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*Expressive Metrics:  
The Context and Development of Some Prosodic Principles  
in the Poetry of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot,  
1908-1915.*

**By John David Ballam**

A thesis submitted to the  
**University of Bristol**  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of  
**Ph.D.**  
in the Faculty of Arts, Department of English  
**September 1995**

## *Abstract*

**The University of Bristol; Ballam, J.D.; *Expressive Metrics: The Context and Development of Some Prosodic Principles in the Poetry of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, 1908-1915*; Ph.D.; September 1995.**

This thesis focuses primarily upon three areas: a comparative analysis of those prosodic theories which form the historical context of the years 1908 - 1915; the ways in which Eliot and Pound came into contact with this discussion and the extent to which it contributes to their own criticism; and finally an analysis of how Pound and Eliot's poems from this period are conditioned by their authors' relationship to the then concurrent debates surrounding metrical form.

Chapter One seeks to establish something of the origins of the core debate over metrical format, demonstrating the contrasting views upon the precise locus of 'form,' as well as its continuance, and how these views affected poets writing in England to whom Pound and Eliot were later drawn. Chapter Two compares and contrasts the views of American authors on these subjects, suggesting how through an alternative relationship to "tradition," American poets and prosodists developed a more self-consciously radical approach. In Chapter Three, the focus is upon how Pound and Eliot came into contact with these attitudes and, based upon their own criticism, what their individual responses were. Chapter Four analyses the practical results these matters had for Eliot's early poetry, while Chapter Five offers a comparable analysis of Pound's early style(s).

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## *Introduction*

Noaaw this is fawrest *pri-meval*.

--H.D., *Her* (1984)<sup>1</sup>

H.D. puts this phrase in the mouth of her Ezra Pound-character George Lowndes.

The singular phonetic spelling, which unmistakably recalls Pound's own, is an attempt to reproduce in printed form the unique vocal quality in which Pound dressed this well-known quotation from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. What makes H.D.'s choice of detail so satisfying is the way it forces us to focus not only on the peculiarity of her character's manner, but also on the specific context that lends significance to that character's own parodying. To understand that context more fully, is to recall that in *Evangeline* (1849) Longfellow undertook to create a species of epic through the combination of a New World subject and a format derived from the Old World metre of dactylic hexameter:

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks, ...

--Longfellow, *Evangeline*<sup>2</sup>

In H.D.'s version, Lowndes/Pound has just returned from Europe to his native America, and in this episode the inherent contrasts between the two worlds is highlighted through a line of verse in which these differences were meant to coalesce-- the nasal intonation and truncated form of the phrase being a further mutation of Longfellow's own personal adaptation of a specific metrical format.

In some ways the ironies of this minute example of mutation and adaptation combine as an apt symbol of the prosodic flux characterizing the historical period separating the two poets. What this thesis seeks to explore is how the struggle at this time to identify and utilize a system of metrical constants contributed significantly to the work of two of the twentieth century's most influential poets, Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and T.S. Eliot (1888-1965). To do this, it will be necessary to identify precisely the nature of this prosodic background, explore how both poets came into contact with these discussions, and finally to

map the influence that competing arguments about the nature of metre had upon Pound and Eliot's own work. In doing so, the aim is not to attempt to differentiate neatly between prosody and other forms of literary criticism. Indeed, as many of the prosodic remarks discussed here show, such differentiation was almost as uncommon in the years 1908-1915 as it was in the previous five decades. But while the contribution of other aspects of contemporary critical thought to the formation of Eliot and Pound's poetry have been widely examined by their later critics, the interaction of this thought with the specific issues raised by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century metrical analysis remains largely unexplored. This is surprising, considering the emphasis both poets placed upon the aesthetics contributing to the formation of their poems, as well as the degree to which their obvious engagement with metrical structuring attracted the comment of early reviewers.

There are, of course, many reasons why prosodic issues should have remained bound up with other elements of critical discussion. Foremost among these is prosody's ostensible worth as a means of literary judging. While many of the processes ascribable to critical method could be shown to reflect the larger aesthetic values of their given era, prosody, if offered as a composite of practices drawn from widely divergent eras, could be nominated as a standard of judgement transcending the tastes of individual historical moments. Seen in this way, metrical writing and its accompanying literature of prosodic analysis, provided a basis of continuity analogous to that of a shared linguistic heritage. Attempts to assign just such a function to prosody were widespread in the years surrounding the turn-of-the-century, but none was as comprehensively formulated as that of George Saintsbury.

What sets Saintsbury largely apart from his contemporaries and forerunners is both the magnitude and apparent skill with which he argued in favour of English poetry's observance of a voluntary unwritten code of practice. While for Saintsbury this code was



periodically broken by the technical inadequacies of individual authors, or even obscured entirely by the artistic wantonness of certain epochs, that code remains vital to an understanding of the links between poems within the tradition of verse in English. Against this view of poets participating in a culturally received "tradition" of versification, Saintsbury's rival prosodists-- among them, Edwin Guest and Coventry Patmore-- proposed a concept of metre as manifested by a limited range of possibilities, domesticated through long usage, but generally funded by rhythmic patterns found to occur even in everyday speech and prose. It is this fundamental difference of opinion, whether metre is a culturally-determined value assessment, or an inseparable constituent to our way of thinking, that formed the crux of prosodic debate in the half-century ending in 1915.

Essential to either of these views of metre is the notion that both poet and reader participate in the experience of a poem through an ability to "hear" a meaning in the rhythm produced when the words are voiced. Again, differing interpretations were offered as to how this experience effects us. For supporters of the view that metre represents a culturally significant phenomenon, the suggestion is that in those patterns of verse for which a name and precedent exists (like iambic pentameter), this meaning involves the perception of slight rhythmic dissonances between the metrical pattern underwriting the text and the aural rhythm produced by its voicing. That is to say, that the metre of the poem possesses a meaning of its own, derived from its relationship to other poems in the same metre, and to which the rhythm of the words alerts us. Like the instantaneous flash of an arc lamp, the mind of the reader experiencing the poles of both pattern and sound, experiences a level of the poem's meaning in a way not linked exclusively to its lexis. For those supporting the opposing view, the rhythm "heard" in the voicing of the words <sup>also</sup> may be a near approximation to the poet's meaning anterior to the poem's manifestation as a work of organized sound-structures. Or, in other words, that the rhythm is a basic part of the

meaning, possibly more basic than the lexis, and for which metre is primarily a name with which to conjure a repetition of the desired experience.

Complicating this whole debate is the issue of how far the poet's volition extends (or ought to extend) in matters of determining the poem's actual visual format. In what respect does a poet control words and the rhythm(s) that their format is likely to produce? To what extent does prior experience (aural or visual) of previously formatted texts contribute to the poet's own ability to "hear" poems? Are "forms" internalized and reproduced involuntarily, or is "form" perpetually self-generating? The implications of both possibilities were explored by writers as diverse in time and circumstances as Ralph Waldo Emerson and T.E. Hulme-- writers whose ideas contributed significantly to the larger discussion of this dimension of writing as it faced Pound and Eliot at a time when their own careers as poets were just beginning.

But for writers on both sides of the Atlantic, the proving ground for prosodic ideals were the texts of poems written during English poetry's greatest periods of metrical uncertainty. Specifically, the focus was on poets of the late fifteenth-, early sixteenth-, and late-nineteenth centuries. If a theory could be formulated to join the divergent styles of these separate eras with the supposed consistencies of the remainder of English verse, then, depending on its author's particular bias, that theory could be said to demonstrate either a unity of cultural influence, or a positive basis in language-formation. Both of these possibilities, as well as examples from the suggested periods, are exploited by Eliot and Pound in their own calculations regarding the nature and origin of metrical segmentation. Likewise, the corollary, that poets exist as either good or bad examples to their successors, is one that Pound and Eliot share with Saintsbury. For this reason, it is hardly surprising to find that both poets, being themselves metrical experimenters, are careful to enumerate the

members of the specific "traditions" in English verse in which they consider themselves to be a part.

But if Pound and Eliot have in common a need to construct a "tradition" suited to their own particular styles of versification, the differences between those "traditions" is as enlightening as the styles that accompany them. Given the proximity of these two poets in terms of historical era, background, education and social status, it is unremarkable that both confronted issues of literary tradition and the role of individual writers, in a broadly comparable way. But this proximity makes what differences there are in their separate approaches to the subject, all the more notable, particularly so when these differences can shed some light on the contrasting paths taken by their followers. This perspective is important, if only for the fact that it forces us to reconsider the roles of writers like Hulme and Arthur Symons, whom we know influenced Eliot and Pound in other ways. Thus, for example, the views of these two avant-garde theorists, both of whom embraced the concept of rhythm as a basic factor of poetic meaning, advocating its emotional appeal as a test of poetic verity as well as the heightened sensitivity to rhythm as a distinguishing trait of "modern" poetry, must be seen as developments within the context of an ongoing prosodic debate, itself inseparable from concurrent issues regarding the aesthetics of composition. Both Symons and Hulme propose the existence of a 'form' of ideas and a 'form' of words-- 'forms' which are capable of unity through the rhythm 'formatted' by poetry, traditions of which 'formats' operate either to encourage or prevent the reader's apprehension of such ideal rhythmical identities. Therefore, Pound and Eliot's own endorsement of similar ideas cannot be seen in isolation from that of their influential contemporaries, but instead must be considered in relation to the spectrum of critical discussion in which prosodic principles, poetic format and the continuities of tradition were central. Examples of this can also be

seen in the important notional shift suggested by the concept of 'breaking' metres, or that verse translation involves an unlocking of meanings manifested by the mere sound of words.

Nevertheless, alongside these sophisticated arguments, the degree to which personal contacts and predilections may have influenced all of these authors' critical appraisals, cannot be over-emphasized. The world of prosodic studies in the era leading up to Pound and Eliot's earliest work is a weird and wonderful one, made more so by the extraordinary fusion of quasi-scientific terminology, class dispute, nationalist agendas, propagandizing and egomania of so many of its participants. Even Eliot and Pound are not above a bickering, defensive tone in their own critical remarks on versification. For this reason, and because so many of the arguments they deploy, as well as the methods they develop, are so similar to their predecessor's, in order to understand fully the implications of these decisions and attitudes on the part of Pound and Eliot, it is necessary to be precise with regard to the complex genesis of certain of the principal ideas they inherited. These ideas are not found in the rarefied language of prosodic studies only, but also as practical examples in both the "experimental" and "conventional" verse of many of those nineteenth-century poets (and earlier) whom Eliot and Pound admired. Alongside these influences, and forming a significant contribution to the context in which they were received, are the corresponding developments in other related arts, philosophy and aesthetics, particularly as these developments were propounded by certain charismatic individuals with whom Pound and Eliot came into contact. Thus Eliot and Pound's university instruction, the writers, artists, philosophers and critics with whom they associated, and the authors whose work affected them most profoundly in these years, will receive special attention.

Finally it must be stressed that the revitalizing strategy sought in Eliot and Pound's early poetry, together with the revivifying aspect of their criticism, must not be seen in isolation from the comparable tendencies in the larger context in which they developed.

This can be seen in many ways, but perhaps none more clearly than in the parallel construction by both poets of a succession of authors whose work exemplified ideals to which they themselves aspired in their own writing. Insofar as each of these disparate groups of writers constitutes a peculiar unity for their individual sponsors, each serves as a unique "tradition," funding the methodology each poet desired. In this way Pound and Eliot's formation of their respective prosodic rules mirrors that of their contemporaries and predecessors, in that besides the need for a *modus operandi* there was the accompanying need for validation based upon prior example. The implication of this is, of course, that metre-as-measure is impossible without agreed-upon criteria, and therefore, the first need is to establish clearly those criteria. However, as in all cases of measurement, perception is most effective when it is most immediate. For example, our ability to grasp quickly the solution to a question like, 'Which is longer, eight metres or nine yards?' depends as much upon our upbringing as upon our mathematical ability. For a poet writing verses, and a reader meeting them for the first time, the immediacy of such *gestalt* terms is imposing. Therefore fully comprehending the significance of verbal format is very much a reflexive activity. And as a consequence of poetry's unique ability to challenge us in this way, when combined with the other powerful historical, cultural and philosophical factors effecting literature at that time, it provoked the formal introspectiveness in turn-of-the-century versification. It is also this degree of reflexiveness that makes the study of a poet's early techniques particularly fruitful, because it is in their earliest efforts to discover a distinctive voice that poets find the *patterns* of voice that satisfy their privately-formed needs for formal significance. As with the other issues outlined above, it is both the similarities and the differences of Eliot and Pound's approach to this question of formal identity that link them as a subject for study in this way.

In order to demonstrate how Pound and Eliot represent a late development of this process, Chapter One seeks to establish something of the origins of the core debate over metrical format, demonstrating the contrasting views upon the precise locus of 'form,' as well as its continuance, and how these views affected poets writing in England to whom Pound and Eliot were later drawn. Chapter Two compares and contrasts the views of American authors on these subjects, suggesting how through an alternative relationship to "tradition," American poets and prosodists developed a more self-consciously radical approach. In Chapter Three, the focus is upon how Pound and Eliot came into contact with these attitudes and, based upon their own criticism, what their individual responses were. Chapter Four analyses the practical results these matters had for Eliot's early poetry, while Chapter Five offers a comparable analysis of Pound's early style(s).

## *Notes to Introduction*

1. Hilda Doolittle, [H.D.] *Her*, with a New Introduction by Helen McNeil and an Afterword by Perdita Schaffner (London: Virago Press, Limited, 1984), p. 66.
2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*, line 1; reprinted in *The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (London: Henry Frowde, 1893), p. 142.

# Chapter One

## ENGLISH METRE IN AN ERA OF MANY TRADITIONS

### I. Introduction.

The wealth of English literature which the Edwardian generation inherited provided a rich array of poetic modes, nearly all of which shared with the living tongue common patterns of lexical, syntactical and rhythmical forms. The existence of rhythmical 'forms,' although constituted essentially of aural data, was explained, and in some cases deduced, by reference to abstract visual structures. These structures themselves were formulated from comparisons between the language of poems drawn from many centuries of examples. Therefore any challenge to the validity of specific proposals constituted a challenge to the integrity of the entire tradition as it was perceived by upholders of individual systems. For this reason, proponents of such prosodic schemes usually claimed a demonstrable literary ancestry, as well as an operative function in current usage. What distinguishes the later nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries as a climactic period of metrical studies is the emergence of several rival theories claiming precedence as the "true" source and explanation of metrical form.

Many of the causes of this debate are attributable to an array of social and historical factors, while the roots of others extend to the searching critical evaluations prevalent in the later Victorian years. But all of these are linked to the growing awareness of an artificiality in linguistic practices, especially those claiming permanence. This view was stimulated by the research of the Philological Society (founded in its present form in 1842). Out of the Society's work came the impetus for the compilation of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (conceived in 1857). The crucial factor which the founders of the *Dictionary* maintained, was that the forms of words are traceable through various historical mutations. Coinciding



with their efforts was the founding of the *Early English Text Society* (1864), which for the first time, made Early and Middle English literature widely available for critical comparison. All of these developments reflect a growing interest in the historical dimension of language studies. By the turn-of-the-century, however, this interest had become such that independent editions of authors like Wyatt, Campion, Dunbar and Lydgate appeared.<sup>1</sup> A need to review and re-evaluate the continuity of poetic practices also meant that the works of authors recently deceased were quickly collected and re-published, often with introductions highlighting those authors' individual merits in respect to their own generations as well as to the past.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, concurrent with these events, there appeared an enormous volume of critical arguments which filled weekly and quarterly journals with scholarly (and unscholarly) debates.<sup>3</sup> The passionate tone of some of these debates evinces the degree to which the study of language was perceived as an essential part of the educated consciousness. Its broader implications, that it was also part of a *national* consciousness, coincided with the founding of departments devoted to the study of English as a *literary* language.<sup>4</sup>

The immediate effect of these measures on the rising generations of poets and prosodists was a complex one. The image of transience created by an historical interpretation of language, coupled with the sweeping ideological reforms of the period, pushed Edwardian writers into a wilderness of instability. The need for security drew many into the belief that a continuity of "traditional" assumptions about literature, and poetry in particular, was essential if poetry was to survive into the next century as a living art-form. Qualities which could be said to characterize English verse-- for example, order, symmetry, freedom-within-restraint-- were ones which, like other elements of an historical past, needed to be clarified if they were to continue giving life to a "tradition" threatened by a changing

world. The struggle to define and uphold one such "tradition" is epitomised by the figure of George Saintsbury (1845-1933).

