his wife travel around Italy in the prelude to settling in Rapallo, as well as the early years in the town, make little acknowledgement of the political situation in Italy or elsewhere. The poet's historical focus—on the Malatesta of the fifteenth century rather than the contemporary anarchist and socialist Errico Malatesta[45] who he must also have heard of—comes with a predictable price: in Pound's letters the present tends to be overlooked—especially those events which do not fit conveniently with the poet's own agenda. Personal details and feelings as well as the immediate milieu

[41] Lauren Arrington, *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 11.
[42] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's Fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[43] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 21 March 1923, Lawrence Rainey, 'Between Mussolini and me', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 21, No. 6, 18 March 1999, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v21/n06/lawrence-rainey/between-mussolini-and-me.
[44] Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 90.
[45] Errico Malatesta (1853-1932), an Italian anarchist and revolutionary who led revolutionary acts in 1914. After a brief period of apparent revolution, order was re-established and Malatesta escaped to London. He was tried in Italy in 1921.

of life in Rapallo and Italy are largely absent.[46] 'In modernism art and literature retained their traditional nineteenth century autonomy from every day life,' observes Andreas Huyssen.[47] Significant events, such as the Matteotti murder in Italy in June 1924 are completely ignored.[48] Internationally, the General Strike in the U. K., the Wall Street Crash and the early years of the Great Depression all pass beyond Pound's epistolary radar. There are incidental mentions of Mussolini and Italian government, but all made after Pound had settled in Rapallo. None demonstrate that he is a man driven by commitment to fascism or Mussolini. There is no mention of the meeting between Mussolini and the British Foreign Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain which took place in Rapallo in December 1925 and was widely reported in the media.[49] A 1925 letter from Hemingway jokingly addresses his friend, 'Dear Duce'.[50] A 1926 letter from the poet to Harriet Monroe notes, 'I personally think extremely well of Mussolini.'[51] In 1927 he writes to Richard Aldington describing Italy as 'the Best governed state in Europe and where the goddam shits least bother one'.[52] This is as near to an endorsement of the Italian fascists ventured by Pound at this point. The identity of 'the goddam shits' is impossible to determine as it could have been any of a large number in the poet's firing line—publishers, politicians, competitors, academics and more. In 1928, the publisher William Bird talks of the poet's 'ferocious fascismo'.[53]

4.3: Of all times

In *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*, Predrag Matvejevic coins the term 'mediterraneity'.[54] It has been described as 'a quality neither ethnically defined, nor based on inheritance alone, but rather centered on forms of cultural learning and literary creativity'.[55] As Eugenio Montale puts it in a review of *The Pisan Cantos*: 'Italy was probably the most appropriate *pied-à-terre* for someone engaging in this kind of experiment, the vastest Dantean-Joycean poem of our time. Not the Italy of today, but the Italy of all times: the land where nature and culture are as one and where even the landscape appears to be

[46] In contrast Pound's friend William Carlos Williams argued for engagement with the locality. This is explored in Alex Davis and Lee Jenkins (eds.), *Locations of Literary Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[47] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 163.
[48] Giacomo Matteotti (1885-1924) was a socialist politician who spoke out against political violence and what he regarded as fraud carried out in the 1924 Italian elections. He was kidnapped and killed by fascists in June 1924. The potential involvement of Mussolini was a matter of enormous media coverage.
[49] Peter Edwards, 'The Austen Chamberlain-Mussolini meetings', *The Historical Journal*, March 1971, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 153-64.
[50] Ernest Hemingway to Ezra Pound 16 March 1925, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[51] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 30 November 1926, Paige, p. 279.
[52] Ezra Pound to Richard Aldington 10 November 1927, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas 5.4.
[53] William Bird to Ezra Pound 26 April 1928, Lilly.
[54] Predrag Matvejevic, *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
[55] Martina Kolb, *Nietzche, Freud, Benn and the Azure Spell of Liguria* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 5.

permeated by centuries of civilisation.'[56] This sense of literary and more general history is an abiding element in Pound's letters and made Rapallo a perfect base. Italy and, more specifically Rapallo, provided a potent fusion of ancient and modern, the Italy 'of all times' juxtaposed with the forceful brand of modernity associated with the fascists.

Indeed, the relationship between past and present lies at the heart of modernism. The injunction to *Make It New* is often cited as modernism's mantra, shorthand for the driving energy, originality and purpose behind the movement, and a phrase also associated with and sometimes attributed to Pound.[57] The connection with the poet is understandable. *Make It New* encapsulates the energy, urgency and salesmanship which he exemplified—and which is a constant in his correspondence. The use of the word 'make', rather than create or an alternative, is suggestive of Pound as he saw art as something to be crafted and worked at rather than the result of sudden or inexplicable inspiration. The poet also encouraged the association of *Make It New* with himself. It was the title of a collection of his essays published in 1934.[58] Contemplating the suggested title, T. S. Eliot (in his publishing role at Faber and Faber) was unenthusiastic, telling Pound he was not 'altogether happy about your new title **make it noo** we may have missed subtle literary allusion but if we do I reckon genl public will also'.[59]

The literary allusion is not so much subtle as distantly historical. While *Make It New* apparently venerates the crafting of original, fresh art, free from the shackles of history or the political and cultural concerns of the present, it was a phrase purloined from the past. It was neither new nor original nor Pound's. In *Novelty: A History of the New* Michael North traces the original source of the phrase to Chu Hsi, a neo-Confucian scholar who worked on Da Xue (Ta Hio) and T'ung-chien Kang-Mu which both tell the story of Ch'eng T'ang, the King of the Shang dynasty (1766-1753 BCE), who had a version of the slogan inscribed on a washbasin.[60] Pound's translation of this was published for the first time in 1928—after the first flush of modernism. Later, in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*, translating from Ta Hio, Pound phrases it as 'Make it new, make it new as the young grass shoot'.[61] Hugh Kenner

[56] Eugenio Montale, *Il Secondo Mestiere: Prose 1920-79* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), p. 1594.
[57] For example by Peter Gay: 'In short, modernists considered Ezra Pound's famous injunction, "Make It New!," a professional, almost a sacred obligation.' Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy* (New York: Norton, 2008), p. 46.
[58] Ezra Pound, *Make It New: Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).
[59] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 18 June 1934, Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 526.
[60] Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 162.
[61] Ezra Pound, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 112.

recorded the *Make It New* injunction from Ta Hio in 1950 and it became absorbed into the modernist mythology thereafter.[62]

At the heart of the galvanising phrase lie questions about history, time and their relationship to the creation of art which are highlighted in Pound's correspondence, his choice of Italy as a base and also apply to the content of *The Cantos*. The referent of the sentence *Make It New* can be interpreted as history. It is, therefore, a call to make history new, to provide a contemporary twist or interpretation of what has gone before, to reinvent and refresh the past for a contemporary audience. Art vivifies history. As a perspective this owes something to Jacob Burckhardt who refers to the 'resuscitation of antiquity'[63] and Nietzsche's suggestion that history recurs time and time again.[64]

Modernism sought to provide a dynamic fresh perspective on what had preceded it rather than creating something which was completely original. Indeed, pure originality is all but impossible with this world view as all art, unconsciously or consciously, builds from what has gone before. As such, modernism is deeply and ironically bedded in the past, seeking to bring history and historical literature to bear on the very different experience of the early twentieth century. It does not dismiss the past but regards it as a constant and vital presence in the moment. In Rapallo this relationship between past and present was writ large—the Roman-built via Aurelia, the colourful history of nearly three thousand years, Ottomans and Barbary pirates, control by the Genoese and Aragonese, all alongside the sophisticated villas and entertainment of a twentieth-century seaside resort.

4.4: An illusory coterie

W. B. Yeats describes Rapallo in the opening section of *A Packet for Ezra Pound*:

> Rapallo's thin line of broken mother of pearl along the water's edge, the little town described in the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.' In what better place could I, forbidden Dublin winters & all excited crowded places, spend what winters yet remain. On the broad pavement by the sea pass Italian peasants or working people,

[62] Hugh Kenner, 'The rose in the steel dust', *Hudson Review* 3, 1950, p. 81.
[63] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Modern Library, 1954), p. 130.
[64] Nietzsche's idea was eternal recurrence which he traced to Indian philosophy and ancient Egypt, suggesting that existence repeats itself. Perhaps owing something to this, in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* Yeats ponders whether every 200 or so years there is a sacred and secular re-ordering and the potential for some 'arithmetic or geometry than can exactly measure the slope of a balance, the dip of a scale'. W. B. Yeats, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum, Co. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1929), p. 37.

> people out of the little shops, a famous German dramatist, the barber's brother looking like an Oxford Don, a British retired skipper, an Italian prince descended from Charlemagne and no richer than the rest of us, & a few tourists seeking tranquility.[65]

As described by Yeats, Rapallo is reassuringly ordinary, free of the trappings of the rich, but in a beautiful location with colourful inhabitants and given literary allure by a vague parallel with the 'little town by river or sea shore' featured by Keats in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. Yeats created this piece of literary mythology. He wrote to Lady Gregory in 1928: 'This is an indescribably lovely place—some little Greek town one imagines—there is a passage in Keats describing just such a town.'[66] The comparison became developed in time.[67] In 1936 it is mentioned by Harold W. Thompson, who taught Pound at Hamilton College, in an exchange of letters with the poet. Pound replies (confusing who the letter is from in his enthusiasm to clarify this literary myth): 'Has Thomp/ any grounds for his "Keats' Rapallo." Shelley was at Spezia; Sh/ and Bry/ at Pisa/ all of 'em must have gone down by Via Aurelia and therefore passed here.'[68] This is wishful thinking and Pound eventually and correctly concludes: 'I suppose Keats wrote the line before he ever got out of 'Ighgate.'

Having settled in Rapallo, Pound's assumption may have been that writers and artists would flock to be by his side. Many did visit the town. It is tempting to interpret the flood of literary and artistic figures to Rapallo as the cohesive coterie or movement the poet had repeatedly talked of. Some were attracted by Pound's presence: including Basil Bunting, Louis Zukofsky, James Laughlin, Ronald Duncan and James Angleton. They often described themselves as students of the Ezuversity. Other old friends came to visit for shorter periods. T. S. Eliot sought refuge from his troubles with his first wife. Ford Madox Ford was photographed with Pound alongside the Christopher Columbus monument on the sea front. Ernest Hemingway came with his first wife Hadley, stayed at the Hotel Riviera, fished and produced a short story, 'Cat in the Rain'. Others who passed by for varying lengths of time included Richard Aldington, the Hungarian novelist Joseph Bard,

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[65] W. B. Yeats, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum, Co. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1929), p. 1.
[66] W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory 24 February 1928, Allen Wade (ed.), *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 738.
[67] Yeats may also have come across Nietzsche's description of Rapallo in 1886: 'There is something Greek about it....something piratical, unexpected, buccaneering.' Sue Prideaux, *I am Dynamite: A Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Faber and Faber: London, 2018), p. 226.
[68] Ezra Pound to Harold W. Thompson 14 April 1936, Cameron McWhirter, '"Dear Poet-General and Walloper": The correspondence of Ezra Pound and Harold W. Thompson 1936-39', *Paideuma*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Winter, 2001, p. 118. This article suggests the possibility that Pound and Thompson had their wires crossed and the poet in question was actually Yeats rather than Keats.

Phyllis Bottome, Desmond FitzGerald, Robert Fitzgerald, Robert McAlmon, George and Mary Oppen, Osbert Sitwell, Lincoln Steffens, Adrian Stokes, and the composers George Antheil and Tibor Serly. John Allan Wyeth, an American poet and artist, lived in Rapallo from 1926 until 1932 and claimed his children were tutored by Pound and Yeats.[69]

Certainly, Pound was never slow to talk positively about the move to Rapallo. In 1926 T. S. Eliot's brother Henry reports to their mother that Pound was agitating to attract his friend and wife to the town: 'Pound is very anxious for Tom and Vivien to live in Italy, because it is so cheap, so delightful, and so cheerful. He says he has added 10 years to his life by coming to Italy to live.'[70] Again there is no mention of Mussolini or the Italian political situation as an attraction.

W. B. Yeats was the best-known literary figure attracted to Rapallo. From 1928 the Nobel laureate planned to spend his winters in Rapallo with his wife, George. This was largely at George's instigation. 'I hope to get him to Rapallo, in fact well or ill I am going to get him there,' she writes to the writer, poet and translator Thomas MacGreevy in 1927.[71] In the end the Yeatses were in the town for two winters (1928-29 and 1929-30) and then for a short period in 1934. In the Irish poet's wake came the novelist and playwright Lennox Robinson, the author and literary hostess Brigit Patmore, MacGreevy and the second Governor General of the Irish Free State James MacNeil.[72] Oliver St John Gogarty also visited and snidely dismissed Rapallo as 'Genoa's Bray'.[73] MacGreevy and Robinson were friends of George rather than her husband. In a 1932 letter to Yeats, MacGreevy suggests some ill feeling, reporting 'unsubstantiated charges of inaccuracy made against me from the Pound camp, it appears he sends frantic denunciations of me over half Europe'.[74]

Yeats found the town conducive to his work. It was perhaps, as Pound phrases it in Canto 72: 'Sligo in heaven.' Indeed, it has been argued that Pound, Bunting and Rapallo reinvigorated and challenged Yeats poetically.[75] 'I never wrote with greater ease,' Yeats

[69] John Allan Wyeth (1894-1981), author of *This Man's Army* (1928).
[70] Henry Eliot to Charlotte Eliot 16 May 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 148.
[71] George Yeats to Thomas MacGreevy October 1927, Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 392.
[72] Lennox Robinson (1886-1958), Irish poet, dramatist , producer and director; Thomas MacGreevy (1893-1967), Irish poet and later director of the National Gallery of Ireland (1950-63); Brigit Patmore (1888-1964), British author and literary hostess; James MacNeil (1869-1938), Irish politician and diplomat.
[73] Oliver St John Gogarty to W. B. Yeats 9 April 1930, National Library of Ireland MS 30,584.
[74] Thomas MacGreevy to W. B. Yeats 16 May 1932, Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy with Alan B. Himber (eds.), *Letters to W. B. Yeats Volume 2* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 537-8.
[75] Keith Williams and Steven Matthews, *Rewriting the Thirties* (London and New York: Longman, 1997).

tells Lady Gregory.[76] His Rapallo notebooks are extensive. Between early February and the end of March 1928 he wrote 12 poems.[77] Yeats was very ill during the second winter he spent in Rapallo. In December 1929 he was thought to be near death suffering from Malta fever. Pound and Bunting were called in to witness an emergency will while the German dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann sent over champagne to aid recovery.

Lauren Arrington suggests that Yeats was a magnetic literary force who created some sort of coterie in the town. Given the short length of his periods of residence in Rapallo, and his ill health during one of them, this appears unlikely. Most of the visiting poets—Bunting, Zukofsky, Duncan, Laughlin—clearly did so because of Pound rather than Yeats. While there were a great many literary visitors there is no sense of a cohesive group in the traditional sense of a coterie or in that experienced by Pound in London. For all his talk of cenacles, gangs and vortexes, in Rapallo Pound usually managed things so that people remained neatly separated and compartmentalised. This was a long standing habit. In *The Verse Revolutionaries* Helen Carr notes how Pound kept his college friends apart.[78] He adopted much the same approach with children and lovers. Visitors provided stimulation and conversation but did not overly intrude on his routine. Many of the visitors spent very little time with Pound in Rapallo and their stays tended not to overlap. James Laughlin first visited in August 1933 and returned in 1934. Louis Zukofsky made one visit to see Pound in Rapallo.[79] The most persistent resident was Basil Bunting. He arrived in Rapallo in 1924, fresh from brief imprisonment in Genoa, returned in 1928 staying until 1930 and then from 1931 until 1933.

Not only did the group members spend little time with Pound, they also often barely knew or were not positively disposed to each other. Laughlin was not friendly with Zukofsky and was dismissive of his work—he said that Zukofsky wrote 'in an unintelligible gibble'.[80] Bunting was unenthusiastic about Laughlin who never published him.[81] T. S. Eliot also did not publish Bunting and had a perfunctory meeting with Zukofsky in London.[82] Bunting

[76] W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory 9 March 1929, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
[77] R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life: The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 385.
[78] Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 37.
[79] Zukofsky returned on two more occasions to Rapallo in 1956 and 1969. In 1956 Pound was absent and Zukofsky observed Rapallo was 'worse than Coney Island when it's 100 degrees'. Mark Scroggins, *The Poem of a Life* (Berkeley: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2007), p. 280.
[80] James Laughlin to Ezra Pound 18 January 1934, Beinecke EP.
[81] 'Literature owes Laughlin some respect for what he has done (fairly profitably) for Ezra; but he has the distinction of having turned down both Zukofsky and BB time and again in spite of Ezra's advocacy. He is not a serious character, only a big bank balance.' Basil Bunting to Rodger Kingston 1 May 1970, *Bunting*, p. 324.
[82] Zukofsky wrote of his meeting with Eliot: 'I dropped in to say hello, because I was in London & he was human enough to let me do so. And that was the end of that.' *P/Z*, p. xviii.

and Zukofksy became friends. Ronald Duncan was something of an outsider—Pound described him as 'the lone wolf of English literature'.[83]

Even with a regular supply of visitors, his mistress nearby and his parents eventually living in the town, the poet was isolated from the worlds of literature, music, publishing and art—not to mention politics and economics. Pound's moves to London, Paris and Rapallo have been interpreted as a series of self-imposed exiles and there is some truth to this.[84] In all he was an exile from America, but in Rapallo he was also an exile from the literary mainstream. 'When Pound stationed himself in Rapallo, he became the member of a secret society of one. The dream of community and collaboration, embodied in Stone Cottage, was rejected in Pound's later career,' writes James Longenbach in his book on Pound's sojourn as Yeats' secretary.[85] This might be over-playing the bonding between the two poets in Sussex, but the military-sounding description of Pound stationing himself in Rapallo more accurately suggests the poet single-handedly launching an intellectual guerilla war. Phyllis Bottome, a friend from London days, noted: 'From the moment Ezra left the Anglo-Saxon world he began to suffer more and more from the isolation of his intellectual exile.'[86] Like Monsieur Verog in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, he was increasingly 'out of step with the decade,/ Detached from his contemporaries,/ Neglected by the young'.[87]

Within the town, Pound became a notable, if eccentric figure. This is captured in a 1940 *New Yorker* article:

> I had been walking about five minutes on the boulevard toward the baths when I heard a slight commotion behind me. All around people stopped moving. It was as if a fire siren had sounded and nobody could hear anything or even move until it had stopped. I leaned up against a balustrade and waited. They were all looking at a man advancing with giant strides. He was tall and broad, with a pointed beard. He had on a white suit that, large though he was, literally flowed from him. The

[83] H. Lockyear (ed.), *Tribute to Ronald Duncan by his Friends* (Philadelphia: Wharton Press, 1974), p. 12. It was a reputation Duncan encouraged. The two installments of his autobiography were entitled *All Men are Islands* (London: Hart Davis, 1964) and *How to Make Enemies* (London: Hart Davis, 1968). Pound may also have been consciously or unconsciously alluding to Sigismondo Malatesta who was known as the 'wolf of Rimini'.
[84] Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": The Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 40.
[85] James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats and Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 267.
[86] Phyllis Bottome, *From the Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1944); Jan Stephens, 'Friendship's garland', *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 July 1944, Issue 2214, p. 334.
[87] Ezra Pound, 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley VII', *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 102.

> spotless trousers wrapped around his legs as he walked, the shining coat billowed in the breeze. There was a towel tied about his waist and the fringe from it bobbed rhythmically. His hat, that was white too, had been slapped on at a dashing angle. He marched by me, swinging a cane, ignoring the awed Italians, his eyes on an interesting point in space.[88]

Rapallo's poet-in-residence set about creating a new cultural context on his own terms. He established a literary supplement, *Il Mare,* which ran in the local newspaper, and organised a variety of musical events. (The latter were self-serving in that they usually featured Olga Rudge.) In 1936 he talked of making Rapallo a 'centro internazionale di cultura fascista'.[89] Pound was active locally—he played tennis regularly, went to the movies, and was usually to be found dining at the Albergo Rapallo below his apartment on the seafront. Pound spoke American-accented Italian—unlike most of his visitors and many of the long-term foreign inhabitants of the town.[90] 'Pound's command of Italian was idiosyncratic, occasionally brilliant, scarcely grammatical,' notes Massimo Bacigalupo.[91]

Isolation brought some choices. In Paris, Pound bridled at the social constraints and expectations of the influential literary salons of Gertrude Stein and Natalie Barney's 'temple de l'amitié'.[92] In Rapallo he was free to socialise as he chose. In his letters and those of others it is clear that he made little social effort beyond meeting his acolytes. There were occasional exceptions. The German dramatist and Nobel laureate Gerhart Hauptmann also wintered in Rapallo from 1925 to 1928 and knew Pound.[93] Their encounters were limited by the lack of a common language. The poet usually bowed respectfully and walked on when he encountered the German. This did not prevent Pound inviting the two Nobel laureates in Rapallo and their wives to dinner. He dutifully reports to his mother: 'Ceremony of introducing Yeatsz and Hauptmanns passed off calmly last evening with sacrifice of two pheasants. No other bloodshed.'[94]

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[88] Elizabeth Delehanty, 'A day with Ezra Pound', *New Yorker*, April 13 1940, p. 92.
[89] Wayne Pounds, '*Il Mare*: Supplemento Letterario 1932-33', *Paideuma*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Winter 2000, p. 258.
[90] It is often suggested that Dorothy Pound did not speak Italian, but this seems unlikely given her enthusiasm for and experience of the country over many years. In holidays with George Yeats, before their marriages, the two studied and practised the language. Isabel Pound also appeared to know Italian before moving to the country—at least her son seemed to think so as he wrote to her in Italian. Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 2 March 1923, *Parents*, p. 509.
[91] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. xvi.
[92] Natalie Barney (1876-1972), writer and literary hostess.
[93] Hauptmann was gently satirised by Bunting in 'Aus Dem Zweiten Reich': 'The renowned author of/more plays than Shakespeare/stopped and did his hair/with a pocket glass/before entering the village,/afraid they wouldn't recognize/caricature and picture postcard,/that windswept chevelure.' Basil Bunting, 'Aus Dem Zweiten Reich', *Collected Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1985, p. 15.
[94] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 3 March 1929, *Parents*, p. 682.

Beerbohm and his visitors—including Siegfried Sassoon and John Masefield—were also increasingly off limits. In 1925 Pound brought T. S. Eliot to meet Beerbohm—'Took Possum Eliot to tea with Beerbohm yesterday'[95]—but relations became more distant thereafter. Polite notes are exchanged with regrets that meetings aren't possible.[96] Beerbohm reportedly found the poet to be overly critical and envious.[97] Phyllis Bottome explained it this way:

> Ezra would have liked to have seen more of Max Beerbohm, whom he at least partially admired for his wit, although of course he could not have tolerated his philosophy of life. But although they lived as the only intellectual representatives of their own language in so small a place as Rapallo, they were not destined to decrease each other's mental loneliness.
>
> I found that Max Beerbohm, having once met Ezra, declined to enlarge their acquaintance. 'I do not really see Ezra Pound in Rapallo,' Max Beerbohm told me. 'He seems out of place here. I should prefer to watch him in the primeval forests of his native land, wielding an axe against some giant tree. Could you not persuade him to return to a country in which there is so much more room?'[98]

Bottome's observations suggest two isolated, fading artists whose mutual incompatibility confirms their isolation. If Pound was suffering from 'mental loneliness' the arrival of Yeats and his wife would appear to have provided a solution but, from the start of their time in Rapallo, the Yeatses had difficulty in successfully connecting socially with their old friends. In November 1928, Yeats complains to Olivia Shakespear (the Irish poet's former lover as well as Pound's mother-in-law): 'We move in next Tuesday and have tried to persuade the Pounds to join us in a vigorous house-warming but Dorothy seems to classify champagne with steak and onions and badger's flesh, and other forms of the tinsel of the world.'[99] Dorothy was prone to what Lauren Arrington describes as 'tiring ascetism'.[100]

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[95] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 24 December 1925, *Parents*, p. 584.
[96] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31964069.
[97] David Cecil, *Max: A Biography* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 484.
[98] Phyllis Bottome, *The Goal* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 240. This echoes a comment of Olivia Shakespear to Pound in London when he was trying to become engaged to Dorothy: 'You *ought* to go away–Englishmen don't understand yr American ways.' Olivia Shakespear to Ezra Pound 13 September 1912, Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 154.
[99] W. B. Yeats to Olivia Shakespear 23 November 1928, Allen Wade (ed.), *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (London: Hart Davis, 1954), p. 748.
[100] Lauren Arrington, *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 4.

The Pounds were invited by George Yeats to come and meet the visiting Siegfried Sassoon and his lover Stephen Tennant[101] but turned down the invitation. George Yeats airs her annoyance to Lennox Robinson:

> Ezra has refused to come and meet them, which alternately infuriates & amuses me. He says he cant be bothered with people who are not serious students or 'Pilgrims' & Dorothy *may* come in for coffee afterwards 'but I find it so difficult to talk to people now'—my statement that Sassoon was a terribly nice person was not well-received—one *does* want a good brain as well you know! Or rather a brain good in a parallel line to the Ezratic brain. They make one sick![102]

Considering the previous closeness of George to Dorothy Pound and of the couples who had holidayed together only a few years before this marks a significant cooling in relations.

During the next winter—1929-30—Yeats was very ill and, as a result, was avoided by the younger poet. The awkwardness in relations is plain in a letter from Yeats to Olivia Shakespear: 'To-day I met Ezra for the first time—you know his dread of infections—seeing me in the open air and the sea air, he sat beside me in front of the café and admired my beard and declared I should be sent by the Free State as Minister to Austria, that Austria would alone perfectly appreciate my beard.'[103] A little later, writing to Lady Gregory, Yeats notes: 'Masefield and his family, Siegfried Sassoon and a friend, arrive in Rapallo in a few days, and I am hoping the mountain will not deter them. Ezra Pound arrived the other day, his first visit since I got ill—fear of infection—and being warned by his wife tried to be very peaceable but couldn't help being very litigious about Confucius who I consider should have worn an Eighteenth Century wig and preached at St. Paul's, and he thinks the perfect man.'[104] Pound may have been metaphorically litigious, but not literally. There is no doubt that the conversations between the two poets were habitually argumentative.

In 1910 Pound declared he and Yeats were poetically united in a letter to Margaret Cravens: 'Yeats has been doing some new lyrics—he has come out of the shadows & declared for life. Of course there is in fact a tremendous uplift for me—for he and I are now as it were

[101] Stephen Tennant (1906-87) was a socialite and literary inspiration for Nancy Mitford and others.
[102] George Yeats to Lennox Robinson 2 February 1929, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
[103] W. B. Yeats to Olivia Shakespear 4 March 1930, Allen Wade (ed.), *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (London: Hart Davis, 1954), pp. 772-3.
[104] W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory 7 April 1930, Ibid., pp. 773-4.

in one movement, with aims very nearly identical.'[105] The vagueness of the phrase 'very nearly' suggests Pound's hyperbolic salesmanship was at work. By the late 1920s, the aims of the poets had certainly diverged, and this was the last winter W. B. and George Yeats spent in Rapallo. The logistics of their departure added further complications. There were disagreements over money when Homer and Isabel Pound took over the Yeatses apartment—'DAMN the WBs/ why don't they send their bleating RENT?!?!?!'[106] The Pounds did not see the Yeatses again. Ezra Pound only saw Yeats once more in London shortly before his death and George Yeats in Dublin in February 1965 when he remained largely silent.[107]

4.5: Isolation and identity

There is a strong sense of the narrowing of options rather than the expanding of horizons in Pound's Rapallo correspondence. Meeting people via letters gave Pound a greater level of control than meeting face to face, especially those he suspected of having literary and other views which may not have coincided with his own. As George Yeats acutely registered, Pound was only open to 'serious students' and 'pilgrims' who had travelled to pay homage or enroll at the Ezuversity. W. B. Yeats noted in 1930: 'Pound's conception of excellence like that of all revolutionary schools, is of something so international that it is abstract and outside life.'[108] Yeats willingly embraced the 'abstract and outside life' in his extracurricular spiritual activities, but remained grounded in his Irishness and his involvement in the machinations of Dublin artistic and political life—'I hate international literature. The core of a thing must be national or local. But at the same time it ought to be a fundamental piece of human life, which is the same everywhere.'[109] In Rapallo Pound's grounding could be said to have slipped; by being detached geographically and socially he became detached intellectually and culturally.

This sentiment is echoed by George and Mary Oppen,[110] friends of Louis Zukofsky, who visited Pound in 1931. They met him on the promenade and the elder poet advised, 'Read, study the languages, read the poets in their own tongues' and 'pointed with a grand gesture of his cape and cane in the wrong direction and said: "From there came the Greek

[105] Ezra Pound to Margaret Craven 30 June 1910, Omar Pound and Robert Spoo (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Margaret Cravens: A Tragic Friendship 1910-12* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), p. 41.
[106] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 25 June 1933, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.
[107] Ann Saddlemyer, *Becoming George* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 645.
[108] George Yeats (ed.), *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 294.
[109] R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life: The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 419.
[110] George Oppen (1908-84), American poet and activist. Mary Oppen (1908-90), American activist, artist and author.

ships".'[111] Keen sailors, the Oppens noted Pound's error. Politically poles apart and unimpressed by Pound's poetic front and grand but incorrect geographical gestures, the Oppens did not stay—though Mary Oppen, in her biography, records Pound's generosity.[112] After opening a publishing venture in France (which published Pound among others), the Oppens headed back to America, not tempted by the expatriate life.[113] Later, their left-wing politics meant that they left America to live in Mexico rather than face the FBI. Their exile narrative was the antithesis of Pound's journey.

Pound's American-ness is repeatedly an issue clouded by contradictions—as it has been for countless other American writers in Europe from Henry James to Gore Vidal. In Canto 66 John Adams says, 'there is no drop not American in me' and Pound suggested that culture cannot be completely assimilated or shrugged off.[114] The same logic lies behind calling Eliot 'Possum', an animal which plays dead when threatened. The suggestion was that by embracing Englishness so enthusiastically Eliot had done just that.[115] Pound remained an American citizen and never publicly contemplated taking Italian citizenship—though, in a bizarre sideshow, he mentions the possibility of getting an Irish passport in return for attending an event in Ireland being organised by Yeats.[116] His allegiance was clear. The arch critic of virtually all aspects of contemporary American life remained an American to the last and, as such, Pound believed this gave him the constitutional privilege of free speech and the ability to hold American politicians to account no matter where he was in the world.

Yeats and the Oppens suggest that Pound's identity was compromised by being in Rapallo. His identification with the broad global sweep of literary history—Homer, Dante, Confucius, Cavalcanti—served to muddle and overwhelm. The personal was subverted by the historical. It is one thing to utilise the past to constantly relate to and make sense of the present, another to become becalmed in the past. There are regular accusations of Pound in his correspondence and elsewhere that the past dominates his mind and work. In a 1925 article in *Poetry*, Harriet Monroe suggests that he has become overly literary in his outlook

[111] Mary Oppen, *Meaning A Life* (New York: New Dimensions, 2020), p. 133.
[112] Ibid.
[113] The Oppens moved to Europe in 1929 and settled in Le Beausset in southern France where they started their own publishing company called To Publishers with the To standing for 'The Objectivists'. They published Pound's *How to Read* and Zukofsky's *An Objectivist's Anthology* in 1932.
[114] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia*, (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1950) pp. 64-5.
[115] Donald Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1991), p. 264.
[116] Ezra Pound to W. B. Yeats 19 June 1924, Lilly Library, University of Indiana. The request for a passport is also mentioned in a letter to James Quinn, Ezra Pound to James Quinn 10 July 1924, New York Public Library.

and inspirations, 'deriving from books of the past instead of life of the present, and refining often to trivial excess'.[117] Living in Rapallo highlighted and encouraged these tendencies to refine 'often to trivial excess'. Pound created his own time bubble in the town. In spite of the poet's devouring of newspapers and his correspondence with politicians, fundamentally his view was often backward looking, rooted in history.

Hemingway takes Pound to task for the scope of his intellectual ambitions and contrasts them with his own more basic and focused parameters: 'You go on and learn everything. I can't. I'm limited. But I'm going to know about fucking and fighting and eating and drinking and begging, and stealing and living and dying.'[118] Certainly, in moving to Rapallo, Pound took a step back from literary society. Allen Tate suggests the randomly democratic nature of this world-view: 'Mr. Pound is a typically modern, rootless, and internationalized intelligence. In the place of the traditional supernaturalism of the older and local cultures, he has a cosmopolitan curiosity that seeks out marvels, which are all equally marvellous, whether it be a Greek myth or the antics in Europe of a lady from Kansas.'[119] In this view, cosmopolitanism comes at the expense of judgement.

It is also notable in his letters that Pound's connection to literary history is often far greater than his connection to contemporary literature. The celebrant of Dante and Cavalcanti had minimal apparent connection with or time for the Italian literature of his own era.[120] This did not prevent him venting his disapproval of Italian writers as locked into the final years of the previous century and Italian publishers as lacking professional seriousness—'Do you egg-spect Eyetalian editors to ANSWER letters inside of 20 days/? Pazz/ienZah!!!'[121] He expresses disappointment with Italian writers and their willingness to stage a literary revolution: 'What I don't see in Italy is a man who wants to understand the state of contemporary literature, and to bring to Italy the so-called reforms, or rather than inventions (methods, techniques) which marked the last 20, 50 or 70 years of literature abroad.'[122] He makes much the same criticism of American authors. To *Globe* editor James Dunn, he writes: 'The wops you mention as bad, are NO USE to me. Linati the only one I

[117] Harriet Monroe, 'Ezra Pound', *Poetry*, Vol. 26 No. 2, May 1925, pp. 90-7.
[118] Ernest Hemingway to Ezra Pound December 1925, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[119] Allen Tate, *Essays of Four Decades* (Chicago: Swallow, 1968), p. 368.
[120] 'Ezra Pound had little interest in and contact with prominent Italian writers of his time—poets even less than novelists (Marinetti being a partial exception).' Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. 69.
[121] Ezra Pound to Carlo Izzo 21 January 1936, Carlo Izzo, '24 lettere e 9 cartoline inedite di Ezra Pound', *Civiltà Americana* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1976), p. 266.
[122] Ezra Pound (Aldo Taghiaferri, ed.), *Lettere 1907-58* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), p. 105.

can have mentioned., as you say, the best, but not good enough.'[123] Similarly, Italian academics are lambasted in lines from Pound's well-practised script—to Carlo Izzo he writes, 'way back in 1860 where the Eyetalyan purrfessors are/BACK in 1895 where the Eyetalian licherchoor is. Back refers to time past/= in the past, "in the dark backward and abysm of time" etc'.[124] Even those who visited Pound were not spared. Eugenio Montale lived in Genoa and met Pound in Rapallo. Later, railing against Italian literary figures, Pound said: 'PRATZ is pure punk/hasn't noticed the paleographic evidence among the total pewks Pratz is no good/ tho not so low as Montale who is undiluted sewage.'[125] This is a reference to the academic and author Mario Praz. For his part, Montale described Pound as 'a man who had not grown up…a force that had not been focused in one direction, and finally was expended all on the surface'.[126]

For all this, there is nothing to suggest that Pound regarded himself as isolated in Rapallo. Indeed, there is never a suggestion in his letters that he is anything other than at the heart of the world of letters. A practical peculiarity is that there is scarcely ever a mention of the time and money consuming demands of actually ensuring that postage was appropriately paid, and letters taken to the post office. Given the volume of incoming and outgoing correspondence, this must have been onerous. It was presumably viewed as a price worth paying for being in Rapallo. There is only occasionally an observation on slow or delayed deliveries. 'Shant write at length as dont know how post is functioning,' the poet writes to Robert McAlmon in 1934.[127] To Ödön Pór he notes 'the DAMN nuisance of postal interruption' and the 'Ital Post office so incompetent that NOTHING more should be entrusted to it.'[128] In a follow up letter he asks the well-connected Pór to speak to Carmelo Rapicavoli[129] who he presumed to have some influence: 'HAVE you seen Rapicaveli, and CAN you get it at least into his head that the interruption of postal service is bloody shit.' The poet explains that he requires the postal service to gather information and to communicate with the world.[130] In 1937 he records: 'Packet from England has taken 13 days and not arrived yet. Things git LOST.'[131] With a world war raging, Pound complains to Senator Burton Wheeler[132] of Montana, 'With postage at the present price it is a mild

[123] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 4 May 1937, *Globe*, p. 116.
[124] Ezra Pound to Carlo Izzo, 19 November 1935, Carlo Izzo, '24 lettere e 9 cartoline inedite di Ezra Pound', *Civiltà Americana* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1976), p. 256.
[125] Ezra Pound to Clark Emery 5 February 1953, Special Collections Dept., Otto G. Richter Library, University of Miami, Coral Gables.
[126] Eugenio Montale, *Il Secondo Mestiere: Prose 1920-79* (Milan: Monadori, 1996), p. 1598.
[127] Ezra Pound to Robert McAlmon 12 May 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17202524.
[128] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór January/February 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[129] Rapicavoli was a fascist author mentioned in Canto 93.
[130] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór January/February 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[131] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 12 February 1937, *Globe*, p. 84.
[132] Burton Wheeler (1882-1975), an independent minded democrat who opposed American involvement in the war.

luxury to write to you at all.'[133] Given the huge volume of correspondence these are very rare complaints.

Pound seems to relish being a big fish in a small intellectual pond. Organising the special issue of *Poetry* on the Objectivists, he asks Zukofsky to cable him—'Pound, Rapallo'—to confirm receipt of various letters. Thinking about it, to be sure, Pound suggests Zukofsky could add Italy.[134] In his letters there are no complaints that sending proofs to New York, London or elsewhere is an expensive inconvenience or an issue easily solved by moving nearer. Pound considered *his* location to be the key determining factor rather than the location of audiences, fellow artists, publishing firms and the entire apparatus of culture and communication. In April 1910, writing to his father, Pound proudly reports that the great poet Yeats described him as 'a solitary volcano'.[135] Likewise, writing in 1921 to her mother-in-law Isabel, Dorothy Pound comments on Pound's random purchase of a bassoon and notes, 'He will be a soloist always…rather than in an orchestra!'[136] In moving to Rapallo Pound confirmed both these observations.

4.6: The group agenda

None of this meant that Pound had forgotten his interests in developing literary orchestras. In 1938 writing to Joseph Brewer, president of Olivet College, he is still thinking of a literary group in America and refers to James Angleton and Reed Whittemore's magazine *Furioso*—'Two chaps at Yale are or were trying to bring out a quarterly of nowt but verse. I don't think there is enough verse fit to read to fill it/ but in any case it does NOT fill the need I mention for a MEETING ground.'[137] Pound might have been alone, but he still believed he could foster literary togetherness. He did follow some of his own advice on how to establish a group. A regular meeting place for meals was the Albergo Rapallo, the café below the Pounds' apartment. In 1940 Pound was still directing people to call the Albergo Rapallo if they wished to connect with him.[138] The presence of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's 1914 stone sculpture, 'Hieratic head of Ezra Pound', in the café was a bizarre addition—as if the Ezuveristy had its own interpretation of the monumental nature of conventional university architecture: a study of the founder by one of the leading artists of

[133] Ezra Pound to Burton Wheeler 18 June 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122648.
[134] *P/Z,* p. 55.
[135] *Parents,* p. 233.
[136] *Parents,* p. 489.
[137] Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer 14 November 1928, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, 'Letters from Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer', *Paideuma*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1981, p. 382.
[138] Ezra Pound to Theodore Stoddard 20 January 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122633.

the age placed amid the comings and goings of an Italian café. He also launched the short-lived but aptly titled magazine *Exile*. Even so, for all his letters and pronouncements he never mentions the creation of a Rapallo coterie. His attempts at establishing a group at this time and going forward put him in the background as a literary marionette, pulling the strings rather than taking centre stage.

Louis Zukofsky is Pound's main hope of igniting a movement. In August 1928 he provides the younger poet with an extended letter offering advice on how best to bring a group together in New York. Having introduced Zukofsky to William Carlos Williams, Pound writes: 'I further suggest that you make an effort toward restarting some sort of life in N.Y..'[139] He goes on to spell out what he means:

> I suggest that you form some sort of gang to INSIST on interesting stuff (books) 1. being pubd. promptly, and distributed properly.
> 2. simultaneous attacks in as many papers as poss. on abuses definitely damaging la vie intellectuelle.
> //
> Whether you can meet at Bills, or whether you can find some cheap restaurant and dine together once a week as we have done at various times in London, is obviously an affair to be decided by local taste.
> But there are now several enlightened members of yr. body impolitic that might learn the val. of group action.[140]

Pound pays a great deal of attention to the people to invite to the new group:

> Must make a NEW grouping. and the older elements must be the uncompromised (either toward mediocrity or popularity.) also the mugs the y,m,c,a, types, the gorddam seerryous neo-Lippmans etc.
> If in doubt and ignorant of past records, you might consult me re/ proposed affiliations.[141]

[139] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 11.
[140] Ibid..
[141] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 13.

The contradiction here is that 'the goddam seerryous' are dismissed while Pound takes seriousness as the key entry requirement to correspond with him and admittance into the Ezuversity. People had to be serious about the same things as the poet. He concludes that Zukofsky, Williams, E. E. Cummings, Marianne Moore and some younger poets would be sufficient—'Point is you've got to get people as will work together.'[142] At this stage, Pound sees a group as a means of securing publication. Group and audience are combined as a practical solution to the challenge of getting work to market—'What group shd. mean is: convenience of literature, i,e, faculty for printing and distributing without too damnd much bother, secondly, as accessory, fight against impingements on vie literaire.'[143] As Pound's ambitions expand to include politics and economics, his ambitions for literary groups diminish. They are a practical way around the problems of dealing with publishers rather than revolutionary bodies set on changing the artistic and cultural world.

Indeed, the practical side of printing is of increasing importance and interest to Pound during the 1930s. Self-publishing and self-publicising, his emphasis is on taking control of the literary and cultural process rather than leaving it to what he regards as malevolent corporate forces—especially publishing houses which had long been subject to Pound's most forceful disgust. In 1929 he writes to Zukofsky about the potential to use the poet Charles Reznikoff's skills in setting type and access to a press—'Idiotic if there is a press in N.Y./ and a man who can set (hence supervise) that there shdnt. be a movement, a centre.'[144] Later, in a confused exchange with Ford Madox Ford concerning a possible academic position at Olivet College in the United States, one of Pound's central concerns is the printing capabilities on offer. He requests Ford to ask the president of the school:

> Will he GET a printing press/ LINO or monotype/ I.E. practical and not fancy hand arty machine for the DISTRIBUTION of knowledge and ideas?
> No use discussing details viva voce unless or until fundamentals can be got on paper.[145]

In July 1933 Pound is still nagging Zukofsky and suggests he stays in Europe to set up a 'salon'.[146] In Rapallo he remained comfortable preaching the merits of literary

[142] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 17.
[143] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 15.
[144] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 9 December 1929, *P/Z*, p. 27.
[145] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 21 February 1938, *P/F,* p. 155.
[146] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 10 July 1933, *P/Z,* p. xiii.

togetherness while himself existing in literary exile. Pound was critical of any notion of the writer as an isolated romantic figure, but that is largely what he became in Rapallo—though he would not have recognised this description. The artist in exile has a romantic air to which Pound might have been expected to give short shrift. However, he did title his magazine *Exile*. Perceiving himself as an exile raises the question of exiled by whom and from what. Pound's exile was his own decision though he ruffled literary feathers along his way through both London and Paris. His retrospective vitriol on London's cultural standing further emphasised his status as someone outside of the cultural and literary mainstream. Delmore Schwartz sums up Pound's isolation in a letter:

> In the old days when you were busy digging up Joyce and Lewis and Eliot, and even ten years ago when you printed those wonderful poems by Yeats next to Zukofsky in *Exile*, you were in the middle of everything and knew what was going on with exactitude, and as a result everybody benefitted. Now you seem to have your gaze trained on Jefferson and social credit and Harold Monro. And a phenomenon like Auden—to the author of 'Lustra' and 'Mauberley', the satirist of the British ought to be an item of some interest—does not seem to exist for you.[147]

The final point may well have been a little unfair on Pound as he did, according to Bunting, actually invite Auden to Rapallo. Bunting later recalled: 'It was once suggested to the young W. H. Auden that he should come for a week or two to Rapallo because EP, BB and WBY thought he had something in his first book, but it seemed too diffused and they thought that might be remedied. He replied that he preferred teaching boys to play rugby; and he became more diffuse with every piece he wrote.'[148]

Pound did not necessarily identify exile with isolation. He saw the writer's role more broadly within literary and extended society. He was not alone but connected intimately and dynamically with the cultural context. The writer, even one located in Rapallo, was a touchstone of society and culture; the writer was never alone. From his desk at the top of his apartment building in Rapallo, Pound regarded himself as integral to the broader context of civilisation and culture. Defying geography, he was performing a vital civilising function with his correspondence as the essential lubricant. The clarity and effectiveness

[147] Delmore Schwartz to Ezra Pound late 1930s, *Globe*, pp. 17-18.
[148] Basil Bunting to Gael Turnbull 4 January 1965, *Bunting*, p. 269.

of his letters in communicating to his network thus becomes ever more important in helping to overcome his geographical exile and achieving his objectives.

5: The Language of Letters

5.1: Ezratic lingo

If letter writing can be interpreted as Ezra Pound's chief weapon of literary and intellectual mobilisation, the style and form of the letters becomes central to achieving that goal. The poet's location in Rapallo and his growing interest in economics and political power further emphasise the importance of effectively communicating via his correspondence. Yet, the poet writes his letters in an increasingly obscure and impenetrable style which makes even basic understanding problematic. This contradictory force is perhaps the most perplexing: a brilliant, original, enthusiastic, persuasive communicator neuters his most important means of communication through linguistic playfulness, childish humour, random leaps of thought, blind and repetitive adherence to his ideas, insults and an inability to think about the recipients of his letters.

In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936 W. B. Yeats writes of Pound:

> When I consider his work as a whole I find more style than form; at moments more style, more deliberate nobility and the means to convey it than in any contemporary poet known to me, but it is constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nothing but its direct opposite, nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion.[1]

Alternatively, writing in *The Dial,* T. S. Eliot concludes of Pound's correspondence: 'His epistolary style is masterly.'[2] This is probably one of the more debatable of Eliot's pronouncements. The letters are the work of a literary master and in that sense masterly. They are highly distinctive in virtually every respect, full of 'nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion' as well as dangerous certainty. Louis Dudek, a correspondent of Pound's, concludes of D. D. Paige's selection of the poet's letters: 'The qualities of these letters are freshness of language, vitality, richness of useful ideas, lucidity. They are the letters of a poet, impersonal despite their angry energy.'[3] 'Angry energy' does not necessarily work in parallel with lucidity. While the letters have a revolutionary intent—to

[1] W. B. Yeats (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. xxv.
[2] Paige, p. 19.
[3] Louis Dudek (ed.), *Dk/Some Letters of Ezra Pound* (Montreal: DC Books, 1974), p. 119.

change literature, economics and civilisation—their meaning is frequently difficult to decipher.

Even the simple practicalities are unusual and often provocative. Pound's letterhead is indicative of his individualism—and priorities. In the late 1920s it simply reads: 'Res publica the public convenience'. He may have overlooked one English implication of this phrase. It is drawn to his attention by William Bird[4] who, more than virtually any other of the poet's correspondents, has a knack of deflating pretentiousness. In a 1928 letter Bird recounts a visit to London:

> I was confronted by a sign reading:
> "The nearest PUBLIC CONVENIENCES are at Leicester Square." Here is the key, then, to the enigma, and the explanation of your ferocious fascismo.[5]

Such witty deprecations are studiously ignored by Pound.

In 1932 a Gaudier-Brzeska profile drawing of the poet is introduced to the letterhead. From 1932 Pound also uses the fascist calendar which was dated from 28 October 1922. In 1937 a new motto is added—'A tax is not a share. A nation need not and should not pay rent for its credit.' It is defiantly negative, reflecting Pound's growing obsession with social credit and economics.[6] From 1938 he exclusively uses the fascist calendar and a quote from Mussolini is featured—'Liberty is not a right but a duty.'[7] The dictator's combination of tautology, abstraction and motivation was plainly appealing to the poet who was comfortable with all three elements.

