

Ezra Pound and 20th-Century Theories of Language

Ezra Pound is one of the most significant poets of the twentieth century, a writer whose poetry is particularly notable for the intensity of its linguistic qualities. Indeed, from the principles of Imagism to the polyphony of his *Cantos*, Pound is central to our conception of modernism's relationship with language. This volume explores the development of Pound's understanding of language in the context of twentieth-century linguistics and the philosophy of language. It draws on largely unpublished archival material in order to provide a broadly chronological account of the development of Pound's views and their relation to both his own poetry and modernist writing as a whole. Beginning with Pound's contentious relationship with philology and his antagonism towards academia, the book traces continuities and shifts across Pound's career, culminating in a discussion of the centrality of language to the conception of his *Cantos*. While it contains discussions around significant figures in twentieth-century linguistic thought, such as Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein, the book attempts to recover the work of theorists such as Leonard Bloomfield, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and C.K. Ogden, figures who were once central to modernism, but who have largely been pushed to the periphery of modernist studies. The picture of Pound that emerges is a figure whose understanding of language is not only bound up with modernist approaches to anthropology, politics, and philosophy, but which calls for a new understanding of modernism's relationship to each.

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Ezra Pound and 20th-Century Theories of Language

Faith with the Word

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For my family, British and German,
with love and gratitude



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Abbreviations

Works by Ezra Pound

<i>ABC/R</i>	<i>ABC of Reading</i> (New York: New Directions, 1934)
<i>GK</i>	<i>Guide to Kulchur</i> (New York: New Directions, 1938)
<i>LE</i>	<i>Literary Essays</i> (New York: New Directions, 1968)
<i>SL</i>	<i>Selected Letters</i> , ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1950)
<i>SR</i>	<i>The Spirit of Romance</i> (London: Dent, 1910)

Citations of the *Cantos* (New York: New Directions, 1996) are inserted parenthetically after the quotation or reference in the form of ‘Canto number. Page number(s)’.



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Introduction

The Word beyond Formulated Language

Why does it matter what Ezra Pound thought about language? There are three reasons: first, because Pound has been paradigmatic to our understanding of modernism since he first published 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' with its famous definition of the image as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', a definition which remains seminal to our understanding of what it is that the language of poetry does.¹ Second, because the broader paradigm of twentieth-century letters, whether literature or philosophy, is language, and Pound was not only contemporaneous with many of the great conceptual shifts in the understanding of language, but he was at the forefront of a literary culture which embraced and rejected them in equal measure. Third, because Pound's work offers an alternative to structuralist and post-structuralist accounts of literary language, with their focus on the nature and structure of the linguistic sign. The terminologies and frameworks of post-Saussurian accounts of language have brought numerous advances to our subject, but there is a sense in which they strain against the material when we use them to study modernism. By looking at Pound's life and work in relation to contemporaneous debates in language, we can lay a foundation for an understanding of modernist accounts of language which allows greater commerce between criticism and texts. With regard to poetic language, Pound writes in 'A Serious Artist' (1913): 'you can be wholly precise in representing a vagueness' (*LE*, 44). The purpose of this book is to outline why that might be the case, and to explore the problems it raises.

Pound's life (1885–1972) covered a period of literary and philosophical history in which faith in language, as opposed to the metaphysical ideas or the external reality it supposedly mediated, became a central aspect of philosophical enquiry. Pound's unique and significant voice provides crucial insight into the way in which we can understand the relationship between language and literature in the twentieth century; this by virtue of both his extensive and complex oeuvre and his historical vantage point. Pound was not only a significant poet in his own right, but was a central node in the modernist nexus. There are numerous problems in attempting to understand the trajectory of Pound's career

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in relation to the most famous writers on language in the twentieth century, chief among them that Pound was notoriously idiosyncratic in his choice of sources. Were scholars to put together a reading list of key texts of twentieth-century linguistic and philosophical thought, it would be unlikely that Pound would have read many of the works listed. The difficulty for Poundian scholarship has been finding a balance between doing justice to Pound's views on his own terms and relating this to wider modernist and historical debates. One of the major problems in historicising Pound is the diversity of his interests and his own view of history as an equilibrium. As he claims in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), he wanted an approach which would 'weigh Theocritus and Mr Yeats with one balance' (SR, 8). Where he found no satisfactory answers in his own time, he would reach back into the past and consider the point as no less current. His use of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentio*, the Confucian odes, or his attempt to recover certain methodologies of scholasticism all demonstrate this approach to history. From the point of view of the historian of twentieth-century letters, Pound is a somewhat frustrating figure. His preference for obscure or underappreciated figures leads to us finding not Edmund Husserl, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ferdinand de Saussure, or Ludwig Wittgenstein, but instead Ernest Fenollosa, C.K. Ogden, Leo Frobenius, and George Santayana. However, it is essential that we understand his relation to the major figures of modernist thought. This leaves the historian with two options: first, to understand the ways in which Pound responds to the same concerns and debates as his contemporaries; second, to understand affinities between Pound and his contemporaries in terms of common roots and sources.

In order to understand Pound's role in twentieth-century debates around language, it is worth first sketching some of the key ideas in the period in which he lived. The late nineteenth century had seen the emergence of a series of challenges to the apparently long-held epistemological and cultural assumptions of Western philosophy, and language was no exception. From Friedrich Nietzsche's and Søren Kierkegaard's challenges to Western metaphysical traditions to scientific positivism in the late nineteenth century to Edmund Husserl's and Martin Heidegger's phenomenologies of the early twentieth, Pound conducted his work in a period of philosophical and literary upheaval. Faith in language as a stable medium of thought and communication was severely challenged. The great shift of philosophy from epistemology, from the study of how we know, to ontology, the question of being itself, had a great effect on the ways in which we can conceive objective reality, our relationship to it, and the way we represent it. The Western metaphysical tradition was challenged from a number of directions, and language became central to this concern: speech shifted from being understood as the main medium through which we encounter reality to being conceived as that which constitutes reality itself. There was a broad shift to the following

position: as our experience of reality is always bound through language, it is only through an intense study of the interior logic of language that we can understand our relationship to the world, and the cultures, art forms, people, and ideas it contains. This is what Richard Rorty has termed the 'linguistic turn' in philosophy.²

Identifying the 'linguistic turn' is both a matter of conjecture and relativity. One place to begin is the work of Gottlob Frege and his theory of reference.³ Frege conceived of language in mathematical terms, treating it as a series of logical propositions. In his *Grundlage* (1884), written one year before Pound's birth, Frege proposed that sentences have meaning by virtue of being true or false, and this truth or falsehood is determined by each of the components of a sentence having a meaning, a reference, or, in Frege's terms, *Bedeutung*.⁴ In his *Sinn und Bedeutung* (1892), Frege further expands his view by demonstrating that *Bedeutung* cannot be all that determines our understanding of language. While 'Earth' clearly refers to the planet Earth, it is not clear what the reference for 'Odysseus' is, and yet we are still able to understand stories told about the mythical character. Frege refers to this as the *Sinn*, or the 'sense' of a proposition, sentence, or text. Thus, a name, such as Odysseus, can have sense even if it does not have a direct reference.⁵ In 1905, Bertrand Russell challenged this view in his 'On Denoting', a seminal text in the so-called analytic tradition. Russell held that names such as Odysseus are really shorthand descriptions. Thus 'Odysseus' does not necessarily refer to an individual object, but rather functions as a shorthand version of a description such as 'the main character of the *Odyssey*'.⁶ Russell's student, Ludwig Wittgenstein, expanded such treatments of language and logic in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, wherein he explored the ways in which '*the limits of my language mean the limits of my world*', a notion in which the boundaries of human perception and the capacity of human speech are seen as one and the same for the speaking subject.⁷

In some senses, however, what is often conceived of as a 'linguistic turn' was, in fact, a 'semiotic turn', in which the multifaceted issue of linguistic communication was brought to focus on the notion of the sign: that is, the unification of material and conceptual components of language, and the way they 'point' towards external objects in reality. From the perspective of intersections between literary and linguistic treatments of language, the most influential figure has been Ferdinand de Saussure, whose *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) was both a summation of the linguistic approach and the seminal text in the foundation of semiotics, or the study of signs. Saussure was a professor of Sanskrit philology and, after his death, his *Course* was assembled out of lecture notes taken down by his students. Although Saussure's text is a summary and survey of many aspects of linguistic study, it has become most famous for its formulation of the linguistic sign. Saussure distinguishes, first, between the various objects of linguistic study: *le langage* (language – as

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a general concept), *la langue* (an individual language, or tongue), and *la parole* (speech).⁸ He also outlines the two approaches to linguistic study: a linguist can study language diachronically, that is, language change across time, or synchronically, which constitutes a study of language use at any single point in time.⁹ The focus of structuralism is generally on the latter, the object of linguistics being language qua language. Saussure outlines an argument for the psychological construction of all human speech. Language, he argues, is composed of signs which refer to objects, or referents. The linguistic sign is itself made up of two parts: a sound image, or *signifier* (such as the word *tree*), and a mental concept, or *signified* (such as an image of a tree in one's mind). As Saussure writes, 'the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image'.¹⁰ Following the work of the American philologist William Dwight Whitney, Saussure then asserts the fundamental arbitrariness of the linguistic sign: there is no fundamental link between the particular composition of the phonemes in the sound image, or *signifier*, and the particular image that comes to the speaker's or listener's mind. Rather, the connection between *signifiers* and *signifieds* is based on convention and communal use. That does not mean, however, that one can simply shift the meanings of words at will. Language, Saussure points out, is not so much communally determined or agreed upon, as it is culturally predetermined; all language users are born into a linguistic community both the language of which and the rules governing it have, by and large, long since been established. Saussure's formulation of the linguistic sign has provided one of the bases for structuralism and for the general science of semiotics – or the study of ways in which signs and sign-systems structure our lives – of which he hoped linguistics would form a subcategory.