### I.I.i.

As well as five unsuccessful attempts to gain a fellowship at Oxford, George Saintsbury's career included being a schoolmaster in Guernsey, as well as a distinguished journalist in London. From 1876, he was a frequent contributor to the *Fortnightly Review*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Daily News* and *Manchester Guardian*. His first book, *A Primer of French Literature*, was published in 1880. After this, besides being an assistant editor of the *Saturday Review* from 1883-94, he produced an enormous amount of critical material, both on French and English literature. Finally, in 1895 he was appointed to the Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh (in the competition for which post, he defeated rival candidate W.E. Henley).<sup>5</sup> It was from this enclave that over the next twenty years he produced his most voluminous works. So formidable was his position in the world of British letters that one important newcomer characterised the Edwardian literary map as,

[a] land full of indigenous institutions like Gosse, Saintsbury and the *Daily Mail* professor at Cambridge ... these three upholders of obsolete British taste.

--Ezra Pound, (letter dated 15 December 1913), reprinted in *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*, ed. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (1982)<sup>6</sup>

What is most striking about Pound's observation of Saintsbury is Pound's use of the word 'indigenous' and his emphasis on the "Britishness" of Saintsbury's position. Making allowances for Pound's bumptious disposition, (for example, does he mean that *all* British taste is obsolete?) his status as an "outsider" makes it worthwhile to consider how far in

actuality he is right in describing Saintsbury as an exemplum of prevailing literary standards for the two decades surrounding 1900-1910.

### I.I.ii.

When Saintsbury published his colossal study, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day* in 1906-10, it appeared as both a compendium of, and a monument to, Victorian scholarship. Despite its irregularities, it is a work unique in its magnitude, and one which demanded enormous erudition to compile. Still, Saintsbury's reliance upon a conservative system of metrics made his task easier. Rather than compound the complexities already present in metrical explications relying on Greek terminology, Saintsbury reduced his technical vocabulary to the fewest possible terms within that system. His list of specialist words, the *Glossariolum Technicum* of Volume I, includes eight Classical metrical conditions, plus a selection of twenty-one possible metrical feet.

But this attempt at simplifying the approach to metrical analysis has its drawbacks. Firstly, Saintsbury's conservative method-- backed up by precedents in English letters extending back to at least the eighteenth century-- means that he cannot abandon completely either the elevated tone of scholarly debate (*Glossariolum Technicum*), or free himself from the *gestalt* necessary to explain aural phenomena in terms of rule-governed visual constructs. It is his determined adherence to the method of defining rhythmical characteristics in the building-blocks of metrical feet, which enforces the most severe limitations on his analysis. To compensate for this, Saintsbury relies on the linked concepts of 'equivalence' and 'substitution.' His explanation of these terms, central to his view on English metrics, is contained in Volume I, Appendix I.

In essence, Saintsbury's argument is that as in Classical verse, English syllables are related on a variable scale of duration. However, he acknowledges that prosodic analysis of

English is made more difficult by the complex relationship between temporal duration, pitch, accent, and stress-timing. In view of this, Saintsbury believed it is the poet's, (and prosodist's) responsibility to judge the correctness of the poetic line by reference to the ear.

This notion of 'ear' is left necessarily vague, though Saintsbury refers to it in terms which link it to the poetic "gift" or "genius." However, the fundamental insight into his view of prosody, is his conviction that it is *culture*, and not class or geographical heritage, that defines the relative merits of the poetic ear. Speaking of James Thomson's poems in *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880), Saintsbury is perfectly clear in what, for him, constituted 'culture':

The various prosodic experiments ... are interesting, because the inequality of their effect is exactly what might be expected from a *selfepista*-- a man whose education, though regular up to a certain point, had not reached exact scholarship, and whose enthusiastic private study was not assisted by that atmosphere and tradition of cultivated breeding which smiles at mere "education."

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>7</sup>

It was the arch tone of passages like this that gave offence to recent immigrants like Pound. More importantly, this assurance on Saintsbury's part allowed him to assess the whole output of poets writing in English from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries as the product of one indigenous British tradition. Just as the poets' individual talents were assisted by 'culture,' so too the linguistic factors which constitute the basis of their work are best defined by one operating within the circle of that tradition.

From this perspective Saintsbury and his Edwardian supporters (for example, Gosse) were able to convince themselves of several vital assumptions. Firstly, that all poets from the earliest times to the present day who did not write good poetry by accident (for instance, Shakespeare) did so under the auspices of a tradition of 'culture' of which they themselves were a part. Secondly, that the methods and terminology which evolved within that tradition are irrefutable; that contrary views are the result either of misapprehension,

malevolence or some alien source. And thirdly, that poetry produced within the boundaries of that tradition can be subjected to an identical process of analysis, whereby its merit can be assessed by contrasting it to those works which the tradition has long held in esteem.

The crystalization of these assumptions is Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*.

With his perspective so well defined and his terminology in place, Saintsbury approached his vast subject with aplomb. It is to Saintsbury's credit that his dedication to his subject propels him through a vast amount of material which, for the most part, he is able to assimilate as varyingly successful constituents of a single history of poetics. There are, however, several areas in which his confidence is somewhat overstated. Tracing the genealogy of what he considers mistaken ideas, Saintsbury frequently chides his contemporary theorists who attempt to account for the apparent "success" or popularity of poems which are at variance with what he himself considers the tradition's ideals. Similarly, he becomes involved in an interminable methodological debate with exponents of rival prosodies (for example, musical scansionists) who attempted to account for rhythmical effects in terms of their broader inherence within the language, rather than conscious metrical structuring that is ascertainable within the framework of Classical terminology. The three salient areas of contention in this latter respect are, in chronological order, his accounts of the Chaucerians, the early Tudors and the late Victorians.

### **I.I.iii.**

The era surrounding the publication of Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody* saw a widespread renewal of interest in the poetic literature of the English Middle Ages and Renaissance. Therefore Saintsbury's discourse on early English literature is less recondite and more relevant to current trends than it might seem at first. Forming the centerpiece of

his discussion, as a model for the poetic ideal which he believed was not truly renewed until Spenser, is the work of Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400).

What interests Saintsbury most is his view of Chaucer, not as an innovator, but as a poet possessing an instinctive 'ear' for English poetry, which was unmatched for centuries.

Believing Chaucer's poem 'ABC' to be his first use of the decasyllabic line, Saintsbury remarks,

Now this instinctive and early striking out for the great staple line of English poetry is a prosodic fact, the importance of which cannot be overrated. It had for centuries been one of the staples (it was perhaps the oldest of all) in French, and it corresponded (with the necessary difference in the two languages) to the hendecasyllable which had established itself as the staple of Italian. But though there had been, as we have seen, sporadic examples of it, and even of its couplet, in English, it had never been staple, had never been used continuously and deliberately, had never even made frequent appearance. Yet Chaucer, as to the manor born, seems to have hardly the slightest difficulty with it.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>8</sup>

While this is true to an extent, it is significant that Saintsbury assumes that his scansion, or perception of form in Chaucer's lines, is equivalent to Chaucer's own. This assertion is based, as I have said, on Saintsbury's belief that the linguistic heritage he shares with Chaucer is equivalent to a cultural heritage, which is itself sufficient to account for any subsequent identification of rhythmical 'form' in the language Chaucer used. He confirms this slightly later in a footnote subscribed to his analysis of William Langland

(c.1330-c.1386):

One of the innumerable privileges of those who have received the older Classical education is that they have been taught (at least in some cases) to read scanningly. I have accustomed myself for years to read Middle English, like *all* English, poetry in the same way; and any one who does so will find that very soon the final *e*, and the libertine accents, and the rest

cease to jar, and the whole thing goes, in good examples, as fluently as Pope or Tennyson.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>9</sup>

Saintsbury's difficulty is in reconciling this conviction with the anomalies that exist in Chaucer's text when it is assessed under these conditions. The two principal problems that emerge are Chaucer's placement of mid-line pauses, and in the irregularities in the lengths of his lines. Saintsbury observes with some gratification that Chaucer

... does not appear to trouble himself with the French decasyllabic caesura at the fourth syllable, for though it sometimes appears, it is quite as often absent.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>10</sup>

The implication here is that Chaucer's use of a variable mid-line pause is like that of much later authors who, writing under the auspices of foot-scansion, achieve rhythmical variety in five-beat lines through contrasting phrasal cadences. What is apparent however, even in the lines that Saintsbury cites,<sup>11</sup> is that far from strengthening a five-beat scansion, Chaucer's mid-line pauses, placed irrespective of syllable *count*, often encourage a reading of the lines with four strong stresses. Saintsbury acknowledges the danger of slipping into this style of reading when he addresses the problem of Chaucer's "decapitated" nine-syllable lines:

... I would have resisted the evidence if I could. Instead of adding beauty, as the companion license does in the octosyllable, it appears to me to give (with the very rarest exceptions, if with any) an ugly jolt and jar in continuous verse, and complete destruction of all harmony in the stopped couplet. The fact is, as I have ventured to express it already elsewhere, that the octosyllable treads too closely on the heels of the decasyllable to allow the latter to contract its own stride.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>12</sup>

In an attempt to resolve the dilemma of two compatible readings, Saintsbury concludes in the Interchapter which follows his discussion of Chaucer, that

... the prosody of English was a prosody of strict correspondence in feet, yet not of strict correspondence in syllables; [and] that one main secret of success in it was the variation of

the pause;

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>13</sup>

As a justification for his adherence to this view, he offers a solution which accepts that he cannot know how Chaucer himself may have read his own verse,

But it does not really matter. Nothing can be more exquisitely musical to the English ear than the poetry of Aeschylus or Catullus, pronounced in the English fashion which we may be perfectly certain that neither Aeschylus nor Catullus ever used, however uncertain we may be what fashion they did use; and it is the same with Chaucer. Perfect poetry according to its own scheme is always transposable into other schemes; imperfect poetry will never make music in its own or in any other.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>14</sup>

This solution, however, poses a further problem which Saintsbury ignores. That problem is that adherence to one method of reading *only* easily becomes dogmatic in its application-- effectively subordinating the potential for poetic response to a supposed insight into poetic construction. The result is that a prejudice to one style of reading blunts the reader's capacity to appreciate rhythmical effects for which that reader's method cannot account.

How far this occurs in the case of Saintsbury's reading of Chaucer can be seen by a brief comparison with more recent readings. In his controversial study of Chaucer, *Verses of Cadence* (1954), James Southworth asserted that Chaucer's metrical base is not a segmental unit like the metrical foot, but an approximate rhythmical equivalence between lines of roughly the same syllable count.<sup>15</sup> Southworth claims that Chaucer did not 'alter the basic rhythmic structure' of his contemporaries' prose, but simply regularized the individual line-lengths, thereby creating a perimeter within which a variety of effects is possible.<sup>16</sup> Building upon this idea in his book, *Chaucer's Prosody* (1971), Ian Robinson calls Chaucer's decasyllables 'balanced pentameters.'<sup>17</sup> Robinson bases his reading on the evidence of manuscript punctuation by mid-line versicules which divide Chaucer's lines into



larger, more complex rhythmic units than Saintsbury's metrical feet. Furthermore, Robinson believes that the guiding characteristic in Chaucer's composition of these half-lines is the rhetorical completeness of their phrasal rhythms.<sup>18</sup> Likewise it is the interaction of this rhetorical plane with metrical design that Robinson believes was overlooked by the later Chaucerians, which accounts for the bumpy cadence of so many fifteenth-century decasyllabic lines when scanned as iambic pentameter.<sup>19</sup> As I will show later in this chapter, an idea very similar to the combined views of Southworth and Robinson was put forth by some of Saintsbury's chief rivals.

But if this offers a possible explanation for the compositional shortcomings of Chaucer's followers, it also provides a sharper perspective on the inadequacy of Saintsbury's approach to their work. With his need to fix Chaucer firmly at the head of English prosodic tradition, in which the historical dimension of vocal utterance is subsumed by a belief in the relative equivalence of a modern to a medieval 'ear' trained by a native 'cultured' familiarity with the language, Saintsbury can apply a one-dimensional analysis to all that poetry which follows in Chaucer's footsteps. This he proceeds to do with great vigour.

#### I.I.iv.

As Robinson has said of Saintsbury's view of John Lydgate (c.1370-1449), Saintsbury is '...amusing himself at the expense of his subject.'<sup>20</sup> Citing examples from *The Temple of Glas*, *Minor Poems* and *The Story of Thebes* in particular, Saintsbury vehemently asserts that Lydgate is the author of 'prosaic, hobbling, broken-backed doggerel.'<sup>21</sup> Some of his remarks may be prompted simply by a determined wish to cast aspersions on poets he plainly doesn't like. For example, his condemnation of Lydgate's use of octosyllables and decasyllables in the same poem,<sup>22</sup> is followed by a more general approval of William Dunbar (c.1456-c.1513), who frequently does the same thing.<sup>23</sup> Similarly he chastises Lydgate for

using anything from seven to fourteen syllables in what he himself considers a decasyllabic line,<sup>24</sup> then later criticizes Thomas Hoccleve (c.1369-1426) for using ten-syllable lines exclusively.<sup>25</sup> More important, however, is his belief in a fundamentally distinct rhythmical character which is the exclusive property of poetry:

Some batches of Lydgate will make very tolerable,  
though undistinguished prose if run straight on--  
a thing which good verse next to never does.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>26</sup>

The lack of harmony which Saintsbury finds in Lydgate and Hoccleve stems from his dichotomous position that any poetry which cannot be quantified in terms of metrical feet is not good poetry, and that the perception of rhythm in such lines as he classifies as doggerel, is coincidence, insofar as the rhythm of English poetry is itself *created* by the poet's handling (consciously or unconsciously) of metrical feet.

So absolute is Saintsbury in this belief that the structural principles which form a significant part of the composition of poetry are as 'transposable' as the rhythmical effects themselves, that he fails to notice where he is being led into self-contradictions. As I have said, his application of a metrical paradigm to Chaucer (which he grants that Chaucer himself could not possibly have used consciously) sits rather uneasily on much of Chaucer's work. A similar case exists in his brief analysis of Gavin Douglas (c.1475-1522). Having condemned Douglas for many of the same "blunders" as Lydgate, Saintsbury exposes what he believes is further proof of Douglas' inadequate grasp of the principles of iambic pentameter-- that being that a perceptible pattern of five feet must be firmly in place, not only to minimize the possibility of slipping into a four-beat rhythm, but before a line can be extended *beyond* five feet:

It is not here that any objections would be made to his inserting in the heroics of the text of his great translation such Alexandrines ... *if he intended them as such*. But the intention is not quite so clear: but it is certain that in other places he has indulged

in things not merely ugly but to a certain extent incompetent.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>27</sup>

The assumption implicit in this statement is that the metrical *gestalt* is decisively what Saintsbury prefers it to be; and that the author's own intentions in this respect *ought* to be accountable to just such a theoretical pattern, comparable to its apparent use in other texts.

The second of these conclusions is vital because it illustrates how far Saintsbury's reading of English poetry is conditioned by referral to a series of objectified characteristics. Behind this is the notion that if categorizations which are broadly applicable in one set of examples are applied to another set and found equally acceptable, then they have an objective validity. The error is in not remembering that the original categorizations are *derived* by reference to the first set. When examples exist which confirm the possible existence of a specific category (in this case the Alexandrines in Chaucer, Shakespeare and Spenser<sup>28</sup>), the conclusion is drawn that in approximate cases (like Douglas' *Eneados*) the author has not grasped completely the objective theoretical dimension which is presumed to underlay the actual formative process of writing. In Saintsbury's scheme of prosody this means a scansion that is both physical (aural and visual) as well as abstract.