The letterheads in their various forms provide a strong sense of place and identity. They are a statement—the letter is 'a genre of detached, distanced utterance that affirms the writer's absence in one place while asserting his presence in another'.[8] Pound was aware of the impact of the letterhead. In correspondence with Maurice Reckitt[9] of the Chandos Group (which also championed social credit) he uses a plainer letterhead to avoid

[4] William Bird (1888-1963), American publisher and journalist.
[5] William Bird to Ezra Pound 26 April 1928, Lilly.
[6] Pound's interpretation of economics and social credit is illuminated in: Ralf Lüfter and Roxana Preda (eds.), *A Companion to Ezra Pound's Economics* (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz Verlag, 2019) and Roxana Preda, "Social credit in America: a view from Ezra Pound's economic correspondence 1933-40", *Paideuma*, Vol. 34, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter 2005, pp. 201-27.
[7] *P/Z,* p. x.
[8] Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 194.
[9] Maurice Reckitt (1888-1980), a christian, socialist, author and croquet player.

offence—'Herewith an answer on some stationary that wont scare the committee out of its pants.'[10]

5.2: The tooter the suiter[11]

The sense of place is combined with a perpetual air of urgency, what Pound describes to Robert McAlmon as 'our own febrile tempo'.[12] No matter who he is writing to, Pound wants things done and quickly. Encouraging *Globe* editor James Dunn to commission an article from William Woodward,[13] the poet writes: 'He cd afford to do it cheap as is wd. serve as a book later. He is at loose end/ that is yr/ chance. N O W NOW.'[14] The urgency in the letters is frequently established in the opening. His first lines are often arresting and set an aggressively questioning and demanding tempo:

> To John Cournos: 'Dear Cournos: Are you in touch with any of those Rhooshun blokes you write about in *Criterion*?'[15]
>
> To Ronald Duncan: 'Dear Ron: Did *you* kill *The Criterion*? Wot will pore Robbink doo gnow?'[16]
>
> To William Carlos Williams: 'Deer Willyum the Wumpus: How badly does Zuk want to git to Yourup? And how badly OUGHT he?'[17]
>
> To H. L. Mencken: 'My dearly beeluvved Hank: Wot you say is mostly so, but why try to bluff yr. venerable friend that you have *read* any serious work of mine for a decade??'[18]
>
> To William Bird: 'Dear Zsoiseau: Yrs. with the camels to hand.
> Wot can you do with Olga's Mussolini business? Have now more details.'[19]

[10] Ezra Pound to Maurice Reckitt 5 May 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122620.
[11] 'Next point is to get Jas. [James Laughlin] to understand need of pub/ing a nucleus of civilisation, more organic than a "Five foot shelf," & the tooter the suiter.' Ezra Pound to Julien Cornell 20 March 1946, Julien Cornell, *The Trial of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 83.
[12] Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 123.
[13] William E. Woodward (1874-1950), American author and historian. His books included *A New American History* (1936).
[14] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 13 December 1936, *Globe*, p. 77.
[15] Ezra Pound to John Cournos 25 September 1935, Paige, p. 366.
[16] Ezra Pound to Ronald Duncan 10 January 1939, Paige, p. 415.
[17] Ezra Pound to William Carlos Williams 22 November 1930, Paige, p. 308.
[18] Ezra Pound to H. L. Mencken 24 January 1937, Paige, p. 377.
[19] Ezra Pound to William Bird 4 March 1927, Paige, p. 282.

Exclamations are another means of epistolary entry:

> To W. H. D. Rouse: 'N O NO! Doc.'[20]
>
> To T. S. Eliot: 'KIYRypes!!"[21]
>
> To Tibor Serly: 'Dear TTT-borrrrRRR: Yer damn right, them New Hungs *can* play the fourtett.'[22]

Some letters descend into insults virtually immediately. The belief might be that the recipient will read on to discover the justification or meaning of the insults:

> To Henry Swabey: 'Dear Swabe: You better twig the manifesto of the American Catholic Bishops and step on the gas. It covers a good deal, and yr. own pot-bellied bastid piscops are left at the post.'[23]
>
> To E. E. Cummings: 'My dear Estlin: Don't be more of a fool than nature has made you.'[24]

Pound explains his general letter writing rationale to Mary Barnard:

> Simply haven't time to write criticism, this a. m. or indulge in perlite langwidge. I take it immediate answer is preferable to delay.[25]

The poet is urgent and immediate in the full knowledge that the means of communication is slow and distant. There is no leisurely sense of time and timing which you might expect from a self-employed poet. Pound's continual sense of urgency is virtually entirely his own creation. His deadlines and timescales are largely established by the poet himself. This differentiates him from many of his literary peers who had very different time pressures, often dictated by the need to earn a living. Eliot, for example, commuted to work and, as

[20] Ezra Pound to W. H. D. Rouse 18 March 1935, Paige, p. 359.
[21] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 28 March 1935, Paige, p. 360.
[22] Ezra Pound to Tibor Serly September 1936, Paige, p. 372.
[23] Ezra Pound to Henry Swabey 7 March 1940, Paige, p. 437.
[24] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings February 1935, Paige, p. 356.
[25] Ezra Pound to Mary Barnard 2 December 1933, *Helico*n, p. 55.

Hugh Kenner points out in *The Mechanical Muse*, this brought a keen sense of working reality. (Kenner sees commuting as the tyranny of time over the masses.)[26]

All of this was a world away from Rapallo and, yet, Pound emphasises speed over more considered responses. Two letters are often mailed the same day to the same person as new thoughts occur to the poet. Pound's quick replies are usually sent by sea mail to another continent, a journey taking a number of weeks. The time lag between sending and receiving replies to letters means that it is notable, for example in his correspondence with his parents, that Pound often repeats the same things and responds to queries more than once. With around a month between letters this is understandable.[27] This was something Pound was used to. The rhythms of his life were daily activities—swimming, tennis, literary visitors—and the stream of correspondence.

There was virtually always time to contemplate or consider, but the poet preferred immediacy, action now. In a letter to James Joyce, Pound observes that 'the curse of me and my nation is that we always think things can be bettered by immediate action of some sort, ANY sort rather than no sort'.[28] By writing and posting a letter, he felt he had stayed true to his commitment to action.

Letters come with their own chronology. In *Epistolarity* Janet Altman argues that 'the temporal polyvalence of epistolarity discourse' is what distinguishes it.[29] Writing on Emily Dickinson's letters, Daria Donnelly makes a more general point about time and letters:

> The writer understands that a letter inherently dwells in the multiple temporalities of composition, movement through space-time, reception, reading, response, rereading; finally, the potency and meaning of the letter are subject to the vagaries of temporally-based shifts in affection and attention.[30]

Pound's letters are more notable for their shifts in attention—sometimes evident in the same letter. Very occasionally he alludes to the epistolary time lag which makes creative

[26] Hugh Kenner, *The Mechanical Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 21.
[27] Pound's liner crossed the Atlantic in eight days from Genoa in 1939. Given time taken on either side of the ocean, this suggests around 10 days as a minimum for a letter to reach an American recipient from Rapallo.
[28] Timothy Materer, 'Doppelgänger: Ezra Pound in his letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1982, p. 252.
[29] Janet Altman, *Epistolarity* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), pp. 117-42.
[30] Daria Donnelly, 'The power to die: Emily Dickinson's letters of consolation', Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter Writers 1600-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 135-6.

exchanges difficult. To Louis Zukofsky he writes: 'Let me know which version you prefer. Tho by the time your letter gets here, I suppose I will have sent the thing as I prefer it.'[31] In another letter he humorously contemplates the side effects of the time lag—'I seebythe papersSEZ Mr DooOley thet Mr Phuthnumb's review is afther bein printed,/ and by thet thet it may git here in the looseness of the fullness of the unincumbhered elasticity of Einstinian (thak godnot GertSteinian) relativity.'[32] To James Laughlin he laments a missing contract, but characteristically advocates moving on: 'Thass that. But as no news had reached me / and contract not here, you can damn well go ahead with the three you've got. only make eee haste.'[33]

There were other occasional issues. He complains to James Laughlin: 'These godDAMN sanctions mean that NO printed matter is imported, cause it affects trade balance / Economic WAR. is war. so please CUT any essential matter and *send* it letter post.'[34] Little mention or complaint is made of the undoubtedly difficult logistics. Again, one interpretation might be that the actual writing of the letter is enough for Pound to derive satisfaction that he is fulfilling his role. Whether the letter actually arrives and whether the edicts and suggestions are put into practice is not the poet's responsibility.[35]

The advent of airmail between Europe and America disturbed the rhythm of Pound's correspondence.[36] In St Elizabeths he was discomfited when Olga Rudge started using air mail while other correspondents used sea mail. For the poet the flow was broken.[37] '[A]ir mail hardly does more than change order in series of letters,' he writes.[38] 'And, Time bein' non-exist—it ain't so much gettin' news air-mail quick as gettin' some every so often.'[39] These lines encapsulate the contradictions and confusion in the poet's chronological view of the world—time is non-existent but constantly urgent, speed is essential but only by using traditional delivery methods. The flow of correspondence was the flow of his life, his personal chronology, a means of making sense of time, of recording history in the moment.

[31] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 8 September 1930, *P/Z*, p. 40.
[32] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 29 and 30 January 1931, *P/Z*, pp. 86-7.
[33] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 23 January 1934, *Laughlin*, p. 18.
[34] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 17/19 December 1935, Ibid., p. 49.
[35] Comparisons can be made with D. H. Lawrence who also juggled a constant flow of correspondence. Frances Wilson notes: 'Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Lawrence's writing life is his dependency on and trust in the postal service. Manuscripts, made without copies, were regularly despatched from one-horse towns; proofs from London and New York similarly journeyed across oceans to catch up with Lawrence in whatever hut he had laid his hat. He knew at any moment which of his writings were in the press, which were out to publishers, which were on hold, which proofs were expected, which needed completing and which needed rewriting.' Frances Wilson, *Burning Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 341.
[36] Airmail started in 1911 but airmail across the North Atlantic not until 1939.
[37] 'Ezra objected when Olga Rudge sent letters airmail, telling her he did not want accelerated communiqués but rather an unbroken flow of chatter from Italy to his cell.' *EP/DP*, p. 27.
[38] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 22 March 1946, Beinecke OR.
[39] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 30 April 1946, Beinecke OR.

5.3: Hot and molten

Below the striking and changing letterhead, Pound's correspondence is written and presented uniquely. Ernest Hemingway complained that the poet wrote in an 'uncommon tongue'.[40] Writing to Pound's lawyer in 1945, Hemingway cites the style of his letters—and other writings—as evidence of a diminished mental state.[41] James Laughlin called Pound's language 'Ezratic lingo', a combination of Ezra, eccentric, erratic and (perhaps) ecstatic.[42] 'The correspondence also shows that Pound had developed in his letters, long before he achieved it in his poetry, the nervous pastiche of public and private references which is characteristic of his major poetry,' write Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz in their introduction to a collection of letters between Pound and his future wife.[43] The poet's correspondence is often eccentric and certainly a pastiche of a variety of styles and formats, but generally very confident and assertive in its objectives and voice. 'Nervousness' may only be detected in the sense of someone flitting from subject to subject in an agitated rather than orderly manner.

There is an abrupt down-to-business element to many of the letters as Pound bypasses social niceties to get to his point. He writes to Harriet Monroe:

> Cheers, my dear Harriet, CheeUHHS!!! In a few days it wd. have been a birfday present.
>
> And now proceeding in order. No, I did NOT means Norman MacLeod when I wrote J. G. meaning Joseph Gordon (purrrnounced I prezoom Garrrdun) Macleod (perrnounced Mclwd) whose *The Ecliptic* has just been pubd. in vol. by Faber and Faber of Lunnon.[44]

In short measure, this manages to be friendly, business-like, playful and patronising. It includes Pound's stage-Scottish accent—the prelude perhaps for his description of Yeats' accent while reading in Canto 83.[45] The lack of coherence was perhaps expected by the

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[40] *Helicon*, p. 268.
[41] 'It is my considered opinion that Ezra Pound has not been normal mentally for at least the last ten years. I think you will find the evidence of his mind and judgement being progressively impaired (although with occasional flashes of brilliance) in all his later verse, writings, broadcasting and letters, and I am only sorry that he was not writing to me in those years so that I might put the letters at your disposal.' Ernest Hemingway to Julien Cornell 11 December 1945, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2109547. Hemingway's motivation may have been to prevent his friend being executed.
[42] James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 1987), p. 50.
[43] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. vii-viii.
[44] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 24 October 1930, Paige, p. 307.
[45] 'Uncle William/downstairs composing/that had made a great Peeeeacock/in the proide ov his oiye/had made a great peeeeeeeacock in the...'

recipients. With long-term contacts like Monroe, Pound is assertive and acerbic, always keen to have the final word. For example, he responds to a critical article by Monroe in 1926:

> Yes, I saw your article, if you mean the one that says what a delightful writer I used to be, and what a shame I have probably petered out. Also you blame Wabash for doing in 1907 very much what you did in 1917, ne c'est pas.[46]

In a letter to the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead,[47] Pound ends: 'You will probably feel that this note shd. have begun with a palaver of excuses, etc. Can but ask you supply same from any polite preliminary epistle in yr. collection.'[48] This displays an awareness that the poet is casting aside social niceties and conventions of letter writing but is hardly likely to encourage a reply from someone unknown to him. 'Letter writers apologise for letters too long, letters too short, late letters, letters that are not letters,' notes William M. Decker in *Epistolary Practices.*[49] 'You know it is customary for the first page to be occupied with apologies,' writes Emily Dickinson to Abiah Root.[50] The apology is a conventional means of opening a letter, but one which Pound almost totally avoids.

Describing his writing style on social credit to Stanley Nott, the poet writes: 'With the cold and the technical stuff there; I have of set purpose done the thing hot and molten. (as probably no one else will).'[51] 'Hot and molten' suggests the energy and passion in much of Pound's correspondence. Insults fly. 'Reese (Holystone Holysmoke rubber ball kikie Reese) is the slickes jew publisher in YourUp,' he warns *Globe* editor James Dunn of John Holroyd-Reece of the Albatross Press.[52] Writing to George Tinkham in 1936 he describes John Maynard Keynes as a 'blathering trained seal'.[53] To his parents, he writes:

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[46] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 30 November 1926, Paige, pp. 278-9.
[47] Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947).
[48] Ezra Pound to Alfred North Whitehead 19 February 1928, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122649.
[49] William M. Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America Before Telecommunications* (Raleigh, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 19.
[50] Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (eds.),*The Letters of Emily Dickinson Volume 1* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 65.
[51] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January 1935, *Nott*, p. 7.
[52] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 5 May 1937, *Globe*, p. 119.
[53] Ezra Pound to George Tinkham 6 February 1936, Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18, No. 1/2 (Spring & Fall 1989), p. 39.

> The edtr. of the Atlantic is a bloody idiot and an ignoramus to boot. He ought to be chucked into the swill pail, and all his family, race, cousins an connections. However, America as a hole is going collectively bug-house.[54]

Pound's insults rarely stop with the individual, but speedily expand to encompass their families, communities, colleagues, friends and entire nation. It is unlikely his parents knew the name of the editor who so enraged their son or had any personal connection. The volcanic stream of insults appears a largely pointless exercise—but one which portrays the poet as a single heroic figure defying a tsunami of ignorance.

It is not simply his willingness to venture bold opinions, criticise institutions and lambast a wide range of individuals which gives Pound's correspondence its energy and distinctiveness. His letter writing style has a number of recurring characteristics. First, he had a long-established habit of using phonetic spellings of words. This is used to the extent that often they require deciphering as much as reading. This can be seen developing in letters to his parents:

> Glad you were entertained at Kape Kawd. One of the views with the old Kawdgers was quite amusing.[55]

> Very sorry you have been down with RHEUmatizzzzzzzzzz.[56]

> No I am not a Sinologue. Don't spread the idea that I read it a zeasy as a yourapean langwidge.[57]

> Lunched with Berenson Monday—ditto with Loeser (friend of J.Q.) last week—both in mag. villas with old ahrt abaht 'em.[58]

This is not a private parental joke. Phonetic spellings—in a variety of accents—are used exhaustively with virtually all his correspondents. To E. E. Cummings he shares his views

[54] Ezra Pound to Homer and Isabel Pound 18 March 1925, *Parents*, p. 561.
[55] Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 31 August 1917, *Parents*, p. 405.
[56] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 23 February 1918, *Parents*, p. 413.
[57] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 1 September 1928, Zhaoming Qian (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 17.
[58] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 10 April 1924, *Parents*, p. 527.

on Roosevelt's 'Nude eel'.[59] He also talks of 'colly/bore/eaters' [collaborators] and 'purrDikkyments' [predicaments].[60] To James Dunn he talks of 'kallyfornicators'.[61] To Agnes Bedford, the poet writes: 'Nevuh hav bin so aktiv as in last 2 or 3 years.'[62] Senator Cutting is directed to 'Horstralyia' [Australia].[63] Writing to T. S. Eliot, Pound refers to the 'Slimes Slit Subpooonplement' [*Times Literary Supplement*].[64] In that publication, Herbert Read was damning of Pound's phonetic excesses: 'There is a certain type of humour (peculiarly Anglo-Saxon, but most frequent in America) which shies at seriousness and hopes to get past it by apeing a vulgar and illiterate mode of speech. Thus culture becomes "kulchur!," Aristotle "Arry stotl" or just "Arry," Shakespeare "Bill Shxpeare".' Read concludes that this approach 'ceases to be funny at the end of two or three pages' and can only be explained by 'some form of inferiority complex—some lack of self-confidence which the author is successfully hiding from himself'.[65]

At times the phonetic spellings come in a largely unintelligible torrent, such as a letter to Frank Morley of Faber and Faber: 'Brer/Possum dun say attack is worf mo'n laudashun, as 'strument ov pubcty/to himself az orthur. so we may consider several limes in dat prefashum az authorized by the Revrund hisself. Tenny rate I aint dun a sneek on 'im.'[66] All publicity is good publicity appears to be the message.

Pound is quick to demand clarity from others. To Ödön Pór he writes: 'DAMN blast and Hell it/ IF you wd/ write the IMPORTANT WORDS so as a human being cd/ read 'em instead of deploying yr/ calligraphic refinements on pronounds and puppyzishuns./'[67] Later, from St Elizabeths, with a lack of both irony and self-awareness, he complains to Dorothy Pound: 'if she wd write the KEY words clearly & leave the illegible unimport. etc. he don't know what she sz.'[68]

Phonetic spellings are especially evident from the very start of the poet's correspondence with James Laughlin. 'Cantos not to be given away. As Frida said about talking to British

[59] Greg Barnhisel, 'Review of *Pound/Cummings*', *Paideuma*, Vol. 28, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter, p. 260.
[60] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 23 February 1933, *Cummings*, p. 22.
[61] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn December? 1938, *Globe*, p. 177. This anticipates by 61 years the album 'Californication' by the Red Hot Chilli Peppers.
[62] Ezra Pound to Agnes Bedford 4 April 1934, Pound Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.
[63] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 23 March 1934, *Cutting*, p. 115.
[64] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 9 December 1927, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 368.
[65] Herbert Read, 'Cogitations of Mr. Ezra Pound', *Times Literary Supplement*, Issue 1903, 23 July 1938, p. 489.
[66] Ezra Pound to Frank Morley 12 May 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 572.
[67] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór March 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[68] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 21 May 1946, *EP/DP*, p. 341.

Guard's Officer. NO, vun musssst tdraw dch line SOMMMM / Vhere!!!!,' writes Pound in 1934.[69] In their correspondence an entire phonetic language develops—'Harry Stotl', 'Haavud' or 'Hawvud' is Harvard, and there is 'aht an letters', 'seereeyus', 'wuz', 'eddikashun', 'ShXpr' [Shakespeare], 'aggykulch' [agriculture], 'Amurikuh', 'maggzzeenz', 'noozpaper', 'seereeyusness of porpoise', 'Gee/hee/ZUSS' (or 'Gee.hee.ZUSSSS'), 'sez', 'fer krizake', 'curry / /ku /lums' and 'licherchoor'.[70] A complete letter from the poet to the disciple in December 1935 reads:

> Jas. sure one glutton fer kulchur / suggest something less old rose and mauve than Gourmont / something EP hasn't already extracted / AND in fakk something contemporary / Gesell. New Eng / Weekly essential if you meant to watch papa AT all. constant life in econ / at present, hardly elsewhere.
>
> might read Frobenius / am myself starting on Romains' Homme de bonne Volonte, 8 vols . . don't know yet . . what it amts / to.[71]
>
> there is further oh well / I man I hadn't in 1917 digested it all /
>
> Also a little fugue / perhaps / Richter . . or a few classics / have you read Trollope, if too lazy to read furrin woikz? (I don't say T / is all readable.[72]

The ground covered in a few lines is substantial and would have required extensive decoding by the recipient no matter how enthusiastic and well informed. The poet describes himself in the third person—'EP', 'papa'—as a supportive eminence grise.

Phonetic spellings, with an array of accents, are part and parcel of the Ezcratic lingo, a reflection of the poet's well-being. It is notable that Pound's letters to his wife when initially in captivity are markedly more serious (understandably) and there is less phonetic foolery. So much so, that it is a relief when Pound describes something as 'beeyewteeful'.[73]

Phonetic spelling is in keeping with a playful element. This is particularly true of his letters to Olga Rudge which regularly break into verse—such as on Adrian Stokes:

> The elegant elongated Stokes

[69] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 10 March 1934, *Laughlin*, p. 26.
[70] A biography of Laughlin took this phonetic spelling for its title: Ian S. MacNiven, *Literchoor Is My Beat* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2014).
[71] Jules Romains' novel sequence *Les Hommes de Bonne Volonté* eventually amounted to 27 volumes.
[72] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 12 March 1935, *Laughlin*, pp. 41-2.
[73] *EP/DP,* p. 153.

> Constructed a wheel without spokes,
> He said: Simply you feel
> That the thing *is* a wheel
> From the image that it invokes.[74]

There are jokes aplenty. Some only Pound is ever likely to have understood. Many are juvenile and regularly repeated. James Laughlin's publishing company New Directions is routinely 'Nude Erections'. The publishing company Houghton Mifflin becomes 'Houghton Snifflij' or 'piffling Mifflings'. President Hoover is 'Sausageface Fatboy'.[75] There is no apparent appreciation that this might under-cut any serious messages.

What is often not expressed is why an individual or a group justifies disdain. An interpretation of Pound's pointed insults might be simply that he is consciously or unconsciously seeking to create a common bond with his correspondents, a shared subject of ridicule or disdain, an enemy (however benign in reality).[76] As a technique, it may have worked as Pound's correspondents regularly continue the abuse. It could also be argued that the frenetic wise-cracking playfulness of Pound's correspondence actually disguises his often dictatorial and judgemental intent. Wyndham Lewis observed that the 'tone of the letters almost from the beginning is authoritarian, not to say pontificatory'.[77]

Many of these elements can be seen in a few lines from a 1932 letter to Bronson Cutting which reiterates common targets for the poet's wrath:

> RESOLVED that no cockeyed sonvabitch be allowed to call himself a economist (even though a member of the Haavud or other beanery faculty) until he have pubkly answered the foller ink kweschunz[78]

The poet absolves himself from such strictures and calls himself an economist—'I was after all a poET before I economicKD; econoKICKED.'[79] In such lines there is a playful and

[74] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 17 February 1928, Beinecke OR.
[75] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 13 November 1932, *Cutting*, p. 79.
[76] 'Mutilation of a proper name of distortion of a text usually attest to a certain contempt for the person or thing referenced to. These negligences can create a complicity with the hearer…Use of a deliberately poor or clumsy vocabulary may serve the same purpose.' Charles Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 164.
[77] Wyndham Lewis, 'The Rock Drill' in *Ezra Pound: Perspectives* (Chicago: Regnery Co., 1965), p. 200.
[78] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 13 December 1932, *Cutting*, p. 79.
[79] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 14 November 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.

spontaneous sense of word play and puns being thought up by Pound as he types. Another to Cutting asks:

> IZ thur enny stachoots to prewent a 'foundation' spending its money on what it AINT founded to spend it for, and neglecting to spend it fer WHAT (in this tube) Andy laid it down fer 'em to spend it fer??[80]

Buried among the phonetic spellings and homespun diction, the Andy in question is Andrew Carnegie. The serious point Pound is making, submerged by playfulness, is that there appears little to prevent literary or other foundations spending their money as they see fit. The poet is constantly aggrieved by the lack of financial support from the likes of the Guggenheim Foundation for the work of himself and his acolytes. There is perhaps also a hopelessly optimistic sense that somehow he might become the controller of a foundation.

Amid the wordplay, typographical errors and misspellings are commonplace. Many of these are undoubtedly a result of Pound's speed of thought and wit outstripping his typing technique. Like Yeats, his spelling is not altogether reliable.[81] Indeed it is a distinguishing feature. 'I never did like spellin, tho my olema' has still got a medal they give me when others wuz wusser,' he explains to Frank Morley.[82] After Pound writes to Mary Barnard from St Elizabeths she observes: 'The only signs in the letter of breakdown in mind or spirit were that all the words were correctly spelled and he signed his name legibly.'[83]

To these complications and decorations is added constant use of abbreviations—'N quire', 'Yr.', 'NRG', 'Cdnt.' and so on. Mussolini is either Muss or M. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is simply Frankie. Explaining the use of abbreviations in *The Cantos*, the poet explains: 'Abbreviations save *eye* effort. Also show speed in mind of original character supposed to be uttering or various colourings and degrees of importance or emphasis attributed by the protagonist of the moment.'[84] Increasingly, as Pound's output of letters

[80] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 15 May 1934, *Cutting*, p. 125.
[81] Ann Saddlemyer notes that Yeats was 'dyslexic, a poor speller and careless about punctuation'. Ann Saddlemyer, 'The letters of W. B. and George Yeats', Oxford University Press blog, https://blog.oup.com/2011/03/yeats-letters/, accessed 16 April 2020.
[82] Ezra Pound to Frank Morley 1 January 1937, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122600.
[83] *Helicon*, p. 231.
[84] Ezra Pound to Hubert Creekmore February 1939, Paige, p. 418.

accelerates, his appetite for condensation grows. 'DONT apologize for long letter/ I err so often by trying to make mine short,' he tells Montague Fordham.[85]

Exclamation marks, underlinings and capital letters are also utilised extensively. Upper and lower case are used for emphasis as required. For example, Pound writes to Louis Zukofsky in self-justificatory vein:

> ALSO HELL; who got Joyce Printed, who got Prufrock Printed, who got ole Bill's first (with bill's aid) who sent Tagore's first into america, who first sent Frost to Poetry??? etc....
> JheeZUSS: some god damn pubshr ought ultimately to git wise to the fak that farver is SOMETIMES RIGHT. (even if the butter an eggs men want dull pornography with Beardsley eyelustrations.[86]

Again, the poet portrays himself as the literary elder—'farver'—ignored by publishers but proved right by events. His amusing interpretation of the predictable taste of mediocre publishers is offset by the reality that he sought such popularity for his own work. Amid the self-justification and complaints, the constant battery of emphases is largely self-defeating. Stanley Nott concludes this and suggests the poet changes stylistic tack: 'You have been knocking them over the head with a big stick for a long time now and I think they have become used to those sort of blows.'[87]

What makes this even more confusing is that Pound also skips from subject to subject. During the 1920s and 1930s the links between the subjects in Pound's letters often disappear. The virgule provides a minimal divide between competing and sometimes contradictory ideas. Knowledge is assumed. 'Pound from the late thirties on refers familiarly to events and personalities that are so private or obscure that even his correspondents do not recognise them,' notes Timothy Materer.[88] He expects readers to keep up—or has simply not thought of it from their side—or has and doesn't care. There are occasional explanations. Writing to Zukofsky, Pound pulls up the younger poet on his

[85] Montague Fordham (1864-1948), author of *A Short History of English Rural Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916). Ezra Pound to Montague Fordham 8 January 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122623.
[86] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 2 January 1928, *P/Z*, p. 20.
[87] Stanley Nott to Ezra Pound 16 December 1935, *Nott*, p. 184.
[88] *P/L*, p. vii.

letter writing style and suggests that his own style is justified as time saving and, as he has mastered the style, he can take literary liberties:

> You must stop tangling yr. sentences = got to simplify. write subject [1] predic. [2] obj. [3] = AFTER you have abs. mastered simple (even to platichood) style you can start convolutin' = my letters done to save time are NOT model for print = I know its very hard to keep mind on what reader dont know & has to be told.[89]

Rather than displaying the lack of control identified by Yeats, James Laughlin argues that all this was done deliberately as a protracted exercise in literary attention seeking:

> The staccato paragraphing, the rough diction, the sound effects, the distorted spelling, the typographic stunts, the anecdotes & allusions, the shouting & swearing are all there for a purpose: to shatter the reader's mental slumber and *make* him absorb the content.[90]

The trouble with this argument is that having gained the reader's attention the writer has to lay out 'the content' in a readily understandable way. In his letters Pound continually shouts for attention without then delivering a digestible explanation.

Laughlin's comments echo another influence on Pound, Filippo Marinetti. The Italian futurist corresponded with the poet occasionally but is a somewhat marginal figure despite their similar campaigning zeal, converging political beliefs and parallels in their writing styles.[91] Marinetti was a charismatic self-publicist, networker and entrepreneur. At times he was an agent, poet, promoter, publisher and musician and (again echoing Pound) was criticised for 'impudent careerism and intolerable exhibitionism'.[92] Marinetti's descriptions of what constitutes the futuristic literary style strongly suggest that adopted by Pound in his letters. For example, Marinetti talked of '*parole in libertà*', meaning words in freedom, and espoused, 'Love of speed, abbreviation, and the summary'.[93] He was critical of 'confused verbalisms of the professors' and promised to 'despise subtleties and

[89] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 26 August 1930, *P/Z*, p. 43.
[90] James Laughlin, 'New directions: Pound's prose', *New Democrat*, 1 December 1935, p. 120.
[91] For more on the Pound/Marinetti relationship and the futurist's relationsip to fascism see David Barnes, 'Fascists aesthetics: Ezra Pound's cultural negotiations in 1930s Italy', *Journal of Modern Literature,* Vol. 134, No. 1, Fall 2010, pp. 19-35.
[92] Günter Berghaus (ed.), *F. T. Marinetti: Critical Writings* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2006), p. 10.
[93] F. T. M. Marinetti, 'Destruction of syntax—imagination without strings—words to freedom', 1913; Umbro Apollonio (ed.), *Futurist Manifestoes* (Boston: MFA Publishing, 1970), p. 98.

nuances of language…The rush of steam-emotion will burst the sentence's steampipe, the valves of punctuation, and the adjectival clamp. Fistfuls of essential words in no conventional order.' Marinetti's action-oriented imagery appears an apt description of the American poet's epistolary style, comparable to Pound's notion of his style as 'hot and molten' or Laughlin's chosen metaphor of 'the pressure pump'. The poet's style invites colourful descriptive metaphors. Lawrence Rainey provides this interpretation:

> [Pound] possessed an uncanny sense of the page (or, *mutatis mutandis*, the postcard, the leaf of stationery, etc.) as a physical medium—not as a bearer of 'pure' information, but as a unit of display. He did not so much write a sequence of text as improvise a kind of graphic performance, a textual billboard with words arrayed in different sizes, multiple colours, and shifting spatial configurations.[94]

Simultaneously, Pound's letters are 'a unit of display', largely impersonal, while having an exciting sense of intellectual performance. They are an exercise in epistolary theatre and posturing as much as honest and personal communication. A letter to Olga Rudge on 26 March 1928 demonstrates many of Pound's stylistic quirks:

> Ziao :
>
> Hieri he attended a film called Chang.
>
> He advises her to do the same, as it is full of tigers a nelefants.
>
> A fantle's " chang "in Siam
> You cawn't tell its head from its ham
> The native's Who's Who
> Merely mentions the zoo
> Which takes up the whole of Siam.
>
> Undsoweiter.
>
> ///
>
> Yes, that is correct , we at the instigation of Bill Bird donated said copies of orig. edtn. to be jewly signed by G.A. and dispoged of benefizio suo.

[94] Lawrence Rainey, 'The letters and the spirit: Pound's correspondence and the concept of modernism,' *Text*, Vol. 7, 1994, p. 373.

///

He has noted her remarks re/ Yvette, and has, sfar a zee knoze done nothing to impede her designs. he don't quite know wot ellz he is ezpekted to do.

///

Yes, there is a typewriter, name I forget, that will allow you to put on your own handschrift or Chinese or anything, with or without common type.
Emotion is howeffer more easily obtained in the orthography than in slant. which requires more doing.

Ziao, amure.[95]

The last five words of the letter are arranged at different angles to illustrate Pound's point about the potential of the new brand of typewriter. He is keen throughout his letters to use the typewriter—and language—to the limit of their capabilities.

This letter is one of hundreds to Olga Rudge. It feels like a continuing conversation as Pound walks through points he wants to deal with from a previous note. It flits between discussion of a film he has seen, arranging for a book to be signed, domestic disquiet regarding Yvette, and a brand of typewriter. The virgule in the middle of a line or to separate paragraphs is Pound's customary text break. This dramatic form of punctuation divides the letter up in a way similar to the basic designs of newspapers in the early twentieth century as one story bleeds into the next.

The letter to Olga Rudge also demonstrates Pound's continual movements between languages. There are short deviations into German—'Undsoweiter' [and so forth] and Italian—'hieri', 'beneficio suo'. There are also the usual phonetic spellings—'sfar a zee knoze', 'wot allz he is ezpekted', 'howeffer'.

[95] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 26 March 1928, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/11689693.

The poet's use of the third person—something which Rudge emulates in her letters—adds a curiously stilted and impersonal air to what is a conversational note exchanged between two lovers who live in the same town. They use the third person in much of their correspondence. In 1928, for example, Rudge writes reprovingly:

> She hopes He stops writing about 'tin in his teeth', and 'reducing his figure.' One would think He was His friends Mr. Joyce and Mr. Ford rolled into one! His teeth are bellisimo, also His figure, when He keeps His pants hitched up. He please try to be a bit romantic when he's writing to a lady.[96]

The use of the third person is a recurring feature of Pound's correspondence with his lovers and in their replies. This goes back even to his brief relationship with Iseult Gonne in 1918.[97] When imprisoned, Pound begins to use the third person in letters to Dorothy—for example, 'He hopes she having tolerable journey back,'[98] and 'He hopes she didn't get drownded with rain at 3 a.m. or snowed under on the Bracco.'[99] This may have been out of habit or an oversight—writing to his wife in the same style as he writes to his lover.

Even in the 1940s Pound was writing frequently to Olga when he was away from her. On a ten-day trip to record broadcasts in Rome in May 1942 he writes almost daily—all signed with the name Ezra Pound rather than something more informal and appended with an injunction to greet their daughter Mary ('salute the sprout', 'love to the sprig', 'salute the rising star', 'greet the authoress.')[100]

The playfulness in Pound's letters often goes hand in hand with insults, digressions and intolerant opinions. For example, his correspondence with Bronson Cutting is notable for its relaxed and playful tone. A May 1934 letter reads:

> To the Rt. Reverend Cutting, chaplain to the murkn senate/
>
> Yer/ rivrince/

[96] Olga Rudge to Ezra Pound to 17 July 1928, Beinecke OR.
[97] A. Norman Jeffares, Anna MacBridge White and Christina Bridgwater (eds.), *Letters to W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound from Iseult Gonne: A Girl that Knew All Dante Once* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), p. 142.
[98] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 3 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 103.
[99] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 4 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 105.
[100] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17091453.

> The NNNclosed recd/ this a/m/ from the Rt. Rev/ Eliot (T.S.) late Norton Purr/feezer at the idem/ inschooshun. as illystrashun of the effeks of the baboon LAW (211 of the Pea/in/all coda)
>
> This is the kind of silliness an smuttiness fostered in the gt/ centre of onanism at Cambridge Mass/ where they have Sprague to TEACH economics/ or backhousehold saving.
>
> Will you blokes ever START on the risveglio or WAKING UP of American eddykasun/ or do you want yr old age pestered by idiots made WORSE by the present asinine system of obfuscating the young.
>
> yrs/ with ever increasing piety
> E.P.[101]

While being critical of the 'silliness an smuttiness' of the enclosed document (which remains unknown), Pound practices both. Cutting, a well-educated linguist, may have been one of the few people in receipt of one of Pound's letters who might confidently have expected to be able to decipher its meaning. The silliness comes in the allusions to religious roles—more comfortably befitting Eliot than the politician. The letter combines a stream of phonetic spellings (some more tortured than others) with assumed shared knowledge. The 'baboon LAW' was part of the Penal Code which Pound and Cutting had previously corresponded on. Sprague is a reference to Oliver Sprague,[102] professor of banking and finance at Harvard Business School and one-time member of Roosevelt's administration. The overall effect is playful but pointed; familiarity with an agenda. Whether this is a suitable or helpful way of communicating with a Senator does not seem to occur to the poet.

5.4: The typist

The poet's enthusiastic use of the typewriter was an influence on the Poundian epistolary style. 'My medium is the typewriter,' he tells Mary Barnard.[103] 'I spend about 95% of my energy at this typewriter to CREATE a REAL revolution,' he writes to the poet Langston

[101] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 30 May 1934, *Cutting*, p. 131.
[102] Oliver Sprague (1873-1953), economist, President of the American Economic Association, Secretary of the Treasury (1933).
[103] *Helicon,* p. 162.

Hughes.[104] Pound was unusual for the time in that virtually all of his letters are typewritten—often with handwritten additions and amendments.[105] 'Cant correspond without typewriter,' he tells his mother and repeats the complaint to René Taupin.[106]

The poet's correspondence with Louis Zukofsky was one-sided in this respect—all of Zukofsky's letters are handwritten, Pound's all typed.[107] Similarly, letters from the futurist Marinetti are elegantly hand-written. Neither might have appreciated the irony of a fountain-pen-wielding futurist and a technology-loving disciple of Dante and Cavalcanti. Even though typewriters were not a new technology—they were introduced in the 1870s[108]—it was still somewhat unusual for writers to use them exclusively. Eliot began using a typewriter to write in 1919 and claimed it boosted his lucidity but not necessarily his subtlety.[109] Other writers were still in the habit of apologising if they typed a letter rather than handwriting it. Pound saw things differently. He reproves Ödön Pór: 'Gheez when you got a puffikly good typewriter/ why dont you USE it.'[110]

There are photographs of the poet poised hawkishly above a typewriter. Pound's typing style was energetic. This had repercussions. 'His epistolary vehemence left one typewriter constantly in the repair shop,' says David Gordon in his collection of Pound and Laughlin's letters.[111] The performance of the typewriters is a constant irritation for the poet. He complains to Viola Jordan about his new typewriter with its 'unfamiliar keyboard sticky with three months in shop window'.[112] 'What I need is a dictaphone and two secretaries and harder fingers, cause I get mad when typing and wear out the tips of my own,' the poet writes to Ödön Pór.[113] The noise generated and energy dissipated by Pound's vigorous typing technique was part and parcel of the letter writing process; it was a performance. Of D. H. Lawrence's plays, George Bernard Shaw noted: 'I wish I could write such dialogue. With mine I always hear the sound of the typewriter.'[114] In Pound's letters, the sound of the typewriter competes with the various voices of the poet.

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[104] Langston Hughes (1901-67). Ezra Pound to Langston Hughes 13 May 1935, David Roessel (ed.), 'A racial act: the letters of Langston Hughes and Ezra Pound', *Paideuma* 29.1-2, 2000, p. 229.
[105] 'Pound was one of the early users of the typewriter for composing both poems and letters.' *P/J*, p. 13.
[106] René Taupin (1905-81), French-born critic and academic. Author of *The Influence of French Symbolism on Modern American Poetry* (1929). Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound 15 June 1927, *Parents*, p. 631; Ezra Pound to René Taupin May 1928, Paige, p. 292.
[107] In 1933 Pound briefly took up the fountain pen, writing to Eliot: 'I'm learning to write wif a fountain pen.' Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot September 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 657.
[108] The Sholes & Glidden Type Writer was launched in the American market in 1874 followed by the Remington.
[109] Matthew Hollis, *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber and Faber, 2022), p. 52.
[110] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 5 May 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[111] *Laughlin*, p. xxi.
[112] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 25 September 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037864.
[113] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 20 December 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[114] Frances Wilson, *Burning Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), p. 37.

Typing rather than handwriting doesn't always provide clarity. To the journalist Ian Munro, Pound writes: 'I ll get used to this Corona again in a wkk and find ly my near glasses so at as to see they keys m but reckon thi this is clearer than hand writing.'[115] The author Mary Butts[116] describes Pound as 'the only person who types worse than I do'.[117] Prince Ranieri struggles with Pound's type: 'For the love of Morgenthau, I wish you would clean the type on your bloody rattler. The m's, o's, e's, p's, t's, q's and every other letter look very much like horses turds and as I have got to read your elucubrations on the radio, I have had to use my imagination much to the detriment of the sense and the contents.'[118] Pound retorts, 'I am ALWAYS cleaning this goodddddam machine' but is handicapped by a lack of ammonia.[119] Elsewhere, he complains, 'Damn this weak ribbon/ and the rain.'[120]

Pound associates the typewriter with the energy to work and create. After illness he writes to his father in 1924: 'Am beginning to want typewriter again = sign of awakening energy.'[121] The typewriter is the tool of his trade. In its modernity it is the ideal communication tool of modernism. On holiday with Yeats in Sicily he borrows Yeats' typewriter 'to get through a bit of work'.[122] Returning home he reports that he is catching up having been without a typewriter—'Am plugging through arrears of correspondence, not having had this machine in Sicily.'[123]

The subject of typewriters recurs in his letters as Pound tries to keep old models working or seeks out alternatives on his travels. In 1923 he writes: 'New typewriter rather a comfort, Underwood portable,[124] runs easier and feels more solid, also ribbon don't curl up (yet).'[125] As a 'comfort' (a word also used by Pound to describe the feeling of having a letter in his hand) the typewriter is synonymous with his own health and equilibrium. Later, when imprisoned in Italy, the poet was allowed to use a typewriter in the medical hut during off-duty hours as it was thought that his mental health depended on writing and the

[115] Ezra Pound to Ian Munro October/November 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17409019.
[116] Mary Butts (1890-1937), British author, married to the publisher John Rodker who published Pound.
[117] Mary Butts to Ezra Pound 2 June 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31908813.
[118] Prince Ranieri to Ezra Pound 27 July 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[119] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 30 July 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[120] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór January/February 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[121] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 16 May 1924, *Parents*, p. 530.
[122] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 23 January 1925, *Parents*, p. 552.
[123] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 27 February 1925, *Parents*, p. 559.
[124] The Underwood Number 5 was launched in 1905 and was the Model T of the typewriter world, selling two million by the early 1920s. It was used by Hemingway, Faulkner and Fitzgerald among others. By 1940 Pound was using an Everest 90 portable. https://site.xavier.edu/polt/typewriters/typers.html.
[125] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 24 April 1923, *Parents*, p. 510.

administration of his writing.[126] The typewriter was his link to normality, a reassuring means of escape.[127]

In Pound's relationship with the typewriter, there is a sense that he is reveling in the possibilities, using the instrument to its maximum. Sometimes this is playful. Pound and Dorothy, for example, rather unkindly refer to George Yeats in their letters simply by the shape □ to signify her square-shaped face. The lure was mechanical as well as emotional. One of the likely attractions of the typewriter for Pound is that the finished product feels like it is being published rather than simply written. It cuts out the publishing middlemen he increasingly despised. This means that typed letters are more easily preserved for posterity. Typewriters also make possible a variety of different layouts for letters. The way they are structured and arranged on the page has more in common with magazine publishing than traditional letter writing. In Pound's letters there are often different sections and headlines. The typewriter also makes revisions more practical. 'For the high modernists (and then for their sometimes self-consciously imitative successors), the typewriter was more an instrument of re-representation, of re-presentation, than composition,' says Hannah Sullivan.[128] In *The Work of Revision*, she highlights the willingness of modernist writers to revise their work. This was encouraged by the advent of the typewriter. Valerie Eliot commented on the kind of 'violet ribbon used by Pound' and its use in the *Waste Land* manuscript.[129]

Pound was also interested in the host of other printing machines and mechanical devices introduced during his career. As an author he was deeply involved in the publishing process. His early works were effectively self-published, and he was an extremely diligent reader of proofs. Even so, other literary figures took this much further in terms of taking back control. The Woolfs bought a hand press in 1917 and from there sprang the Hogarth Press which published the first British book edition of the *Waste Land* in 1923.[130] Virginia Woolf's comments on the status of the new technology would have resonated with Pound:

[126] *EP/DP,* p. 104.
[127] His interest in typewriters was unaffected by incarceration. From St Elizabeths he writes to Dorothy: 'Pope has a white enamel typewriter–otherwise no Ital. news.' Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 23 May 1946, *EP/DP*, p. 343.
[128] Matthew Kirschenbaum and Hannah Sullivan, 'On instruments of composition', Harvard University Press Blog, 6 January 2014.
[129] Valerie Eliot (ed.), *The Waste Land. A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), p. 63.
[130] Hannah Sullivan, *The Work of Revision* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 43.

> The private printing press is an actual fact, and not beyond the reach of a moderate income. Typewriters and duplicators are actual facts and even cheaper. By using these cheap and so far unforbidden instruments you can at once rid yourself of the pressure of boards, policies, and editors.[131]

But, given his epistolary views on the Bloomsbury Group, it is unlikely he would have given Woolf credit for achieving the independence he craved.

Throughout his correspondence, it is clear that, at the same time as venerating history and historical texts, Pound was no Luddite. He championed George Antheil whose work included *Ballet Mécanique*, a score to be played on a set of interlinked pianolas with special effects including a siren and aeroplane propellers.[132] Repeatedly in his letters Pound expresses an interest in technology—in 1926, for example, he asks the Youngstown Boiler & Tank Co. and E. W. Bliss, a metal machinery company in Brooklyn, for information about their work and products.[133] Printing machinery is of particular interest. He writes to William Carlos Williams: 'I shd. like to see the advertisement of one of those latest smallest lightest printing presses again. The kind advertised fer bizniz houses: "Do your own printing."'[134] He goes on to ask about the shipping costs to Italy of such a printing machine. When Iris Barry is based at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Pound is quick to pick her brains on the 'microphotographic method'.[135] In his discussions with Olivet College in 1938 about a possible teaching role, Pound repeatedly refers to the need for printing technology. He writes to Olivet president Joseph Brewer:

> Purely frivolous to start a college hind 'em on/ I.E. WITHOUT a printing press. You can't found anything without a press. College ought to have one/ or to BORROW or rent that of the nearest jerk=water local paper *for one day a* week. The de luxe printing don't answer the purpose of a lino/[type].
>
> The stewd/dents wd. learn both a trade and some sense in setting up the sort of stuff I wd. find fit to print.[136]

[131] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (New York: Harcourt, 1938, 2006 edition), p. 116.
[132] Its Paris premiere in 1926 led to a street riot. 'Ezra (who is Antheil's champion) got very excited, and rushed about in high glee,' Eliot reported to his mother. T. S. Eliot to Charlotte Eliot 24 June 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 198.
[133] BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10080178.
[134] Ezra Pound to William Carlos Williams 2 December 1929, Paige, p. 303.
[135] Ezra Pound to Iris Barry 3 June 1937, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10778606.
[136] Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer 14 November 1928, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, 'Letters from Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer', *Paideuma*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1981, p. 379

In his correspondence with James Dunn of *Globe* Pound displays knowledge of modern printing technology, including the Swiss offset printing process Manuldruck: 'I think colour illustrations a waste of money. usually horrible any how. has Manuldruck process got to U.S. or are you partially financed by coulour printer?? otherwise shd. think you better hold down to coloured frontpiece & and use finance to ameliorate quality of TEXT.'[137]

Elsewhere he admires a photograph of the medal press at the Royal Mint—as Homer Pound was assistant assayer at the mint in Philadelphia there was a family connection. Writing to his father, he describes it as 'magnificent' and adds: 'The NOSE of the big dies, for example, excellent shape. Photos of the detail of the coin press, especially at the point where force is concentrated. NOT the damn detail of the *coin,* sentimental symbolism.' The poet goes on to describe the attraction of the machine:

> MUST distinguish between machinery, motor parts, and mere stati[c] structure.
> The static structure in machines, really part of architecture and employs no extra principle. Governed purely by form and taste.
> Its the mobile parts, and the parts REQUIRED to keem them in their orbits or loci. that I am interested in.[138]

This is analogous to Pound's views on architecture and futurism. He is not interested in 'mere static structure' but is fascinated by drive, movement and energy, action rather than celebration.

