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# EZRA POUND URBI ET ORBI

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UDC 82.111(73)

DOI 10.22455/2541-7894-2019-7-202-224

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## EZRA POUND'S GLOBAL POETICS

**Abstract:** This essay will explore the reasons for the international appeal of Ezra Pound and his importance in the creation of “Global Poetics.” What, in his writing, especially his poetry, makes him a transnational figure not only translated into Russian, French, German, Japanese, Chinese and Greek, but appealing to writers in a variety of cultures? What makes his work influential for other, often foreign writers, and what can we as readers identify as his international style? How, in short, does he articulate a global poetics? Throughout his work, beginning with *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), Pound was a comparatist but his ideas and examples constantly absorb multiple poetics and poetic forms, whether Troubadour poets, Renaissance Italian writers or Confucius. He is our first global poet, translangual, translational and transnational which this essay will demonstrate through his use of global history, languages and imagery. The roots of Pound's global poetics may be in his cultural cosmopolitanism incorporating imagery, content and form from other literatures into his writing. He develops a transcultural vision that valorizes the dislocation and displacement of voices, as much sources and texts. Three texts that highlight this practice are *Cathay*, essay “The Chinese Written Character As a Medium for Poetry, and Guide to Kulchur”. Pound, I shall argue, not only introduces global poetics but a new vocabulary for Global Modernism. In his prose and poetry, borders, boundaries and separations disappear which force us as readers to become transnational and even translocational responders to his texts. In his “A Draft of Three Cantos” (1917), Pound parallels Confucius with Dante. The effort to link the two in terms of content and form is an early expression of the global poetics elaborated more fully in *The Cantos* which will be at the center of this discussion.

**Keywords:** Globalism, Modernism, Pound, translation, comparative literature.

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## ГЛОБАЛЬНАЯ ПОЭТИКА ЭЗРЫ ПАУНДА

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматриваются причины общекультурной привлекательности Эзры Паунда и его роль в создании «глобальной поэтики». Что именно в его творчестве, в особенности поэтическом, делает его общенациональным автором, наследие которого не только переведено на русский, французский, японский, китайский и греческий языки, но и привлекает внимание писателей самых разных культур? Что оказывает влияние на зарубежных писателей и что мы как читатели можем отнести к чертам его межкультурного стиля? В чем выражается глобальная поэтика Паунда? Начиная с «Духа романской культуры» (1910) и на протяжении всего творчества, Паунд был компаративистом, но его идеи и система образов постоянно впитывали другие поэтики и поэтические формы – будь то поэзия трубадуров, произведения итальянского Ренессанса или Конфуция. В статье показано, что включение Паундом мировой истории, иностранных языков и образности в свою поэзию позволяют характеризовать его как первого поэта-«глобалиста», в основу творчества которого положен межъязыковой, переводческий и общенациональный материал. Корни паундовской глобальной поэтики кроются в его культурном космополитизме, заимствующем образность, содержание и форму из других литератур. Паунд развивает межкультурную оптику, для которой процесс перемещения и смещения голосов различных культур так же важен, как их источники и тексты. Это находит отражение в трех произведениях: сборник «Катай», эссе «Китайский иероглиф как средство поэтической выразительности» и «Путеводитель по культуре». Паунд не только создает глобальную поэтику, но и наделяет глобальный модернизм новым языком. В его прозе и поэзии рубежи, препятствия и разрывы исчезают, что заставляет его читателей преодолевать национальные и территориальные границы. В «Наброске трех кантос» (1917) Паунд проводит параллель между Конфуцием и Данте. Попытка сопоставить их – по форме и содержанию – становится ранним проявлением глобальной поэтики Паунда, позднее получившей свое развитие в его «Кантос», которые будут в центре внимания в данной статье.

**Ключевые слова:** глобализм, модернизм, Паунд, перевод, компаративистика.

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“We proceed by a study of discoveries.”  
Ezra Pound, “How to Read.” (1928)

Pound found the cross fertilization of cultures essential for his conception of literature which, to his thinking, was from the start contemporaneous as he wrote in the preface to *The Spirit of Romance*. Ideas of national boundaries or rigid chronologies had no agency for him. Confucius was writing at the time of Heraclitus, Plato discussing Socrates when Mencius was born he was quick to point out. His view of literature was synthetic reflected in individual lines which combined Catullus and Mallarmé. The American sinologist Ernest Fenollosa was an early influence, introducing Pound to Chinese poetry and Japanese Noh drama, but equally important were 12<sup>th</sup> century Troubadour poets and 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Italian writers like Cavalcanti and Dante. Confucius, however, reigned supreme in Pound's trans-lingual poetic world. His later prose work *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) is in many ways the culmination of his transnational poetics. Its focus on the universal qualities of literary composition and ideas makes it a kind of summa of his global outlook ranging between history, memory and culture.

Pound, himself, embodied this literary cosmopolitanism: born in Hailey, Idaho, he grew up in Philadelphia before heading to Venice, then London, Paris and, finally, Rapallo with interim stops in New York, Washington and Rome. He spoke English, French and Italian and believed he could read Greek, Chinese and German, although his linguistic ambitions exceeded his knowledge. Nevertheless, he absorbed and renewed his writings through his experience of these other languages and literatures. Reaction to his work was equally global. From China and Russia to South America and Sweden, his writing was read and absorbed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Concrete poets of Brazil became one of his most vocal supporters drawing especially from his work on Imagism and Fenollosa. From the start of his career, Pound was intellectually and poetically restless, a cultural nomad. But in his efforts at global and poetic transparency, he became Modernism's first global poet as he pursued his belief that “the history of a culture is the history of ideas going into action” – everywhere [Pound 1970 b: 44].