#### I.I.v.

With his conclusions about Chaucer and Chaucer's immediate successors established, Saintsbury turns his attention to the Tudors. Here again the need to assert positive 'form' in poetry as something largely determined through means not wholly referable to the given text, leaves him unable to isolate satisfactorily his preferred repertoire of verse-structures. In this case that inability is partly physical. As I have said, Saintsbury places Chaucer at the head of a line of poets writing iambic pentameter. For this to be so, Saintsbury takes Chaucer's lines to be divisible according to his own method of metrical feet with the

provision of 'equivalence' and 'substitution'-- terms which themselves imply physical properties. Therefore he can identify Chaucer's rhythmical practice within the structural limits that appear *visually* on the page. In this way the aural properties of the verse are fitted into a pattern apprehensible by the eye, and capable of regulation based upon an abstract. This, Saintsbury believes, accounts for the poems' metrical unity, as well as giving scope to their rhythmical verisimilitude. However, if the visual element of a poem's structure is altered (as Robinson points out about the mid-line punctuation in the Chaucer MSS), then Saintsbury's metrical analysis is disrupted. Such is the case in his view of John Skelton (c.1460-1529).<sup>29</sup>

Noting that Skelton could at times write "acceptable" pentameters,<sup>30</sup> Saintsbury concludes, somewhat hazily, that Skelton preferred "doggerel" to "regular" metres because, "doggerel is *for him* essentially an "escapement."<sup>31</sup> Saintsbury blames the necessity of this in part on the linguistic flux concurrent with Skelton. Moreover, his solution to the origin of the distinctive Skeltonic line is that it was derived from internally rhymed longer lines, possibly influenced by carol-writing. Other points of his analysis, however, show the extent to which his capacity to apprehend the aural properties of the verse was conditioned by his views on its visual presentation. As Saintsbury believed the larger metrical unit of Chaucer's best verse to be the pentameter, he might therefore conclude that its constituent half-lines have a structural identity which is inseparable from the concept of the pentameter line as a whole. But as it is most often phrasal rhythms that define these half-lines, as well as the rhetorical relationship which binds them into integrated segments, it is surprising that Saintsbury can list these same characteristics as distinguishing the Skeltonic, and yet fail to draw an analogy between the two styles.<sup>32</sup> This must be because he saw the integrity of the pentameter as a whole as defined more by its *appearance* than by its *sound*.

It is necessary at this point to be reminded of the relationship that existed for Saintsbury between the physical (aural, visual) and abstract (metrical) dimensions of poetry. If, as he believed, one of the criteria for verse is verifiable by reference to its appearance as a printed text, then a similar condition should exist to limit the range of its aural permutations. For Saintsbury, this condition is present in the mind of the reader, who is able to deduce the rhythm of individual lines as rhythm *qua* rhythm. Discussing the views of American musical scansionist Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), who suggested an analogy between the variety of possible readings of individual lines and the way in which ostensibly identical musical notes sound different when played by different people or on different instruments, Saintsbury concludes that while recitations of verse may vary,

... that is quite a separate thing. ... In fact one does not read poetry, silently, with one's own voice or any other, but with an abstract or generalised "mind's voice," almost or quite destitute of tonality; yet one perceives the rhythm perfectly.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>33</sup>

Despite the persuasiveness of his statement that 'tonality' is muted in silent reading, his belief that the rhythm of the lines is experienced somehow separately from other expressive values which a "mind's voice" might assign to them, postulates a catalogue of objective rhythmical 'forms' operating within the reader at a level other than that representative of vocal utterance. In other words, there exists a range of metrical "poems of intention" whose rhythms are "heard" alongside that of the printed words. But to say that the reader 'perceives the rhythm perfectly' in a silent reading-- a rhythm in which actual sound-values are incomplete-- is also to say that the rhythm is identical to, or completely independent of, the syntactical combination of the words. But if the rhythm *is* perceived independently of the syntax, then altering one's perception of what a line of poetry says semantically would have no effect on how the rhythm is perceived. Likewise to identify the rhythm as wholly

governed by the words' syntactical placement is to assume that an ideal formatting of the lexis would produce an equally "perfect" rhythm.

Unfortunately, Saintsbury's arguments do not take him explicitly this far. Instead, his almost total ~~ignorance~~ of the conflict compounds the difficulty of maintaining his position in his analyses of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Thomas Campion (1567-1620).

### I.I.vi

Saintsbury's visual characterization of Wyatt is instructive:

We seem to be looking afar at a man running or walking over a course beset with all sorts of visible stumbling blocks and invisible snares, into which and over which he is perpetually stumbling and tumbling, yet picking himself up and pressing towards the goal.

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>34</sup>

Saintsbury has no doubts about what that goal is:

When one comes to examine the matter, one finds that his adherence to his models already almost saves him from one of the great sins of the English fifteenth century-- the irregular and go as you please line; but that he has not escaped-- that he has rather exaggerated-- two other faults in order to lessen this. One of these is capricious, if not altogether antinomian, accentuation; the other, uncertainty of rhyme, comes, as we saw, from rhyming suffixed words sometimes on the suffix, and sometimes on the last syllable of the main word.

-Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*<sup>35</sup>

Having previously asserted what Wyatt's models are, and what metrical forms they observe, Saintsbury can conclude that the defect in Wyatt's own versification is his failure to maintain a regular coincidence of metrical and syntactical accent. His earlier contention that the proper placement of metrical accent is referable only to the tradition of the cultured 'ear' leaves Wyatt to fall between two stools: that, following Chaucer, he is writing lines which

are decasyllables and *appear* to demand a voicing like that afforded Chaucer; but which, when read in a manner with which both Pope and Tennyson 'go,' do not produce a rhythm resembling earlier or later 'iambic pentameter.' Saintsbury's solution is to wrench the lexical and syntactical accents, claiming that this is what Wyatt must have intended-- proof, he believed, of Wyatt's failure to attain the 'form' through the usual means. But Saintsbury is misled further by his second observation-- that Wyatt's lines appear to falter in their rhymes.

Though Wyatt's lines resemble Chaucer's physically, both in the number of syllables and the placement of rhyming or near-rhyming words at the ends of lines, their profound difference is illustrated by the contrasting rhythms they produce when voiced. Whether read aloud, or with the "mind's voice," the cadence of Chaucer's lines usually lead to an abrupt accent which falls solidly on the final word. Thereby an audible linking of sounds is created which does not interrupt the syntax. With this as his expectation-- that if words sound the same when pronounced, and appear at the ends of lines, their function is to produce an audible rhyme of the same magnitude as Chaucer's rhymes-- Saintsbury was unable to find the necessary coincidence he demanded from Wyatt's lines. Therefore, he presumed, in order to scan properly, Wyatt's decasyllables demand that the lexical accent be shifted in order to produce the sound required by the presumed metre.

This is the first of the problems alluded to above-- that a pattern of words on a page may produce a rhythm that exists regardless of the words' communicative role, either arbitrarily or through the unintentional miscalculation of effect. Believing that he saw end-rhymed iambic pentameter, Saintsbury was forced to re-lay the accents of Wyatt's lines in a pattern that conformed to both his own visual and aural expectations-- a discrepancy for which he blames Wyatt. This pattern was, of course, the decasyllabic paradigm as "descended" from Chaucer. That a rhythm is produced by voicing the lines in accordance with syntactical emphasis only-- or that the rhythm may vary with different interpretations of

the words' semantic function-- is precluded by Saintsbury's assumptions regarding the role of metre in the construction of the lines. Saintsbury's argument then is that whereas Lydgate and Douglas were (in different ways) guilty of producing lines in which the rhythm is at odds with the principle of conscious structuring (visually ascertainable metrical feet), Wyatt was defeated by his too-literal rendering of the language into visual formats (decasyllables) which impair the audible quality of the words when voiced. Or, it was as if the Chaucerians knew what was expected of them audibly, but failed to produce it because they couldn't grasp the visualized structural principles which made it possible for Chaucer, while Wyatt understood the visual requirements, but had to force some sounds in order to produce others. A similar stance can be seen in Saintsbury's estimate of Thomas Campion.

#### I.I.vii.

When Saintsbury considered Campion's *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* (1602), his argument was hampered by an unusual difficulty. This was how to keep a poet so obviously "successful" as a lyricist within the pale of authors in the English "tradition," who nevertheless utilized a concept of metre at variance with his own, and one whose terminology he plainly didn't understand. Discussing Campion's belief that the rhythmical placement of syllables is "measured chiefly by accent,"<sup>136</sup> Saintsbury complains that Campion, 'strangely pronounces the second syllable of "Trumpington" as *naturally* long.<sup>137</sup> He concludes that Campion's 'special rules are as arbitrary, or nearly so, as Stanyhurst's.'<sup>138</sup>

Here Saintsbury has blurred some very important details. Campion does not say that he '*pronounces*' the second syllable as long; quite to the contrary, he says, 'we accent the second [syllable as] ... short, yet it is naturally long.'<sup>139</sup> For unlike Saintsbury, to Campion the 'natural' duration of the syllable is determined not by accent but by *position*. In this respect he is, as Saintsbury correctly asserts, of one mind with Richard Stanyhurst.<sup>40</sup>



However, as Derek Attridge has demonstrated, this determination of syllabic duration is based on an aesthetic grounded in the Elizabethan reading of Latin quantitative verse.<sup>41</sup> To the Elizabethans, as to all subsequent generations who read Latin verse, the "rhythm" produced by Classical poetry is merely an imagined, theoretical one. Without the benefit of Roman pronunciation, the lines are scanned with regard to rules laid down near the demise of the empire. The patterns they define, while occasionally approximating accentual rhythms, are manifestly *not* an aural cadence based on the coincidence of long vowels and lexical accents.<sup>42</sup> It is this contrast that Campion is highlighting when he observes that the *sound* of 'Trumpington' is not what might be expected from its *appearance* in a linguistic system governed by rules of position (which he believed English might be). The point for Campion is, of course, that the writer of English verses cannot afford to overlook the pronunciation of his lines (as Stanyhurst seems to have done) in an effort to *appear* correct; nor, if he is a musician, can he afford to overlook vowel quantity (as a non-lyric poet might do in favour of accents exclusively) if he intended the words to be sung. For Campion, the perfection of poetry (a perfection that he, himself, does not always manage) means a coincidence of long syllables and metrically prominent accents in a rhythm that is lexically and syntactically orthodox; or, in other words, verses that scan visually (by position-derived quantity), that make communicative sense, and that do not wrench lexical accents.

But this will not do for Saintsbury. If the integrity of the "tradition" of English verse for which Saintsbury stands was to be maintained, then it was imperative to show that Campion's verse did not descend from his literary forebears, but was an illegitimate offspring of his own temperament and the excesses of his age. Now it is one thing to transpose a poet's work into a system of versification which that poet himself cannot have known, but it is something else to discriminate against work which is composed with manifestly different standards. For Saintsbury, Campion's "successes" are mere quirks,

"monstrous beauties" ... Constructed (*v.inf.*) on a system which, though mistaken, does not, ... fly deliberately in the face of the harmony of the English language ... [although they are] unnaturally warped and cramped.<sup>43</sup> The further excuse offered for Campion is that he wrote his lyrics to be performed to music, and that while this allows him to be correct in respect to divisions into individual metrical feet (that is to say, because of the limited number of syllables available to melodically identical lines), it destroyed Campion's concept of the overall rhythm of the full line.<sup>44</sup>

This last case is an example of the kind of trap into which Saintsbury's analysis was likely to fall. According to Saintsbury, Campion's fault was that he turned to a prosodic system in which metrical segmentation is not quantifiable in rhythmically predictable units. Campion's phrases, governed by syntax and musical notation, are chaotic by Saintsbury's standards because they fail to observe a series of rule-governed practices which, for Saintsbury, give the poetic line its character. (As I will show later in this chapter and again in Chapter Five, it was precisely such a need to forestall metrical ambiguity that may have prompted poets from Bridges to Pound to name their metres alongside their titles.) But in retrospect it was this same degree of chaos which explains the various capacities for 'ear' from the twelfth century onwards. However, the most damaging limitations of Saintsbury's prosodic analyses appear when they are set alongside his two most formidable rivals, the so-called 'fancy prosodies' of musical scansion and the "'stave-men.'" It was the adaptability of these two latter modes of thought to poems unsuited to the terms of the visually-defined metrical foot, that fuelled the fierce controversies of the late nineteenth- early-twentieth centuries, as well as providing the impetus for writing verse in "new" "metrical" forms.

## I.I.viii.

Though he does not append a bibliography to *A History of English Prosody*, Saintsbury does conclude Volume III with a lengthy discussion of his contemporary prosodists.<sup>45</sup> Of those he names, virtually all hold theories in opposition to his own. It is characteristic of Saintsbury's approach to scholarship that he should both mention his rivals and, for the most part, dismiss their ideas. By doing so he gives a fair summary of the scope of research then in progress, as well as an illustration of the degree to which prosodic investigations can be mutually exclusive.

There are, nonetheless, two factors that remain consistent: the consensus that potentially *some* rhythmic 'form' was inherent in the language, which could, in special circumstances be consciously directed, and that when so directed the resulting hybrid rhythms possessed an emotive force unlike that of prose.<sup>46</sup> However, if there was some truth in each of the competing theories and, as their various proponents maintained, they were largely incompatible, then,

... the question remained: if uniformity was not to be found in the number of syllables, nor in the number of stresses, nor in the prescribed sequence of classical feet, nor in musical timing, nor in quantitative timing, where was it to be found?

--Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (1988)<sup>47</sup>

An answer was begun by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) in a frequently revised essay that was eventually entitled, 'Essay on English Metrical Law.'<sup>48</sup> Published originally in 1857, this essay became the progenitor of one of the most intriguing and contentious metrical theories of the nineteenth century. To those in sympathy with Patmore, he was seen as, 'inaugurating ... the "new prosody."<sup>49</sup> Later writers,<sup>50</sup> with the benefit of hindsight, discuss the extent to which even Saintsbury was indebted to Patmore's ideas, although Saintsbury himself disowned the connection.<sup>51</sup> But whatever their shared beliefs in the

abstract dimension of metrical form, their most important difference of opinion was regarding the extent to which metrical form could be reduced to quantifiable units. For Saintsbury, as I have said, these units were metrical feet, which through the principles of 'equivalence' and 'substitution,' could be combined to produce a variety of forms, which were then in turn deemed metrically correct. However, Patmore avoided the proscriptiveness of Saintsbury's classifications, as well as the twin pitfalls accompanying it, by minimizing the amount of visualization usually demanded by scansion. For Patmore, as for Saintsbury, the irreducible factor of English utterance was the syllable; but unlike Saintsbury, Patmore placed the patterns which bring about the rhythmic combinations of these syllables at a level closer to the very basis of language itself, and hence less objectifiable as governing principles. Whereas for Saintsbury the metricality of a poem could be judged by reference to a paradigm, a grid which could be placed over the lines, for Patmore the structure of individual lines was hierarchic, with all lines subordinate to the practical demands of voicing. For Patmore these demands were that, 'the sequence of vocal utterance ... shall be divided into equal or proportionate spaces,' the principle of which is isochrony-- a balancing of words into groups which the mind will accept as roughly equivalent in duration.<sup>52</sup>

The key to the difference of perception between Saintsbury and Patmore, is Patmore's ability to include the hierarchy of syllables in pronunciation within the larger hierarchy of a line dominated by syntactical rules and semantic ambiguities, as well as a consideration of the physical characteristics of speech. For Saintsbury, a poem diagnosed as written in tetrameter has a structure of four equivalent metrical feet per line:

$$A=B=C=D$$

This also implies of course that  $A=C$ ,  $A=D$ ,  $B=D$  and so on. But Saintsbury would also be forced to point out that some substitutions of feet, while equivalent, produce an effect more

"harmonious" to the overall sound of the line than others. But why? In principle, if metrical feet are truly 'equivalent' in some combinations, then they ought to be so in *all* combinations. Patmore realized this and offered a simpler solution: If AB is 'equivalent' to CD, then any combination of syllables that produces this equivalence is metrically acceptable to the ear. Provided that D is allowed occasionally to be a silent beat, (as in ballad metre), the result in four-beat verse is not markedly different from Saintsbury's point-of-view-- lines "inharmonious" to Saintsbury, are inadequately equivalenced to Patmore. Patmore's revolutionary proposition, however, is to suggest that the same pattern underlies a great deal of verse commonly defined as pentameter.

