

Appendix A

In Praise of Bad Translations: Ezra Pound and the Cultural Work of Translation

I have been thinking about translations--specifically, literary translations of literary works--and about the cultural work translation performs for the traditions of its "target" language. Especially in post-War North America, literary translation has been undergoing a renaissance--and I think our contemporary interest in translation, and in world literatures, has to do with an attempt to work North American poetics beyond the received standard assumptions of the high Modernist generations.

Translation introduces into the received tradition voices, tones, structures, social nuances and imaginative possibilities that the dominant ethos had ignored, had not developed, or did not have the linguistic structures to conceptualize or to articulate. In this sense the selective translation of other models has helped contemporary poetry to begin anew. Ironically, the internationalism of the Modern poets, their work in translation and their questions about linguistic and social reformation by means of other cultural forms, opened the way.¹

Although not technically a "genre" of poetry, translation in contemporary terms has taken on a different status than it had earlier. In an important way, the service that translation--especially inadequate translation, or translation that has not assimilated the original language into the target language or that self-consciously carries traces of the original language or--offers for the tradition is the work that allusion--the incorporation of foreign material directly into the structure of the lyric--used to perform. Eliot calls Joyce's procedures in Ulysses the "mythic method"; the strategy of cross-language allusions in both "The Waste Land" and the Cantos derives from Joyce's example in Ulysses and the Wake.² Allusion in the Modernist poem had

redefined the relation of the poem to its base-language, and the diffraction and reintegration of perceptions that allusion required turned the reader into a meta-translator, as Robert Adams has suggested.

Much Modernist writing expects [the reader] to construct precisely from... overtones and connotations the structural pattern of `the work as he sees it.' Thus the creation of literary art is the first half, and its interpretation is the second half, of a process which in its entirety must be described as a set of translation, which is both inevitably necessary and inevitably imperfect.³

The Moderns had aspired to shape a culturally-formative power through the technique of allusion and quotation within the Anglophone poem. By contrast, contemporary poets have tended to honor translation as a separate form. In the process they have moved toward a different concept of translation as a way to inform the canon of a diverse (and increasingly more internationally-oriented) culture. In this sense, however, the contemporary acknowledgment that the critical "translation" of form, "inevitably necessary and inevitably imperfect," begins in the Modernist experiment and then works to overcome the limitations of the Moderns example.

Sometimes this work of new translations rediscovers for us the ways in which other cultures resisted the influences of Modernism, or how and why some other cultures that did not feel the need for that allusive diffraction in their particular versions of Modernism. This rediscovery accounts in fact for some new interests in Asian art, for instance, in its more dynamically continuous traditions. The tendency to look for other holistic cultural traditions has occasioned some magnificent editions and translations of traditions we North Americans had known only in scraps and fragments--of native American poetics and other ethnopoetic traditions, for instance, and of Caribbean poetries, and East Indian traditions.⁴ Sometimes this urge to start again, or to claim other informing origins, has lead writers back through the history of Anglo-American Modernism, to the work of pre-Modernist and early Modernist generations. And sometimes this new work of translation has directly investigated the ways in which Modernism affected other cultures similar to ours, but in ways different from the ways it affected England and America.⁵

Because different cultures experienced Modernism differently, several historical version of "the Modern" evolved; some of our recent poets have returned to other modes of Modernism (in the examples of Spanish Americans for instance), to see what might have become of us, had the Anglo-American Moderns had different choices or had the socio-historical circumstances that conditioned their responses been different.⁶ The writers these newer poems have chosen to translate are all representative "alternatives" to the dominant forms Modernism adopted in English-speaking literatures.⁷