5.5: The style virus

Pound's correspondents are sometimes willing to attempt to emulate his letter writing style. Some do so facetiously. Writing to Dorothy Pound while her husband is in St Elizabeths, Wyndham Lewis adds a note at the end of the letter: 'Will you say: Dear Ezz. Why doan yew warble about Washington, same as Osky did bout Reading and ole Verlaine tew when same cause took him to same place. Yew could bring it out nonymous-

[137] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 29 August 1936, *Globe*, p. 45.
[138] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, 23 October 1925, *Parents*, p. 578.

like.'[139] The suggestion of becoming the Oscar Wilde of St Elizabeths was probably not what Pound wanted to hear.

T. S. Eliot similarly falls into the Poundian letter writing style in his correspondence with the poet:

> Dear Rabbett,
>
> Well heres a long time, since much water has Flowed under many bridges has they say well I Don't know hardly where to begin but here one point for immediet attention.[140]

Elsewhere he playfully apologises for his lack of responsiveness:

> Rabbitt my Babbitt,:.
>
> Owing to Obsxurity of yr. episstlary stile I had done nothing about anything and owing to my being very busy what with receiving an obscure letter-in-French from the secretary of the Michael Mullins Marching & Chowder Club.'[141]

Arranging a visit to Rapallo in 1925, Eliot writes:

> Me and my lil ole saxophone will be with you some day next week. I must get new passport and hire a mewl to tote my traps down the mountain. Will send wire first and await reply as don't wish to arrive in yr absence. Bad enough to cross Genoa without a guide. It *cant* be colder than here – they hav to break the ice in the horsetrough to wash mah pants.[142]

He follows up with a longer update three days later which begins:

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[139] Wyndham Lewis to Dorothy Pound 15 November 1947, W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 420.
[140] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 16 August 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 621.
[141] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 5 April 1933, T. S. Eliot (Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden, eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 5: 1932-3* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 571.
[142] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 8 December 1925, Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 2: 1923-1925* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 791.

> It doan matter a toad's fart whether your village is Syracuse Aggrigentum or Buffalo, the point is it aint in France, my passport expired with a sigh on the 7th instant.[143]

Eliot's standard epistolary voice is a model of conservative restraint. His next letter, written on the same day, is to Richard Aldington. In it Eliot reverts to his normal style and the more conventional subject matter of publishing politics—'What you say sounds incredibly perfect, and if it comes off will require a bottle of fizz to precede the Cockburn.'[144]

Pound's voice was clearly infectious. Phonetic spellings and exclamation marks are adopted with varying degrees of enthusiasm and natural comfort by his friends and disciples. Correspondents might have considered the adoption of the Poundian style as a mean of better engaging with the poet. Even occasional correspondents are seduced. Edmund Dulac,[145] the illustrator and designer, adopts Pound's language in a letter explaining a disagreement he had with Yeats: 'Also had A1 row with WBY over poetry broadcast with him asking me to do the music for some poams the noises inbetween ah but in Doblin it aint real moosik they like, what you keep time with & real notes & all.'[146] The Italian Carlo Izzo writes to Pound in 1942: 'The girl, who is convinced you are a grrrate poewet, would like you to explain to her;—which might give her lights on your technique.'[147] Louis Zukofsky, a seriously minded individual, eventually succumbs. His letters are initially respectful and begin, 'Dear Pound'. It takes a number of years before they are abbreviated and personalised—'Dear E'—and the Poundian argot is adopted. The Guggenheim Foundation becomes 'Gug'; business, 'bizness'; and *The Times*, 'The Lunnon Times'. Rising to the challenge, Zukofsky writes in January 1930: 'Kate Hecht is no ex-anything. She's merried, has two arfspring. So it's "whatcheveryou Freudians call it," hell!—I'm a feelossopher.'[148] And later: 'Dear E: I cannot know how to too much offer my thanks—Yr. Chaston Blues-uues—now being typed by Mussyou Reenie Toe pan [Monsieur René Taupin] and will be before the booblik if Put's [Samuel Putnam] reliable.'[149]

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[143] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 11 December 1925, Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 2: 1923-1925* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 791.
[144] T. S. Eliot to Richard Aldington 11 December 1925, Ibid., p. 792.
[145] Edmund Dulac (1882-1953), French-born, London-based illustrator and stamp designer.
[146] Edmund Dulac to Ezra Pound 29 November 1937, Beinecke EP.
[147] Carlo Izzo to Ezra Pound 24 April 1942, Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. 100.
[148] Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound 12 January 1930, *P/Z*, p. 32.
[149] Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound 12 October 1931, *P/Z*, p. 99.

The journalist and publisher William Bird intersperses his arguments with stylistic embellishments designed to appeal to the poet. A letter of 1933 combines hard-hitting confident opinions—'Don't go high-hatting me about Economics. I was a technocrat way back in 1919 (before they had found that stylish name for it).'—with phonetic spellings and a sure sense of his own contribution—'Most of the reddest labor leaders including a couple of Roosians finally thought that the most the Legislature could do would be to increase the income tax. Somebody said it should simply mean that big NY corporations would move to N. Jersey. It may surprise you, mon cher Ezra, but it was yr present correspondent who put the discussion to bed.'[150] By putting himself at the centre of the action, Bird is challenging Pound's notion that the centre of things is always where he is located. The publisher's take on Pound's economic and political opinions provokes increasingly bad tempered responses—by 1934, Pound is nearing the end of his epistolary tether: 'For all our time/ the sonsofbitches have maintained a nightmare which is now as god damn idiotic as having people die of thirst in the attic, because some syphilitic kid has turned off the water in the basement.'[151]

E. E. Cummings is one of the very few who can match Pound's ability for linguistic silliness such as in this 1930 letter: 'Ye Kid is hitting in the clinches and ruffureee Brandt&Brandt's one glasseye had an attack of sic unleashing pandemonium until the audience was on my feet to a manhole(What Comma Indeed comma Is civileyesehshun)?—Tears Lyut.'[152] This refers to Cummings' agents Brandt and Brandt and 'Tears Lyut' is T. S. Eliot. A 1935 letter from Cummings begins:

> superruthianX transoceanic swat fabulously incinerates pilule pink As Cowards Sheer and blushful beholder's bereft borsalino bounds proudly from soi-distant brains(item who in serene glee suddenly stood on my head)paragraph[153]

This blends Cummings' poetic style with the phonetic convolutions of Pound's letter writing. Rather than challenging his views, the surest way to access the poet's brain and

[150] William Bird to Ezra Pound 13 January 1933, Beinecke EP.
[151] Ezra Pound to William Bird 24 February 1934, Lilly, Bird Collection, Folder 1931-39.
[152] E. E. Cummings to Ezra Pound 1 March 1930, *Cummings*, p. 18.
[153] E. E. Cummings to Ezra Pound 7 January 1935, *Cummings,* p. 41.

network was imitation. James Laughlin was a Harvard sophomore when he made his way to Rapallo after writing to Pound (helpfully enclosing a stamped addressed envelope):

> Could you and would you care to see me in Rapallo between August 27-31? I am American, now at Harvard, said to be clever, and the whiteheaded boy of Fitts, Mangan etc. [Dudley Fitts and Sherry Mangan were poets and Fitts was Laughlin's teacher at the Choate School] Specifically, I want 1) advice about bombarding shits like Canby & Co [Henry Canby was a critic and editor]; 2) sufficient elucidation of certain basic phases of the CANTOS to be able to preach them intelligently; 3) to know why Zukofsky has your support. I presume to disturb you, because I am in a position (editor Harvard Advocate and Harkness Hoot) to reach the few men in the two universities who are worth bothering about, and could do a better job of it with your help.
>
> Servissimus
> James Laughlin IV.[154]

With its combination of youthful chutzpah, practical support for Pound's work, connection to a great educational institution, name dropping and a willingness to be opinionated, Laughlin's letter was likely to appeal to Pound. It was carefully calibrated. For example, 'Servissimus' was a Latin affectation used by Dudley Fitts in his letters to Pound. The poet's reply manages to be pithy and positive yet cryptic: 'Visibility high'.[155] Pound says he will be in Rapallo until 28 or 29 August and suggests a meeting with Louis Zukofsky—'You can also have the opportunity of slaying the Z in person. Or if you prefer—painfully to pry up the lid of his intelleg.'[156] Almost immediately Pound falls into a more extreme version of his writing style in his correspondence with Laughlin. There is no let up. In October 1933, Pound writes:

> Waaal waaal ART AN DACHSUNDS ARE LONG. How can any kid know anything (about Potry) when I at the age of forty 8 am just findin' out things I hadd orter bin told at 18.

[154] James Laughlin to Ezra Pound 21 August 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 3.
[155] *Laughlin*, p. 3.
[156] Barbara Epler and Daniel Javitch (eds.), *The Way It Wasn't* (New York: New Directions, 2006), p. 233.

> Act / Anth seems fairly solid now its out. My ole farver he sez : Gheez it'z tough.[157]

By the end of 1933 Pound is writing to Laughlin using his most condensed style—'Sidg / vs. that lousy sonvabitch or Woodie Wilson. Fr / Urbino. sons of bitches from the days of *Verres*'.[158] Few others could keep pace or exercise the patience to decode such communication which manages to compress Sigismondo Malatesta, Federico Urbino, Gaius Verres and Woodrow Wilson into two lines. Many of the letters from Pound to Laughlin are written in this breathlessly compact but elusive style—'Bro / Serly he done go BIG / and izza passin up to Buda. mebbe you might Pest over fo' his orchestral show, long in Rapril if you iz letchin for a change / I rekum dem averlunches wont eat so good in the sprung time.'[159]

Soon Pound is addressing Laughlin as 'Dilectus Filius', beloved son.[160] This is not a cavalier greeting, but one important to Pound. He writes in Canto 74: 'Filial, fraternal affection is the root of humaneness.' By this time Laughlin is enthusiastically aping Pound's writing style: 'I say to hell with Haahvud. I honest to God don't see how I can go back there.'[161] Updating Pound on his reading programme, Laughlin writes:

> Reading: Ec. med. lit. & things on the HOWtoREAD list that I haven't touched yet./Writin' perty (I think I'm getting a bit stronger there) prose & any crit. that will help the KORSE./Physical Dev.: Skiing, mountains, & ole swimmin hole.[162]

The willingness of a student to emulate the master, even if only in incomprehensibility, might have given Pound some satisfaction.

5.6: A poet's voice

Increasingly, as the strident and unusual nature of the letters grows, there is a sense that either Pound did not know the likely impact of his epistolary style on the recipients or was past caring. '[Pound] seems to have been incapable of seeing how disjointed and cryptic his

[157] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 27 October 1933, *Laughlin,* pp. 6-7. 'Act / Anth' is a reference to the *Active Anthology* edited by Pound and published in 1933.
[158] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 24 December 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 11.
[159] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 6 March 1934, *Laughlin*, p. 24.
[160] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 31 December 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 12.
[161] James Laughlin to Ezra Pound 7 January 1935, *Laughlin,* p. 38.
[162] James Laughlin to Ezra Pound January/February 1934, *Literchoor,* p. 56.

prose frequently appeared to others,' observes Leon Surette.[163] It can be argued that the authenticity of the letters becomes heightened by the fact that the author cares little about the audience or, certainly, not enough to temper his mode of communication. The more revolutionary Pound's intent, the less easily understandable are his letters.
Elsewhere, Surette suggests that the poet's epistolary style effectively worked as a smokescreen for his ignorance on the very subjects he was shouting loudest about—'Pound's cryptic style is much admired in the *Cantos*, but it does not contribute to comprehensibility. In his political and economic writing it serves to obscure his ignorance and lacunae in his arguments.'[164]

There is no doubt that Pound's style was unique and that much of it was beyond the comprehension of any reader, even the enlightened modernists he often corresponded with. Writing to D. D. Paige, the editor of Pound's selected letters, Wyndham Lewis counsels against editorial housekeeping:

> E.P.'s letters tidied up would no longer be E.P.'s letters. The 'old hickory' flavor is essential. The more 'Waal me deah Wyndamn' you have the better. Change this to 'well my dear Wyndham', and it is somebody else speaking—writing. It is not a Yankee-exoticism (its desirability, or otherwise) that is at issue. I prefer E.P. as he *is*—it is a question of portraiture and of accuracy.[165]

In the same letter, Lewis adds: 'The publisher *who dulls these letters down* and deguts them will not only be doing a great disservice to Ezra but to the public of today and also of tomorrow.'[166] Pound's letters, when they have been collected, have usually been left intact complete with 'old hickory'.

Given the peculiarities of his style it is surprising that more of Pound's network didn't express their incomprehension on receiving one of the letters written in his 'hot and molten' style. Only a few did so. 'You're hard to read at any time, let alone at all times' remarks Prince Ranieri.[167] 'You seem to have made it impossible for many people to read

[163] Leon Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 153.
[164] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[165] Wyndham Lewis to D. D. Paige 25 October 1948, W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 466.
[166] Ibid..
[167] Prince Ranieri to Ezra Pound 30 July 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.

you—they refuse to read you or they can't abide you,' writes Stanley Nott with commendable honesty.[168] The communist editor Mike Gold is diplomatically polite:

> Your letters were forwarded me & I have quit trying to answer. Ezra you are a great man (maybe no one is) but your new manner is too stenographic & personal to answer anyway. You should be more patient in presenting your ideas in logical order. Pardon the insult.[169]

W. B. Yeats is among the regularly perplexed:

> Your letter of January 3rd followed me to America and then back here and when it reached here I had influenza so George didn't give it to me until tonight. I have read it without much understanding, I wonder if you could bring yourself to tell me what you want in old-fashioned English.[170]

T. S. Eliot also expresses his mystification on receiving a letter (from the 'masterly' letter writer) with an unlikely combination of subjects:

> Your letter, as frequently, is extremely obscure. I do not understand the point of the pug dog nor the apparently more significant allusion of the storming of the bastille. Perhaps you will kindly explain this latter point to me as it might prove a useful piece of knowledge?[171]

Ford Madox Ford finds Pound's letters maddeningly difficult to understand. He continually, and largely humorously, complains of his incomprehension:

> Get the waiter at your hotel to write your letters for you; he will at least write comprehensible dog-English. Your 1892 O Henry stuff is wearisomely incomprehensible by now.[172]

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[168] Stanley Nott to Ezra Pound 22 May 1936, *Nott*, p. 212.
[169] Mike Gold to Ezra Pound 7 December 1930, Beinecke EP; *Globe*, p. 14.
[170] W. B. Yeats to Ezra Pound 2 March 1933, Beinecke EP.
[171] T. S. Eliot to Ezra Pound 28 July 1922, Lawrence Rainey, 'The letters and the spirit: Pound's correspondence and the concept of modernism,' *Text*, Volume 7, 1994, p. 377.
[172] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 16 March 1938, *P/F*, p. 156.

> I ought to have written to you before—but I have not, and that is that, I have such a tic against writing letters that I cannot do it—and yours are always so incomprehensible that it is as good as getting no answers.[173]
>
> Your heart is golden: so are yr. words. But the latter are normally—even when they can be read—incomprehensible.[174]
>
> Your handwriting is more incomprehensible than your type-script and that says a great deal; Stella and I spend all our spare moments deciphering your last letter. I expect we shall get to the end of the job before I write again.[175]

In the correspondence between Ford and Pound it is clear that Ford regards his friend's letter writing style as extreme and unhelpful, especially in correspondence with outsiders to Pound's network. Increasingly through the 1930s, Pound is unwilling, or unable, to compromise his letter writing style. Trying to secure 'a settled job in the U.S.A' for Pound, Ford enlists the help of Paul Palmer, editor of the *American Mercury* to 'print any one I told him to, and I thought I had better to go to Rapallo and censor anything you wrote him…But, as you expect when I have got so far, I desisted when I got a letter from Palmer, a cable saying that he would rather die than print anything that you wrote or even to print your name in his magazine. He said you had insulted him in a manner no human being could be expected to stand and, as he is a very mild and forgiving person, I guess you *must* have done something to him.'[176] Ford castigates himself for not fully appreciating that Pound's 'epistolary-lapidary manner in an initial letter might make him believe that you were not a poet'.[177]

Only old friends appear confident enough to express such sentiments to Pound. 'YOUR form of communication is a little difficult for ancient persons like me,' complains George Yeats on receipt of an increasingly rare letter from Pound in the 1950s.[178] In his reply Pound sets her straight by explaining that by 'Elephant' he meant T. S. Eliot and 'Dover Bitch'

[173] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 28 March 1927, *P/F*, p. 88.
[174] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 27 July 1920, *P/F*, p. 33.
[175] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 12 July 1920, *P/F*, p. 32.
[176] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 6 September 1936, Richard M. Ludwig (ed.), *Letters of Ford Madox Ford* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 260.
[177] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 6 September 1936, Ibid., p. 262.
[178] George Yeats to Ezra Pound circa November 1957, Ann Saddlemyer (ed.), 'George, Ezra, Dorothy and Friends: Twenty-six letters 1918-59', Warwick Gould (ed.), *Yeats Annual No. 7* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 27.

was Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach'.[179] 'I am not very good at deciphering his impulsive and temperamental script,' Wyndham Lewis admits to T. S. Eliot.[180] Lewis complains directly and challengingly: 'Your last letter undecipherable, just cannot imagine what lies beneath the words. Have you anything really to say?'[181] As D. D. Paige assembled the poet's selected letters, he corresponds with Lewis who includes some notes on the letters from Pound he has sent to Paige. Lewis writes: 'E.P.'s text requires a great deal of attention on part of typist. When he writes facetiously "Muster", say for "Mister", or "Musterd" for Mustard", the eye is very apt to neglect so small a departure from the norm: or time is wasted deciding whether it is a typing error or a *Witz*....'[182] Lewis suggests Pound's letter writing style is the product of a particular period: 'You will remark in these very early letters the germ of his subsequent extravagant jerkiness. It grows on him rapidly towards 1919 and 1920.'[183] It is a point Lewis comes back to in a later letter to Paige: 'Are the exuberantly spellt [sic] and expressed letters all later ones? It is a point that interests me. At what date did the letters begin to be eccentric?'[184] Similarly, describing Pound's letter-writing style of 'eccentricities of spelling, punctuation, line arrangement, indentation', Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, editor of the collection of Pound-Ford correspondence, concludes: 'They were part of a highly individual style which seems to have developed gradually during his London years and which may be identified as a conscious way of composing around 1920 or a little later.'[185]

While Pound's letters were certainly a 'conscious way of composing', putting a date on when exactly his letter-writing made the leap from standard English into 'extravagant jerkiness' and 'eccentricities' is difficult. There is little evidence of a sudden stylistic transformation. Many of his stylistic quirks were long standing. For example, writing to Viola Jordan in 1905 he displays an early enthusiasm for the introduction of foreign phrases, phonetic spellings and entertaining bastardisations of the language. It is also worth noting that Viola is given the option to register her preference for a more conventional writing style:

[179] Ezra Pound to George Yeats 21 November 1957, C. F. Terrell (ed.), 'Ezra Pound letters to W. B. Yeats', *Antaeus*, 21/22, 1976, p. 48.
[180] Wyndham Lewis to T. S. Eliot 29 April 1946, W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 394.
[181] Wyndham Lewis to Ezra Pound January 1956, Ibid., p. 564.
[182] Wyndham Lewis to D. D. Paige 14 October 1948, Ibid., p. 461.
[183] Wyndham Lewis to D. D. Paige 14 October 1948, Ibid., pp. 461-2.
[184] Wyndham Lewis to D. D. Paige 12 November 1948, Ibid., p. 473.
[185] *P/F*, p. xvii.

> It is that it is that I have got ze paralyses en fingair so that is it that it is that I can not any more ecrire avec ma plume. I attempted to write a dinner bid and the ink had to be taken up in baskets. I can scarcely produce a signature let alone write my name. This is of course all hot air and if you object to this form of letter writing I'll go back to the old school method of hieroglyphicixing a la 1830 per request, but it's such a comfort to write something that I can read myself etc. ad inf.[186]

Pound's attitude, even aged 20, appears to be that if he can understand and be amused by it, his letter writing style is acceptable. Thirty years later, writing to Stanley Nott he expresses confidence that his work is more accessible while adding critical caveats:

> On the hole I think my 1930 writing IS more readable that stuff done 20 years ago.
> but that may only mean more readable BY ME.
> I do not understand the boild potato in the public head.[187]

Elitist rather than inclusive, what is surprising is that the poet increasingly expresses annoyance with his inability to connect with an audience he looks down on and makes little apparent contact with even in his day-to-day life.

During the 1930s, the poet increasingly applies the same standards to his prose work. There's a clear overlap between his methods of education via correspondence and the later critical writings—*How to Read*, *ABC of Reading*, *ABC of Economics* and *Guide to Kulchur*. The informality of his letter-writing style spills over into his book writing in these 'educational' manuals and the introductions to his polemical anthologies. Pound suggests that readers of his prose in *Guide to Kulchur* need to have the skills of a crossword solver.[188]

It can be argued that Pound is, in style and format, simply pushing at the boundaries of convention. Writing to his daughter, he notes: 'If we never write anything save what people can understand we will never extend the field of poetry or of our own comprehension.'[189] Yet, at the base of letter writing must be the functional objective of any communication whether it is to entertain, inform or inspire. Pound's correspondence—largely free of emotion—was usually highly functional in objective, but it is difficult to

[186] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 9 August 1905, Beinecke EP.
[187] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott, 19 May 1935, *Nott*, p. 125.
[188] *Kulchur*, p. 48.
[189] Ezra Pound to Mary Rudge 1 December 1957, Richard Taylor (ed.), 'From father to daughter', *Paideuma*, Vol. 37, 2010, p. 210.

believe that his stylistic mannerisms and experiments in form did anything other than hinder the achievement of these objectives. In the 1930s, as the clarity of what the poet wants to achieve increases—global awareness and application of social credit—his letter writing style becomes more impenetrable. This contradiction between objectives and execution creates a vicious circle which serves to further increase Pound's frustrations while also highlighting the demandingly cryptic nature of much of his correspondence.

6: A Collaborative Dictator

6.1 Mentoring by mail

With little personal detail, bold ambitions to create groups and re-shape civilisation, and an often impenetrable writing style, Ezra Pound's correspondence appears to defy the personal nature of any communication from one person to another via mail. Yet, the poet was successful in sustaining correspondence with many individuals over decades. Recipients of his letters were willing to negotiate his unique style and presentation, strident opinions and intolerances, and unwillingness to share personal information. They did so because they perceived that they received something of value which made the epistolary exchange worthwhile.

For many that value lay in developing their own work, career and perspectives on literature with the older poet acting as a mentor. Wyndham Lewis described Pound's letters as a 'pedagogic volcano'.[1] In Rapallo creating and maintaining relationships by mail, and providing an education according to his own unique standards, evolved into the modus operandi of what Pound labelled the 'Ezuversity'. It also served as a means of overcoming isolation and ensuring publication. In doing so, the letters expose more contradictions in Pound's world view—in particular, on the nature of collaboration, knowledge and education.

One of the central contradictions of Pound's life and work is that he espoused collaboration. However, being in Rapallo meant he worked alone and at a distance from people. Geographical isolation was not the only issue. 'He was not made for compromise or cooperation,' observed Herbert Read.[2] The poet's personality was ill suited to the frank face-to-face exchange of ideas central to a group or gathering. Instead, his correspondence became the focus of Pound's collaborative endeavours.

The poet Mary Barnard[3] provides an example. On returning to Vancouver after graduating, the young poet read Pound's manifesto for Imagism which chimed with her

[1] Harry Meachem, *The Caged Panther: Ezra Pound at St Elizabeths* (New York: Twayne, 1967), p. 168.
[2] Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 223.
[3] Mary Barnard (1909-2001).

own thoughts.[4] Emboldened, Barnard looked up Pound's address in *Who's Who* and mailed six poems to him in Rapallo. In the poet's response, a postcard, he bluntly asks:

> Age? Intentions? Intention? How MUCH intention? I mean how hard and for how long are you willing to work at it?
> Rudiments of writing:/ vide my pubd. crit. Rudiments music??? My unpubd. and mostly unwritten crit.
> Contents??

In such communications, Pound manages to be both forthright and elusively cryptic. There are more questions than answers—and the answers suggest that knowledge of his own work is mostly what is required of any literary aspirant. Indeed, it seems to advise Barnard to absorb Pound's 'mostly unwritten crit.'. The postcard finishes with a P. G. Wodehouse-like flourish: 'Nice gal, likely to marry and give up writing or what Oh?'[5] Later in their correspondence, Pound returns to Barnard's marital plans. Becoming a matriarch is a distraction and the other options (in Pound's restrictive view of female roles) are limited. 'And it is now about time you *decided* whether you are going to lorelai, or matriarch or bluestocking,' he writes.[6] Barnard replies that she plans to become a bluestocking. 'Every bluestocking has garters,' Pound retorts.[7] His letters are notable for the lack of any appreciation of what might be appropriate in an exchange with a young woman.

Whether his correspondents are male or female, young or old, the willingness of people to commit themselves seriously to their art is fundamental for Pound—'how hard and for how long are you willing to work at it?' The answers from Barnard are reassuring and soon, with typical generosity, the older poet responds with detailed feedback. His instructions during their early correspondence includes 'rewrite this, with greater economy', 'NO, not TOO much condensation';[8] and 'Don't worry about *lightness*. You ain't an Amy Lowell. Shall the gazelle mimic the hippo. "be yerrself"!!'[9] Later, Pound's criticism is more hard-hitting while remaining challenging to decode—'The poem Cayoosh is

[4] 'It seemed to me the only really worthwhile piece of poetry criticism I had ever read–worthwhile for the maker, that is, as opposed to the consumer.' Sarah Barnsley, *Mary Barnard, American Imagist* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 26.
[5] Ezra Pound to Mary Barnard 29 October 1933, Paige, p. 331.
[6] Ezra Pound to Mary Barnard 18 February 1938, *Helicon*, p. 116.
[7] *Helicon*, p. 117.
[8] Sarah Barnsley, *Mary Barnard, American Imagist* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 26.
[9] Ezra Pound to Mary Barnard 13 August 1934, Paige, p. 346.

mattressed and quilted down under the verbiage,' he says of one of Barnard's poems.[10] Barnard aspires to a 'spare but musical style'.[11] She also talks of 'hard' writing of 'a certain starkness'.[12] This is music to Pound's highly tuned ears.

The crucial development in Mary Barnard's literary career was influenced by Pound's correspondence. He advised her to work on Greek metrics. This led eventually to her translation of the poet Sappho. 'There is so little Sappho that that won't take long, after you buy a crib,' writes Pound in 1934. 'You hate translation??? What of it?? Expect to be carried up Mt. Helicon in an easy chair?'[13] Pound expected his students to work hard and to eschew what he regarded as the easy and largely mythical route to creating worthwhile literature.[14] (It could be argued that Pound's own path up the literary mountain—propelled by Yeats's endorsement—was not as taxing as his later strictures to others suggest.) Once identified as suitably serious and added to Pound's mailing list, the feedback and process of education was ongoing for Mary Barnard and the other students of the Ezuversity. He continued to offer comments on Barnard's poems even while incarcerated in St Elizabeths.

Another beneficiary of Pound's personal educational programme was the English author Ronald Duncan. 'Bright lad named R (no relation of Raymond, Isadora or other) DUNCAN on way from India/ 10 hours Rapallo,' Pound writes to James Dunn, immediately opening doors for the new arrival and commissioning an article on India (or, at least, on the poet's interpretation of India)—'I told him to send you FIRST hand about SNAKES and Gandi and Leopards in CooshBahar. BRIGHT lad.'[15] In his memoir *All Men are Islands*, Duncan writes:

> Ezra taught me more in one day than I had learned in a year at Cambridge. The practice of apprenticeship should be revived. He began by reading to me one of Guido Cavalcanti's canzone, and then gave me the book as a present. There was I with an honours degree in English literature and I'd never even heard of Cavalcanti, let alone become aware of the form of a canzone. And like many other

[10] *Helicon*, p. 118.
[11] Sarah Barnsley, *Mary Barnard, American Imagist* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), p. 46.
[12] Ibid., p. 47.
[13] Paige, pp. 336-7.
[14] Barnard titled her autobiography, *Assault on Mount Helicon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Her *Sappho: A New Translation* appeared in 1958 and went on to sell over 100,000 copies.
[15] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 7 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 90.

> student graduates at Rapallo, I continued to have, as it were, a post-graduate course by postcard from the Chancellor.[16]

The Ezuversity was a uniquely personal education: the knowledge, insights, opinions and prejudices of a single individual delivered directly by mail.

6.2: Declining feedback

While Pound was capable of collaboration, during his time in Rapallo his willingness to enter into constructive relationships diminishes as his own economic and political agenda increasingly dominates. This means that the poet's feedback is often either general rather than specific, rarely shared or depressingly (for the author) destructive. In a letter Hemingway bridles at Pound's generalisations: 'It does me no good to have you say in a large offhand fashion that everything I'm writing was written much earlier and better by Charles Louis Phillippe who was no good either: because a statement like that being so large has automatically a too great specific gravity of horseshit.'[17] James Laughlin reports that feedback is sparing and only rarely encouraging.[18] 'Yr/teKneeee /qu iz in verse improvin',' Pound writes to Laughlin in March 1934.[19] The very occasional nature of positive feedback means that it is valued even by Nobel laureates. Yeats is buoyed when, at what proves to be their final meeting in London in 1938, Pound, somewhat damning with faint praise, concludes Yeats' recent poems are '"rather good" which for him is rapturous applause'.[20] In 1934 Pound's one word of feedback to Yeats on *The King of the Great Clock Tower* is: 'Putrid.'[21] Elsewhere he tells Yeats that it is written in 'nobody language'.[22] In *The Poets of Rapallo*, Lauren Arrington reports: 'In 1934, the two poets had a spectacular disagreement over Yeats's new play, *The King of the Great Clock Tower*: a falling out that was the nadir of WB and George's visits to Rapallo. Tensions had been building for more than a year.'[23]

Pound prided himself on his willingness to stand up to the reputation of Yeats. He writes to Desmond FitzGerald in self-congratulatory fashion: '*Who* has the record fer having

[16] Ronald Duncan, *All Men are Islands* (London: Hart Davis, 1964), p. 158.
[17] Ernest Hemingway to Ezra Pound 1937, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[18] 'Occasionally, Pound could be persuaded to critique James's verse, which he did with pencil in hand, slashing out words, lines, sometimes whole pages, breaking the lead as if to emphasize his disapproval.' *Literchoor*, p. 75.
[19] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 16 March 1934, *Laughlin*, p. 30.
[20] W. B. Yeats to George Yeats, 18 November 1938, R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats A Life: II The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 642.
[21] R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats A Life: II The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 501.
[22] Lauren Arrington, *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 132.
[23] Ibid.

coonthradicted Unc. Wm. More times per week, hour, moment, year and decade, than yer ole fren' Ez?'[24] Contradictions do not necessarily constitute criticism or sustain friendship. There is a sense in their relationship that Yeats and Pound had reached a compromise whereby the younger poet could say anything he wanted, and Yeats would regard it as Pound expressing his personality rather than a worthwhile literary critique.

Not all could afford to be as tolerant as Yeats. Unsparing and rarely cloaked in kind or politic language, Pound's feedback is often not what budding poets want to hear. Laughlin is soon bluntly instructed to become a publisher rather than a poet: 'No Jas, it's hopeless. You're never gonna make a writer…do something useful…Go back and be a publisher.'[25] Giving Robert McAlmon feedback, the poet patronisingly suggests his friend 'learn one or two very simple mechanisms of prose writing'.[26] For his part, McAlmon notes of Pound, 'he will be the pedagogue, yearning for pupils to instruct, and I, whether I write well or badly, have my idea of how I want to do it.'[27]

Pound did not always directly suggest a career change though his blue pencil frequently sent the equivalent message. It was decisive and often destructive. On a visit to Rapallo, Daniel Cory[28] (then working with the philosopher George Santayana) asks if Pound would look at some of his poems only to bring things to a halt as the poet wields his crayon with dramatic zest.[29] It took a thick skin to succeed at the Ezuversity. When William Carlos Williams is upset by some criticism, Pound replies: 'But really this "old friend" hurt feeling business is too Skipwithcannéllish, it is *peu vous*. I demand of you more robustezza.'[30] Skipwith Cannell[31] was a minor poet associated with Imagism but also a friend of both Williams and Pound. The admonishment from Pound manages to be unkind to both Williams and their mutual friend.

A fundamental contradiction here is that Pound was more and more thin-skinned as he encouraged others to accept fundamental and often negative feedback. He explains to Harriet Monroe: 'I don't in the least mind opposition. I regard it as being there to be

[24] Ezra Pound to Desmond FitzGerald 1934, Mary FitzGerald, 'Ezra Pound and Irish politics; an unpublished correspondence', *Paideuma* 12, 2, 1983, p. 392.
[25] James Laughlin, 'Letters from Pound and Williams', *Helix*, 13/14, 1983, 97ff.
[26] Ezra Pound to Robert McAlmon 3 April 1930, Robert McAlmon Papers, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17202524.
[27] Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 30.
[28] Daniel Cory (1904-72), author and secretary and executor to George Santayana. During the 1960s and 1970s he and his wife stayed regularly at Brunnenburg, the home of Pound's daughter.
[29] Daniel Cory, 'Ezra Pound: a memoir', *Encounter*, May 1968, p. 31.
[30] Timothy Materer, 'Doppelgänger: Ezra Pound in his letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 1982, p. 250.
[31] Skipwith Cannell (1897-1957).

eliminated. I.e., resistance to develop the force of action.'[32] Opposition is 'eliminated' rather than tolerated. When the poet receives criticism his response tends to be aggressively defensive, no matter who the criticism comes from or whether it is justified. Consequently, he responds hysterically to criticism in an undergraduate's thesis[33] and stalks literary magazines for a hint of negativity about his work and ideas. Criticism is not forgotten. His dislike of anyone associated with Bloomsbury rumbles on over decades.[34] As economics takes over his correspondence, Pound is outraged by anyone who fails to support the economic ideas of C. H. Douglas. The author H. G. Wells falls into this category and, consequently, the poet writes to Paul de Kruif: 'Wells is a jolly amible; full of bonhomie SON of a BITCH that wont think straight.'[35] Disagreeing with Pound—or, more accurately, failing to agree with him—is viewed by the poet as an intellectual failure to see what is rational and obvious.

While acting in a less than collaborative way, Pound continues to argue for collaboration and robust criticism. To Zukofsky, he notes: 'To say nothing of very real val. of honest verbal crit. (viva voce) mutual of mss. before they are pubd.'[36] To the publisher Stanley Nott, he writes: 'LIVE ideas must be discussed/ but can't just have dump of ALL the dead ones, and all the superstitions of blokes who eithr have NO interest in literature, or have been too lazy to learn anything about it, apart from what their Mamas told 'em.'[37] Elsewhere he laments that the magazine 'Poetry has never had enUFF disagreement INSIDE into own wall'.[38] He voices his belief in disagreement as an energetic force:

> am all for AT LEAST collusion, even among groups that dislike each other, or who from reasons LOCALLY of HIGH visibility can't openly cooperate
> (will do my best to hook up, to cause to colly/borate etc all such lost sheep, fallen women, wild eyed energumen etc.).[39]

The poet writes to James Vogel lamenting Vogel's unwillingness to contemplate a lack of accord in a group:

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[32] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 25 March 1931, Paige, p. 311.
[33] Ezra Pound to Alice Steiner Amdur 23 January 1937, Sebastian D. G. Knowles, 'Ezra Pound to Alice Steiner Amdur, 23 January 1937', *Paideuma*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Spring/Fall, 1992, pp. 235-49.
[34] This is explored in Chapter 9.5.
[35] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[36] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 12 August 1928, *P/Z*, p. 13.
[37] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 3 February 1935, *Nott*, p. 45.
[38] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 24 October 1930, *P/Z*, p. 45.
[39] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January 1935, *Nott*, p. 8.

> Yr. painfully evangelical epistle recd. *If* you are looking for people who agree with you!!!! How the hell many points of agreement do you suppose there were between Joyce, W. Lewis, Eliot and yrs. truly in 1917; or between Gaudier and Lewis in 1913; or between me and Yeats, etc.?[40]

Pound is the source of a great many 'painfully evangelical' epistles and his argumentative tone is an unlikely route to discovering the vital group ingredient of 'the 10% of matters that you agree on'.

In the correspondence there is little if any feedback to Pound on his own work—or opinions. There are also very few instances in which Pound elicits such feedback. To Bronson Cutting he writes:

> If any points in these notes of mine strike you as TOO blitheringly idiotic, I wd. also be glad of castigation or reference to printed exposition (however tedious) of what you consider sane view.[41]

His commitment to social credit means that one of the instances when he does invite feedback (with caveats) concerns his pamphlet *Social Credit: An Impact*. He writes to Stanley Nott:

> I very much want you opinion of the mss/ don't worry about my feelings/ send it back with queeries and objections.
>
> The subject is too big for personal vanity and ANY author's conceit. If you or any INTELLIGENT friend have any suggestions; do lets have 'em. I don't mean I'll take 'em. But I promise to think 'em over and to <u>do something</u> as a result.[42]

This is as close as the poet gets to humility but comes with the caveat that Nott's friend must be 'intelligent' and the poet reserves the right to ignore any resulting suggestions. Another of the very few instances where Pound seeks feedback and is keen to maximise the impact of his work is related to his wartime broadcasts. One of the outputs of Pound's

[40] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 23 January 1929, Paige, p. 300.
[41] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 11 February 1932, *Cutting*, p. 73.
[42] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January 1935, *Nott*, p. 8.

correspondence with Princess Jane San Faustino was an introduction to her grandly titled son, Ranieri Bourbon del Monte Sante Maria, Prince of San Faustino.[43] Ranieri, as he was known to Pound, was part of the fascist broadcasting programme. The poet writes to him in June 1941:

> If it hasn't already happened when you get back/ I should LIKE not merely for idle curiosity, but in view to future registration technique, to HEAR myself once/ to get ideas for improving my modus mormorandi/ etc. D. heard me once while I was in Roma/ said SLOWNESS was O.K. etc. but one call allus laaaarm.[44]

The poet's request concentrates on broadcasting technique rather than the actual content of the broadcasts. Such willingness to solicit and accept the views of others is rare. Ranieri is reassuring: 'can assure you that all your stuff is very highly looked upon by all and sundry.'[45] There is a sense that the poet's ego is being carefully managed. During his correspondence of the 1930s, as his frustration and agitation grows, Pound is adept at maximising any vaguely positive feedback. There is an element of pathos to this as he mistakes politeness for enthusiasm and is quick to tell others—'I hadda nice letter from Senator Pope this mornin sayin how "deeply interested" he wuz. an how my letters wuz "particularly valooble" as information on the internashunul sittywashun,' he writes to Ödön Pór .[46] Elsewhere he reports: 'I have just had letter from asst/ to sec/ of U.S. Treas/ saying Morgenthau told him to write me that "my views etc. are read with interest, and that the Administration is givin thoughtful attention to WOT I wrote 'em.'[47] And in 1936 he reports: 'Latest neez iz Swabey visited Fascist Quarterly and reports that they consider me highly./ Handsome muggerzeen.'[48] In a similar vein, he writes to James Angleton on the impact of his musical work: 'The Villon was experimented bit by bit in Paris, must have been 1925 or thereabouts/ and twice broadcast from London. Harding, B.B.C. man in charge said that members of the cast kept on humming it in the corridors for a year afterwards.'[49] In the absence of mass sales of his books or an enthusiastic embrace of social credit by politicians or his network, the poet is left clutching at increasingly desperate straws.

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[43] Prince Ranieri (1909-77), married the surrealist artist and poet Kay Sage (1898-1963).
[44] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 1 June 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[45] Prince Ranieri to Ezra Pound 11 June 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[46] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 13 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[47] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór undated 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[48] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór undated 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[49] Ezra Pound to James Angleton March 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.

6.3: Contrary voices

While he suggests that agreeing to disagree is a plausible way forward for any author or literary group, few of Pound's circle of friends and disciples are willing to engage in an epistolary debate with the poet. Zukofsky does so and Basil Bunting eventually stands up to his anti-Semitism, but many quietly accept his views as a manifestation of Pound's driven and excitable personality. Among the exceptions is H. L. Mencken[50] who is forthright in his occasional correspondence with the poet. He responds frankly in 1931 to a submission from Pound for *The American Mercury*:

> If I printed this it would disgrace you. There is not an idea in it that has not been hashed to death by ninth-rate editorial writers, and it is thrown together so carelessly that it is simply devoid of effect. You are talking of an imaginary United States. Come back and take a look and you will do the thing all over, and in an entirely different way.
> In God's name, what is the charm of the Italian dunghill?[51]

Much the same criticism could be directed at a great deal of Pound's journalistic output in the 1930s. In 1936, Mencken again reproves the poet: 'Your acquaintance with actual politics and especially with American politics, seems to be pathetically meager. You write as if you read nothing save *The New Masses*. Very little real news seems to penetrate to Rapallo.'[52] The suggestion that Pound was out of touch with news would have stung as he prided himself on being up to date. There were obviously no hard feelings as Mencken later visited Pound in St Elizabeths.

One who takes a more aggressive stance is John Holroyd-Reece of the Albatross Press. 'I have not had an opportunity of answering your letter—if one may describe it as such,' he writes in reply to the poet. 'You still suffer from two delusions: one, that the best stuff, as you call it, is confined to the books that you happen to like; and the other delusion is that if you do not see a particular title in the ALBATROSS that you think should be included, you imagine the cause for its absence is nothing but a mixture of my own stupidity and inefficiency.'[53] One might expect the recipient of such a letter to step back or apologise;

[50] H. L. Mencken (1880-1956), journalist and editor.
[51] H. L. Mencken to Ezra Pound 13 January 1931, *Globe*, p. 16.
[52] H. L. Mencken to Ezra Pound 28 November 1936, *Globe*, p. 11.
[53] John Holroyd-Reece to Ezra Pound 18 September 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122576.

Pound threatens to assassinate the publisher. This heightens the comic impact of Holroyd-Reece's next letter:

> since seeing you last, you have been kind enough to continue to take an interest in a mere publisher, to the extent of informing my belle-fille, Miss Diane van Dommelen, that you wish to assassinate me. I cannot, at the moment, recall any action on my part which merits such extreme attention on your part, and for this reason I would be beholden to you if, before you assassinate me, you would allow me to give you real cause to do so.[54]

Another notable exception to the generally passive acceptance of Pound's epistolary excesses is William Bird, the journalist and publisher. He strongly repudiates Pound's political views in an exchange of letters in the early 1930s. In particular he challenges Pound to explain what the real differences Mussolini has brought about in Italy and the reasons why he hasn't put the poet's economic theories into practice—'Explain to me why BM hasn't instituted the National Dividend and Stamp Scrip.'[55] Calling Pound to account on the translation of his views into action and what he regards as uncontestable facts into reality was not difficult but was not a route pursued by the vast majority of the poet's correspondents.

Yeats had a benign approach to managing Pound's total confidence in his own rightness. Debate is certainly something he was prepared to do when he visited Rapallo. The Yeatses lived within walking distance of the Pounds' apartment. The two met regularly though their views had diverged in the years since they had spent extended periods together. The older poet noted that he and Pound 'disagreed about everything'.[56] Their disputes provided intellectual stimulation and entertainment for Yeats at least. But, his seniority and reputation seemed to allow him to amicably disagree with Pound. Contemplating his time in Rapallo, Yeats wrote:

[54] John Holroyd-Reece to Ezra Pound 4 March 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122576. Diane van Dommelen was his step-daughter.
[55] William Bird to Ezra Pound 28 February 1934, Za Pound Folder Bef-Bk 1935-58, William Bird Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
[56] R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats A Life: II The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 358.

> I shall not lack conversation. Ezra Pound, whose art is the opposite of mine, whose criticism commends what I most condemn, a man with whom I should quarrel more than with anyone else if we were not united by affection.[57]

Yeats was confident enough to admit he was bewildered by a great many of Pound's preoccupations and literary output. Pound increasingly found Yeats exasperating.

Clearly there was debate and conversation between Pound and his various visitors. But, it appears to have been largely dominated by the poet. He spoke a great deal to others without the insight accumulated from first talking with himself. There are mixed reports on the quality of the discussion over meals in Rapallo. George Antheil complained that the latest murder mysteries were the chief talking point among the literati in Rapallo. (In response, he wrote one—as did Olga Rudge and her lover.)[58] Alternatively, James Laughlin observed that Pound was 'the best, the funniest talker I ever knew. Our classes at the Ezuversity took place mostly at the lunch table and I have never had such entertainment. He practiced what I believe the rhetoricians call tapinosis, the application of colourful slang to serious topics, and we were given Villon and the troubadours, or even Dante, in his vernacular'.[59] Laughlin's observation is a reminder of the similarity between Pound's speech and the style and tone of his letters—explored in Chapter 9.

The teaching at the Ezuversity was in keeping with Pound's energetic and diverse mind. It was an intellectual tour de force, a display of Pound's far-reaching knowledge and passions, but not the debate or discussion he insisted that others pursue. It was wide ranging but within the confines of the poet's own reading and knowledge. 'There were literature and history, the way he wanted to revise it, because of course, as he insisted, all history has been miswritten since Gibbon. And poetics and the interpretation of culture,' said Laughlin.[60] For the poet lecturing was second nature whether in conversation or correspondence.

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[57] W. B. Yeats, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum, Co. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1929), p. 2.
[58] R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats A Life: II The Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 379. Rudge and Pound's book, written in 1930, was eventually published in 2019—Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge (Mark Byron and Sophia Barnes eds.), *The Blue Spill* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).
[59] James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 1987), p. 4.
[60] Ibid., p. 35.

6.4: An educator

Unlike the majority of his literary contemporaries, Pound thought of himself as an educator—even though his relationships with educational institutions had been early in his life, fraught and ended in farce. He writes to Gorham Munson in 1935 couching *The Cantos* as an educational tool:

> Cantos also base for econ/hist/, as the Kublai, a good deal is NOT in pros[e] hists/of econ/ as e:g: Jeff Mark's Modern Idolatry. And note again that in lecturing at the Universita Bocconi, I used pages or passages as the briefest and cleanest exposition of data RE/money or banking.
> Also E/P? not interested (1935) in verse of writers who are too "dumb" to peecive economic motivations, and distortions of LIFE due to econ/ pressure.
> (this follows on from remarks printed by E/P? as early as 1910).[61]

The brevity and clarity of *The Cantos* in explaining complex economic issues was not, to Pound's mind, matched elsewhere in academia. In reality, his academic link to Bocconi was very limited and it is difficult to trace back his commitment to economics to 1910 as he claims.

In his correspondence the poet expresses constant irritation with what he regards as the deficiencies in educational institutions. The root of this dissatisfaction was his own educational experience. At the University of Pennsylvania between 1905 and 1907, Pound studied for a Masters in Romance Languages. He left without an MA and lamented that the university was 'dead' as a useful institution.[62] (This was a regularly re-iterated complaint in Pound's Italian correspondence more than twenty years later.) Despite this educational failure, the aspiring poet became an instructor in French and Spanish, and chairman of the Department of Romance Languages at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana. He was the department's sole member. A series of events—scandalous for the times—meant that this relationship with an educational institution was also short-lived.[63]

When Dorothy Pound meets the poet in February 1909 he is already dismissive of American educational institutions—'He said of one college, that it was only another tract

[61] Ezra Pound to Gorham Munson 18 February 1935, *Globe,* p. 6.
[62] A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet I: The Young Genius*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 33.
[63] The smoking of imported cigarillos in his office was compounded by Pound sharing a meal with an 'English lady-male impersonator' and allowing a stranded burlesque performer to sleep (chastely, according to the poet) in his room. Ibid., pp. 56-61.

of the barren waste he had lived in before'[64]—and, as it develops, his role in the relationship is seen in educational rather than emotional terms—'You could have taught me all I care about—about poetry & Revelation–Inspiration,' writes Dorothy in an early letter.[65] Similarly, his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz titled her book about their relationship, *Father and Teacher*. He was often more the latter than the former.