Again the idea is a simple one. If the mind can balance AB as equivalent to CD (even though they may not be *exactly* the same in number of accents or syllables), then it may also accept that AB(E) can be equal to CD, or that AB can be equal to CD(E). For Saintsbury, this was anathema. Not only did it mean that his proposed "tradition" of metrics as descended from Chaucer was inaccurate, and that a time-honoured method of scansion was inadequate, but that the very substance of metrical composition was not what it was thought to be. If a system chaotic enough to allow some elements of voicing to dominate others with such apparent freedom (and hence, unpredictability) prevailed, how could the perimeters of *metrical* verse be maintained? How could the "tradition" of English verse survive the experiments of people who only half-grasped a method so completely ungrounded in definable laws?

Despite Saintsbury's fears, the phenomenon of 'dipodic rhythm' which Patmore described was not completely random, either in its occurrence or in its subsequent application.<sup>53</sup> Patmore's own view was that the approximate equality of 'isochronous intervals' was a habit to which English naturally tended, 'as natural to spoken language as an even pace is natural to walking.'<sup>54</sup> Its appearance in literary compositions, (as opposed to

"popular" ballads) written in four-beat lines even helped to settle some of the interminable debates over whether some poems are iambic or trochaic, by making the terms themselves referable to the larger hierarchies demanded by syntactical rhythms and the inherent ambiguities in the semantic function of the words.<sup>55</sup> More important however, was the perspective it granted for a revisionist look at the poetry of past eras. Far from disrupting the notion of 'tradition' which Saintsbury demanded, it served to strengthen and broaden that tradition's appeal to later poets by re-admitting authors like Wyatt and Campion who were otherwise outcasts. Furthermore, these evaluations prompted both an appreciation of verbal dexterity that had otherwise gone unnoticed, or had been credited to accident, as well as to highlight the skills of certain authors (for example, Browning) whose work was already well-regarded in other terms.

### I.I.ix.

Still, representing the 'frontier of the Victorian understanding of metrical form,<sup>56</sup> the freedom permitted by dipodic rhythm was crucial in the development of verse-forms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Robert Browning (1812-1889), Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) and John Masefield (1878-1967) have all been shown to have experimented with foregrounded dipodic rhythms within the context of traditionally transcribable metrical formats.<sup>57</sup> The possible division of lines into hemistichs fuelled the arguments of some critics (Saintsbury's "'stave-men"<sup>58</sup>) who maintained that the parallel structuring of strong stresses was the native "tradition" of English versification, later superseded by the "'rhythm of the foreigners."<sup>59</sup> Influenced by this similarity, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) entered into a discussion of these possibilities in his correspondence with Patmore and Robert Bridges (1844-1930).<sup>60</sup> A further development of the idea, (proposed independently as early as the eighteenth

century<sup>61</sup>) was that the analogy between musical and poetic rhythm was more literal than metaphorical; that in fact, poetry was scannable in terms of musical notation with values based on permutations of four-beat time signatures.<sup>62</sup> But however productive these viewpoints were, in attempting to reduce dipodic rhythm to rules of scansion, all overlooked the fact that the rhythm of poetry is carried forward by the flexibility of the human voice. The emphatic emphasis of strong-stress metre effectively minimizes the resemblance of verse to speech, which makes it unsuitable as a defining characteristic in works like Shakespeare's. Similarly, the rigidity of musical scansion limits the range of its readings to those quantifiable by musical notation, which fails to accommodate the variables of semantics.<sup>63</sup>

Still, other poets followed in the wake of these discoveries. Some, notably William Morris (1834-1896), were inspired by the emphasis on syllabic isochrony in the 'new prosody,' to experiment with isosyllabic metres.<sup>64</sup> Others, including C.B. Cayley, Robinson Ellis, W.J. Stone and particularly Robert Bridges, merged Elizabethan and modern theories of vowel duration to produce poems under various guises of quantitative metrics.<sup>65</sup> Even more daring, Morris, D.G. Rossetti (1828-1882), Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) and Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) wrote a considerable number of poems based solely on "irregular" dipodic rhythms.<sup>66</sup> Saintsbury's response to one series of examples, the choruses from Arnold's *Merope* (1858), is to conclude that they are merely 'prose.'<sup>67</sup> But by far the largest body of work from the period overtly influenced by the 'new prosody' is the poetry of W.E. Henley (1849-1903). Dozens of examples from collections published throughout his career, are written in rhymed and unrhymed distichs, the dipodic rhythms of which are emphasized by sequences of two-, three-, and four-beat lines where endstopped syntax fixes the periodic rhythm into 'isochronous intervals.'<sup>68</sup> As with Arnold, the *avant-garde* nature

of Henley's versification (as well as that of his later contemporaries) met with stern reproof from Saintsbury:

[of Henley:] The "Speed" piece itself is essentially ... the motive of Kingsley's "Freya" crossed with Arnoldian suggestions, and carried out Whitmanically ... I print it as it stands in the book, and as prose, side by side; and I ask anyone, on his honour and conscience, whether it does not go more naturally as prose.<sup>69</sup>

[of John Davidson (1857-1909), he ] ... emitted prosodic heresies ...<sup>70</sup>

[of Francis Thompson (1859-1907)] I do not ... think that he requires very much notice prosodically, for all his most remarkable pieces are couched in that "modern Pindaric," which, though Tennyson has given it its passport in *Maud*, and most younger writers have taken it up more or less, presents nothing novel for us.<sup>71</sup>

[of Kipling] ... the dominant [harmony] of [his] ... soul is no doubt the anapaest ...<sup>72</sup>

[of W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)] ... he is perhaps the capital example of an undoubted poet who has tried to wriggle himself, by fantastic will-worship of prosodic will-o'-the-wisps, into the unpoetical--and has failed.<sup>73</sup>

--Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody*

All of these poets offer explicit proof of the influence of the 'new prosody' on the practice of verse-writing in the era surrounding the turn of the century. As Saintsbury observed, often there was a clear distinction between those poems written in "orthodox" foot-scansion metres, and those in newer, experimental manners. What is certain is that a scansion which posited the metrical form of a poem as defined solely by an abstract paradigm rhythm of certain prominent lines, was no longer imperative. In its place came the recognition that, in Saintsbury's phrase, 'the music of poetry' is produced by the spontaneous assimilation of psychological factors with physiological ones in the poem's audience. When that audience's perception is dominated by the former (like the Elizabethans), it will demand a metric that is



theoretically satisfying; when dominated by the latter, (like the Chaucerians) one which is physically stimulating. When, as at the turn of the century, a transformation is in progress, it might demand both.

### I.II.i.

... so the use of prosody is to supply a technical language by which to describe each specimen of verse brought before us; to distinguish the different kinds of verse, and establish a type of each, with reference to which existing varieties may be compared, and finally to state the rules of composition which have been observed by those whom the world recognises as poets. Then from this we may draw practical rules of art for the use of the poet or the reader.

--J.B. Mayor, 'Dr. Guest and Dr. Abbot on English Metre,' *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1873-4.<sup>74</sup>

This succinct declaration came roughly midway through the late-nineteenth century development of what, as I have said, contemporary English metrist T.S. Omond dubbed the 'new prosody.' Of the several aims that the passage sets forth, virtually none was agreed upon by any group of rival theorists who could claim even a slim majority of opinion. Thus the 'technical language' sought became a plethora of technical languages, most being mutually exclusive. As each of these technical languages sought to 'describe each specimen of verse,' their own relative deficiencies were exposed. The strands of influence which had become twisted together to form 'different kinds of verse' made it impossible to 'establish a type of each.' Even when such paradigms were seized upon, the difficulty in reconciling verse forms of the "same" type, but from different historical eras, resulted in many poets either being rebuked for an incomplete grasp of supposed 'traditional' principles, or shunned as altogether aberrant from the mainstream of poetic styles. Furthermore, any hope of drawing-up a programmatic set of 'rules of composition' was undermined by disagreements

between widely applauded poet-prosodists like Bridges and Patmore, as well as the cautionary statements and experiments of larger figures like Tennyson and Browning.

With the benefit of over a century of hindsight, modern prosodists (for example, Derek Attridge) can account for the contention among their predecessors as unavoidable, considering the fundamentally flawed stance that so many of them adopted. The "problem of prosody" the Philological Society members and their contemporaries addressed, focused on defining what they believed was the centrifugal principle of inherited traditions of metre. Seen in this way, metre formed a common source for all English poetry-- contact with which could not be broken-- as well as a boundary that could not be transgressed. Verses linked by appearance of metrical conformity (like pentameter couplets from Chaucer to Swinburne), could then be related qualitatively by means of a scale that reflected a broadly linear progression from medieval to modern styles. But the first difficulty with such a qualitative appraisal is that different systems are likely to favour different poets insofar as those poets reflect the values inherent in their authors' own systems. The second difficulty is that any proposed linear development assumes that a single understanding of metre was responsible for generating the multitude of rhythms that exist even with the limited scope of a single form (like iambic pentameter). Therefore, the prime task of the nineteenth-century English prosodist was to develop a system of scansion which by describing the rhythm of one line of Tennyson's 'Tithonus' (written in 1833; published in 1860), could also show how an underlying principle of sound-organization links that line to every other line in the poem, as well as every other line of the same proposed metre that Tennyson ever wrote, along with those of Pope, Dryden, Donne, Shakespeare, Surrey and Chaucer.

Despite the enormousness of such a project, a large number of theorists entered the arena, hosted by publications like the *Athenaeum*, *Fortnightly Review* and *Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>75</sup> Yet while the critical acumen (and resolve) of the group varied widely with the

various participants' taste and experience, all shared a bond of conviction that such a unity of tradition existed in English verse. Such conviction may have been rooted in part in the anxiety that, as Eric Griffiths has put it, 'the community of language users might fall apart (or perhaps had fallen apart) into mutually uncomprehending groups ...'<sup>76</sup> Compounding these fears was the increasing momentum with which poetry seemed to be moving away from a general book-buying audience, and towards more specialist groups whose temperament and opinions were reflected in the verse itself. Therefore the effort of prosodists to maintain the homogeneity of a single tradition was enhanced by the threat of possible fragmentation by individual poets who failed to grasp the significance of their own role in shaping the future of verse-form. Consequently the formation and codification of a 'technical language' sufficient to describe the parameters of this phenomenon were pursued with fervour and determination by individuals who felt they were faithfully executing their duty as Englishmen to do so. The progress towards this feeling can be measured by a comparison of views taken from various authors throughout the period.

Among the earliest works treating the subject of English prosody with a view to broad-ranging historical comparisons, was Edwin Guest's, *A History of English Rhythms* (1837). Coming well before the onslaught of studies in the latter half of the century, Guest's volume shows a dispassionate tone of inquiry very unlike the haughty querulousness of his successors. Nevertheless, the enormous breadth of Guest's selection, his in-depth, stage-by-stage comparative analysis and his clinical approach to descriptive terminology, made his work a model for those who followed in his footsteps. Although his book was not reprinted in his own lifetime, W.W. Skeat edited a new edition in 1882, as a further contribution to the (then) ongoing debate over metrical form.

## I.II.ii.

Guest began his study by setting out what he considered to be the principal condition of metrical composition-- *rhythm*:

## RHYTHM

in its widest sense may be defined as the law of succession. It is the regulating principle of every *whole*, that is made up of proportional parts, and is as necessary to the regulation of motion, or the arrangement of matter, as to the orderly succession of sounds. By applying it to the first of these purposes we have obtained the dance; and sculpture and architecture are the results of its applications to the second. The rhythmical arrangement of sounds not articulated produces music, while from the like arrangement of articulate sounds we get the cadences of prose and the measures of verse.

--Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*<sup>77</sup>

Most of the studies of prosody which followed in the wake of Guest's statement begin from a similar standpoint. But what is important to notice is that Guest offers the essential 'form' of poetry as one comparable to other arts. His view of a poem begins with the assumption that that <sup>poem</sup> represents an artistic '*whole*.' The aesthetic satisfaction that whole produces is based upon its observer's perception of the artefact's intrinsic balance of 'proportional parts.' This balance is achieved in poetry by an 'orderly succession of sounds,' distinguishable from the 'cadences of prose' because their proportions represent 'measures of verse.' The significant departure that Guest made from his predecessors is his assumption that the proportions of those parts are relative primarily to the individual whole created by the poem itself, rather than to an abstract pattern formed from a composite of many poems. The basis of his 'measure' for distinguishing prose from verse, was his belief that in English utterance a limited number of rhythmical variations is possible between the pauses demanded by voicing. Guest's term for these variations was 'sections.' When these sections were linked in pairs, the resulting balance of "successive sounds" achieved the "measurability" of demanded of verse. Yet while these rhythmical variations were limited-- thirty six in Skeat's

tabulation<sup>78</sup>--they could be recombined to form a total of one thousand two hundred and ninety six possible lines. Therefore Guest's basic criteria for poetry was that a poem consists of a group of articulate sounds, the succession of which is measurable by the fact that the patterns of accented and unaccented syllables into which those sounds naturally fall, occur between pauses that have been themselves consciously arranged to form a pattern of balanced pairs.

It should be noted that the foundation of Guest's system is his belief, not that some patterns of sound are *preferable* to others (like Saintsbury), but rather that only a limited number of patterns was *possible*. Like those prosodists who followed him, most notably Saintsbury, Guest began his comparative analyses with a look at Anglo-Saxon versification. But unlike Saintsbury, for instance, Guest assumed that the principles which governed Anglo-Saxon verse were inherent in the language, and continued to take precedence over all subsequent innovations. It followed that, to Guest, the developments of later centuries represented only limited modifications of forms established by the earliest authors of the language. Guest substantiated this proposition by setting forth his examples with a view to their original manuscript configuration. In this he foreshadows the work of James Southworth and Ian Robinson as discussed earlier in this chapter. Thus, for example, Guest prints an extract from Chaucer's 'Prologue,' as it appeared in two manuscripts. His chief interest is in the versicules which, to Guest, signal the pauses demanded by voicing. The first extract looks like this:

Whan that April \* with his schoures swote \*  
 The droughte of Marche \* hath perced to the rote \*  
 And bathed euery veyne \* in suche licoure \*  
 Of which vertue \* engendrid is the figure \*  
 And zephirus eke \* with his swete brethe \*  
 Enspired hath \* in euery holt and heth \*  
 The tendre croppes \* and the yong sonne \*  
 Into the Ram \* his half cours ronne \*  
 And small fowles \* maken melodye \*  
 That slepen all the nyght \* with open eye \*  
 So pricketh hem nature \* in her corages \*

Then longen folk \* to gon on pilgrimages \*

--Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*<sup>79</sup>

Guest's analysis brings him,

... to *one* conclusion: ... namely that each verse was looked upon as made up of two sections, precisely in the same way as the alliterative couplet of the Anglo-Saxons.

--Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*<sup>80</sup>

This opinion spawned a multitude of critical arguments. To begin with, the actual rhythms of Anglo-Saxon verse show a preference for lines (combinations of 'sections') unlike those of later, French-influenced authors. Secondly, there are many lines in later poets (for example, Browning) that contain more than one medial pause. And thirdly, any equation which can account 'sections' of three syllables and two accents as 'proportionally balanced' to 'sections' of eleven syllables and three accents, looks patently ludicrous. In defence of Guest, it may be said that a comparison of preferences for various combinations of 'sections,' say between Chaucer and Tennyson, in no way detracts from his original point that *all* such combinations are formed from the same set of options. More important, however, is the relationship between the second and third points. Guest's whole concept of metre-- that it involves a coupling of rhythmical 'sections' limited by the resources of the language, and the taste and historically-influenced aesthetic of the poet-- was completely alien to that of most other writers on the subject. Its principal difference lay in its abjuring of both the terms and principles of Classical prosody, preferring a system referable only to those examples within the single language group defined as 'English' (but including within that group Anglo-Saxon and Middle English). By assuming that poets follow the lead of their predecessors, Guest was saying no more than most later prosodists who argued in favour of the indigenous character of traditional forms. But by claiming that a poet's options consisted mainly of marshalling the same rhythmical 'sections' as prose authors, Guest was exposed to attack from prosodists like Saintsbury who, willing to grant that prose can be scanned, refused to countenance Guest's view that no single paradigm could be

held accountable for each metrical form. Such a paradigm was advanced by foot-scansionists to account for those lines which, as I said above, have more than one medial pause. Again, such a viewpoint rests on the assumption that the metre of poets writing after such a conflation of prosodies was first suggested (the mid 1500's) was/is the same as that of those poets writing before it. The firmness of Guest's position depended upon his assignment of metrical form (combination of 'sections') as an occurrence subsequent to the development of the language which restricts the possibilities of those forms. Poets like Browning, for example, writing after such forms had been identified as constituted of sequential arrangements of feet, were free to arrange those 'feet' in ways that earlier poets (to whom the concept itself was unrelated) could not. Guest's proposal, therefore, despite the attempts of later prosodists, was the only one capable of embracing the entire history of English poetry as derived from a single process of complementary rhythmical forms, without a central concern for qualitative comparison.

