Cutting a Shape in Time: towards a musical analysis of Poundian verse

For Pound, 'Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree',[1] and part of this meaning was its rhythm. Rhythm was not only important but carried semantic weight: 'Rhythm MUST have meaning. it can't be merely a careless dash off, with no grip and no real hold to the words and the sense, a tumty tum tumty tum tum ta.'[2] The rhythm of poetry could be separated from the words, as Pound suggested: 'Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement.'[3] Indeed, Pound's famous statement that 'I believe in absolute rhythm'[4] was followed by an indication that his interest and belief was one which came from progressive study: 'In 1910 I was working with monolinear verbal rhythm but one had already an adumbration that the bits of rhythm used in verse were capable of being used in a musical structure, even with other dimensions.'[5]

In his *Treatise on Harmony*, Pound follows a long explication of the manner in which rhythm can be seen to approximate melody inasmuch as it is based on frequency, by suggesting that 'the negroes of darkest Africa are probably right when they say that from simple beating of their drums they can imagine other instruments. And the proportions, even very complicated proportions can be established by simple percussion.'[6] The music of poetry was not to be relegated to mere analogy, the like of which he himself alludes when writing to John Lackey Brown in 1937: 'Take a fugue: theme, response, contrasujet. *Not* that I mean to make an exact analogy of structure [...] viede, incidentally, Zufosky's experiment, possibly suggested by my having stated that the Cantos are in a way fugal.'[7]

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[1] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 28.
[2] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc, 1950), p. 49.
[3] Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, Olga Taxidou, eds, *Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 375.
[4] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1962), p. 80.
[5] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia,* p. 82.
[6] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia,* p. 89.
[7] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941,* p. 294.

Rather then the analogical relationship between music and verse assumed by later critics,[8] Pound saw an isomorphic relationship between them that had ramifications for practitioners of verse: 'in short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music.'[9] When Pound, paraphrasing Dante in his *De Vulgaria Eloquentia*, suggested that 'Poetry is a composition of words set to music,' [10] the music he meant was rhythm.

In March, 1913, Pound wrote to Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, and stated that 'I'm deluded enough to think there is a rhythmic system in the d---- stuff, and I believe I was careful to type it as I wanted it written, i.e., as to line ends and breaking *and capitals*. Certainly I want the line you give, written just as it is. [...] In the 'metro' haiku, I was careful, I think, to indicate spaces between the rhythmic units, and I want them observed.'[11] This extract in itself shows both that he wished his poetry to be read in a certain way - otherwise, why would he be so intent that his typography be adhered to - and that a large part of this expected reading would take the form of rhythm; 'there is a rhythmic system in the damned stuff.' For Pound, poetry was not merely a system of words and meters, but something altogether more complex. As he later wrote to Agnes Bedford; 'Kattegorically DAMN the woman. I refuse to spoil one of the best bits of Provençal by making a rush crib in twenty minutes to order. Meaning is all tied up with sound.'[12]

Pound expected that the music with which he imbued his poetry would be understood and translated by his reader, and that this music, specifically the rhythm of the piece, held great semantic importance: rhythm holds meaning. Discussing the *Cantos* in a letter to Hubert Creekmore in 1939, Pound writes; 'ALL typographical disposition, placings of words *on* the page, is intended to facilitate the reader's intonation, whether he be reading silently to self or aloud to friends. given time and technique I might

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[8] See R. Murrey Schafer: 'they [the Cantos] might be better appreciated by measuring them against musical forms, especially the fugue.' R. Murray Schafer, ed, *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 22.

[9] Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, Olga Taxidou, eds *Modernism* p376

[10] T.S. Eliot, ed, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 437.

[11] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 10.

[12] D.D. Paige, ed, *'The Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 161.

even put down the musical notation of passages or "breaks into song."'[13] Pound here seems to be presenting the poem as both a printed 'score' and a performance, the typography acting as a kind of score for the performance, whether it be internal or external. Pound's comprehension of the difficulties inherent in this typographical representation of sound is underlined in a letter to Harriet Monroe in 1918: 'I shall probably do some more work on sound. anything really made to speak or sing is bound to lose on the page, unless the reader have some sense of sound. this I cannot help. Simply the vers libre public are probably by now as stone blind to the vocal or oral properties of a poem as the 'sonnet' public was five or seven years ago to the actual language.'[14] It is certainly true that whenever Pound talks of people reading his poetry, he expects them to read it aloud and indeed castigates Yeats for his inability to read the poetry of Burns with anything other than a Yeatsian cadence: 'years ago Yeats was struggling with my rhythms and saying that they wouldn't do. I got him to read a little Burns aloud, telling him he cd. read no cadence but his own, or some verse like Sturge Moore's that had not any real characteristics strong enough to prohibit WBY reading it to his own rhythm.'[15]

When we consider the importance that Pound attaches to an accurate reading, or performance, of his verse, we cannot help but come to the conclusion that, for Pound, an inaccurate performance would necessarily result in a misapprehension of the verse's rhythm, and therefore its meaning. As the verse would now, in its garbled performance, take on a measure of the reader's meaning, this could be viewed as a mistranslation of the text, or a hijacking of meaning: 'words cling so firmly to the mode of perception, to the truth as experienced by the individual, that the unreflecting adoption of another's diction can only render false the very attempt to communicate meaning.'[16]

In his essay 'A Retrospect', Pound proposed three principles of poetry, one of which was 'As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in

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[13] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 322.
[14] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 127.
[15] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, p. 180.
[16] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays*, quoted in Marianne Korn, *Ezra Pound: Purpose / Form / Meaning* (London: Middlesex Polytechnic Press, 1983), p. 65.

the sequence of a metronome',[17] and Grieve has suggested that 'the correspondence of the third dictum to Pound's notion of *melopoeia* is straightforward, although even here we should note that the predominant concern for concision governs the principle. Composing "in sequence of the musical phrase" rules out verbal padding to fill in a predetermined meter.'[18] Pound 'distinguished three kinds of poetry: *logopoeia*, roughly poetry of ideas and precise expression; *phanopoeia*, poetry of image; and *melopoeia*, "wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning."'[19] 'It is mainly for the sake of melopoeia that one investigates troubadour poetry',[20] wrote Pound in the *ABC of Reading*, before going on to suggest that 'The best smith, as Dante called Arnaut Daniel, made the birds sing IN HIS WORDS; I don't mean that he merely referred to birds singing…'[21] Melopoeia was more than merely a form of onomatopoeia: 'melopoeia is "the art of composing melodies; the part of dramatic art concerned with music (OED): it derives from the Greek, *melos*, (song), and *poiein*, (to make).'[22]

Pound conceived his poetry as music, as a form in which the rhythm held as much meaning as the words. Much of his interest in rhythm can be traced back to his relationship with the Provençal poets, notably Arnaut Daniel. As Pound states in his essay 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', 'He [Arnaut] conceived, that is, a manner of writing in which each word should bear some burden, should make some special contribution to the effect of the whole. The poem as an organism in which part functions, gives to sound or sense something - preferably to sound *and* sense gives something.' [23] It was his work on Provençal troubadours such as Arnaut which informed and inflamed his ardour for the rhythmical aspect of poetry. Through the

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[17] T.S. Eliot, ed, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound,* p. 3.
[18] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), p. 128.
[19] R. Murray Schafer, ed, *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticis*m (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 4.
[20] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading,* p. 52.
[21] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading,* pp. 53-4
[22] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound: Through the Medieval Provençal Aspect* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellor Press, 1996), p. 67.
[23] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' in *Selected prose, 1909-1965,* ed., William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 27.