James Laughlin notes: 'Pound was born a teacher, even if not destined to be a professor. He could not keep himself from teaching. In one way or another he was always teaching. The *Cantos* themselves are a kind of teaching. *Ut doceat, ut moveat, ut delectet*. They move us, they delight us, but above all they teach us.'[66] In his 1964 memoir *All Men are Islands* Ronald Duncan writes:

> If I have any knowledge of that craft [of poetry writing] myself, I owe it more to Ezra Pound's blue pencil, and to Eliot's comments and queries in the margin than to the lectures of Mrs Bennett or Dr Tillyard.[67]

The plaudits for Pound the educator were not handed out universally. Richard Aldington is characteristically damning, suggesting that Pound's lecturing 'relies chiefly on a faulty memory, an almost non-existent power of improvisation and a cough'.[68] Massimo Bacigalupo reports that the Italian writer Eugenio Montale 'recorded an occasion in the early thirties when Pound was invited to speak on troubadour poetry in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence, when his audience was "amazed" by the paucity of his knowledge'.[69]

His experiences with higher education convinced Pound that universities as institutions were failing to live up to educational ideals—at least, his educational ideals—or the practical needs of men of letters. His correspondence has a two-fold educational intent. First, it shares knowledge and contacts, and provides feedback, to his Ezuveristy students. Second, it agitates for changes in educational institutions. Pound regularly expresses fierce discontent with universities. In 1929 the University of Pennsylvania sends a circular letter to Pound as an alumnus. His response reveals his feelings towards higher education in the United States:

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[64] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 3.
[65] Ibid., p. 32.
[66] James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1989), p. 34.
[67] Ronald Duncan, *All Men Are Islands* (London: Hart Davis, 1964), p. 158.
[68] Richard Aldington, *Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot: A Lecture* (Hurst: Peacocks Press, 1954), p. 3.
[69] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. 72.

> what the HELL is the grad. school doing and what the HELL does it think it is there for and when the hell did it do anything but try to perpetuate the routine and stupidity that it was already perpetuating in 1873?[70]

In his initial exchange of letters with James Laughlin, Pound is quick to lambast American education for its 'NOT merely ignorance of contemporary THOUGHT but of historic FACT. (Things known in 1600 or in 1861.) why is E.P. lecturing in Milan, not in amurikuh??....American edderkashun. a process of making slaves and toadies. No prof. expected to know anything he wasn't TAUGHT when a student. 10 or 20 or 40 years before. Profs scared of trustees & "great men" (like Hoover and Kreuger) and resigned to belief "nothing can be DONE about it now".'[71] He repeatedly complains about not being offered academic roles in the United States without considering his lack of experience, suitability or that basing himself in Europe might be a factor in this. As we will see, when offered an opportunity in the United States he turns it down. It is also the case that the poet remains in the thrall of 'great men' whether they are literary (Dante) or political (Malatesta and Mussolini).

There is an incoherent incandescent rage to some of Pound's letters featuring education. This doesn't prevent him suggesting that he might personally provide the solution to America's educational woes. To Bronson Cutting he writes:

> DAMN IT ALL / what aren't some murkn/ eddycation ???
>
> Or why the hell aint I putt where I cd/ edderkate some of the bloody bastuds.[72]

In another letter to the Senator, the poet writes:

> Surely the blithering ignorance of the American 'educated' and governing classes OUGHT by now to have indicated the need of a little mental life in our 'inschtooshunz of learning'.[73]

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[70] Paige, p. 303.
[71] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 25 October 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 5.
[72] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 12 June 1934, *Cutting*, p. 136.
[73] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 23 March 1934, *Cutting*, p. 117.

Elsewhere, he concludes there is 'no intellectual life in the univs'[74] and that 'the utility of education or of knowing the subject is mainly to know *what* one *needn't* bother to do. *The pt. from which* one can start to do one's own bloody bizniz'.[75] The malaise the poet observed was not restricted to American universities. He writes to T. E. Lawrence: 'Oxforr/ is no better than any other University/ a place to keep the young from dangerous thinking. a pervertery, a an incubator of slaves and burocrats.'[76]

Pound's ability to provide the solution to the educational problem was not restricted, in his view, to his lecturing at American universities. A regularly repeated belief of the poet's is that a single accessible book has the power to cut through the confusing clutter on any particular subject. The need for up-to-date but definitive textbooks also relates to Pound's constant criticism of educational institutions and educators. In a 1935 letter to Roy Nichols, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Pound laments: 'Time Lag, between real culture and that TAUGHT.'[77] New textbooks (especially his own) were part of the solution to this. They overcame the time lag. In contradictory fashion, Pound's own textbooks are challenging reads with the same unfocused appetite for diversions, opinions and word plays as his letters.

As with many of Pound's opinions, it is difficult to see that his critique of American higher education was based on facts. His own experience embraced two institutions, he didn't visit the United States between 1908 and 1939, and his interaction with European universities was all but non-existent.[78] Pound's ire was fuelled perhaps by his own narrow experiences, but also by his belief that universities could and should be a force for cultural greatness. A cultural risorgimento required universities. They were set up as intellectual ideals by Pound with a crucial role to play in society and the arts. And, he argues the need for change was urgent and paramount in the 1930s—'There is for the moment, the year, the decade, nothing for the serious American author to do but learn what he can and to struggle to instruct those who know even less than he does.'[79]

[74] Ezra Pound to Felix E. Schelling April 1945, Paige, p. 341.
[75] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 298.
[76] Ezra Pound to T. E. Lawrence 12 December 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122586.
[77] Ezra Pound to Roy F. Nichols, 18 June 1935, Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.
[78] He lectured at Regent Polytechnic early in his stay in London and that was the sum of his formal teaching engagements while in England.
[79] *Cutting*, p. 7.

6.5: The poet's craft

'The first person who introduced me to writing as a craft was Ezra Pound,' said Robert Creeley.[80] Pound repeatedly argues in his letters that writers need to master their craft. The business of universities, therefore, should be to equip writers with the rudiments of that craft. By emphasising the craft of poetry, Pound offers an antidote to romantic notions of poetical inspiration. As a craft, poetry is constructed, a pragmatic and practical edifice rather than an abstract, inexplicable and sudden inspiration. The poet is the maker. Echoing his master's voice, Basil Bunting later wrote: 'Writing poetry is a skill like weaving carpets or shaping bowls on the potter's wheel and is not an intellectual exercise to make people afraid of the poet.'[81] Pound also repeatedly suggests writing is a science and a profession—'For him, as for Auden later, poems were contraptions, and most of them were inefficient and needed overhaul,' is how Richard Ellmann puts it.[82] Replying to Stanley Nott's suggestion that he write an article on 'Tendencies in Music or Poetry', Pound retorts:

> There are no tendencies. There is Stra winsky who KNOWS his job. and a lot of blahsters who don't, and never will, cause they are two fkn/lazy, and conceited. Too lazy to learn, and too conceited to admit anyone else has ever known.
> "tendencies" occur when some kike thinks he can SELL an imitation.
> In surgery a man either knows his job or don't. Same in writing.[83]

The young writers he admired and entered into correspondence with were those who displayed a willingness to understand the craft of writing and to make sense of the literary canon. They wanted to make it their 'job'. Writing to Eliot, Pound explains, or attempts to explain, the entry criteria for the Ezuveristy: 'I mean I am not a eelemosinary institute for the mewling. Not fer the infantile, but for the stubborn wot wont larn tew be good.'[84]

The reverse was equally true: Pound was dismissive of anyone he perceived as failing to master the craft—or failing to attempt to do so. 'Not to invent, not to discover, this is understandable. But not to come to the known level, or not to make an effort to reach it, this I do not understand. It seems to me like not using electricity etc. in everyday life,' he

[80] George Plimpton (ed.), *Beat Writers at Work: The Paris Review* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), p. 72.
[81] Basil Bunting to Roudaba Bunting Davido 7 September 1966, *Bunting*, p. 294.
[82] Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 67.
[83] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott, 25 January 1935, *Nott*, p. 35.
[84] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 21 January 1927, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 385.

writes.[85] (Years later, Basil Bunting was echoing his mentor's thoughts: 'Now Pound has provided a box of tools, as abundant for this generation as those that Spenser provided for the Elizabethans, and a man who is not influenced by Pound, in the sense of trying to use at least some of those tools, is simply not living in his own century.'[86]) Knowledge of the craft—the 'box of tools'—was the bond which Pound envisaged would keep his various disciples together. If knowledge was to be shared, the poet wanted to ensure that it was the knowledge of which he approved. The craft was built around the canon of world literature identified as essential. He regarded the canon as akin to a painter's palette.[87] Indeed, when he tried oil painting, it was the palette which fascinated the poet—'I couldn't draw a pig but it was entertaining just the trying to prepare a palette,' he writes to Dorothy.[88]

In his work Richard Sennett describes the nature of craftsmanship:

> Craftsmanship cuts a far wider swath than skilled manual labour; it serves the computer programmer, the doctor, and the artist; parenting improves when it is practised as a skilled craft, as does citizenship. In all these domains, craftsmanship focuses on objective standards, on the thing in itself.[89]

Sennett's view that craftsmanship is a more inclusive notion than often understood is in accord with Pound's belief that poetry was a craft as much as many other intellectual as well as physical disciplines. Similarly, the focus on 'the thing in itself' chimes with Pound's world view. Sennett describes how standards of craftsmanship can be compromised by external pressures. This is applicable to the poet's situation in Rapallo in the 1930s. Rather than 'the thing in itself' Pound focuses on his broader political and economic agenda. His work and thinking is characterised by impairments caused by what Sennett identifies as 'competitive pressure', 'frustration' and 'obsession'. The frustration and obsession are clearly apparent in his letters. There is also evidence of what could be described as competitive pressures. Pound was highly competitive—on the tennis court and in his literary career. He wanted his work to be centre stage, to be featured and feted. These are perfectly understandable human aspirations and served the poet well in his literary

[85] Ezra Pound (Aldo Taghiaferri, ed.), *Lettere 1907-58* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), p. 105.
[86] Basil Bunting, Eric Mottram, 'Conversation with Basil Bunting on the occasion of his 75th birthday', *Poetry Information* 19, Autumn 1978, p. 8.
[87] Debate about the essential literary canon is perennial. See Alexander Manshel, *Writing Backwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024) and John Guillory, *Cultural Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024).
[88] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-14* (New York: New Directions, 1984), p. 248.
[89] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 9.

ascendancy in London and Paris. In Rapallo, as benefactors disappeared, publishers proved increasingly reluctant to publish his work and his impact lessened, the momentum of the competitive pressures was clear.

In his correspondence, the poet is constantly alert to what he perceives as new approaches to education. When Hilaire Hiler opens an institution in Paris, Pound sings its praises and describes its approach in a letter to Viola Jordan:

> If any ov yr/faithful friends goin to Paris. Hiler has just opened a real school/ NO aesthetic inskrukshun, just materials, what they are made of, how to uz um.
> Works wonders and clear up gt/deal of mss/ in paintin.[90]

Hiler was the kind of multi-talented artistic figure Pound aspired to be—or perhaps already was in his own mind. Hiler was also a jazz pianist, a set and costume designer, a psychologist and a mural painter. Eventually, he became best known for developing colour theory. In his letter Pound seems to have forgotten that Viola Jordan is a middle-aged woman living in Tenafly, New Jersey with very little likelihood of visiting Paris or advising others on their artistic development in Europe. In addition, Hiler's pedagogical method appears to be learning by doing, eliminating what Pound regards as superfluous education in 'aesthetic inskrukshun'. There doesn't seem to be anything in Hiler's approach which is dissimilar to the instruction at other established art colleges. As Pound would have known, at London's Slade School of Art in the early years of the century Wyndham Lewis underwent a very similarly focused pedagogical approach inspired by the French tradition of art education.[91]

When it comes to poetry Pound is an advocate of 'aesthetic instrukshun'. Pound winnowed out the works he regarded as non-essential. His homemade bookshelves housed the approved and essential texts; the canon of literature and knowledge. While Pound adopts a fundamentalist approach—with one person selecting the canon—elsewhere he is a cultural democrat. Making the canon of literature accessible in affordable editions is something he regularly returns to in his correspondence. In 1939, he discusses 'a dollar library' with James Laughlin.[92] In his Pisan prison camp in 1945 Pound is introduced to

[90] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 13 January 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2038242.
[91] Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), pp. 26-7.
[92] *Laughlin*, p. 103.

'Armed Service Editions' of books. He reads Charles Beard's *The Republic* in this utilitarian publishing format. Writing to Dorothy, he observes: 'AT LAST cheap books as I have been wailing for past 30 years.'[93] Such enthusiasm for cultural democratisation sits uneasily with Pound's elitist opinions and aspirations on the creators of art—another jarring contradiction.

In his letters Pound provides regular updates on the essential canon through his remorseless reading suggestions. This is a habit throughout his writing life. When William Carlos Williams sends his friend his first collection in 1909 Pound replies with a reading list.[94] Those in Pound's network receive regular suggestions as to what they should be reading. The poet appears largely unconcerned if his suggestions are taken up or ignored. Again, it seems enough for Pound that he has suggested the right way forward. The unwillingness or inability of people to follow that path is not his concern.

The recipients of his reading lists are often not signed up, explicitly or implicitly, for continuing attendance at the Ezuveristy. In 1948, for example, Pound is still sending recommended reading to Wyndham Lewis from St Elizabeths despite not having seen him for a number of years—suggesting '"Dizzy on Bentinck", Brooks Adams, Kitson and Frobenius'.[95] Lewis makes his excuses. Pound should perhaps have remembered that Lewis was not quite so biddable as others. In 1925 the two have an exchange of letters concerning the scheme to provide Lewis with an income. Lewis takes umbrage and seeks to distance himself from Pound's politicking:

> Please note the following because in the glorious days of Marinetti, Nevinson, machinery, Wadsworth Wormwood Scrubs and Wyoming, we were associated to some extent in publicity campaigns, that does not give you a mandate to interfere when you think fit, with or without my consent, with my career. If you launch one at me and try and force on me a scheme which I regard as malapropos and which is liable to embarrass me, you will not find me so docile as Eliot.[96]

Pound returns the letter with scribbled notes, concluding: 'There are some matters in which you really do behave like, and *some* (some not at all) lines in this letter of yours in

[93] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 14 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 131.
[94] Daniel Swift, *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics and Madness of Ezra Pound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), p. 88.
[95] W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 453.
[96] Wyndham Lewis to Ezra Pound 11 June 1925, Ibid., p. 160.

which you really do write like, a God damn fool.'[97] Lewis' unwillingness to follow Pound's agenda is interpreted by the poet as folly rather than maturity or independence. Membership of this idiosyncratic network is for life. One of the few to pointedly opt out is the poet Delmore Schwartz who grows tired of Pound's economic and anti-Semitic agenda. He writes in 1939:

> Without ceasing to distinguish between past activity and present irrationality, I should like you to consider this letter as a resignation: I want to resign as one of your most studious and faithful admirers.[98]

6.6: The pursuit of fact

Increasingly during the 1920s and 1930s Pound views knowledge in a dogmatic way. His perspective is the antithesis of Keats' negative capability—'when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason'.[99] Pound embraces what could be described as *contradictory capability* in which doubts and logic are cast aside and constant repetition and inflated language seek to overcome inherent contradictions in the message and its mode of delivery characterised by irritable reaching after fact and reason. The result is an often awkward but frequently entertaining mélange of opinion, prejudice and generalisation. Take this letter of 21 July 1934 to Wayne Andrews, a student from New Jersey who had published a magazine in French called *Revue de l'Elite* (and later *Demain*):[100]

> Nothing much against the surrealists save that a lot of 'em are French and therefore bone ignorant , like the English .
>
> I believe they write , but none of 'em has ever been known to read, and it is highly doubtful if the alphabet is personally known to most of them.
> Surrealism must not be regarded as a modern movement, ref/ Ms/ Vaticano Barberino Datino 3953 ; Guido Cavalcanti Rime (Genova, Marsano anno X.); also a few poems inaccessible to the surrealists because written in American or in about 1916.

[97] Ibid.
[98] Delmore Schwartz to Ezra Pound 5 March 1939, *Globe*, p. 18.
[99] H. E. Rollins (ed.), *The Letters of John Keats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), Vol. 1, pp. 193-4.
[100] Wayne Andrews (1913-87) went on to a career in art and architecture history. His books include *Architecture, Ambition and Americans* (1955) and *Architecture in America* (1960). Paul Hoover, 'Two Pound letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1986, p. 95-97.

> Max Ernst is a damn fine painter, I have his clear and limpid colours before me (in concrete materiality , as I write this). Also he has burried Freud and all freudian fiction , but the Freudians haven't yet found out THAT (Ref/Femme aux cent têtes and The Young Lady's Dream (untranslated , as are most modern books.)
>
> I shall join the movement when they devise a form of assassinagram which will kill at once all bankers, editors and presidents of colleges or universities who approach with in 100 kilometres of its manifestation.[101]

Prejudice and intolerance are predisposed to and characterised by certainty. In the opening lines Pound maintains his process of distancing himself from the literary centres of London and Paris. Rather than advocating an alternative he prefers to dismiss them in the broadest terms and leaves it at that. The underlying assumption is that wherever he is located is the centre of things. He goes on to conflate historical and current times. Pound insistently refers correspondents to seek out the historical literary canon. History, he suggests, is the only way to make sense of surrealism. At the same time he is dismissive of something written in 1916 as too old. More certainties follow: Max Ernst passes the test, but anything related to Freud is dangerous—too personal and emotional. Finally, there is the broad sweep of hate figures—'bankers, editors and presidents of colleges or universities'—only mitigated by the amusing suggestion of the benefits of an 'assassinagram'.

The pursuit of certainties is increasingly Pound's driving force in his letters of the mid to late 1930s. The poet takes what he regards as a scientific view that facts exist and cannot be argued with. Presenting facts is seen as expressing truths. At the same time, in contradictory fashion, he is happy to write to James Angleton: 'THE DEATH OF THE PROFESSOR/ Is the death of his curiosity. The Professor dies the moment he ceases hunting for truth, the moment he thinks he knows something and starts telling it to the student instead of trying to find out what it is.'[102] For Pound in the 1930s, abstractions mutate into fact. Pound was not alone in this. Mussolini said: 'We have created our own myth. Myth is a faith, a passion. It is not necessary that it be a reality. It is a reality in the fact that it is a spur, a hope, a faith, a form of courage.'[103] For the fascist dictator abstractions are turned into facts through action. Pound's belief in the 1930s is that his repeated action—writing articles and letters—translates into accepted facts.

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[101] Ezra Pound, 'Letters to Andrews', *Paideuma*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1986, p. 99.
[102] Ezra Pound to James Angleton May 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[103] Benito Mussolini 24 October 1922, 'Discorso a Napoli', Emilio Gentile, 'The conquest of modernity', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 73.

To the novelist John Buchan, Pound writes:

> I think you and I agree about 'opinion'/ and I don't think I have ever demanded that anyone accept mine.
>
> Natural human weakness that I shd/ incline toward those who do/ but I don't ever mean to attempt imposing it/
>
> 'authority comes from right reason'.
>
> And all my cursing and blasting is against ONLY those who refuse to look facts in the eye. It is science's job to accept facts
> and to set them in order /[104]

The facts Pound has in mind relate to social credit and economics. There is an air of exasperation to such comments as the world fails to understand what the poet regards as blindingly obvious and incontrovertible. 'Authority comes from right reason' is a chillingly confident phrase. It suggests that purity of logic or motivation explains or excuses any conclusion one may reach. The reality is that the poet's work and energy in the 1930s is directed at 'imposing' his ideas.

The importance of facts is something which Pound regularly returns to:

> If a man is going to be anti-Semite, let him be objectively anti-Semite. Let him gather as many facts as he can, and not blink them.[105]

> Use FACTS when you have 'em. And don't budge on THEM: but where he has the goods no use argifyin.[106]

> do send me ITEMS, and also criticize what I say, I have no party pris/ I want to make just estimate, based on facts.[107]

[104] Ezra Pound to John Buchan 22 October 1934, S. Namjoshi (ed.), 'Letters to John Buchan 1934-1935', *Paideuma*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Winter 1979, p. 470.
[105] Lea Baechler, A. Walton Litz and James Longenbach (eds.), *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose, Volume 7* (New York: Garland, 1991), p. 280.
[106] Ezra Pound, 'Letter to Wyndham Lewis', *Paideuma*, Vol. 14, Spring 1985, No. 1, p. 99.
[107] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 19 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.

Again there is a contradiction: while Pound takes the acquisition of core knowledge in the field of literature as essential if any author is to master their craft, when it comes to other disciplines, he repeatedly suggests that his speedily acquired knowledge of virtually any subject qualifies him in some way. At various times, he considers himself a musical composer, an economist and an eye specialist.

6.7: In practice

One of the most revealing pieces of correspondence is that between Ford Madox Ford and Pound in the late 1930s. After years of repeated, often self-inflicted, financial insecurity, Ford finally happened on a situation which provided some degree of income ($1,500 per annum and trips to Europe)[108] and security, teaching at Olivet College in Michigan, located between Detroit and Chicago. With tensions rising politically and war looking likely, he sought to tempt Pound from his lair in Rapallo to join him at Olivet and to put some of his often-expressed ideas about education into practice—'The situation is this: I am offering to give up my job at Olivet to you because you have been making noises about Universities for a long time and it would give you a chance really to do something.'[109] Ford knows Pound well and lays out the potential: 'If you did choose to go to Olivet you would have a working, model educational machine to play with'.[110]

Faced with the prospect of an educational laboratory to test out his ideas, Pound is less than enthusiastic and hardly grateful for his old friend thinking of him—'I do not want YOUR job. I do not want the JOB you have got/ whether you keep it or not. I will not go Olivet and teach.'[111] There is the air of a truculent child to this. As Ford was well aware, his friend regularly expressed mystification that he hadn't been invited to play a leading part in revitalising the American higher education system. Pound is soon vacillating, but only slightly. If he is to go to Olivet, it has to be on his terms—'I can offer QUALIFIED students something not on other collegiate menus. BUT I shd/ do it my own way.'[112]—and, 'I am ready to do WORK, in my own way, that wd/ probably teach 'em more and give 'em more kudos/ I could do more or less (of it) and be paid in proportion to what I do.'[113] The opportunity disappears.

[108] Maurice Hungiville, 'Ezra Pound, educator: two uncollected letters', *American Literature*, Vol. 44, No. 3, November 1972, p. 463.
[109] *P/F*, p. 156.
[110] Ford Madox Ford to Ezra Pound 17 February 1937, Richard M. Ludwig (ed.), *Letters of Ford Madox Ford* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 271.
[111] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 22 March 1938, *P/F,* p. 159.
[112] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 18 March 1938, *P/F*, p. 158.
[113] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 18 March 1938, *P/F*, p. 159.

Given his capacity for salesmanship it is not a surprise that Pound represents this story elsewhere in a way that is more favourable to him. For example, he tells the Japanese poet Katue Kitasono of the Olivet invitation and suggests it is a small step on the route to respectability:

> I believe I am now almost officially respectable because I am part of the Institute of Arts and Letters. But I am not really respectable…among the idiots of the more reactionary American universities…not yet. Although a very small Western college has at last invited me to profess in the wilderness.[114]

Presumably, Pound does not regard his own situation in Rapallo as 'professing in the wilderness'. While he craves recognition and the accompanying respectability, Pound can't help still holding the contradictory thought that any institution offering recognition is deeply flawed. It is imposter syndrome but casting the institution rather than the individual as the imposter.

In parallel, Pound enters into a correspondence with the president of Olivet College, Joseph Brewer.[115] This has a dispiriting air. Wires are crossed and Pound's argumentative tone suggests he is desperately flailing around. The poet writes:

> Seems to me important NOT to confuse surgery with nursing. I find some students come HERE, and get TOLD in 15 minutes what they need 6 months or MORE to digest. mere physical presence thereafter quite futile /
>
> CONTACT/ yes. [ ] Get yr/ point. But familiarity ??[116]

Pound is arguing that the physical presence of the educator is not as important as the educator's ability to identify a reading list and the student's willingness to follow it. This might be interpreted as a far-sighted argument for distance and self-managed learning—or a convenient excuse for Pound to remain at home offering his wisdom to the world by mail. In the same letter, assuming quantity equates with quality, he also suggests that Yeats

[114] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 14 May 1938, *Japan*, p. 64.
[115] Joseph Brewer (1898-1991), college president, publisher and librarian.
[116] Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer 1 July 1938, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, 'Letters from Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer', *Paideuma*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1981, pp. 371-2.

has credibility in an argument because he has written or absorbed '12 volumes'. Pound does not apply such strictures to his ability to argue about subjects he barely knows.

The waters are further muddied by a letter by Pound to the editors of an Olivet student magazine, *Thursday*. In this he repeats many of his familiar gripes but provides a more humble introduction before going on to suggest a reading list—'NO economics course is decent *and timely* if it, in 1939, fail to acquaint the students with the facts and ideas contained in…'—which leans heavily on social credit authors.[117] The virtues of social credit are described as 'facts'. The letter ends with Pound's observation: 'The real educator is the man who arouses your CURIOSITY.'[118] His own curiosity remains unquestioned.

As the correspondence with the college president progresses (and Ford dies along the way), Pound simply becomes intemperate. In August he writes to Brewer again:

> am writing this to say AGAIN that *all* you blighted American College Presidents ought to be boiled in all.
>
> ---
>
> All of you criminals obfuscating your students by *refusal* (black & unexcusable) to teach American history even when Text books are available. & that if you cant include Overholser's Hist. of Money in the U.S.
> (price 25 cents. Progress publishing conern Libertyville Ill.)
> In yr. course – you can be damned & deserve *no* consideration as a man # whatsoever.[119]

Talk of collaboration and debate is, by this point, long past. Pound's tone of outrage is offset by his seeming suggestion that the inclusion of a single book would radically change things. Sherwood Anderson succeeded Ford.[120] None of this prevents Pound continuing to complain about universities in America and bemoan his lack of opportunity. To Gerhart Münch in 1940 he writes: 'if somebody dont put me in charge of a universi SOON WITH a

[117] Maurice Hungiville, 'Ezra Pound, educator: two uncollected letters', *American Literature*, Vol. 44, No. 3, November 1972, p. 467.
[118] Ibid., p. 469.
[119] Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer 24 August 1938, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, 'Letters from Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer', *Paideuma*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1981, p. 375.
[120] Later, during World War Two, Wyndham Lewis was approaching people to paint their portraits and his agent received an encouraging reply from Joseph Brewer. They had met in New York when Brewer worked in publishing. Lewis described him as 'a very charming fellow.' There was also talk of Lewis working at Olivet but this fell through. Paul O'Keeffe, *A Kind of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000) p. 443.

salary.'[121] There is no pause to contemplate why any institution would employ someone in their fifties who has never held down a regular job. Also, there is no consideration of how Pound's increasingly loudly trumpeted political opinions are being received outside of Rapallo and Italy.

[121] Ezra Pound to Gerhart Münch 1 November 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.

7: The Great Abstraction

7.1: Writing truth to power

In Rapallo, Pound is caught in a literary lacuna between power and powerlessness. His letters are a means of overcoming geographic isolation to communicate, educate, mentor and wield some sort of literary and other influence. Defying logic, the letters insist on the primacy of Pound's world view and the need for urgent personal action by the recipient. They connect the poet to the world and allow him to influence it—or to *feel* he is doing so. The antidote to any notion of isolation is to write more letters to open up a new front of connections with the prominent and politically powerful. Increasingly, poetical causes fall by the wayside as Pound's other agendas take precedence. The never-ending procession of communication gives the appearance of making progress even if this does not accord with the truth.[1]

In his correspondence Pound repeatedly sees and presents himself as someone close to the machinery—and machinations—of power. It is a grand aspiration but starkly contradicted by the fact that he is a poet writing in a foreign language based in a small seaside town, distant from the nation's capital, and with no infrastructure of contacts or friends in positions of influence. Writing to James Joyce he suggests it is he and Mussolini against the world—there is 'too much future, and nobody but me and Muss/ and half a dozen others to attend to it'.[2] Sometimes Pound's notion of his own position of power is implicit in his grand objectives. He writes to the Japanese poet Katue Kitasono in 1936: 'Two things I should do before I die, and they are to contrive a better understanding between the U.S.A. and Japan, and between Italy and Japan.'[3] To suggest that this is somehow within Pound's gift belies the fact that in Italy he is a peripheral figure, in Japan largely unknown and in his homeland increasingly discredited. Even so, it is not a casual comment, but one the poet takes seriously and acts on. He writes to the Japanese ambassador in Rome offering his services to 'anyone who is interested in improving the understanding of Japanese culture in Europe and America and arranging better methods for mutual cultural comprehension'.[4] Pound quickly begins presenting this as another example of his

[1] 'His belief in his ability to influence public affairs was central to the Rapallo vortex. He had to keep that vortex churning; if the center did not hold, the whole thing would fall part.' Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 63.
[2] Ezra Pound to James Joyce 8 December 1934, *P/J*, p. 254.
[3] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 24 May 1936, *Japan*, p. 28.
[4] Ezra Pound to the Japanese ambassador to Italy 26 December 1936, *Japan*, p. 35.

influence. To Ödön Pór he writes: 'Nobody else gets letters from 12 japanese poets wanting to know what they shd/ do fer cultural accord between Japan Italy and U.S.A.' [5]

As none of this translates into action, Pound eventually admits, though somewhat begrudgingly, that he might not be the best person for the job of cultural bridge-building—'It is quite possible that someone in Tokio could start this exchange of culture more quickly and intelligently than unofficial persons like myself can do it here,' he writes to an embassy official.[6] The recognition that he is 'unofficial' is as near as the poet gets to an admission of his impotence. Bold and laudable ambitions to bridge cultures are countered by their absurdity. At one point Pound suggests to Kitasono that America-owned Guam be exchanged for a set of films of classic Noh plays.[7] The ridiculousness of this suggests the poet is being playful though it is presented with the same level of agitated seriousness as Pound adopts in much of his 1930s correspondence.

The poet seeks to connect with powerful people through a combination of presumptuousness, pushiness and persistence. The connections are often inventively over-blown versions of the truth. His correspondence with Nancy Cox McCormack in 1923 and 1924 displays how he regards the world and seeks to influence it. Having outlined what he believes is the potential for Italy to be Europe's intellectual centre, the poet follows up with a request for McCormack to make the most of her connection to the relatively new Italian leader Benito Mussolini:

> CAN you get a few choice words from Muss. exclusively for the Transatlantic, one or two pages, or as much more as he likes on his scheme for restoration of ROME; tell Judson that the Trans. is THE intellectual organ. (Jud. can have a try writing for it himself re Etruscan research.)
>
> Get Muss. to write a line on new building in Rome, new paving, etc. (possibly as link in revival of Italian intellectual life—that leads on to our other affair.
>
> Ford wants this message at once; i.e., as soon as possible. ANY how in time for second number.

[5] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 14 November 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[6] Ezra Pound to Hajime Matsumiya 15 December 1937, *Japan*, p. 248.
[7] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 25 March 1941, *Japan*, p. 112.

> The Transatlantic is a free international avenue of communication. Muss. wd. reach the PENSEURS partout; and they 'make the opinion of next week'.[8]

The abbreviations of names and the use of nicknames is used routinely by the poet to suggest familiarity or the humanity of those in power. The sense of urgency is also a constant here and elsewhere in the letters. It is a salesman's tactic, creating an impression of the need for immediate action. Also notable is the huge leap Pound makes from the improvement of Rome's pavements to a cultural *risorgimento* and the editorial hustling of a 'few choice words' becoming a number of pages. McCormack's connection to the ruler is through a contact but is developed in the poet's mind to much greater closeness. Pound's presumption is that he has some sort of understanding of Mussolini's motivations and his willingness to engage with 'PENSEURS'. All of this makes any successful connection to Mussolini highly unlikely. Even so, Pound persists. Later in the same month he suggests that he visit Rome to move things forward—'I would come if the moment were opportune.'[9] At the end of January he writes again:

> The matter will be settled man to man between M. and me, or else it will be merely bitched, botched, and bungled, bureaucratized, batardized, boozled, boggled, and altogether *zum wasser*.[10]

The flow of letters creates a sense of urgency and immediacy. The posited meeting between the poet and dictator appears persuasively useful and all but inevitable. The amusing alliterative excesses display Pound's continuing enjoyment of playing with language and disguise the ridiculously unrealistic notion of Pound and Mussolini trading intellectual blows 'man to man'. Later in the same letter, he suggests that: 'I will come to discuss or tabulate QUALCHE MISURA SEMPLICE che si può prendere con piccolisissimo spese e ANCHE SENZA SPESE ALCUNO. [Some simple measures that can be adopted with little or no expense at all.]' Pound's vacillation is between his grand designs for Italy and the simple matter of cost. Like any good salesman, Pound seeks to offer both: a cost-efficient Utopia.

[8] Ezra Pound to Nancy Cox McCormack c.5 January 1924, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Manuscript Section, Nancy Cox McCormack Papers Accession no. 413.
[9] Ezra Pound to Nancy Cox McCormack 13 January 1924, State of New York at Buffalo, Poetry Collection, B745, Folder 15.
[10] Ezra Pound to Nancy Cox McCormack 28 January 1924, State of New York at Buffalo, Poetry Collection, B745, Folder 17.

At this time, immediately prior to the move to Rapallo, the poet's awareness of Mussolini and desire to ingratiate himself cannot be taken as statements of endorsement of the dictator. Indeed, filling editorial space in *Transatlantic* is the central concern. Pound is still opportunistically exploring rather than embracing fascism.

In the 1930s when Pound becomes involved with the *Globe*, roles are reversed, and it is the poet who is sought out by the magazine to exploit his connection with Mussolini. This is something which he persistently talks up in his correspondence with the editors—'I did start saying M/ was RISING years before my Jeff/M was printed.'[11] They ask if he has brought the *Globe* to Mussolini's attention and whether the dictator would like to write 'an intimate letter' for the magazine.[12] While Pound has sent Mussolini a copy, in a fit of realism he notes: 'Globe has been SENT to the private secretary in the approved manner, but can NOT expect the EXCLUSIVE attention of the First European. He has other subjects which call for attention.'[13] This suggests that Pound is an insider with knowledge of 'the approved manner' and of the dictator's priorities. 'The First European' is Pound's coinage, but also might be interpreted as a friendly nickname.

Pound's sole meeting with Mussolini was on 30 January 1933 thanks to a connection made by Olga Rudge. By this time Pound was a convinced admirer of the dictator. He had attended the tenth anniversary exhibition of the fascist government in December 1932—'Xposition of Xenio rather impressive. Not Art-show, but a history show to inskrukt,' he reports to Dorothy responding to what he regards as the educational nature of the event rather than its propaganda.[14] To James Laughlin in 1933 he summarises: 'Italy has got a driver.'[15] In 1936 he writes to Phyllis Bottome:

> England has as yet no idea of the enormous HUMAN value of Mussolini. To arouse the human SYMPATHY en mass is not nugatory. It cant be done by the type of damned intelligentzia FAKE that you tolerate.
>
> My friend the submarine commander U/U/ is CLEAN the whole of the intelligentzia if full of sedoment. poor circulation.[16]

[11] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 25 October 1937, *Globe*, p. 145.
[12] J. W. G. Dunn to Ezra Pound 21 June 1937, *Globe*, p. 129.
[13] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 5 July 1937, *Globe*, p. 131.
[14] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 'Xmas' 1932, Lilly.
[15] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 27 November 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 7.
[16] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.

The poet's fascination with accessing the masses—and his own inability to do so—leads him to laud the dictator's ability to gain mass support. Britain's failure is seen by Pound as not having a dynamic, evolving or genuine intelligentsia. In such comments the poet never provides insights into the status of the Italian intelligentsia which, according to his own logic, could be expected to flourish under Mussolini. It is also notable that the relationship between the intelligentsia and the leader remains unexplored. While Pound espouses the power of groups, he is also comfortable with the power of a single dictatorial figure—if it is someone he approves of. The identification of his 'submarine commander' friend, a suspiciously convenient unnamed source, is unclear.

7.2: An entertaining diversion

At the eventual meeting between the poet and the dictator, a copy of *A Draft of XXX Cantos* was on Mussolini's desk. Canto 41 refers to the long-awaited audience:

> 'Ma questo,'
> said the Boss, 'e divertente.'
> catching the point before the aesthetes had got there.

'Divertente'—meaning entertaining—is interpreted by Pound as a ringing note of understanding. He was ready to be charmed by the dictator—and he was. 'It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Pound was simply flattered out of his senses by this man, who, it must be conceded, had charmed an entire nation,' Leon Surette writes, going on to conclude that Pound's judgement of people was inadequate—citing the eccentric and often amoral set of friends he surrounded himself with (including A. R. Orage, T. E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis, Gerhart Münch and Yeats plus the assembly of misfits and hopeful artists he later amassed at St Elizabeths).[17] A realistic interpretation of Mussolini's response is that he found Pound's work a momentary entertaining diversion from affairs of state. It has been suggested that Mussolini used the language of modernism but, aside from the mention in *The Cantos,* there is little sense of what he actually said or thought of the poet promoting his economic theories.[18] Similarly off-beam is Pound's repeated attempt to suggest hierarchical familiarity by addressing Mussolini as 'the Boss'. This is probably an interpretation of the Italian 'il capo', but it is not used so regularly in English (apart from in stereotypical Mafia-inspired films). 'The aesthetes' is a Poundian catch-all

[17] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[18] Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 220.

phrase presumably encompassing the Bloomsbury group and their like.[19] 'The word *culture* and the word *aesthetic* are both damned, faded, meringued in our language,' he writes in *Guide to Kulchur.*[20] Pound does not consider himself an aesthete though it is doubtful whether Mussolini would have thought him anything other.[21]

When William Bird quizzes Pound on whether Mussolini had answered his questions on economics at their meeting, the poet manages to be simultaneously unequivocal and evasive:

> YES, the boss did answer my questions under the terms they were asked. Namely that AS my questions would undoubtedly have blown hell out of Europe and precipitated no end of a hell of a perfectly useless rumpus, I was not asking them, in the hope of making a mere disturbance, and that they were there to be mentioned pubkly IF and when USEFUL.[22]

Such a contrived and political response from Pound stands out in his correspondence. His argument appears to be that the repercussions of his economic case are so profound that Mussolini, quite sensibly, prefers to register their importance while reserving the right to bring them to public attention when appropriate. The poet positions himself as the revolutionary and the dictator as the diplomat, attuned to realpolitik. It is a rare note of uncertainty and obfuscation, but also one of the very few times when he is challenged.

The meeting with Mussolini, in the condensed version of *The Cantos*, is one in which action and abstraction encounter each other. Pound sees himself as a man of action—like the dictator—at war with the abstract world of aesthetes as well as the emotional world of Freud. The fascists talked of the 'propaganda of the deed', violent assaults as the route to revolution.[23] In Pound's letters it is easy to forget that, as the historian John Foot concludes in his study of Italian fascism, 'Fascism and violence were intertwined and inseparable'.[24]

[19] Including also the opportunistic author Mr. Nixon in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*.
[20] *Kulchur*, p. 94.
[21] Others certainly saw Pound as an aesthete: 'He allowed his poem to write itself, and was at bottom an aesthete—a seeker, collector and creator of beautiful things, anecdotes and trivia.' Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. xvii. 'Ezra Pound is an aesthete in almost all senses of the word, including the positive suggestion of decadent.' Fredric Wertham, 'The road to Rapallo', *American Journal of Psychotherapy,* Vol. 54 No. 1 Winter 2000, p. 106. (Originally in *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, Vol. 3 No. 4, October 1949, pp. 585-600.)
[22] Ezra Pound to William Bird 24 February 1934, Lilly Library, Bird Collection, Folder 1931-39.
[23] John Foot, *Blood and Power: The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 81.
[24] Ibid., p. 133.

Pound sought to induct Mussolini into the world of the arts.[25] And, having incorporated the dictator into the community of artists, with extreme perversity, at their meeting and in his later letters his agenda is often economic rather than poetic. All of this bears out Wyndham Lewis's description of the poet as 'a sort of revolutionary simpleton'.[26] There is a fundamental naïvety evident in many of his letters related to politics and power. The poet has, for example, correspondence with the novelist, critic and communist Mike Gold.[27] Pound takes Gold to task as a founding editor of the magazine *The New Masses* for not clearly laying out what he and the magazine stand for—'Do you realize that during the five years of the N. Masses you have printed almost no clear statement of creed, or program? You have used the term "communist" but you have not made that term clear to your readers.'[28] Pound's inability or unwillingness to do the same with his own position (as exposed in his letters with William Bird) is overlooked. Later, following his audience with Mussolini, Pound writes again to Gold:

> If you ever read anything, or if American papers ever print anything except what they are asked to print by the Mellon, Insull, Kreuger, Wiggin interests, EVEN YOU must by now be beginning to see that I have had at least a trace of reason in telling you that Muss// was a good guy. In fact the only guy outside of Russia that can come up to Lennin.
> Incidentally, you might as well KNOW that Lennin bawled out the wop communists for not sticking with Muss/ or keeping with him.[29]

This has many typical ingredients of Pound's political correspondence. It insults the recipient—'If you ever read anything', 'EVEN YOU'; suggests a media conspiracy; includes casual racism; claims to be taking a reasoned response; proposes Mussolini's exceptionalism; and suggests that the poet has exclusive inside information on the machinations of the Italian Fascist Party. Mike Gold takes his time replying and draws a line under the correspondence:

[25] Others regarded fascism and aesthetic sensibilities as incompatible. Clive Bell among them: 'Were I an Italian peasant or shop-keeper I should be fascist; being what I am, one of those queer people who take art seriously, I am not.' Clive Bell, *Enjoying Pictures* (London: Harcourt, 1934), p. 88.
[26] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 38.
[27] Mike Gold (1894-1967).
[28] Ezra Pound to Mike Gold 16 October 1930, Beinecke EP; *Globe,* p. 14.
[29] Ezra Pound to Mike Gold November 1933, *Globe*, p. 15.

> I am amazed that you write to people like myself. Personally I cannot feel friendly to anybody who is a Fascist and who spreads the confusion that you do. What in hell is it all about anyhow.

Many others must have been amazed to receive one of Pound's letters. Gold continues:

> You say communists don't answer your questions. There are so many books that answer all your questions and you have read them all. What more can anyone do. You are a Fascist and to hell with fascists.[30]

The surprising thing is that Pound does not receive more similar letters. Equally strangely, Gold's comments do not appear to discomfort the poet or to prejudice him against Gold. He is happy to suggest the communist as a potential *Globe* contributor. To James Dunn of the magazine he writes: 'What about Mike Gold (Jews without Money, stuff) Mike's write me "You are a fascist. God dman all fascists". O.KAY.'[31] The often thin-skinned poet appears happy to be labelled a fascist and shrugs off Gold's dismissal. He writes in a similar fashion to Ödön Pór reporting that 'Laughlin writes from U.S.A. "everybody hates your as a fascist"/ meaning ME./ wwwal; if they weren't doing for that reezun they wd. be finding some other'.[32] When it comes to fascism, the poet is sanguine in the face of criticism; the collaborative dictator content to collaborate with a dictator.

7.3: The retained artist

Pound had been thinking of the role of the artist in relation to government for a lengthy period—certainly longer than he had been thinking about economics. A corollary of the role of the artist in re-creating civilisation is that he or she should be supported by the state. If the state is to benefit from a cultural resurgence so, too, must the artist. This logic is a recurring argument in the poet's correspondence before and during his life in Rapallo. Money and the artist's need to earn a living is a regular theme.[33] There is an uncharacteristic bitterness in Pound's discussions of the need to make money. He regards

[30] Mike Gold to Ezra Pound 30 January 1934, *Globe,* p. 15.
[31] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 28-31 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 104.
[32] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 14 November 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[33] For example, he writes to his father in 1909: 'Watson gets a pension from the crown. Binyon gets paid for doing pretty much what I do in the museum. Yeats lives in Ireland. Heine had an uncle. Stevenson didn't. etc.' Ezra Pound to Homer Pound c.24 March 1909, *Parents*, pp. 165-6. In 1921 he writes to Margaret Anderson of the *Little Review*: 'If either or both nations were worth saving they wd. raise 1000 dollars per yr. for me, 2000 for Joyce, Eliot and Lewis (who have less practical sense or more expensive habits than I have.)' Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson 22? April 1921, Thomas L. Scott, Melvin J. Friedman with Jackson R. Bryer (eds.), *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 267.

it as an unnecessary distraction from the real work and one which certainly should not pre-occupy the artist. Most of the visiting writers and artists to Rapallo were not unduly concerned with earning a living. Pound never comments on those—like Bunting and Zukofsky—who have to live precariously by often onerous non-literary work.[34]

Given this, it is hardly surprising that Pound expressed interest in Mussolini's reported belief that writers and artists should be funded in some way by the government. This was an idea with obvious appeal to a poet who largely relied on his wife's investment income. Supporting artists is seen as the mark of civilisation—'Theory of bugwash society: that writers and artists are *not* to be sustained,' he explains to John Drummond.[35] The poet compares the differing approaches of European countries in a letter to Harriet Monroe:

> Re your question is it any better abroad for authors: England gives small pensions; France provides jobs. A ninth rate slob like Claudel gets a job as ambassador. Giraudoux, Morand, Cros, etc., etc., get quite comfortable posts. Italy is full of ancient libraries; the jobs are quite comfortable, not very highly paid, but are respectable, and can't much interfere with the librarians' time.[36]

In London, Pound had campaigned successfully for Joyce to receive a £100 pension from the British government and was aware that Yeats also received a pension.[37] The final point may be referring to Eugenio Montale's work in Florence where he was chairman of the Gabinetto Vieusseux Library (from 1929 until 1938 when he was dismissed by the fascists). In 1938 Pound writes to Van Wyck Brooks: 'Other countries do pay the members of their academies a small salary, such as to provide them with freedom at least from the worst pressure of hell usury and the congeries of falsification, the usuriocrat press.'[38] He sums up his feelings in a letter to Ford Madox Ford (appropriately after loaning him some money): 'We all OUGHT to have plenty of money. I have thought so for twenty years.'[39] To the poet it made perfect sense, but again there are contradictions at every turn—the creative artist in financial debt to government, free but dependent.[40]

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[34] Among other things, Bunting worked in Rapallo on boats importing sand from Sardinia (an activity featured in Canto 23).
[35] Ezra Pound to John Drummond 30 May 1934, Paige, p. 343.
[36] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 30 November 1926, Paige, p. 279.
[37] *P/J*, p. 80.
[38] Ezra Pound to Van Wyck Brooks 16 April 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122528.
[39] Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 10 March 1933, *P/F*, p. 120.
[40] Wyndham Lewis took a different view: 'The artist must make enough money to support himself—must not live on the charity of a few rich people: that an art to be healthy must be independent of fashion and advertisement.' Wyndham Lewis to John Crowe Ransom 22 October 1941, W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 303.

In 1938, Pound is still continuing with this argument. Writing to college president Joseph Brewer, he concludes: 'A country which does not FEED its best writers is a mere stinking dung heap.' He goes onto put a number to how many authors should be covered by governmental largesse—'OVvously the U.S. ought to feed at least 50 or 100 of our better authors.'[41] It is perhaps assumed who will reach the judgement on the identity of the 'better authors'. In spite of his claims to be well-informed about America, Pound shows no knowledge of the Works Progress Administration (later re-named Work Projects Administration) set up in 1935 as part of the New Deal. This gave jobs to people to carry out public work projects. Also, more related to the poet's point, this initiative included what was known as Federal Project Number One which employed artists, musicians, artists and other creative people. The Federal Writers' Project, established in 1935, was part of this and generated work for an estimated 10,000 people. Further afield the Mexican mural programme launched after the Mexican Revolution paid artists—including Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siquerios—to create murals.