To begin a discussion of the global poetics of Ezra Pound is to recognize Pound's early and continuous study of comparative literature. After two years at the University of Pennsylvania, he began the serious reading of Provençal at Hamilton College. Back at Penn for an MA, he continued to work towards a degree in Romance Languages, winning a fellowship to go to Spain in 1906. Three years later, he was lecturing on the Troubadours in London and by 1910 published his first prose work, *The Spirit of Romance*, a work encompassing Dante, Lope de Vega and Latin poets of the Renaissance. His early poetry reflects his international interests underscored by the opening of *The Cantos* which involves an English translation of a sixteenth-century Latin text by Andreas Divas of Homer's Greek lines on the voyage of Odysseus to Hades. To this he superimposes an Anglo-Saxon stressed meter and alliterative verse partly derived from his version of "The Seafarer." Pound was from the start a "globalist," his earliest writing and study of poetry reflecting the cross-fertilization of cultures especially when imported from one country to another: Buddhism imported to China and Japan from India, for example, or the spreading of Christianity to Europe. Translating one culture or language into another without losing their distinctions is the Pound project and the foundation of his global poetics. It also becomes the method of his finest poems.

A chronology appended to Chapter V of *The Spirit of Romance* indicates his early efforts at intertextuality, a form of "radical historicism" indicating that Confucius was writing at the time of Heraclitus, or that Plato was writing about Socrates when Mencius was born [Rabaté 2016: 116, 115]. Pound sought a global and poetic transparency showing readers the essentially contemporary element of these writers. Precipitating the Renaissance, he notes in Chapter X of *The Spirit of Romance*, for example, was the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Mohamed II. Combined with the invention of printing, the Renaissance emerged. As he states in the 1910 preface to the volume, "It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the Pillars of Hercules. All ages are contemporaneous" but what is needed is "a literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Yeats with one balance" – and this was the start of his global vision [Pound 1968b: 6].

Expanding Pound's universalism was Ernest Fenollosa, the American-born Oriental art historian and scholar, essential for Pound's introduction to the Orient. When Pound inherited Fenollosa's manuscripts and papers from his widow in London in 1913, he began to understand the clarity

and aesthetic of the East and started to edit and publish his version of *Noh* plays. The instrumental “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry” (1919) followed. Pound’s poetics then shifted from the isolation of Imagism into a natural language linking the pictorial with the philological developed from Fenollosa whose own transcultural practice of scholarship, linking art history, literature and philosophy, likely became a model for Pound. Fusing the East and West became a goal Pound inherited from Fenollosa intended by Pound to eliminate distinctions between poetry and prose, between “personal lyricism and historical document” often through the ideogram. Derrida noted this in *Of Grammatology* when he identified Pound as a writer who broke with logocentrism.<sup>1</sup> But Pound actually began his exploration of literatures – plural – earlier than either 1910 or 1913.

In “Date Line” (1934), Pound wrote that he “began an examination of comparative European literature in about 1901; with the definite intention of finding out what had been written, and how” [Pound 1968a: 77]. Europe was the start, examining Greek, Latin, Provençal, French, German and English writing from crisscrossed time periods, later followed by Egyptian, Japanese and Chinese texts. Troubadour poetry *and* Chinese classical poetry opened up the question of the relation of poetry to melody, rhythm and performance. By mid-career, his global poetics stretched across continents whether in Latin America, Europe, North America or, more recently, Russia.<sup>2</sup> Brazil is a particular strong example because the Brazilian Concrete poets, with their assimilation of Ezra Pound through translation, imitation, and criticism, also referenced many of the additional figures Pound had signaled as essential.

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<sup>1</sup> [Rabaté 2016: 125]. Rabaté later refers to Pound as “our own first global theoretician” [Rabaté 2016: 134]. Derrida writes that the “irreducibly graphic poetics [of Fenollosa] was, with that of Mallarmé, the first break in the most entrenched Western tradition. The fascination that the Chinese ideogram exercised on Pound’s writing may thus be given all its historical significance.” [Derrida 1997: 92].

<sup>2</sup> For Brazil see the Concrete poetry movement which emerged after WWII; for England, *Sons of Ezra, British Poets and Ezra Pound*, eds. Michael Alexander and James McGonigal. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995; *News from Afar: Ezra Pound and Some Contemporary British Poetries*, ed. by Richard Parker. Bristol: Shearsman, 2015. American followers include Louis Zukofsky, the Objectivists and Charles Olson. The Ezra Pound Society’s quarterly newsletter has recently published a selection of articles on the subject of ‘Pound in Russia,’ in *Make It New* IV:3 (December 2017). Online at <http://makeitnew.ezrapoundsociety.org/pound-in-russia>.

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But what, more precisely, were Pound's poetics? From *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) onward, Pound was a comparatist, his ideas and writing practices absorbing multiple poetic forms, and literary periods whether 12<sup>th</sup> century Troubadour poets, or 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Italian writers (Cavalcanti, Dante), or Confucius (551 BCE–479 BCE). *Cathay* (1915) is a seminal, transformative text for his work extended by "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry." *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), his late prose text, is in some ways the culmination of his transnational poetics reflected in the ongoing *Cantos* including the resonant *Pisan Cantos*. Drawing from Greek, Latin, European, Middle Eastern and Asian traditions, Pound became one of modernism's first, if not *the* first global poet: trans-lingual, translational and transnational. His use of global history, languages and imagery validates this claim with the Egyptian god Thoth, as well as Confucius, emblematic of global Pound. He first translated the Confucian Odes and then the four books of wisdom into Italian and then English. His English translation of *The Great Digest* (Ta Hsio) appeared in 1928, his version of Confucius' *Digest of the Analects* in 1937 and *The Unwobbling Pivot* (Chung Yung) in 1947.