Troubadours he traced the prosodic work of Dante, '*de Vulgari Eloquentia,*' in which he sought the equivalent to the Greek quantitative meter, that is, the manner in which the Greek poets measured their syllables by duration, thus leading to their poetry having a rhythmic value encoded in the text alongside the semantic values of the words themselves.

In his 1885 edition of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Jebb not only includes an analysis of Greek quantity in the form of musical notation, but in his introduction suggests that 'A syllable of speech, like a note of music, has three conditions of utterance: (1) *length of tone*, (2) *strength of tone*, (3) *height of tone*.'[24] He analyses the state of modern poetry thus: 'In modern poetry, Accent is the basis of Rhythm. In old Greek poetry, Quantity is the basis of Rhythm, and Accent has no influence we can perceive.'[25] It does not, therefore, seem surprising that Merrit can suggest that '[Pound] found in instrumental music a rhythm (like that of ancient Greek poetry) based on quantity rather than accent.'[26]

As a man whose desire to grasp the sum total of knowledge of poetry bordered on the obsessional, it seems unsurprising that he should reach back as far as the twelfth century in his detective work. Having identified that 'most other nineteenth century authors [unlike Browning] were unaware how much they were imposing their consciousness and style on Provençal material,'[27] Pound did not merely attempt an academic re-assertion of the troubadour art in his work *Spirit of Romance*, but actually resurrected what he considered to be the rhythms and melodies of the works which were sung rather than recited. Pound considered that the rhythms were either written out or extant within the text itself, while the melody was extemporised. In 1913, Pound, along with the pianist and composer Walter Morse Rummel, released a selection of the works of the troubadours *Hesternae Rosae*,[28] Pound here was

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[24] Sir Richard Jebb, ed, *The Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), p. xix.

[25] Sir Richard Jebb, ed, *The Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles,* p. xix.

[26] Robert Merrit, *Early Music and the Aesthetic of Ezra Pound: Hush of Older Song* (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter; The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), p. 114.

[27] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 39.

[28] Full title being *Hesterae Rosae, Serta II, Neuf Chansons des Troubadours des XIIième et XIIIième Siècles* (London, Augener 1913).

attempting to resurrect what he felt was a lost art, and two years previously, in 1911, Pound and Rummel had released four poems of Pound's set to music. Pound was not merely trying to show what the troubadour poetry sounded like, in an attempt to regain its full meaning, but was seemingly attempting to resurrect the art of the troubadours in his own works.

It may seem that Pound abandoned this work as, apart from the opera *Le Testament de Villon* in the early twenties, he never again set his verse to music, but this is far from the truth. While I have already shown that Pound considered utilising musical notation to accompany his poetry, he felt that the poem itself contained enough information for the reader to understand it properly, and this included its rhythm. As he had already stated in 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', 'the sense of musical period is innate in us. […] If, however, the verse is made to speak [as opposed to merely setting it to music] it may have in it that sort of rhythm which not only makes music unnecessary, but which is repulsive to it; or it may have a rhythm which can, by some further mastery, be translated into a music subtler than either poetry or music would have separately attained.'[29] For Pound, the diligent poet can provide enough information within the poem for this rhythm to be apparent, and for meaning thus to be secure. He does not suggest that this is necessary for all poets, however, as he also states that 'When it comes to poetry, I hold no brief for any particular system of metric.'[30]

Technique and self-expression

Dante wrote that 'the proper result can never be attained without strenuous efforts of genius, constant practice in the art, and fully available knowledge.'[31] Pound also believed in technique as the forerunner to efficient self-expression, and for him, this technique included what he learnt at the feet of his troubadour tutors such as Daniel. Pound's attitude to technique was akin to a musician's. Indeed, he stated that 'the ordinary piano teacher spends more thought on the art of music than does the average

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[29] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 37.
[30] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris'*,* p. 33.
[31] Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* trans A. G. Ferrers Howell (London: Rebel Press, 1973), p. 58.

'poet' on the art of poetry'[32] and that, when he talked of technique in a poetic sense, he spoke 'of technique seriously studied, of a searching into cause and effect, into the purposes of sound and rhythm as such, not - not by any means - of a conscientious and clever imitation of the master of the moment, of the poet in vogue.'[33] It was this belief, that poetry was an art to be studied and mastered, just as music is, and not one which is the result merely of a visitation by the appropriate muse at the appropriate time, which led Pound to embark on his years of study: 'In London as late as 1914 the majority of poetasters still resented the idea that poetry was an art, they thought you ought to do it without any analysis, it was still expected to "pour forth".'[34] This study was largely concerned with the effective translation of poetry, both in its semantic and rhythmic, or metrical aspects, yet also included an interest in early music, excited by the writings and performances of early music pioneer Arnold Dolmetsch, from which Pound learnt the importance of the appropriate sound and performance to a work's meaning. According to Robert Merrit, Pound 'taught himself much in twenty years about instrumental music and developed an increasingly precise, technical vocabulary.'[35]

Pound was also interested in other art forms, notably sculpture, and in his essay 'Gaudier-Brzeska', noted that 'this is the common ground of the arts, this combat of arrangement or "harmony." The musician, the writer, the sculptor, the higher mathematician have here their common sanctuary.'[36] Pound's words here bring to mind his belief that, as in the Chinese ideogram, form invokes meaning, one he explored both in his article with Fenellosa, 'The Chinese written character as a medium for poetry' and in his *Cantos*. When Pound suggests that syllables are 'the medium wherewith the poet cuts his design in TIME,'[37] we can see Merrit's point regarding the connection between Pound's verse and his interest in sculpture: 'Archibald Henderson points out that "Pound's critical vocabulary reveals quite

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[32] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 31.
[33] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 34.
[34] Ezra, Pound, *ABC of Reading,* pp. 74-5.
[35] Robert Merrit, *Hush of Older Song* p. 113.
[36] Robert Merrit, *Hush of Older Song,* p. 43, quoting Gaudier-Brzeska, p. 121.
[37] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.199.

clearly that he judges poetry and sculpture in the same terms,'"[38] and this seems to be because both sculpture and poetry are arts of shaping.[39] Pound, naturally, explains it in more concrete terms: '*These disjunct paragraphs belong together, Gaudier, Great Bass, Liebniz, Erignea, are parts of one ideogram, they are not separate subjects.*'[40]

Pound's belief in the relationship between technique and self-expression led him to apprentice himself to poetry by translating, transcribing and learning as much as he could about all of its forms: 'it has been my hope [...] the analysis of primitive systems may be of use in building the new art of metrics and of words.'[41] As has already been stated, possibly the most important apprenticeship was to Arnaut Daniel, not just because, as Schafer suggests, 'Pound learned the aesthetic of sounds from Daniel […] He learned the difference of legato phrasing and staccato, and all that lies between'[42], but because it was necessary for Pound to translate the words themselves into English.

In his work *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound suggested that 'like all fine poetry, it [Daniel's] can be well judged only when heard spoken, or sung to its own measure.'[43] Daniel's work used both rhyme and sound in order to get its message across, as 'it must be remembered that the art of the trobadours consisted not only in the writing of verse but in the composing of music as well, and words and music, the two halves of the provençal song, should, whenever possible, be studied together.'[44] Unlike Pound's work, however, 'in Dante's and Daniel's art the syllable count and rhyme are important fixed elements'[45] yet it was from the study of these more standardised form that Pound came to greater appreciate the effect of sound, and especially rhythm, on verse: 'One can form no accurate estimate of Daniel's technical skill in rimes, and more especially onomatopoeia - making the sound follow the sense or word - save

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[38] Robert Merrit, *Hush of Older Song,* p. 101.