The semiotic foci of structuralist linguists culminated in the emergence of post-structuralist theory in the 1960s, the point at which Pound stopped writing. It is here that the development of the linguistic-semiotic understanding of language had its most fruitful encounter with literature. In his famous essay 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes explores the implications of the focus on language in the twentieth century in terms of challenging the authority given to writers in determining the meaning of a given text:

Linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytic tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it.¹¹

This is a radical inversion of our intuitive assumptions about language. Where one may believe that grammatical categories such as the pronoun *I* are constituted by the existence of individuals, Barthes argues that it is, in fact, the other way around, and we are led through our linguistic conventions towards an unstable understanding of reality. According to this theory, literature does not necessarily point towards an external reality, but rather self-referentially draws attention to language's fundamental and paradoxical status as the arbiter of reality. Should one use a methodology of this kind to read Pound, for example, it would run up against the current of his own faith in the relationship between literature and lived experience. As was the case with Pound, should one take a more holistic approach to language, relegating the notion of 'signs' to a less privileged place, Barthes's dismissal of speaking subjects (and the authority of the author), while immensely influential in and of itself, functions poorly as an explanation of the modernist understanding of language.

This brings us to the work of Martin Heidegger, whose career and notoriety, as Jean-Michel Rabaté points out, contains many parallels with Pound.¹² In his late essay 'Poetry', Heidegger appears to argue a similar thesis to Barthes, with his famous dictum that 'language speaks, not the man'.¹³ Heidegger attempts to isolate the function of language as language, readily admitting that individuals use language, but that it is not clear what language is as such, as divorced from those who use it. Heidegger's more phenomenological approach and unique terminology allow him a way of thinking about language outside of previous traditions, and in thinking about poetry, he developed the following thesis: the naming of things which occurs in language, and especially in poetry, 'does not hand out titles, it does not apply terms, but it calls into the word'.¹⁴ That is to say that rather than language being a system of signs which point outwards to an external world, it is a kind of summoning, a creative act which calls the world inwards towards the speaking subject, thereby becoming the medium by which we, as writers and readers, encounter the world.

Certain questions can be drawn out from this: to what extent did Pound's aesthetic innovations intersect with these philosophical and ideological revolutions? How far did Pound's ideas about language reflect, challenge, engage with or ignore those of his time? And, most significantly, what influence did his understanding of language have on his work? In this book, I trace the development of Pound's understanding of language, from his early years as a student studying modern languages at Hamilton College and the University of Pennsylvania to the lyrical reflections of his *Pisan Cantos*, conceived when he was held in an open-air cage, isolated from his library and companions, for his part in supporting Mussolini's Fascist government. It is worth remembering, however, that Pound's work was, above all, literary. Insofar as there is a literary approach to language, language as considered by the poet as opposed to the linguist or the philosopher, Pound sought at all points to hew close

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to it. As a way of introduction to this subject, it is perhaps best to begin by situating Pound in relation to what was primarily a literary discussion in order to determine the exact place of language (as a subject in and of itself) in Pound's early career.

Le Mot Juste

The first question that needs to be determined regarding the relationship between modernist poetry and writing is: what is *poetic* language? Perhaps the best introduction to the question of language in twentieth-century literature is Hugo von Hofmannsthal's 'Letter of Lord Chandos', published in 1902. Hofmannsthal imagines a letter, dated 22 August 1603, sent from the fictional writer Lord Chandos to the English philosopher Francis Bacon, a figure who would, incidentally, become important for Pound. In his letter, Chandos apologises for having cut off correspondence with Bacon over the previous two years and for failing to have produced any literary work in that time. His failure, he explains, resulted from an existential crisis in which his previous understanding of the unity of the world fell apart: 'everything disintegrated into parts, these parts again into parts'; a crisis which ruptures Chandos's perception of the connection between word and world, for 'single words floated around [him]' and he was 'led into the void'.¹⁵ Chandos retreats into the stable world of classical culture, but fails to find solace, and finds himself unable to write. Accepting his situation, he concludes that he cannot write another book, explaining to Bacon:

And this for an odd and embarrassing reason which I must leave to the boundless superiority of your mind to place in the realm of physical and spiritual values spread out harmoniously before your unprejudiced eye: to wit, because the language in which I might be able not only to write but to think is neither Latin nor English, neither Italian nor Spanish but a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me and wherein I may one day have to justify myself before an unknown judge.¹⁶

Hofmannsthal, in the guise of Chandos, raises a number of issues that would become central to twentieth-century linguistics, literature, and philosophy. The first is whether or not Chandos's crisis is one of thought or language, and whether there is a distinction between the two. Is Chandos able to comprehend his crisis even if he does not have the language to express it? Does the letter expose the general limits of language or the limits of Chandos's personal understanding of the world? Does the fact that Hofmannsthal is able to express Chandos's crisis in clear prose suggest that these crises can in fact be overcome in a refined use of language? Or, ultimately, does Hofmannsthal's text simply gesture towards the abyss between the world and the language we use to express

it? Although Hofmansthal did not provide the answer to these questions himself, one way into this problem is a literary principle central to the development of the realist prose tradition and which Pound would later import into his poetics: *le mot juste*.

The concept *le mot juste*, or 'the exact word', is most often attributed to Gustave Flaubert, whose literary practice revolved around a language of precision, choosing the most appropriate word to characterise or describe the objects, scenes, or people that he wished to get across. For Flaubert, *le mot juste* was indicative of an aesthetic and philosophical temperament. Writing to the novelist George Sand in 1876, Flaubert explains his literary process:

The anxiety for external beauty which you reproach me with is for me a METHOD. When I discover a bad assonance or a repetition in one of my phrases, I am sure that I am floundering in error; by dint of searching, I find the exact expression which was the only one and is, at the same time, the harmonious one. The word is never lacking when one possesses the idea.¹⁷

Flaubert notes the materiality of his artistic medium on stylistic grounds, disapproving of unwanted, merely literary flourishes. But these questions of style are then connected to a philosophical and psychological faith in harmony between word and concept. It can seem difficult to reconcile Flaubert's concept of an 'exact' phrase with an understanding of language as a system of arbitrary signs, but it is worth noting that Flaubert refers only to the relationship between words and ideas. He does not refer to what constitutes the harmoniousness of word and concept, be it determined by use, history, society, natural law, or God, but rather simply asserts that a differentiated concept demands a word which differentiates it. In general terms, then, we can say that the notion of *le mot juste* is the principle that differences in language should always stand for conceptual differences, and that, in using a different word or phrase, one differentiates one concept from another.

The importance of Flaubert for Pound is attested to in numerous places, but nowhere more striking than in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), Pound's satiric, semi-autobiographical verse assessment of life as a literary 'modern' before, during, and after the trauma of the First World War. In the opening poem of the *Mauberley* sequence, 'Ode pour l'Election de Son Sepulchre', Pound includes a critique of his own career up to that point, one in which he was 'bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn':

His true Penelope was Flaubert
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun dials.¹⁸

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Comparing himself to Odysseus, Pound sees himself as having navigated the misdirection of Anglophone literary culture; where the cultural norm is the analysis of 'mottoes on sun dials', Pound's poetic thrust is towards the 'elegance' of divine beauty. This is not a mere celebration of aesthetic values over materialistic ones, but a unification of the aesthetic and the ethical in the figure of the *mot juste*. Throughout the various adventures of literary modernism, Flaubert weaves and unweaves the tapestry of language, a loyal, yet threatened, linguistic homestead.

Yet Pound was by no means the first to insist on the values of the *mot juste*. A generation earlier, Walter Pater, whom Pound would later deride for the 'softness' of his writings and convictions, had argued for the value of the *mot juste* as a principle.¹⁹ Pater built upon Flaubert's ideas in his collection of essays, *Appreciations* (1889). See, for example, his opening statement in 'Style', which asserts that 'all progress of mind consists for the most part in differentiation'.²⁰ Pater's essay is an early attempt to outline the value of the Flaubertian *mot juste* in English, and in it we find the role of the artist defined as the discrimination of differences in images and the rendering of this in appropriate language. For Pater, this is at the centre of the literary craft:

The one word for the one thing, the one thought, amid the multitude of words, terms, that might just do; the problem of style was there! – the unique word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, essay, or song, absolutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within.²¹

The role of the writer, then, is the careful, exhaustive search for the word or phrase that corresponds to what the writer sees in a way no other would. This must then be transmitted to the reader, which Pater describes in terms of an artistic address to an audience: 'I want you to see precisely what I see'.²² At this point, Pater seems to approach a radical individualism, with the question of what constitutes the 'proper' word being its relation to the personal vision of the writer, rather than to an external reality. However, again with the assistance of Flaubert, he claims that

for every lineament of the vision within, the one word, the one acceptable word, recognisable by the sensitive, by others 'who have intelligence' in the matter, as absolutely as ever anything can be in the evanescent and delicate region of human language. The style, the manner, would be the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected, but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him.²³

The correctness of a word is determined, then, by the sincerity with which a writer describes the apprehended object. Such an understanding

has a tendency to slip into essentialism, but Pater's meaning is somewhat different. What is significant here is the phrase 'recognisable by the sensitive', that is, the correct word is not simply one which draws the attention of the writer onto the thing described, but one that would draw the attention of others as well. Pater is careful to draw his terms on a conceptual plane rather than a material one, and the assumption at the basis of his thought is that if we share a language, we share certain conceptual elements as well. The object of good writing, then, is to draw these conceptual and linguistic elements as closely together as possible.