Finally, there is the third proposition advanced against Guest-- that being that his belief that a 'section'<sup>es</sup> only three syllables could be complemented by one of eleven in such a way as to achieve rhythmical balance-- was impossible. For many, the problem with Guest's view was that it proposed no rule at all, except that such a pairing of 'sections' must exist. If such a system accurately represented the conditions of English verse, then it should be possible for a rhymed couplet to exist with one line of six syllables, and one of twenty two. Unfortunately for Guest's detractors, the existence of such a couplet as a possibility, does not increase the likelihood of its actual occurrence. Instead, as Guest showed, some combinations remain more popular than others, although there is a certain amount of fluctuation between eras. Nevertheless, Guest's very point was that because such preferences *do* fluctuate, they cannot be used as a basis for qualifying, let alone forming a paradigm for verses from different periods. In any case, it was the uniqueness of Guest's

concept of metre, his firm limiting of the number of possibilities available to poets, as well as his dismissal of Classical terminology, which together represented one of the most formidable challenges to prosodists of the succeeding generation.

### I.II.iii.

There are several examples of prosodists who attempted to reconcile the flexible principles of metricality Guest proposed with the more stringent demands of foot-scansion. One of the more interesting of these examples is Gilbert Conway's *A Treatise on Versification* (1878). Conway's system, like that of his predecessors, (for example, R.F. Brewer's *A Manual of English Prosody* (1869), attempts to relate individual lines to an abstract paradigm. Conway's originality, however, shows in his belief that this paradigm does not include a proscriptiveness regarding the number of accents that may occur in metrically identical lines. That he was aware of the distance this put him from the prevailing view of foot-scansion, shows in his footnoted remarks to his analysis of iambic pentameter. Commenting on the opinions of musical scansionists, Conway says that besides these two authors and himself,

... it seems to be assumed by the whole remaining body of English writers in versification, that our heroic verse consists of five feet necessarily. This again I hold to be a radical error, and the parent stock of many other errors.

--Conway, *A Treatise on Versification*<sup>81</sup>

In other words, since each metrical foot must contain an accented syllable, and as much supposedly pentameter verse exhibits fewer than five such syllables per line, it must follow that not all pentameter verse has five feet. What then ensures that a group of such lines is metrically integrated?

For Conway, the answer is isosyllabism. As he confidently declared:

Our heroic verse never varies from ten syllables (or with a double ending, from eleven); it had no feet of definite dimensions; and equality of time



is not needed between verse and verse.

--Conway, *A Treatise on Versification*<sup>82</sup>

As I will show in I.III.ii, this same concept of metre found widespread interest among Conway's contemporary poets, appearing most notably in works by Morris. Still, Conway was not proposing mere syllable-counting as the *sole* factor of metricality. Instead, following Guest's process of induction, Conway formulated a set of rules governing the possibilities for the placement of accents within the context of the (for him) decasyllabic line.<sup>83</sup> In essence, the table that Conway formulated consists of thirty five possible variations of lines, each containing from two to five accents. But despite certain methodological similarities, Conway's insistence on measuring his text line-by-line, rather than half-line-by-half-line, shows him closest to the lines-by-feet school of foot scansion.

Besides hybrid volumes like Conway's, a number of other books appeared from the hands of authors whose principal work was in fields other than prosody. The manner and aims of these books vary considerably. Some of the authors concerned were poets in their own right, who wished to convey what they regarded, not so much as a system of prosody, but rather as a system of signification. John Addington Symonds' (1840-1893) posthumously published book *Blank Verse* (1895) is typical of such studies. By Symonds' own account, these essays, 'were composed with a view to illustrating the rhetoric rather than the prosody of this metre.'<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Symonds cannot resist the temptation to relate those 'rhetorical' effects which formed the subject of his analysis to specific facts of his subject-poems' metre. Speaking of Jacobean blank verse, Symonds seems to regard his subject's prevailing tone of melancholia as inseparable from the verse-form in which it is cast:

... another peculiarity is the substitution of hendecasyllabic lines for the usual decasyllabic blank verse through long periods of dialogue ... so that the license of the superfluous syllable, which is always granted in dramatic writing for the sake of variety, becomes, in its turn, far more cloying than a strict adherence to the five-footed

verse.

--Symonds, *Blank Verse*<sup>85</sup>

(Somewhat like Conway, Symonds clearly did not regard hendecasyllabic verse as five-footed-- a view that I will discuss more fully in I.III.ii) Still, some poets, particularly Webster, provoked Symonds into a response that is based as much on the appearance of the text as upon its voicing:

His verse is broken-up into strange blocks and masses, often reading like rhythmical prose ... he perfected a style which depends for its effect on the emphases and pauses of the reciter ... scansion in the verse of Webster is subordinate to the purpose of the speaker.

--Symonds, *Blank Verse*<sup>86</sup>





Notice the disregard for exact terms and relationships: the audience of Webster's verse, (albeit *dramatic* verse), is supposed to perceive it as though through a 'reciter' or 'speaker'; 'scansion' is equated with metre, grammar and syntax with 'purpose.' Likewise statements regarding the "strangeness" of the 'blocks and masses' of Webster's verse, as well as Symonds' scepticism regarding the efficacy of Webster's free handling of 'emphases and pauses,' shows that Symonds was clearly prepared for something which he could not find adequately manifested by Webster's verse. That something, as Symonds' conclusion makes clear, was the *feeling* of regularity among verses of a supposedly identical sort:

... a verse may often have more than ten syllables, and more or less than five accents; but it must carry so much sound as shall be a satisfactory equivalent for ten syllables, and must have its accents so arranged as to content an ear prepared for five.

--Symonds, *Blank Verse*<sup>87</sup>

But if the type of study Symonds offered is a reflection of the prevailing aesthetic mood of his age, then a reflection of that age's tendency towards amateur genteel investigation is John Ruskin's (1819-1900) *Elements of English Prosody* (1880).

Throughout this work Ruskin relied on a system of musical notation to illustrate his proposed scansion of various lines. But while there is nothing especially innovative in this

(for example, Sidney Lanier's *The Science of English Verse* uses the same technique and was published in the same year), Ruskin's analyses are made particularly complex by his peculiar blend of prosodic description and aesthetic response. For example, his discussion of iambic verse begins with a lengthy discourse on what he considered the three 'classes' of iambs-- lyric, epic and dramatic-- which classes he believed are distinguishable, not merely through reference to their context, but through the distinctive rhythm they produce in each case.<sup>88</sup> Likewise his discussion of anapaests includes the notion that a single anapaest may be scanned as either,  or, , depending upon the metrical 'time' of the entire passage, although he offers no criteria for determining that 'time,' nor any reason why, since the scansion by musical notes is relative to each isolated case, it makes any difference whether that notation is written as , or .<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, as the genre title seems to require it, Ruskin later declares that, 'we may write a pentametre [sic] verse in iambs only.'<sup>90</sup> Again, he offers no explanation of why this must be so, nor any reasoned account of why there are so many "non-iambic feet" in existing "pentameter" verses. But a further motive for this attitude is suggested by that same deference to aesthetic response, even in preference to the rhythmical symmetry he offers as the paradigm of metrical identity. Thus although 'we may write a pentametre [sic] verse in iambs only,' in dramatic pentameter,

... the prosody of every passionate line is thrown  
into a disorder which is more lively than any normal  
order.

--Ruskin, *Elements of English Prosody*<sup>91</sup>

The 'normal order is, presumably, a succession of five iambic feet, the prosody (=metre) of which ought to reflect the rhythm of 'dramatic iambs.'

Altogether the dichotomies that these nineteenth-century British prosodists realized were those forced upon them by the dual needs of historical continuity within the context of English verse, and one of scientific precision in matters of textual analysis. Both of these

factors are motivated, in part, by a straightforward love of the poetry they discussed. Occasionally, these prosodists reveal extraordinary devotion to a cause that may seem at times self-frustrating, particularly when the jargon it fostered exhibits a cliqueishness likely to exclude many of those interested persons upon whom its perpetuation *in verse* was thought to depend. After all, not many poets, had they even desired as much, would have been able to imagine the form Ruskin defined as,

The appellant iambic, beginning with an impetuous single syllable, after an emphatic rest.

--Ruskin, *Elements of English Prosody*<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, many of the innovations claimed in these works *are* genuine discoveries. For example, Patmore's theory of dipody; the revival and refinement of musical scansion; the investigation of temporal relationships in voicing; inductive arguments based on large-scale comparisons of texts; all retain varying degrees of importance in prosodic research. Furthermore the value of such a proliferation of debates-- analytical, methodological, cultural-- was also to provide a stimulus against the malaise threatening to engulf poets whose larger world moved questioningly towards the modern age.

### I.III.i.

By the time Robert Bridges published *New Verse* in 1921, he was able to divide the book into four sections: 'Neo-Miltonic Syllabics,' 'Accentual Measures,' 'Old Styles,' and 'Stone's Quantitative Prosody.' While this degree of categorization is unusual, it represents the heightened self-consciousness among poets at this time regarding what constituted "orthodox" metrical form. So strong was this self-consciousness that Bridges felt compelled to identify his work by the various metrical systems through which it was composed. In this way he showed a certain virtuosity, as well as pre-empted those critics who might have scrutinised his work under the terms of only one of the prosodic theories then competing for precedence. But most importantly, it demonstrates that Bridges' own response, broadly

typical of poets from his generation, includes a measure of self-doubt as to the efficacy (or comprehensiveness) of individual metrical systems. Like many, Bridges refused to abandon altogether a nameable metrical form, although his acceptance of multiple systems of such signification indicates an important change in attitude regarding the generative role of metrics. The reasons for this change in attitude reflect a complex web of developments. But central to the discussion was the problem of defining those boundaries of metrical form which could be deemed acceptable to critics and authors who insisted upon maintaining a firm link with readers' experience of verses from past eras. The ways in which poets themselves came to interpret these boundaries are helpful in shedding light on the principal tenets which gave life to such ideals of "tradition."

There are, essentially, four distinguishable ways in which British poets writing between roughly 1850 and 1900 approached this problem of metrical boundaries. In the following section, **I.III.ii**, I will begin with a discussion of isosyllabism (exact syllable counting), with a view to tracing its re-emergence as an alternative to accentual-syllabic verse. In **I.III.iii**, I will discuss the opposite extreme of verse-measurement, "non-metrical verse." I am concerned here with some nineteenth-century ideas of how the poetic line must be approached as an item of individual completeness. For this reason, the transition to **I.III.iv**, which examines the renewal of interest in experimentation within the supposedly recognizable form of iambic pentameter, is an important one. In **I.III.v** I will compare these methods to the companion process of prosodic re-structuring which accompanied them, particularly as they were deemed justifiable on historical grounds. Finally, I will conclude with a look at the ways in which these prosodic exercises can be seen to form a background to the similar explorations of the early twentieth century (**I.III.vi**).

**I.III.ii.**

There are many reasons why a structural analogy between music and poetry remained popular as an organizational factor in nineteenth-century verse. Classicists could claim a precedent hazily based on a kinship of the Muses, while Christian poets could choose to emphasize resonances based upon echoes of liturgical settings. But there were some poets who viewed the connection between poetry and music as a vital one; one that could be exploited to achieve rhythmical effects impossible in other metres. It is the synchronizing of these two impulses-- the claim to historical grounds for metrical constructs and the will to be innovative-- that I wish to examine first.

There were two main problems facing poets who attempted to write in metres adapted from song. Because musical setting usually involves the repetition of an unvarying pattern of notational phrases, words written to be sung are bound to observe a fairly strict isosyllabic arrangement. However, when these words were printed without their accompanying music, poets ran the risk of confusing readers accustomed to accentual-syllabic metres. The danger was that these readers would find either the accentual pattern of the lines chaotic ("unmetrical"), or that they would be tempted to impose an accentual pattern on to the lines which would distort their voicing (in which case, the wrenched accents would make the poet look inept). The simplest solution was to announce with the title of the poem that the metre was to be understood as an alternative to the more usual variety. An example of this is Bridges' 'A Hymn of Nature: An Ode Written for Music' (1898):

In the smile of thine infinite starry gleam,  
 Without beginning or end,  
 Measure or number,  
 Beyond time and space,  
 Without foe or friend,  
 In the void of thy formless embrace,  
 All things pass as a dream  
 Of thine unbroken slumber.

--Bridges, 'A Hymn to Nature: An Ode Written

for Music.<sup>93</sup>

Bridges' title is a kind of disclaimer, insisting as it does that the metre of the poem cannot be deduced solely from the words. It follows, however, that while an accentual rhythm may be found in the lines, this rhythm is not related to the poem's metre in the same way as the rhythm and metre of an heroic couplet are related. The metre of this poem, the measurement of its constituent sound-units, pays no definite heed to the arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables, and consequently forms no clearly *nameable* accentual rhythm. In this way Bridges has isolated the process of metrical organization from its usual basis in performance. The implication is that while the identity of, say, an heroic couplet can be inferred from its resemblance to an abstract pattern of sounds which it suggests (and for which there is a precedent), this poem suggests no abstract pattern for its aural effects, is therefore without obvious precedent, and consequently might have seemed "unmetrical" to Bridges' readers. It is, in part, as a response to this possibility that Bridges subscribed the notice, 'Written for Music' to his title. As I will show in Chapter Five, such a motive may also inform Pound's similar use of subtitles, epigraphs and footnotes as metrically contextualizing elements in his early poems.

A similar argument is that isosyllabism alone is sufficient to constitute *metre*. *Metre*, being primarily a theoretical phenomenon, can be immediately established provided that an appropriate body of criteria can be agreed upon. Consequently, to sympathetic readers of Bridge's poem, the statement 'Written for Music' is an adequate justification for the poem's apparent format. Obviously, poems were also written which were metrically "correct"-- in this case isosyllabic arrangements-- as well as satisfying the printed page requirements of accentual-syllabic rhythm (for example, Thomas Hardy's 'Sine Prole (Latin Sequence Metre),' c.1900<sup>94</sup>) But the question then changes to, Are these not then simply accentual-syllabic poems with alternative names?

For this reason, defining the range of one's aesthetic was as important as applying it skilfully. The number of poems written in various permutations of Latin metrics, as well as the number of apologetic treatises on the subject, attests to an understanding of the need to make one's methods and motives clear in order to ensure that the compositions themselves could be appreciated. Contemporary prosodist T.S. Omond, published a bibliography of both metrical studies and experiments, in which he names over fifty full-length works dealing with English experiments in Latin metrics alone, published between 1840-1900, as well as a considerable number of slighter pieces that he does not name.<sup>95</sup> There were, for example, frequent attempts to harmonize the goals of isosyllabism as a branch of Latin metrics, with those of accentual-syllabics. In Thomas Hardy's, 'The Temporary the All' (published in 1897), the poet retains the useful defining adjunct of a subtitle, 'Sapphics,' as a way of isolating a part of his particular aims. However, in place of the pattern of quantitatively long and short syllables, Hardy has largely ignored vowel quantity as a metrical factor, and instead, treats three lines as composed of eleven syllables, plus one of five-- the maximum number allowed by the Latin format. The result is a poem metrically correct (in Hardy's terms), but particularly "bumpy" in its accentual rhythm:

Change and chancefulness in my flowering youthtime  
Set me sun by sun near to one unchosen;  
Wrought us fellow-like, and despite divergence,  
Fused us in friendship.