The issue of the financial rewards for writers and artists is raised by the poet in his correspondence with Senator Cutting:

> one of the funniest things in the reports from Sovietica is the naif horror (hoRRRRRor) of some of the grabbers at finding a superintendent, a engineering boss or clothing store manager working for the same pay as mere underlings, whereas in our own beatified and perfect state most of the best artists and writers have spent most or all of their lives working for considerably less pay then the plumber or milk=man.[42]

Discussions about state support for artists are part of a wider consideration by Pound of the role of artists in society and the best means to create and nurture what he regards as civilisation. These issues have been regularly contemplated through literary and cultural history. Pound did not view them as abstract or idealistic but emphasised the practicalities, the nitty-gritty of bringing people together—'prakkikal aXshun,' as he puts it in a letter to Cummings.[43]

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[41] Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer 1 July 1938, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, 'Letters from Ezra Pound to Joseph Brewer', *Paideuma*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Fall, 1981, p. 372.
[42] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 9 December 1931?, *Cutting*, p. 63.
[43] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 24 March 1925, *Cummings*, p. 61.

7.4: A contradictory faith

Having aired his economic ideas, Pound returns to a more literary focus in his letters to the dictator immediately following their meeting. In November 1933 he proposes a literary educational curriculum featuring Homer, Ovid, Catullus, Cavalcanti and Dante.[44] By 1936 he notes: 'Prejudice is much against Nazi and Fascism.'[45] This is something the poet repeats in other letters. For example, he uses exactly the same words in a letter to James Dunn of *Globe* in 1937.[46] His belief is that support for fascism, as well as the economic theories he espouses, is entirely rational, based on incontestable facts. Disagreement is indicative of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and prejudice.

Perhaps given hope and confidence by their face-to-face meeting, in his direct approaches to Mussolini, Pound's writing style becomes aggressively idiosyncratic such as in this letter of December 1936:

> DUCE! DUCE!
> Molti nemici molto onore.
> Voglio vedere tutti gli USURAI fra i nemici d'Italia.
> [DUCE! DUCE! Many enemies much honour. I want to see all the USURERS among the enemies of Italy.][47]

Niccolò Zapponi notes: 'Come è facilmente imaginabile, Mussolini non rispose alla lettera.' [As is not difficult to imagine, Mussolini did not reply to the letter.] During the 1930s Mussolini received around 1500 letters a day.[48]

In his correspondence, the poet's enthusiasm for Mussolini is demonstrated (among other things) by his letterhead (dated according to the fascist calendar and with a fascist slogan added in the 1930s), repeated pronouncements of support (though this tended to the general rather than the specific) and even records of his donations to the Fascist Party— in 1940, for example, the Partito Nazionale Fascists thanks Pound for his 'generosamente

[44] Ezra Pound to Benito Mussolini 17 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.
[45] Ezra Pound to Benito Mussolini May 1936?, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.
[46] 'Prejudice is much against Nazi and Fascism'. Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 28 April 1937, *Globe*, p. 110.
[47] Ezra Pound to Benito Mussolini 22 December 1936, Niccolò Zapponi, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1976), p. 60.
[48] Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 9.

donati al Fascio di Rapallo'.[49] As late as 1943 the poet was signing off a letter to Mussolini with the salutation 'con divozione fascista'.[50]

While preoccupied with the broad sweep of history in *The Cantos*, Pound is an enthusiastic convert to the fascist re-calibration of time. A new calendar to replace the Gregorian calendar was introduced by Mussolini in 1926. It set 29 October 1922 as the starting point, the first day of the Era Fascista, the day when Mussolini became Prime Minister after his March on Rome. The system was applied in Italy with the dates used on new buildings and each year designated an Anno Fascista, A.F. Of particular celebration was the tenth anniversary of Mussolini's rule labelled the Decennale—'Didja see the Decennio', Pound writes in Canto 46 and he uses Era Fascista as the date on his letterhead from 1932. The contradiction here is that he does not consider dates and facts as the essence of history. For example, he describes the Renaissance as 'not a time, but a temperament'.[51]

The decisiveness of the Era Fascista was appealing to Pound. There is a childlike element to this, a belief that the slate can be so easily wiped clean and a new starting point for history inserted. For all of his professed belief in the contemporaneous nature of time and history, he also believed that a pause could be announced and knowledge and history frozen. Some detect a similar urge in *The Cantos*. In a review of *A Draft of XXX, Cantos* Dudley Fitts writes: '*The Cantos* may be described as an epic of timelessness. That is to say, the poem represents Mr. Pound's endeavor to manage an arrest of time.'[52] The ability to halt time, the belief in the potential for breaks in history, can be seen as a necessary condition of modernism. Without such chronological disturbances modernists run the risk of repeating rather than making history.

Pound's faith in fascism was beset by contradictions.[53] His interpretation was personal and narrow. He supported Mussolini, but the intricacies of what Mussolini actually stood for or did were conveniently overlooked—or simply misunderstood. In Pound's letters mentions of particular fascist policies or achievements are absent. Yet, he kept manically up to date with current affairs and saw Mussolini speak publicly on at least one occasion—he reports

[49] Partito Nazionale Fascista to Ezra Pound 27 November 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159545.
[50] Ezra Pound to Benito Mussolini 10 May 1943, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.
[51] Doris L. Eder, 'Review of *Time in Ezra Pound's Work* by William Harmon', *Paideuma*, Vol. 8, Spring 1979, No. 1, p. 166.
[52] Dudley Fitts, 'Music fit for the Odes', *Hound and Horn* 4, January-March 1931, p. 286.
[53] Interestingly, the Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-Tung wrote an essay entitled 'On contradiction', published in August 1937, exploring the important role of contradictions in communist thinking. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm/.

to Paul de Kruif watching Mussolini give a speech from a balcony in Piazza Venezia, Rome in 1935.[54] The poet is simultaneously up to date and out of touch. He writes to Stanley Nott arguing that Mussolini was a socialist in his early career and remains left leaning—'DUCE to the left.'[55] While Mussolini had originally positioned himself to the left, it was something the opportunistic dictator had long abandoned by the mid-1930s. The fascist-as-socialist line of argument was used by Mussolini and his supporters to suggest identification with working people. Leon Surette explains:

> Pound seems interested in endorsing Mussolini as a great leader almost independently of any policies he might wish to pursue. He makes no reference to the details of European national rivalries and grievances, nor does he invoke the Communist threat. His whole focus is on Mussolini as a remarkable man like Jefferson, John Adams, and Lenin. His message is that neither ideology nor institutions matter. All that matters is the quality of those who govern.[56]

Belief in some sort of coherent set of fascist values was beyond Pound. He was not alone. Wyndham Lewis dallied on the fringes of both fascism and Nazism without any coherent set of beliefs. Pound was undoubtedly a fascist in that he lauded the Italian fascist leader, celebrated what he perceived as his victories and insights, and damned his opponents—'Mussolini doin more fer rhoosia and the PEEPUL than all the blasted lying illogical liberals in kingdom kumm,' he writes to Paul de Kruif.[57] The contradictory force here is that Pound was a fascist who didn't actually enquire what the full remit of fascism entailed. Managing to be thoughtless and thoughtful, he saw fascism as a buffet of intolerances from which he could make his selection.

Fascism and Pound actually share many of the same contradictory forces. This might help explain the poet's fateful connection. Matthew Feldman suggests that the very mystery of what fascism actually stood for was part of the attraction: 'Intellectual support for fascism was not wholly unlike "occultism" in its etymological sense: something hidden or secret in the sense of being mysterious to ordinary understanding or scientific reason'.[58] The sense

[54] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 2 October 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[55] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January? 1935, *Nott*, p. 19.
[56] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[57] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 2 December 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[58] Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), p. 26.

of being an insider is something which Pound constantly suggests in his letters. Similarly, the historian John Foot observes:

> Italian fascism looked forwards *and* backwards. It built extraordinary modernist structures, such as Florence railway station, but also neo-classical throwbacks. It encouraged and tolerated innovative forms of art and performance, as with the futurists, but it also covered Italy in dubious realist statues and images of its leader. It understood the power of the media and advertising, but it also glanced back longingly to a rural Italy which was fast disappearing. It was at times radical, but also radically reactionary, and often simply pragmatic. It claimed to be anti-system and anti-political, but most of its leading proponents were corrupt, and enriched themselves. These contradictions were also its strengths.[59]

With its ability to look forwards and backwards, embrace of the modern while venerating the past, capacity to be radical and reactionary, fascism's in-built contradictions were ideally suited to someone as contradictory in his life and beliefs as Pound. Indeed, the argument that contradictions can work as strengths could also be applied to the poet: his contradictions produced a dynamic momentum and meaning to his correspondence and other activities. 'Fascism, in and of itself, apparently possessed no identifiable ideological substance—being little more than a collage of contradictory ideas,' concludes A. James Gregor in his examination of the intellectuals who committed to the fascist cause.[60] Michael North also maps out the contradictions:

> Fascism promised to fulfill the individual and to restrain individualism, to set free loyalties and professions and to meld every group into one great whole, to liberate the particular from iron abstractions and to find one great abstraction to fulfill every particular.[61]

The 'great abstraction' came with ready-made excuses and a continuing bold sense of ambition with clarity and explanation always held up as something for the future—there are parallels with the elusive coherence-providing coda of *The Cantos*.

[59] John Foot, *Blood and Power: The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 3.
[60] A. James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[61] Michael North, *The Political Identities of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 165-6.

Mussolini's brand of fascism had a backward-looking quality which chimed with Pound's worldview and preoccupations. It was dictatorial and reactionary rather than truly socially and economically revolutionary. The historian Niall Ferguson concludes that 'nearly all the dictatorships of the inter-war period were at root conservative, if not downright reactionary' and that they were supported 'by industrialists fearful of socialism and by frivolous intellectuals who were bored of democracy's messy compromises'.[62] The final phrase offers an accurate summation of the position taken by the poet and others. Perhaps even more damningly, while some 'frivolous intellectuals' objected to the implications of democracy, broader suffrage and education and the rise of mass markets, none articulated a coherent alternative.

In a letter to John Drummond (a fellow Italian-resident, Mussolini supporter) Pound suggests that a coherent statement of what fascism stands for will have to wait as it fights off opposition and media prejudice: 'Details later. Don't be blinded by theorists and a lying press.'[63] 'Details later' could serve as a summation of Pound's political misadventures. Piling stubbornness on folly, the poet Pound persists in excusing Mussolini.[64]

A sense of the incoherence of Pound's position can be seen in a letter to Basil Bunting in 1938 in which he takes Bunting to task for not understanding the nature of fascism:

> You will NEVER get the hang of fascism if you persit in habit of regarding every ACT as a precedent.
>
> Surgeon amputates leg/ NOT as precedent/ he dont mean to go on amputating the patients leg every week or year.
>
> Operations to save life/ ONLY in emergency/
>
> What are called CONTINGENT.
>
> Things to be done ONCE and NOT erected into a system.[65]

[62] Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), p. 231.
[63] Ezra Pound to John Drummond 18 February 1932, Paige, p. 320.
[64] In 1953 he is still arguing that the dictator was 'conditioned by circs'. Louis Dudek (ed.), *Some Letters of Ezra Pound* (Montreal: DC Books, 1974), p. 95.
[65] Ezra Pound to Basil Bunting 24 November 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122529.

The phrase 'get the hang of fascism' suggests it is a difficult to master hobby rather than, as Pound appears to believe, a political philosophy with potential to change the world. This view provides an automatic excuse for any action as the immediate context justifies whatever action is deemed necessary. As Pound points out elsewhere, medicine is a science and, as such, is based on precedents, systems and the honing of skills through repetition. The example effectively counters his own argument. Pound's fascism is driven by in-the-moment decision making without reference to wider morality or a coherently expressed schema of beliefs and behaviour.

Part of Pound's apparent logic is that as a member of the intelligentsia he is spared the over-seeing, control and brutality which was part of Italian fascism. Max Eastman[66] recounts a discussion after a meal with Pound and E. E. Cummings in Rome in 1939. '"Don't you as an alien escape the regimentation wh. is the essence of it [Italian fascism]?" I asked. "I wouldn't say you would greatly enjoy being regimented yourself."' To this, the poet replies: 'Fascism only regiments those who can't do anything without it. If a man knows how to do anything it's the essence of fascism to leave him alone.'[67] Pound felt that he was left alone in order, presumably, to pursue his literary and other interests. There is considerable ego and naïvety at work in this perspective. Other interpretations might be that he was left alone as he was peripheral and unimportant, and that he would not have been so readily ignored if he had offered negative or even questioning views of the Italian regime. There is no thought that he could equally easily have been left alone in America.

Elsewhere, struggling against the critique of William Bird, Pound backtracks into excuses, suggesting that while there is no one document incorporating all his pro-Mussolini arguments, he has dealt with all of the criticisms separately elsewhere:

> ALL yr/ damn points have been treated; mostly a dozen times over.
> The difficulty of getting it down ONCE as near foolproof as possible/ precludes (ef thets the woid) letch to rush it into partial xxxpression in private correspondence with semi persiflagical N.A.N.A.[68]

[66] Max Eastman (1883-1969), writer, editor of *The Masses*.
[67] *Cummings*, p. 3.
[68] Lilly Library, Bird Collection, Folder 1931-39.

Of course, Pound knows whether or not 'preclude' is the right word but chooses to raise the possibility that it is not as a diversionary tactic. In a debate about politics and economics he would prefer to move back to the more comfortable sphere of words. Similarly, he raises the issue of 'private correspondence' as some sort of defence. His correspondence—free of personal details, carefully carbon copied and filed—can rarely be described as private in tone or objective. William Bird is unimpressed:

> Off with the false whiskers! I'm sorry I haven't read ALL your writings on economics, it's just been my bad luck that all I *have* happened to see raised more questions than they answered, & when I apply to the author for elucidation he takes two pages to tell me why he hasn't got time to write me a telegram.[69]

Pound is unwilling to remove the false whiskers and repeats the need for the world to urgently embrace his ideas, accusing Bird of a commitment to ignorance.[70] Bird's mistake is to have read Pound's work on economics and to have reached different conclusions. Bird ends the debate—if it can be so described—with a damning reply, suggesting that Pound's potential source of power lies in his ability to ask questions which attempt to hold political leaders to account.[71] Rather than ask questions, the poet prefers his pre-prepared answers. Later, when interrogated in Genoa in 1945, Pound concedes:

> I have at all times opposed certain grey zones of the Fascists opportunism by defining fascism in a way to make it fit my own views.[72]

Tailoring fascism to his own world view is perhaps the ultimate exercise in unworldly intellectual opportunism.

7.5: A new network

With its farcical excesses, self-defeating tone and language, air of desperation and continual over-stating of the author's power, it is tempting to treat Pound's correspondence connected to fascism as an ill-advised diversion. Groundbreaking contributions to the study of Pound and his work—most notably Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era*— steer insistently clear of politics. Yet, the amount of energy and time

[69] Lilly Library, Bird Collection, Folder 1931-39.
[70] Ezra Pound to William Bird 22 July 1935, Beinecke Za Pound Folder 145, 'Letters by Wm. Bird and from Pound'.
[71] William Bird to Ezra Pound 2 August 1935, Beinecke Za Pound, Folder Bef-Bk 1935-58.
[72] Ezra Pound, 'Pound's interrogation at Genoa', *Helix* (Australia), 13 and 14, 1983, p. 131.

committed by the poet suggests it was much more than a peripheral fascination. Once his connections to fascists were established—in his usual energetic way—Pound was unrelenting in developing them. His correspondence related to fascism and directly to fascists in Italy and beyond is extensive. This, combined with his prose work and radio broadcasts, leads Matthew Feldman to conclude: 'Pound was a committed and significant English-language strategist and producer of fascist propaganda.'[73]

The word 'propaganda' is regularly repeated by the poet in a way that suggests that it is not seen as pejorative, manipulative or dangerous to be associated with. To Ödön Pór, he writes: 'we ought to have more SPACE: for propaganda re CONSTRUCTIVE SIDE OF FASCISM.'[74] In another letter he writes: 'As for propaganda/ what counts is PENETRATIO of hostile territory.'[75] Matthew Feldman notes that 'Pound was further radicalised in Spring 1942 after reading *Mein Kampf*, especially Hitler's chapter "Propaganda and Organisation".'[76]

During wartime the poet aspires to have a similar impact as the Nazi supporting British broadcaster Lord Haw-Haw.[77] He writes to Prince Ranieri: 'we must make 'em TALK about the Rome radio/ as they talk of Lord Haw Haw.'[78] The comparison was encouraged by a British newspaper decribing the poet as an American version of Lord Haw-Haw.[79] In 1942 the poet refers to 'Angleton photo of E.P. in "Time" saying I am not Haw Haw, because I had stopped speaking on Dec. 9/ writ. probably, but publ. after I had restarted.'[80] This suggests that he is very aware of the validity of the comparison and that his continued broadcasting confirms it. The British propagandist was executed after the war and his sentence must have had an influence on the legal advice received by the poet once he was detained on the same charge.

At the same time as being comfortable with the creation and communication of propaganda, Pound is aware of the ethical issues surrounding it. 'I can NOT accept money for writing Ital propaganda,' he writes but then mentions that a 'proper SALARY' for a professor of American Studies would be $5000 per annum. It is interesting that the subject

[73] Matthew Feldman, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda 1935-45* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. ix.
[74] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór 21 September 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[75] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór January/February 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[76] Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), p. 26.
[77] Lord Haw-Haw was the nickname of William Joyce (1906-46) who broadcast for the Nazis during the war.
[78] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 30 July 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[79] 'Ezra Pound as US Haw-Haw', *Sunday Times*, 8 March 1942, p. 1.
[80] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 7 May 1942, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17091453.

chosen is American Studies (which emerged as a discipline in the 1930s) rather than literature or, even, economics. It suggests Pound's continuing intellectual commitment to the country of his birth. As a compromise, the poet suggests he is provided with accommodation in Rome. The important distinction in his mind is that this is '"enabling", not a salary'.[81] Pound consistently argues that the state should support artists and yet at this point differentiates his propaganda activities from artistic output. In spite of Pound's various protestations that his propaganda activities be separated from payment, Matthew Feldman estimates that the poet was paid the equivalent of more than $200,000 for his broadcasts between 1940 and 1945.[82]

The correspondence between Pound and Ödön Pór (author of a book on fascism and well-connected among Italian fascists)[83] is particularly substantial. The two corresponded until the end of the war with Pór providing introductions to the fascist movement and Pound expounding and explaining his arguments on social credit. The poet also translated one of Pór's books (*Italy's Policy of Social Economics 1939-1940*).[84] This is presumably 'Odon's neat little volume' referred to in Canto 78. 'My belief is that the DUCE understands more REAL econ/ that Doug/,' Pound writes to Pór in 1934 and calls on him 'to wear down IDIOTIC prejudice against Fascism. I MEAN ITALIAN as distinct from fake fascism'.[85] Again, opposition to fascism is described as 'prejudice'. Presumably the 'fake fascism' was that peddled elsewhere such as by the British Union of Fascists. As with his Ezuversity students, once a relationship was established, the poet was always a keen champion. To Charles Coughlin he describes Pór as having 'tremendours journalistic experience and best writer on Econ/ in Italy'.[86]

Another long-term correspondent with the poet was Camillo Pellizzi.[87] An essayist, sociologist and political student, Pellizzi was the author of *Fascismo-aristocrazia* which argued that the ruling elite were 'heroic, energetic and faithful'.[88] He became President of the Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista and corresponded regularly with the poet.[89] In 1935, Pound writes to Pellizzi: 'era Fascista is damn sight more human and humane and

[81] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór undated 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[82] Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), p. 30.
[83] Ödön Pór, *Fascism* (New York: Knopf, 1923).
[84] Guido Franzinetti, 'Ödön Pór: From socialism to fascism, from Hungary to Italy', http://italogramma.elte.hu/wp-content/files/Guido_Franzinetti_Odon_Por.pdf.
[85] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór undated 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[86] Ezra Pound to Charles Coughlin 18 February 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122540.
[87] Camillo Pellizzi (1896-1979).
[88] Camillo Pellizzi, *Fascismo-aristocrazia* (Milan: Alpes, 1925).
[89] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.

worth living in that Brit/ shit and the general privvy stink of England.'[90] Pellizzi was living in London at the time so could have offered a current perspective. It is not clear if either Pellizzi or the poet realised that by the 1930s the British secret service were opening Pound's mail to Britain.[91] In 1936, Pound writes to Pellizzi:

> Disgrace that the Duce has to do it ALL.
> There eras in Italy.
> the PRESENT inhabited by B. Mussolini and few technicians.
> the 1890 inhabited by the letterati
> the 1860 inhabited by universitaires.[92]

Having set up Mussolini as the lone heroic leadership figure (aided solely by a 'few technicians'), Pound bemoans the dictator's isolation. The year 1890 and the following decade was locked in Pound's mind as an era of unforgivable mediocrity. He repeatedly said this of England over many decades and simply seems to have transported his conclusions to Italy. Like many of Pound's opinions, this was one which was regularly re-cycled. In 1934 he writes to Margherita Sarfatti:[93]

> There seem to the be three epochs:
>
> I. The present, inhabited by DUX ipse, and almost no one else that one hears of, tho' there must be a staff of aviators and architects.
> II. The letterati, living about 1890 and
> III. Scholastic italy inhabiting 1850/60.[94]

Again, Mussolini is portrayed as a lone valiant figure with his comically selective 'staff of aviators and architects'. As the war progresses, Pound complains: 'why don't ANYbody ever think except me, and the Boss, who is now busy with a WAR??'[95] Pound yokes his efforts to those of Mussolini and the idea of another audience with the dictator is regularly brought up—by the poet. 'Is it time starting to work for another interview with the Boss/ I

[90] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi undated 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.
[91] Matthew Feldman, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda 1935-45* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 4.
[92] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi 9 May 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.
[93] Margherita Grassini Sarfatti (1880-1961), Italian journalist, patron, collector, propaganda adviser and mistress to Mussolini. Her biography of the dictator, *Dux* (Milan: Mondadori, 1926) was a bestseller and Pound utilised quotes from it in *Eleven New Cantos*. She left Italy in 1938 threatened by increasing anti-Semitism.
[94] Ezra Pound to Margherita Sarfatti 25 February 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32160276.
[95] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi August 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.

mean ME to see him,' he writes to Ödön Pór in 1935.[96] 'A friend writes me that I ought to try for another interview with the Duce, but that both the foreign office and the ministere stampa are afraid of me,' he writes to Sarfatti. He goes on to immodestly observe, 'I take it my main sin consists in SEEING things a year or two before the idees more or less fixes of those under the "great umbrella" have got round to seeing them.'[97] This is another example of the poet citing an unnamed source, 'a friend', and also of probably misreading the signals emerging from the government departments—irritation rather than fear may have been the dominant emotion.

The force of the poet's logic takes him down some unlikely routes. In 1941, he engages in a ridiculous flight of logical fancy in a letter to Camillo Pellizzi:

> The country lacks BUTTER/ oils are scarce/ Libya and Cirenaica are FULL of SAND/ what do PEANUTS grow in/ peanuts grow in SAND. peanut butter is as good and for some things preferable to cow butter/ any how; OIL, oil; oil/ them nuts is FULL of oil.[98]

He proceeds to note that his dictionary doesn't have the Italian word for peanut (*arachidi*) and follows up by writing to another political contact suggesting peanuts as the way forward. He regrets that this wasn't done years ago, 'but I can't be everywhere'. That the American is missing his supply of peanut butter during wartime is not mentioned.

Pound's correspondence demonstrates that Mussolini and the poet were not working entirely alone. He corresponds with a number of senior figures in the fascist government. They include Gran Consiglio del Fascismo members Cornelio Di Marzio (a journalist),[99] Roberto Farinacci,[100] and Gaetano Polverelli (Chief of Press from 1931 until 1933, Undersecretary and then Minister of Popular Culture, who corresponds with the poet from 1932 until 1942),[101] as well as Asvero Gravelli (director of the fascist journal *Antieuropa* who corresponds with Pound in 1940).[102] He corresponds with Julius Evola in the Office of Race in Mussolini's government. This correspondence begins in late 1942 after the mass

[96] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór undated 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[97] Ezra Pound to Margherita Sarfatti May 1936?, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32160276.
[98] Ezra Pound to Camillo Pellizzi August 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122609.
[99] Cornelio Di Marzio (1896-1944). BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31964650.
[100] Roberto Farinacci (1892-1945).
[101] Gaetano Polverilli (1886-1960).
[102] Asvero Gravelli (1902-56).

arrests of Jews in Italy.[103] He also writes to Alessandro Pavolini, the Minister of Popular Culture, effectively the head of fascist propaganda, suggesting a law under which booksellers have to display prescribed books for three months. The poet's suggested titles include Confucius, Aristotle, Giuseppe Mazzini's *The Duties of Man* and the anti-semitic *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.[104]

Perhaps the most influential connection of Pound's was Galeazzo Ciano[105] Mussolini's son-in-law and Foreign Minister from 1936 until 1943. Invited by Ciano to write in English, Pound notes, 'my "lingua materna" is NOT the language of diplomacy'.[106] In the correspondence with Ciano, Pound concentrates on providing as much as the up-to-date information at his disposal to back his economic theories. These come with an uncharacteristic caveat—'I dont know that my occasional notes are any use and obviously as an isolated student of current history I have no adequate means of checking up on ANYthing.'[107] Invited to broadcast on his 'impressions of Italy' Pound replies: 'I take it "impressions of Italy" means rather more than a verbal postcard of the beauties of Tigullio?' and goes on, 'My "impressions" of Italy are rather ONE IMPRESSION, that of the regenerative force of the Duce, incarnate in fascist state.'[108] Ciano is appreciative: 'Your cooperation in this work is a proof of the spirit of collaboration between Italy and the United States in the field of culture.'[109] By the mid-1930s this 'spirit of collaboration' was a fascist fiction.

The poet also has a very practical correspondence with the historian and diplomat Luigi Villari[110] who worked in the ministry of foreign affairs and later the ministry of popular culture and its propaganda activities. In this correspondence the poet is unequivocal in how he sees his role: 'The BEST propaganda I can put out consists in PROOF that aryicles ARE printed IN Italy, that there is very great freedom for constructive expression.'[111] The word 'constructive' clearly means pro-fascist. In the correspondence, Pound continually complains about the lack of information he is receiving—'I need more information. Can't get any American papers etc. Japan papers a month late// even to have an opinion I am

[103] Julius Evola (1898-1974) was a far right philosopher who was close to Mussolini and later fled to Germany. Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), pp. 25-6.
[104] Alessandro Pavolini (1903-45) was eventually executed and his body was one of those which was hung on display with that of Mussolini. Matthew Feldman, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda 1935-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), p. 154.
[105] Galeazzo Ciano (1903-44).
[106] Ezra Pound to Galeazzo Ciano 16 March 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122536.
[107] Ezra Pound to Galeazzo Ciano 16 October 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122536.
[108] Ezra Pound to Galeazzo Ciano 17 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122536.
[109] Galeazzo Ciano to Ezra Pound 17 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122536.
[110] Luigi Villari (1876-1959).
[111] Ezra Pound to Luigi Villari March 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122646.

handicapped// Can you have any American bulletins sent me?'[112]—with no apparent appreciation that reliable and regular information is at a premium in wartime (and equally unlikely to be shared with foreigners however loudly they shout their support). Hearing that the ministry receives few foreign publications, Pound is outraged: 'IF a propaganda dept. don't KNOW what is being HEARD and said and repeated in another country how the .... etc/ can it PUT any idea whatsdamnever INTO that country?'[113] Villari and Pound continued to correspond after the war. The progress of the war did nothing to reduce Pound's campaigning gusto. In 1944 he is still suggesting a new fascist newspaper to the Nazi-supporting fascist Roberto Farinacci lamenting '45 giorni d'italia NON=fascista'.[114]

Outside Italy, Pound remained in correspondence with figures in British fascism. He had a lengthy correspondence with Major-General John Fuller[115] a former British soldier, strategist and historian who supported Oswald Mosley's fascists and later remained convinced that it would have been better if Hitler had won the war. Similarly, he corresponded with Lieutenant Colonel Graham Seton Hutchison[116] a fascist activist, soldier and author who affects much the same *braggadocio* as the poet. In 1934 Hutchison writes to Pound: 'I have probably more influence in Germany than any other Englishman.'[117] The poet professed to liking Seton-Hutchison's novels for their 'specific treatment of live economies'.[118] This reinforced his opinion that the best authors were increasingly focused on using fiction as a means of exploring economic issues.

In the United States, the poet corresponded with the Silver Shirt Legion of America. 'I am struck by your creative virility of intelligence in the facing of the international program. You are one of us,' Robert Summerville of the Silver Shirts replies.[119] In an exchange of letters Pound suggests with juvenile unpleasantness a list of people who should be 'neatly executed. That is what guns are for'.[120] As we have seen, he also corresponds with the Reverend Charles Coughlin who used radio to reach a mass audience in America to preach anti-Semitism.[121]

[112] Ezra Pound to Luigi Villari 27 November 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122646.
[113] Ezra Pound to Luigi Villari 2 December 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122646.
[114] Ezra Pound to Roberto Farinacci 4 January 1944, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/31964740.
[115] Major-General John Fuller (1878-1966).
[116] Lieutenant Colonel Graham Seton Hutchison (1890-1946).
[117] Graham Seton Hutchison to Ezra Pound 30 July 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122578.
[118] K. K. Ruthven, *Ezra Pound as Literary Critic* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 125.
[119] Robert C. Summerville to Ezra Pound 23 May 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32160334.
[120] Ezra Pound to Robert C. Summerville undated, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32160334.
[121] See BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122540.

The correspondence makes clear that for Pound—as for many others—support of Mussolini evolved into support for Hitler. In 1939 he writes to the journalist Ian Munro: 'I have been preserving a benevolent neutrality up to the press despite my suspicion that 94 % pf right and justice are on t German side.'[122] It is difficult to interpret any of Pound's protestations in the 1930s as 'benevolent neutrality'. His extensive correspondence with the composer Gerhart Münch is revealing. Münch played at concerts in Rapallo organised by the poet but returned to settle in Munich in the late 1930s. 'I could work with the Party, but until now preferred not to do so,' he writes to Pound in 1938.[123] The poet's reply offers clear advice and gives an insight into his own thinking in working with the Italian fascists: 'Do for God's sake work WITH THE PARTY, the party is right and is the future. and the future is RIGHT//.'[124] Pound expresses interest in going to Germany himself to become involved. In 1937, after Münch says he cannot perform at a music festival planned by the poet, Pound writes:

> As far as the particular KIND of thing I was aiming at here, I have no objection to continuing that in Munchen IF you find a nucleus of people in which my energy could be useful.
>
> NO use in getting idee fixe about locality.[125]

This does not suggest a great loyalty to Mussolini's fascist project in Italy. It is something Pound returns to. In 1939 with war already declared, he writes: 'I have been tempted to come up to Berlin and write, I mean I have FELT the temptation to offer my services, I sent what my compatriots will consider a RABID proGerman manifesto to the U.S. two days ago.'[126] A few months later, Pound and Münch are signing their letters 'Heil Hitler'.[127] This was not exceptional. In 1939 writing to the journalist Theodore Stoddard (who interviewed Hitler on a visit to Europe), Pound notes, 'The Italian press is getting better and better', and ends the letter with 'Heil hitler'.[128]

[122] Ezra Pound to Ian Munro 23 October 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17409019.
[123] Gerhart Münch to Ezra Pound 12 April 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[124] Ezra Pound to Gerhart Münch 15 April 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[125] Ezra Pound to Gerhart Münch 7 December 1937, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[126] Ezra Pound to Gerhart Münch 25 October 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[127] Ezra Pound to Gerhart Münch 11 November 1939 and Gerhart Münch to Ezra Pound 2 April 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[128] Ezra Pound to Theodore Stoddard 17 November 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122633.

As the war progresses, Pound's sympathies remain constant. The poet views the early stages of the war as largely satisfactory. In 1940, for example, he writes to his old friend Viola Jordan: 'Waaal a friend of mine (murkn) saw the Fuhrer a month ago and Adolph wuz feelin find. This for you comfort. no side. just human an german/ so if the god damn jews tell you Adolf is off his head, ask 'em WHEN.'[129] During this period, Pound more often takes recourse in his letters from unnamed sources. A few months later, the poet writes in a similar vein: 'Waal the new Europe seems to be comin on nicely/ but whether America will get ALL the escaped crooks remains to be sawn. Seem to be a great flights of yidds to yr/ shores for the moment.'[130] Olga Rudge clearly shares similar views. In 1942 she writes to the poet in their usual impersonal third person style: 'She beginning to think maybe it wont be so long now till end of war—Getting on with Hitler's "Vita" and very impressed most edyfying for young.' She adds the hope that the poet doesn't 'come back as thin as last time'.[131] As his lover contemplates German victory, in prosaic combination with the poet's weight, there is no sense of what the implications of Nazi domination might be. Pound's correspondence continues with minimal infringement of wartime realities. There is no mention of the losses on both sides, the violence, the discomfort and day-to-day awfulness of wartime. War hardly impinges on Pound's Rapallo life or economic and political agenda. The poet remains blinkered in spite of the global nature of his correspondence and his constant demands for information and news. In the hope that they might listen, he continues to correspond with those he regards as powerful no matter who or where they are.

[129] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 8 February 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037884.
[130] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 27 August 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037887.
[131] Olga Rudge to Ezra Pound 7 May 1942, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17091453.

8: Powerful Illusions

8.1: On the side of the Angletons

Ezra Pound's seduction by Mussolini was not an isolated incident. His letters make clear that the poet was attracted to the powerful and influential. Making a connection to them was an expression of his own power, a re-assertion that the poet was well-connected and able to make things happen. This was increasingly illusory: for Pound corresponding with the powerful never translated into access, influence or money.

In the 1930s he corresponds with Louise Hanson-Dyer,[1] an Australian music publisher and arts patron, and with Jane Allen Campbell,[2] an American who married into Roman nobility and became Princess di San Faustino. Immediately in their correspondence, Pound suggests that Princess Jane (as he respectfully addresses her) becomes involved in creating a newspaper which would serve as his mouthpiece, publishing the news he approves of. As he writes, the poet contemplates a more wide-ranging effort involving other wealthy backers:

> The Princess de Polignac shd. have arrived in Rome yesterday. I think she is very well disposed. Whether she wd. join you in an assault on the Pecci.... or what sort of enveloping movement cd. be undertaken.... I leave to yr/ fertile imagination.[3]

The 'fertile imagination' belongs to the poet. In his typical fashion, Pound suggests he has intimate details of the movements of the key players. 'The Pecci' is a reference to Anna Pecci-Blunt,[4] an art collector and salon host in Rome. He continues:

> It appears she is pouring gold over music, about which her ideas are extremely vague. She has had the sense to be guided by Casella,[5] another heave, and she might be guided if not BY at least TO or TOWARDS the undersigned.[6]

[1] Louise Hanson-Dyer (1884-1962).
[2] Jane Allen Campbell (1865-1938).
[3] Ezra Pound to Jane San Faustino 5 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[4] Anna Pecci-Blunt (1885-1971).
[5] Alfredo Casella (1883-1947), Italian composer, pianist and conductor who Pound collaborated with in the creation of a week celebrating the music of Vivaldi in 1939.
[6] Ezra Pound to Jane San Faustino 5 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.

If gold is to be poured anywhere, the poet is always keen to be a recipient and explains (somewhat plaintively) to Princess Jane that he has musical pedigree: 'I was a composer… I was a good composer.'[78] Working extremely hard to be helpful, in another letter the poet expounds on the film industry and connects the Princess to Man Ray.[9]

While the attraction is not necessarily financial, the aristocratic elite are of repeated interest. When James Laughlin tells the poet that he has been skiing with Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, Pound immediately signs a copy of the *Ta Hio* for Laughlin to pass on to convert her to Confucianism.[10] Keen to celebrate the travails of the British monarchy (presumably as emblematic of the corrupted state of the British establishment), the abdication of the British monarch Edward VIII in 1936 is an event he regularly returns to. Writing to the *Globe* editor James Dunn, the poet produces some doggerel on the abdication with the refrain, 'But they pinned a dukedumb on his britches/ as he left 'em.'[11] A few days later, he follows up with another letter commenting on the King's mistress Wallis Simpson: 'eden's bitch didn't approve of Wallie/ and Wallie NOT exactly a pixchoor pos' card of Victoria's successor BUT lorrr luvv yew dearie, thet aint th arf ov it.'[12] The first reference is presumably to Beatrice Beckett, the wife of the British foreign secretary Anthony Eden—who was derided by Mussolini. Months later the poet is still returning to the subject: 'Re/ AbderKashun. My ole PAW he sure will be pleased an my ole Maw she cert/ will sniff an fusss erbout our lack of kulchur and refinement.'[13]

There is an opportunistic and perpetually hopeful air to Pound's attempts to infiltrate the corridors of wealth, power and influence. His relationship with James Angleton[14] is a case in point. Like other of the poet's relationships it takes place mainly via correspondence—and also barely merits a footnote in biographies.[15]

Angleton's father took over the operations of NCR (National Cash Register) in Italy in 1933. Over his years in Italy, Hugh Angleton[16] became more right-wing, staunchly anti-

[7] Ezra Pound to Jane San Faustino 5 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[8] Few agreed with the poet's assessment of his musical accomplishments. For example, Robert McAlmon wrote: 'People who had known Ezra for some time did not take his composition abilities with great seriousness as, so they claimed, Ezra was virtually tone deaf. He was not a trained musician.' Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 165.
[9] Ezra Pound to Jane San Faustino 5 February 1937, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[10] *Literchoor*, p. 79.
[11] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 13 December 1936, *Globe*, p. 78.
[12] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 17 December 1936, *Globe*, p. 79.
[13] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 7 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 90.
[14] James Angleton (1917-87).
[15] Angleton is referenced once in A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet II: The Epic Years 1921-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 305, and once in *Ezra Pound: Poet III: The Tragic Years 1939-72* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 61.
[16] Hugh Angleton (1888-1973).

Communist and, it was suggested, even knew Mussolini.[17] He was 'one of the best-known Americans in northern Italy'.[18] Given this, it is highly likely that Pound would have heard of him. His son James, a student at Yale, saw a profile of Pound in a magazine under the headline 'From Idaho to Rapallo', extracted the poet's address from the American consulate in Genoa and wrote explaining he was a photographer from the *Yale Literary Magazine* (which didn't actually use photos)—'I want only to get a few spirited ideas from you together with a photo,' he writes.[19] Angleton met Pound in August 1938 for five days when his family were spending the summer in Italy. The young man provided a combination of flattery ('spirited ideas' was a well-phrased bait), an outlet for publication, and association with an Ivy League university as well as a wealthy father of sympathetic political views. Angleton had been born in Boise, Idaho (mentioned in his first letter) and there was a superficial parallel with the Idahoan poet's own life. The somewhat shared background and the connections to wealth and power were a persuasive cocktail for the poet based in Rapallo whose correspondence increasingly went unanswered and whose publishing options were declining. These connections appeared to blind Pound to his usual commitment to seriousness and hard work. Indeed, Pound was even prepared to overlook the fact that Angleton was not a great literary enthusiast—'Jim knew some Eliot, Pound and Dante, but he was not much of a reader—even in modern poetry,' recalled his friend Reed Whittemore.[20] Angleton struggled to commit his ideas to paper and there is scant trace of his literary output.[21] None of this prevented Pound (and also E. E. Cummings) rating him highly. 'One of the most important hopes of literary magazines in the US,' said Pound.[22] Angleton leaves Rapallo with the task of assembling Pound's formidable bibliography. Soon after, he is chased by an irate poet when the bibliography fails to materialise—'How the hell am I to do my own work and take two months off to collect my own bibliography I don't SEE.'[23] In a six-page typed reply, Angleton smoothly placates Pound by telling him that he is doing the reading recommended—Confucius' *Ta Hio* and his own opera *Cavalcanti*.

[17] Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 14.
[18] Jefferson Morley, *The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton* (New York: Macmillan, 2017), p. 3.
[19] James Angleton to Ezra Pound 23 August 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/171222519.
[20] Reed Whittemore (1919-2012), poet, biographer, critic and academic. Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 15.
[21] One of the exceptions is Angleton's poem 'The immaculate conversion', *Yale Literary Magazine*, May 1940, Vol. CV, No. 8, p. 21.
[22] Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 15.
[23] Ezra Pound to James Angleton 10 January 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/171222519.

Angleton strikes a tone of enthusiastic sycophancy in his letters—'Gangway…here I come…a very excited piece of protoplasm after your wonderful and to-the-point letter'.[24] (The breathless ellipses are his own.) This is combined with his connection to Yale and his willingness to promote Pound to all and sundry with talk of lectures and connecting to Harvard via Archibald MacLeish. Angleton struggles to convince Yale Professor William Phelps[25] of Pound's genius after the poet writes directly. Angleton reports that Phelps concludes 'any man who would write another man a letter and call him a son-of-a-bitch was crazy'.[26] Undeterred, Pound suggests the 'only place for him is in the Boston Museum of Natural History'.[27] (Again, the poet's ire appears misdirected: Phelps was an author, critic, radio broadcaster, orator and academic who taught the first university course on the modern novel.) Eventually, in April 1939 an invitation arrives from the Master and Fellows of Yale University for the poet to give a lecture for $50. The invitation is politely directive:

> Your audience would probably expect you as a poet to talk about some subject related to modern poetry and its aims, or to the metier of the poet in the contemporary world; I hope you won't mind that much limitation of your subject. Economics is maybe over-technical for a general to literary Yale audience.[28]

This might have given the poet-economist encouragement as it suggests his economic interests had successfully crossed the Atlantic. In the end Pound read from *The Cantos* at Harvard and received an honorary doctorate from Hamilton, but did not speak at Yale.

In 1939 Angleton connected Pound directly to his father Hugh—'I talked to Dad on the telephone a day or 2 before the war and mentioned the little shekel which you might need, say a couple of thousand, and he said o.k. so I hope you will oblige by writing him and accept it as a favor.'[29] Pound does just that and, with customary immodesty, points out that he can be helpful to the successful well-connected businessman—'Time has come when I might be a business asset. (wild as the idea wd/ appear.) I dont mean IN an office; but setting at the seat of news.'[30] It is easy to forget that such letters were written in the midst of a world war. Italy entered the war on 10 June 1940 just nine days before the poet's letter to

[24] James Angleton to Ezra Pound 28? March 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[25] William Lyon Phelps (1865-1943).
[26] James Angleton to Ezra Pound 19 January 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[27] Ezra Pound to James Angleton March 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[28] The Master and Fellows of Yale to Ezra Pound 25 April 1939, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[29] James Angleton to Ezra Pound undated 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.
[30] Ezra Pound to Hugh Angleton 19 June 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519.

Hugh Angleton. The businessman was likely to have been preoccupied with the future of his company and his status as a foreigner. The poet appears to have no such distractions.

The correspondence with Angleton ends as the war progresses and Angleton begins his work with the American intelligence services. He eventually became director of the CIA. What is surprising is that there is no evidence that Pound contacted Angleton as he became genuinely powerful and the poet genuinely needful. This may be due to the poet's sensitivity to embarrassing Angleton, but that appears unlikely.

8.2: Committees of correspondence

While there is an air of desperation to Pound's correspondence seeking to exploit political connections there is no suggestion that he experienced this. Easily seduced by the powerful, he believed simply writing to a politician is an expression of an individual's democratic power. Senators Borah and Cutting, Hugh Angleton, Benito Mussolini and a host of others were in Pound's orbit simply by dint of him writing to them.

Pound sees letter writing as a practical antidote to the decline of civilisation. Letters engage and incite people to action. A central epistolary inspiration for the poet is the correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, an example of correspondence actively shaping ideas, civilisation and political power. 'As I am reading Jeff. and J. Adams correspondence my style becomes momentarily more aulic,' Pound jokes to Louis Zukofsky.[31] For the poet, the Jefferson-Adams letters were the quintessence of American culture and civilisation.[32] Its apotheosis was the 1800 American presidential election which pitted the President of the American Philosophical Society (Jefferson) against the President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Adams). Political power and intellectual and creative endeavours were in alignment. 'Jefferson's letters I have read. He was probably the only civilized man who ever held down the job [of president],' the poet writes to his parents.[33]

[31] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 25 December 1930, *P/Z*, p. 84.
[32] Pound acquired T. S. Eliot's collection of the complete works of Jefferson which Eliot inherited from his father. 'There are a great many volumes and my flat was already filled with books, so I think that he agreed to store them for me,' Eliot writes to Olivia Shakespear with a vagueness suggesting he wasn't altogether sure how the heirloom had ended up in Pound's hands. T. S. Eliot to Olivia Shakespear 3 May 1924, Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 2 1923-25* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 401. It served as source material for *The Cantos* and also for Pound's emergent ideas on the role of the artist in society.
[33] Ezra Pound to Homer Pound 21 May 1924, *Parents*, p. 528.