The possibility of stylistic precision, as suggested by Flaubert and Pater, is one that is in equal parts clinical and mystical; while there is a clear attempt to represent subjectivity on an objective plane, this often has recourse to a series of essentialist metaphors. There is always a conceptual gap in such explanations, as can be seen in Pater's admission that language is an 'evanescent and delicate region'. Pound notes this conflict in his essay series 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1912), where he claims that poetry must retain its powers of 'vague suggestion' as 'our life is, in so far as it is worth living, made up in great part of things indefinite, impalpable'. Because the arts present these impalpable things to us, they matter so greatly to humanity. Poets thus aim to exploit the vagaries of human language in the elucidation of images, thoughts, and sensations, rather than the elucidation of language itself: it is on this point that poetry and linguistics divide. As Pound explains,

The artist discriminates, that is, between one kind of indefinability and another, and poetry is a very complex art. Its media are on the one hand the simplest, the least interesting, and on the other the most arcane, more fascinating. It is an art of pure sound bound in through an art of arbitrary and conventional symbols. In so far as it is an art of pure sound, it is allied with music, painting, sculpture; in so far as it is an art of arbitrary symbols, it is allied to prose. A word exists when two or more people agree to mean the same thing by it.²⁴

There is a temptation here, of course, to recast Pound's words in Saussurian terms, but by the time Pound was writing this statement, the arbitrariness of language was something of an intellectual truism for those who had studied language at university, as Pound had. Pound's terms capture not only the material basis of poetry: the cadences, rhythms, sounds and written marks, rhymes, and alliterations that we submit to analysis, but also the conceptual side, the process behind the poem's production, the linguistic laws and communities which serve to limit it, and the functions and effects that it has.

It is notable that Pound's material 'pure sound' does not include those 'arbitrary symbols'.²⁵ Contrary to the assumptions typical of the

'linguistic turn', Pound does not associate this arbitrariness with a systemic analysis of the linguistic matrix. 'Arbitrary' has become a kind of literary shorthand for 'unnatural', but Pound's lifelong dedication to technique, praxis, and later Aristotelian *techne* distance him from an analysis based on language as system. Where Roman Jakobson, for example, sees linguistics and poetics as sub-disciplines of an overarching semiotics, Pound begins not with the sign but with the image, the technique, or the creative impulse: the sign in use.²⁶ While it is of course naïve to separate language use from the linguistic matrixes in which a speech act occurs, and such a radical separation is not licensed anywhere by Pound, it is significant that his discussions of language are always focussed on the nature of signification or the thing signified, rather than a discussion of the structural relations of the signs themselves.

Pound's most famous innovation of the *mot juste* tradition is, of course, the image: an importation of Flaubert's prose principle into poetics. The impulse that encouraged Richard Aldington, H.D., and Pound to develop poetic Imagism can be traced to the ideas being discussed at The Poet's Club in London between 1908 and 1914. The secretary of the club was the poet and philosopher, T.E. Hulme, who was greatly influenced by the work of French philosopher Henri Bergson. Hulme formulated well the linguistic problems to which the 'image' and the *mot juste* respond. Unlike Pound, Hulme provides more overtly philosophical material for critics to work with. Although Pound was always at pains to play down the influence that Hulme's ideas had on his own, the latter's essays and talks revolve around the same questions that Pound sought to answer. In 'Romanticism and Classicism' (published posthumously in 1924), Hulme thinks through the problems facing poets at the turn of the century in terms that characterise modernist poetic practice:

The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description. The first thing is to recognise how extraordinarily difficult this is. It is no mere matter of carefulness; you have to use language, and language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise – that which is common to you, me and everybody. But each man sees a little differently, and to get out clearly and exactly what he does see, he must have a terrific struggle with language; whether it be with words or the technique of other arts. Language has its own special nature, its own conventions and communal ideas. It is only by a concentrated effort of the mind that can hold it fixed to your own purpose.²⁷

Hulme's recognition of language as a communal, conventional, and yet unstable system is a perfect synthesis of problems to which the philosophy of language attends. According to Hulme, language is an imperfect medium for the communication of individual thought (not to say objects

and external reality), poets in fact seek to overcome and compensate innate linguistic problems. Hulme continues to define prose as like algebra, which he sees as 'concrete things embodied in signs or counters which are moved about according to rules'. He argues that in prose, one only returns those signs or counters to the things they represent at the end of the process, thus introducing inevitable delay and confusion. Poetry, he argues, is an attempt to avoid this process with a freshness and clarity of presentation:

Poetry, in one aspect, at any rate, may be considered as an effort to avoid this characteristic of prose. It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over accusations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a mind.²⁸

The basic unit of poetry is not the same as ordinary language, in this sense: the basic meaningful unit of poetry is not necessarily the word, but the image. The image is, in the end, the result of a poetic struggle to overcome what Hulme sees as the deficiencies of common, conventional language; the problem for Hulme, as for the post-structuralists later, is that this escape from common language cannot truly escape. Poetry is thus conceived as a more definite and accurate form of compensation.

Although Pound shared much of Hulme's convictions, and clearly derived much of his framing of the image from him, there are a number of important differences in their thought. Where Hulme sees poetry as an attempt to overcome language's inherent failure to represent the mental apprehension of objects, Pound sees this as something of a fallacy. In 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', Pound describes the attempts to capture an event such as sunrise in language:

It is bad poetry to talk much of the colours of the sunrise, though one may speak of our lady 'of rosy fingers' or 'in russet clad', invoking an image not present to the uninitiated; at this game the poet may surpass, but in the matter of the actual colour he is a bungler. The painter sees, or should see, half a hundred hues and varieties, where we see ten; or, granting we are ourselves skilled with the brush, how many hundred colours are there, where language has but a dozen crude names? Even if the poet understands the subtleties of gradation and juxtaposition, his medium refuses to convey them. He can say all his say while he is ignorant of the reality, and knowledge of the reality will not help him say it better.²⁹

12 *The Word Beyond Formulated Language*

Pound's difference from Hulme here is subtle but significant. Where Hulme sees poets as inevitably trapped by their medium, Pound overcomes this apparent problem by suggesting an attempt such as the representation of colour in poetry is misdirected. Language is not, in this case, an inevitably imperfect medium for the representation of reality, but rather simply the wrong medium. We may think of Dante's description of the sunrise in *Purgatorio*: 'Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro/ che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto del mezzo' ['soft colours of oriental sapphire/ gather themselves about the serene aspect of the horizon'].³⁰ The reader's attention is directed towards the impression and articulation by means of a metaphor (the oriental sapphire), rather than by plain description. Contrary to Hulme, who argues that language is inherently flawed, Pound discerns that it is not language itself which is flawed, but the use to which it is put.

At the time in which Pound wrote 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', Pound shared with Hulme a distinction between the language of poetry and common speech. Pound dismisses as a fallacy the notion that poetry should mimic ordinary language, and, echoing Milton, he claims 'works of art attract by a resembling unlikeness'. That is, readers are attracted to poetry by coming into contact with the familiar 'arranged more finely': the distinction between poetic language and ordinary language is a question of form and use. Pound then advances to explain the importance of 'technique', which would remain a constant throughout his career, which he defines as 'the clinch of the expression on the thing intended to be expressed'.³¹ Pound's formula includes the intentionality between the image perceived and the perceiver; poetic language is distinguished by the creative process, rather than by its passive inheritance of language's inherent structures. This intense connection between expression and thing expressed is a dynamic process dependent on the active participation of writer and reader.

The struggle to determine the experience beyond language, the effort to capture the richness of perceived phenomena that cannot be delimited in ordinary words, is at the centre of the creation of one of Pound's most famous poems, 'In a Station of the Metro'.