In 1905 Pound won a fellowship for a trip to Europe to study the plays of Lope de Vega. He visited Gibraltar, Madrid and Burgos before Paris and London. Three years later, he moved to Venice before going on to England and then Paris and finally Rapallo with frequent visits to Rome and Venice. His own work soon appeared in English, French, Italian and even Japanese. Other languages included Polish and Serbo-Croatian frequently communicating with his translators about language, meaning and style. His closest friends were similarly international ranging from English, French, Irish, Spanish and Italian to Japanese and Chinese.

Pound struggled with languages he little understood but he knew they were crucial to his global poetics whether those languages were Greek, Egyptian or Chinese. A small Chinese dictionary and a one-volume edition of Confucius' *Four Books* were among his most valued items during his detention in Pisa at the end of WWII. A dictated cable to be sent to President Roosevelt from the military prison camp emphasized, in fact, his identity not as an American poet but as an interpreter of Oriental culture. It read: "FENOLLOSA'S EXECUTOR AND TRANSLATOR OF CONFUCIUS CAN [DO] WHAT VIOLENCE CANNOT." It suggests that he alone

could solve the conflict with Japan [Moody 2015: 105]. Unsurprisingly, the ideogram had become his indispensable poetic device, explaining to the Japanese poet Katsue Kitasono that the

IDEOGRAM is essential (to the exposition of) certain kinds of thought. Greek philosophy was mostly a mere splitting, an impoverishment of understanding. ... Socrates a distinguished gas-bag in comparison with Confucius and Mencius ... at any rate, I NEED ideogram. I mean I need it for my own job. [Pound 1987: 103]

Pound recast the short and long modernist poem through formal and structural experiments, *The Cantos* exhibiting a social as well as a literary poetics focusing on precision of image and voice. These qualities, plus his fusing of aesthetics and politics, soon found reception in countries worldwide. His intertextuality, an important aspect of his poetic project which combines formal juxtapositions originating in ideogrammic practices and moral condemnation, became evident throughout *The Cantos*. Pound made poetry and politics reciprocal forms of action providing an activist poetics.

Confirming Pound's globalism is the first letter written to him by the avant-garde Kitasono dated 26 April 1936:

For a long time since Imagism movement, we have always expected you as a leader on new literature. Especially your profound appreciation in the Chinese literature and Japanese literature has greatly pleased us. [Pound 1987: 27]

Pound's debut in Japanese print was actually thirty years earlier in a 1916 article by Noguchi Yoejiro; his poetry was first translated by Sato Haruo in 1925 [Solt 1993: 120].

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The root of Pound's global poetics begins in his translations. His earliest work in reading Provençal and then Italian and French poets, and the emergence of his ideas of creative translation a la "Homage to Sextus Propertius" and "The Seafarer," initiated an experiment with poetics extended by his engagement with the concentrated poetry of

Imagism. Beginning with *A Lume Spento* (1908), originally titled *La Fraisne* (*The Ash Tree*), Pound incorporated French and Italian poetics both in form and expression. His dramatic monologue “Cino” set in 1390, “Na Audiart,” his rendering of a Troubadour work, or the Latin titled “In Tempore Senectutis,” attests to his early desire for a poetics that transcended time and place, later expressed in “Cantico del Sole” included in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910). His edition of Cavalcanti (1912), *Cathay* (1915), “*Noh*” or *Accomplishments* (1917), and later translations of Confucius and Sophocles, furthered his engagement with foreign literatures through translation. He understood that “you will die or live/ By the silvery heel of Apollo” as he wrote in 1917 expressing his early commitment to the classics [Pound 2003b: 1185]. Indeed, classical literature, Provençal poetry, Italian texts, Egyptian writing and Chinese ideograms became the soil out of which Pound’s poetics grew.

The principal concept Pound drew from his translations was objectivity, associated with the idea of persona (the title of his collections of 1909 and 1920). This meant the removal of the lyrical and the self from the text, a kind of depersonalization which the American poet Charles Olson (and follower of Pound) summarized when he wrote “Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the ‘subject’ and his soul” [Olson 1968: 27]. To efface the self became the first step in the establishment of Pound’s poetics seen, for example, in the way he worked through the drafts of “In a Station of the Metro” spending nearly three years on revisions until its final form, a process he outlined in his essay “Vorticism” from his volume on Gaudier-Brzeska [Pound 1970a: 86–89]. The poem needs every one of its twenty words, including the six of the title. His anti-Symbolist stance, focusing on the immediate and the objective, separated him from Romantic subjectivism. His concentrated, objective presentation is an “assault on the subjectivist tradition” [Grieve 1997: 8] and becomes part of his global appeal expressed conceptually by Imagism, his engagement with the dramatic monologue transposed from Browning, as well as through his translations. Displacing the self as a poetic subject by substituting a dislocated, often historically based fragmented text, became Pound’s method.

Imagism was coincident with his work on translation. His instinctive labeling the work of H.D. as Imagist in 1912, partly drawn from



the philosopher/ poet T.E. Hulme's suggestion that poetry should focus on an absolutely accurate presentation of its subject (expressed as early as 1908), aimed to replace abstractions with concrete details. In his 1913 essay, "A Few Don'ts [by an Imagist]," Pound outlines the habits and poetics of the practice, beginning with a definition of an image: that which presents "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" [Pound 1968a: 4]. The image offers "sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time . . . and space limits," a sort of trans-spatial existence, one of the key elements of his poetics. He goes on to stress the need to "use no superfluous word," to always use "the natural object" which is "always the *adequate* symbol." One must also "go in fear of abstractions" [Pound 1968a: 4–5]. Fenollosa is key in his attack on abstraction in poetic language which should emphasize verbs "to follow objective lines of relations in nature herself;" this effort "brings language close to *things*" [Fenollosa 2005: 320, 312]. Presentation unadorned is the goal for Pound and others, part of his "Make it New" agenda. Self-revelation is no longer essential for poetic expression: only the "direct treatment of the 'thing'" [Pound 1968a: 3]. Relying on personae, as Pound does in his early poetry, expunges personality, the personality of the poet. The twenty-five poems in *Ripostes* (1912) mark these developments exhibiting a new restraint, concision and hardness in the presentation of images.<sup>3</sup> This became what Pound would call, à propos Ford Madox Ford, "the prose tradition in verse." Ford, he would write in "Status Rerum" (1913), "believes in the exact rendering of things" [Pound 1968a: 371–377]; [Pound 1913: 125].