[39] For a more in-depth investigation into the relationship between Pound's verse and his interest in sculpture, see Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1965).

[40] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1960), p. 75.

[41] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound* , p. 10

[42] R. Murray Schafer, ed., *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, p. 9.

[43] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1952), p. 26.

[44] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 71, quoting Smythe, *Trobadour Poets* (1912).

[45] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 77.

from a study of the original provencal.'[46] Pound's translations and study culminated in a collaboration with pianist Walter Morse Rummel, producing in 1913 an edition of nine troubadour songs: 'together they gave "these melodies the rhythm and the ligature" which the medieval notation lacked (Rummel, 1912, preface).'[47] Indeed, as Dennis has stated: 'Pound remarks that "the notes do not register differences of duration". Musical notation is unnecessary because the durations are dictated by the length of the syllables. Pound wanted a quantitative metric system to replace the English qualitative system. In the latter the stressed accent is determined by the weight of the syllable, or by the overriding iambic pattern. in the former the poet attends to the relative length of the syllables [...] instead of assuming that syllables are either long or short, stressed or unstressed, the art of *motz el son* exploits sensitively the wide range of different sounds which words make.'[48]

While Pound was fully aware of the aspects of technique other than quantity, 'the Troubadours were melting the common tongue and fashioning it into new harmonies depending not upon the alternation of quantities but upon rhyme and accent,'[49] he still connected their work with earlier, classical forms: 'In the forms of Arnaut Daniel's canzoni I find a corresponding excellence, seeing that they satisfy not only the modern ear, gluttonous of rhyme, but also the ear trained to Roman and Hellenic music, to which rhyme seemed and seems a vulgarity.'[50] As Greek poetry was quantitative, where the syllabic durations were inherent in the words themselves, it seems unsurprising that Pound should describe 'Daniel's polyphony not just as the resonance of terminal sounds in the auditory memory, but also as a counterpoint of the entire rhythm-units which they shape.'[51] While Pound did not find all of his technique within the work of Arnaut Daniel, he appropriated much of it, in the same manner as he did that of Dante: 'Pound's "Treatise on metric" has absorbed the medieval epic poet's main conclusions and adapted them to modern conditions.'[52]

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[46] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance,* p. 28.
[47] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 71.
[48] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 74.
[49] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance,* p. 22.
[50] Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance,* p. 22.
[51] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 110.
[52] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 75.

Typically, Pound was not impressed by translations in general, 'translations of ...the troubadours are very unsatisfactory,'[53] and not only translated Cavalcanti and Daniel but also the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Seafarer.* Pound's views on the nature of translation were forthright, believing that the translator's job was to transmit the emotion of the poem, exactly: 'Translation is likewise good training, if you find that your original matter "wobbles" when you try to re-write it. The meaning of the poem to be translated can not '"wobble."'[54] As Berryman suggests, 'The importance that Pound attached to clarifying terms cannot be overemphasised,'[55] or, as Confucius would have it, 'ch'ing ming' [56]: call things by their right names. The relevance of this to both translation and to poetry is straightforward; poetry is, in effect, a translation. It is the job of the poet to translate the emotion felt or the point which is to be communicated, just as it is the translator's job to translate the text. As Grieve suggests, 'the fact that there is a seemingly unavoidable tendency to quibble over the question of originality in Pound's poetry clearly testifies to the inextricability of his two activities as poet and translator. Any poem is, in a sense, a translation.'[57]

Pound's activities as a translator enabled him to learn the manner in which poetry had been transformed over the ages, from the quantitative metrics of the Greeks to the modern-day insistence (as he saw it) on 'rocking-horse rhythms': "The fact that every masterpiece contains its law within itself, self-sufficing to itself, does not simplify the solution. Before we can discuss any possible 'laws of art' we must know, at least, a little of the various stages by which that art has grown from what it was to what it is.'[58] The fact that Pound felt that every masterpiece contained its law within itself goes some way to explaining how he could feel that readers of his poetry should be able to grasp the all-important rhythm. Whether Pound meant for *all* readers to have access to his poetry seems unlikely, however: the relentless complexity and over-

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[53] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 64, quoting the Criterion, I, 2 (Jan 1923), p. 153.
[54] Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect' in Eliot, T.S., ed, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 376.
[55] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft: Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (Epping: Bowker Publishing Company, 1983), p. 3.
[56] See Pound's *Guide To Kulchur*, pp. 15-21 for a more in-depth investigation.
[57] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics,* pp. 110-11.
[58] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 25.

writing of his imagery, citation and allusion alone make the idea of a populist Pound laughable. According to Marianne Korn, 'In his *Sonnets and ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* (1912), Pound argued for the existence of a secretive, deliberately-obscure poetry whose inner meaning could be understood only by the initiate.'[59] As Pound himself suggests, 'the order of words and sounds *ought* to induce the proper reading; proper tone of voice, etc, but can *not* redeem fools from idiocy, etc. if the goddam violin string is not tense, no amount of bowing will help the player, and *so* forth.'[60] Like the allusion, citation and myriad other techniques Pound utilised in his complex and layered poetry, rhythm is merely another, if seemingly overlooked, method of encoding his meaning in a musical sense, such that only those who have the knowledge and the skill can translate his poetry; his poetry that is itself translation.

Pound felt that these rhythms, this musical meaning, were apparent in the text for those with the skill and who were prepared to look. Hartman considers that 'prosody, to function as a prosody, must be shared'[61], which suggests that if Pound was working with a complex rhythmic prosody, it would possibly be comprehensible to only a few readers. This is not inconceivable, however, when we consider that Pound wrote to John Quinn in 1917 suggesting that 'nothing but ignorance can refer to the 'troubadours' as having produced popular art. If ever an art was made for a few highly cultivated people it was the troubadour poetry of Provence.'[62]

Transcription and translation

The immediate problem of how to approach a musical analysis of Poundian verse would seem to be the very difficulty in extracting the 'music' which Pound plainly thought was contained within his words. How are we, as readers, to reconstruct, with the aim of critical analysis, the 'music' of this verse, without recourse to merely aural, and thus highly subjective, representations? The answer to the first question would seem simple: we analyse the work as aurally represented by the poet himself. Thus we

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[59] Marianne Korn, *Ezra Pound: Purpose / Form / Meaning,* p. 16.
[60] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 323.
[61] Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 13.
[62] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 102.

can hopefully ascertain whether the music which Pound claimed was in his verse can be extracted for further analysis. Obviously, we need to be convinced also that the author is not simply reading his verse in a 'musical fashion' because he thinks it sounds nice that way - this possibility seems unlikely when we consider that he stated, in his translations that 'the rhythm of any poetic line corresponds to emotion. It is the poet's business that this correspondence be exact ...'[63]

We are looking for solid evidence of intent in the reading - we must approach this as if the words were a musical score which can be read in much the same way as Pound suggested Daniel's work or the quantities of Greek poetry can be read. We are looking to find the music extant in the verse. In this sense, the recording chosen, from 1939, twenty years after the poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* was first published, may in itself help us make these decisions: Pound may have changed his mind since the poem was published, amending it to give greater musical meaning,[64] or may indeed simply have forgotten how the 'tune' goes, thus suggesting that his music was not inherent in the work at all, but merely an intellectual conceit, a theoretical concept which Pound was unable to reproduce in practice. Pound noted, in his *Treatise on Harmony*, that 'Ernst Friederich Richter has said: "pure theory can not and should not concern itself with practice, for it has as sole aim the definition of the nature of the divers constituent elements of the art, without ever treating the special and particular cases which result from the employment of personal procedures."[65] It may well be that Pound's theory of immanent word-music was one which merely resided in the world of 'pure theory', that is, it is purely a method of analysis, and not one which allows performative practice beyond Pound's own 'personal procedures'. What is more certain, however, is that a metrical system based on time rather than accent is ripe for translation into musical notation, as Hartman has suggested: 'to scan accentual verse, one can only mark the accents [...] when a meter is based directly on time, however,

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[63] Marianne Korn, *Ezra Pound: Purpose / Form / Meaning,* p. 67, quoting Ezra Pound, Translations.