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.³²

Pound's two-line poem is prized for its fine, precise quality, its author making use of principles discerned from both Western and Eastern literary traditions. He overlays two images, the one of the ghostly quality of passing people in the city; the other of a natural world, the petals departed from their stems and caught on the trees in a storm. Pound's account of the impression that this poem captures, included in his memoir

of the life of the painter Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (published 1916), is written in terms similar to those used by Hofmannsthal:

Three years ago in Paris I got out of a 'Metro' train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Raynouard, I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation...not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that – a 'pattern,' or hardly a pattern, if by 'pattern' you mean something with a 'repeat' in it. But it was a word, the beginning, for me, of a language in colour.³³

The revelatory quality of Pound's impression was not reflected in the composition of the poem, however. Initially, Pound struggled with his 'language in colour' and composed a thirty-line poem. Eventually, he was able to reduce it to the two lines of the poem in its final form. In Pound's rendering of his impression, his 'image', the conventional languages that he had inherited would not serve his purposes and could not be used to capture the complexity of the instant, much like Lord Chandos's 'language none of whose words is known'. As Pound writes, 'any mind that is worth calling a mind must have needs beyond the existing categories of language'. In this sense, 'all poetic language is the language of exploration', a notion that leads him to conclude that 'the image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language'.³⁴ When we read 'In a Station of the Metro', then, the two images form a kind of sentence in a language beyond the conventional signs of ordinary speech or writing; Pound's imagistic poetry shifts meaning from the interplay of the words onto the interplay of the images they describe. The intention is that we see beyond the word to the vision, as if we experience the vision ourselves. The purpose of the imagistic poem, in this sense, is to bind through in language the uniqueness of an experienced image. To speak of the meaning of an imagist poem is to speak of the 'meaning' of phenomena.

What does this say about language and the nature of reference? And where does this map on the landscape of linguistic thought in the twentieth century? A simple theory of reference, such as Saussure's, is only of partial assistance. Pound rejects association with French Symbolism, claiming that the Symbolists 'degraded the image to the status of a word', that is, one thing standing for another. Symbolism, for Pound, is a proliferation of the semiotic, an extension of the already symbolic into another symbolic realm, whereas he conceives of a poetics which

must come to rest on the concrete and the definite, on the real. Pound's 'image' is not a symbol of external reality, but is a measure of our experience of reality; it is on these grounds that Pound compares his work with the visual arts:

The image is the poet's pigment. The painter should use his colour because he sees or feels it. I don't much care whether he is representative or non-representative. He should *depend*, of course, on the creative, not upon the mimetic or representational part in his work. It is the same in writing poems, the author must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it, *not* because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics.

An *image*, in our sense, is real because we know it directly. If it have an age-old traditional meaning this may serve as proof to the professional student of symbology that we have stood in the deathless light, or that we have walked in some particular arbour of his traditional paradiso, but that is not our affair. It is our affair to render the *image* as we have perceived or conceived it.³⁵

Pound does not claim that this language beyond words, nor the words that he uses to gesture towards it, reflects external reality as such, but rather that it is a mode of consciousness. His definition of 'the real' is one that negotiates between subjective experience and external reality, and his 'image' speech is the medium in which this is done. Poetry thus emerges as a meditation on states of consciousness and modes of being, all of which are 'beyond formulated language'. Pound's argument suggests that, although a poet's medium is words, the base material of poetry is the image. *Le mot juste* is thus that which best communicates the image 'beyond formulated language' and cannot simply be abstracted as a principle of language alone. Although the 'linguistic turn' encourages us to expect Pound to view language as both the material and subject of poetry, he saw it, first and foremost, as a tool put to use, directed towards subjects beyond linguistic matrices. The use of language is, for Pound, a multifaceted, creative process, always with the capacity to extend beyond itself. According to Pound, poetic language is, then, not an extension of ordinary speech, nor a privileged metalanguage intended to draw our attention to the function or disfunction of signs, but the ordering and patterning of images and melodies; its fundamental unit is not the word, but the image it calls.

Pound and Language in Literary Criticism

Although the genealogy of the *mot juste* and the image is reasonably well known, its linguistic implications for Pound have not been fully explored. From the stylistic treatments given by Donald Davie in *Ezra*

Pound: Poet as Sculptor (1964) and Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* (1971), Pound has been central to the way in which we conceive modernism. Although Pound's numerous statements have been crucial to our understanding of his poetic practice, treatments of Pound's work in relation to twentieth-century linguistic theories have been rare. The most sustained account of Pound's linguistic theory is Victor Li's essay 'Philology and Power: Ezra Pound and the Regulation of Language' (1987), a thorough treatment of both Pound's own statements and a number of his sources. Central to Li's contention is that Pound is a 'linguistic idealist'. The assumptions of linguistic idealism, Li explains, are manifest in three ways: '(1) language is secondary to some primary reality...(2) language's role is to represent or communicate aspects of that reality; and (3) language is most effective when it can communicate the real in the most unmediated and transparent way possible'.³⁶ Li's article, a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the ways in which Pound's understanding of language developed over the course of his career, explores his work in relation to these three points, all of which Li believes to have been based on a fallacious attempt to bring language closer to nature.

While there is a great deal to commend in Li's account, the notion of linguistic idealism, as well as its relation to Pound, requires some scrutiny. In the first instance, Li's definition of linguistic idealism is atypical, taking it to stand in this case for a belief that language is a direct representation of reality. Linguistic idealism, however, is most often associated with precisely the opposite view. Discussing the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, G.E.M. Anscombe defines linguistic idealism as the belief that reality is the product of the languages we speak.³⁷ This is, contrary to Li's definition, an idealism which sees language as primary and reality as a reflection of its structures and practices. Continuing the debate, David Bloor offers a more moderate definition, defining linguistic idealism as 'the claim that some truths or realities are created by our linguistic practices'. As a result, Bloor argues, 'the contrast is with cases where language transmits or reflects an independent reality'.³⁸ Richard Rorty similarly defines linguistic idealism as a position in which 'what appears to us, or what we experience or what we are aware of, is a function of the language we use'.³⁹ It is clear, then, that what Li, in fact, outlines is a kind of linguistic realism, and this is to a great extent discernible in Pound's focus on the 'natural object' or his reliance on Fenollosa's theories.

Li's article raises a number of interesting questions about Pound's work, many of which are complicated by the charge of 'linguistic idealism'. The first problem is that Li suggests that the first point, language being secondary to an external reality, was one of Pound's major contentions; Pound's poetic practice leads us to a slightly modified view, which is that language is secondary to our conception of reality. The question of whether language is constitutive of reality or vice versa was of less a concern for Pound than for the way in which it mediates it. The second

point, that it is the 'role' of language to represent or communicate reality, is again more a product of our critical heritage than a point raised by Pound's writing. The analysable relationship, in Li's understanding, is between language and external reality, and it fails to account for the experiential and intentional aspects at the root of poetic activity. Li believes that Pound ascribes a particular role to language, but Pound rarely gives agency to abstract concepts or universals, and this does not reflect Pound's focus on particulars and specific usages. Li's third point, that Pound believes language to be most 'effective' when it communicates the 'real' requires the most investigation. While there is, indeed, a great deal of truth in Li's summary of Pound's belief, he focusses on the communicative aspects of that formulation, when the focus is perhaps better directed at 'the real'. The terms under discussion here, idealism, realism, nominalism, conceptualism, and so on, are not theories of language, but theories of meaning and reality. The pertinent question Li deftly raises is, therefore: what does Pound's understanding of language tell us about his understanding of reality? In this case, it is inevitable that the debate shifts from language to questions of reality. A further question is, then: to what extent does Pound's understanding of language reflect a nominalist approach to truth and reality? This question is the subject of the final chapter of this book.

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

The necessary decentering cannot be a philosophical or scientific act as such, since it is a question of dislocating, through access to another system linking speech and writing, the founding categories of language and the grammar of the *episteme*. The natural tendency of *theory* – of what unites philosophy and science in the *episteme* – will push rather toward filling in the breach than toward forcing the closure. It was normal that the breakthrough was more secure and penetrating on the side of literature and poetic writing; normal also that it, like Nietzsche, at first destroyed and caused to vacillate the transcendental authority and dominant category of the *episteme*: being. This is the meaning of Fenollosa whose influence upon Ezra Pound and his poetics is well-known: this irreducibly graphic poetics was, with that 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.⁴⁰

Derrida's notion of 'historical significance' is meant in the sense that we should be aware of the gravity of Fenollosa's and Pound's achievements and that their work should be considered as an embodiment of a Heideggerian reconsideration of the relationship between speech and being. By putting Pound in the same category of ontological thought as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and, in fact, himself, Derrida is reinterpreting the role of poetry. Although Pound's own philosophical outlook was far from this tradition, Derrida is, in fact, assigning poetry the same cultural and historical significance that Pound did, if in a radically different way. I will discuss this quotation and the problems it raises in more detail in Chapter 2, but one immediate problem is that Derrida misreads Pound's interest in the ideogram as a 'decentring', ontological endeavour. Not only does Pound rarely raise or question the notion of being in the context of Fenollosa, but Pound's work is far from 'decentred'. Rather, the *Cantos*, particularly in the late 1930s and afterwards record an attempt to return human culture, particularly European culture, to a lost centre. Pound's use of Fenollosa, were it to have a philosophical bent, would, in fact, be a radical re-centring of Western and oriental culture on to a shared basis in historical, natural, and (above all) poetic processes.