In "A Retrospect," Pound explains that he has been "pawing over the ancients and semi-ancients" as a "struggle to find out what has been done, once for all, better than it can ever be done again, and to find out what remains for us to do ..." [Pound 1968a: 11]. The focus is international with historical time unlimited, supported by his innate transnational aesthetic originating in his absorption with translation and belief in the synchronic treatment of literatures without regard for historical or national boundaries. Hugh Kenner neatly summarizes this sense of the permeability of writing when he explains that

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Grieve offers an unusual comment in his study of Pound when he writes that Pound "seems from the beginning to have been temperamentally unsuited to write poetry about himself" [Grieve 1997: 21]. He is incapable of self-dramatization.

Confucius after twenty-four centuries stirs Pound into speech; Pound after twenty-four centuries lends Confucius his voice [Kenner 1953: 14].

What Kenner implies in this exchange is that translations gave Pound the space to formulate his poetics. As Kenner writes, “a text to be translated, once grasped, doesn’t wobble” [Kenner 1953: 10]. Pound’s clearest comments on translation appear in “How to Read” where he also notes that while histories of Spanish and Italian literatures always take account of translators, histories of English literature do not [Pound 1968a: 34–37]. Pound’s basic claim is that “English literature lives on translation, it is fed by translation” and is inescapable [Pound 1968a: 34].

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Pound’s poetics stress objectivity, the image and free verse rich with reference formulating an international style that simultaneously encouraged fragmentation and precision, history and imagination. In “A Draft of Three Cantos” (1917), he parallels Confucius with Dante, Catullus with Mallarmé in the same line [Pound 2003b: 323, I:16]. The connections are not extravagant nor improbable, especially to a synthesizing mind like Pound’s who recognized no difference or barriers between writers from different cultures, languages or time. Cultural interdependence is a critical foundation of Pound’s poetics and the source of his globalizing efforts. Even late in his life, he continued this work as his translation of *The Analects* (1950), followed by *The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* (1954) confirm.<sup>4</sup> His anthology *Confucius to Cummings*, edited with Marcella Spann, appeared in 1964. In one volume it displays his global reach since it includes nearly a hundred poets with an emphasis on Greek, Latin, Chinese, and Provençal in addition to Renaissance and Elizabethan figures. The translations are Pound’s, while his increasing attention to Confucius should not be surprising: Canto XII in *The Cantos* was about Kung (Confucius), while Cantos LII–LXI dealt with Chinese history. Chinese ideograms, of course, appear throughout the text.

For Pound, poetic art is universal and exists free from restraint by history, censorship, or culture. The parallel may be to Picasso whose most

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<sup>4</sup> His translation of *The Great Digest* (Ta Hsio) appeared in 1928, *The Unwobbling Pivot* (Chung Yung) in 1947.

distinctive early modernist works easily incorporate contradictory objects (Cubism) and forms, notably African images as in “Les demoiselles d’Avignon.” Pound valorized the dislocation and displacement of voices, as well as texts and sources, and saw no disagreement or contrast among works that could forward the modernist project. Marking the international reaction to Pound during and after his death are the many translations of his writing (prose as well as poetry) into Russian, French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Korean – and many other languages.<sup>5</sup> *The Cantos* have been translated into several Slavic languages in recent years by Czeslaw Karkowski into Polish, Ihor Kostets’kyi into Ukrainian, Vojo Sindolic into Serbo-Croatian, and Ian Probststein and Andrei Bronnikov into Russian. His influence on such writers as Tadeusz Rozewicz, Halina Poświatowska, and Tadeusz Pióro (who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Pound and James Joyce) has shaped Slavic poetics in recent years.

This extensive influence should be measured alongside Pound’s impact upon Latin American poets, such as the work of the Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal and the Peruvian poet Antonio Cisneros. Rodolfo Jaruga has written on Pound’s continuing influence in Brazil through the Noigandres movement and other cultural manifestations, while Fernando Pérez Villalón has written on the poet’s reception in Chile.<sup>6</sup> Pound’s near-global influence on poetry and poetic practice over the last half-century takes on particular resonance in the context of Chinese poetry from the Cultural Revolution onwards. Yunte Huang has translated *The Pisan Cantos* into Mandarin, while Pound’s influence on the Misty poets and the post-Tiananmen generation is sufficiently significant to warrant separate treatment. The on-line journal *Make It New’s* occasional “Ezra Pound in the World” section continues to shed light on Pound’s reception around the globe: Mohammad Shaheen has

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<sup>5</sup> Recent scholarship continues to interrogate global Pound, two examples from the Pound Society’s on-line quarterly, *Make It New*: “Pound in Russia.” *MIN* IV:3 (Dec. 2017) and Lin Wei, “The Reception of EP in China.” *MIN* IV:4 (June 2018). An earlier example is Hakutani, Yoshinobu. “Ezra Pound, Yone Noguchi and Imagism.” *Modern Philology* 90:1 (1992): 46–69.