Another inspiration for the poet are the committees of correspondence which emerged during the American Revolution. These were networks of letter writers who ensured that the news, circulated via hand-written notes, was accurate. The committees were a subversive network seeking to organise what became a parallel government to that of the British. Letters were effectively a call to arms, a means of igniting and coordinating action among an identified group.[34] The potential power of such committees of correspondence was something Pound was acutely aware of as he sought to mobilise action from his apartment in Rapallo. As we have seen, throughout his letters of the 1920s and 1930s, Pound regularly bemoans the American education system. Its universities are dismissed as 'beaneries'. One of their flaws, he perceives, is the lack of intelligent debate and dialogue, their equivalent to committees of correspondence. As all the great minds cannot be in one place, correspondence between them is the lubricant of civilisation. Timothy Redman notes that Pound's 'vision of the political process.... begins with cooperation, consensus, and communication among a small group of intelligent men. These men, who presumably know one another, from what can be described as committees of correspondence, writing to each other to air their ideas and reach agreement.'[35] Letters are much more than a limited exchange between two people, they are community building and have the power to become the cultural cornerstones of entire nations.[36] Pound's belief in the importance of letters between intellectuals harks back to the concept of 'the republic of letters', a Utopian global literary world, *orbis litterarius*.[37]

Supported by historical precedence, Pound embraces the idea of corresponding with those in political power with customary vigour. His correspondence with American politicians is a poignant display of relative powerlessness and persistent optimism. It is also a clear demonstration that he still regarded his connection to his country of birth as extremely important. He did not give up on America but continued to seek to influence it. Indeed, the poet sought to return to America during the war. This is something which barely features in biographies of the poet, but it is mentioned in a number of letters. In 1940 he writes to James Angleton: 'I thought of coming over on clipper at end of Sept/ but no place

[34] 'From early in his career, Ezra Pound conceived of his letters as documents like those circulated by the American founding fathers in their "committees of correspondence". Convened by local government in the American colonies to facilitate communication of information and colonial responses to British actions, these committees were also sites for planning and organizing towards collective action.' 'Pound's epistolary practice' in *Nott*, pp. 300-301.
[35] Timothy Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 113.
[36] 'Pound might even be said to have regarded himself as participating through his letters in endeavours comparable to nation-building, although the imagined communities that Pound sought to construct were supranational—composed of kindred minds aspiring to improve the state of the arts and, later, intellectual and cultural practice more broadly. For Pound, letters played an indispensable role in this constructive process.' *Nott*, p. 301.
[37] This phrase is used in Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, *La République des Lettres* (Paris: Belin, 1995), pp. 63-90.

obtainable till Dec. 15 which is no use.'[38] He writes much the same to Viola Jordan: 'waaal you will be pleased to hear I dug up me roots, and started fer the U.S.A. early in oktober/ but there warn't no place on the Clippah so I am bak at the ole stand.....Of course, the strain of packing 16 years into a 30 pound maximum of luggage, early in Oct. wuz somfink treemenjus.'[39] There is no mention of whether his mother, wife, lover and children were also planning to travel. There is also silence on how leaving the country sits with his support for Mussolini. To Gerhart Münch, then in Germany and sympathetic to the Nazis, Pound explains the reason for his potential departure in very basic terms: 'I even pulled stakes and prepared to go to U.S. because one can't cash cheques here.'[40] This presumably meant that any income from outside Italy could not be converted into cash. This was troubling for Pound's mother who relied on an American pension and also made the pay the poet received for his broadcasts in Italy more attractive. A linked financial issue was that the British government took a dim view of the poet's views and broadcasts and the Custodian of Enemy Property watched and curtailed movements of money from Dorothy's accounts and investments.[41]

Pound's correspondence with American politicians makes it difficult to agree with Leon Surette's conclusion: 'There is no question that Pound removed his loyalties from the United States and gave them to Italy.'[42] The poet's letters show that he carefully manages his and his family's official relationship with the country of his birth. In 1929 Pound writes to the Chief Justice of the United States seeking clarification on the status of Dorothy's American citizenship.[43] And, the list of Pound's political correspondents in America is long. The poet writes to President Roosevelt in 1933 shortly after his inauguration, congratulating him on his book *Looking Forward*, and again in 1934.[44] Presumably he has this in mind when he affirms to Robert McNair Wilson: 'I now have personal information that he [Roosevelt] KNOWS that social credit is what is needed.'[45] Roosevelt knows because Pound has told him. Eleanor Roosevelt also receives letters—addressed with due

[38] Ezra Pound to James Angleton 12 November 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122519. It is also suggested he tried to return in 1942: 'He clung to his American passport. It is a matter of record that he tried in 1942 to get aboard the last diplomatic train that took Americans from Rome to Lisbon. He was refused permission to board it. He had no choice but to stay.' Richard H. Rovere, 'The question of Ezra Pound', *Esquire*, 1 September 1957; Alan Levy, 'Ezra Pound's voice of silence', *New York Times*, 9 January 1972.
[39] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 7 November 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037895. He wrote similarly to his agent John Slocum in October 1940, John J. Slocum, 'Remembering Ezra Pound', *The Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 57, No. 1/2 (October 1982), p. 60.
[40] Ezra Pound to Gerhard Münch 1 January 1940, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122602.
[41] This meant that there were difficulties in paying Omar Pound's school fees and general expenses. Eliot and George Yeats were among those who helped out. Chris Jones, 'Help from Uncle Possum', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 September 2022.
[42] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[43] Ezra Pound to the Chief Justice of the United States 28 February 1929, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122643.
[44] Ezra Pound to F. D. Roosevelt 2 May 1933 and 27 April 1934, Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, pp. 44-5.
[45] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 9 February 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.

reverence, 'Dear Madame President'.[46] Pound imagines himself as 'the unofficial Brains Trust of the next president of the United States'.[47] He writes to Louisiana Senator Huey Long in 1935 offering to be Secretary of the Treasury in a Long presidency.[48] Various Roosevelt associates—including Harold Ickes, Henry Morgenthau and Henry Wallace—are among his correspondents.[49]

The connection with Wallace is illustrative. In January 1935 Paul de Kruif, a regular correspondent of Pound's, receives a letter from Wallace at the Department of Agriculture quoting a recent letter from the poet which reads: 'A man in your position has no more right to preserve his black ignorance of Gesell and G. H. Douglas than I have to walk into your office and shoot you.' Wallace ends his letter to de Kruif with an acerbic comment: 'Inasmuch as you are responsible for this outburst, it would seem that you should send me a copy of your articles. I did not realize that you had become a monetary expert.'[50] It is worth noting that after serving as Secretary of Agriculture (1933-40), Wallace went on to become vice-president from 1941 until 1945. So, effectively when he was first imprisoned, the man who had stepped down as vice-president only a few months before was someone Pound had aggressively insulted. Undaunted, the poet explains to de Kruif: 'Have just heard from Han/ Wallace / telling me it aint him but Hen/ Morgenthau who is the s/o/ thebithch.' He goes on to cite his articles appearing in the *Yorkshire Post* among other places as proof 'that my position is probably stronger than that of any American ambassador'.[51]

In relation to American politics, Pound manages to be energetically and diligently up to date and yet woefully out of touch. His power and all-embracing knowledge are illusory. While regarding himself as American he dismisses virtually every aspect of modern American life and culture in his letters. Re-opening their correspondence Wyndham Lewis takes Pound to task on this and suggests that the poet's affinity with history has been costly: 'What a pity it is that the lure of history kept you locked up in the dusty old Mediterranean. The Hudson River Valley would have been a better place.'[52] In response

[46] Ezra Pound to Eleanor Roosevelt 15 October 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122621.
[47] Daniel Pearlman, 'Fighting the world: the letters of Ezra Pound to Senator William E. Borah of Idaho', *Paideuma,* Vol. 12, No. 2/3 Fall/Winter 1983, p. 421.
[48] Ezra Pound to Huey Long 13 April 1935, Roxana Preda, 'Social credit in America: a view from Ezra Pound's economic correspondence 1933-1940', *Paideuma*, Vol. 34, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter, 2005, p. 216. Long was assassinated later in 1935.
[49] Harold Ickes (1874-1952) was Secretary of the Interior; Henry Morgenthau (1891-1967), Secretary of the Treasury; and Henry Wallace (1888-1965), Secretary of Agriculture.
[50] Henry A. Wallace to Paul de Kruif 8 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[51] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 19 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[52] Wyndham Lewis to Ezra Pound 30 June 1946, W. K. Rose (ed.), *Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 395.

Pound takes issue with Lewis' positive slant on America 'the most uninteresting country on/earth because it takes the/least interest in truth'.[53] Lewis replies: 'You should chuck all politics, get out of that place, and become an American. Boogie Woogie is better than Sole Mio.—But perhaps again I am not au courant!'[54] Lewis' final comment is a sarcastic jibe. Pound prided himself on being 'au courant', in touch with what was happening in politics and literature, an insider in spite of his geographic location.[55] Thanks to his correspondence with the poet Katue Kitasono, Pound arranges for Japanese newspapers to be sent to Rapallo. He has a regularly supply of American publications—for example, in a letter of 1 November 1933, the poet refers to the *New York Times* of 8 October.[56] He tells Stanley Nott: 'I read a collection of papers daily/ I get some American news that isn't in print.'[57] This, presumably, alludes to the titbits of information he accumulates in his correspondence. To H. L. Mencken he boasts: 'I am prob. as well informed as to the events in our vaterland as I wd. be if in residence there.'[58] Similarly, in 1935 he offers a predictable rant to Ernest Hemingway—'Banks make 90% of all buggarin money/ of all expoloding gun running gunselling , jaw breaking and eviscerating and cock amputating money that goes into buggarin shells for the bloody was it a WAR.'—followed by the protestation, 'I do get direct nooz from Washington/ and I know what some of the blokes on the board do NOT.'[59] The replies he receives from politicians are presumably the 'direct' news. Even so, there is a regular complaint from Pound that this deluge of newspapers is insufficient to keep him as fully informed as he would like. To Paul de Kruif he writes: 'I dont get information QUICK ENOUGH.'[60] In another letter he implores, 'Fer garzake turn in any information you can get... I mean send it to me// clippings or any damn thing.'[61]

Inevitably, there are gaps in Pound's cultural knowledge after the best part of three decades resident out of the country. In a 1937 letter, E. E. Cummings refers to the actor and singer Al Jolson who was at the height of his popularity. Pound replies:

> The term Al Jolson is a bit vague to me/ that shows how far out of touch I am with my comPathriots. I reely dunno WOT iz a Al J.

[53] Ezra Pound to Wyndham Lewis 28 November 1946, Ibid., p. 397.
[54] Wyndham Lewis to Ezra Pound 24 September 1946, Ibid., p. 398.
[55] He was not necessarily so up to date with literary publications. In 1926 writing to Eliot he describes *Criterion* as 'that August and orderly publication, which, as reported, I have not seen for some years'. Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 5 March 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 102.
[56] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 1 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[57] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January 1935, *Nott*, p. 11.
[58] Ezra Pound to H. L. Mencken 3 September 1928, Paige, p. 295.
[59] Ezra Pound to Ernest Hemingway 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[60] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 2 October 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.
[61] Ezra Pound to Paul de Kruif 1 November 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122547.

> Youah mean the fecetious touch/ the as it were un Johnsonian (Saml) phrase now and again in the midst of seereyus an huplifting or puplifting discourse ??'[62]

Echoing *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, the poet manages to be out of touch with the present—no matter how hard he likes to think of himself as well-informed—and also out of step in his interpretation of the past and its relationship to the present. In a letter to Louis Zukofsky, Basil Bunting summarises: 'Ezra—in correspondence—seems indomitably out of date.'[63]

8.3: Giving them hell, at a distance

In the American political sphere Pound's campaigning energy is principally focused on New Mexico Senator Bronson Cutting, Congressman George Tinkham of Massachusetts and Senator William Borah of Idaho.

Pound's correspondence with Borah between 1933 and 1939 is one-sided—27 letters from Pound to three short replies from Borah.[64] Pound sent six letters to Borah during October and November 1935. The two met in Washington in 1939. In his introduction to a collection of the Pound-Borah letters, Daniel Pearlman describes the poet's intent in the correspondence as 'to educate, for the role of the presidency, the one Republican statesman he believed could beat Roosevelt'. Pearlman concludes, 'Pound clearly hoped to be a king-maker of a sort, a gray eminence'.[65] Borah is steadfastly and humorously indifferent. The poet's first letter to him begins, 'As an Idahoan'.[66] This displays some appreciation of his audience, but the tactic falls flat. Borah replies:

> 'As an Idahoan' I suggest that you come back to Idaho and to the United States. It isn't fair to give us so much 'hell' at so great a distance. I can talk better than I can write. So drop in when you get home and see me.[67]

The correspondence is ripe with contradictions. Borah was chairman of the foreign relations committee but had never visited Europe. The Idahoan poet had barely spent any time in his life in the state and now offered advice from afar. Nor was he interested in

[62] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cumming 3 April 1937, *Cummings*, p. 8.
[63] Basil Bunting to Louis Zukofsky 21 January 1947, *Bunting,* p. 175.
[64] Daniel Pearlman, 'Fighting the world: the letters of Ezra Pound to Senator William E. Borah of Idaho', *Paideuma*, Vol. 12 No. 2/3, Fall/Winter 1983, p. 420.
[65] *Borah*, p. ix.
[66] Ezra Pound to William Borah 27 November 1933, *Borah*, p. 1.
[67] William Borah to Ezra Pound 3 January 1934, *Borah*, p. 4.

talking—'If there is anything that don't interest me, it is conversation,' he tells the senator.[68] Instead, Pound suggests that he becomes an unofficial advisor—'Country needs a few Ambassadors (informal and NOT subject to appointment by men like Hoover and Harding).'[69] This is a recurring theme to a number of correspondents, a need for Pound to be recognised in some sort of role, however unofficial—'Pity my knowledge of Europe can't be some use to the nation,' he writes to Borah.[70] A persistent champion of the American constitution, the poet cannot see the constitutional dangers in the appointment of unofficial advisors—especially ones located in what was soon to become a war zone with a history of supporting the nation's enemy. He regularly puts himself forward as an expert on Europe, or economics, and is quick to criticise the knowledge of American politicians and the country's ambassadors. To James Dunn, he writes:

> I <u>am</u> an authority on current European affairs—though I don't expect people to believe it YET. That is apart from a few people.
>
> Any how I know a d/m sight more about 'em than Morgenthau (Jr.), Izzy Strauss. Etc. & more than anyone you can get to write for ten or 15 bucks a shot.[71]

There is an uncharacteristic diffidence to such assertions of knowledge. The emphases—'<u>am</u>' and 'YET'—are deliberate rather than scattergun, a threatening air offset by the caveat 'apart from a few people'. Henry Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury and Jesse Isidor Strauss, the American ambassador to France (1933-36). The poet's claim to know more about Europe than senior politicians is undercut by the final assertion that he also knows more than journalists with cheap rates.

The poet's letters to Borah are full of unsought advice. 'Why not start on reform of the Universities. The jig is damn well UP. Can't go on suppressing history of the U.S.A. OF economics etc. forever,' he writes.[72] Pound returns to the theme a week later: 'Why not look for'rad a bit, and see that the yearly crop of mis-educated college boys is a yearly rivet in grandfather's neck?'[73] The senator's replies are rare, curt and usually tease the poet about his geographic distance from the nation he seeks to influence. 'When are you

[68] Ezra Pound to William Borah 15 January 1934, *Borah*, p. 5.
[69] Ezra Pound to William Borah 15 January 1934, *Borah*, p. 6.
[70] Ezra Pound to William Borah undated 1935, *Borah*, p. 55.
[71] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 29 August 1936, *Globe*, p. 44.
[72] Ezra Pound to William Borah 8 May 1934, *Borah,* p. 14.
[73] Ezra Pound to William Borah 15 May 1934, *Borah*, p. 17.

returning to Idaho?' Borah asks again.[74] Pound is unusually equivocal in his reply: 'Whether I wd/ be any more use on the spot, than pluggin away in New Eng. Weekly/ New Dem/ and wherever else I am let loose, I dunno.'[75] He then becomes more stridently pro-Mussolini in his letters—'I doubt if you will find any man in power with greater care for the public good'[76]—and in 1935 makes clear that he supports the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.[77] Politely unwilling to engage, Borah replies in a manner which undercuts the poet: 'We have had a perfectly marvelous autumn, somewhat interrupted last night by a whift [sic] of winter.'[78]

Borah sought the Republican nomination for president in 1936 but failed. This was in spite of Pound's agitation in favour of his nomination to a host of his regular correspondents. 'Borah has a very good chance of being next president,' he tells Robert McNair Wilson.[79] Suggesting he has the inside track, Pound writes to Charles Coughlin: 'Borah can't come out for anything real UNTIL he is nominated.'[80] Meanwhile, he advises the politician: 'I don't see you carrying the country UNLESS you can use the next three years in DEFINING an enlightened econ. policy.'[81] Writing to Eleanor Roosevelt's secretary, Pound says:

> I must usef every atom of energy to build up Borah
> (with Borah's limpness, and the damnable likelihood of his being hog=tied by Wall St if elected).
> I have had several decent letters from Borah and I was, after all, born in Idaho, where Borah wasn't.[82]

The poet's commitment to 'building up' Borah is undermined in the very next lines with talk of his 'limpness' and the likelihood of him being controlled by Wall Street financiers. Borah's replies cannot by any stretch of the imagination be described as 'several' or 'decent'. They are humorously dismissive. One of Borah's clerks later observed of the poet:

[74] William Borah to Ezra Pound 21 May 1934, *Borah*, p. 19.
[75] Ezra Pound to William Borah 2 June 1934, *Borah,* p. 22.
[76] Ezra Pound to William Borah 7 July 1934, *Borah,* p. 28.
[77] Ezra Pound to William Borah 10 October 1935, *Borah*, p. 42.
[78] William Borah to Ezra Pound 30 October 1935, *Borah*, p. 45.
[79] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 2 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[80] Ezra Pound to Charles Coughlin 20 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122540.
[81] Ezra Pound to William Borah 8 May 1934, *Borah*, p. 14.
[82] Ezra Pound to R. W. Magee 30 August 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122621.

'He believed he had important messages for Senator Borah. Maybe to Borah he listened, but my impression is that he probably listened mostly to himself.'[83]

Even so, Pound is soon talking up the prospect of a Borah presidential bid with another of his correspondents, Congressman Tinkham, as vice-president—'Anybody ON the ground see a stronger Republican line up than Borah AND Tinkham??'[84] Pound's enthusiasm suggests that he is the on-the-ground political expert rather than someone receiving old news on another continent. His suggestions are, not surprisingly, misplaced as Tinkham had already ruled out being involved in a presidential bid. Repeatedly undeterred, Pound later suggests he becomes involved in a Tinkham presidential campaign even though the politician maintains no interest in running.[85] In a long letter to Wyndham Lewis in 1939, he helpfully suggests a number of people who might be interested in having Lewis paint their portraits. Having recently returned from Washington, the poet encourages Lewis to visit 'Uncle Jarge' Tinkham and paint his portrait. 'You got to live, but IF Unc. G. is elected president you suppose you can sell the portrait even if he don't want it fer the family album.'[86] Again, Pound routinely describes Tinkham in faux friendly terms suggesting long-established convivial relations. The poet continues:

> You needn't be backward in saying that I want him to run fer president/ that his job getting rid of prohibition and keeping the U.S. out of the stinking league of stinkin nations deserves some notice.
>
> I admit it may have been impractical for him to have run for vice presidency with Borah LAST time/ but it WOULD have got him into the public eye.[87]

The second paragraph is as near to an apology as Pound gets while failing to acknowledge that the vice-presidential aspirations of Tinkham were his own invention. Even so, his correspondence with the American politician stretches over eight years (1932-40) and 100 letters. There are times when Tinkham is high on Pound's radar. Then the letters are more regular—sometimes twice a day.[88] There is some common ground—'Mussolini certainly

[83] *Borah*, p. 81.
[84] Ezra Pound to William Borah 12 March 1936, *Borah*, p. 63.
[85] Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 60.
[86] Ezra Pound, 'Letter to Wyndham Lewis', *Paideuma*, Vol. 14, Spring 1985, No 1., Spring, p. 97.
[87] Ibid., p. 98.
[88] For example, on 20 January 1939 Pound writes two letters to Tinkham. Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 62.

has had a great triumph and in his age and generation is a great man,' Tinkham writes in 1936.[89] With the politician, Pound's emphasis is on sharing information and providing access to learning—in the same way as he does so with the students of Ezuversity.[90] The poet positions himself as an economist with the knowledge and access to cross examine Roosevelt's advisers in the Capitol. To him, the conclusions are so clear and obvious that the next steps are assumed.

Tinkham is co-opted into what Pound positions as an international campaign.[91] Writing to Katue Kitasono in Japan, the poet displays knowledge of Tinkham's travel itinerary (real or imagined) and seeks to bridge the cultural gap he sees between Japan and America. He argues that Tinkham:

> kept the U.S.A. OUT of that sink of hypocrisy the League of Nations.[92]

> 'Uncle George' is crossing the Pacific next summer and I hope you will be able to meet him. He IS the America I was born in, and that may have disappeared <almost> entirely by now.

> My daughter was shocked at his lack of sartorial elegance, (age eleven) but she decided that 'l'uomo più educato'
> Had spent too MUCH time on his face massage etc.
> 'l'uomo più educato' is a S. American more or less millionaire fop.[93]

Pound can't help introducing personal criticism into his peon to Tinkham—even if it is relayed from his daughter. For a relatively obscure politician the attention and the suggestion of international influence may well have been flattering. The two met on one

[89] George Tinkham to Ezra Pound 20 June 1936, Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 54.
[90] 'Pound's attitude towards Tinkham is not the usual attitude of a teacher toward a student; rather, it is the attitude of teacher toward someone else who is neither a student nor a colleague, someone with whom he has no hierarchical relation whatsoever but who nevertheless shows interest in the information conveyed. It is a relationship that allows the "teacher" to teach but does not require a "student" who learns.' Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 55.
[91] 'Pound does not always tell him what to think and do, but he does show him where he believes the clearest thinking and the most effective action are taking place. The effect is to situate Tinkham within an international network that is intellectually "charged", and to place him in a context where certain core ideas can generate a new economic system in the catalytic presence of intellectual interaction and reciprocal influence. In other words, it is to place him within Pound's own Rapallo vortex.' Philip J. Burns, '"Dear Uncle George": the Pound-Tinkham letters', *Paideuma*, Vol. 18 No. 1/2, Spring & Fall, 1979, p. 52.
[92] The League of Nations was loathed by Pound and widely in Italy after it criticised the country's invasion of Ethiopia. After the League imposed sanctions on Italy in 1935, Pound suggested there should be a new Italian-led version of the organisation. Niccolò Zapponio, *L'Italia di Ezra Pound* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1978), p. 50.
[93] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 11 March 1937, *Japan*, p. 40.

occasion in Venice in 1936. In 1939, when Pound visited the United States to lobby for his economic ideas, Tinkham provided the poet with letters of introduction to various politicians and editors in Massachusetts. Unfortunately, this act of networking generosity failed as Pound didn't receive the introductions in time.

The poet's most productive correspondence with an American politician is with Bronson Cutting. He observes to Robert McNair Wilson: 'Cutting must be the best man in the senate.'[94] This judgement appears largely based on the politician's willingness to reply to the poet's letters as much as a meeting of minds. There are 33 letters between the two from 1930 until the senator's death in 1935. Cutting was a well-travelled linguist with wide-ranging intellectual and business interests. Among other things, he was owner of a number of newspapers including the *New Mexican* which Pound eventually contributed to. He had also opposed federal censorship. There were contributory factors on both sides which made this a more fertile relationship. On Pound's side, whether in ancient Rome or Washington, the Senate was associated with the kind of autocratic governance he aspired to introduce to re-create civilisation. And, on Cutting's side, he was aware of Pound's standing in the literary world. The poet's introductory letter strikes a bravura tone of opinionated outrage which he largely maintains:

> Article 211 of the Penal Code was, as I have had occasion to remark 'obviously made by gorillas for the further stultification of imbeciles'. The late Chief Justice Taft was somewhat shocked at this expression but I see no reason to soften it.[95]

This suggests that Pound and Taft had held a face-to-face discussion. In reality, the Chief Justice had sent curt replies to Pound's letters. Elsewhere in the opening letter, the poet describes the censorship law as 'the one confusing smutty post cards; condoms and Catullus'. Cutting's reply includes a list of like-minded senators (including Borah) who might be worth corresponding with.[96] This is a highly trusting and transparent sharing of information. Pound follows up and develops correspondence with a number of them—Senator George Moses (between February and March 1934), Senator Hiram Johnson (1934) and Senator Burton Wheeler (1936-40).

[94] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 18 March 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[95] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 8 November 1930, *Cutting*, p. 38.
[96] Bronson Cutting to Ezra Pound 9 December 1930, *Cutting*, p. 40.

In his correspondence with Cutting, Pound is unusually realistic about what constitutes success from his perspective and is mindful of wasting the senator's time: 'Please dont take time out to answer this. I shall undoubtedly send irrelevant items, but if one citation in ten is of any use, I shall be satisfied.'[97] In a foreign policy speech Cutting uses a quotation furnished by Pound and the senator's replies are respectful and engaged.[98] After Cutting's death in a plane accident Pound's valedictory article in the *New Mexican* might be expected to strike a personal note. Instead, it emphasises the poet's own and continuing agenda:

> Had he had time to leave us a farewell letter I have no doubt whatever that he would have left us this legacy and injunction:
> 1. To fight for a national dividend, paid from the nation's credit, and not collected by creation of interest bearing.[99]

There is no second point. In such articles the overlap between the preoccupations and style of Pound's letters and that of his journalism is evident. With their multi-layered references to past and present and incessant playfulness, Pound's letters of the 1930s often suggest a greater commitment of time by the author than does his journalistic work.

Despite their quantity and the poet's persistence, all of Pound's American political correspondence amounted to very little in terms of impact. To put his failure to exert influence in perspective, this was a time when literary figures moved more comfortably in the corridors of power. For example, H. G. Wells met Stalin, Lenin, both Roosevelts, stood for parliament, and addressed the Reichstag. In the 1930s, Gertrude Stein's American tour saw her make 40 appearances and she was granted an audience at the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as meetings with Charlie Chaplin and George Gershwin.[100] This was galling and irritating for Pound who was rudely dismissive of Stein whenever there was a chance—'Gert the ole tub ov guts' he writes of her in 1934, a decade after their last meeting.[101] In contrast, Pound's 1939 visit to his homeland was something of a non-event—

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[97] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting 3 February 1931, *Cutting*, p. 45.
[98] 'Although the correspondence was clearly more important to the poet than to the senator, Cutting nevertheless valued it enough to continue it for four and a half years. He did so not because he was indulging the whims of an eminent crank but because he, too, benefitted from the exchange. To begin with, he could number a major American poet among his correspondents. He answered Pound's letters in a collegial manner and spoke respectfully of Pound in at least one letter to a third party. In a major foreign policy speech, Cutting used a quotation provided by Pound, and he almost certainly read some of the Social Credit tracts that Pound recommended to him.' *Cutting*, p. 230.
[99] Ezra Pound, 'Cutting's mind was best in the Senate', 3 August 1935, *Cutting*, p. 206.
[100] *Literchoor*, p. 68.
[101] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin, 6 October 1934, Houghton Library; *Literchoor,* p. 51.

a visit to Yale courtesy of enthusiastic undergraduates (Angleton and Reed Whittemore), to Harvard through Archibald MacLeish and his alma mater Hamilton College, but little in the way of genuine political connection.

8.4: In search of power

In the mid-1930s Pound writes indiscriminately to anyone he perceives as close to political power—not only in the United States. His connection with the Irish politician Desmond FitzGerald is resurrected. They met in London in 1908 and FitzGerald later visited Rapallo. The Irishman, a poet, leading figure in the 1916 Easter Rising, an elected politician and then a government minister, is a patient recipient of Pound's letters.[102] The poet's ire is particularly drawn by the Irish censorship bill which was supported by FitzGerald as a member of the government. Pound's interest in Irish censorship was ignited in 1924 by the seizing and destruction of 499 copies of *Ulysses* by the British authorities. He immediately contacts Yeats who offers emollient words which simply encourage Pound's fulminating:

> WOT I wanted to know from you was whether free and assassinous Ireland was still under Henglands bhloody thumb: or whether she acted for her evergreen and bhlossoming self in these little matters.[103]

In reply, Yeats commits to 'call on somebody, probably FitzGerald', 'armed with your very lucid and persuasive letter'.[104] Good humouredly, Yeats may have thought he had ended this particular Poundian cul-de-sac, but the debate rumbles on and Pound doggedly maintains his interest from Rapallo. In August 1928 he writes to FitzGerald attaching an article from the *Herald Tribune* referring to the first reading of the bill. The complete letter reads:

> Dear Fitz :
>
> What the HELL does this mean ? Because my country is filled with sonzofbitches who have betrayed their constithooshun with an amendment n and passed a lew (Art. 211 , Penal code) muddling Dante , postcards and syringes , why the balls shd. Oireland do the same :
>
> Cant you keep condoms and classics in sepharte parts of your lawbook ?!!!!!

[102] FitzGerald was Ireland's Minister for Defence (1927-32), Minister of External Affairs (1922-27), Minister for Publicity (1921-22) and Director of Publicity (1919-21). He proposed that Yeats joined the Irish Senate.
[103] Ezra Pound to W. B. Yeats 14 June 1924, Lilly Library, University of Indiana.
[104] W. B. Yeats to Ezra Pound 17 June 1924, Ibid..

EP[105]

Pound follows up this apparently unanswered letter with an even pithier question—'Re this new censors bill : ARE you a nation or a dung hill ?'[106]—and then has a letter published in the *Irish Times* offering a slightly more moderated version of this view—'The idiocy of humanity obviously knows no limit, but the text of your proposed Censorship Bill adds yet another clause to the axiom. If any nation produces a debased imbecility in thought or legislation, some other nation will follow it. Imitation is not a quality of apes, but of men.'[107] FitzGerald remains unruffled and cordial in his reply to Pound. He talks about going to Rapallo and observes:

> You and I are both Censors. You (I believe) have tried to lead people to appreciate, say, Guido Cavalcanti and Arnaut Daniel. I advertise Dante, Baudelaire and St. Thomas. The Censorship Committee may make it just a little less easy for people to read about every rape and incest performed in England.[108]

Anti-English sentiments are a sure way to placate the poet and FitzGerald's argument is shrewdly put as Pound, for all his willingness to attack government-sponsored censorship is the most censorious of literary figures, willing to reach judgements and to communicate them repeatedly on a range of authors and individuals. There must be few other authors whose personal tastes and prejudices are so widely and unequivocally known. With all his anger on the issue and understandable protectiveness of *Ulysses*, the poet overlooks his own censoring—albeit minor—of the manuscript.[109]

With Yeats in Rapallo, his visitors offered a new audience for Pound's views on Irish censorship. He certainly discussed the issue with Thomas MacGreevy who was in Rapallo over Christmas 1928 and writes to MacGreevy, 'every time any intelligent non-catholic develops any such pipe dream, some damn fool in Armagh (usually a bishop's pimp) comes out with a super-Arkansas manifestation of obscurantism'.[110]

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[105] Ezra Pound to Desmond FitzGerald 16 August 1928, Mary FitzGerald, 'Ezra Pound and Irish politics: An unpublished correspondence', *Paideuma*, Vol. 12, No. 2/3 (Fall and Winter 1983), p. 388.
[106] Ezra Pound to Desmond FitzGerald 24 October 1928, Ibid., p. 388.
[107] Ezra Pound to the *Irish Times* 4 November 1928, Ibid., p. 381.
[108] Desmond FitzGerald to Ezra Pound 13 December 1928, Mary FitzGerald, 'Ezra Pound and Irish politics: An unpublished correspondence', *Paideuma*, Vol. 12, No. 2/3 (Fall and Winter 1983), p. 389.
[109] Detailed in Diana Souhami, *No Modernism Without Lesbians* (London: Head of Zeus, 2021), pp. 52-3.
[110] Ezra Pound to Thomas MacGreevy undated, Trinity College Dublin.

Pound complained loudly when he saw governments introduce what he interpreted as censorship in both America and Ireland. Closer to home, among the early acts of fascist violence in 1919 was an attack on the offices of the newspaper *Avanti!* Its editor Giacinto Serrati was attacked again in 1920. Many others in the Italian media were similarly targeted. 'Having taken power through murderous violence, Italian fascism held onto it through further bloodshed and the occupation of the state. In power, fascism eliminated all vestiges of free speech,' observes the historian, John Foot.[111] Italy's Ministry of Popular Culture exercised ever stricter control in the later 1930s. As a result, the futurist newspaper *Artecrazia* was closed down in 1939 as was the weekly magazine *Omnibus*. While F. T. Marinetti fought against increased censorship and the restriction of freedoms in Italy, Pound continued to argue that Italian freedoms of expression had not been curtailed. To Robert McNair Wilson, he writes: 'Italy ONLY country where press is free to print truth, in papers of any large circulation.'[112] In New York in 1939 he said: 'It's pure nonsense to say that censorship in Italy restricts truth. It's hooey. You've got the freedom to write if you have something to say.'[113] Who decides on 'truth' and whether someone 'has something to say' is left unanswered.

Also captured by Pound's broad-ranging but often inaccurate antennae for political power is the novelist John Buchan. The poet's first letter to Buchan, in February 1934, rapidly gets to the point. In the opening paragraph, after a brief allusion to Buchan's novel writing, Pound lays out a worldwide corporate conspiracy:

> What about the game that has been going on SINCE 1919 with, heaven knows, very thin line skirmishing against the Bank of France, and the hook up Creusot, Skoda, Mitsui, and the big press owners suppressing news all over the place?[114]

The precise naming of the companies suggests a degree of knowledge offset by Pound's belief in elaborate global conspiracies. Buchan's position of influence at the time is Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland—not a role one would have automatically associated with Pound's economic agenda. Buchan had made sympathetic comments about fascism and was reputedly anti-Semitic.[115] This may have

[111] John Foot, *Blood and Power: The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 1.
[112] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson undated 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[113] John J. Slocum, *The Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 57, No. 1/2, October 1982, p. 57.
[114] S. Namjoshi (ed.), 'Letters to John Buchan 1934-1935', *Paideuma*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter), 1979, p. 462.
[115] He was a Zionist and a member of the Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group while an MP. Anthony Storr, *Feet of Clay: A Study of Gurus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 168.

been enough to attract him to Pound's epistolary network. Again, while largely ignoring the specific points raised by the poet, the novelist is patient and well-mannered: 'I feel that in all these matters I do not differ from you except in opinion (and in that I differ violently). But opinion does not seriously matter.'[116] Soon after Buchan is made Governor General of Canada and becomes Lord Tweedsmuir. Perversely, the correspondence peters out as Buchan progresses to a role of genuine power.[117]

8.5: Uncle Willie

The strangest aspect of Pound's quest to make connections to the powerful is that his mentor and perhaps closest literary friend, W. B. Yeats, was clearly connected to power. The life and career of the Irish poet serves as an intriguing parallel to that of Pound during the 1920s and 1930s. Yeats accomplished many of the things which Pound described theoretically or aspired to. In 1922 he became a senator in the fledgling Irish government. This put Pound's accomplishments into perspective. Pound was hardly senatorial material, but nor was Yeats. In *A Packet for Ezra Pound*, Yeats includes a letter advising Pound never to enter politics.[118] In Canto 80, perhaps in belated response to Yeats's advice, Pound notes: 'If a man don't occasionally sit in a Senate/ how can he pierce the dark mind of a/ senator?'

Yeats managed to skate in a haphazard manner around a constant stream of causes, groupings, publications and spiritual distractions. For better or worse, he effortlessly attracted people and his timing was generally good. Pound's timing was routinely less fortunate—characteristically, he published a satiric poem on Rupert Brooke just after he died in 1915. Even though the poem had been written well before, it caused offence.[119] This reflects what Pound described as 'the antipodes of our two characters'.[120] At a typical point Yeats was dealing with the latest domestic and financial dramas surrounding the Cuala Press, lobbying for the location and personnel of a new national art gallery, campaigning for the creation of an artistic committee to advise the government, as well as being involved in the Drama League, the revival of the *Irish Statesman*, sitting as a senator and finalising *A Vision*.[121] Yeats even had printing presses in the basement of his Merrion

[116] S. Namjoshi (ed.), 'Letters to John Buchan 1934-1935', *Paideuma*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter), 1979, p. 468.
[117] Yeats suspected that Buchan based a character, Dominic Medina, in his novel *The Three Hostages*, on the poet. He was reassured that though the character was a murderer, a hypnotist and anti-English he was well-mannered. R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life: The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 274.
[118] W.B. Yeats, *A Packet for Ezra Pound* (Dundrum, Co. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1929), p. 33.
[119] *P/J*, p. 80.
[120] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 24 December 1915, University of Chicago Library.
[121] 'He was, nonetheless, building a Dublin life with the energy he had always devoted to constructing societies, projects, *cenacles,*' notes R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life: The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 242-3.

Square home. In short, the older poet was doing the things Pound spent decades arguing for—gathering people together at his weekly evening gatherings, taking control of the publishing of his own work, playing a leading role in important agenda-shaping publications, sitting in government, advising on cultural development, surrounding himself with challenging but supportive artists, and even producing, with *A Vision*, an all-embracing theory.

A crowning glory of Yeats' ascension to a position of power was the Tailteann Games ('Aonach Tailteann') of August 1924—'it is the desire of the People of Ireland that this, their greatest traditional celebration, be attended by representative men in Science, Literature, and Arts from different countries,' he writes in the official invitation.[122] The poet was chairman of the invitations committee, the contrast with Pound apparent: Yeats was embedded in the new Irish establishment, a committee-man with real influence. His invitation to Pound makes it clear that he is offering his friend access to the corridors of power and wealth.[123] Characteristically, Pound does not simply acquiesce and confirm attendance, but requests that the Abbey Theatre stage his latest Villon-inspired opera and, more bizarrely, that Yeats pull governmental strings to provide him with an Irish passport.[124] In the end Pound did not attend though he might have enjoyed Yeats's opening speech which celebrated the 'individualist' nature of Mussolini's Italy.[125]

Exercising political influence in the relatively limited confines of Ireland is vastly different to Pound's ambitions of having a similar influence in America (a country he hadn't lived in for most of his adult life). Even so, in Rapallo Yeats offered a reminder of all that Pound was not. Their friendship can be seen as a relationship of somewhat cynical convenience for the younger poet. Pound left America with the expressed intention of meeting and befriending the world's leading English language poet. For him their relationship was career enhancing and strenuously cultivated. By the time the American was in Rapallo, Yeats had outlived his usefulness in career terms. This is reflected in the references to Yeats in Pound's letters where the Irish poet is routinely portrayed as aging and a vestige of yesteryear—'Uncle William', 'Old Billyum'. As early as 1920, Pound is describing Yeats as 'faded'.[126] Later, he writes that the eagle—the nickname he and Dorothy gave to Yeats—

[122] Ibid., p. 263.
[123] W. B. Yeats to Ezra Pound 17 June 1924, Lilly Library, University of Indiana.
[124] Ezra Pound to W. B. Yeats 19 June 1924, Ibid.. The request for a passport is also mentioned in a letter to James Quinn, Ezra Pound to James Quinn 10 July 1924, New York Public Library.
[125] Lauren Arrington, *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 16.
[126] Ezra Pound to William Carlos Williams 11 September 1920, Paige, p. 223.

had become 'the buzzard'.[127] When the Irish poet arrives in Rapallo, Pound writes to Olga Rudge: 'Unc. Wm. arrove. not so dilapidated. Still able to complain about being gag, and be disgusted with favourable notices in the Brish. press, which he takes to be sign of his final passing. Prepared to be starred as last victorian etc. Hears his early work was more poetic etc.'[128] Stalked by his own mortality, Yeats is already consigned to literary history by his friend. Pound writes to James Laughlin in 1934: 'The aged Yeats left yester / I had several seereeyus reflexshuns re / doing a formal document requesting you to chloroform me before I get to THAT state.'[129] While Yeats's health was poor, he was hardly in his intellectual dotage—'Yeats declined to subside, like some writers, into addled repetitiveness,' is Richard Ellmann's conclusion on Yeats's later years.[130] The elder statesman's productivity during his periods in Rapallo was also notable—though, of course, hardly comparable to that of Pound. For others in Rapallo, Yeats's ability to impress was certainly retained. Bunting recalled:

> I dined or lunched or supped or underwent some similar formal presentation in the flat he [Yeats] had taken at the top of a big modern block overlooking the bay. I remember nothing about it, but a little later at some similar meeting he astonished me by reciting to his guests the whole 28 lines of one of my poems, word-perfect, though to me, at first, almost unrecognisable in his hieratic chant.[131]

Elsewhere, Bunting noted of Yeats: 'He walks about—absent: sees nothing, apparently. But his huge curiosity is busy all the time.'[132] None of this suggests the intellectual decline described by Pound in his letters (and later in *The Pisan Cantos*).

8.6: Hot steam

The overall effect of Pound's relationships with the powerful is dispiriting. There is, through the time in Rapallo, a growing disconnect between the poet's perceived and actual power. The greater this becomes the more strident and forceful is Pound in his correspondence. The poet remains resolutely and stubbornly committed to his beliefs and much-repeated arguments. His own notions of his power appear unchanged by circumstance and reception.

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[127] R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life: The Arch Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 501.
[128] Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge 18 February 1928, Beinecke OR.
[129] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 28 June 1934, *Laughlin*, p. 32.
[130] Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 3.
[131] *Agenda* 12, 37. The Bunting poem was 'I am agog for foam'.
[132] Basil Bunting to Louise Morgan 11 April 1929, *Bunting*, p. 25.

For some this confirms Pound's exile from the restraints of the mainstream. The poet and academic J. H. Prynne notes:

> One of the features of Pound's isolation in Rapallo was that he separated himself from clever friends who could say, Come off it, Ezra, for heaven's sake, wise up, pay attention, don't be so stupid, read a few things, let me tell you what I think as a reader of your stuff. But he isolated himself. He was surrounded by people who believed in these crackpot economic ideas. And none of them told him he was going off the rails.[133]

While it is notable how few of Pound's network attempt to disabuse him of his prejudices and delusions, his correspondence shows that the poet's isolation was geographical rather than intellectual. William Bird is one of those who challenges the poet's political and economic beliefs with some force and coherence. In November 1939 James Laughlin reports to Pound that 'you are in great disfavour with your compatriots…In most stores they refuse to stock your books. Either they say they won't have them because you are a Fascist, or they say that youth has lost interest in you and they can't sell them'. Laughlin goes on to conclude, 'I am afraid I must say that as far as I am concerned your present position makes it impossible to contemplate the Founders series with you at the helm'.[134] While making this decision Laughlin stops well short of personally objecting to his mentor's views, instead he reports the views of others and of the marketplace.

Basil Bunting is the most vociferous in denouncing Pound's political, economic and racial views. He expresses scepticism about Mussolini as early as 1934.[135] He is also critical about Pound's economic beliefs—and has the advantage of having studied (somewhat casually) at the London School of Economics from 1919 until 1923—'You surely got a bloody big bat in the belfry about economics. It seems to me just one of a good number of matters that are all pretty equally wrong.'[136] By 1936 Bunting's reservations are growing though he continues to give Pound the benefit of the doubt. 'A chap who writes the letters you've been writing lately obviously isn't at his best, no doubt overworked, etc. The remedy is to work less,' he writes in 1936, adding, 'I desire to continue profiting by you, but don't get any

[133] J. H. Prynne, 'The art of poetry No. 101', *The Paris Review*, No. 218, Fall 2016, p. 184.
[134] *Laughlin*, pp. 107-110.
[135] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 21 March 1934, *Bunting*, pp. 72-3.
[136] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 5 March 1935, *Bunting*, p. 99.

profit out of mixed abuse and political intolerance.'[137] The abuse and intolerance continue. Bunting's strongest criticism of Pound's anti-Semitism comes in a letter from the Canaries in December 1938 after seeing his mentor's anti-Semitic correspondence with Zukofsky:

> It makes me sick to see you covering yourself with that kind of filth. It is not an arguable question, has not been arguable for at least nineteen centuries. Either you know men to be men, and not something less, or you make yourself an enemy of mankind at large.[138]

The letter sadly concludes:

> It is hard to see how you are going to stop the rot of your mind and heart without a pretty thoroughgoing repudiation of what you have spent a lot of work on. You ought to have the courage for that: but I confess I don't expect to see it.

The message does not get through. In a following letter to Zukofsky, Pound refers dismissively to 'lots of hot steam from Bzl'.[139]

Few others put their heads above the parapet to warn Pound of the likely repercussions of his opinions, correspondence and broadcasts. Most notably Yeats and Eliot were silent. One plausible explanation for this is not that they didn't care, but they regarded Pound as powerless and peripheral. For the poet this was the worst fate of all. Another interpretation is that his friends may have regarded the poet's embrace of social credit and fascism as likely to be short-lived or an attention-seeking performance. Separating Pound's genuinely held beliefs from those which were not poses a particular challenge with someone as adept at altering personas and able to hold contradictory positions. Amid the energy, the volcanic expressions of opinions and intolerances, the authentic self and the urge to perform are interwoven.

[137] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 22 January 1936, *Bunting*, p. 119.
[138] Basil Bunting to Ezra Pound 16 December 1938, *Bunting*, p. 135.
[139] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofsky 7 January 1939, Ezra Pound Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

9: The real thing?

9.1: Original sin

Ezra Pound's perspective on the world was unusually contradictory. It was well-informed but often crudely blind to rational argument. It was described as modern but was habitually backward looking. It managed to be intimate but distant. It espoused collaboration but determinedly practiced individuality. It was cosmopolitan and global yet communicated from a single comparatively isolated location. It sought to exercise power but was largely powerless. Amid these contradictions, the poet's prodigious literary output, global network and myriad of passions and prejudices, the authenticity of his actions and beliefs is often difficult to determine. This difficulty is apparent throughout his correspondence.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'authenticity' as:

1. The fact or quality of being true or in accordance with fact; veracity; correctness. Also accurate reflection of real life, verisimilitude.
2. The fact or quality of being authoritative or duly authorized.
3. The fact or quality of being real; actuality, reality.

Facts, correctness and accuracy are at odds with much of Pound's correspondence of the 1930s—'The bees in the bonnet have buzzed away the facts,' Basil Bunting later writes to Louis Zukofsky[1]—though the sense of being 'authoritative or duly authorised' is constant. Pound's confidence in his own ability and standing is steadfastly high. In 1941 he writes to Prince Ranieri:

> Now there is a question of whether Eliot or myself is the leading etc/ light of Parnassus. Some think he does his job better than I do, and some think he mightn't have been there ef I hadn't a rocked his cradle etc. But there wd/ be very little contradiction to the statement that he and I are the two bewt amurikun poETS.[2]

[1] Basil Bunting to Louis Zukofsky 17 June 1949, *Bunting*, p. 190.
[2] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 10 May 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.

Laying aside the claims of his friends William Carlos Williams and E. E. Cummings among others, such statements illustrate Pound's refusal to allow doubts to infiltrate his mind. After more than a decade of declining sales, influence and opportunities (and the rising reputation of Eliot), he remains confident in his own authority.

An alternative interpretation of authenticity comes from Lionel Trilling in *Sincerity and Authenticity*:

> The procedures of the great movement of art of the early century may serve to put us in mind of the violent meanings which are explicit in the Greek ancestry of the word 'authentic'. *Authenteo:* to have full power over; also, to commit a murder. *Authentes:* not only a master and a doer, but also a perpetrator, a murderer, even a self-murderer, a suicide.[3]

Trilling interprets authenticity as a means of displaying and exercising power, rather than the communication of some personal or universal truth. More recent interpretations are less dramatic but more readily accord with Pound. For example, Gordon Marino suggests appearances are more important than some sense of an authentic inner self.[4] Andreas Reckwitz presents the idea of 'performative authenticity' in which uniqueness is an expressive art.[5] This resonates with Pound's flair for personal as well as epistolary performance, emphasising immediate effect and emotions of the moment over consistency and coherence.

Some of these elements are apparent in the poet's correspondence with the linguist, philosopher and writer, C. K. Ogden.[6] Among other accomplishments, including being co-author (with I. A. Richards) of *The Meaning of Meaning*, Ogden was the champion of a reduced vocabulary version of English, BASIC (British American Scientific International Commercial), which utilised 850 common words.[7] In 1935 Ogden sends Pound seven books on BASIC and the poet offers a positive and enthusiastic response: 'only *set* of books issued in Eng/ that show ANY interest in thought Whatsobloody ever.'[8] Pound suggests the addition of fifty words would allow him full poetical rein:

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[3] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 132.
[4] Gordon Marino, *The Existentialist's Survival Guide: How to Live Authentically in an Inauthentic Age* (New York: HarperOne, 2018).
[5] Andreas Reckwitz, *The Society of Singularities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).
[6] Charles Kay Ogden (1889-1957).
[7] Later, Louis Untermeyer used a vocabulary of 800 words in his *Modern Masters for Children* series published in the 1960s.
[8] Ezra Pound to C. K. Ogden 21 January 1935, *Cummings*, p. 47.

> I propose startin a nice lively heresy, to effek, that gimme 50 more words and I can make basic into a real/licherary and mule-drivin' language, capable of blowin freud to hell and gettin' a team from Soap Gulch over the Hogback. you watch ole Ez/ do a basic Canto.[9]

Again, Freud is a casually mentioned target amid imagery derived from a cowboy film. Enthused, on the same day Pound brings BASIC to the attention of Galeazzo Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law): 'I can have some of the books on it , sent you. With the new Minister of Education , I take it a non=sentimental , and practical idea is more likely to get into action , than it would under some aesthete or literary sentimentalist.'[10] As in his letters to Mussolini, the poet positions himself as a practical person rather than an aesthete—in Trilling's phrase, 'a master and a doer'. He also recommends Ogden's idea to E. E. Cummings—'The only bks worf a damn that I have seen coming from Eng/ apart from econ/ are Odgen's series'.[11]

His initial enthusiasm having dissipated, in 1938 the poet writes to Ogden at the Orthological Institute in London: 'From my point of view you are goddam chump. You did not stand up to remarks in my note in Chinese written character / you did NOT mix and converse when I gave you the chance... You simply aren't worth a grown man's time.'[12] Ogden and the poet had at this point corresponded for three years. Ogden's chief mistake is to give the impression that he hasn't read Pound's *ABC of Reading*. He replies—'I'm sorry to find you <u>have</u> been annoyed, however arbitrarily'— and provides a retort to each of Pound's outbursts—'you suppose me to have "students". Why? Has someone at sixth remove told you that I am at Cambridge, or do you imagine that lectures are given at the Orthological Institute? Answer: you don't know and you don't care. But why should a grown man use silly words, merely because he has heard someone reading Dante as if it was prose.'[13] Ogden cannot have been alone in being confused as to the motivations and intemperate language of the poet. Moving from enthusiasm to contempt, Pound's epistolary behaviour appears more based on performance than conviction. Often, as Ogden suggests, the poet simply didn't know—facts, correctness and accuracy were

[9] Ezra Pound to C. K. Ogden 28 January 1935, *Cummings,* pp. 47-8.
[10] Ezra Pound to Galeazzo Ciano 28 January 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122536.
[11] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 31 January 1935, *Cummings*, p. 49.
[12] Ezra Pound to C. K. Ogden September 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122606.
[13] C. K. Ogden to Ezra Pound 18 October 1938, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/1740919.

dispensed with—but ploughed on with little apparent care for the recipient. The need to hold an opinion, to provide an epistolary performance, trumps feelings, logic or truth.

The performative element in Pound's correspondence is observed by Hugh Kenner reviewing D. D. Paige's selection of Pound's letters:

> Like a fish or a falcon, he [Pound] has always implied a milieu of translucent continuity that confers maximum motive efficacy on every gesture. He has always been, that is, essentially a conversationalist and letter-writer. The role of haranguer and impresario derives from exuberance in part, in part from a civilization in which people have to be shouted at, goaded, chaffed, clowned for, and bombarded with a hundred facts of which one may impinge on a vital spot.[14]

This description of Pound's letter writing style gives a sense of its uncompromising nature, achieving impact in the moment—'maximum motive efficacy'— while ignoring the broader context of a relationship with the recipient. It forgets that conversation and letter writing are two-sided, and that 'exuberance' is both tiring and tiresome. Kenner also suggests that the poet is responding to the demand of modern civilisation. This seeks to excuse Pound's abrasive letter writing style, but it fails to explain why if it is a symptom of the age others don't adopt similar epistolary habits.