Of course, Ezra Pound is the great exemplar of twentieth-century translators into English. Pound's allusions, as in the synthetic texture of the Cantos, served the purpose of introducing other voices--and increasingly, other concept of social organization--directly into the poem, recontextualizing the original into the modern discourse without changing its linguistic form. Often his translations and anthologies, including the ABC of Reading, are directed to a similar propadeutic aim, to define a tradition of craftsmanship that could underwrite the Modern experiment, but in those translations Pound's attitude toward the linguistic status of the original--and therefore toward its cultural integrity--is somewhat different. Pound honors the autonomy of the original text more in his technique of allusion than in his practice of translation, and contemporary poets have adapted their concepts of the uses of translation more from Pound's allusiveness than from his actual practice of translation, even while they acknowledge the "permissions" that Pound's interest in translation offers. Pound's own theory of translation seems to have been one of a Flaubertian apprenticeship in poetic craft; Pound recommended a poet should translate in order to learn enrich his capacities in the "vehicle" language, English in Pound's case. "The poet should read widely," he advised, "especially in languages he does not understand."⁸ This broadening advice helped to widen the scope of what was possible in English-based poetries, and it bore fruit in Pound's own reclamation and re-invention of work from Provençal, Anglo-Saxon, Chinese, Latin, and other languages. By his example Pound

enlarged the shape of what was aurally and imaginatively possible for English, and his example returned the English ear. And yet his choices of material to translate (including the Greek lyricists, Catullus, and Villon) were territories that had already been mapped out by earlier Victorian translators like Rossetti, Symonds, and others.

That is, although he is known and celebrated as a "translator," Pound influenced translation in the early twentieth-century chiefly through his advocacy of other language-traditions, and oddly through the inadequacy of his translations. Although there is a way to read such linguistic appropriation as a form of colonial co-optation, I think it's helpful to remember that Pound's advocacy of other traditions, resulting in his "bad" translations, is consistent with his attempts to create a new tradition retrospectively, and through insistence on the poet's apprenticeship to models that supported the Modern ambitions. George Steiner concludes:

Pound broadened and gave critical orthodoxy to a body of values and emotional responses established by his pre-Raphaelite and Edwardian predecessors. What he revolutionized was the idiom of translation, the notion of what a translation is and of how it relates to the original...Pound's translations...are re-enactments of the original poetic deed in the cadence, tonality, idiomatic stress of the modern.⁹

Pound worked in translation in order primarily to freshen the modern idiom of the "target" language. Through his translations based on other peoples' knowledge of Chinese, for instance, Pound virtually invents Asian poetry for modern Western sensibilities. He does so largely through his advocacy of his own theory of the ideogram, his spatial concept of poetic form. When the form and the reasons for it coincide, the results can be lyrically stunning:¹⁰

The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.

You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
 You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
 And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
 Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
 I never laughed, being bashful.
 Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
 Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
 I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
 Forever and forever and forever.
 Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,

You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
 And you have been gone five months.
 The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.
 By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
 Too deep to clear them away!
 The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
 The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
 Over the grass in the West garden;
 They hurt me. I grow older.
 If you are coming through the narrows of the river Kiang,
 Please let me know beforehand,
 And I will come out to meet you
 As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

Two outstanding qualities recommend this poem. The first is its elegantly tactful argument through images, its pure control in the service of an implied narrative. Perhaps (as Pound suggests in his parsing of his own poem "The Jewelled Stairs' Grievance") any Imagist-based poem shapes a "narrative" in the sequencing of perceptions, but this poem is particularly convincing and poignant for its movement through images to suggest external narrative data and subtle internal motions that the speaker herself would not articulate in a more overt way. The

gerunds in lines 2, 3, and 4 define a state of childhood--pulling flowers, playing horse--that will and must be disrupted by the intrusion of adult passion in these lives; the parallelism of the gerunds (she pulling flowers, he playing horse) shows how they share this childish natural experience, though with gender-defined interests already evident, in details that anticipate the shape of their future relationship; his departure from their state of childish marriage is the more moving because it is clear they are of the same age, with parallel but gendered experiences. This childhood state continues through the third stanza, modulates into a marriage that the girl cherishes ("At fifteen I stopped scowling, / I desired by dust to be mingled with yours".) And at sixteen he leaves inexplicably, perhaps (though surprising abutment of his departure with her dramatic devotion suggests that he may be trying to escape the intensity of this intimacy.) The last line of stanza three ("Why should I climb the look out?") is the closest the woman comes to a direct expression of her anger and dismay at his absence, but this speaker is not given to direct articulation. (This reticence seems innately a characteristic of this woman, though it participates in cultural patterns of Chinese poetry, and it suggests something about the social status of the wife and about her expectations as well--and for that matter, it may participate in an Orientalist stereotype of the passivity of Asian women.) After her one statement of direct dismay, luminous details and obliquity carry the rest of the poem's emotional argument, perhaps because the young wife is too proud to complain directly. Her observation "You dragged your feet when you went out" may suggest that the husband left apparently with reluctance (was he drafted involuntarily?), or it may suggest that he is bouncing on his heels--or even that he is still a child himself, scuffing his feet as he leaves home. His young wife physically looked down (toward the path, noticing the moss) as he left: her devotion to him even then was submissive and absolute. To follow that detail with her observation that beside the gate through which he left "the moss has grown, the different mosses, / Too deep to clear them away!" is to suggest the length of time he has been gone, the changes of seasons (but not of her feelings) during his absence, her