<sup>6</sup> “Ezra Pound’s Arrival in Brazil.” *Make It New* IV:1–2 (September 2017). Online at <http://makeitnew.ezrapoundsociety.org/volume-iv/4-1-2-september-2017/ezra-pound-in-the-world>. Also see “Versions, Variations, And Reverberations: Ezra Pound in Chile.” *Make It New* III:4 (April 2017). Online at <http://makeitnew.ezrapoundsociety.org/volume-iii/3-4/pound-in-the-world>

written on Pound's place in contemporary Arabic literature, while Seda Şen Alta has compiled a bibliography of Pound studies in Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

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Cosmopolitan Pound, anticipating his global poetics, began with his early trips to Europe: between the ages of thirteen and twenty-six, he made five journeys traveling initially with Aunt Frank and his mother. His attraction to Troubadour poetry and the French Provençal language, soon incorporated as multiple sources in his texts, partly originated in these early journeys. His appreciation of Provence and Renaissance Italy certainly grew from his early exposure to such cultures. As he writes in "Provincia Deserta" (1915), "I have walked/ into Perigord, / I have seen the torch-flames, high leaping" [Pound 2003b: 297]. Early poems such as "Piere Vidal Old," "Cino" set in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, or the vocal and intense "Sestina: Altaforte" incorporate this world directly into his writing. Later work would include Cavalcanti, Japanese Noh theatre, the poetry of Li Po and the *Ta Hio: The Great Learning* by Confucius. That Cantos VIII–XI of *The Cantos* would focus on the Renaissance *condottiero* Sigismondo Malatesta creates no confusion for the poem, nor his later assimilation of John Adams, nor his uniting, in his prose work, *Jefferson and/ or Mussolini* (1935). From the start, and continuing throughout his career, Pound disregarded cultural or historical divisions as artificial if not false. Historic periods and continents

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<sup>7</sup> "Teaching Pound." *Make It New* III:2 (September 2016). Online at <http://makeitnew.ezrapoundsociety.org/volume-iii/3-2-september-2016/shaheen-article-make-it-new-3-2>, and "Ezra Pound in Turkey: A Bibliography, 1961–2016." *Make It New* III:3 (December 2016). Online at <http://makeitnew.ezrapoundsociety.org/volume-iii/3-3-december-2016/documentary>. Also see Nagahata, Re Akitoshi. "The Reception of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot in Prewar Japan." *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*. Online at <http://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-209>, and Solt, John. "The Hooking of Distant Antennae: Ez Po & Kit-Kat." *Ezra Pound in Europe*, ed. Richard Taylor. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993: 119–130. It deals with Pound and his friendship with Kitasono Katue which lasted for two-and-a-half decades beginning in 1936. More recent is Pound, Ezra. *Pound's Chinese Friends, Stories in Letters* (ed. Zhaoming Qian. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), which brings together 162 letters between Pound and Chinese intellectuals, Huang, Yunte. "Ezra Pound, Made in China." *Paideuma* 42 (2015): 39-55, and Bush, Christopher. "'I am All for the Triangle': The Geopolitical Aesthetic of Pound's Japan." *Ezra Pound in the Present, Essays on Pound's Contemporaneity*, eds. Paul Stasi and Josephine Park. London: Bloomsbury, 2016: 75–106. See also Shaheen, Mohammad. "The Reception of Pound in Arabic." *Paideuma* 34:1 (2005): 89–95. Outlining much of the above material is Richard Parker's forthcoming paper "Pound and Influence." *New Ezra Pound Studies*, ed. Mark Byron. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

dissolved as in *Lustra* (1916, 1917), where he incorporated Catullus, Lope de Vega, Albert-Victor Samain, the fertility goddess of Asia Minor, Cybele, the Geek poet Ibycus, the King James Bible, Heine, Cleopatra, Ovid, Sappho, Ch's Yuan, Fu Hi and Li Po. To build a global poetics one had to possess a global outlook.

In a February 1937 letter to F.V. Morley, a director of Faber and Faber publishers describing the nature of *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound reaffirms his identity as a citizen of the world. The work, and his program for the global renewal of culture, would include

the economic element in history ... history of thought ... hist. of action ...  
Licherchoor and deh Awts ... Racial elefunts necessary fer the whole of  
Kulchur. [Pound 1971: 288]

Hybridity is natural for Pound. This is not so much the re-purposing of texts but a new synthesis creating an intercultural dynamic and, through their global reach, achieving a new aesthetic and energy. The austerity of Japanese style, the ideogrammic method described by Fenollosa, the lyricism of the Troubadours, the referential style of Dante come together in Pound's poetics.

The use of borrowed poetic forms alternate with that of Pound's American inheritance to further enlarge his cosmopolitanism: whether it is the Sestina, the Villanelle, the sonnet, the Chinese lyric or the American prose epic, Pound adapted these genres to his poetic energy. Translations of Cavalcanti, Arnaut Daniel, Li Po and Confucius, as well as Sophocles (*The Women of Trachis*) and a set of Japanese plays (notably *Hagoromo* which appeared first in the Pound/Fenollosa translation of 1914, reprinted in Fenollosa and Pound's "*Noh*" or *Accomplishment* [1916]), advanced his expansive poetic vision. He would even write two of his Cantos in Italian (LXXII and LXXIII). His engagement with these forms and literatures, as a comparatist and translator, contributed to an occasionally over-confident internationalism (assuming knowledge of other literatures and languages which he did not study) which nevertheless made it second nature for Pound to extend beyond national boundaries overlooking differences of language, technique and expression. Borders, boundaries and separations disappear in his transcultural poetics which force readers to become transnational and trans-locational to understand his texts. One reads his

work without regard for one's location, background, or even linguistic knowledge.