Derrida does not continue to explain how his terms relate to Pound's, nor how Pound fits into the tradition he assigns him, but Kuberski takes up this challenge. *A Calculus of Ezra Pound* is an engaging and deeply valuable assessment of the various ways in which Pound's work engages with language and semiotic ideas. While Pound's work has long interested post-structuralist critics, the *Cantos*, for all of their political gravity and controversy and all of their philosophical statements, tend to resist deconstructive analysis. One reason for this may be that Pound often names his sources and authorities in the text, giving the impression that binary oppositions that make up the poem are already laid bare. Another reason could be that Pound's sources are often outside of the dominant Western political and philosophical traditions upon which deconstructive analyses often focus as a point of opposition. Kuberski does not deconstruct the *Cantos* as such, but rather provides an exploration of the ways in which Pound's writing may or may not represent the 'break' that Derrida gestures towards in *Of Grammatology*. Kuberski argues that Pound's work can be characterised by tensions between a commitment to modernist poetics and a faith in anti-modern ideology and aesthetics (such as his belief in Mussolini, his treatment of Sigismundo Malatesta, or his use of Aristotelian notions of *techne*). Seen this way, Pound's is a project which works against the 'relativizing tendencies of Freud, Saussure, and Einstein' by attempting to 'put the word, self, and atom back together again'.⁴¹ Kuberski concludes that with regard to language and writing, *The Cantos* are distinctly anti-modern, writing that 'Pound may, far from being an advocate of modernism, be seen as its first critic, and his poetry may be seen as an attempt to employ

innovation to motivate the sign – not finally to sever it from ideological anchoring points'.⁴² While Kuberski, like Li, provides an excellent account of the issues Pound raises for us today, the prism of semiotics distorts our ability to assess Pound's approach on its own terms. While literary studies begins its understanding of language with a theory of the sign, Pound's approach is far more holistic. As I have suggested, Pound rarely conceived of language as system. While Kuberski's interpretation of Pound in a semiotic context is an invaluable contribution, its focus on the semiotic aspects of language reduces what was for Pound a broad issue to a narrow focus on signs.

One way in which Pound's broad approach to language has been discussed is translation. In the last few decades, translation has become central to our understanding of literary language, and Pound has been at the centre of this discussion. Translation focusses our understanding of the relationship between words and phrases, thought, and the world, as well as the intense and intractable connection between language and culture. There has been a great deal of critical attention paid to Pound's work in relation to translation, from Ming Xie's 'Pound as Translator' to the broader studies of Laurence Venuti and Daniel Katz. These studies have served to build a clear picture of the ways in which translation infuses not simply Pound's understanding of the way languages and cultures interact, but also his entire poetic practice: as Daniel Katz has written, 'for Pound, poetry *is* translation'.⁴³ Understanding the importance translation held in Pound's conception of his work is essential for understanding the cultural negotiations of the *Cantos*. Echoing Pound's account quoted at the end of this introduction, Katz terms the language of the *Cantos* as 'post-English', as the text cannot be said to rely simply on the structures and vocabulary of any one linguistic code. As Katz explains, this is 'not only because [the *Cantos*] feature many foreign languages, but because no particular English remains against which the foreign tongues can be measured, it too having become an untethered "series of Englishes"'.⁴⁴ Translation is essential, therefore, in understanding three key aspects of Pound's poetics: the relationship between languages, language as cultural negotiation, and the language of the *Cantos*. As Katz's study reminds us, the *Cantos* do not simply take place in a 'series of Englishes', but also in Chinese, Egyptian hieroglyphs, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, among other national languages and diagrams. The poem fluctuates between translation and non-translation, blurring the distinction between the creative process behind the two. It is perhaps better, in light of the dynamism to which translation points, not to speak of Pound's theory of language, but rather his approach to languages. This subject is given more treatment in Chapters 2 and 3.

Another significant area of study is, of course, Pound's politics. In recent decades, from Robert Casillo's *A Genealogy of Demons* (1987) and

Tim Redman's *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (1991) to current work by Matthew Feldman and David Barnes, critics have considered the role that Pound's fascism and anti-Semitism have played in his poetry.⁴⁵ Peter Nicholls frames Pound's politics in discussion of the relation between his economic theories and his language of 'rectification': that is, a desire for a clear and precise language conducive to good economics.⁴⁶ Nicholls draws on the essential unities between Pound's aesthetics and his politics, providing a clear model for Poundian scholarship wishing to work on either. In his *Language, Sexuality, and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos*, Jean-Michel Rabaté deftly draws together the wide range of Pound's interests to focus on his critique of metaphysics through language and history, an approach that Rabaté links with Heidegger. The 1930s crystallise Rabaté's comparison, as both Heidegger and Pound 'responded to the tide of history as it swept over Europe, while maintaining the claims of a foundational approach to language'.⁴⁷ Where Rabaté provides a Lacanian exposition of the way in which Pound posits the speaking subject as the 'Other' of language, my task in this book is always to maintain a closer relationship between the two. Nevertheless, as Rabaté demonstrates, one cannot speak of language alone. Culture, history, and psychology (and, as Rabaté suggests, sexuality, though this is beyond the scope of this book) all play a fundamental role in the determination of the linguistic structures that we inhabit and use; in Pound's case, there is the underlying question of the extent to which his own theories of culture, history, and psychology interact with language. Indeed, from the 1930s on, his understanding of all three became inflected with the racial and anti-Semitic theories he indulged. As Michael North has shown in his *The Dialect of Modernism* (1998), even Pound's technique of mimicking accents and dialects became a response to his interest in race.⁴⁸ Rabaté and North demonstrate that discussions of the relationship between language, language use, and literary style must take questions of culture or identity into account.

The Argument and Structure of the Book

One of the methodologies of this book has been to 'bracket off' both structuralist and post-structuralist treatments of language as far as possible in order to offer a recovery of Pound's work on the terms in which he himself would have understood it. This is not to challenge semiotic theories per se, but rather solely to allow a number of neglected voices to come through louder and more clearly. With the advent of semiotic models of language in the study of literature, Pound's work has often been appropriated into discourses and debates which, while eminently necessary, have blurred somewhat our notion of how he would have understood his work himself. The dominant approach to discussing the relationship between modernism and language has been to rely on

structuralist or post-structuralist treatments of the linguistic sign. It is the role of linguistics, Saussure argues, to analyse the system of language as system, whether synchronically (that is, the system as it appears in an instant of time) or diachronically (changes in the system across time). Meaning is thus reduced to the interaction of signs and semiotic accounts of language are often further reduced to the analysis of the sign itself.⁴⁹ Applied to literary studies, it is the role of critics to formalise the structures of literary texts (whether intrinsic or intertextual) and to see the ways in which these arbitrary signs take effect in texts. With the advent of post-structuralism, the faith in the structure of these texts was challenged, most notably by Jacques Derrida, who critiqued Saussure's understanding of 'difference' as lacking a temporal quality. Derrida argues that Saussure relies on 'difference' as a kind of originary, 'transcendental signified', which, in fact, draws attention to the instability of the concept itself.⁵⁰ Saussure's understanding of all meanings as negatively constituted, Derrida argues, actually draws attention to the instability of language, seeing as signs by their nature stand for absences. Language, therefore, draws attention to our ontological instability. Literary texts, particularly literary modernism, according to such a view, draw attention to the ways in which language manifests this ontological instability. The problem with such a view is that, if literary analysis is too reductive to the status and structure of signs, and their interaction, the difference between texts is somewhat obscured. What unites both structuralism and post-structuralism is its focus on discussions of language through the lens of the sign; Pound's approach, by contrast, is, on the one hand, pragmatic and, on the other hand, holistic. While he grants the arbitrariness of linguistic signs, his work is far more concerned with the non-arbitrary aspects of language, its material conditions, physiology, its history, its cultural connections, and its psychological bases. This book is an attempt to understand Pound's theory of language in a way that does not reduce to the sign.

For all the manifold achievements of both structuralism and post-structuralism, there has recently been a movement towards revising the semiotic focus of the twentieth century. In her excellent recent study, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology*, Beata Stawarska challenges the general conception that Saussure was the originator of structuralism and its focus on systemic analysis. Stawarska argues that Saussure really requires a phenomenological understanding of the relationship between signs, thought, and world in order to fully appreciate his ideas. Stawarska calls for a 'linguistic phenomenology' in which language is 'encountered subjectively, within the consciousness that a language user has of being involved in language-bound practices of speaking, listening, and writing'.⁵¹ In many ways, I have attempted a similar revision of our understanding of Pound in particular, and

modernism more generally. Rather than focus on the linguistic sign, I have tried to restore the debate around the literary understanding of language to the terms in which it was understood at the time, particularly with regard to thought. The nature of arbitrary signs was, of course, a part of this debate, but it had nothing like the centrality implied by scholarship in the structuralist and post-structuralist traditions.

In particular, I am interested in a recovery of the speaking subjects and creative acts. For all the merits of semiotic accounts of language, they have a tendency to subsume the notion of subjectivity within debates around language systems, culture, and ontology, and to reduce discussions around language to a focus on what Pound terms the most 'mundane' element of language, the sign. Where Pound writes of 'the clinch of the phrase onto the thing intended to be expressed', our critical inheritance encourages a reading which sees this in terms of a relationship between utterance and linguistic matrix, between sign and system. Seen thus, it is clear why Pound is often seen as a kind of linguistic reactionary with a faith in some natural connection between word and thing. A 'linguistic phenomenology' of the kind that Stawarska encourages, however, allows us to see this relationship in wider complexity by restoring the speaking subject and its activity, to expand beyond the sign into the totality of human experience. Pound's emphasis on poetry as craft, as an art of making, means we cannot reduce our understanding of language to a connection between signs and the systems governing them. It is the role of the poet to direct language towards intentional objects or ideas, and it is the extent of this directedness that constitutes poetic language.