subsequent solitude and loneliness and fidelity (no-one else has scuffed away the new moss.) The abutment of the two perceptions suggests the young wife's bewilderment and watchfulness and fear, her aggrieved displacement of emotions onto the physical world, her continued physical and emotional looking-down, her unwillingness to accuse her husband of having abandoning her. (The closest she comes to a direct anger again occurs in the last line of the poem. By indenting her qualification, "As far as Cho-fu-Sa," her letter suggests indirectly that there may be limits to the woman's willingness to follow her husband--or conversely, the indentation, and the slight sense of qualification, may suggest that she is reluctant to press her case too strongly.)

The second outstanding quality of this poem follows from the first. This poem impresses me for the way it makes these Imagist techniques seem dramatically and culturally meaningful. Any style or technique used for its own sake, without regard for its epistemological or contextual justifications, may quickly become mannered. The more absolute the style, the more quickly its unselfconscious use can sound like a received, encoded rhetoric. In "The River Merchant's Wife," Pound works out an essential relation between the presumptions behind the style and the narrative situation. His Imagist techniques are credible because they are a measure of character. Some might hear in this sketch of a bashful Asian woman a racial or sexual stereotype, but the physicality of the images, and their correlation to one another in juxtaposed sequence, suggest think this young woman would have deflected her perceptions onto the processes of the physical world; she would have hesitated to accuse her husband but would very likely find indirect ways to articulate her grief, her fear, her anger, her sense of unjust abandonment despite the momentum of their history together. There's an ideological fit between style and character in this poem.

My appreciation of this strong diaphanous poem does change a bit when I remember that it is not so much a translation as a pastiche, a series of inspired approximations. Just as Pound's concepts of the Asian ideogram were late-Imagist speculations about a language he did not know

(and were based on Ernest Fenollosa's better-informed misconceptions), so his handling of entire Asian texts was at times frankly tendentious. To encourage the illusions of narrative sequence and of "Oriental" authenticity, Pound has grazed through several centuries of Chinese poetry. The diverse tones of this poem come from several Asian traditions: from the poem of the abandoned lover, from the farewell-poem of travellers and of departing friends, from homesick laments by soldiers and diplomats, from portraits of the seasons of human time. Pound does credit the 8th-century writer Rihaku (Li Po) as the author of the original poem ("The Song of Ch'ang-kan"), though insofar as the poem depends on Li Po it anthologizes lines, ideas, and sections from several of his shorter, more compact lyrics, to make a sequential lyric apparently based on the life and psyche of a single speaker. The Modern poem that results from Pound's rearrangement of his sources inadvertently represents an Orientalism like that of Pound's contemporary Sergeant, for instance, a Westernized version of what the forms of Asian art would have been like if Western traditions of narrative continuity and sequence and character and Imagism had been part of the Asian traditions; Pound's poem would not have been possible without Li Po's lyrics or Browning's monologues of self-revelation.¹¹ Intending to create a model--of imagistic strength, indirection, revelation-through-character--for nascent Anglo-American Modernism, Pound elegantly counterfeits an Asian tradition.