His associations at this time were equally worldwide beginning with the Irish poet Yeats, the eminent Japanese poets Yoni Noguchi (who lectured at Oxford) and Katue Kitasono, and the Spanish-born philosopher George Santayana (met in Venice in 1939). Pound, in fact, maintained friendships with Chinese writers and scholars from 1914 until 1959 and they ranged from F.T. Sung (1883–1940) and Fengchi Yang (1908–1970) to Achilles Fang (1910–1995) [Qian 2008: xv]. One of Pound's early disappointments was the failure of a proposed plan to visit Beijing in 1914 organized by Far-san T. Sung [Qian 2008: xv, 1]. Pound's Italian associates were legion and included Eugenio Montale (a future Nobel laureate), Gino Saviotte, co-editor of the Literary Supplement of *Il Mare* and Luigi Monti, a minor writer praised by Pound in *Guide to Kulchur*. Others included his Roman friends Olivia Rossetti Agresti, daughter of William Michael Rossetti, Caren Lilli, Gabriele Paresce – and his Italian publisher, Vanni Scheiwiller.<sup>8</sup>

Reinforcing Pound's global outlook is his prose with "directness of presentation" a persistent goal, supported by his belief that "the touchstone of an art is its precision" [Pound 1968a: 33, 48]. "Maximum efficiency of expression" remains his aim [Pound 1968a: 56]. His comparatist prose – early essays included numerous French and Italian references drawn from his travels such as the early "Burgos, A Dream City of Castille" (1906) or "Troubadours: Their Sorts and Conditions" (1913) – indicate his early need to form a comparative poetics. *The Spirit of Romance* extended these ideas. The paradoxes of European history and politics also fascinated as two unpublished essays from his early visits illustrate: "Genoa," and "The Rais Uli Myth being Tangier in Dry Point."

Pound from the start was intellectually, poetically and physically restless. Eliot wrote that wherever he went Pound "seemed always to be a temporary squatter" [Ackroyd 1984: 26]. In a passage in *Guide to Kulchur*, he admitted his predisposition to be nomadic and in his essay "Europe or The Setting" [Pound 1970b: 107–114], he celebrates a walking and motor tour through Italy emphasizing the need for moving on [Pound 1970b: 243, 111]. But peripatetic Pound allowed him to experience new languages and literatures as he cavalierly traveled back in time in his study of past

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<sup>8</sup> On this important figure, see Bacigalupo, Massimo. "In Memoriam: Vanni Scheiwiller, Italian Publisher of Ezra Pound." *Paideuma* 29:3 (Winter 2000): 245–252. Scheiwiller's dates are 1934–1999.

literatures, while he physically traveled forward in Europe without regard for passports, currency or even addresses. His introduction to Oriental literature through the materials of Ernest Fenollosa strikingly advanced his international approach to poetics. In writing about Confucius's *Analects*, for example, he recognizes almost immediately the value of random rather than ordered thoughts and that the study of Confucian philosophy "is of greater profit than that of the Greek because no time is wasted in idle discussion of errors. ... Aristotle gives, may we say, 90% of his time to errors" [Pound 2003b: 659]. The *Analects* "contain nothing superfluous" always giving "particular instances" [Pound 2003b: 659].

When Pound writes about Noh drama, he focuses on the precise, explaining to readers that ceremonial dancing always fuses words and music and that "one must build out of their indefiniteness a definite image." The unity of the plays are at their best as an image, the source of their unity built up "as Greek plays are built up of a single moral conviction" [Pound 2003b: 368]. This is a core principle of Pound's poetics originating in, and uniting with, Japanese and Greek aesthetics. When he begins to publish and adapt Fenollosa's writing on the Noh, and explains that "the art of dance has played a richer part in Chinese and Japanese life than it has in Europe," he exhibits his natural, comparatist understanding and linking of seemingly disparate cultures, the center of his global, transcultural practice [Pound 2003b: 392].

An additional and sometimes overlooked source is Egypt, not only in its occult traditions but its poetry, although his interest diminished in the face of the Orient and the evolution of *The Cantos*. Nonetheless, Egypt stood as an "oppositional space" for Pound's own poetic project existing in contrast to Victorian aesthetics and his classical models [Fletcher 2002: 4]. His early poems "De Ægypto" and "The Tomb at Akr Çaar," plus remarks in *Gaudier-Brzeska* that his Hieratic Head sculpted by Gaudier-Brzeska "should have had the firmness of Hotep-hotep, the strength of the gods of Egypt," underscore the importance of Egypt for Pound preparatory to framing an opposition between Egypt and China [Pound 1970a: 50]. Six lines of Canto I in "Three Cantos" (1917), with reference to Ficinus, Hotep-Hotep ("a king in Egypt"), Atlas, Prometheus and Moses, mark not only the encompassing globalism of Pound but extend his absorption with matters Egyptian [Pound 2005: 149]. The year before, in 1916, he shared his interest in Egypt with Iris Barry, recommending a book of translations of Ptahotep

[Pound 1971: 88]. Plato and Egypt actually become the sources of his understanding of realism, especially Egypt, in his evolving aesthetic criteria in which he privileges Egypt for its Platonic calm over Greece, which for Pound becomes a site of aesthetic imbalance [Fletcher 2002: 5–6]. Following the ideas of the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska, he argues that Egyptian art preserved the intensity of primitive times. Later, in the “Rock-Drill” section of *The Cantos*, Egypt re-appears but now valued for its hieroglyphic language and philosopher-kings like Kati. Hotep-hotep, cited earlier, was fictitious. This late engagement was with Egypt’s culture; his earlier, with its poetic precursors.