Although I have spoken of the need to 'bracket off' structuralism, this is a solely theoretical exercise, and Saussure remains a prominent voice in this study. In another recent revision of Saussurian linguistics, Armin Burkhardt has argued that scholarship often ignores a significant distinction in Saussure's work between arbitrariness and 'motivation' (the assigning of meaning to a phrase on the basis of predetermined limits). In a close reading of the *Course in General Linguistics*, Burkhardt argues that the arbitrariness of linguistic signs is offset against and restricted by a process of 'motivating' signs towards objects or concepts: at the moment in which one selects a new word for a concept, one is limited by certain factors: be they historical meanings, social contexts, and aesthetic considerations. Forming a new word of compounds, for example, Burkhardt argues, cannot be arbitrary as 'compounds are always motivated (but not completely determined) by their components (at least not in a historical perspective)'.⁵² In other words, the coining of phrases is always limited by certain conditions, including pre-existing linguistic forms. Saussure's most profound insight, according to Burkhardt, lies in demonstrating that over time even these 'motivated' signs lose their meaning and become arbitrary

in conventional usage. The history of language is a process of fluctuation between motivation and arbitrariness: 'motivation stands at the beginning and arbitrariness at the end of a word's historical career'.⁵³ Pound's aesthetic and epistemological concerns lead him to stand resolutely at the outset of this linguistic arc.

The broadly chronological divisions that I have made in this book cannot be separated neatly. I have tried, however, to match them with important poetical and theoretic shifts in Pound's work. In this book, I have investigated five aspects of Pound's approach to language. In Chapter 1, I explore the ways in which Pound's background in philology, particularly Germanic philology, influenced his approach to poetry and translation. Pound's lifelong animosity towards the academic study of literature and language has obscured the numerous debts he owed it in his practice. In Chapter 2, I reassess Pound's understanding of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, arguing that it is to be understood in terms of a modernist commitment to internal reality and consciousness, a discussion that requires disentangling from our current focus on semiotics. In Chapter 3, I explore Pound's linguistic relativism in relation to an anthropological shift in modernist culture. In particular, I look at the linguistic implications of Pound's reading of Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Leo Frobenius. Chapters 4 and 5 can be taken together as two related explorations of Pound's attempt to resolve the relationship between particulars and universals in language. In the former, I look at Pound's brief but enlightening engagement with international languages. Pound was interested in the work of C.K. Ogden and his Basic English project, exploring the ways in which Ogden's views of language correspond with Pound's. In the final chapter, I look at the final sections of Pound's *Cantos*, from the *Pisan Cantos* to 'Drafts and Fragments', reading them in relation to Pound's attempt to find an aesthetic and philosophical theory that will bind them together. In the 'Afterword', I attempt to pull out the implications that this has for Pound's understanding of language, and modernist debates around language's capabilities in general.

What I attempt in this book is a twofold recovery. On the one hand, I hope to lay the foundations for understanding Pound's career in light of his complex view of language, relating this not only to the traditions in which he saw himself working, but also to our broader understanding of modernism and linguistic theories. To modernist studies, I hope to contribute to the rediscovery of a number of strands of thought picked up not only by Pound, but by his contemporaries as well. On the other hand, and related to this first task, I hope to recover a literary understanding of language, distinct from the structuralist and post-structuralist ideas literary studies has inherited. By 'bracketing off', so to speak, the semiotic approach to language, I hope to restore to current debates a literary approach to language

which draws on longstanding continuities and shifts in poetry and prose which consider the speaking subject, style, and notions of reality at their centre. In doing so, I suggest that the structuralist and post-structuralist focus on the linguistic sign is at once too reductive and too abstract to capture the various aesthetic, cultural, historical, psychological, political, and, above all, personal limitations which condition linguistic choices.

In 1934, Pound provided a retrospective account of the difficulties that he faced in establishing his poetic voice early in his career. As Pound makes clear, the problems he faced revolved around the history of language as well as the relationship between language and thought. They also, significantly, as I hope to show, indicate the importance of the individual mind in the use of language. Pound's retrospective account captures the problems he had in distinguishing himself from his forebears:

What obfuscated me was...the crust of dead English, the sediment present in my own vocabulary – which I, let us hope, got rid of a few years later. You can't go round this sort of thing. It takes six or eight years to get educated in one's art, and another ten to get rid of that education.

Neither can anyone learn English, one can only learn a series of Englishes. Rossetti made his own language. I hadn't in 1910 made a language, I don't mean a language to use, but even a language to think in.

(*LE*, 193–194)

Language was, for Pound, the tool, the medium, and ultimately the form of thought. What this book is, then, is the story of a modernist poet's attempt to find a 'language to think in'. As with any language, there are contexts and histories and personal preferences that influence the phrases; there is an inherited grammar and syntax; there are rules to be obeyed for the sake of understanding. There is the ubiquitous problem of how to translate one language into another, and the difficulty of compensating for what is lost in the process: 'Shall two know the same in their knowing?' Pound asks in Canto XCIII, to which we may ask the respondent question: how would we know? (XCIII.651). There is, of course, language change across time and morphology; there is the difficulty in attending to the processes of meaning and the problem of how signs work. There is, as Pound was to discover towards the end of his career, the problem of silence in the face of the incommunicable: a problem raised by Hofmannsthal and Wittgenstein alike. Above all, however, there is the fact that human language binds us as a species (for all our division), and that poetry and literature generally, the art of language, depend upon its variety, its beauty and sublimity, and its uncanny success.

Notes

- 1 Ezra Pound, 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, 1:1 (1913), 200–206 (200).
- 2 See Richard Rorty, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
- 3 See the discussion of number in §68 in Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logico-mathematical Enquiry into the Concept of Number*, trans. J.L. Austin (New York: Harper, 1960), 79; and Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytic Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 6.
- 4 The German word *Bedeutung* is most commonly translated as 'meaning', but it, in fact, encapsulates a wider range of meanings than this: it lies somewhere between 'significance', 'intension', and 'use'.
- 5 Gottlob Frege, 'Sense and Reference', *The Philosophical Review*, 57:3 (1948), 209–230.
- 6 I have used this example for the sake of continuity, and Russell uses the examples of Walter Scott and the non-existent 'present King of France'. See Bertrand Russell, 'On Denoting', *Mind*, 14:56 (1905), 479–493.
- 7 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears, and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 56.
- 8 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 9–10.
- 9 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 101–102.
- 10 Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 66.
- 11 Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 142–148 (145).
- 12 Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 2.
- 13 Martin Heidegger, 'Language' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 1975), 185–208 (188). Heidegger's meaning here is somewhat lost in translation into English. Although it is quite clear that Heidegger argues that 'language speaks', the German word *Sprache* [language or speech] is linked to the verb *sprechen* [to speak], and so in Heideggerian terms the phrase 'die Sprache spricht' could very well be translated as 'language languages' or 'speech speaks', a notion which must be related to his argument that 'things thing' or 'humans human', that is, in arguing that *die Sprache spricht*, Heidegger is attempting to isolate the linguistic element without importing human values or agency in the way that later post-structuralists do. Heidegger resolutely does not personify speech.
- 14 Heidegger, 'Language', 196.
- 15 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Letter to Lord Chandos' in *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings*, ed. J.D. McClatchy, trans. Tania Stern, and James Stern (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 69–79 (74).
- 16 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Letter to Lord Chandos', 79.
- 17 Gustave Flaubert, *The George Sand-Gustave Flaubert Letters*, trans. Aimee L. McKenzie (London: Duckworth, 1922), 359–360.
- 18 Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (Life and Contacts)* (London: Ovid Press, 1920), 9.
- 19 Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters, 1907–1941*, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1951), 137.
- 20 Walter Pater, 'Style' in *Appreciations: with an Essay on Style* (London: Macmillan, 1889), 1–36 (1).

- 21 Pater, 'Style' 27.
- 22 Pater, 'Style', 28.
- 23 Pater, 'Style', 34.
- 24 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: IX. On Technique', *The New Age*, 10:13 (1912), 297–299 (298).
- 25 There is, of course, a problem of terminology in the fact that the word 'semi-otic' was not popularised at Pound's time, and so the word 'Symbolism' had a double meaning: In order to avoid this confusion, in the following, I will be explicit when referring to Symbolism in the semiotic sense, and Symbolism as a literary movement.
- 26 See Roman Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics' in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 350–377.
- 27 T.E. Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism' in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Trubner, 1924), 111–140 (132).
- 28 Hulme, 'Romanticism and Classicism', 134.
- 29 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: X. On Music', *The New Age*, 10:15 (1912), 343–344 (343).
- 30 Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, I.13–15. Translation my own.
- 31 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris: XI. En Breu Brisiral Temps Braus', *The New Age*, 10:16 (1912), 369–370 (370).
- 32 Ezra Pound, 'In A Station of the Metro' in *Lustra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1916), 45.
- 33 Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1960), 89.
- 34 Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 88.
- 35 Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 86–87.
- 36 Victor P.H. Li, 'Philology and Power: Ezra Pound and the Regulation of Language', *boundary 2*, 15:1 (1986–1987), 187–210 (189).
- 37 See G.E.M. Anscombe, 'The Question of Linguistic Idealism' in *From Parmenides to Wittgenstein* (London: Blackwell, 1981), 112–133.
- 38 David Bloor, 'The Question of Linguistic Idealism Revisited', in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. David Stern, and Hans Sluga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 354–382 (356).
- 39 Richard Rorty, "In Defense of Eliminative Materialism" in *Mind, Language and Metaphilosophy: Early Philosophical Papers*, ed. Stephen Leach, and James Tartaglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 199–207 (203).
- 40 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 92.
- 41 Philip Kuberski, *A Calculus of Ezra Pound: Vocations of the American Sign* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1992), 4.
- 42 Kuberski, *A Calculus of Ezra Pound*, 60.
- 43 Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 75.
- 44 Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, 87.
- 45 See Matthew Feldman, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda, 1935–45* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013); David Barnes, 'Fascist Aesthetics: Ezra Pound's Cultural Negotiations in 1930s Italy', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34:1 (2010), 19–35.
- 46 See in particular Nicholls's chapters 'Pound and Fascism' (79–103) and 'A Metaphysics of the State' (104–124) in *Politics, Economics and Writing*.
- 47 Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 4.