My concern about the "accuracy" of Pound's translations is not an academic grouches about competence and territoriality. A case can be made that literalness need not be the determining criterion for judging a translation, if the new work justifies itself by rendering the spirit or imaginative movement, the emotional arc, of an original text, within reasonable expectations of fidelity. It doesn't bother me so much that Pound in his Sextus Propertius poems mistranslates the verb "canes" ("thou shalt sing") for the noun "canes" ("dogs"), nor does it particularly bother me, finally, to learn that Pound did not know Chinese and did not translate directly from Chinese characters, that he relied on the surviving notes of a dead amateur

collaborator, and that he often dealt with his originals as if working in some permanent confusion between earlier Chinese and later Japanese traditions. These revelations make me reframe the "translation", to read it as an act of intervention in the Anglo-American tradition, more than as a linguistically accurate translation of an integral text. Pound's discovery of some phrases startlingly appropriate to a "cultural" as opposed to a "textual" translation (to use a distinction introduced by Wai-lim Yip) do justify his sense of translation as a process of making what he called "translucencies." Pound's ear served him excellently, despite his pronouncements that the melopoeia (music) and the phanopoeia (images) of a poem can almost never be translated, but that its logopoeia (the "dance of the intellect among words," what he calls elsewhere the poem's "internal thought-form") may be translatable.¹²

The more serious problem, I think, is that sometimes Pound tonally falsifies the originals and so by definition, in the spirit of his own theory, deliberately translates "badly." The Li Po original of the Pound poem does not say "forever and forever and forever" quite so wiltingly (or accusingly), for instance. Lovely as that line is, Pound's invention introduces tones of European romantic-love, where the Chinese suggests the fervor of an adolescent bride less melodramatically.¹³ In this sense, Pound's dynamized or clairvoyant renderings of the originals not only sometimes falsify his translations themselves but sometimes challenge his own theory of translation. Less sympathetic critics have called Pound's theory of translation "apocalyptic," because of his tendency to decontextualize the original poems, making all times and cultures contemporaneous--or simultaneous in Pound's mind Pound, at least.¹⁴

The historical accuracy of Pound's translations diminishes as the immediate emotional power of his poem increases. This trade-off does justify itself in some luminous moments of Pound's invention. The girl's bangs in the Li Po poem are his creation, as is the phrase "two small people" where the Chinese original has essentially "children"; in these examples Pound simply shifts the connotations of one image to another. From the generalities he knew about Asian social

structures and from the complexities of pronoun-structures evident in Fenollosa's papers on Asian languages, Pound also invented the poem's moving forms of address, as in "At fourteen I married My Lord you." But then, Pound's purpose never really was to "translate" the originals (as we now use the term) in their otherness and cultural autonomy. The linguistic, cultural, and historical otherness of the original poem are subordinate to Pound's propadeutic mission for English-language poetry. As Hugh Kenner has it, the Cathay poems in particular serve "to extend, inform, and articulate the preoccupations of the present by bringing the past abreast of it."¹⁵ Kenner is especially persuasive when he argues that the Cathay poems "paraphrase, as it were, an elegiac war-poetry that no one wrote" about World War I.¹⁶ Charles Tomlinson also picks up the issue and points out Cathay's themes of the domestic difficulties of war, of continual departures and losses, of desperate waiting, of military service on the frontier and of the terrifying lack of news from those campaigns back home: issues common to the Asian traditions and to Britain's homefront experience in 1914. Finally Kenner and Tomlinson gloss the questions of translation altogether. Kenner, especially, treats the Chinese translations as English poems that use Chinese models "to supply a system of parallels and a structure of discourse." "Cathay is notable," Kenner concludes, "considered as an English product rather than [as a] Chinese product."¹⁷ In the Cantos, too, Pound creates a synthetic language to carry cultural traces they could not carry in translated versions; still, the base-language of the Cantos (like that of "The Waste Land" and Finnegans Wake) is English, because for Pound (as for Eliot and Joyce) world history is still centrally Western and European.

Pound's concept of translation as a vehicle of self-realization for English poetry seems to lead away from the otherness of the originals. In another sense, however, the "bad translation" effect--which he carries to greater length in the Cantos' technique of integrating quotations directly from other language--has the effect of acknowledging the Otherness of the originals, demonstrating for us what English cannot do, and what we need to learn. On Flaubertian grounds,

T.S. Eliot is generous about Pound's practice--claiming that through Pound, the "inventor of Chinese poetry," we "really at last get the original"--but Eliot is working within slightly different presumptions about the usefulness of translations to Pound's.¹⁸ "If one can really penetrate the life of another age," Eliot generalizes, "one is penetrating the life of one's own." The dangers of this technique are obvious, as even Eliot acknowledges when he suggests that "in three hundred years Pound's Cathay will be a 'Windsor Translation' as Chapman and North are now 'Tudor Translations': it will be called (and justly) a 'magnificent specimen of XXth Century poetry' rather than a 'translation'. Each generation must translate for itself."