--Thomas Hardy, 'The Temporary the All.'<sup>96</sup>

Being firmly isosyllabic, the Latin quantitative Sapphic is an extremely restrictive metre, and by subtitling his poem in this way, Hardy has alerted the attentive eye to the ways in which the metre of his Latin model might be adapted. The value of this type of adaptation is twofold. Firstly, it allowed poets to demonstrate their virtuosity in an era when such virtuosity was highly regarded. And secondly, it provided a way of exploring rhythmical variations within the confines of a recognized alternative metrical system. That the second



of these possibilities could have a revitalizing effect on English poetry was also understood by poets who chose to experiment within the freer range of the decasyllabic line.

While there were some attempts to adapt the principle of isosyllabism to lines longer or shorter than the decasyllabic, (for example, Morris's octosyllables and Hardy's hendecasyllables<sup>97</sup>), the proximity of the decasyllabic line to iambic pentameter gave it the broadest scope for experimentation. No doubt there are many lines in Tennyson, Browning and Wordsworth (to name only a few) which are scarcely referable to a paradigm of iambic pentameter construction. But as an organizational principle for *entire* poems, Morris' use of a standard line of ten syllables with an indifferent number of accents and an apparent disregard for their patterning, is striking. In these examples from his long poems, 'King Arthur's Tomb' (1858) and 'Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery' (1858), notice the way in which groups of accented, or unaccented, syllables inhibit the potential for a regularity of cadence:

Hot August noon-- already on that day  
     Since sunrise through the Wiltshire downs, most sad  
 Of mouth and eye, he had gone leagues of way;  
     Aye and by night, till whether good or bad ...  
                     --Morris, 'King Arthur's Tomb'

It is the longest night in all the year,  
     Near on the day when the Lord Christ was born;  
 Six hours ago I came and sat down here,  
     And ponder'd sadly, wearied and forlorn.  
                     --Morris, 'Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery'<sup>98</sup>

In the first of these extracts, the ponderous phrase, 'Hot August noon--' slows the voicing of the line, enforcing a suspension of breath over the dash, before the next clause, elongated over the enjambement, effectively masks the rhyme. Similarly, in the second extract, the rhythmical ambiguity of the monosyllables in 'Six hours ago I came and sat down here,' is followed by the four clearly defined accents of the next line, separated by the slight caesural pause over the comma. This degree of license with accentuation provoked critics like Saintsbury to dismiss this kind of composition as simply doggerel, because when scanned by

metrical feet, it makes very awkward iambic pentameter.<sup>99</sup> However, Morris was not alone in his use of this format. Later in the century, Wilfrid Blunt (1840-1922) would use a similar style in his *Love Sonnets of Proteus* (1885), and as late as 1913, Stephen Phillips (1864-1915) employed it in his *Lyrics and Dramas*:

You ask my love. What shall my love then be?  
 A hope, an aspiration, a desire?  
 The soul's eternal charter writ in fire  
 Upon the earth, the heavens, and the sea?  
 --Blunt, 'XIX,' *Love Sonnets of Proteus*<sup>100</sup>

This grey acquaintance with fierce suffering,  
 And bosom proof against the sharpest sting,  
 Fearless familiarity with pain;  
 The dreadful victory of pity slain.  
 --Phillips, 'The Hospital Nurse'<sup>101</sup>

Here, as in poems written for music, and those in adapted foreign metres, an organizational substitute is being offered. Yet while maintaining a repeated accentual rhythm is not *necessary* to the metre of these poems, it can appear unexpectedly in order to reinforce other elements of the text. For instance, in 'King Arthur's Tomb,' Morris uses a strong medial pause, highlighted by both syntax and punctuation, to dramatize the sweep and picturesqueness of a descriptive passage:

Rode Launcelot, the king of all the band,  
 And scowling Gawaine, like the night in day,  
 And handsome Gareth, with his great white hand  
 Curl'd round the helm-crest, ere he join'd the fray.  
 --Morris, 'King Arthur's Tomb'<sup>102</sup>

But throughout the range of these experiments, the essential goal has been to reconcile the obvious fact of accentuation in English rhythmic composition with the more nebulous character of isosyllabic metre. Beginning with an analogy to music, poets explored ways of combining syllable count with the necessity of making metre easily apprehensible to the reader. A further model, was to adapt the formats of foreign metres like Latin. The result was a gradual move towards a metric which could accommodate greater accentual freedom within the context of styles similar, but not identical to,

recognized formats like the iambic pentameter. The necessary validation for these experiments was that they were one way of revitalizing traditional forms, while being justifiable themselves as metrical compositions on the basis of their own interpretation of the 'rules' of verse-making.

### I.III.iii.

Between the appearance of the 'Ossian' poems in the 1760's and the late nineteenth-century publication of Henley's experimental poems, thousands of lines of poetry were written in apparently "non-metrical" verse. From its inception, such verse was characterized by wide divergences in style. Both early and late, Whitman's method of egocentric, biblically cadenced, parallel clauses and skewed syntax, was openly copied and parodied. A typical example is Kipling's 'Song of the Galley Slaves':

But, in a little time, we shall run out of the portholes as  
the water runs along the oar-blades, and though you  
tell the others to row after us you will never catch  
us till you catch the oar-thresh and tie up the winds  
in the belly of the sail. Aho!

*Will you never let us go?*

--Kipling, 'Song of the Galley Slaves'<sup>103</sup>

More common, however, is the practice of writing verse with clear accentual rhythms, and the identity of individual lines marked off as syntactically complete units arranged in typographical sequence down the page. Examples of this particular brand of "non-metrical" verse occur in the works of Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947), John Cowper Powys (1872-1963), Patmore and Henley, with by far the largest number being Henley's.<sup>104</sup> Like his contemporary Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891),<sup>105</sup> Henley's poems of the sea, with their gradual lengthening of lines, followed by sudden recessions, appear to be visually structured in ways suggesting the pattern of the waves he describes:

Growling, hideous and hoarse,  
Tales of unnumbered Ships,  
Goodly and strong, Companions of the Advance,  
In some vile alley of the night,

Waylaid and bludgeoned--  
Dead.

--Henley, 'Rhymes and Rhythms. III.'<sup>106</sup>

But a comparable method of writing, which combines something like this type of mimesis with the additional feature of rhyme, was more widely practiced. Poets as different in taste as Powys, Christina Rossetti, Victor Plarr (1863-1929), Lionel Johnson (1867-1902) and Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) all experimented in this form.<sup>107</sup> The most common arrangement of lines is in rhyming couplets or quatrains with an asymmetrical arrangement of accents and an uneven syllable count. Possibly following the 1702 lead of Edward Bysshe in his book, *The Art of English Poetry*, (which in turn, followed Ben Jonson and Abraham Cowley), poets and critics alike referred to this style as the Pindaric Ode.<sup>108</sup> It was customary, however, to limit the absolute freedom of syllable and accent count by separating the verses into a series of strophes, with a single pattern or two repeated throughout. In this case the poem was described as a Regular Pindaric. But if this strophic arrangement of lines varied unpredictably within the poem, it was referred to as an Irregular Pindaric, (or as cited earlier, Saintsbury referred to Tennyson's *Maud* as 'the Modern Pindaric'). Notable examples of the Regular Pindaric include choruses from Swinburne's *Atalanta at Calydon* (1865), while an Irregular Pindaric could include Arnold's 'Dover Beach' (1867):

Who hath given man speech? or who hath set therein  
A thorn for peril and a snare for sin?  
For in the word his life is and his breath,  
    And in the word his death.  
That madness and the infatuate heart may breed  
    From the word's womb the deed ...

--Swinburne, *Atalanta at Calydon*<sup>109</sup>

The sea is calm tonight,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand ...  
    --Arnold, 'Dover Beach'<sup>110</sup>

Still the poet who turned most completely to the form of the Irregular Pindaric Ode, was Coventry Patmore. Virtually half of Patmore's *oeuvre* consists of verse written in lines with recognizably strong accentual rhythms, but with unpredictable syllable count. But Patmore's primary innovation was to dispense with even an approximate regularity of stanzas. His long poems in this manner became a battleground for critics who sought to identify the frontier between metrical and "non-metrical" verse:

'If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor Child!  
 The dear lips quivered as they spake,  
 And the tears brake  
 From eyes which not to grieve me, brightly smiled.  
 Poor Child, Poor Child!  
 I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.  
 It is not true that love will do no wrong.  
 Poor Child!

--Patmore, *The Unknown Eros*, 'XIV. If I were  
 dead' (1877)<sup>111</sup>

Approaching poetry of this sort, even against the background of works like *Atalanta*, critics were bound to admit that although the lines were frankly rhythmical, they served as a poor example to future generations of poets:

The metre [Patmore] ... adopted-- iambic lines of unequal length, with rhymes recurring at irregular intervals-- is not, in itself, a very good one, for it depends for its whole effect on the taste of the writer; unskilfully used, it becomes ragged and shapeless at once ...

--Percy Lubbock, 'Coventry Patmore,'  
*Quarterly Review* (1908)<sup>112</sup>

It was in part the need to remain within the pale of Artifice -- notice Lubbock's appeal to the *look* of the poem-- which compelled poets to observe the more easily apprehensible isosyllabic metres described earlier. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of works like this by Patmore, demands that they be seen as something more than mere experiments or aberrations. While their influence on trends in poetry of their own and later generations can only be assessed by placing them within the larger context of nineteenth-century poetry conceived under the auspices of accentual-syllabic metre, it must be borne in mind that it was the re-handling of the terms of that metre which gave rise to this early form of

"non-metrical" verse. The effects are therefore cyclical: a re-examination of "traditional" metre spawns a period of adjustment, the output of which is then absorbed into the "tradition" itself, fostering future growth in areas previously unquestioned.

#### I.III.iv.

Alongside these developments, and perhaps more intriguing, was the method occasionally practised by Swinburne and Arnold of writing lines which could be read reasonably in two ways.<sup>113</sup> The possibility of writing lines that with a *gestalt* shift can be seen as rhythmical in more than one manner, was not in itself new.<sup>114</sup> What is remarkable here, is that in the midst of the controversy surrounding the very *nature* of English pentameter verse, some poets, notably Swinburne, published poetry which stands as a resolution of two opposing views. Furthermore, Swinburne's achievement was also to show how various rhythmical shadings within these absolutely "orthodox" pentameters could contribute to the expressive/mimetic quality of the verse.

The most sustained example of Swinburne's in this respect is his long poem, 'Tristrem of Lyonesse' (1882). Here is a passage with a proposed five-beat scansion:

But in the halls far under sat King Mark,  
 Feasting and full of cheer, with heart uplift,  
 As on the night the harper gat his gift:  
 And music revelled on the fitful air,  
 And songs came floated up the festal stair,  
 And muffled roar of wassail, where the king  
 Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string  
 Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran  
 Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.

--Swinburne, 'Tristrem of Lyonesse'<sup>115</sup>

However, it is arguable that this text also encourages a particularly strong dipodic reading. There are three principal reasons for this. Firstly, there is the affinity with the style of medieval romance versification which the subject of the poem suggests. Secondly, the strong medial pauses, combined with the alliteration on accented syllables, encourages a heightened awareness of the balance between "half-lines." And thirdly, since the theme of this particular passage is music, song and the rejuvenation they inspire, Swinburne's mimesis offers an appreciation of the subtleties of this style of verse. In order to illustrate this, here is the same text with the medial pauses punctuated as in Edwin Guest's version of Chaucer:

But in the halls far under \* sat King Mark \*  
 Feasting and full of cheer \* with heart uplift \*  
 As on the night the harper \* gat his gift \*  
 And music revelled \* on the fitful air \*  
 And songs came floated \* up the festal stair \*  
 And muffled roar of wassail \* where the king \*  
 Took heart from wine-cups \* and the quiring string \*  
 Till all his cold thin veins \* rejoiced and ran \*  
 Strong as with lifeblood \* of a kinglier man \*

Neither reading can illustrate the full complexity of Swinburne's rhythmical and alliterative subtlety, but it is his singular skill in suggesting both readings which is notable. To some critics, this rhythmical multiplicity was a defect:

[in 'Tristrem of Lyonesse'] Mr. Swinburne injured his art by the frequent excess of his metrical artifice, especially by his use of the accelerated beat in the line and his love of dancing measures ... his taste for free rhythms and the intoxicating 'triple lilt.'

--Unsigned, 'The Poetry and Criticism of Mr. Swinburne,' *Quarterly Review* (1905)<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, while an iambic pentameter scansion remains possible the lines must be viewed as "orthodox" couplets. Yet far from answering the question of metricality, this observation focuses the question more sharply on defining the relevance of scansion to rhythmical apprehension.

### I.III.v.

Many of the features characterizing nineteenth-century experiments in four- and five-beat verse which I have discussed in this chapter can be seen, in some cases, to have been combined by poets in search of metrical variety. One of the most striking new ways of viewing metrical composition was the growing awareness of those effects that the physical presentation of the text have on the reader's perception of rhythm. This important fact, heralded by the re-examination of interlinear rhythm, was the realization that the integrity of individual line-units has a function not wholly dependent upon the lexis. Thus, in part, the fact that a poem *appears* to be written in heroic verse conditions the way a reader approaches it by suggesting a range of prior associations. For instance, a reader of 'Tristrem of Lyonesse' in 1892 brought to the poem a set of expectations for Swinburne's couplets unlike that of a reader in 1992. These differing expectations are based on the relative values a particular form possesses in the estimate of each generation. It was to alter, or in some cases to overcome this altogether, that some poets of the late nineteenth century sought to extend the possibilities of poetic format by forcing readers to view metre in unconventional ways. One of the chief methods of doing this was to separate the rhythmical (and most often syntactical) subsections of "metrical" lines, and restructure them to form alternative formats.

This development is one which can be linked also to the historical re-examination of poetic form popular from the mid 1850's. Some of these experiments are easy to trace. For example, Francis Thompson's footnote specifying an Anglo-Saxon source for the metre of his poem, 'A Judgement in Heaven' (1893), suggests that the poem must be seen in the context of concurrent research.<sup>117</sup> But what further distinguishes poems of this sort from the more widespread use of dimeter, or trimeter lines of foot-scansion, is an almost total absence of rhyme as well as a distinguishable tone and range. While occurring in the works



of Arnold, Morris, Kipling and D.G. Rossetti, this example from Henley will serve to illustrate the point:

Stooping, he drew  
 On the sand with his finger  
 A shape for a sign  
 Of his way to the eyes  
 That in wonder should waken,  
 For a proof of his will  
 To the breaking intelligence.  
 That was the birth of me:  
 I am the sword.

--Henley, 'The Song of the Sword' (1890)<sup>118</sup>

Thus the authors of this mode show a willingness to empathize with their Old English models in both their taciturnity and their rhymelessness, as well as an appreciation of the proprietary link between the recognition of 'form' and the exercise of 'form.'

The place of this particular development in a survey of four- and five-beat verse is clear. As I have said, the majority of nineteenth-century experiments in this area are concerned with identifying the precise metrical definitions of the poetic line and its rhythmical constituents. When the comprehensiveness of those definitions came to be questioned, as it was in the critical works of Guest, Patmore and others, poets were at liberty to consider such verse in unprecedented ways. If, as it appeared, the poetic line was *audibly* divisible in a variety of ways, depending upon the manner in which it was *visually* structured, then conversely, a shift in the visual structure could create new sounds. That this practice could claim some precedence in the ancestral language of the Anglo-Saxons, further legitimized the style as one of an organized 'traditional' metre.

### I.III.vi.

Considering the breadth of these developments, both in the theory and practice of prosody, it seems impossible to assert that the metrical styles explored by Pound and Eliot in the early twentieth century were without precedent in English poetry. But as recently as

1990, Timothy Steele, in his book, *Missing Measures*, has declared that a reader who fell asleep in 1900 and re-awoke in 1925 would be puzzled by the enormous changes in versification which Steele believes mark the era.<sup>119</sup> Given the amount of work from the previous century which foreshadows these later styles, his reader would have had to have been an inattentive one. As examples, I would suggest that the isosyllabism which characterizes much of Pound's early work, as well as his interest in Anglo-Saxon versification, to name only two modes, were explored by some of his own favourite authors like Morris, Rossetti and Swinburne. Likewise, the 'broken' metres of Eliot's early verse cannot be seen as isolated from the comparable innovations of Arnold, Tennyson, Patmore and others. Furthermore, the "newness" of Eliot and Pound's work, as will be seen particularly in Chapters Four and Five, was revolutionary, not by the degree of their rejection of former values, but in their unique approach to reconciling their art to their own interpretation of those same values. It is to the peculiarly American input upon that interpretation, as well as its relationship to British and continental views, that forms the focus of Chapter Two.