9.2: Genuine and gymnastic

Throughout his life there were regular complaints about the elusiveness of the authentic personality of the poet. Indeed, this is something which Pound actively encouraged. In 1916, he writes: 'One says "I am" this, that or the other, and with the words scarcely offered one ceases to be that thing.'[15] The quest for your own authentic personality is a plausible quest for a young poet. For Pound, it went much further than being an intellectual or poetical exercise. An early review notes:

> Mr Pound used to be quite interesting when he was a remote passéist and wrote about the Provençal troubadours; but as a revolutionary I would rather have Signor Marinetti, who is at any rate a genuine hustler, whereas Mr Pound assuming

[14] Hugh Kenner, 'Praestantibusque ingeniis', *The Kenyon Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1951), p. 344.
[15] Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (London and New York: John Lane, 1916), p. 98.

> violence and ruthlessness is as unimpressive in his movements as a man who is trying to use someone else's coat as a pair of trousers.[16]

The repeated criticism is that Pound is 'assuming' a position rather than naturally holding it. On first meeting, E. E. Cummings concludes Pound has 'a gymnastic personality'.[17] Later, Vladimir Nabokov describes the poet as a 'venerable fraud'.[18] Boarding the bandwagon, the novelist Kingsley Amis suggests that Pound's gift lay in 'behaving sufficiently like a great poet to gull the gullible'.[19] In *The Verse Revolutionaries* Helen Carr recounts Pound's meeting with H. D. in 1901: 'H. D. was intrigued by this contradictory figure, his exhibitionism, his flashiness, his exotic cosmopolitanism, his lack of Philadelphian propriety, his impulsive generosity.'[20] In London, Pound cultivated his poetical appearance. Douglas Goldring notes:

> Ezra, with his mane of fair hair, his blonde beard, his rimless pince-nez, his Philadelphian accent and his startling costume, part of which was a single turquoise ear-ring, contrived to look 'every inch a poet'.[21]

Elsewhere, Goldring expresses further suspicions:

> He struck me as a bit of a charlatan, and I disliked the showy blue glass buttons on his coat; indeed his whole operatic outfit of 'stage poet', stemming from Murger and Puccini.... I failed to appreciate Ezra's cosmopolitan Yankee Muse, and thought much of his verse pretentious.[22]

Later, Goldring describes the futurist Marinetti in similar terms as 'a flamboyant personage adorned with diamond rings, gold chains and hundreds of flashing white teeth'.[23] The pantomime poet figure of Marinetti—'a genuine hustler'— lingers in the background of Pound's development as a poet and a campaigner. In Paris Robert

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[16] Solomon Agle (John Collings Squire), 'Current literature: books in general', *New Statesman*, 3 No. 65, 4 July 1914, p. 406.
[17] *Cummings,* p. 2.
[18] Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), p. 136.
[19] Responding to Frank Kermode's observation of Pound that 'few would deny he had genius', Amis wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* suggesting 'it was a genius not for poetry (he had not even any particular talent in that direction)'. Craig Brown, *Haywire* (London: Fourth Estate, 2022), p. 507.
[20] Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 17.
[21] Douglas Goldring, *South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review* (London: Constable & Co., 1943), p. 40.
[22] Ibid., p. 48.
[23] Ibid., p. 64.

McAlmon describes Pound as having 'a Vandyck-ish beard and an 1890-ish artist's getup'.[24] Yet, for all the flamboyance and posturing, Pound found it hard to distance himself in appearance and manner from his roots. His American accent remained strong and was notable in his Italian speech. He would have been dismayed by the report of Henry Eliot (T. S. Eliot's brother) to his mother on meeting Pound in 1926: 'Pound is unmistakeably American; you would take him for a professor in some Western college.'[25]

James Angleton said that he rated Eliot ahead of Pound as a poet and man, but he admired Pound's ability to evolve and change styles. Angleton, who later led the CIA, would have been adept at recognising, adopting and understanding the power of personal subterfuge:[26]

> I don't think anyone ever took Pound's politics seriously. It was another mask. I think it was a part of that kaleidoscopic side of Pound. I don't think he was an integrated man.[27]

Echoing these sentiments, Yeats, who knew Pound as well as anyone, observed that he was never comfortable in his various personas and remained 'the sexless American professor for all his violence'.[28] Pound's violence was related to his use of language and perhaps his dramatic gestures in conversation. His professorial mien was cultivated throughout his life. His sexlessness appears unlikely given his various liaisons, but so it appeared to his mentor. It might also be interpreted as a lack of personal passion—borne out in his correspondence. 'What I could never tolerate in Pound or seek for myself was the "side" that went with all his posturings as a poet,' noted William Carlos Williams, his longest lasting poet-friend.[29] It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Pound's work—including his letters—contains a substantial element of artifice and posturing which masks the personality and personal life of the poet—or marks its absence.

This is further complicated by the past being intertwined irrevocably with the present—and with Pound's own timeless preferences and prejudices. He is loudly dismissive of

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[24] Robert McAlmon (with Kay Boyle), *Being Geniuses Together* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 29.
[25] Henry Eliot to Charlotte Eliot 16 May 1926, Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 148.
[26] His judgement was not foolproof. Notably, in his professional life Angleton didn't identify Kim Philby as a Soviet spy.
[27] Aaron Latham, 'Poet, florist, angler, spy', *Washington Post*, 17 May 1987.
[28] Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 83.
[29] William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 58.

many major historical literary figures, such as the Romantics and Milton, but maintains a lifetime's devotion to Dante, Cavalcanti and others. His selective historical canon is regarded as unquestionable and definitive. His history *is* history. These figures are not passing influences on Pound, but constant presences in his life and work—and correspondence. By taking on the style and perspective of literary forebears he is not being inauthentic but true to literary history, paying dutiful and expected homage. Wyndham Lewis, an aggressively independent observer of Pound, writes of the poet:

> By *himself* he would seem to have neither any convictions nor eyes in his head. There is nothing he intuits well, certainly never originally. Yet when he can get into the skin of somebody else, a Propertius or an Arnaut Daniel, he becomes a lion or a lynx on the spot.

Lewis adds an important caveat: 'But where the present is concerned it is a different matter. He is extremely untrustworthy where that is concerned.'[30] As we have seen, current events are largely overlooked by Pound in his correspondence. In spite of his boasts of being up to date, he moves in a unique time construct which can be described as the *historical urgent*: dated in the present, constantly informed by the past and insisting on the need for immediate action.

This effortless moving between eras and cultures may have been what Yeats had in mind in his comment on Pound in his introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*: 'There is no transmission through time. We pass without comment from ancient Greece to modern England, from modern England to medieval China; the symphony, the pattern, is timeless, flux eternal and without movement.'[31] The 'without movement' element is key: history is here, but in a way which is assumed and transparent. Living the present through the prism of the past is, to Pound's mind, the calling of the artist. This is seen in *The Cantos* and Pound's translations in which the artist is an informed guide rather than a provider of linguistic exactitude. Translating Cavalcanti, Pound described his work as 'traduction' rather than translation, referring to the Latin *traductio*, 'leading across'.[32] As a translator Pound sees himself as bringing something important to the attention of the current generation. Translation—and art—is thus a process of guidance and education linking the

[30] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), p. 87.
[31] W. B. Yeats (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. xxiv.
[32] David Anderson, *Pound's Cavalcanti* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. ix.

past to the present. The same could be said of Pound's correspondence though the process of guidance is simultaneously a good deal more playful and hectoring.

9.3: The poet's speech

One interpretation of Pound's letter-writing style is that it was similar in some ways to the way he spoke. Descriptions of his speaking voice suggest strong parallels. Iris Barry said of Pound's speech that it combined 'the base of American mingled with a dozen assorted "English Society" and Cockney accents inserted in mockery, French, Spanish and Greek exclamations, strange cries and catcalls, the whole very oddly inflected, with dramatic pauses and diminuendos'.[33] D. G. Bridson, a contributor to the *Active Anthology*, describes the poet reading 'Alfred Venison' 'in an Americanised form of Cockney'.[34] Pound's first biographer Charles Norman wrote: 'He spoke with many voices. In the midst of expositions in a flat, pedantic, and occasionally scolding tone, he would lapse into exaggerated Western drawls, Yankee twangings, feet-on-the-cracker-barrel pipings, and as suddenly switch to upper-class British sibilants and even Cockney growls.'[35] The Italian critic and translator Carlo Izzo knew Pound in Rapallo and reflected after the poet's death: 'I cannot say that I ever had with Pound a real human relationship, since he was so remote from reality, and conversed in fragments, occasionally somewhat childishly.'[36] Describing Pound's broadcasting style, Robert Spoo wrote: 'He would hold forth for several minutes in stage Yankee or in a weird brogue, rolling his *r's* in the style he had adopted for reading his poetry. Sometimes he spoke in a measured didactic voice, almost professorial in its suave patience, at other times in a taunting growl that flattened out and trailed away in a manner reminiscent of W. C. Fields.'[37] Later, in St Elizabeths, various doctors made similar observations.[38]

There appears to be agreement that Pound's speech was colourful, unconventional and somewhat randomly reflected his travels, passions and knowledge. Whether these idiosyncrasies were transferred when Pound spoke other languages—such as Italian or French—is not clear. Certainly, his letters in other languages appear much more orthodox and restrained. But, in English, his letters—with their changes of direction, patchwork of languages, argot, playful digressions and crude alterations in emphasis—were clearly

[33] Iris Barry, 'The Ezra Pound period', *Bookman* 74, 2, 1931, p. 159.
[34] M.C., 'Rapallo for duo', *Times Literary Supplement,* 10 December 2021.
[35] Charles Norman, *Ezra Pound: A Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 5.
[36] Carlo Izzo, 'Ezra Pound: il migliar fabbro', *Paragone* 280, 1973, p. 89.
[37] *EP/DP*, pp. 2-3.
[38] Daniel Swift, *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics and Madness of Ezra Pound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), pp. 67, 70 and 72.

similar to his reported speaking voice. Amid this, identifying the poet's authentic sound or self is challenging.

9.4: Japanese letters

Over a number of decades Pound corresponds with a variety of Japanese literary figures and the correspondence demonstrates some of the difficulties in locating the authentic poet. From Rapallo his most notable Japanese correspondent was Katue Kitasono—there are 46 letters from Pound to the Japanese poet. The correspondence embraces a substantial element of artifice and posturing which habitually masks the personality and personal life of the poet. Is he the well-mannered conservative and constructive literary figure writing to Kitasono in the mid-1930s or the more frenzied and opinionated correspondent of the early 1940s flitting aggressively from subject to subject, stereotype to prejudice?

When the correspondence begins Kitasono is already practising what Pound erratically preached. He had established the avant-garde VOU Club and VOU magazine and was involved in the Tokyo Poet's Club.[39] 'We started from Dada and passed Surrealism. And at present we are connected with no "-ism" of Europe. Under the close influence of contemporary architecture and technology, we are making progress in our theory on art and are forming a characteristic form of ourselves,' Kitasono explains in his first letter.[40] Once introduced, Pound enables Kitasono's work to be published in the *Townsman* magazine and champions it enthusiastically. While quick to develop a positive and generous correspondence with his younger Japanese counterpart, he does so with little apparent knowledge of Kitasono's work or reputation.

Their epistolary relationship navigates a route through Pound's various preoccupations and passions. He provides a steady stream of questions on Noh plays and Japanese culture. The hyper-contemporary Japanese poet is more interested in the present—'It is a great regret that I have no more knowledge of Noh than an ordinary Japanese. I think you have a better appreciation of it than I,' he concedes.[41] As the correspondence develops, Kitasono is addressed amicably as 'Kit-Kat', 'K-Kit', 'K 2°', 'K/K' or 'K2' by Pound. (Writing to James

[39] The founder members of the VOU Club in 1935 were Iwamoto Shuzo, Miki Tei, Kitasono and 11 others. The magazine was first published in July 1935 and ran until 1940. It was revived in 1947. *Japan*, pp. 209-210.
[40] Katue Kitasono to Ezra Pound April 1936, *Japan*, p. 27.
[41] Katue Kitasono to Ezra Pound 17 July 1936, *Japan*, p. 29.

Laughlin he refers to Kitasono as 'kittense katwise'.[42]) Pound mentions his daughter to Kitasono and a book she has written for him:

> My daughter is not in America. In fact I am translating into English a little book she has written for me in Italian. I think Japanese children might like it, I mean they would learn what a child of 12 sees in the Tyrol.[43]

Perhaps understandably, there is no explanation from Pound why his daughter doesn't live with him or her mother. In the next letter Pound promises to send a copy of 'Maria's booklet' once he has sewn up the pages.[44] When he does so, Kitasono translates the stories into Japanese. Pound is grateful—'I trust my daughter will be properly sensible to the honour of being translated by you AND that she wont get a swelled head.'[45] With typical over-enthusiasm, Pound then sends the book to Eliot and Frank Morley at Faber and Faber suggesting they publish it. His logic is ridiculous: 'If a child wrote it it must be comprehensible to other infants?'[46] Falling into the role of competitive parent, he argues that the evident and natural naïvety of his twelve-year old daughter is preferable to 'FAKE naïve stuff', the assumed poses for literary effect of other authors. Eliot turns the book down on the understandable basis that it is unlikely to sell many copies. Pound is outraged, suggesting in reply to Eliot that he should have shared the book with the literary agent Larry Pollinger—'the error was I didn't send it to Larry who would have saved you the error of thinking it wouldn't SELL.'[47] It is impossible to tell how genuine Pound's outrage is.

Having been rejected and expressed his irritation, the poet is undeterred and is soon selling Mary's work—without apparently admitting his relation to her—to *Globe* magazine. He is quick to boast of its translation into Japanese—'The Tirol stuff by M. R. wasn't invective. In fact the whole little book, of which I send you chap. 1. is being translated in Tokio.'[48] He returns to Mary's work repeatedly in his letters to James Dunn at the *Globe*. 'I never have approved of CHILD stuff, but I am sending on a translation of letter from a 12 year old in the Tirol. The opening is very clear/ it is quite as good as a lot of

[42] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 8 April 1937, *Laughlin*, p. 78.
[43] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 13 January 1938, *Japan*, p. 53.
[44] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 13 January 1938, *Japan*, p. 53.
[45] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 14 January 1939, *Japan*, p. 70.
[46] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot and Frank Morley 16 January 1938, *Japan*, p. 214.
[47] Ezra Pound to T. S. Eliot 25 November 1937, *Japan*, p. 215.
[48] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 12 April 1938, *Globe*, p. 165. The article by Mary rejected by *Globe* was eventually published in Japan in the magazine *Reijokai*, Vol. 18, No. 1, January 1939.

the accounts in Frazer,' he writes, comparing Mary's work to that of the anthropologist Sir James Frazer.[49] The poet's disapproval of 'CHILD stuff' is either of material written by children or, perhaps, a more general distaste for literary work targeted at children. Both are somewhat peculiar views and hardly persuasive for the editor he is asking to publish the work. A month later there is a reminder: 'what about that Tyrol stuff by M. R./ I thought that t worth printing, and cost wd/ be next to newt.'[50] The proud father was not willing to give his daughter's work away.

Mary's book is not an isolated personal detail in the letters to Katue Kitasono. Pound provides updates on what she is doing:

> Mary after two months in Tyrol 'gone native' to her mother's distress, so there is tremendous effort to make her *Salonfähig* before she goes back to La Quiete/
>
> All after my instructions that she shd/ become *Bauernfähig* to keep up with the times. At any rate her tennis is improving. I shall try that picture <on her> of Japanese girls *en masse* with swords, to see if it will stimulate 'union of cultures'.[51]

It is difficult to believe that this would have much sense to Kitasono who was not privy to the arrangements of Mary's upbringing which had been delegated to a farming family in the Tirol with only occasional interludes with her parents in Rapallo and Venice.

Reciprocating Pound's introductions to magazines, Kitasono introduces the American to the *Japan Times* and he begins contributing regularly to the publication in 1939. Inevitably, he seeks as wide a brief as possible:

> Whether I am to STICK to art, music and poetry or whether I am allowed to consider the arts as happening IN an ambience, expressive of states of mind coincident with different dispositions toward organized society.
>
> I have been cited in Italian press as 'poeta economista'.[52]

[49] Sir James Frazer (1854-1941). Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 23 November 1938, *Globe*, p. 173.
[50] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 18 December 1938, *Globe*, p. 176.
[51] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 2 October 1940, *Japan*, p. 97.
[52] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 27 March 1939, *Japan*, pp. 74-5.

Kitasono later admitted that he understood little of Pound's more elaborately discursive letters. His wife was better at English.[53] Whatever his standard of English, it is unlikely Kitasono would have been able to decode Pound's wish to write about 'expressive states of mind coincident with different dispositions toward organized society'. This may be a euphemistic and tortuous definition of fascism or simply a piece of opaque salesmanship allowing him to write about anything he wishes. The final reference to him being described as a 'poeta economista' is another piece of salesmanship, a further example of his desperately citing anything which could be positively interpreted. In the late 1930s, for Pound the ultimate compliment is to be taken seriously as a poet *and* an economist.

The *Japanese Times* asks for two 2,000-word articles per month. By May 1939 Yasotaro Morri of the publication is writing to the poet to rein in his broadly interpreted brief:

> We know you are not on a special mission to iron out the Japan-U.S. relations, if ever there are any jagged surface, but naturally would prefer nothing which will provoke Americans in political issues. Kindly stick to literary subjects; if your criticism of current American literature is found unfavourable to Americans, for instance, it can't be helped. Have I said sufficiently to indicate what we want?[54]

Of course, Pound is on such a 'special mission'. After a few months, the poet replies: 'I would prefer to write about history for the moment, including current history.'[55] Having identified his subject as the entirety of the past and the present, Pound then suggests via Kitasono that the *Japan Times* should make him their Italian correspondent.[56] This doesn't happen but is part of an ongoing (and unsuccessful) quest by the poet in the 1930s to have a formally recognised role of some sort.

This correspondence has many elements common to the poet's other letters. With little, if any, analysis of his artistic credentials, Pound generously introduces Kitasono into his literary network and pulls as many of the slightly fraying strings at his disposal to ensure publication of the Japanese poet's work. He gives Kitasono detailed and positive feedback and displays a relentless, though often random, curiosity about Japanese culture and

[53] *Japan,* p. 212.
[54] Yasotaro Morri to Ezra Pound 15 May 1939, *Japan*, p. 78.
[55] Ezra Pound to Yasotaro Morri 28 October 1939, *Japan*, p. 79.
[56] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 13 January 1940, *Japan*, p. 82.

history. Yet, over an extended period, this correspondence has a very different tone. His bugbears on American culture and education, the global political situation and economics are generally absent. It is much more conservative in its tone, style and layout. Pound's hyperbolic excesses are restrained. Perhaps most surprising is the personal nature of the information he shares with Kitasono. He regularly mentions his daughter and there is a sense of him taking the Japanese poet into his confidence. As the war begins and tensions around Japan rise, the letters become increasingly free ranging in subject matter and revert to Pound's more normal style and tone. In August 1940, for example, he writes:

> As to Mr. whatshisname at yr/ kultur buro/ I shd/ have thought that the *J.Times* with especially its advertising matter/ 'GRRRRRReatest electric etc/' in the WORLD/ etc. was adequate to tell the occident about how modern (and/or America) Japan is.
>
> Matsumiya has left Rome, so I couldn't get round to poesy/ I mean if etc/ Noh is OUT/ and the living writers incomprehensible. Anyhow they were nice blokes. And so forth.[57]

Compact but discursive, this letter is a considerable leap from the well-mannered and conservative letters which precede it. It covers Pound's visit to Japan's cultural relations bureau in Rome, Chiang Kai-shek, Chinese philosophy, his *Japan Times* articles and ends with the comically inappropriate exhortations: 'Heil! Banzai! AlaLA!' Kitasono replies that the letter 'made me laugh a pelican's laugh'.[58] This may have been so, but the random nature of the letter must have presented a formidable challenge in comprehension. Another letter begins:

> Have I asked, and have you answered: whether you have olive trees in Japan? and whether the peasants shake off the olives with bamboo poles.[59]

Unexpected diversions are combined with an increasing willingness by the poet to give vent to his long-held opinions and prejudices. For example, he makes sweeping cultural generalisations which would be comical in other contexts:

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[57] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 25 August 1940, *Japan*, p. 94.
[58] Katue Kitasono to Ezra Pound 26 September 1940, *Japan*, p. 96.
[59] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 12 March 1941, *Japan*, p. 111. Kitasono replies: 'I am not sure whether there are olive trees in Japan, or not.' Katue Kitasono to Ezra Pound 28 May 1941, *Japan*, p. 114.

> Germans rise at 6 a.m. to GOOD music on the radio/ French radio music soppy, English music and jokes putrid. Incredible vulgarity, and jazz WORSE than the human mind had hitherto conceived possible.[60]

It is difficult to see any basis for these opinions—either in terms of music or Pound's personal experience. He had, for example, hardly been in England for two decades. They are likely to have been recycled material from his much earlier articles on music for *New Age*.[61] The letter continues:

> If you manage to read my *J.T.* articles at all, I wish you wd/ comment FREELY. I want guidance. I wish you folks cd/ make a peace in China. Best possible kick in the jaw for the nastiest kikes and pseudo-kikes in America. If you can manage it we might get on and have a little civilization once again.[62]

This is more typical of Pound's letter writing. The unusual invitation for 'guidance' is off set by the aggressively prejudiced sentence which follows and then the emollient call for 'civilisation'. Contradictions and prejudices sit side by side.

9.5: Hijacked vendettas

The sense of inauthenticity in Pound's behaviour and correspondence is heightened when one considers some of his most persistently adopted positions. In a number of instances his most stridently held extreme opinions are not particularly his own. The originality comes through the vehemence and persistence of the poet's professed belief in the various positions—whether it be the cultural decline of America, the dreariness of the suburbs or the failure of the education system. This might also be said to apply to his belief in fascism. Others dabbled and departed, Pound stubbornly, ill-advisedly and noisily stayed the course.

The poet was willing to adopt argumentative positions and prejudices and then pursue them as if they were his own over many years. For example, his regular diatribes against the English—once he had left the country—are of dubious originality. Marinetti lectured

[60] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 29 October 1940, *Japan*, p. 99.
[61] These are collected in R. Murray Schafer (ed.), *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism* (New York: New Directions, 2008).
[62] Ezra Pound to Kitue Kitasono 29 October 1940, *Japan*, p. 100.

in London in 1912 (his lectures attended by Dorothy among others) and castigated the English as a 'nation of sycophants' with their 'worm-eaten traditions'.[63] Pound's complaints against the English in the 1920s and 1930s provide repeated echoes of this in their language and sentiments. Similarly, the poet's regular critiques of American cultural life were his larger-than-life perspective on a very common position. For example, *The Dial* published essays by Harold Stearns reporting on the conformity and mediocrity of the American cultural scene. His 1921 book, *America and the Young Intellectual*, expanded on the theme, bemoaning the 'belligerent individualism' of American culture and the loss of 'moral idealism'.[64] Such thoughts were routinely echoed by the poet who absented himself from America from 1908 until 1939, but who remained ever willing to venture opinions on American culture. It was an unoriginal perspective loudly and repeatedly aired.[65]

In economics he was also a follower. 'Pound's engagement with economics and politics make it abundantly clear that he always followed and never led, despite a bumptious style that made him appear to be in front of a parade,' concludes Leon Surette, adding, 'Pound was an intellectual sponge, taking up the ideas of others and holding them without any true assimilation.'[66] Similar sentiments are expressed by Massimo Bacigalupo: 'An egocentric absorber, Pound transformed everything into a projection of himself, but was dependent on the world (books, people, landscapes) as a source. He took, chameleonlike, the colour of his surroundings, while remaining always E.P.'[67]

One of the most perplexing and longest standing of Pound's gripes was with the Bloomsbury Group. This is frequently repeated in letters over many years. Again, this was unoriginal, a hijacked vendetta. The Bloomsbury Group is described variously and always negatively by the poet, sometimes unpleasantly—'less taint of Bloomsbury snail-smear,' Pound writes to Zukofksy.[68] To Robert McNair Wilson, he humorously writes: 'A real idea is something like a TREE, organic, will grow./ bloomsbury, the critics, etc. never get trees only chair legs.'[69] Bloomsbury is also consistently used as an amalgam with buggery:

[63] *Daily Chronicle* 20 March 1912, p. 2, col. 6.
[64] 'Moral idealism is precisely what the institutional life of America does not want. For moral idealism, if it means anything, means fearlessness before the facts and willingness to face them, intellectual integrity, emotional honesty, the attempt to win a more order out of the jungle of experience without bias, without any axe to grind, without native prejudice…it is just this kind of moral idealism which the younger generation finds nowhere existent in American national life today.' Harold Stearns, *America and the Young Intellectual* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), pp. 18 and 21.
[65] It is dismissed by Emanuel Carnevali: 'Look! He's throwing pebbles at our skyscrapers.' Emanuel Carnevali, 'Book review of *Pavannes and Divisions* by Ezra Pound', *Poetry*, January 1920, pp. 211-21.
[66] Leon Surette, 'Ezra Pound's fascism: aberration or essence?', *Queen's Quarterly* 96 (Autumn 1989), pp. 601-24.
[67] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. xx.
[68] Ezra Pound to Louis Zukofksy 29/30 January 1930, *P/Z*, p. 87.
[69] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 2 January 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.

bloomsbuggy slickophants[70]

WD/much rather than historians or economists comment of Cantos, esp 31/41 than the snoops of bloomsbuggy letteratets.[71]

the Church Assembmy (of England, 7 bishups etc.) haz up'd an SED "employment aint WORK, woik may be a moral discipline etc/ BUT scripschoor don't say you gotter go out and SELL it."

if that aint one up on the bloomsbuggars, I DUNKno.[72]

Homosexuality was not a subject Pound was comfortable with or forgiving of.[73] He writes to Robert McAlmon on his latest work: 'I am not convinced that the narrator gets bugggahed for or from reasons necessitated in the narration.' He scribbles down the side of the letter—'"buggar minded" is obviously not same as broad minded'—and goes on to note: 'On the other hand this queery may rise from my own prejudices.' Later in the letter he throws in another bugbear—psychology—'I spose yr. buggah boys are useful to show up feminine pussycology in clearer diagram than if they wuz skeits pure an simple.'[74] Homosexuality and psychology are seen by Pound as expressions of weakness. He does, at least and unusually, concede that he may have his 'own prejudices'. With Bloomsbury and buggery, it could also be that Pound found the word play irresistible. The author John Middleton Murry[75] is repeatedly melded into the phonetic mix—'Muddleton Mumpy, merely Bloomsbugger idiot not really of the same party, tho detrimental and useless.'[76] T. S. Eliot described Murry as 'one of the most distinguished men of letters of this time' and was a friend to Murry, as was D. H. Lawrence.[77] Pound had contributed to Murry's *Athenaeum* magazine. Though well-connected, Murry was not universally liked even among the Bloomsbury set Pound regularly pairs him with—Leonard and Virginia Woolf

[70] *Nott*, p. 76.
[71] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott January 1935, *Nott*, p. 9.
[72] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 13 February 1935, *Cummings*, p. 53.
[73] Though, earlier in life Pound is quoted noting, 'they say in Wyncote I am bi-sexual and given to unnatural lust'. Helen Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries: Ezra Pound, HD and the Imagists* (New York: Vintage Digital, Random House, 2013), p. 32.
[74] Ezra Pound to Robert McAlmon 4 April 1934?, Robert McAlmon Papers, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17202524.
[75] John Middleton Murry (1889-1957), prolific English author who married Katherine Mansfield. He became a campaigning pacifist during World War Two.
[76] Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 12 January 1935, L*aughlin*, p. 39.
[77] Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (eds.), *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-27* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p. 901. In 1919 Murry invited Eliot to become assistant editor of *The Egoist* at £500 per annum for two years, more than Eliot then earned at a bank, but he turned it down. Matthew Hollis, *The Waste Land: A Biography of a Poem* (London: Faber and Faber, 2022), p. 59.

were dismissive of him.[78] It is likely that Murry became the recipient of Pound's phonetic mischief after he irritated the poet in an obituary of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska which described Vorticism as 'only a passing phase in his development'.[79] Murry's focus on sexuality was also almost certainly not to Pound's taste. Various bête noirs of Pound tend to be combined:

> BUT until the buggars can put up a schema o f books, you can't dicsuss it/ it is just MuddletonMudshit blah.
> Bastids that never know whether they are writing about literature, reliogion, philosophy, theosophy, or gastronomy in Spain.[80]

Pound's own willingness to expound on subjects as diverse as economics, music, censorship and the American education system is forgotten.

The anti-Bloomsbury sentiments can most plausibly be traced back to a falling out between Wyndham Lewis and the group years before when he was partnering with Roger Fry in the Omega Workshops. This became known as 'The Ideal Home rumpus'. Lewis also knew how to harbour a grudge and thereafter frequently blamed malign Bloomsbury influences when things didn't go his way—an unfortunately regular occurrence. Fry was a particular target.[81] In *The Apes of God* Lewis labels Bloomsbury 'elitist, corrupt and talentless' and suggested to the publisher's lawyers that it was acceptable to malign a group on 'the Bloomsbury principle' that there is 'no caricature of any individual Bloomsbury'.[82] Elsewhere, Lewis refers to the 'tittering old maids' of Bloomsbury.[83] When his portrait of T. S. Eliot was rejected by the Tate in 1949 he was quick to suggest a Bloomsbury-inspired conspiracy and that the rejection was characterised 'by a sneer of hatred or by a sly Bloomsbury *sniff*'.[84] Pound's own language to describe the group echoes and amplifies that of Lewis.

[78] Virginia Woolf described Murry as 'the one vile man I have ever known'. Leonard Woolf said Murry was 'Pecksniffian'. Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Circulating Genius: John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 1.
[79] John Middleton Murry, 'Gaudier-Brzeska, in Memorium', *Westminster Gazette* 23 July 1915, p. 2.
[80] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 2 February 1935, *Nott*, p. 46.
[81] Lewis said of Fry: 'The most effective means of ridding my own system of a quantity of putrescent matter would be to write a book on Roger Fry: he personifies as much as anybody what I dislike most about the art world, and I've always disliked the man himself.' Paul O'Keeffe, *A Kind of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 415.
[82] Ibid., p. 363.
[83] Wyndham Lewis, *Men without Art* (London: Cassell and Co., 1934), pp 170-8.
[84] Paul O'Keeffe, *A Kind of Genius* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 545.

Herbert Read described the Bloomsbury Group as 'the charmed circle'[85] and they may have been associated by Pound with the English elite and amateurish dilettantism. This hardly applies to Virginia Woolf or justifies his insulting of Keynes or Murry by their proximity to the group. Others, such as Eliot, had friendly relations with members of the Bloomsbury Group and with Murry. Yeats even attended a seance with Roger Fry.[86] There may have been an element of competitiveness. Fry had many of the entrepreneurial networking characteristics of Pound. The elitist ethos of members of the Bloomsbury Group was in fact largely in line with Pound's own thinking. For example, Clive Bell in *Civilisation* talks of a 'civilising elite' and suggests, 'All artists are aristocrats.'[87] Similarly, Middleton Murry compared great writers to Jesus but access to this redemption was only available to intellectuals.[88] In keeping with this shared intellectual elitism, the Bloomsbury Group and Eliot looked down on the successful novelist Arnold Bennett,[89] son of shopkeepers. Following suit, in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* Pound satirises him as the corrupt, venal and philistine Mr. Nixon pontificating in the 'cream and gilded cabin of his steam yacht'. In reality, while Bennett enjoyed his literary and financial success, he was also a generous supporter of young writers.

Another assumed attitude of Pound's is his disparagement of suburbia. The rise of the suburbs and the disdain for them expressed by the intellectual elite are described in John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses*.[90] Launching the *Criterion*, Eliot announced it stood against 'suburban democracy'.[91] Similarly, H. G. Wells' *The War in the Air* refers to 'suburban parasitism'.[92] When Wyndham Lewis fell out with Fry's Omega workshop he sent a letter to all of his contacts complaining about Omega working against his interests. This drew a rebuke from Clive Bell: 'You ought not to bombard the town with pages of suburban rhetoric. The vulgarity of the thing! And the provincialism! That's what I mind. You don't belong in the suburbs, so what the devil are you doing there?'[93] Even emanating from Clive Bell, the anti-suburban sentiments were clearly infectious. 'As in all countries, one may find the implacable dullness of Suburbia—often a healthy dullness,' writes the

[85] Robin Majumdar, Allen McLaurin, et al, *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage* (Law Book Co. of Australasia, 1975; Amy Licence, *Living in Squares Loving in Triangles* (Stroud: Amberley, 2016), p. 284.
[86] Roy Foster, *W. B. Yeats: Arch-Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 80.
[87] Clive Bell, *Civilisation* (London: Chatto and Windus 1928), p. 74.
[88] John Middleton Murry, *Things to Come* (London: Cape, 1928) and *To the Unknown God* (London: Cape, 1924).
[89] Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), playwright, journalist and author of 34 novels including *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), *Clayhanger* (1910) and *Riceyman Steps* (1923).
[90] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), pp. 46-70.
[91] Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), p. 143
[92] H. G. Wells, *The War in the Air* (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 109.
[93] Paul O'Keeffe, *Some Sort of Genius: A Life of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 135.

young poet.[94] In 1915, he writes to James Joyce: 'This deluge of work by suburban counter-jumpers on one hand and gut-less Oxford graduates or flunktuates on the other....bah!'[95] In *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, the suburbs are home to 'the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen'.[96] When Pound loses faith in the magazine the *New English Weekly*, he dismisses it as 'suburban', 'frittering and piffling'.[97] In *Guide to Kulchur*, he observes: '*Suburban minds* and sectarians fritter about with differences. They ignore convergences and differences of appearances.'[98] In Pound's mind the suburbs were the heart of mediocrity and, somehow, the suburbs *were* America—or, at least, the America of the young Ezra Pound. With typical gusto, the poet traces the suburban malaise back much further—'The truly appalling suburbanism that set in after the civil war, partly from our exhaustion, partly from the oedematous bulging of the British Empire, our relapse into cerebral tutelage, our suburbanism did not afflict Adams and Jefferson.'[99] To the *Globe* editor James Dunn, he writes: 'several of us have been yelling against suburbanism and 1895 pt/ of view, for some time.'[100] To Ödön Pór, he writes: 'Am about fed up with british suburbia.'[101] When, eventually, Pound explains and perhaps excuses his anti-Semitism to Allen Ginsberg as a 'stupid suburban prejudice' there is a feeling that he is blaming the suburbs for providing him with this inbuilt prejudice rather than it being something he was responsible for.[102]

Individuals cannot claim to be wholly original in their opinions and arguments, and so Pound's appropriation of the causes and logic of others is understandable. What better friend could there be than one who trumpets your own opinions but with energy, wit and relish? What is unusual is the vehemence and persistence with which he pursues these issues at the same time as offering so little of himself. Both can be interpreted as defence mechanisms: one protecting the writer from unwanted emotional expressions and complications; the other attention and affirmation seeking. All of these elements mean that Pound's correspondence—however enormous in quantity—is often a poor source for

[94] Ezra Pound, 'Through alien eyes', *New Age* 12, 23 January 1913, p. 275.
[95] Ezra Pound to James Joyce 15 September 1915, *P/J*, p. 45.
[96] '"Conservatrix of Milésien"/Habits of mind and feeling,/Possibly. But in Ealing/With the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen.' Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* XI.
[97] Ezra Pound to Henry Swabey 30 January 1937, Roxana Preda, 'Social credit in America: a view from Ezra Pound's economic correspondence 1933-1940', *Paideuma*, Vol. 34, No. 2/3, Fall/Winter, 2005, p. 219.
[98] *Kulchur*, p. 172.
[99] Ezra Pound, 'The Jefferson-Adams letters as a shrine and monument', *North American Review*, Winter 1937-38; William Cookson (ed.), *Ezra Pound Selected Prose 1909-65* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 156.
[100] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 3 April 1937, *Globe*, p. 108.
[101] Ezra Pound to Ödön Pór January/February 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/32159568.
[102] Allen Ginsberg (Gordon Ball, ed.), *Allen Verbatim. Lectures on Poetry, Politics, Consciousness* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), pp. 179-87. People who consider themselves intellectuals continue to express a prejudice against suburbia. For example, in his diaries Roy Strong dismisses Queen Camilla as 'rather suburban'. Roy Strong, *Types and Shadows: The Roy Strong Diaries 2004-15* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2020).

biographers. The poet not only avoided the biographical but adopted a variety of voices and was prone to adopting the passions and stances of others as if they were his own. On his own life, Pound was an unreliable and largely unwilling witness.

9.6: Learning by osmosis

The poet's habitual inauthenticity also impacts his view of the artist in society and his own behaviour as an artist. In 'The Serious Artist' Pound argues that poets 'heap together and arrange and harmonize the results of many men's labour. This very faculty for amalgamation is a part of their genius'.[103] Writing to Harriet Monroe, he explains: 'The "cultural heritage" is the accumulated fruit of labour, mental and physical.'[104] With the full cultural weight of historical artistic output at their disposal, the job of the artist is to take what is there and to add to it. Given this perspective Rebecca Beasley points out similarities in Pound's perspective on literary history and C. H. Douglas' of economic history:

> From Pound's point of view, one of Douglas's most important insights concerned the 'cultural heritage' of society: everyone should share in the world's wealth because it is not produced by individuals or individual businesses in isolation, but rather by an accumulation of knowledge and invention over centuries.[105]

While there is a re-distributive socialist air to Douglas' beliefs, Pound did not necessarily believe that everyone should—or could—share in the accumulated cultural heritage. He professed faith in the creation of an intellectual elite able to mine and increase the accumulated knowledge. Membership of the intelligentsia is enough to suggest the potential for artistic merit and achievement. As such, potential is paradoxically backward looking. Again, Rebecca Beasley suggests there are parallels with Douglas' perspective:

> Pound, like Douglas, locates value in potential rather than achievement. As a result, Pound's approach to art changes in two fundamental ways: first, he redefines the work of art in very broad terms, as any contribution to civilisation, and, second, he evaluates art through an evaluation of the artist's intelligence, to the point where

[103] Ezra Pound, 'The serious artist', *New Freewoman* 1 1913, pp. 161-3.
[104] Ezra Pound to Harriet Monroe 13 August 1935, Paige, p. 365.
[105] Rebecca Beasley, *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme and Ezra Pound* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 99.

> the artwork's value is primarily its ability to act as evidence of the artist's mental capacity.[106]

Pound's work can, in this light, be viewed as an intellectual display without a coherent meaning. The display acts as proof of the artist's intelligence and artistic value. Members of the intelligentsia are, through dint of their intellectual powers, able to roam freely over cultural and intellectual domains without fear of questioning or imposter syndrome. The process of roaming intellectually is uniquely interpreted by the poet. William Carlos Williams recounts an early encounter with Pound:

> He could never learn to play the piano, though his mother tried to teach him. But he 'played' for all that. At home, I remember my mother's astonishment when he sat down at the keyboard and let fly for us—seriously. Everything, you might say, resulted except music. He took mastership at one leap; played Liszt, Chopin—or anyone else you could name—up and down the scales. Coherently in his own mind, any old sequence. It was part of his confidence in himself. My sister-in-law was a concert pianist. Ez never liked her.[107]

Pound admitted to being 'tone deaf'[108] and writes to James Joyce, 'I have the organ of a tree toad, fortunately, for if I had been able ever to sing "My Countree tiz of Theeee," without going off the key four times in each bar, I shd. have warbled & done no bloomin' thing else—che peccato.'[109] Yeats noted that Pound's voice sounded 'like something on a bad phonograph'.[110] This did not stop the poet promoting himself as a composer and musical impresario at various stages. Later, visiting Pound in St Elizabeths, Williams recalls his friend's belief that he could convince Stalin of the errors of is ways given 'twenty minutes' instruction in the Georgian dialect'.[111] In *Guide to Kultur* he repeats his story of how Gaudier-Brzseska could understand the meaning of Chinese characters without having studied the language.[112] Learning by osmosis was one of Pound's most perplexing beliefs.

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[106] Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 160.
[107] William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1967), pp. 56-7.
[108] *Parents*, p. 184.
[109] Ezra Pound to James Joyce 2 June 1920, *P/J*, p. 173.
[110] W. B. Yeats to Lady Gregory 10 December 1909, Richard Ellmann, *Eminent Domain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 61.
[111] William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 337.
[112] *Kulchur*, p. 27.

Writing to Dorothy, the poet discusses the education of their son Omar and concludes that absorbing his father's work is preferable to university—'Om will git enuff generl kulchr from my woiks and friends, and what he cd/ git in a university wd/ be merely dilutation to the 1/1000th. Better something definite.'[113] Up to this point, Pound has barely spent any time with Omar, so his exposure to the poet and any of his friends with an educational inclination was unlikely to prove a substitute for conventional education. Again, Pound regards his own knowledge and interpretation of the world as definitive and pure, 'something definite', and capable of being absorbed by any who stand near or spend time in his company. This stands in complete contradiction to his advice to younger poets of the dangers of being carried up Mount Helicon in an 'easy chair'.

The accumulative logic is also applied to Pound's political lineage. He believes that the activities of his ancestors provide credence to his political activities. The poet's grandfather Thaddeus Coleman Pound[114] was a Republican assemblyman, speaker of the state assembly, lieutenant governor and acting governor of Wisconsin and served three terms in the House of Representatives.[115] This connection gives the poet confidence and conviction in writing to modern day politicians. Familial history provides legitimacy and credibility.[116]

Knowledge of money is also regarded as part of the Pound family DNA. The Chippewa Falls Union Lumbering Company, run by Thaddeus Coleman Pound, issued paper money to its employees. A copy of the money is used as the frontispiece of Pound's pamphlet on social credit published by Stanley Nott in 1935. This is at the poet's insistence. He explains in a letter to Nott:

> It is worth 500 words, in my philosophy.
>
> and proves that there has been an economic background in the family. I find those photos start people thinking a lot quicker than 'remarks on the subject'.[117]

[113] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 14 and 16? November 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 189.
[114] Thaddeus Coleman Pound (1832-1914).
[115] *Cutting*, pp. 4-5.
[116] The nearest Pound got to writing a conventional memoir was *Indiscretions or, Une Revue de Deux Mondes* originally published by Three Mountains Press in 1923. It focuses on his forebears including Thaddeus and is included in Ezra Pound, *Pavannes and Divagations* (New York: New Directions, 1958).
[117] Ezra Pound to Stanley Nott 31 December 1934, *Nott*, p. 14.

The logic is that 'an economic background' qualifies Pound as an economist. Hemingway is among those unconvinced—'Since when are you an economist, pal? The last I knew you were a fuckin' bassoon player.'[118] Pound's reply is predictably outraged—'purrhapz you cd/ rise to the idea that after 15 years lookin at ECONomoks , I might be able to idem for blokes tryin to find their way about it.'—though there is the more rational argument, 'Econ/ is NOT so very damn interesting , BUT the capacity to think straight WORKS there as otherwhere.'[119] 'The capacity to think straight' is seen by the poet as offering universal access to any discipline or profession. Hemingway politely, though sardonically, backtracks: 'Glad you're an economist— I believe it—you don't have to show your papers. I may become a naturalist.'[120]

The conclusion of many was that Pound's interest in economics meant that his poetry was automatically marginalised and of less worth. 'You made your great mistake when you abandoned the poetry business, and set up shop as a wizard in general practice,' H. L. Mencken writes to the poet in 1936.[121] While the world may have seen Pound's diversions into politics and economics as closing the door on his poetical career, he regarded them as inextricably linked. He was a poet *and* an economist. He writes to Delmore Schwartz in 1938:

> When the HELL or in what context did I ever say I had given up or was giving UP literature for economics?
> I know peePull SAID I had given up poesy fer muZIK etc/but WHEN? where? In what time or space did either of these giving's occur?[122]

In this instance, it is easier to sympathise with Pound. His career is notable for its ability to combine a wide range of other activities as well as maintaining his poetical core. At times he was an impresario, composer, literary agent, editor and columnist. The ardent and political nature of his interest in economics was clearly off-putting to some. They may have seen it in Pound's own words as 'dilettantism or a poet's whim, or propaganda of a sect'. Some may have also suspected that he slipped into the role of a cheerleader for social credit with minimal broader understanding of the subject.

[118] Ernest Hemingway to Ezra Pound 22 May 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[119] Ezra Pound to Ernest Hemingway undated, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[120] Ernest Hemingway to Ezra Pound 22 July 1933, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2047026.
[121] H. L. Mencken to Ezra Pound 28 November 1936, *Globe*, p. 11.
[122] Ezra Pound to Delmore Schwartz 20 March 1938, *Globe,* p. 6.

The poet's over-confidence and salesmanship also characterise his pronouncements on economics. Writing to T. E. Lawrence, Pound takes credit for elevating economics to public attention:

> As for fashionable themese. Econ/ wasn't when I started.
> People blah about production/ but distribution has only reached the Bloomsbury scum , after 15 years as a suppressed topic.[123]

The suppressors are presumably the usual corporate and media suspects repeatedly identified by the poet. At the same time, Pound is quick to criticise others as 'pseudo economists'.[124] He is repeatedly dismissive of the economist John Maynard Keynes whose mistakes are to be associated with the Bloomsbury Group and not to agree with social credit originator C. H. Douglas and Pound. In Canto 22 he is parodied as Mr. Bukos—'I am an orthodox economist'. The poet's disdain for Keynes provides inspiration for verse in a letter to Phyliss Bottome:

> If his head's full of Pigou
> We are in a bloody stew
>
> But if he sat with Keynes
> It wd/ muddle better brains
>
> Than the keptun's or the bozun's or the crew's.[125]

The lightness of this is offset by the poet reprimanding Bottome, an old friend from London, for her lack of knowledge on the subjects close to his heart:

> There is too much in yr/ last page or so, that I might have to contradict/ and yr/ real ignorance of the specific case is too great for you to venture to write about it.

[123] Ezra Pound to T. E. Lawrence 12 December 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122586.
[124] Ezra Pound, 'Letters to Woodward', *Paideuma*, Vol. 15, Spring 1986, No. 1, p. 114.
[125] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome undated 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.

> At any rate I decline to be used as advertisment for soothing syrop I dont believe in.[126]

The impression is of the poet remaining staunchly true to his well-informed beliefs in the face of amateurs and dilletantes. The tone of Pound's anti-Keynes rants worsens during wartime. To Prince Ranieri, he writes: 'Also INCURABLE disease of co ntinuing to mention and BUILD UP reputaions of Keynes and other shits. who ought to be killed , and if can't be reached , ought to be ignored.'[127] Being ignored, as the poet-economist Pound increasingly was in the 1930s and 1940s, is seen as one level lower than being killed.