And for its own reasons. The aesthetic purposes Pound is pursuing in the Cathay poems, for instance, are primarily the ratification of Imagist and Vorticist values: to invent a retrospective tradition, to depict obliquely the British home-front experience of the war. Formally Pound is working not so much to render the "originals" accurately (he does not observe their textual integrity for instance). He is working to invent a model of the autonomous image ("direct treatment of the thing itself"), a model of a metric based on the syntactical unit, on the shorter line, on the freighted unit within the line instead of within the verse paragraph (a metric of the phrase, not the rhythm of the metronome); and to structure a thought-rhythm based on the sentence, attentive to the natural thing (nothing extraneous--"the natural object is always the adequate symbol.")¹⁹ Pound may or not be deliberately writing war-elegies, as Kenner and Tomlinson suggest. In any case, he is exploiting a foreign tradition to buttress his own Modernist experiments. I suspect that Pound's choice of Flaubert as the Penelope for his Mauberley has to do both with Flaubert's concepts of Orientalism and instructive exoticism and with the more overtly Flaubertian issues of craft and artistic impersonality.²⁰ In the Chinese originals Pound found a vehicle for articulating those values he had been preaching just before Fenollosa's widow brought him her husband's Chinese worksheets. I don't mean to begrudge Pound the lasting beauty and elegance and "translucency" of those translations. I do mean to remind us that they

are culturally-defined work, as clearly of this W.W. I period as Rossetti's Italian translations are Pre-Raphaelite. As Eliot characterizes the commitment, "good translation like this is not merely translation, for the translator is giving the original through himself, and finding himself through the translation."²¹

This commitment survives in our day, of course, most obviously in our advocacy of translation as a vehicle by which a poet can sharpen a working sense of craft.²² Following Pound's presumption that the work of translation might enrich the concept of craft in the received tradition, many contemporary poets have continued to revive the art of translation, while modifying Pound's Flaubertian definition of the purposes of the exercise. One of our leading translators, W.S. Merwin, generously credits Pound's example, for instance, but Merwin's characterization of his own purposes differs significantly from Pound's. Merwin even claims that he has tried to keep his work in translation separate from his work of writing poems. He credits the impulse behind many of his translations to "the same kind of search that prompts us, in our time, to read translations of poems: a wish to embrace, even through wrappings, poetry that was written from perspectives revealingly different from our own."²³ The difference from Pound's tendentious use of translations, even from Robert Lowell's theory of "imitations," is pertinent here. Not so much a rejection of Pound's propaedeutic purposes as a refinement of them in the light of post-colonial questions of cultural co-optation, Merwin's attitude differs in his approach toward the historical, social and linguistic otherness of the originals. Merwin's attitude is more aware of the issues of cultural difference, more appropriate to an era of structural anthropology--and oddly, therefore more aware of what "cannot" be translated culturally as well as linguistically.²⁴

The paradox of contemporary literary translation is that the more attentively translators and readers respect the otherness of the original in the new translations, the more writers like Merwin can embody forms of possibility for new poems within our expanded tradition--even

more coherently, and less dogmatically, than Pound's purposively Modernist-oriented practice could. Through the Fenollosa worksheets, Pound had recognized principles of Chinese syntax, the completeness of lines as syntactical units, but in his grudge against Milton and the domination of English by metrical verse, Pound chose to observe the autonomy of the Chinese image by ignoring that principle of syntactical autonomy in the original language. For Pound in 1914, what the example of Chinese poetry as a field has to offer as a model for English verse is more important than the syntactical and emotional structures of the original poems--or of the foreign cultures. Pound does try to suggest the completeness of the Chinese syntactical unit by containing the arguments of "The River Merchant's Wife" in enjambed but syntactically complete stanzas (which embody complete units of meaning: stages in the woman's life, stages in her memory of her devotion to her husband) and in syntactically-complete periods within the poem. Pound's translation feels "Oriental."²⁵ By contrast, the austerity and clean abutment of individual perceptions in Merwin's translation of Asian poems, for instance, help to make his translations sound more "Asian", or at least more attuned to what we now know about Chinese ideogrammic diction, its syntactical poetic forms, and the epistemological arguments of those poetic traditions.