In many ways *Guide to Kulchur* summarizes Pound’s comparativist prose and search for a globalist poetics. Its wide-ranging, inclusive text of some 359 pages in its first edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), includes various translations underscoring its global spread: a verse translation of the German text of a song of the Haussa tribe of the Sudan; a verse translation of a folk-song of Teleuten, Siberia; a free translation based on Père Lacharme’s Latin text of an ode printed in *The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius* [Gallup 1983: 62]. The original suggested title was *Rough Rider*, evoking the journey of an American cowboy riding through world culture as well as the rough and ready Theodore Roosevelt and his volunteer cavalry gathered for the Spanish-American war recounted in his best seller, *The Rough Riders* (1899) [Araujo 2018: 1–2]. *Guide to Kulchur* is Pound’s own ride through the borderlands of history, culture and literature, blending in the text a Confucian search for stability with a cultural maverick’s imagination. “Whole beams and ropes of real history have been shelved, overclouded and buried” he energetically writes and they must be reclaimed [Pound 1970b: 30]. Importantly, in the text Pound breaks with “traditional taxonomic classifications of knowledge” realizing that it was time for ““a XXth. century outline and synthesis”” which he carried over into his poetics which crossed international and historical borders [Araujo 2018: 5].

The capaciousness of Pound’s poetics finds articulation throughout the *Guide* which registers his longstanding goal of “ideas going into action” [Pound 1970b: 44]. Language, literature and poetry are holistic as Pound in his text and poetics outlines a cross-pollinated approach. Pound’s global poetics and outline of knowledge in the *Guide* may, in fact, be that of a Vortex which he defined in his memoir of the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska as



a condition “from which, and through which, and into which ideas are constantly rushing” [Pound 1970a: 92]. The *Guide* becomes a “cultural ideogram,” a text to be decoded through its challenging, non-linear structure and pluralistic cultural exchanges [Araujo 2018: 13, 15].

Pound’s trans-historical poetics demanded openness and attentiveness. His revision of conventional, frequently nationalist poetics, initially met resistance largely because it was radical and different than more accepted and traditional ideas of poetic expression, a balance of rhythm, syntax and balanced imagery originating in Tennyson or the Pre-Raphaelites. Browning challenged such restrained methods with the dramatic monologue, while Swinburne reacted with excessive rhetoric and imagery. But Pound’s directness and inclusiveness disregarding national poetic boundaries soon overturned such practices. *Vers libre*, plus the economy of words and controlled rhythmic structures became the new hallmarks in the quest to write hard, sane poetry to be “as much like granite as it can be” [Pound 1968a: 12]. The new poetic is to be “austere, direct, free from emotional slither” [Pound 1968a: 12].

Pound’s radical ideas found acceptance in cultures as diverse as Brazil (the Concrete poets), Japan (the VOU group) and America (the Objectivists). From the start, his poetry employed meter, imagery and verse structures drawn from a variety of times and places. His mix of influences and sources, ranging from Bertram de Born to Li Po find expression in *The Cantos* a workplace of new ideas. This combination expressed itself not only in allusion and reference but in his syntax which is often disruptive reflecting his energetic efforts to include the multiple origins of his ideas. The English poet J.H. Prynne, writing to Charles Olson in May 1963 on reading Pound, identified the elements of his appeal but also the confusion in articulating Pound’s organizational strategies:

the monolinear sequence allows too little breadth of narrative, too little space in which to deploy the larger patterns of awareness. The locus, that is, as well as the vector (or, as I revert to it, the noun as well as the verb). The overall Poundian structure, even, as a form of parallelistic gerundial patternment. [Olson 2017: 63]

Poets have grappled ever since in attempting to unpack and apply Pound's techniques.

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Mussolini asked Pound "why do you want to put your ideas in order?" [Pound 1970c: 66.] Critics of Pound have taken on the job and are beginning to see his ideas in a global context and understand his poetics within the language of Global Modernism. Marjorie Perloff in "Raising the Referential Temperature": Poundian Reverberations in Brazilian Concrete Poetry" (2015) and Jean Michel Rabaté in "Ezra Pound and the Globalization of Literature" (2016) illustrate this new approach. Perloff's essay focuses on the Campos brothers and Décio Pignatari, poets who edited a Brazilian poetry journal sent to Pound in 1953 and whose title was taken from Canto XX, *Noigandres*.<sup>9</sup> For Brazilian poets of the left, Pound became a poetic master, a "tutelary spirit for the avant-garde community of Brazilian concretism" [Perloff 2015: 7]. Pound was late to arrive in Brazil, but it was not of his own making. WWI and WWII delayed the arrival of avant-garde journals, music, art and books to the country. Augusto Campos made this clear in a 1965 essay entitled "Pound Made (New) in Brazil." But the postwar generation quickly discovered and absorbed Pound and his innovations.

For the Noigandres poets, Pound's poetic calling for intensity, luminous detail and the ideogram spoke to the aesthetic of concretism. In a 1958 manifesto, the movement wrote

[C]oncrete poetry begins by being aware of graphic space as structural agent. Qualified space: space-time structure instead of mere linear-temporal development. Hence the importance of the ideogram concept, either in its general sense of spatial or visual syntax or in its specific sense as a method of composition based on direct –analogical, not logical –discursive – juxtaposition of elements ("Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry" [Perloff 2015: 9]).

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<sup>9</sup> The confusing term is from Provençal and is a compound word from *enoi* (ennui) and *gandir* (to ward off). To ward off boredom may be a loose translation [Perloff 2015: 8]. Pound actually had a smattering of Portuguese, having studied it for a term at Penn.

What also appealed to the Noigandres poets was the high referential element within Pound's poetry: the facts, events, cultural contexts and historical figures. They translated this into their own work. They understood that the macrostructure of *The Cantos* allows for a "stylistic plurality at the same time there exists a parallel fragmentation of discourse." "Ideogrammatic montage invades the microstructure of the composition" as Haroldo de Campos explains in "The Informational Temperature of the Text" (1960) [Perloff 2015: 10]. But these poets go further, criticizing Pound's easy assessment of the ideogram's reference to direct pictorial representation. As the poets show, words do not actually resemble the things they represent.