[64] Espey suggests that 'the most notable aspect of the text's successive states is the slow tidying up of the 1920 edition's more conspicuous errors […] taken together they do indicate that the process may not yet be completed' John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 23.

[65] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony,* p. 81.

quite elaborate systems become both possible and informative. They are as essentially musical as the meter itself. Latin macrons and breves could be translated without loss into quarter notes and half notes or any other diagrammatic representation of time values. Here lies the main burden English took on in adopting the Latin system. our dominant meter stands at some distance from musical principles; yet the system brings with it assumptions that apply only to a time-based prosody.'[66]

Indeed, if we consider that 'the troubadours relied on an immanent word-music,'[67] and Pound also studied Greek systems of poetry and music - 'Greek music was notated by pitch signs alone. It was the sound patternings of the text which provided the other two necessary elements to the notation of a musical line: the duration of the tones at each pitch, and the rhythmic groupings of these durations'[68] - it seems reasonable to suggest that Pound's text was, indeed, his score. It is then the musician, or poet, who is relied upon to make the music come alive once more in performance.

Once more, Pound's interest in early music provides another clue regarding his views of the musical score. Arnold Dolmetsch suggested that early music was scored simply, and the performing musician would add flourishes and accentual devices at will, depending on the conventions of the particular piece - such as a madrigal. This is interestingly mirrored in his experience with Arab folk musicians, especially considering the link between Arab folk music and poetry, and the link between this and the troubadour tradition: Pound's obsession with Daniel et al may well have formed many of his poetical ideas regarding rhythm, and these, in turn, may well have come from Sufi poets such as Hafiz: 'a preparation for further discoveries [...] I heard there, at Meknes, a quantity of Arab music, some of it dating back at least eight hundred years, as yet unspoiled by European influences. There were some songs closely resembling those of our troubadours. One famous Arab lutenist recognized at

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[66] Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse,* p. 37.
[67] Helen May Dennis, *A New Approach to the Poetry of Ezra Pound,* p. 72.
[68] John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 22.

once some of our melodies, but he said: "You play them plain; we should embroider them!"'[69]

Again we can see a relationship to Pound's interest in early music, the aim of which was, according to Robert Merrit, to 'establish or re-establish the original scoring, with neither transcription nor augmentation; to recover, partly by artistic insight and by inference from the music itself [...] the exact manner of fitting the instruments and playing them.'[70] This preoccupation reflects also Pound's views on translation, according to Grieve: '*Canzoni* is a book not only predominantly *of* translations (many of a rather special sort) but also *about* translation insofar as it proceeds out of Pound's technical and thematic preoccupations with this mode as a means of registering the loss of, and the possibility of recovering, the vitality and harmony of past literatures.'[71] I will, therefore, produce a transcription of Pound's reading of selected parts of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* as if it were a piece of music, and will then analyse the rhythms which result.

While I will be discussing my transcriptions of Poundian verse in great detail, there is a serious point to be made regarding the very act of musical transcription and its necessarily reductive nature. The alert critical reader will immediately grasp that, without access to the text discussed - the recording itself - and without the time or technique to attend to the reading with the necessary attunement of the ear to rhythmically diverse variables, he simply has my word for the accuracy of the transcription. This is, interestingly, a similar position to the one in which Pound found himself in relation to his 'translations' of certain works, such as 'Sextus Propertius': some critics suggested that his translation was poor because it refused to translate the meanings of the words precisely. Pound himself considered that the job of the translator was to transmit the meaning of the work: 'the skill Pound was proclaiming a year after composing his translation [translations from Heine] as the "technique of content," the poet's control over the "power of tradition" held within words and his

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[69] Mabel Dolmetsch, *Personal recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 168.

[70] Robert Merrit, *Hush of Older Song,* p. 10.

[71] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics,* pp. 116-7.

ability to release this energy through the art of "exact juxtaposition."'[72] This meaning, however, lay not in its semantics, but in its emotional meaning: 'Pound believed that the success of a translation did not depend on how closely it kept to the original wording, but on how closely it kept to the original author's emotion.'[73]

In this sense, a Poundian translation was an attempt to transmit the emotional intention of the author, not necessarily the words as they appeared on the page. This is particularly interesting considering that 'Pound has suggested the relationship between the themes of these two poems in a letter to John Drummond, "I wonder how far the *Mauberley* is merely a translation of the *homage to S.P.,* for such as couldn't understand the latter?" [fr rapello, jan 24, 1931, letter, p. 231] Michael Reck recalled a conversation with pound years later, when pound continued to insist upon this relationship: "At Saint Elizabeth's Pound irritated me by declaring that his poem 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' is merely a popularized version of his 'Homage to Sextus Propertius'.'[74]

For the purposes of my translation, however, we are interested in this concept because musical transcription is a necessarily reductive art: 'when the notational systems applied retrospectively to an existing performance, the exactitude is deceptive, because it is inadequate.'[75] It is simply impossible to listen to a piece of music and write down exactly what is heard. Musical notation does not allow for this, and if one were to do so, the resultant score would be far to complicated for any musician to re-translate back into sound. Musical notation, indeed, only became necessary in order to transfer the general idea of music over distance: 'Modern notation expanded to serve a different convenience, that of the composer. The problem was the same one that gave rise to the writing of language: to communicate with people distant in space or time.'[76]

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[72] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics,* p 121.
[73] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 106.
[74] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 31.
[75] Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz and Song* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 69.
[76] Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text,* p. 69.

In discussing a performance by the Modern Jazz Quartet of one of Ornette Coleman's improvisations, Hartman neatly elucidates the difficulties inherent in such a project: 'nothing could be further from Coleman's fluid rhythm, so essentially impossible to notate […] The MJQ seems to have found more or less conventional rhythmic patterns implicit in the tune, which they render distinct and show off in turn like facets; whereas for Coleman, exactly the point of the tune's rhythmic structure is its continuous, simultaneous ambiguity.'[77] This is a problem, however, most apparent in the transcription of improvisations, and I feel that Pound is not improvising.

Transcription is not only a reductive art but it is a relative one: the point of a transcription is to reproduce on paper the intention of the performer. It may be impossible to transcribe exactly the performance, yet we may be able to grasp the 'original score', though there will be problems which need to be inferred: little hiccoughs in otherwise flowing lines of sixteenth notes, for example. The performer may perform the piece rubato, in 'robbed time', yet there is still an intentional rhythm behind his pushing and pulling of the beat. What a transcription does is to isolate the most likely intention of the performer: no two transcriptions will ever be exactly the same. Musical score is a language, and as such transcription of a performance into notation is simply a translation. The transcriber must write down an imaginary score which he feels the performer would have been reading from, were he reading a score at all. Of course, the score for Pound was his text - the poem itself - but I am transferring this into musical notation.