George Steiner is probably the most famous spokesperson for this contemporary "anthropological" theory of translation. Taking up the challenge of Robert Frost's smug dismissal of translation ("poetry is what gets lost in the translation,") Steiner repeatedly has argued for translation as a process of developing cultural relativity and self-consciousness, even as he admits the final impossibility of any translation as a full transduction of all the connotations of a speech-act into another language. The source of the culturally-enriching power of translation is its ability to transmit values despite these difficulties and limitations. Our own dialect, in its particular semantics and syntactics, does define and trap us in its vision of the way the world can assemble its parts in relation. For Steiner, however, this relativity, far from a source of glib

despair like Frost's, is evidence of the need for translation, a process by which we can recognize both how our own idiom conditions our perceptions ("Poetic translation enriches by what it reveals of our poverties") and also how other semantic and syntactical configurations of the world are possible. Further, once he's admitted that any transmission from one language-system to another must of necessity lose information, Steiner makes that loss a form of free necessity. Poetry is as susceptible to translation as prose is, because poetry is a more systematic, compact use of the rules of transformation in any language. That is the creatively "justifying paradox" of translation. Any translation loses information, Steiner admits, but then most other linguistic activities, including readings from other periods of English, are equally acts of translation. Poems don't necessarily lose more information through translation than prose does; in any case poems may contain more information to be transferred, and so may better sustain the loss. Steiner's argument about the necessity and the "impossibility" of translations becomes a humanistic argument about why we need and value such attempts. "Our world, the way we move among its total possibilities, springs from grammar, from the pattern by which we relate identity, verb and object." This belief in the formative power of the humanized Logos leads Steiner to metaphors of poetry and of poetic translation as processes by which we can escape the provincialism of our idiom and of our linguistically over-determined selves. The metaphor of a devout attentiveness to the otherness of the original text in its original linguistic formulation recurs throughout Steiner's work. When he describes another language as a Kierkegaardian "second self," or when he tells us that "a painting divides space between self and the whole; so a poem divides experience between itself and "otherness," Steiner makes a moral necessity of the need both to recognize that otherness and to bridge the Babel-gap.²⁶ This impulse is not so far from Merwin's claim that we read poems in translations for their otherness--not for their exoticism, nor from an interest in their immediate similarity to (or modelling power for) our

current condition, but from the "wish to embrace...poetry written from perspectives revealingly different from our own."

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Rihaku (LiPo)/Ezra Pound

The Lake of the Ten Thousand Mountains

I throw the line in from this little island.
 The water is clear and my heart is protected.
 The fish pass under the trees of the lake.
 Along the promontory monkeys swing on the vines.
 The wandering beauty of former days took off her necklace
 In these mountains, the legend says.
 I look for her but I have not found her.
 The songs of the rowers lose the way to the moon.

Mong Hao-Jan/W.S. Merwin

1. See also David Young's excellent essay on translation, "Second Honeymoon: Some Thoughts in Translation," in Field Guide, 178-89. Young has been one of our foremost contemporary translators, and a generous advocate of the work of others. Watch Young's sense of the formative power of translations--the sense of giving the tradition what it needs--at work even in his subordinate clauses, as he discusses here the work of translators who labor to "duplicate the formal characteristics of their originals" and so produced monstrosities: "These are translators who, approaching a Rilke sonnet, seem bent...on giving us a sonnet in which Rilke will come and go, if he is lucky enough to appear at all, when what the English language needs is not one more bloody sonnet, but Rilke, as vital and potent and moving as he is in German, where the fact that he was writing a sonnet was perhaps the most incidental aspect of his achievement" (italics mine). For another, implicit, theory of the use of "origins", see also Paul Mariani's finely argued essays in A Usable Past (Amherst: Massachusetts, 1984).