In March 1933 the poet is confident enough to lecture at the Università Commericiale Luigi Bocconi in Milan on 'An historical background for economics'.[128] There is no doubt that Pound was well read in economics. His reading was led by his untutored belief that he had the answer to the challenges facing economists: social credit. Having established his solution, Pound's reading tended to be supportive of his standpoint.[129] This might be interpreted as a reflection of the poet's observation that 'the utility of education or of knowing the subject is mainly to know *what* one *needn't* bother to do. *The pt. from* which one can start to do one's own bloody bizniz'.[130]

There are some examples of Pound actually looking into the future and making a case for something which could credibly happen. One of the instances is his argument for a shorter working week. To the communist Mike Gold, he writes: 'one does not have to be a communist to be convinced that a four hour day; four days a week, for all male between the ages of 20 and 40, is not only enough; but is all that is now possible for a social balanced order in a country possessing machinery.'[131] An article in the *Chicago Tribune* quotes Pound—'The Chi/ Trib/ interviewed me in 1931 with a head line on 5 hour day.'[132]—and more light-heartedly he writes to Viola Jordan 'wot I want is a 30 hour week fer th woikin man, anna 30 hour day fer personal use. and so forth'.[133] The debate about working

[126] Ezra Pound to Phyllis Bottome May/June 1935, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122525.
[127] Ezra Pound to Prince Ranieri 14 May 1941, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122625.
[128] *Nott*, p. 61.
[129] Even so, he happily to confesses to James Laughlin that his grasp of his own income and professional and personal economy is non-existent—'I don't know what it costs to live anywhere. I used to have the ambition of getting ten bucks a week. I am now too muddled to know where it goes or how it comes (when it does).' Ezra Pound to James Laughlin 27 November 1933, *Laughlin*, p. 7.
[130] Ezra Pound to James Vogel 21 November 1928, Paige, p. 298.
[131] Ezra Pound to Mike Gold 16 October 1930, Beinecke EP; *Globe*, p. 13.
[132] Ezra Pound to Robert McNair Wilson 18 March 1934, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/17122650.
[133] Ezra Pound to Viola Jordan 7 April 1936, BD https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2037866.

hours and the working week is ongoing nearly a century later with growing support and practice of a four-day working week.[134]

However he acquired his economic knowledge, it is something the poet is desperate to have affirmed. There is no sense of imposter syndrome—a poet reinventing himself as an economist—but instead a simmering resentment from Pound that his economic knowledge is not acknowledged. In 1937 he asks James Dunn of *Globe* magazine to alter his biographical note to reflect the recent publication of a series of three articles in the Italian economics journal *Rassegna Monetaria*:[135]

> As it aint edt./ job to belittle contributors..you might in Biog. Brev. note that the publication ofmy article on Economic Orthology in current
>
> RASSENA MONETARIA
>
> definately puts me on the map as an ECONOMIST = I don't mean I wasn't one before. but the opposition could until today have said it was a dilettantism or a poet's whim, or propaganda of a sect.[136]

As he writes, the poet finds himself under-cutting his own argument. His desire for recognition means that he sees a brief biographical note as validation which, in itself, suggests he is not an economist. This also runs counter to his strident unwillingness elsewhere to edit or provide a short biography. This battle may be seen as one between authenticity and inauthenticity, the poet fighting for recognition of his knowledge as an economist while having a track record of adopting personae, aping the stances of others and speaking in multiple voices.

The tensions in Pound's mind are clear in a 1935 letter to E. E. Cummings:

> can anyone spill it that Sir. Monty Webb[137] is quotin me in free silver paper in Karachi (Injy(s coral strand) and I am printed In old Madrid, in Olde Madrid, where whoosses made the kid, and that Odon Por is or sez he iz quotin me at length in the next Cultura Fascista. (He zin charge of the Instituto di Politica Internazionale.

[134] For example, James Walker and Rita Fontinha, 'The four-day week: The pandemic and the evolution of flexible working', Henley Business School White Paper, 2020.
[135] *Rassegna Monetaria*, XXXIV, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10 (May/June, July/August and September/October, 1937).
[136] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 2 September 1937, *Globe*, p. 142.
[137] Montague Webb (1869-1938), British author and businessman, based in Karachi, wrote on the case for monetary reform.

> CAN by christ anybodt gey my M/I/N Econ/ printed NOW
> so"z bichrist we can get on with Kulchr an the amenities and not HAVE to stay here writin about econ/ fer ANOTHER blasted ten years of crop restriction and bums cadgin ha pence
> and that bastardly shit Schacht out with a beggin box for brlin Christmas??
>
> DAMN if I don't want to be a ECONOMIST all the rest of my life, why dont the bastids find out that I AM one, and then let me quit it.[138]

The list of his achievements and recognition as an economist has a familiarly desperate air: being quoted in India, Spain and potentially the in-house publication of the Italian Fascist Party. There is a childlike tone to the remainder of the letter: a plea to be recognised as an economist and then to be able to bow out and move on. The logic is self-defeating in that a willingness to depart from the economic world so readily suggests that the poet was never an economist in the first place.

The desire for validation goes to the heart of the definition of authenticity—'the fact or quality of being authoritative or duly authorised'. Pound's letters, especially in the 1930s, are his quest for authorisation, to be recognised for his economic knowledge and yet their tone and style work against this recognition. The one group of people the poet largely avoids communication with are economists.

[138] Ezra Pound to E. E. Cummings 28 April 1935, *Cummings*, p. 65.

10: PART OF THE PROCESS

10.1: A Pisan postscript

In practical terms, Ezra Pound's letters from Rapallo came to an end on 3 May 1945 when he was arrested by two Italian partisans. He never lived permanently in the town again. Initially imprisoned with the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) in Genoa, the poet was transferred after three weeks to the Army Disciplinary Training Center at Pisa where he was kept in a cage exposed to the elements. After a month, Pound was moved to a more comfortable tent, but remained in the Pisa compound until 17 November when he was transported to Rome and from there to Washington DC and incarceration in St Elizabeths. During this time, he was only allowed to write to Dorothy and this provided a channel for the manuscript of *The Pisan Cantos* which were largely written between late June and the middle of October 1945. Nevertheless, the energy, momentum, subject matter, writing style and *dramatis personae* of the correspondence—and the many contradictions it displays—found their way into poetry. Indeed, one of the most intriguing—and unexplored—aspects of *The Pisan Cantos* is the relationship between the manifold contradictions in Pound's correspondence and the precarious equilibrium of this part of *The Cantos*. As Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz describe it, 'the nervous pastiche of public and private references' is central to the correspondence and long-established before infiltrating Pound's poetry.[1]

Though Pound's life and reputation were permanently tarnished by his arrest and imprisonment, *The Pisan Cantos* won the Bollingen Prize in 1949 and resuscitated his poetic standing. Even so, he remained imprisoned until April 1958.

The physical and emotional demands on Pound during this period were enormous. The 59-year-old poet was prolific in spite of the discomforts. The process of the creation of *The Pisan Cantos* was remarkable. Parts were written on toilet paper. Handwritten drafts were mailed to Dorothy who passed them onto Olga Rudge whose daughter, Mary, then typed the drafts of her father's work on Olga's old French Corona typewriter, left behind after Rudge's house—referred to as 'No. 60' by Dorothy to avoid using Olga's name—had been searched and many of the poet's papers removed. The typed manuscript was then returned to Dorothy who passed it back to the poet. Sometimes the deliveries went via

[1] Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (eds.), *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), pp. vii-viii.

cafés in Rapallo—Dorothy writes: 'Have pondered yr. cantos. Will now get them typed at No. 60—via Dante's so they should be safe.'[2] The use of cafés had the advantage of the poet's wife and his mistress not meeting. Later in 1945, the process was refined. Dorothy reports: 'I got the bunch of Cantos via Base Censor: No. 60 is typing the copies & putting in Greek—after wh. I am inserting Chinese Characters in legible manner—(but not for printing). They then go on to Possum and Laughlin. I hear the new version of Kung, & Cantos, are safe in U.S.A. but I am sending Cantos to Jas because of the Chinese.'[3]

Even in prison, Pound manages to create a stream of correspondence throughout the world. He is no longer the one writing many of the letters, but he remains their restless and relentless instigator. The complex process of liberating the drafts of *The Pisan Cantos* is barely mentioned in the poet's correspondence with Dorothy. Decades of managing an ornate epistolary, literary and campaigning life provided helpful practical preparation. Pound continued to defy the logistics of isolation—even in a prison camp during a world war. It is also notable that the situation made revising drafts difficult, if not impossible. '*The Pisan Cantos* are exceptional for the lack of significant revision,' notes Massimo Bacigalupo.[4] In this *The Pisan Cantos* may also be compared to the poet's letters.

10.2: From memory

During his confinement in Pisa, Pound was allowed to use a typewriter—largely because his American jailers recognised that it was a means of maintaining the poet's mental equilibrium.[5] In his letter of 23 September 1945 he encloses five typed pages which are a copy of Canto 81 and the opening of Canto 82—'Here is a first bit typed—I don't know whether the earlier parts of the ms. are intelligible as haven't read thru 'em yet. Anyhow—more human than a dull letter—& in parts mild enough to suit mother. Send it up hill to be copied. I spose the <u>little</u> typewriter is still there.'[6] It is notable that poetry is regarded by Pound as 'more human than a dull letter'. At a time when the reassurance of 'a dull letter' would have been significant, he prefers poetry as a declamation of his good health. Whether 'mild enough' or not, Isabel Pound was unimpressed: 'After five months

[2] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 13 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 131. It is apt that Dante's café was an element in Pound's poetical escape from purgatory. The café is also mentioned in Canto 78.
[3] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 13 December 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 217.
[4] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. 203. There is not universal agreement on this. Ronald Bush suggests Pound had developed some of the ideas for *The Pisan Cantos* beforehand and that the degree of revision was greater than he suggested. Ronald Bush, 'Modernism, fascism and the composition of Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*', *Modernism/Modernity,* Vol. 2, No. 3, September 1995.
[5] There are parallels with the wartime experiences of the British author P. G. Wodehouse. He was interned, borrowed a typewriter and was highly productive, producing the novel *Money in the Bank*. He went on to share his experiences on German radio which damaged his reputation. Sophie Ratcliffe (ed.), *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (London: Hutchinson, 2011), p. 296.
[6] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 23 September 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 91.

undisturbed (sic!) I expected something more valuable,' Dorothy reports as Isabel's comment on reading her son's latest work.[7] The notion of imprisonment accused of treason being 'undisturbed' is perverse, but it suggests that Isabel had bought into the idea—indeed, she may have helped create it—that time and space being made available to her son for writing was all that mattered.

On 28 September the poet provides an update on his progress with the cantos:

> Haven't heard from you yet, but apparently that is nothing to worry over as mail from Rome takes a week / as from the U.S.A. Also sent you a wad of canto a few days ago. Dont know that it will be passed, as probably unintelligible. Anyhow, I have done 70 or 80 pages. Some of it good, whether intelligible to anyone who hasn't read early parts I don't know. Some of it must be comprehensible.[8]

The confusion of not hearing from Dorothy while sending such an amount of new material means that the poet repeats himself on his progress and is again downbeat:

> I sent you one extract from new CANTI. Here are two more. I have done a Decad 74/83 (about 80 pages this typescript), which dont seem any worse than the first 70.[9]

On 8 October he writes to Dorothy to say he has received her first letter and repeats that he has written ten cantos. A week later, with uncharacteristic uncertainty, he reiterates his concerns about the new group of cantos—'I doubt if the new cantos are the best, but lets hope they are no worse than the first 71.'—and is unusually pessimistic about whether they will be read: 'The new Cantos are simpler in parts, there is a certain amount of new technique but good only in so far as no one will see it.'[10] It is difficult to determine what Pound regards as 'new technique' and how or why the reader wouldn't be able to see it. His lack of confidence is as close to an admission of human frailty the poet allows—though, for Pound, this is a significant one. Blind and bold confidence in his work is normally a constant in his correspondence.

[7] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 15 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 133.
[8] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 28 September 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 97.
[9] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 2 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 101.
[10] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 15 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 137.

At a practical level, *The Pisan Cantos* are a remarkable display of adaptability and discipline. Pound was without the accoutrements of his constant correspondence—paper, envelopes, address book, filing system. Without his approved literary canon at hand, *The Pisan Cantos* are a feat of memory, a defiant demonstration of the health and vitality of his mental faculties—and also of his steadfast adherence to his passions and opinions. With Poundian efficiency, Dorothy's letters are speedily integrated into the manuscript. Describing her journey home from visiting her husband in Pisa, Dorothy writes of traveling through Tuscany: 'Carrara splendid–it snowed the night I was in Massa, & the tops were snow-white, next a.m., as against stone-white.'[11] This is picked up in Canto 84: 'Carrara/snow on the marble/snow-white/against stone-white/on the mountain.'

In an October 1945 letter, having read the poet's latest work, Dorothy writes:

> I am getting stupider as I get older. Of course all these last, apparently, scraps, of cantos, are your self, the memories that make up yr. person. Is one then only a bunch of memories? i.e. a bunch of remains of contacts with the other people? Gawd—but it might be a reason for making the other people's memories contain something pleasant, from oneself.[12]

It is a strangely delayed realisation for someone in their late fifties to appreciate that their behaviour and treatment of others is remembered. Dorothy's comment soon features in Canto 76: 'just getting stupider as they get older.' Pound does not respond to Dorothy's thoughts on the nature of memory and being remembered—at least, in letter form.

10.3: Contradictions redux

Imprisonment meant that Pound's contradictions were expressed in a new context. Even in prison, Pound imagined himself playing a vital diplomatic and educational role in the post-war world. Unencumbered by remorse and able to focus on his work, in Genoa Pound spent his time translating Confucius. 'I have been doing Confucio e Mencio, for american reader, if any,' he writes matter-of-factly to Dorothy during his first weeks of confinement.[13] The task was given urgency and focus by his belief that Confucius could offer valuable lessons to the victorious Americans. For the poet, the past is a constant

[11] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 5 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 115.
[12] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 13 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 131.
[13] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 24 May 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 49.

reference point, insights and art from history are ready solutions to present difficulties. At the height of the Second World War in 1942, Pound circulated a pamphlet explaining that the most useful service he could do would be to place before the public lines from Confucius. True to his word, selected slogans from Confucius and Cavalcanti were distributed by the poet around Rapallo.[14]

Repeatedly Pound's correspondence suggests that literature could solve a contemporary problem or issue. Literature is equated with power—'Properly, we shd. read for power. Man reading shd. be man intensely alive. The book shd. be a ball of light in one's hand.'[15] He retains a consistent faith that literature—specifically that created by him—might hold the key to political and cultural progress. In 1940 he writes to Katue Kitasono suggesting *The Cantos* as useful reading for the Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek:

> If you can get Chang Kai Chek to read my Cantos 52-61 may be he wd/ make a sane peace. I see that his side kick Kung/ has got his fingers burned/ and I should/ THINK it was rightly, as he has NOT followed his great ancestor's teachings.[16]

There is nothing in Kitasono's correspondence to suggest he has any link to Chiang Kai-shek.

The disjunction evident throughout his correspondence between the poet's actual and perceived power continues. Again, his feelings of power are brutally contradicted by the stark reality of his position. On the day before his arrest, he descended the salita from Olga Rudge's house and told some American soldiers that he wanted to be taken back to the United States 'to give information to the State Dept'.[17] In Genoa when questioned he offered himself up as a peace negotiator with the Japanese and suggested his interrogators should send a telegram to President Truman.[18] In a memo to J. Edgar Hoover, one of Pound's interrogators reports:

> The Subject stated that he believed he could negotiate a peace between the United States and Japan, because in November of 1943, at Salo, Italy, he had met two

[14] Noel Stock, *Reading the Cantos: A Study of Meaning in Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge, 1967), p. 46.
[15] *Kulchur*, p. 55.
[16] Ezra Pound to Katue Kitasono 25 August 1940, *Japan*, p. 93.
[17] Julian Cornell, *The Trial of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 52.
[18] *EP/DP*, p. 7.

> Japanese who were from the Japanese Embassy, and they were surprised to learn that he was familiar with Confucius and Femolosas [sic]. He advised further that he would appeal not to the Japanese militarists, but to the ancient culture of Japan.[19]

The poet's faith in the power of culture (and in himself as a representative of the world of culture) to bridge apparently impossible divides remained defiantly strong, undimmed by his own experiences and his manifest and repeated failures to build such bridges. This appears hopelessly naïve, but it is a rational extension of Pound's long-held and loudly articulated views: if civilisation is important and shaped by a civilising elite then it is a credible negotiating tool during wartime in the hands of a member of that elite.

The changing reality is sometimes difficult for the poet to grasp. In Canto 74, out of habit or hope, he is still using the fascist calendar used in his letters—'Pisa, in the 23rd year of the effort in sight of the tower.' And, illusions of being able to connect to the powerful are maintained. Pound suggests 'someone who "knows what it is about" ought to be able to talk to Stalin in his OWN language namely Georgian, that I would have done it given the chance. What is the use talking to such a man thru an interpreter'.[20] Even at this stage, Pound is convinced of the validity and usefulness of his role on the global diplomatic stage. Small details, such as his inability to speak Georgian, are swept aside in the creation of his logical follies.

What is strange is that Pound doesn't pursue or even suggest lines of contact to other people of genuine political power. In October 1945, five months after being arrested, Pound advises Dorothy to re-kindle his connection with Senator Tinkham to exert his believed influence on world affairs. This is done in a relaxed manner belying the poet's dire situation: 'I think the time has now come when it wd / be suitable for you to write to Unkle George, The Hon. G.H.T. House of Representatives Office Building Washington D.C.'[21] There is no evidence that Dorothy does so. James Angleton, who visited Pound in Rapallo and paved the way for the poet to speak at Yale, was a person of rising influence in American counter-intelligence.[22] Pound does not attempt to get back in touch. The poet is

[19] Memorandum of Frank L. Amprim to J. Edgar Hoover 26 May 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 51.
[20] Ezra Pound to Dorothy Pound 17 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 143.
[21] Ibid.
[22] During the war, Angleton ran the Italian desk of the Office of Strategic Services' X-2 counter-intelligence operation. It has been suggested that he visited Pound when he was incarcerated in Genoa. David C. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), p. 17. Angleton and Pound's communication had ceased around 1941 and there is no corroboration in Pound's correspondence of a Genoa meeting between the two men.

connected to important literary figures with influence—from Hemingway to Eliot. It may have been that pride or ego got in the way or, perhaps, there was some realisation from Pound that they knew the truth of his personality and opinions. His network of contacts included a clutch of politicians from throughout the world. And yet, in this moment of crisis, Pound nurtures the most grandiose of unrealistic notions—brokering global peace—rather than confronting the more prosaic and immediate problem of extricating himself from prison and a charge of treason.

For once there is no real sense of urgency in his correspondence. Suggesting Dorothy write to George Tinkham, Pound's wording is diffident—'I think the time has come'—rather than the constant entreaties for urgent action which occur in his letters under normal circumstances. There is steadfast but blind hope that the poet's day in court will come or the folly of pursuing him will suddenly become clear. For someone used to proactively making things happen—or at least attempting to do so—Pound's tone is strangely, though perhaps realistically, passive.

10.4: Style hangovers

Pound's hoped-for forays into global politics fall by the wayside in captivity. Rather than pursue his notions of exerting political influence his energies become largely focused on poetry. *The Pisan Cantos* act as a replacement for the abruptly ended correspondence. The links between the two are clear from the early lines of Canto 74:

> Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano*
> by the heels at Milano
> That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock.

The image of the bodies of the Italian dictator and his lover Clara Petacci is a haunting one. Five lines later, Pound writes: 'To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars.' Dioce has been interpreted as a rhyme of 'Duce'. Of course, Mussolini is a regular character in Pound's letters of the 1930s. There is frequently a level of faux intimacy suggesting that the poet and the ruler are on first name terms—they had met after all. Calling him 'Ben' continues the manufactured friendliness of Pound's letters. There is another layer of playfulness which links the Mussolini of Canto 74 with the character of

Pound's Rapallo correspondence. In a letter to Bronson Cutting the poet conflates Mussolini with Theodore Roosevelt:

> The Bull Moose down in Rome, is the best thing in Europe. Gives 'em what they can understand. Drained the swamps, more grain and better grain.[23]

The Bull Moose was the name of a party created by Roosevelt in 1912 after he lost out in the Republican nomination process. There is no pertinent similarity between the two leaders, but the suspicion is that Pound simply developed from labelling the dictator 'Muss' into 'moose' and so to 'Bull Moose'. The phonetic joke takes precedence over any credible political comparison.[24] *Bos* means bull in Latin and Pound routinely refers to Mussolini as 'the boss'. And so, however bizarrely linked, 'the dead bullock' makes an appearance in Canto 74. At once the poet is allusive, playful and circular.

Some elements of *The Pisan Cantos* are lifted from epistolary memories rather than experiences. For example, he refers to Bunting's time in the Canaries at the end of Canto 77—'If Basil sing of Shah Nameh, and wrote/ *Firdush'* on his door.' This is an example of Pound's memories being directly drawn from correspondence. The poet never visited the Canaries but received a number of evocative letters from Bunting which he utilises.[25]

Many of the stylistic characteristics of Pound's Rapallo correspondence are in evidence in *The Pisan Cantos*. He moves from language to language. Canto 74 alone features sections in Greek, Italian, German, French, Latin and Russian. There are abbreviations which are used as standard in his correspondence—'the wild birds wd not eat the white bread' (74), 'I sd/why? He thought he wd' (80), and many more. With surprising delicacy, abbreviations are also used to disguise the language of the other prisoners—'the prime s.o.b', 'in the a.h. of the army' "all of them g.d. m.f. generals c.s. all of 'em fascists"' (74). 'I heard it in the s.h.,' he writes in Canto 77, referring to hearing about the end of the war in the latrine. Pound's long-standing enthusiasm for phonetic spellings is also manifest—in Canto 80 he recalls an encounter in London:

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[23] Ezra Pound to Bronson Cutting February/March 1934?, *Cutting*, p. 107.
[24] Elsewhere in his correspondence, Pound refers to William Carlos Williams as 'Bull', an approximate phonetic version of Bill. For example: 'Friends of ole Bull is a good idea.' Ezra Pound to Ford Madox Ford 31 January 1939, *P/F*, p. 167.
[25] See *Bunting*, pp. 66-120. Bunting discusses his Arabic translations in a letter to Pound on 19 April 1934 and ends with a quote from Fidursi. *Bunting*, pp. 77-80.

'Yurra Jurrmun!'
'Well yurr szum kind ov a furriner.'

The use of multiple languages, abbreviations and phonetic spellings is a staple feature of Pound's correspondence. In *The Pisan Cantos* it adds to the feeling of fragmentation as human speech needs to be decoded and foreign languages translated.

Another relationship between *The Pisan Cantos* and Pound's correspondence is the appearance of many of the same campaigning elements, themes and intolerances. *The Pisan Cantos* is compromised by the repetition of prejudices previously aired extensively in his prose and correspondence. (Bunting described *The Pisan Cantos* as, 'Discursive: the opposite of his own first commandment for poetry, namely, condensation.'[26])
While celebrating Pound's poetic achievement in *The Pisan Cantos*, A. David Moody notes that 15 lines in Canto 74 'are the only clearly anti-Semitic lines in *The Pisan Cantos*'.[27] This has the appearance of an excuse. Anti-Semitism certainly features. For example:

the yidd is a stimulant, and the goyim are cattle
in gt
proportion and go to saleable slaughter
with the maximum of docility. but if a place to versalzen,,,? (74)

and the goyim are undoubtedly in great numbers cattle/whereas a jew will receive information (74)

For readers of Pound's correspondence this sounds familiar. Intolerances are recycled, repeated and linked to other of his causes. Sweeping racial stereotypes are used: 'and the dog-damn wop is not, save by exception,/ honest in administration any more than the briton is truthful' (77). His opposition to the League of Nations regurgitated: 'Geneva the usurers' dunghill' (78).[28] A universal conspiracy of usury is reported: 'but the local loan lice provided from imported bankers/ so the total interest sweated out of the Indian farmers/ rose in Churchillian grandeur.' (74) and 'Never inside the country to raise the standard of living/ but always abroad to increase the profits of usurers' (74). The BBC is criticised—

[26] Basil Bunting to Louis Zukofsky 17 June 1949, *Bunting*, p. 190.
[27] A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet Volume 3: The Tragic Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 143.
[28] The League of Nations came to an end soon after in April 1946.

'Bracken is out and the B.B.C. can lie/ but at least a different bilge will come out of it.' (76). Freud is dismissed: '"He won't" said Pirandello/ "fall for Freud,/ he (Cocteau) is too good a poet."'(77). What Pound regards as the sorry state of the American constitution is referenced—'and the Constitution in jeopardy/ and that state of things not very new either' (74)—and politicians fused together in a mass venal conspiracy—'and all the presidents/ Washington Adams Monroe Polk Tyler / plus Carrol (of Carrolton) Crawford/ Robbing the public for private individual's gain' (74). Pound's enthusiasm for social credit—even at this point in history—remains—'taxes are no longer necessary/ in the old way if it (money) be based on work done' (78). The ability of governments to take a more proactive role in finance, as championed by social credit, is referred to repeatedly, a familiar refrain from his correspondence. In Canto 74 the same point is repeated: 'the fleet at Salamis made with money lent by the state to the shipwrights'; 'nevertheless the state can lend money/ and the fleet that went out to Salamis/ was built by state loan to the builders'; 'and the state *can* lend money/ as was done/ by Athens for the building of the Salamis fleet'. And it is brought in again in Canto 77: 'the state *can* lend money/ as proved at Salamis'. There are also references to stamp scrip—in particular its introduction in Wörgl, Austria, 'a nice little town in the Tyrol in a wide flat-lying valley'; 'Gesell entered the Lindhaeur government/ which lasted rather less than 5 days' (74).[29] All of these hobby horses regularly feature throughout the Rapallo correspondence.

Given Pound's situation and the defence for his actions which had developed in his mind, it is surprising that the topic of free speech doesn't occur with the same level of repetition. 'Free speech without free radio speech is as zero/ and but one point needed for Stalin,' he writes (74). This is as near to a coherent defence of his wartime radio broadcasts the poet ventures. While he labours many other points, the practical application of free speech in new media is not something he returns to. He also overlooks the inconvenient reality that wartime tends to compromise freedoms exercised as routine in peacetime. Indeed, *The Pisan Cantos*—and Pound's letters during the war—do not allow a global conflagration to impinge significantly.

[29] Various experiments with local currencies in the twenty-first century suggest that Pound's faith in stamp scrip may not have been completely misplaced. See Celia de Anca, 'Our emotional attachment to local currencies', *Harvard Business Review*, 5 November 2014, https://hbr.org/2014/11/our-emotional-attachment-to-local-currencies.

The repeated opinions and prejudices are accompanied by a *dramatis personae* familiar from Pound's Rapallo correspondence. In *The Pisan Cantos* his correspondents exist alongside his fellow inmates:

> "an' doan you think he chop an' change all the time
> stubborn az a mule, sah, stubborn as a MULE,
> got th'eastern idea about money"
> Thus senator Bankhead
> "am sure I don't know what a man like you
> Would find to *do* here"
> Said senator Borah
> Thus the solons, in Washington,
> On the executive, and on the country, a.d. 1939. (84)

The juxtaposition of the language of the prisoners with Senator Bankhead, a renowned opponent of civil rights in pre-war Alabama, is perhaps more pointed than even the poet imagined. The combination of leading political figures, such as Senator Borah, with prisoners provides a stark counterpoint. As portrayed in *The Pisan Cantos* there appears more immediate humanity in the prisoners than the politicians. Indeed, *The Pisan Cantos* offer a fragmented taste of Pound's literary past while retaining a sense of personal distance. A powerful contrast to the procession of literary figures is provided by the vividly human and present voices of Pound's fellow inmates which are recited and repeated throughout—rare evidence of the poet having listened. In this *The Pisan Cantos* is determinedly in the present. In response to her husband's latest drafts, Dorothy Pound writes: 'What seems to come from more recent experience is v. interesting.'[30]

10.5: Those memoirs

In September 1945 Dorothy writes to her husband:

> I only hope captivity is not proving bad for yr. health, & that you are able to work at some writing or other. The moment perhaps for those 'Memoirs?'[31]

[30] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 10 October 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 129.
[31] Dorothy Pound to Ezra Pound 25 September 1945, *EP/DP*, p. 91.

At this time, Dorothy didn't know that the poet was working on more cantos. That apart, it is a note which is strangely discordant with Pound's personality and much-repeated prejudices. There could have been no doubt that whatever the circumstances he would have been engaging in 'some writing or other'. The phrase is almost designed to irritate the poet as it has the suggestion of trivialising his all-important work. The final line is even more confusing. As we have seen, Pound had a vigorous dislike for anything even vaguely personal or emotional. Given this, it is difficult to believe that Pound had seriously or even flippantly contemplated writing his memoirs or that Dorothy genuinely thought that this was a potential literary project for the imprisoned poet. The nature of their own marriage might have caused her to pause before encouraging her husband to capture his life on paper.

The Pisan Cantos could never be categorised as 'memoirs' but, contrary to all of Pound's pronouncements, they are full of reminiscences. In Canto 74 he remembers a trip to Gibraltar in 1908 as well as his pre-Rapallo travels in troubadour country in 1912, 1919 and 1924—'at Limoges the young salesman/ bowed with such french politeness "No that is impossible."' His periods in London and Paris are alluded to throughout. Among the characters from London are Alice and Edmund Dulac (friends from 1914 mentioned in Canto 77); an early benefactor, Margaret Cravens ('O Margaret of the seven griefs/ who hast entered the lotus' (77)); Edward Upward—'old Upward:/ not the priest but the victim' (74); the publisher Elkin Mathews—'Elkin Mathews, my bantam' (82); and, more obscurely, Michio Ito, a Japanese dancer who performed in a Yeats play in 1916—'So Miscio sat in the dark lacking the gasometer penny/ but then said: "Do you speak German?"/ to Asquith, in 1914.' (77) There is passing reference to 'the studio on the Regent's canal' (77) and poignant possessive despair on the state of the city he has hardly visited in 25 years: 'God knows what else is left of our London/ my London, your London.' (81).

From Paris there are mentions for Hemingway; George Antheil; Natalie Barney ('Natalie said to the apache' (80)); Nancy Cunard ('Nancy where art thou?' (80)); Amelie Rives, a novelist the poet knew in Paris and Rome—'Amber Rives is dead' (74); and Ralph Cheever Dunning, a poet Pound met in Paris—'by Babylonian wall (memorat Cheever)' (76). More obscure Parisian figures feature, such as Colonel Goleyevsky: '"You sit stiller" said Kokka/ "if whenever you move something jangles."/ and the old Marchesa remembered a

reception in Petersburg/ and Kokka thought there might be some society (good) left in/ Spain, wd. he care to frequent it, my god, no!' (74).

The poet's memory is, at times, more detailed. He recalls Basil Bunting:

> Bunting
> doing six months after that was over
> as pacifist tempted with chicken but declined to approve
> of way 'Redimiculum Metellorum'
> privately printed
> to the shame of various critics

This refers to the English poet being jailed as a conscientious objector and the title of his 1930 collection whose title translates as *A Garland of Chamberpots*.

Pound, not a bon viveur by the standard of his peers, provides a tour of great restaurants from London, Paris, St Petersburg, Vienna and New York City—'Sirdar, Bouiller and Les Lislas,/ or Dieudonné London, or Voisin's' (74) plus 'the cake shops in the Nevsky, and Schöners/ not to mention der Greif at Bolsano la patronne getting older/ Mouquin's or Robert's 40 years after/ and La Marquise de Pierre had never before met an American/ "and all their generation".' Later in the same canto, French restaurants lead again to memories of his French walking tours—'Sirdar, Armenonville/ Or at Ventadour the keys of the chateau;/ rain, Ussel,/ To the left of la bella Torre the tower of Ugolino.' And Canto 76 sees a reprise: Mouquin, Voisin, 'cake shops in the Nevsky,/ the Grief, Schöners, the Taverna, Robert's, La Rupe'. This feels like a memory test, a self-imposed examination of the poet's mental capacity. There is little sense of wisdom having been generated by the experiences mentioned. '*The Cantos* are a travelogue, a collection of moments of perception (and imperception, as Pound carefully pointed out). They record a journey in progress, without benefit of hindsight,' observes Massimo Bacigalupo.[32] This holds true in *The Pisan Cantos:* the journey has not come to an end.

Often periods are juxtaposed. Literary figures from London and Paris crowd together, such as in Canto 74:

[32] Massimo Bacigalupo, *Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020), p. xv.

Fordie that wrote of giants
and William who dreamed of nobility
and Jim the comedian singing:
"Blarrney castle me darlin'
you're nothing now but a StOWne"
and Plarr talking of mathematics
or Jepson lover of jade
Maurie who wrote historical novels
and Newbolt who looked twice bathed
are to earth o'ergiven.

Ford Madox Ford, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, the novelist Maurice Hewlett, the Irish novelist Victor Plarr, the poet Edgar Jepson, and the poet Sir Henry Newbolt are compressed into a few lines with a memory of each. The memories are akin to a shorthand means of organising names in the poet's memory rather than personal reminiscences. Indeed, there is a lack of emotions and any suggestion or description of the poet's own feelings. When some emotion is anticipated—such as in the final line quoted above—the poet takes refuse in archaic phrasing. Making little use of the first-person pronoun, names are dropped in something of a contextual vacuum.[33]

James Joyce's idiosyncrasies are remembered with a fondness not offered to others. In Canto 76, Pound recalls 'Jim's veneration of thunder and the/ Gardasee in magnificence' and, in Canto 77, Joyce's exacting demands before joining his friend on holiday—'Mr Joyce requested sample menus from the leading hotels'. There is a humorous warmth here—though the reality was that Pound and Joyce barely corresponded in the last decade of the novelist's life and didn't see each other after Pound left Paris.

Yeats fares notably badly in *The Pisan Cantos*. This is a continuation of the general souring of perception apparent throughout the 1930s in Pound's correspondence. His erstwhile mentor is portrayed as perennially old:

[33] In the lengthy Canto 74, for example, there are six instances—'in Tangier I saw from dead straw ignition'; 'I rode out to Elson's/near the villa of Perdicaris'; 'It cannot be done./and this I had from the monument'; 'I surrender neither the empire nor the temples plural'; 'I don't know how humanity stands it.'; and 'until I end my song'.

the problem after any revolution is what to do with your gunmen
as old Billyum found out in Oireland in the Senate, Be'dad! (80)

And there was also Uncle William
labouring a sonnet of Ronsard. (80)

Old William was right in contending
That the crumbling of a fine house
Profits no one
(Celtic or otherwise) (80)

Yeats comes off worse in comparison with others from Pound's past. In Canto 82 he is directly compared with Ford Madox Ford:

and for all that old Ford's conversation was better,
consisting in *res* non *verba,*
despite William's anecdotes, in that Fordie
never dented an idea for a phrase's sake
and had more humanitas.

In Canto 83 Pound recalls their time together at Stone Cottage in the Ashdown Forest and provides a parody of Yeats' overly elaborate style of recitation:

so that I recalled the noise in the chimney
as it were the wind in the chimney
but as in reality Uncle William
downstairs composing
that had made a great Peeeeacock
in the proide ov his oiye
had made a great peeeeeeeacock in the...
made a great peacock
in the proide of his oyyee
proide ov his oy-ee
as indeed he had, and perdurable.

Old and comically theatrical, elsewhere Yeats is described vaguely walking around—'Uncle William dawdling around Notre Dame/ in search of whatever.'—and expressing elitist sentiments—'sd Mr Yeats (W.B.) "Nothing affects these people/ Except our conversation."'(83). Even a pithy humorous comment from Yeats in Canto 77 is loaded with the suggestion that he scarcely had the strength to utter it—'"Sligo in heaven" murmured uncle William/ when the mist finally settled down on Tigullio.' The portrayal of Yeats as a spent force links back to similar comments in many letters over the preceding years.

The lyrical nature of some parts of *The Pisan Cantos* encourages the reader to believe they are more personal and emotional than they actually are. The most quoted lines—'What thou lovest well remains,/ the rest is dross.' (81)—suggest a poet laying bare his soul. Again, they use archaic language and, in doing so, Pound retains a distance, protected by multiple fragments. Even so, some sections suggest a degree of humble introspection—for example, this section of Canto 74:

> To study with the white wings of time passing
> is not that our delight
> to have friends come from far countries
> is not that pleasure
> nor to care that we are untrumpeted?
> filial, fraternal affection is the root of humaneness
> the root of the process
> nor are elaborate speeches and slick alacrity.

It is difficult to associate Pound with the dismissal of speech-giving and 'slick alacrity' when he supported a dictator who excelled at the former and himself pursued the latter. The talk of friends visiting from afar accords more comfortably with Pound's experience (and echoes the exile's letter in *Cathay*). There might also be a new-found humility in the line about not caring if 'we are untrumpeted', a rather sad double negative.

Other lines in *The Pisan Cantos* offer a distilled and romantic version of Pound's life story. In Canto 80:

so that leaving America I brought with me $80
and England a letter of Thomas Hardy's
and Italy one eucalyptus pip
from the salita that goes up from Rapallo.

This sounds like an oft-repeated story, but it is barely mentioned in Pound's correspondence. In 1937 he writes to James Dunn:

I landed in Gibraltar with 80 bucks/ the Yusuf, &
And two suit cases/ one full of mss//
Mohameed Ben Abt el Hjameed, etc/ Liceo Calpe, in Canto XXII.[34]

The Pisan Cantos offers a neatly cryptic romantic version of events—the young poet with limited funds moving to a new continent then moving on again holding a treasured literary memento from a major writer and finally the distilled essence of Rapallo, the eucalyptus pip. Typically for Pound it is open to interpretation. The stereotypical image of the poverty-stricken artist is contradicted by the fact that $80 in 1908 translates to more than $2400 in current values. It was a useful sum to begin a new life. Pound did correspond with Hardy—originally the young poet wrote to the elder statesman in 1915 asking for his opinion on his poetry. Pound was flattered that Hardy had actually already heard of him. While he clearly had a high opinion of Hardy, it was Yeats who attracted Pound to Europe and who befriended him. In this memory triptych, the eucalyptus is also an interesting choice. Mussolini planted large numbers of eucalyptus to drain marshes near Rome and this may have lodged in the poet's mind. Pound equates eucalyptus with memory—'and eucalyptus that is for memory/ under the olives, by cypress, mare Tirreno' (74).

While it would be difficult to imagine Pound creating a comprehensive and systematic memoir, significant correspondents and characters in his life—both personal and professional—are notable by their absence from *The Pisan Cantos.* Close literary relationships such as with T. S. Eliot, Louis Zukofsky and William Carlos Williams are all but ignored. Williams is mentioned in passing ('perhaps only Dr Williams (Bill Carlos)/ will understand its importance' (78)); Eliot similarly ('Mr Eliot may have/ missed

[34] Ezra Pound to James T. Dunn 30 March 1937, *Globe*, p. 156.

something, after all, in composing his vignette/ periplum.' (77)) while Zukofsky is not referenced.

Pound's memories, as expressed in *The Pisan Cantos*, are as clipped as they are cryptic. They rarely develop into illuminating anecdotes—except in the cases of Joyce and Yeats—and the presence of the poet and his emotions is minimal. In this there are strong echoes of the poet's correspondence which remains low on emotions and personal feelings.

The Pisan Cantos can, therefore, be read and seen in a continuum with Pound's epistolary style and content. Fragmented, written with familiar abbreviations, phonetic spellings, foreign languages, themes and characters, *The Pisan Cantos* are shaped and informed by Pound's correspondence—and, practically, delivered by means of correspondence. As such, they provide a poetical finale to his Italian letters. In this sense, his letter writing saved Pound's poetry. Isolated and alone the poet returns to the preoccupations of his correspondence, the characters it features and connects, and the restless style evolved over the previous decades. The bravura energy and sense of performance of the letters is retained. At the same time, the poet is informed by his immediate context and able to tune in to its voices to a greater degree than was his habit in Rapallo.

10.6: Beyond Pisa

The contradictions repeatedly exposed and developed in the poet's correspondence—and which I have examined in this thesis—provide a lens to understand his life and work in keeping with his own perspective on chronology and also in accord with the fragmented nature of such a productive life. 'Chinese saying "a man's character apparent in every one of his brush strokes",' Pound writes to George Santayana.[35] The quantity and intent of his correspondence, as well as the development of a unique epistolary style, suggest that Pound's letters represent a significant brush stroke in his literary career. 'Pound was of course one of the really great letter writers. Among American correspondences perhaps only Emily Dickinson's letters can compete with his in originality,' writes Brita Lindberg-Seyersted in her introduction to a collection of the poet's letters to Ford Madox Ford.[36] Certainly, there is an incendiary energy behind the correspondence—fueled by the array of contradictions at work in his mind and letter writing. While being highly individualistic, they provide a continuing source of a sense of community and grouping between those

[35] George Santayana (1863-1952), philosopher. Ezra Pound to George Santayana 16 January 1940, Paige, p. 430.
[36] *P/F*, p. xiv.

whose work, ideas, careers and lives were touched by the poet. Given the trajectory of Pound's literary career and his route to St Elizabeths it is tempting to describe the period after his arrest as possessing a tragic element.[37] The biographer A. David Moody labels 'the tragic years' in Pound's life as dating from 1939 until his death. This provides coherence to the biographical narrative. The sudden dramatic event of the poet's arrest is a convenient fulcrum, leading as it does to years of imprisonment and the poet's final exile of self-imposed silence.

In this light, the publication of *The Letters of Ezra Pound* in 1951 can be interpreted as an attempt to re-delineate Pound's legacy as a literary figure and influence. The book's title suggests completeness and coherence rather than the very limited selection it is. The book was published in the wake of the success of *The Pisan Cantos* at a time when the poet was still imprisoned. The selection avoids the worst excesses of his pro-fascist, anti-Semitic, anti-American and pro-Mussolini correspondence. It marginalises his relationship with Olga Rudge and ignores a whole swathe of fascists who corresponded with the poet. Subsequent collections of Pound's letters have focused on his correspondence with literary figures (Cummings, Ford, Joyce, Williams and Zukofsky), politicians (Borah and Cutting) and editors (Nott and *Globe*). Large amounts of his correspondence remain uncollected though available from Yale's collection. A collected edition of Pound's letters is a huge and unlikely undertaking, but there remains potential for further collections focused on particular areas of his correspondence—such as with fascist academics and politicians, and with Olga Rudge. This would allow a fuller understanding of the poet's life and experiences in Rapallo.

My thesis challenges the established interpretation of Pound's time in Rapallo. Indeed, apart from the works by Massimo Bacigalupo—*Ezra Pound, Italy and The Cantos* (New Orleans: Clemson University Press, 2020)— and Lauren Arrington's *The Poets of Rapallo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) there are no book-length examinations of this period. Instead, the focus tends to be on Pound's war-time broadcasts, economic campaigning and anti-Semitism. In reality, these were all significantly shaped by his years in Rapallo and are notable elements of the correspondence from 1925.

[37] See, for example, Nick Selby, *Poetics of Loss in The Cantos of Ezra Pound: From Modernism to Fascism* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).

My argument is that the poet's correspondence suggests that his 'tragedy', if such it be, was not the dramatic denouement of Pisa and St Elizabeths, but was played out slowly over two decades in exile from the cultural mainstream—the period of 1921-39 that Moody describes as 'the epic years'. The letters from Rapallo suggest that the poet's literary achievement as an artist, champion of the unknown, and creator of causes and communities, was largely set before arriving in the town. Pound's letters between 1925 and 1945 can be interpreted, therefore, as his irritable, argumentative and energetic raging against the declining light. The twenty years in Rapallo were a period of slow decline from his peak period of influence and creativity.

During this time, by virtually every measure he might have set himself, Pound was a failure. Indeed, in his correspondence clear ambitions are established in a variety of areas. He talks of igniting a literary movement (discussed in Chapter 3), launching a new Renaissance (Chapter 4), challenging established educational institutions (Chapter 6), seeing social credit broadly accepted and implemented, and promulgating fascism (however he construed it). None of these things came to pass. The letters provide damning documentation of Pound's ambitions and his failure to match them.

As we have seen, during the 1930s sales of his books were small. They neither ignited the intelligentsia nor connected with a mass audience. *The Cantos* continued to appear, increasingly weighed down by historical research and detail, but also labouring under the weight of the poet's political and economic agenda, as well as the lack of either a coherent structure or direction. His non-fiction works, such as *Guide to Kulchur*, received a decidedly mixed response. The key publications he had once contributed to had either disappeared or did not accept his work. His prose writing aped the style of his letters and was not in demand. He was no longer the weathervane of literary tastes and excellence. Wealthy patrons spent their money elsewhere.

Another legacy which can be questioned is that of the 'Ezuversity', Pound's self-styled antidote to what he regaded as the hidebound educational institutions of the time. The poet's disciples—recipients of his wisdom and networking largesse by way of the Ezuversity—had mixed literary careers: Bunting went decades without producing anything of note; Zukofsky ploughed an increasingly lonely furrow; and Ronald Duncan's energies were diluted by the sheer opportunistic range of his output. Only James Laughlin,

through the success of New Directions, and Mary Barnard, who forged a literary career at a distance from her mentor, were consistently productive and successful. No group or coterie, as often described by Pound, emerged from his hectoring, lecturing and connecting.

Beyond literature, for all the noise and energy Pound expounded on economic and political matters the net result was near zero. Roxana Preda's work on Pound's economics-related correspondence and output gives a clear sense of how much time and effort was expended by the poet in this area.[38] Yet, for all the thousands of epistolary diatribes, articles, broadcasts and conversations, in histories of economics, Italy and fascism, Pound scarcely merits a footnote. Among his correspondents there were a handful of converts to the cause of social credit—including Gorham Munson and Paul de Kruif—but there is never a sense of any sort of movement coalescing around the poet or the issue. Indeed, the closest to this happening has been the creation in 2003 of the contemporary political group 'CasaPound'. This Italian fascist organisation takes the poet as an unlikely inspiration and regurgitates some of his most unpleasant intolerances.[39]

For all the revelation of Pound's failings and contradictions the correspondence is a vital—and often overlooked—part of his legacy. In one of his broadcasts, the poet made an observation on letters which encapsulates the mix of persuasion, performance, immediacy and hope for proof demonstrated by his own correspondence:

> A letter PROVES what the bloke who wrote it wanted the receiver to believe ON the day he wrote it.[40]

With their myriad of contradictions, originality of style, voice and content, and sheer profusion, the letters from Italy are central to Pound's corpus as well as to an understanding—however founded in incoherence—of his life and work. The poet's letters from Italy illustrate his sheer energy and personality. While he had no room for psychological introspection, the letters deliver virtuoso displays of his opinions, knowledge, prejudices and playfulness. They provide a vivid example of the life of an artist with the constant setting of standards and artistic values. The craft of the writer is

[38] See Roxana Preda (ed.), *Ezra Pound's Economic Correspondence 1933-40* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007).
[39] Pound's remaining family have made clear their opposition to CasaPound. Matthew Feldman writes about CasaPound in his chapter 'Fascism for the Third Millennium' in Matthew Feldman, *Politics, Intellectuals and Faith* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2020), pp. 157-178.
[40] Leonard W. Doob (ed.), 'Ezra Pound speaking', *Radio Speeches of World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978), p. 138.

powerfully embodied by the poet—especially evident in his continuing dedication to his art in the face of physical and mental adversity when imprisoned. As Pound's ambitions and plans are confused and thwarted by events, the letters demonstrate that day-to-day life reveals itself in ways which defy a coherent narrative. They display the contradictions which bring dynamic tension to the poet's output, and which paradoxically provide a sense of continuity and consistency enabling the poet's life to be better understood. The correspondence makes clear that the contradictions are not occasional intellectual detours or confusions but lie at the heart of Pound's worldview and experience.

There is an irony in that the most compelling legacy of Pound's letters may not lie in their political and literary polemic but in their presentation and public nature. His correspondence is performative, an epistolary soap-box which he repeatedly mounts—often to regurgitate the same arguments in the same ways. In so doing Pound challenges the norms and expectations of letter writing.

A recurring theme in literary correspondence over the centuries is the balance between the private act of creation and the public audience for that created. Letters frequently expose the disquiet experienced by authors as their work finds an audience and new expectations of the author are born. The editions of the letters of the contemporary poets Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, for example, are notable for their discomfort when their privates lives and experiences become public property.[41] Pound's letters display few such qualms. Instead, correspondence is treated as a public forum—even with an audience of one. Free of the complications of emotions or personal news, the poet uses letters as a means of public declaration and to seek public influence. It can be argued that Pound's letters seek to reinvent literary correspondence as a campaigning, networking and badgering force for change.

With his imprisonment, the year 1945 was a punctuation point in Pound's life and also in terms of his literary and epistolary career. *The Pisan Cantos* ensured that it was not an end point for his poetry. Throughout his journey back to the United States, his period of imprisonment in St Elizabeths and during the remainder of his life in Rapallo and Venice, Ezra Pound remained a committed correspondent. The letters of his later years tend to be more abbreviated, condensed and casual, notes rather than grand calls to literary and

[41] Christopher Reid (ed.), *The Letters of Ted Hughes* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007) and Christopher Reid (ed.), *The Letters of Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 2023).

political action. They are written in the same idiosyncratic style, but there is a lessening of energy, a reduction in the sense of a literary and argumentative performance being staged for the reader's benefit. The momentum of the 1930s—even if often imagined and manufactured by the poet—dissipates.

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Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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