There is an added difficulty in the transcription of read poetry, however; there is no easily discernible pulse. As a result the pulse can only be inferred from the work, assuming, of course, that the reading does not take the form of regular, easily discernible, 'rocking-horse rhythms' of meters such as the iambic pentameter. It is no surprise that Pound's 1939 reading of *Mauberley* does not take this form. The transcription of rhythms is a relative art - as one note length is only justified in terms of another note length, and by the inferred 'pulse' underneath the performance. The actual note length chosen is irrelevant, as it is the relationship between the notes

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[77] Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text,* p. 66.

which is being shown, not any absolute note length. All we can say about an eighth note is that its duration is twice that of a sixteenth note, and half that of a quarter note. It is on this basis that I have produced my transcriptions of Pound's readings. As Pound himself has stated, this is 'lateral motion, the horizontal motion, and the time-interval between succeeding sounds must affect the human ear, and not only the ear but the absolute physics of the matter.'[78]

Why *Mauberley?*[79]

'Few modern poems have received more notice than Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*.'[80] At least, this is what John Espey would have us believe, and it is this attention which initially draws one to the poem. Pound himself seemed to consider the poem of no little importance, not least with regards to what I have been discussing here, as he wrote to Mary Bernard: 'there aren't any *rules*. thing is to cut a shape in time. Sounds that stop the flow, and durations either of syllables, or implied between them, '*forced onto the voice*' of the reader by nature of the '*verse*'. (E.g., my Mauberley).'[81] With my interest being how Pound manipulated rhythms within his work, analysing a poem which he himself considered would force its rhythmic flow onto the reader's voice should not be an altogether surprising proposition.

With the attention, however, come disagreements, one of which has been whether the speaking persona is Mauberley or Pound himself, or as Espey would have it, 'whether the two [Ezra Pound and Hugh Selwyn Mauberley] are to be identified wholly or in part or not at all.'[82] Espey goes on to suggest that 'moving on to the age in which he lives, Pound characterises it in his own voice (II)'[83] whereas Grieve, for example, suggests that 'the entire sequence is spoken in the fictitious voice of Mauberley. If that voice is uncomfortably close at times to Pound's own voice, I see this as a virtue and not a defect, both a necessary consequence of his homage and a resource brilliantly

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[78] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony,* p. 84.
[79] For a full citation of the parts of this poem I used for my transcription, see appendix 1
[80] John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 1.
[81] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 254.
[82] John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* p. 13.
[83] John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* p. 15.

exploited.'[84] Indeed, Grieve goes on to cite the poet himself as an authority: 'The worst muddle they make is in failing to see that Mauberley buried E.P. in the first poem; gets rid of all his troublesome energies.'[85]

Beyond such detailed disagreements, however, is a larger raft of more interesting general contentions which highlight the confusion over the poem: many critics have considered its musical properties. Espey talks of 'The first line' underlying 'the musical form of the poem'[86] while later stating that 'the underlying theme and the underlying musical structure of *Mauberley* are apparent. The musical development takes the form of what might be called a double counterpoint, or a major and minor counterpoint.' [87] Berryman considers that '"Envoi" is Pound's positive example of "music just forcing itself into articulate speech," whereas "Medallion" exemplifies "sculpture or painting ...forcing itself into words."'[88] For Davie, 'the work was in fact written "by ear," by improvising and feeling forward from one poem to the next, not according to any pre-ordained scheme.'[89] While each critic uses the language of music and alludes to its importance, none quite gets to grip with it, preferring to stay firmly behind the argument that any rhythm within the poem is a result of metrical borrowings, such as that identified by Pound himself: 'the metre in Mauberley is Gautier and Bion's adonis; or at least these are the two grafts I was trying to flavour it with. Syncopation from the Greek; and a general distaste for the slushiness and swishiness of the post-Swinburnian British line (Cf. Dante's remarks in the DVE).'[90]

When considering the influences mentioned by Pound himself, Berryman suggests that 'Pound has Mauberley imitate masters's rhythm in order to suggest that Mauberley lacks the poetic ability to create his own, distinctive cadence. Mauberley apes masters.'[91] Of the school which believes the poem to be in Mauberley's voice, not Pound's, Berryman again borrows the language of music, suggesting that 'Mauberley,

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[84] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics,* p. 195.
[85] Thomas F. Grieve, *Ezra Pound's Early Poetry and Poetics,* p. 190.
[86] John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* p. 86.
[87] John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* p. 76.
[88] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 144.
[89] Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1965), pp. 98-9
[90] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 180.
[91] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 62.

but not Pound, copies Bion or masters in order to find an appropriate cadence. Pound, but not Mauberley, seeks to create a rhythm that is "uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.""[92] This is, of course, a reference to Pound's famous declaration which appeared, in various forms, in his *Treatise on Harmony*, A Retrospect and many other works: 'I believe in "absolute rhythm," a rhythm, that is, in poetry, which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. a man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.'[93]

The first transcription[94]

Possibly the first question which needs to be asked of the transcription of *Mauberley 1920*' is 'what evidence there is to support the contention that Pound's performance here is purposeful': in what way can we suggest that Pound was, indeed, viewing the text of the poem as, in effect, a musical score? Throughout his reading there are initial similarities of phrasing, such as the resemblances between the first pair of lines and the second pair, but these similarities are not, in themselves, enough to prove that Pound was 'performing the score' of his own work. Likewise, the rhythmic mapping apparent between the fifth and sixth lines is not enough to infer intention on Pound's part. What is, however, striking, is the rhythmic shift between the second and third stanzas of the verse. Between the lines 'His tool / the engraver's' and 'Firmness, / not the full smile' there is a radical shift in the underlying, rhythmic pulse, with both tempo and 'feel' changing. The technique Pound uses here is one termed 'metric modulation' by musicians, and is a complex concept to explain, and an even more difficult effect to perform.

Before I delve into the mysteries of metric modulation, however, I will analyse the more standard rhythmic devices Pound uses here - the feels and the time signatures employed. It is interesting that Pound uses complex time signatures throughout - starting with 5/4 in the first pair of stanzas, 12/8 11/8 and 5/4 again in the second pair.

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[92] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 63.
[93] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 221.
[94] See Appendix Two

appendix two

Turned from the "eau - forte by Jac que mart"

[Par]

To the strait head of Mes sa li na His

true Pen el o pe was Flau bert His

[And]

tool the en gra ver's

$\flat \flat \flat = \flat \flat \flat$

Firm ness not the full smile His

art but an art in pro file

Co lour less Pi e ro Fran ces ca Pi sa

nel lo lack ing the skill to forge A cha ia

this transcription © Pete Langman 2002

It is not merely the use of changing time-signatures which is interesting, though this is echoed in the work of composers such as Stravinsky, and may well have been

derived from his study of the Troubadours and early music as well as being part of the modernist preoccupation with complexity, but the change in feel he used as well. Pound alerts the reader to his knowledge of such forms, and his intention to use whatever seems appropriate to the words, in his essay 'The Tradition':

'no one is so foolish as to suppose that a musician using 'four-four' time is compelled to use always four quarter notes in each bar, or in 'seven-eighths' time to use seven eighth notes uniformly in each bar. He may use one 1/2, one 1/4 and one 1/8 rest, or any such combination as he may happen to choose or find fitting.