Perloff convincingly proves not only the influence of Pound's poetics but how they led to further poetic analysis and experiment. But Pound, they argue, misunderstood the poetic function of language and its pictorial associations. As Perloff incisively summarizes, the "iconic aspect of the ideogram ... is always subordinate to the necessity for relational structure ... whereby ... *any phonological or visual coincidence is felt to mean semantic kinship*" [Perloff 2015: 13]. "Materiality is meaning" she concludes, emphasizing the relational not "pictorial" argument for the ideogram which is a relational process, a "structural metaphor" [Perloff 2015: 13]. Pound has not only been absorbed by the Noigandres but transformed. Pound's conception of poetic structure, not his political or economic ideas, mattered.

Rabaté focuses on the globalized culture represented in *The Cantos* initiated, in part, by Pound's engagement with Tagore and Fenollosa. This generates active global knowledge, incorporating but also testing inherited ideals of a synthesizing global culture as Pound radically but concretely overlaid history and geography. His knowledge was partial but that should not prevent the recognition of Pound as a literary globalist. As early as 1920, the publisher of the *Dial*, James Sibley Watson, claimed that Pound presents a kind of "Comparative Literature of the Present" (Watson in [Froula 2016: 135]).

Pound's vocabulary of Global Modernism originates in his allotropic writing, poetry that points outwards in "the direction of the Other" in the words of the American poet and translator Cid Corman (Corman in [Woods 2014: 57]). It also means variability and changeableness creating a polymorphic text which defines Pound's style, incorporating history, languages,

documents, images, dates, fragments and even repetition. Pound projects his style, prosody and narrative method on to a text which externally is epic in its gesture. Poets, readers and writers beyond his initial audience understood this and responded whether in Brazil, China, Japan or India. He also initiated new terms for the global modernist as well, “transcreation” (the term is Haroldo de Campos’s) perhaps one of the most useful. It certifies his creative translations, something the Brazilians especially valued. Another is “Excernment” defined by Pound as “the general ordering and weeding out of what has actually been performed. The elimination of repetitions,” analogous to the work of a curator [Pound 1968a: 75]. In his re-invention of earlier writing, as in his version of “The Seafarer” or “Homage to Sextus Propertius,” Pound rekeys the language of the previous texts into his own. In a creative translation, according to the Brazilian Haroldo de Campo, “not only the signified but also the sign itself is translated, that is, the sign’s tangible self, its very materiality” [Perloff 2015: 14]. “Transcreation” also creates a new form of criticism, criticism by translation through an act of osmosis.

Another strategy of the global Pound is replacing the richness of vocabulary, often misunderstood or confusing in other cultures and languages, with the richness of structure. As he stated in “The Chinese Written Character,” “relations are more real and more important than the things which they relate” [Fenollosa 2005: 320]. While reducing the language field, this intensifies the impact and broader meaning of the text. Haroldo de Campos, who met Pound in 1959 in Rapallo, was told that *The Cantos* had no plan of completion. It was “a world in motion, in process” and could only be a work in fragments, although the fragments themselves became watermarks of the whole [Perloff 2015: 18].

Pound globally contributed to the economies of literary value, his avant-garde, experimental poetics never separating from pedagogy. Such a union is the bed rock of his global poetics. His poetry and poetics always instruct, favouring parataxis or juxtaposition, parataxis “the syntax of equality in difference” emphasizing relationships [Golding 2012: 195]. This parallels Jun’ichiro Tanizaki who in *In Praise of Shadows* writes that “we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows . . . that one thing against another [always] creates . . . were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty” [Tanizaki 1977: 30]. He also stressed stripping away useless decoration and pushing back “into the shadows the things that come

forward too clearly” [Tanizaki 1977: 42]. Pound agreed; in *The Pisan Cantos*, he writes: “I like a certain number of shades in my landscape” (Canto LXXIX) [Pound 2003a: 504–505].

Pound’s pedagogy and poetics have been absorbed by writers and poets from Tokyo and Beijing to Paris and Moscow. He stridently opposed provincialism (“Provincialism the Enemy” was the title of a series of 1917 essays) and his global poetics challenged the idea of literary parochialism. His vertical and horizontal axes of reading, the vertical emphasizing the contemporaneity of Homer, Dante or the Troubadours, the horizontal axis reaching out latitudinally to Asia, Africa and even Australian aboriginal legends, reveals his global spread duplicated by his successors [Rabaté 2016: 109]. His paragraph from the 1910 preface to the *Spirit of Romance* emphasized the contemporaneity of all ages, but the statement also suggests that we all live in different times and periods even when we share the same present. Pound sought a syncretic culture which his poetics achieved in a formal, thematic and direct manner. Saying something instantly makes the mind see and hear it another way: “get it across *e poi basta* [and then stop] (Canto LXXIX) [Pound 2003a: 506]. This directive sharpened but also expanded his poetics as he outlined a method and value to writing. “The arts,” he reminded readers in “The Serious Artist”, “provide data for ethics” [Pound 1968a: 46].

Pound constantly absorbed multiple poetics and poetic forms, whether Egyptian, Provençal, Italian, Greek or Chinese. He is Modernism’s first global poet, translingual, translational and transnational demonstrated through his use of international history, languages and imagery. The roots of Pound’s global poetics are in his cultural cosmopolitanism incorporating imagery, content and form from other literatures and times in his writing. He developed a transcultural vision that valorizes the dislocation and displacement of voices, as much as sources and texts. Pound was able, as he writes in Canto LXXXI, to “have gathered from the air a live tradition,” understanding Europe as a Dantean comedy balancing Classical, Oriental and even Egyptian sensibilities regarding language, technique and image (Canto LXXXI) [Pound 2003a: 542]. Pound was unquestionably our Foreign Correspondent, his official title as a contributor to *Poetry* magazine.

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