2. The manuscripts to "The Waste Land" suggest that much of Pound's editorial work on Eliot's poem consisted of erasing the traces of Joyce's influence on the poem (see The Waste Land: Facsimiles, ed. Valerie Eliot (N.Y.: , 1972). Pound's declared intentions to write a version of the Odyssey as a "periplum" in the early Cantos clearly recalls Joyce's schema and methods. In a letter to his father Pound explained that the Cantos were like a "fugue", in which the three repeating elements (all of which recall Joyce's example) were

Live man goes down into the world of Dead. The `repeat in history.' The `magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, bust through from quotidien into `divine or permanent world.'
Letters,

3. Robert M. Adams, Proteus, His Lies, His Truth (N.Y.: Norton, 1973), 7.

4. I have in mind works of discovery and translation like Howard Norman's moving versions of the poem-cycles of Algonquin and Cree peoples (see, for instance, Norman's The Wishing-Bone Cycle (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1982) and Where the Chill Came From (San Francisco: North Point, 1982); also Jerome Rothenberg's influential anthologies of ethnopoeitics like Shaking the Pumpkin; and David Ray's work with East Indian poetry, and Caroline Wright's work on the works of Bengali women poets.

5. One of the most encouraging and even daring publishing ventures of recent years has been Ecco Press' "Neglected Writers of the Twentieth Century" series. That list of reissued works might serve as a preliminary anthology of this "alternative tradition."

I don't think that John Ashbery is joking when he describes his interest in editing his own anthology of Neglected Writers. The list he suggests would include John Wheelwright, David Schubert, Samuel Greenberg, and F.T. Prince--all writers, not coincidentally, who are "bizarre cousins or in-laws of Ashbery's" as David Schapiro puts the case--"all applying the same `syntax of dreams' for dramatic purposes." See Schapiro, "Urgent Masks," in Field Guide to Contemporary Poetry and Poetics (N.Y.: Longman's, 1980), 195.

6. George Steiner claims also that contemporary American interests in translation reflect an enduring American doubt about the reality of our own culture, and an American tendency to raid other countries for the materials we think we need. Maybe so. I am willing to admit that Americans have often had a curiously eager, even appropriative attitude toward world culture; that attitude seems a form of greed, if the observer is unsympathetic or if the material translated is conceptualized as "raw material" from a colony which the imperial power needs.

There is, moreover, a generous reciprocity of contemporary poetry in English-language poetics: many of the best British poets of our day (including Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes, and Geoffrey Hill among the British, John Montague, Thomas Kinsella, and Seamus Heaney among the Irish) acknowledge their debt to North American models. It would be closer to the truth to say that American cultural imperialism take the vehicles of art-forms that don't demand translation--basically visual forms with rhythmic periods, like fashion or films, or basically rhythmic forms with significantly visual presentations, like rock music or fast foods. Anglo-American poetry, if there is such a beast, seems to be moving beyond such "imperialism" and appropriation, in a movement that accord to Steiner's own theory should be welcome. George Steiner, "Introduction," The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translations (Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), 33.

7. This work has been wide and deep: in Richard Howard's translation of Baudelaire's Fleurs du Mal and Charles Wright's translation of Eugenio Montale poems; in Rosanna Warren's work on Max Jacob; in John Ashbery's attention to other French writers like Reverdy and Michaux; in Stephen Mitchell's wonderful work on Rilke, Richard Pevear's on Yves Bonnefoy,

and Heather McHugh's on Jean Follain; in James Merrill's on French and Brazilian poets (Verlaine, Meireles, and others); in Elizabeth Bishop's on Octavio Paz and other Latin American writers; in Mark Strand's on Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