## Notes to Chapter One

1. For example, Thomas Campion, *Campion's Works*, ed. Percival Vivian (Oxford, 1909); Sir Thomas Wyatt, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Poems*, ed. W.E. Simmonds (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1889); William Dunbar, *The Dunbar Anthology 1401-1508 A.D.*, ed. Edward Arber (London, 1901); John Lydgate, *Life of St. Edmund*, ed. C. Horstman in: *Altenglische Legenden Neue Folge* (Heilbronn, 1881).

2. For example, Ernest Dowson, *The Poems of Ernest Dowson*, ed. Arthur Symons (London: The Bodley Head, 1905); or Lionel Johnson, *Poetical Works of Lionel Johnson*, ed. Ezra Pound (London: Elkin Mathews, 1915).

3. For a comparative list of the volume of prosodic studies produced decade by decade in the nineteenth century, see Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 20 note; also below, note 75.

4. Walter Raleigh was the first person appointed to the Chair of English at Oxford in 1904; Arthur Quiller-Couch first filled the same role at Cambridge in 1912. For a full discussion of the controversy surrounding the formation of University departments devoted to teaching "English," see Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 75-82.

5. This fact may have lent a personal motive to Saintsbury's subsequent criticism of Henley's poetry; for examples, see below, note 68, and I.I.ix.

6. Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford, *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*, edited with an Introduction and Narrative Commentary and Notes by Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 13.

7. George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1906, 1908, 1910), vol. 3, pp. 372-373.

8. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 148.

9. *Ibid.* p. 182.

10. *Ibid.* p. 149.

11. For example, *Ibid.* p. 148.

12. *Ibid.* p. 171.

13. *Ibid.* p. 199.

14. *Ibid.* p. 198.

15. James J. Southworth, *Verses of Cadence: An Introduction to the Prosody of Chaucer and His Followers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. 48.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Cf. Ian Robinson, *Chaucer's Prosody: A Study of the Middle English Verse Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 151-156.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Robinson, *op.cit.*, pp. 200-201.

20. *Ibid.* p. 70.

21. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 234.

22. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 226.

23. For example, William Dunbar, *William Dunbar: Poems*, ed. James Kingsley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 7.

24. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 229.

25. *Ibid.* p. 232.

26. *Ibid.* p. 234.

27. *Ibid.* pp. 275-276.

28. The most common *structural* example being the last line of a Spenserian stanza.

29. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 240-245.
30. *Ibid.* p. 242.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.* p. 243.
33. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, p. 496.
34. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 305.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 184.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. See Thomas Campion, *The Works of Thomas Campion*, ed. Walter R. Davis (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 313.
40. Cf. the discussion of Stanyhurst in, Derek Attridge, *Well-weighed Syllables* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 165-172.
41. Attridge, *Well-weighed Syllables*, Chapter 1, *passim*.
42. Cf. Attridge, *Well-weighed Syllables*, pp. 211-216.
43. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 139.
44. For example, Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 144 note.
45. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 437-439.
46. For example, Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 491-492.
47. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 18.
48. First published as 'English Metrical Critics' in *The North British Review* 27 (1857): 127-161; later revised, re-titled and included in Coventry Patmore, '*Amelia*', '*Tammerton Church-tower*', etc., with a Prefatory Study on English Metrical Law (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878), pp. 3-85.
49. Cited by Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 18.
50. *Ibid.* p. 29.
51. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 439-440.
52. Patmore, '*Amelia*', '*Tammerton Church-tower*', etc., with a Prefatory Study on English Metrical Law, p. 25.
53. *Ibid.* p. 44.
54. Cited by Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1982), p. 22.
55. *Ibid.* pp. 118-120.
56. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p. 90.
57. Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, pp. 114-121. Also see Taylor, *op.cit.*, pp. 87-95.
58. For example, Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, p. 504.
59. Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 12.
60. Reprinted in, Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W.H. Gardner, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), pp. 151-217.
61. Discussed, for example, by Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p. 543.
62. Saintsbury discusses nineteenth-century views on this subject in, Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 493-497.
63. Cf. Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, pp. 18-23.
64. See the discussion of Morris' isosyllabic style in I.III.ii.
65. Cf. footnote in Attridge, *Well-weighed Syllables*, pp. 129.
66. For example, 'In Prison' in William Morris, *William Morris: Early Romances in Prose and Verse*, ed. Peter Faulkner (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1973), p. 138; 'Pier Moronelli di Fiorenza: Canzanetta: A bitter song to his lady' in Dante Rossetti, *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 261-263; 'Consider the Lilies of the <sup>Gabriel</sup>

Field' and 'Despised and Rejected' in Christina Rossetti, *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1920), pp. 138-139, 241-242; and 'Consolation' and 'Merope' in Matthew Arnold, *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 50, and esp. pp. 391 and 398.

67. Saintsbury, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 255-256.

68. For Saintsbury's view of Henley in this regard see, Saintsbury, op.cit., vol. 3, pp. 382-383; for examples of Henley's poems in this manner see, 'Children: Private Ward,' 'Staff-nurse: Old Style' and 'Ave Caesar' in W.E. Henley, *Works*, 7 Vols. (London: David Nott, 1908), Vol. 1; also 'A Song of Speed', op.cit., vol. 2, pp 177-194.

69. Saintsbury, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 383.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid. p. 385.

72. Ibid. p. 392.

73. Ibid.

74. J.B. Mayor, 'Dr. Guest and Dr. Abbott on English Metre,' *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 4 (1873-4): 624-649, p. 624.

75. Citing an unpublished work by T.V.F. Brogan, Dennis Taylor lists the number of books and articles devoted to prosodic issues published in the nineteenth century as follows: 13 (1800's), 12 (1810's), 16 (1820's), 11 (1830's), 21 (1840's), 21 (1850's), 41 (1860's), 52 (1870's), 120 (1880's), 178 (1890's); Taylor, op.cit., p. 20, note.

76. Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 290.

77. Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*, ed. Walter Skeat (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), p. 1.

78. Ibid. p. XVII.

79. Ibid. p. 208.

80. Ibid. p. 209.

81. Gilbert Conway, *A Treatise on Versification* (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1878), p. 16, note.

82. Ibid. p. 16

83. Ibid. p. 24.

84. J.A. Symonds, *Blank Verse* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1895), p. 1.

85. Ibid. p. 35.

86. Ibid. pp. 45-47.

87. Ibid. p. 86.

88. John Ruskin, *Elements of English Prosody*, in Vol. 31 of *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 Vols. (London: George Allen, 1903) pp. 324-374; pp. 334-336.

89. Ibid.

90. Ruskin, op.cit., p. 369.

91. Ibid. p. 372.

92. Ibid. p. 366.

93. Robert Bridges, *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 401. (pp. 401-5). The entire stanza is as follows:

Power eternal, power unknown, uncreate;  
Force of force, fate of fate.

Beauty and light are thy seeing,  
Wisdom and right thy decreeing,  
Life of life is thy being.

In the smile of thine infinite starry gleam,  
Without beginning or end,  
Measure or number,  
Beyond time and space,  
Without foe or friend,  
In the void of thy formless embrace,  
All things pass as a dream  
Of thine unbroken slumber.

94. Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Samuel Hynes, 3 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), Vol. 3, p. 30.
95. T.S. Omond, *English Metrists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), pp. 292-327.
96. Hardy, op.cit., vol. 1, pp. 7-8.
97. See 'Aristodemus the Messenian (Dramatic Hendecasyllables)' in Hardy, op.cit., vol. 3, pp. 181-186; and 'The Haystack in the Floods' in Morris, op.cit., pp. 118-122.
- 98.. Morris, op.cit. p. 12 (pp. 12-23) and p. 24 (pp. 24-30).
99. Saintsbury, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 328.
100. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Love Sonnets of Proteus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Company, 1885), p. 25.
101. Stephen Phillips, *Lyrics and Dramas* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1913), p. 19.
102. Morris, op.cit., p. 21.
103. Final stanza of 'Song of the Galley Slaves' in Rudyard Kipling, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, 1941), p. 285.
104. See 'Untitled' in Richard Le Gallienne, *New Poems* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1910), pp. 141-144; 'Compensation' in John Cowper Powys, *Poems* (London: Macdonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1964), p. 73; *To the Unknown Eros, etc.* in Coventry Patmore, *The Poems of Coventry Patmore*, ed. Frederick Page (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 347-446; and 'Clinical' in Henley, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 17-19.
105. Cf. 'Mouvement' in Arthur Rimbaud, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Editions Garnier Freres, 1960), pp. 304-305; or 'Mouvement' in Arthur Rimbaud, *Arthur Rimbaud: Complete Works*, trans. Paul Schmidt (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), pp. 236-237.
106. 'Rhymes and Rhythms III' in Henley, op.cit., vol. 1, p. 200-201.
107. For example, 'In Excelsis (1889)' in Victor Plarr, *The Collected Poems of Victor Plarr*, ed. Ian Fletcher (London: Eric and Joan Stevens, 1974), pp. 51-2; 'Earth Worship' and 'Reversion' in John Cowper Powys, op.cit., pp. 32 and 71; 'De Amicitia' in Lionel Johnson, *The Collected Poems of Lionel Johnson*, ed. Ian Fletcher (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982), pp. 103-106; 'The Song of the Guns at Sea' in Henry Newbolt, *Poems New and Old* (London: John Murray, 1914), pp. 9-10; and 'Winter: My Secret' in Christina Rossetti, op.cit., p. 336.
108. Cf. Cowley's 'Pindarique Odes' and the Choruses of Milton's 'Samson Agonistes.'
109. Algernon Swinburne, *Collected Poetical Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 6 Vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1917), Vol. 1, p. 284.
110. Arnold, op.cit., p. 210.
111. 'XIV. If I were Dead,' from *To the Unknown Eros, etc.*, in Patmore, *The Poems of Coventry Patmore*, p. 373.

112. Percy Lubbock, 'Coventry Patmore,' *Quarterly Review*, 208 (1908): 356-376, p. 370.

113. For example, 'Mycernius' in Arnold, *Poetical Works*, pp. 8-12; 'Tale of Balen' in Swinburne, op.cit., Vol. 4, pp. 153-233; and Canto VI of 'By the North Sea' in Swinburne, op.cit., Vol. 5, pp. 104-107.

114. For a discussion of earlier examples, see Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, pp. 118-120.

115. Swinburne, op.cit., vol. 4, pp. 76-77.

116. 'The Poetry and Criticism of Mr. Swinburne,' *Quarterly Review* 203 (1905): 525-547, p.539.

117. 'I have throughout this poem used an asterick [sic] to indicate the caesura in the middle of the line, after the manner of the Old Saxon section point.' Francis Thompson, *Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 145.

118. Henley, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 50.

119. Timothy Steele, *Missing Measures* (Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 1990), p. 55.

## *Chapter Two*

### AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY, AMERICAN METRE: SOME COMPARISONS

#### II. Introduction.

The increased momentum for innovation which overtook English poetry in the early years of the twentieth century was accompanied by a series of challenges to prosody's role in shaping the future of poetic formats. The debate was centered largely on the degree to which inherited metrical forms benefited *poets*. Of course, no one believed that much memorable poetry was written by authors simply filling in the blank cheques of stanzaic forms like the Sapphic or the sonnet. But even if poets composed line-by-line, then the value of recognizable line units, like the pentameter or the fourteenner, was open to scrutiny. The rise of competing prosodic systems also forced anyone deeply interested in poetry to ask once and for all how far poetry was distinct from prose. For if no one system could account for the metres of existing English poetry, then possibly no one set of structural principles could have given rise to it. But if that was true, then could poetry be written in the future in accordance with the dictates of different prosodies, and yet share the distinction of belonging to a single genre within a single tradition? How many systems are allowable? To what extent must a system *overtly* influence writing for it to be termed "poetry" and not "prose" (that is to say, If I don't know your "system," how can I fully appreciate your verse?)? Could various systems be stratified by degree of difficulty, and does difficulty confer excellence?

Briefly, the key ideas expressed in this period are: 1.) defining the relationship between past, present and future poetic formats 2.) expressing the necessity for "poetry" to be *apprehensible through format* as a genre distinct from prose 3.) discovering a system which could adequately relate the metres of existing poetry 4.) finding ways in which different prosodic systems could be related to a single tradition 5.) acknowledging the



extent to which pre-existing familiarity with poetic formats (by reader and writer) influences the subject and manner of a poet's work.

Yet while broadly international in scope, the influences upon American poets in particular in the era surrounding the turn-of-the-century must be measured against the backdrop of concurrent trends as they were shaped by American thinkers. This is particularly true in view of the ways American writers and philosophers shaped attitudes regarding America's relationship to literature in English. The two authors from this period whose work best exemplifies this are Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and William James (1842-1910). With their passionate belief in individual freedom, the writings of these two men in particular pose the difficult question of the individual's relationship to his national and cultural heritage. In the case of writing itself, this question can be seen in terms of the individual writer's responsibility to the uniqueness of his own creative impulse, as well as the place of his art in the larger context of the traditions within which it arises. The peculiarly sensitive relationship between poetic literature and traditional forms made this assessment of the author's responsibility especially relevant to poets. Compounding this was America's growing awareness throughout this period of its own role in shaping the future of literature in English. For these reasons, nineteenth-century American poetry and the prosodic theories put forth alongside it, exhibit a tendency towards identifying specific cultural and linguistic affinities with the past comparable to that expressed by their contemporaries in Britain. But at the same time, the distinctive viewpoints of the two nations often provided differing interpretations of the same historical materials. It is the ways in which nineteenth-century America's perspective on poetic form (as conditioned by American philosophy) differs from British views, that I wish to explore first.

### II.I.i.

In his edition of Emerson's work (1965), Walter H. Gilman, describes Emerson's compositional practice like this:

Emerson's method was to write down in the heat of inspired vision the truth as it seemed to him at the moment, regardless of contrary perceptions he might have had at other moments. ... Sentences could be written at any time, without seeming to have any relation to each other. Eventually, some question would pose itself, and show that the sentences all belonged together, were parts of a whole. The process was like crystalization ... If left alone, domesticated in the mind, they would take their own order, and this order was divine.

--Gilman, ed., *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*<sup>1</sup>

Insofar as this description relates to Emerson's prose, it is an implicit statement of Emerson's extraordinary faith. Believing in the integrity of impulse, Emerson was prepared to accept that his use of language was subject to disparate forces, whose interaction was only marginally within his control. The validity of finished statements was verifiable if, when challenged by objective circumstance ('some question'), their relationship to his own subjectivity remained disputable; that is to say, the 'crystalization' of form ('order') imposes itself from within through the content of the statement. For Emerson, this was possible because, as he noted in his journal,

In good writing every word means something. In good writing words become one with things.

--Emerson, *Journals*, 27 October 1831<sup>2</sup>

Thus authentic language is both ideal and apprehensible, though apprehension may not be immediate. Subjectivity-- the view from oneself-- obscures understanding by its attempt at interpretation *through* oneself. Clarity, or the perception of an affinity with the thing stated, is possible only through direct contact with objectivity, necessarily limited by the individual's lack-of-control over this aspect of his own consciousness. Consequently, clarity of both

expression and reception is achievable, if at all, only through prolonged exposure

('domesticated in the mind'). Applying these precepts to poetry, Emerson believed that,

The poem is made up of lines each of which filled the sky of the poet in its turn; so that mere synthesis produces a work quite superhuman ... For that reason, a true poem by no means yields all its virtue at the first reading, but is best when we have slowly and by repeated attention felt the truth of its details.

--Emerson, *Journals*, undated, 1858?-1870?<sup>3</sup>

In this way the integrity of the poem as a work of art is superior to the intellection of both writer and reader. The unity which characterizes it is a 'superhuman synthesis' of 'details,' the 'truth' of which can only be perceived ('felt') gradually by both. What is most striking in these descriptions is the degree to which Emerson believes language possesses a power distinct from that of its users. For Emerson, the power of language is not marshalled, it is invoked. For communication-- *real* communication-- to take place, artist and audience depend on the fullest possible awareness of the medium they use. In language, particularly in poetry, the scope of that medium is conditioned by factors which can be seen to transgress the boundaries of objective and subjective apprehension.