To apply this musical truism to verse is to employ *vers libre*.'[95]

The first signatures of 5/4 and 4/4 use 'straight' eighth and sixteenth notes as the basis for the pulse - two eighth notes per beat. When he switches to 12/8 however, he moves to a triplet-based pulse - three eighth notes per beat. The use of 11/8 merely reinforces the sense of metrical instability introduced by this change of feel - it seems almost as if Pound is changing time signatures for the same reason that he eschewed rhyme, because of the distraction such regularity caused in making the listener concentrate on the regularities rather than the meaning of the verse: 'I have no especial interest in rhyme. It tends to draw away the artist's attention from forty to ninety per cent of his syllables and concentrate it on the admittedly more prominent remainder.'[96] It is interesting to note that here I have transcribed the bar lines as seems fit to the performance, and these do not always coincide with the lines of verse. This is, in apparent conflict with Pound's own suggestion in *Guide To Kulchur* which reads: 'I suggest that the next digger try to interpret troubadour tune on the hypothesis that the line (of verse) is the bar and can be graphed to best advantage as a (that is one single) bar.'[97] This, however, is meant for the troubadour tunes themselves, not Pound's own work. It is, however, interesting that what he seems to perform does not coincide with this suggestion.

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[95] Ezra Pound, 'The Tradition' in Eliot, T.S., ed, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 93
[96] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', p. 42.
[97] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur,* p. 199.

metric modulation

While the change between straight and triplet-based time is enough to make the first and second halves of the verse feel substantially different, Pound accentuates this difference with his use of metric modulation. This technique effectively changes the tempo of a piece by manipulating time. When introducing metric modulation into a piece, the musician will preserve the real-time length of a note - say, for example, a sixteenth-note - while changing the relative value of this note. Thus when the shift is from straight time to triplet-based time, the individual sixteenth-note in the original bar becomes an individual sixteenth-note from a group of three sixteenth-note triplets in the new bar. In this way, the actual pulse of the piece changes, but not in a random manner, but in a manner that is inextricably bound in with the original tempo:

Pulse (four feel)	P		p		p		p	
Sixteenth-notes	S s s s s s s s s s s s s s s s
Pulse (six feel)		P			p				P

etc

The implication of this discovery is straightforward: it is difficult to conceive of Pound 'accidentally' utilising such a feel change in his reading of *Mauberley*. This suggests that not only did Pound mean his verse to be read in this manner - at least at the time he read it - but that he was a man of not insignificant rhythmical ability. Metric modulation is a difficult enough technique to utilise when there is a solid pulse to work with, but when the pulse can only be inferred from the reading, its utilisation becomes extremely impressive. It is, however, made a little opaque due to the rubato delivery indulged in by Pound. It seems a little odd that he would indulge in a such a time-stretching delivery when he has stated 'The wobbling about by deficient musicians, the attempt to give life to a piece by abundant rallentando and speedings up, results in reduction of all music to one doughy mass and all compositions to the one statement of the performing executant, said wobbly time is due to their NOT divining the real pace of the segment.'[98]

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[98] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur,* p. 233.

It has been suggested by some that Pound was tone-deaf, and certainly HD stated that 'He seemed unintimidated by the fact that (to my mind) he had no ear for music and, alas, I suffered excruciatingly from his clumsy dancing.'[99] In 1917, Yeats remarked that 'this queer creature Ezra pound [...] has I think got closer to the right sort of music for poetry than Mrs Emery--it is more definitely music with a strong marked time and yet it is effective speech. However he can't sing as he has no voice.' [100] While there is no space to investigate this fully, it seems that possible lack of singing voice (a possibility reinforced by listening to his performance) does not interfere with his rhythmic abilities: if anything, his lack of voice may explain his insistence on rhythm over melody. His dancing, however, is a different matter altogether and can, I feel, be reasonably excluded from the equation.

When Pound goes on to suggests that 'The 60, 72, or 84, or 120 per minute is a BASS, or basis. It is the bottom note of the harmony'[101] we can deduce that the difference, for Pound at least, between his rubato performance and a 'wobbling' performance is that he knows where the bass is - just as when his metric modulation may change the apparent pulse, but this apparent pulse is directly proportional, and dependant upon, the original.

That Pound meant to perform *Mauberley* with this rhythmic scheme cannot be in doubt, therefore. We must affirm, however, that this rhythmic scheme as performed by Pound is inherent in the verse itself, and if so, whether it is in itself extractable. Furthermore, whether this rhythmic activity is merely the affectation of a man who simply enjoyed reading his verse in a rhythmic manner - the fact that he reads the entire verse with a slight 'swing' feel is testament to this - or whether it has any real, semantic value is again a matter for further investigation: we must confirm that this is not simply a case of a poem in which Pound 'falls so in love with the sound of the words as to weave beautiful rhythms that affirm nothing.'[102] Finally, one does wonder how he expected a reader to infer this rhythmic information, as it seems he did.

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[99] H. D., ed Norman Holmes Pearson and Michael King *An End To Torment - A Memoir of Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press Limited, 1980), p. 49.
[100] Robert Merrit, *Hush of Older Song,* p. 14.
[101] Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur,* p. 233.
[102] Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text,* p. 85.

Semantic differentiation through rhythmic placement

There are other reasons, however, for this change in time signature in the second half of the verse. In his reading of *Mauberley*, Pound edits certain features of the original published text, and these seem to be edited in order to facilitate rhythmic echo: oddly enough, the temporal equivalent to rhyme. In the first two stanzas, Pound created what is called an 'anticipation': when a note falls not in the bar to which it 'belongs', but to the previous bar. This is often called anacrusis, a term used in verse as well as music. The anticipations Pound uses are on the word 'His,' and occur each time the word appears. This effectively places an accent on the following word, making it seem more important, as if it, in reality, is the beginning of the phrase and the word 'His' was simply to alert you to this fact. The apparent importance of the anticipations on 'His' is highlighted because Pound, in this reading, removes the textual 'and' from the second stanza in order that he may keep this anticipatory 'His' consistent.

The anticipations Pound allows into his verse through editing allow him to place accents on certain words, changing in emphasis from the words 'His' and 'And' to 'True' and 'Tool' which changes the flow of the lines. The fact that this emphasis only comes out in performance is also interesting, as a mere textual reader might place emphasis on the words at the beginning of the line. Does this affect the meaning of the verse? What it does do is highlight not the artist himself but his 'true Penelope' and his 'tool'.

In the second pair of stanzas there is but one anticipation, which links the word 'firmness' with 'art'. Indeed, 'firmness,' being both at the beginning of a lexical line and of a musical bar, is accentuated still further. While in this quality it resembles only 'turned,' it also presides over the radical feel-change engendered by Pound's metrical modulation. Indeed, if we look at one of the readings of *'Mauberley*,' it seems that each word which is accentuated in this manner - the beginning of a bar and the beginning of a line - is a word of criticism. 'Turned' is where the artist moves from the real art, 'To' is where he goes, 'Firmness' is plainly pejorative while 'Colourless' is the final failing. The fact that these anticipations reflect what seem to be Mauberley's

failures as an artist support the most cogent readings of this verse which suggest that it concerns the failure of Mauberley to be anything but a technical artist: one who uses theory, as Pound might suggests, to effect practice.

The fact that the emphasis of these failures of Mauberley's is achieved through the use of what we might usefully term 'temporal rhyme' is equally instructive. While it may be considered that Pound would have eschewed such attention-grabbing techniques as he suggested he did with rhyme itself, this technique suggests that here we have a meaning, an emphasis, which is only accessible to the performative reader. The implication that Mauberley himself is not so much an artist but a user of tools, that he has not advanced beyond mere technique, is accessed here not through traditional poetics, but through rhythm.