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- 48 See Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 94–99.
- 49 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 65–68.
- 50 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.
- 51 Beata Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology: Undoing the Doctrine of the Course in General Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 109.
- 52 Armin Burkhardt, 'The So-called Arbitrariness of Linguistic Signs and Saussure's "Realism"', in *Essays on Linguistic Realism*, ed. Christina Behme, and Martin Neef (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2018), 271–296 (286).
- 53 Armin Burkhardt, 'The So-Called Arbitrariness of Linguistic Signs and Saussure's "Realism"', 288–289.
 - 1 Ezra Pound, 'Raphaelite Latin', *Book News Monthly*, 25.1 (1906), 31–34 (31).
 - 2 David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16.
 - 3 Pound, 'Raphaelite Latin', 31.
 - 4 James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix.
- 5 See Peter Seuren, *Western Linguistics: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 89–103; for the 'manifesto', see Hermann Osthoff, and Karl Brugmann, *Morphologische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hirzel: 1878), iii–xx.
- 6 Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 95. Graff, of course, mimics the pejorative descriptions of each for dramatic effect.
- 7 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 9–10 (1–2).
- 8 See Daniel Coit Gilman, *The Launching of a University and Other Papers: A Sheaf of Remembrances* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1906); Andrew Dickson White, *Autobiography* (New York: The Century Co., 1906).
- 9 J.M. Hart, *German Universities: A Narrative of Personal Experience* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1874), 268–269.
- 10 H.C.G. Brandt, 'How Far Should Our Teaching and Text-books have a Scientific Basis', *Transactions of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1 (1884), 57–63 (58–59).
- 11 Ezra Pound, Letter to John Quinn, 26 August 1915, in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and John Quinn, 1915–1924*, ed. Timothy Materer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 41.
- 12 See Michael Holquist, 'Why We Should Remember Philology', *Profession* (2002), 72–79.
- 13 Turner, *Philology*, 253.
- 14 Turner, *Philology*, 380.
- 15 Ezra Pound, *A Visiting Card* (London: Peter Russell, 1952), 21.
- 16 David Moody, *Ezra Pound*, 14.
- 17 Stuart Y. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 3–4.
- 18 Rouben C. Cholakian, *The William P. Shepard Collection of Provençalia: A Critical Bibliography* (Hamilton: Clinton, NY, 1971), i.
- 19 Ezra Pound, 'Philology' [2 of 2], 21 February 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3734, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 20 Ezra Pound, 'Phonetics', 1 November 1905, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3735, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 21 Ezra Pound, 'Philology' [2 of 2], 24 January 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 87, Folder 3734, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

- 22 Walter Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1900), vi.
- 23 John E. Joseph, *From Whitney to Chomsky: Essays in the History of American Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 19.
- 24 *Catalogue of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1905), 138.
- 25 Turner, *Philology*, 248.
- 26 The Platonic dialogue *Cratylus*, for example, contains a discussion on this very point.
- 27 William Dwight Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language: Twelve Lectures on the Principles of Linguistic Science* (London: N. Trubner & Co., 1884), 48.
- 28 Anne Birien, 'Pound and the Reform of Philology' in *Ezra Pound and Education*, ed. Steven G. Yao, and Michael Coyle (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 2012), 23–46 (36–37).
- 29 Ezra Pound, 'Black Mirror', 1906, YCAL MSS 43, Box 86, Folder 3710, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 30 Ezra Pound, 'Goal', YCAL MSS 43, Box 88, Folder 3791, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- 31 Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and 'Globe' Magazine: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. Michael T. Davis, and Cameron McWhirter (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 299.
- 32 Both of these are models for Pound's career. For a comparison of Pound's and Rossetti's translation techniques and theories, see Roxana Preda, 'D.G. Rossetti and Ezra Pound as Translators of Cavalcanti: Poetic Choices and the Representation of Woman', *Translation and Literature*, 8:2 (1999), 217–234.
- 33 See Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in Finnegans Wake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 34 Carlos Riobó, 'The Spirit of Ezra Pound's Romance Philology: Dante's Ironic Legacy of the Contingencies of Value', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 39:3 (2002), 201–222 (201).
- 35 Dante Alighieri, 'De Vulgari Eloquentia' in *De Vulgari Eloquentia: Dante's Book of Exile*, trans. Marianne Shapiro (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 47–90 (79).
- 36 W.P. Ker, 'Dante, Guido Guinicelli and Arnaut Daniel', *The Modern Language Review*, 4:2 (1909), 145–152 (149).
- 37 Arnaut Daniel, 'Si'm fos Amors de joi donar tant larga' in *The Troubadours of Dante*, ed. H.J. Chaytor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), 50–51 (50).
- 38 Ezra Pound, *Instigations, Together with an Essay on the Chinese Written Character* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 318.
- 39 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – IV: A Beginning', *The New Age*, 10:8 (1911), 178–80 (179).
- 40 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – II: A Rather Dull Introduction', *The New Age*, 10:6 (1911): 130–131 (130).
- 41 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – II', 130.
- 42 Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – IV', 179.
- 43 Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – XI: En Breu Brisaral Temps Braus', *The New Age*, 10:16 (1912), 369–370 (370).
- 44 Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris – IV', 179.
- 45 Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, 13.
- 46 It is important to bear in mind throughout that Pound may have exaggerated his points for dramatic effect at a time of heightened anti-Germanic sentiment.
- 47 Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111.

- 48 Ezra Pound, 'James Joyce: At Last the Novel Appears', *Egoist*, 4:2 (1917), 22.
- 49 Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1938), 203; *A Visiting Card* (London: Peter Russell, 1952), 21.
- 50 Ezra Pound, "Provincialism the Enemy: I," *The New Age*, 21:11 (1917), 244–245.
- 51 Ford Madox Ford, *When Blood Is Their Argument: An Analysis of Prussian Culture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 90.
- 52 Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914–1933* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 45.
- 53 Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 74–75.
- 54 Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy: I', 245.
- 55 Ezra Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy: III', *The New Age*, 21:13 (26 July 1917), 288–289.
- 56 Pound, 'Provincialism the Enemy – III', 289.
- 57 Birien, 'Pound and the Reform of Philology', 36.
- 58 Thomas E. Connolly, 'Ezra Pound's "Near Perigord": The Background of a Poem', *Comparative Literature*, 8:2 (1956), 110–121 (110).
- 59 Ezra Pound, 'Near Perigord' in *Lustra* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1916), 95–103 (95).
- 60 Pound, 'Near Perigord', 98–99.
- 61 Pound, 'Near Perigord', 99.
- 62 See John Leigh, 'Shepard, Pound, and Bertran de Born', *Paideuma*, 14:2 (1985), 331–339.
- 63 McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, 33.
- 64 Richard Sieburth, Introduction to Ezra Pound, *A Walking Tour of Southern France* (New York: New Directions, 1992), vii–xxii (ix).
- 65 Sieburth, *A Walking Tour of Southern France*, xv.
- 66 Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 128.
- 67 See Lawrence Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture: Text, History, and the Malatesta Cantos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). An excellent account of the textual genesis of the 'Malatesta Cantos' is given in the first chapter, 25–64.
- 68 David Ten Eyke, *Ezra Pound's Adams Cantos* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 10.
- 69 See Luke McMullan, 'Counter-philology: Ezra Pound as Translator of Provençal and Cavalcanti, 1917–1932', in *Textual Practice* (online 10 April 2017).
- 70 J. Mark Smith, 'The Energy of Language(s): What Pound Made of Philology', *English Literary History*, 78 (2011), 769–800 (770).
- 71 Emil Lévy, *Provenzalisches Supplement-Wörterbuch: Berichtigungen und Ergänzungen zu Raynouard's Lexique roman*: Volume 5 (Leipzig: Reisland, 1907), 402. It should be noted that the entry for *noi* is followed by a question mark, denoting Lévy's uncertainty with his supposition.
- 72 Emil Lévy, *Provenzalisches Supplement-Wörterbuch*: Volume 4 (Leipzig: Reisland, 1904), 33–35. Translation my own.
- 73 Réka Mihálka, 'Canto XX' in *Readings in the Cantos*: Volume 1, ed. Richard Parker (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2018), 187–200 (190).
- 74 Pound, *Instigations*, 295.
- 1 Ezra Pound, Letter to Dorothy Shakespear, 2 October 1913, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters* (New York: New Directions, 1984), 264.
- 2 Zhaoming Qian, 'The Orient', *Ezra Pound in Context*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 335–344 (336).
- 3 Massimo Bacigalupo, *The Forméd Trace: The Later Poetry of Ezra Pound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 12.