8. Ezra Pound, "Renaissance," in Literary Essays, selected by T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 50-ff.
9. George Steiner, "Introduction," Penguin Book, 33.
10. Ezra Pound, "The River Merchant's Wife," Cathay (1914), in Personae. I give the version reprinted in later editions of the Pound's translations, without the diacritical marks over the vowels. See also Ronnie Apter's helpful study Digging for the Treasure: Translation After Pound (N.Y.: Peter Lang, 1984).
11. About Pound's expertise in Chinese, see Kenner, The Pound Era, and Louis Simpson, Three on the Tower, and also specialized studies of Pound's use of Chinese, including primarily Yip and Achilles Fang, "Materials for the Study of Pound's Cantos," Harvard doctoral dissertation, 1958. More ambivalent readings of Pound as translator--by Sinologists--include Heiuh Wen-tung's "English Translations of Chinese Poetry" Criterion, XXVI (April, 1938,), 423-ff. and Roy Earl Teele, Through a Glass Darkly (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1949).
12. Pound, "French Poets," Little Review, IV, no. 10 (Feb., 1918), 3-61. The phrase "internal thought-form" comes from Pound's "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," New Age, X, 15 (Feb. 8, 1912), 344.
13. Similarly, Pound's tonal changes make Propertius a much more verbally whimsical and more unpatriotic poet than the Roman poet was. See Simpson, Three on the Tower, 52.
14. L.S. Dembo first used the term; Massimo Bacigalupo discusses the charge succinctly, in The Forméd Trace (N.Y.: Columbia, 1983), 183.
15. Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound, (London: Faber), 1951, 154.
16. The point is perhaps a bit strained; Pound published Cathay only eight months after Britain had entered the war, somewhat early for disillusioned, weary elegy. Still, the case is generally helpful.
17. Hugh Kenner, "The Invention of China," Spectrum, IX, 144, 154. See Tomlinson's excellent "Introduction" to The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation (Oxford: Oxford, 1980), xiii.
18. T.S. Eliot, "Introduction" to Selected Poems of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1928), 15ff.
19. See Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor (N.Y.: Oxford, 1964), 45. The terms here obviously come from Pound's manifestoes on Imagism; see also "Vorticism" in his Gautier-Brzeska, 89, and Literary

Essays, 5.

20. Of all the 19th-century novelists, Flaubert most embodies the paradoxes of Orientalism, its fascination with the exotic and its simultaneous longing for a "visionary alternative" or enlarged alternative tradition, a true homeland for a nomadic spirit. For an excellent discussion of the cultural significance and content of Orientalism, especially in the early 20th century, see the first and the last chapters of Edward Said's Orientalism (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1978).

I sense Flaubert's Orientalism, especially from his Egyptian and Asian travel writings, as a common thread or exemplum through much of Pound's work of this period, from the early Confucian propadeutic ambitions for America in the Whitmanian experiments of Lustra (1912) through the issues of poetic form and cultural values implicit in Cathay (1914) through the aesthetic world-weariness of the "Mauberley" series (1915). Flaubert may have offered Pound a field of work, Asia, and a set of attitudes toward that field: curiosity, sympathy, appropriativeness, a certain fascinated epistemological doubt about our final ability to "know" the East, and some cultural stereotypes about "the Oriental Mind" in its linguistic manifestations through ideograms and through physically-apprehensible aesthetic forms.

21. T.S. Eliot, ed., Selected Poems of Ezra Pound, 13.

22. By "translation" here I do mean chiefly translation of first-rate earlier poems by first-rate contemporary poets; that combination has also dictated my choice of poets and poems to consider in this chapter.

It strikes me significant that both the Penguin Book of Verse Translations (1966) and the Oxford Book of Literary Translations (1980) organize their offerings under the rubrics of the translators themselves. This organizing schema introduces some problems (to distribute modern versions of Horace, for instance, among the random interests of 9 translators ranging over 300 pages of text, as in the Penguin anthology, can make reading the book arbitrarily difficult.) Nevertheless, the system does realistically recognize the phenomenon of translation as a systematic and independent art practiced by those who are not necessarily the dominant poets of the day.

23. W.S. Merwin, "Forward," Selected Translations, 1948-1968 (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1969), vii.

24. Sir James Frazer in The Golden Bough (1890) had aspired to find the common stories of wildly diverse cultures; compare that anthologizing, unifying purpose with the purposes of contemporary anthropologists, who, more attentive to the differences between cultures, seek not the common story but the grammar of relationships by which any culture tells its story.

25. See Said, Orientalism, especially on the relation between such Western appropriative adaptations and an attitude of imperialism, 252-ff.

26. Steiner, "Introduction," Penguin Book, 27, 21.