Pound's next performative edit - that of the addition of 'o' to 'pier' - is instructive in a number of ways. Firstly, the modern reader notes that this edit makes the name follow the standard 'English' - Piero. The second change is a rhythmic one. Pound now enunciates 'Piero' as a tri-syllable, rather than the two syllables most would use, with Pier read as an elision. This addition and enunciation together make the line one which follows a tri-partite, tri-syllabic structure. Not only this, but each progressive tri-syllable is longer than its predecessor, and by a similar proportion: 'Colourless' is precisely spaced out - as evenly as is possible which also accentuates its meaning - whereas 'Piero' and 'Francesca' are enlarged by the addition of the previous note-value: a sixteenth and two eighths followed by an eight and two dotted eighths. This line, while slowing down to enunciate the name 'Piero Francesca' also recalls the strengths of the artist himself: Piero della Francesca was fêted for his revolutionary use of both colour and proportion.[103] It seems that the implication here is that Mauberley is an artist who has the proportions absolutely correct - he has firmness -

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[103] This is particularly interesting when we contrast Berryman's explanation of the inclusion of the two artists Pisanello and della Francesca in *Mauberley (1920)* with that of Espey. Where Berryman suggests that 'Piero's contribution in color and perspective constitute his virtu. In turn, Pisanello's "skill / To forge Achaia" represents his virtu' (Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 85), Espey would have it that Piero lacks the essential virtue of colour: 'I follow Friar in noting that Reinarch's *Apollo*, Mauberley's own reference work, speaks of Piero della Francesca as being 'cold and impersonal' in his work and refers to his 'pale, straight figures.' Pisanello, the great Veronese medalist, is one of Pound's favourite artists and plays a role in *The Cantos*.' (John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* p. 99)

but is, essentially, colourless. The proportion is the perfect - the trisyllabic weighting of the line - while the other aspects of his art are simply none-existent. While *Mauberley* is taken to concern an artist who is merely an imitator, not a creator, the rhythm of this line, in particular, seems to reflect this strand of meaning perfectly.

As an illustration of how a musical analysis of a line can give a more subtle reading, we merely have to consider how 'colourless, Piero Francesca' would be formed in standard metrical units. Certainly, if we take the textual amendation (of Pier to Piero) as read, we could see this line as three dactyls, which would give us some of the symmetrical properties of the rhythm I have discussed, but without the over-arching symmetry. The line could also be read as an amphibacchic followed by two dactyls. Not only is this less subtle than the rhythmic reading I propose but is also quite debatable, not least because of the apparent lack of easily readable metrics in Pound's verse: reading the line as printed takes us even further away from the subtle, rhythmic reading available. Steele highlights this difficulty when he asks

'And what to make of the following verse in the pentametric "What thou lov'st well" passage of Ezra Pound's eighty-first canto, a verse exhibiting an alternation of heavy and light feet across the entire line:'

'Would this be a spondee, plus two double-iambs:

    /   / | ◡   ◡   /   / | ◡ ◡   /   /

    Made   cour age, or made or der; or made grace

Or two reversed double iambs, plus a spondee?

    /   / ◡   ◡ | /   / ◡ ◡ | /   /

    Made courage, or   made order; or   made grace' [104]

In the final line of *Mauberley 1920*, the rhythmic system Pound has so carefully created in the preceding fourteen lines breaks down. It was impossible for me to come

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[104]Timothy Steele, 'Staunch Meter; Great Song' in *Meter in English: a critical engagement*, ed. by David Baker (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996).

up with a rhythmic transcription of this that satisfied. The reason for this is that the pulse disappears: there seems to be no 'great bass'. While the metric modulation between the two sections can be hard to hear, especially when it is the last thing you expect, this final line seemed not to fit into any system. This feeling is enhanced by the regularity of the previous line, with its beautifully symmetrical tripartite trisyllabic form. The line 'Pisanello, lacking the skill to forge Achaia' seems to do exactly that: it lacks skill. The very beginning is awkward, the anticipation - placing the first syllable of 'Pisanello' in the previous bar - setting up a complicated rhythmic phrase, while harking back to the adjustments in the first stanza, makes it difficult to read any possible rhythmic shifts, such as a return to the original pulse. There seems one explanation to me, and that is it is meant to be this opaque. The line refers to Mauberley himself, unable to truly create because he does not have the skill - or virtu - of such artists as Pisanello and Piero della Francesca: 'Pisanello and Piero della Francesca both discovered and developed what Pound calls their *virtu*; Mauberley did not.'[105] Thus the rhythm necessarily breaks down irredeemably.

This reading of a semantic reflection of the verse's meaning in its rhythm also supports the reading of the previous line which appears beautifully proportioned, but lacks rhythmic colour - it is as close as Pound gets to a simple metric exposition in this verse. Pound's letter to Harriet Monroe in 1915 shows a precedent for the form or feeling of a poem mirroring its content and meaning, even if that means that the form must fail: "Mr. Prufrock' does not 'go off at the end.' It is a portrait of failure, or of a character which fails, and it would be false art to make it end on a note of triumph.'[106]

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[105] Jo Brantley Berryman, *Circe's Craft,* p. 85.
[106] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 50.

The second transcription [107]

appendix three

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The second transcription is taken from *Mauberley (1920)*, two stanzas into part II, and formed part of the same reading session. What is apparent on first listening, and what cannot be shown by the transcription itself, is that there is a need for more work on the part of the transcriber than there was for the first piece. Whether this means it

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[107] See Appendix Three

is simply more difficult to approach the 'score' of the poem here, or whether, like in the final lines of the previous transcription, the apparent difficulty in grasping the rhythmic form merely reflects and reinforces the theme of the verse is unclear.

There are, on first looking at the transcription, a few points which present themselves as possibly worthy of investigation:

1 Note the possible Metric modulation-esque effect here, also the extreme rubato on 'drifted', and the speeding up on 'precipitate'

2 These are more regular triplets.

3 'bewilderment' is tough to centre on one particular rhythm, especially the 'be' part

4 anticipation on flower

5 'certain, certain' this is slower, and the second half of the line speeds up.

6 For arrangements see precipitates, also note how it doesn't match estrangements.

7 'drifted on' is tough to centre again

8 we are back to a square rhythm again, almost

Problems with time

The first difficulty is ascertaining the initial time signature. The gaps between each internal poem in Pound's reading make it impossible to 'carry forward' a rhythmical scheme: each one seems to exist on its own terms. Do we notate the first bar as 3/4 in triplets or 9/8? This, as ever, is a difficult question, and the only real answer is that to the transcriber, it 'feels' more like 9/8. This is supported by the fact that if it were viewed as a triplet feel 3/4 bar, the rhythm would break down at the end. To compound our difficulties, the words 'drifted…drifted' are not only extremely rubato - they do, in fact, drift rhythmically - but the next word, 'precipitate' has an extreme delay on the syllable 'pre', which makes it rush into the rest of the word, as the syllables 'cipitate' are more easily shoehorned into a rhythmic plan. This is a technique used by musicians to effect a 'tumbling' feel: the first notes are played late (behind the beat) and with each note, the position of the note relative to the beat is

brought forward, until, at the end of the phrase, the notes are either on or even in front of the beat.[108]

There are two possible readings of this. The first is that Pound is working with a highly sophisticated structure which denies even attempts to notate it on this musical level, as his manipulations of these words reflect their meaning - the drifteds drift and the precipitate does exactly that - or that this is simply a classic example of procrustean, prescriptive transcription. It is impossible to conclude that either is correct, in the same way that, for example, it seemed that the final line of the previous transcription had the rhythm fit exactly the meaning, but is this because the music is simply not there, or because of the difficulties in establishing a Poundian 'Great Bass' when there is nothing concrete to relate it to? The only support that can be suggested for the reading of 9/8 and 3/4 for the first two bars is that this is a similar, if far less complicated, rhythmic manipulation to the metric modulation found in the first transcription. What is certain is that Pound pushes and pulls time in the first two lines, mimicking the meaning of 'drifted…precipitate', which in themselves seem a little oxymoronic. The 'drifted…drifted' is almost lost, rhythmically, while 'precipitate' does exactly that.