- 4 T.S. Eliot, 'Introduction' in *Selected Poems* by Ezra Pound (London: Faber & Faber, 1928), 14.
- 5 Ford Madox Ford, quoted in T.S. Eliot, *Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry* (New York: Knopf, 1917), 26.
- 6 Ernest Fenollosa, 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry' in *Instigations* by Ezra Pound (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), 357–388 (362–363). Subsequent textual references are to this edition, and will be designated with the abbreviation CWC.
- 7 See Haun Saussy, 'Fenollosa Compounded: A Discrimination' in Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition*, ed. Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling, and Lucas Klein (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1–40.
- 8 Saussy, 'Fenollosa Compounded', 31.
- 9 Saussy, 'Fenollosa Compounded', 39.
- 10 Saussy, 'Fenollosa Compounded', 40.
- 11 Rebecca Beasley, *Ezra Pound and the Visual Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 52–53; Ian F.A. Bell, *Critic as Scientist: The Modernist Poetics of Ezra Pound* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 27.
- 12 Hudson Maxim, *The Science of Poetry and the Philosophy of Language* (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910), 35.
- 13 Maxim, *The Science of Poetry*, 113–114.
- 14 Maxim, *The Science of Poetry*, 36, 37.
- 15 Herbert N. Schneidau, 'Vorticism and the Career of Ezra Pound', *Modern Philology*, 65:3 (1968), 214–227 (222).
- 16 Ezra Pound, 'Vortex', *Blast*, 1:1 (1914), 153–154 (153).
- 17 Julian Murphet, 'Towards a Gendered Media Ecology', in *Modernism and Masculinity*, ed. Natalya Lusty, and Julian Murphet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53–67 (57).
- 18 Pound, 'Vortex', 153–154.
- 19 Pound, 'Vortex', 154.
- 20 Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 86–87.
- 21 Arthur Wesley Dow, *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1913), 4.
- 22 Dow, *Composition*, 89.
- 23 Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), 437.
- 24 Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), 69.
- 25 Bloomfield, *Language*, 283.
- 26 Bloomfield, *Language*, 285.
- 27 Bloomfield, *Language*, 287.
- 28 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 25–26.
- 29 Hugh Kenner also makes this point in *The Pound Era*; see 163.
- 30 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 92.
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- 42 K.K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae (1926)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 223.
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- 48 Peter Nicholls, "'Deep in Him": Ezra Pound and the Persistent Attraction of Laforgue', 9–19 (10).
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- 50 Jules Laforgue, *Poems*, trans. Patricia Terry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 92. Terry's translation, on page 93, is far more streamlined than Pound's:

I'm not at all 'that gay blade!' nor 'Superb!'
But my soul which a raspy cry can disturb
Is candid and distinguished, like an herb.

- 51 Ezra Pound, *Pavannes & Divagations* (New York: Knopf, 1918), 43.
- 52 T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1954), 3, 4.
 - 1 Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 99.
 - 2 As infamous as this theory is, Sapir and Whorf never worked together on formulating a hypothesis of this kind, and Sapir's work offers as many tools to criticise the theory as to support it.
 - 3 Edward Sapir, 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science', *Language*, 5:4 (1929), 207–214 (209).
 - 4 See Benjamin Lee Whorf, 'Science and Linguistics' in *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. J.B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1956), 230–232. First published in 1940.
 - 5 See James Dowthwaite, 'Edward Sapir and Modernist Poetry: Amy Lowell, H.D., Ezra Pound, and the Development of Sapir's Literary Theory', *Modernist Cultures*, 13:2 (2018), 255–277.
 - 6 See Peter Nicholls, *Politics, Economics and Writing* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984); Richard Sieburth, 'In Pound We Trust: The Economy of Poetry/The Poetry of Economics', *Critical Inquiry*, 14:1 (1987), 142–172.

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- 9 Pound, 'George Antheil', 326–327.
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- 16 Stephen G. Alter, *Darwinism and the Linguistic Image: Language, Race and Natural Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 17–18.
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- 19 Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 39.
- 20 Edward Sapir, 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science', *Language*, 5:4 (1929), 207–214 (210).
- 21 Sapir, *Language*, 244.
- 22 Sapir, *Language*, 237.
- 23 Edward Sapir, 'An American Poet', *The Nation*, 121 (1925), 211–212 (211–212).
- 24 Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 59; Susanna Pavlovskaya, *Modern Primitives: Race and Language in Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and Zora Neale Hurston* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 63.
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- 33 Jean-Michel Rabate, 'Joyce and Jolas: Late Modernism and Early Babelism', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 22:2 (1998–1999), 245–252 (251).
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- 39 Ezra Pound, Letter to Galeazzo Ciano, 28 January 1935, YCAL MSS 43, Box 9, Folder 401, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
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- 40 Santayana, *Letters*, Volume 5, Book 6, 316–317.
- 41 George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1923), 260–261.
- 42 Santayana is often described as a 'pragmatist', casting him in a role alongside John Dewey, William James, and Charles Sanders Pierce. The problem with this label is that it relies more on his disciplinary and institutional background in Harvard's Philosophy Department than it does on the nature of his thought. Such a label, though accurate in a disciplinary sense, obscures the independence of Santayana's work and thought.
- 43 George Santayana, *Life of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1953), 326. Subsequent textual references are to this abridged edition.
- 44 *Flatum vocis* – either 'vocal wind' or 'voice flatulence', depending on the spirit in which it is read – refers to a dismissive phrase used by St Anselm to summarise the position of Roscelin and the other nominalists: 'therefore those contemporary logicians (rather, the heretical logicians) who consider universal essences to be merely vocal emanations [*flatum vocis*], and who can understand colours only as material substances, and human wisdom only as the soul, should be altogether brushed aside from discussion of spiritual questions'. Anselm of Canterbury, 'On the Incarnation of the Word', in *The Major Works*, trans. Richard Regen (Oxford: Oxford University

- Press, 1998), 233–259 (237). We may assume that Santayana uses the term ironically.
- 45 George Santayana, Letter to Ezra Pound, 20 January 1940 in *The Letters of George Santayana*, Volume 6 1937–1940, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 318–319.
 - 46 Ezra Pound, ‘Pragmatic Aesthetics’, *Machine Art*, 155–159 (156).
 - 47 Pound, ‘Pragmatic Aesthetics’, 159.
 - 48 Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana, Book 8, 1948–1952*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 222.
 - 49 Noel Stock, *Poet in Exile: Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 251.
 - 50 Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume II, xiii.
 - 51 Feng Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism: Remaking Humanism in the Face of Modernity* (London: University of Toronto, 2005), 74.
 - 52 See Tomas Willard, ‘John Heydon’s Visions: “Pretty” or “Polluted”?’’, *Paideuma*, 16:1 (1987), 61–72.
 - 53 Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 532; Stephen Sicari, *Pound’s Epic Ambition*, 175.
 - 54 Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Volume 3: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 404.
 - 55 See Michael Kindellan, *The Late Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 235.
 - 56 Anselm of Canterbury, ‘Monologion’, trans. Simon Harrison in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5–81 (13).
 - 57 Anselm, ‘Monologion’, 14–15.
 - 58 Abelard is, of course, approvingly mentioned in Canto LXXX (532) and in *Guide to Kulchur* (170) but solely in the context of his having fought for his academic position.
 - 59 Michael Alexander, *The Poetic Achievement of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 195–196.
 - 60 Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality, Ideology in Ezra Pound’s Cantos*, 27.
 - 61 Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 56, 74.
 - 1 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, ‘Letter of Lord Chandos’ in *The Whole Difference: Selected Writings*, ed. J.D. McClatchy, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 69–79 (79).
 - 2 Frederic Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* (London: Verso, 2016), 321.
 - 3 Laura (Riding) Jackson, and Schuyler B. Jackson, *Rational Meaning: A New Foundation for the Definition of Words and Supplementary Essays*, ed. William Harmon (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 7.
 - 4 Riding and Jackson, *Rational Meaning*, 13.
 - 5 Riding and Jackson, *Rational Meaning*, 15, 20, 21.
 - 6 For another excellent account of the ‘end’ of Riding’s poetry to read alongside McGann’s, see Tom Fisher, ‘Reading Renunciation: Laura Riding’s Modernism and the End of Poetry’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 33 (2010), 1–19.
 - 7 Jerome J. McGann, ‘Laura (Riding) Jackson and the Literal Truth’, *Critical Inquiry*, 18:3 (1992), 454–473 (458).
 - 8 McGann, ‘Laura (Riding) Jackson and the Literal Truth’, 473.
 - 9 Charles Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (London: University of California Press, 1997), 239–249 (240).
 - 10 Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, 241.
 - 11 Olson, ‘Projective Verse’, 247.
 - 12 Denise Levertov, ‘Some Notes Towards Organic Form’ in *New and Selected Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 67–73 (73).
 - 13 Robert Duncan, *The H.D. Book* (London: University of California Press, 2011), 364.