In bar three, the exact position and rhythm of the word 'bewilderment' is extremely hard to ascertain - the combination of Pound's rubato delivery once more and the uncertain position of the first syllable make this placement a 'best guess'. This bewilderment of the transcriber is repeated, though in a slightly different manner, between lines three and four: they could easily be written as 4/4 leading to 3/4, the reverse of their current positions. The reason for this is that there is no apparent downbeat to make the listener feel that any of the words from the line 'to designate His new found orchid' is at the bar's beginning. Again this seems to reflect the need to such a designation.

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[108] Espey associates this drifting feel with the copying of Bion's metrics, but in an aural representation it is immediately apparent: 'Pound, taking up Bion's device of the hesitating rhythm, stresses it through his punctuation and repetitions to produce 'Drifted…drifted precipitate,' and 'To be certain…certain.' (John J. Espey, *Ezra Pound's Mauberley,* pp. 44-5)

During bars five and six, we can hear tempo manipulations between 'certain…certain,' which slows down, and during 'aerial flowers' and 'time for arrangements' which both increase their tempo. These are simple tempo changes, albeit subtle ones, which are not like the change we heard in 'precipitates.' It is not only during these words that we hear tempo changes, as the tempo subtly increases over these two bars as a whole.

There are other difficulties in this transcription. There is a feel change once more, albeit a subtle, un-notatable one - when we return to the final 'drifted', but this is as difficult to notate as the first pair of 'drifteds' were. Just as the first two bars could feasibly be notated differently, so we find that the final three bars are also a little opaque. Bar six could easily be in 6/8, which would leave bar seven as 12/8 - and bar seven in itself is very close to being a pause rather than a series of rests: does this suggests that Pound has actually moved this section into the next section, which seems at first listen to be quite chaotic and almost impossible to notate. The final bar feels like 9/8 in itself but also, once more paradoxically, feels as if it is part of bar seven.

It is difficult to make a case for these lines and these changes as having a great semantic weight, as much of their subtlety seems to derive from the sort of rhythmic manipulation that we discover in performance, rather than in any 'score' which we may infer through transcription. These are not changes that we can, or indeed would wish to, notate, as they seem to be performative manipulations of a more standard scoring. There are, however, some more compelling rhythmic manipulations within this section.

Semantic differentiation through rhythmic placement

If we consider the relative treatment of the words 'arrangements' and 'estrangement', we are drawn back into considering that there is a method to Pound's rhythmic delivery. Both arrangement and estrangement are accentuated not by the first and second syllables (in terms of quantity) but by context: 'rangements' and 'strangement' share rhythmic values of a quarter-note and an eighth-note. Both words have their first syllables anticipated, much as we saw in the first transcription, but this time

between beats rather than between bars. The first syllable of each is, however, very different, and this difference is primarily in context: The two syllables (in 'final') before 'estrangement' are equal, whereas 'arrangements' has only one short note - 'for' - bringing it in: 'for arrangements', therefore, sounds like 'forar rangements' while its counterpart in 'to the final estrangement' is plainly enunciated as an individual word. While its first syllable is still anticipated, the even delivery of the syllables 'fi', 'nal,' and 'es' not only highlights the very meaning of the word - it is a word of exclusion as opposed to the inclusive nature of the word 'arrangements' - but the delivery echoes that of the line 'Colourless Piero Francesca.' The lines are similar because they share the technique of anticipation within a bar (compare the position of the 'P' of 'Piero' with the 'es' of 'estrangement), and the use of three even eighth-notes in a bar consisting of groups of three, the former in 12.8, the latter in 9/8. Thus we may suggests that the two words are approached, rhythmically, in a manner which reflects their individual and differing natures: 'arrangements' is closely allied with its neighbours whereas 'estrangement' seems to be forced apart from its companions. In this way, the rhyme between the two words is prevented from implying a similar meaning between them by the rhythm chosen: indeed, the different rhythms used accentuate the different meaning of these sonically similar words.

While the first transcription seems to provide strong evidence for the existence of a score from which Pound was reading - though this must, necessarily, have been extant in the words themselves - the second transcription seems far more difficult. Indeed, one could easily argue that this second transcription is not even there, and is merely being forced upon the performance by the transcriber. We can, however, suggest that the difficulties encountered with establishing the 'score' of the second part merely reflects the fact the Pound held no torch for any particular metric, and that this was as true of his own as of any other. Does this second piece contain indecisive rhythm or rhythm capable of multiple interpretations? Either of these might seem to reflect the matter of the words of the verse. Do we consider that where the rhythmic structure is unclear, the meaning is, too? It is certainly true that this extract's lack of clarity begins, and is announced, by the very first word: 'drifted.'

Conclusion

In 'An Essay on Criticism', Pope suggested that 'the sound must seem an echo to the sense,'[109] and while a poem may be seen, in Poundian terms, as a translation of emotion, it is also clear that the translator has fully to convey the raft of meanings included in the work, and for Pound, this raft floated on an undercurrent of temporal analogy. When Pound stated, in his *Treatise on Harmony*, that 'the limits for the practical purposes of music depend solely on our capacity to produce a sound that will last long enough, i.e. remain audible long enough, for the succeeding sound or sounds to catch up, traverse, intersect it',[110] he was grasping at the fundamental nature of harmony: the association of notes over time. This harmony is just as effective in terms of rhythm as it is in terms of pitch. Pound was less than enamoured of traditional harmony, as can be appreciated if we consider a letter he wrote to Agnes Bedford in 1921: 'sat through the *Pelléas* the other evening and am encouraged - encouraged to tear up the whole blooming' era of harmony and do the thing if necessary on two tins and a wash-board. anything rather than that mush of hysteria, Scandinavia strained through Belgium plus French Schamerei. Probably just as well I have to make this first swash without any instruments at hand. very much encouraged by the *Pelléas*, ignorance having no further terrors if that DAMN thing is the result of what is called musical knowledge.'[111] Certainly, his opera *Testament de Villon*, containing very little of what might be considered traditional harmony, supports this apparent disregard of standard harmony: 'Remember that the accords, or rather identical note is built up of several instruments forcement giving VERY different overtones how much bloody chord-harmony is necessary? [...] Premier principe - RIEN that interferes with the words, or with the utmost possible clarity of impact of words on audience...'[112] Harmony, for Pound, was to be inferred over time, and in emphasising inferential harmony rather than straight chordal harmony - something he investigated further in his *Treatise on Harmony* - Pound is driving towards a

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[109] Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism' (1711) in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, ed Angela Partington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 521.
[110] Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony,* pp. 79-80.
[111] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 167.
[112] D.D. Paige, ed, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 169.

harmony which uses rhythm and not pitch: he is driving towards a harmony of experience, cutting a shape in time.

Appendix One

Mauberley (1920)[113]
"Vacuos exercet in aera morsus"

I
1 Turned from the "eau-forte
2 Par Jacquemart"
3 To the strait head
4 Of Messalina

5 "His true Penelope
6   was Flaubert,"
7   And his tool
8   The engraver's.

9   Firmness,
10 Not the full smile,
11   His art, but an art
12   In profile;

13 Colourless
14 Pier Francesca,
15 Pisanello lacking the skill
16 To forge Achaia

II

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

5 To be certain…certain…
6 (Amid aerial flowers)…time for arrangements ---
7   Drifted on
8   To the final estrangement;

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[113] Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems 1908-1969* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 106-7.