The bridge to this frontier is provided by the perception of linguistic forms as altogether artificial. Grammar, syntax, orthography, are agree-upon constructs shaped out of the need to communicate effectively. Their objective validity is, at least, contestable. The extreme example of this is poetic form-- or the arrangement of language in ways not immediately determinable through the lexical demands of the statement only. By focusing the attention of his audience on the presence of such a format in his work, the poet isolates a part of that audience's attention, reserving it for communication at a level distinguishable from that of, for instance, grammar. For Emerson, the efficacy of this was that it grants poets the ability, if not to 'form' communication, at least to instruct as to the presence of 'form' within that communication. The scope of communication was therefore broadened by

an appeal to the audience's knowledge of 'form' as an artificial construct, or mode of thought.

In his essay 'The Poet,' from *Essays, Second Series* (1844), Emerson describes what he believed to be the experience of objectivity in the poetic impulse:

For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem,-- a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. The thought and the form are equal in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form.

--Emerson, *Essays, Second Series*<sup>4</sup>

His language here is difficult to explicate, but several assumptions seem implicit. In the first place, he repudiates the notion that a poem can be defined *as a poem* by the presence of identifiable metrical form. From this we might also assume that he would not exclude a piece of writing from the category of 'poem' simply because its format is not immediately recognizable. Instead, the veracity with which the poet is able to express his poetic impulse in the medium of language is itself a sufficient <sup>formal</sup> construct, or *manifestation* of metre. But this would postulate a definition of metre outside of the usual one. For if metre is not immediately recognizable, how can it be called 'metre' at all?

For Emerson the answer would seem to be that if the intensity (integrity) of the poet's thought (experience of objectivity) is apprehensible, then there is sufficient cause to expect the presence of form equally objective, even if it is not itself immediately apprehensible. This implies, of course, that objective form may operate on the poem's audience at a semantic level which is both distinct from and co-existent with that of the poem's lexis. How this may be is explained by the statement that, 'thought and form are equal in order of time.' Here the 'order of time' represents the subjective encounter by the poem's audience of the poem's entirety. As readers we cannot *encounter* the poem in any way other than that which is presented to us. If we could do so,

ours would no more than resemble the poet's own experience of the poem's objectivity--perhaps, in itself, incomplete. But this is neither necessary, nor desirable. Instead, the poet's encounter with objectivity, his 'thought,' which he cannot completely experience himself, is expressible only in conjunction with the form which, Emerson believed, was self-directed. The resulting challenge is to apprehend the objectivity of the poem either by its immediate appeal to our experience of objectivity, or through its affinities with those elements of objectivity latent within our own subjective faculties. To do this, as Emerson indicates in this quotation above, is to run the risk of imposing a form (metre) upon an idea which that idea did not itself generate. Emerson's way of avoiding this was to allow his 'thoughts' to remain without composite form until he believed the inevitable one was manifested by a fuller apprehension of those 'thoughts' objective content.

Emerson's attitude towards poetry, however, shows one important departure from his attitude towards prose. That departure was his awareness that while the varieties of semantic discourse in poetry are co-existent, the extreme degree of their artificiality made some more easily manifestèd than others. He describes his experience of this in his journal:

*Metres.* I amuse myself often, as I walk, with humming the rhythm of the decasyllabic quatrain, or of the octosyllabic with alternative sexsyllabic [sic] or other rhythms, & believe these rhythms to be organic, or derived from our human pulse, and to be therefore not proper to one nation, but to mankind. But I find a wonderful charm, heroic, & especially deeply pathetic or plaintive in the cadence, and say to myself, Ah happy! if one could fill these small measures with words approaching to the power of these beats.

--Emerson, *Journals*, undated, winter 1854?<sup>5</sup>

Here again are several important indicators of Emerson's perception of the inherence of form and meaning. The most important fact he describes is the variety of *feelings* which certain patterns of sound evoke for him. What is interesting is the way in which he perceives these sounds with feelings that range from the heroic to the plaintive. It may seem

a mere extension of the pathetic fallacy to imbue identical sound abstracts with meanings which they alone cannot represent. However, we may infer from his precise naming of these rhythms that for Emerson these patterns did not (or could not) exist apart from the prior contexts (poems) in which they occur. (Eliot's position is comparable to this, and is discussed in Chapters Three and Four.) Emerson does not claim that anyone could experience these forms fully without a prior, if limited, encounter with their use in conjunction with specific 'thoughts,' the pathos or heroism of which might develop their objectivity through an apprehension of their subjective fulfilment. Instead, the "identity" of a decasyllabic quatrain is an abstraction which, for Emerson, is equivalent to a 'thought.' Rather than finding a way to put his 'thoughts' *into* words, he desires words that are equivalent to his 'thoughts'-- 'thoughts' which may have no basis in words. When this is accomplished, as he says above, 'words become one with things' (cf. Eliot, Chapter Four). The crucial point is that if words are limited abstractions of meaning, so too are patterns of sound which do not themselves form words, but through prior unity with words have come to represent limited abstractions of meaning also. The latter point is, of course, subjective, and therefore alterable with time. The "meaning" which an abstract pattern of sounds represents will vary with each person's (or each generation's) apprehension of its limited use. Thus for Emerson, apprehension of the pattern which he calls 'decasyllabic quatrain' may have been complete, although its "meaning" must remain variable in view of its changing relevance to the 'thoughts' it accompanies. It was the developing awareness of this-- the degree to which the co-operation of 'form' and meaning to express objectivity may produce alternative abstracts of communication in time-- that propelled poets forward in the search for 'forms' completely intrinsic to meaning; that is to say, which could not be reduced to separate repeatable abstractions. In this way they were also helped by the principles of Pragmatism.

## II.I.ii.

The central philosophical tenet of Pragmatism, as put forth by its originator William James, is that the validity of any claim to truth lies in its practical consequences. Beginning with his 1890 volume, *Principles of Psychology*, James continued to develop his particular approach to metaphysics, culminating with the posthumous *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912). Throughout his career, his work was characterized by a high regard for individual discovery and assimilation. These remarks, from the Conclusion to *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1903), are typical:

To learn the secrets of any science, we go to expert specialists, even though they may be eccentric persons, and not to commonplace pupils. We combine what they tell us with the rest of our wisdom, and form our final judgement independently ... We who have pursued such radical expressions ... may now be sure that we know its secrets as authentically as any one can know them who learns them from another ...

--James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>6</sup>

A key element of the radicalism James describes is his insistence that facts are neither true nor false. Instead, James maintains that facts (constituents of Objectivity) simply exist in an irreducible form, about which no certainty can be had. For James, the individuality of empirical truths forms the very strata of the world, whilst the vital factor of philosophical assertion is *faith*. The Objectivity of Idealism is essentially monistic--reducible to a single, composite over-system. James' pluralist viewpoint allows for progress in apprehension in an altogether different manner. Instead of a gradual nearing to the truth of things, in James' view we come to know Objectivity (if at all), only through subjective assessment of its presence or absence in isolated circumstances. Finality in these assessments is impossible, firstly because we cannot rely on our subjective points-of-view, and secondly, because our own faith (subjectivity) contributes to the objectivity of the thing

apprehended. This is because if there is no one pattern (or unity of principles) beneath the things we apprehend, they are not bound to observe any consistent objectivity. As a partial demonstration of this James offers the following case:

*Do you like me or not--* for example. Whether you do or not depends, in countless instances, on whether I meet you half-way, am willing to assume that you must like me, and show you trust and expectation. The previous faith on my part of your liking's existence is in some cases what makes your liking come. But if I stand aloof, and refuse to budge an inch until I have objective evidence ... ten to one your liking never comes ... There are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming

--James, *The Will to Believe* (1905)<sup>7</sup>

This principle can be applied to the example given by Emerson. Emerson's faith in the decasyllabic quatrain as an objectified 'form,' as an objectified communicator of pathos and heroism, as an objectified pattern participating in human physiology ('the pulse'), is justified by its existence and acceptance as such. Credited with the faith of its apprehender, the phenomenon he describes-- his own experience of the 'form'-- is a self-validating account of Objectivity. The corollary to this proposition however, is that Objectivity is not fixed (or fixable) but *evolves*. This is broadly the case that James makes. In his account, the condition of subjectivity makes it appear alone relative to time. However 'truth'-- the apprehension of Objectivity--is progressive, though not always apparently so. He describes the Objectivity which the individual encounters in this way:

The present sheds a backward light on the world's previous processes. They may have been truth-processes for the actors in them. They are not so for one who knows the later revelations of the story. ... Like the half-truths, the absolute-truth will have to be *made*, made as a relation incidental to the growth of a mass of verification-experience, to which the half-true ideas are all along contributing their quota ... I have already insisted on the fact that truth is made largely out of so much experience *funded*. But the beliefs are themselves parts of the sum total of the world's experience, and become matter, therefore, for the next day's funding operations. So far as reality means experience-able reality, both it and the truths men



gain about it are everlastingly in a process of mutation ...

--James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, (1907)<sup>8</sup>

When one applies this principle to the context of his contemporaries' debate surrounding metrical forms, it is possible to see how James' conclusions could lead to the opinion that change-without-precedent in versification is vital progress. Poetry in decasyllabic quatrains, to use one example, will retain its optimum communicative power so long as its audience retains an approximation of the poet's own apprehension of his metre. But if that apprehension changes, as it was seen to do widely in the nineteenth century, an equivalent formal medium must be sought.

The task for poets and prosodists was to find grounds for that medium.

But along with its perspective on form, Pragmatism carried with it a further impetus regarding the direction of progress. That impetus, as I have said, is markedly individualistic.

So much so, that at times it seems almost anti-intellectual:

[The Pragmatist] turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power.

--James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*<sup>9</sup>

Thus for the Pragmatist, progress in reasoning is marked only through the practical application of principles. That this idea could produce widely divergent results was a possibility that James considered immensely profitable. This was largely because he believed that through the rejection of commonplace assumptions, mankind could unlock the gates to a hidden world of realities-- realities which could not be described in any commonplace way. Instead, this world of realities is observable only as a 'stream of consciousness' (James' own term). In this primitivist view,

... the recesses of feeling, the darker, blinder strata of character, are the only places in the world in which we catch the real fact in the

making, and directly perceive how work is actually done. Compared with this world of individualized feelings, the world of generalized objects which the intellect contemplates is without solidity or life.

--James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>10</sup>

Like Emerson, James advocates a turn inwards for the identification of Objectivity. The difference is that, for Emerson, Objectivity is a divinized stasis of perfection, constituents of which, if perceived in conjunction, produce enlightenment (communication); while for James, apprehension of the flux of objectivity is itself sufficient to produce at least the feeling of communication-- realistically, the most we can expect.

These two views-- formal fixity versus formal flux-- are, as I will show, at the core of nineteenth-century prosodic debate in America.

### II.II.i.

American prosodists of the nineteenth century, like their British contemporaries, utilized works from the remote past in their interpretations of existing metrical forms. This is because the Americans also realized that the broadest scope for comparative analysis lay in the range of styles represented by the Anglo-Saxons, Chaucerians and Tudors. However the rancour which characterizes many British prosodists of the period is very unlike the tone of contemporaneous American studies. This may be because America's diverse cultural heritage was itself enough to remove one major point of contention among its British counterparts. That contention being, as I have said, that precision in linguistic practices (such as poetic format) is a reflection of national identity. Instead, America's cultural affiliation with Germany as well as England features prominently in the prosodic works of the period. Two model examples of this are the critical works of Sidney Lanier (1842-1881) and F.B. Gummere (18\*\*-19\*\*)<sup>11</sup>

The works of Francis Gummere show a keen interest in the history of poetic forms in English, particularly the ways in which those forms appear to have developed gradually

out of the styles common to both English and German. In his book, *The Oldest English Epic* (1909), Gummere took the unusual step of translating a part of *Beowulf* alongside the Old German poem *Hildebrand*.<sup>12</sup> By placing the two texts side-by-side, and by stressing the similarities of their metrical styles, Gummere emphasizes their common linguistic heritage. The degree of this similarity is increased further by his translation of the two poems, 'In Original Metres,' treating their metrical practices as, in fact, identical. Elsewhere, in his book, *Germanic Origins* (1892), Gummere poses the question of whether, 'English Literature' is essentially Germanic, Celtic, Classical or Romance.<sup>13</sup> Nowhere does he offer an explicit answer for this question. However, Gummere's position is clear, if not from the titles of his books, then certainly from the emphasis on what he considers the poetic virtues peculiar to the Germanic element in English verse. Among these virtues, is his belief that, 'Substantives, not verbs, are the chief consideration.'<sup>14</sup> This habit, he says, is combined with the use of a strong rhythm (in which metrical, syntactical and 'logical' accents coincide), and with 'tone-color' and parallelism. Citing an earlier author, Gummere believed this rhythmical practice reflected the 'passionately earnest character of the race,' while the parallelism resembles that of Hebrew poetry.<sup>15,16</sup> For Gummere, the vitality of these characteristics ensured their survival throughout the Christian era, despite the diluting effects of Classical and Romance influences, which he saw as alien forces, threatening the further development of the Anglo-Germanic poetic style. In Gummere's estimate, the most definite link with our common poetic ancestry lay in the style of the popular ballad. In his book, *The Popular Ballad* (repr. 1959) Gummere claims the Anglo-Saxon epic as the ultimate source for the ballad, citing their common features as, 'didactic vein ... reflective tendency ... comment on the action, consciously pathetic tone ... attitude towards nature ... control of material ... correlation of parts ... organic conception ... [and] descriptive power.'<sup>17</sup> Likewise, he repeatedly asserts that a peculiarly noticeable feature of Anglo-Saxon, Old German and

ballad verse is the tendency towards sudden transitions, repetition, incremental changes and avoidance of metaphor. As I will show later in this chapter, these features of pre-modern versification all colour his influential *Handbook of Poetics* (1885).

### II.II.ii.

According to William Hayes Ward, the 1892 editor of Sidney Lanier's *Poems*, Lanier was, 'a master of Anglo-Saxon and early English texts,' the study of which gave him 'deep delight.'<sup>18</sup> Lanier's experimental poems, and his 1880 volume, *The Science of English Verse*, (both of which I will discuss more fully in II.II.iv and II.III.i) show the influence of this belief in the common ancestry and kinship of English and German versification. Lanier himself occasionally composed poems in German-- a relatively unusual feat for authors in English.<sup>19</sup> Still, as a proponent of the 'new prosody' of musical scansion, Lanier was most unusual for his insistence that Anglo-Saxon verse was written in a temporal cadence essentially the same as that used by poets as historically diverse as Chaucer, Shakespeare and Tennyson. Lanier's argument rests on a unique treatment of metrical accents. Unlike proponents of accentual metrics (like Gummere), Lanier believed that the rhythm of individual lines is not quantifiable by the number of accents. Similarly, he differs from supporters of scansion-by-metrical-feet, (like Saintsbury), who viewed a line of verse as divisible into distinct units, whose identity was most often determined by the combination of accented and unaccented syllables. Both of these systems regarded the *number* of accented syllables in a line as a fundamental factor in determining metrical identity. For Lanier, however, the chief constituent was the way the line was divisible into time-units, regardless of accent. In this way, he regarded the rhythm of Anglo-Saxon verse (which he describes as 3/8 time) as essentially the same movement as that of iambic verse (which he calls 3/4 time). As both forms exhibit a '3-rhythm' they represent a consistent, progressive and unbroken

development from the sixth century to Lanier's own day.<sup>20</sup> As with Gummere, this historical perspective puts Lanier at odds both with those of his contemporaries (like Saintsbury) whose accounts of English versification placed the origin of the prevailing accentual-syllabic rhythm as the conflation of styles subsequent to the Norman Conquest. Yet while neither Lanier nor Gummere dispute that accentual-syllabic *metre* is a hybrid, both saw the rhythm as primarily a Germanic one.

This particular line of reasoning-- that the rhythm of English verse owes its nature to the survival of Germanic custom within a largely Romance or Classical metric-- also helped to focus the attention of prosodists on the work of Chaucer and the Tudors. The early nineteenth-century work of the English 'Dr. Nott,' whose proposals included a reading of both Chaucer and Wyatt as irregularly cadenced lines of from three to six beats (cf. Chapter One<sup>21</sup>) figured in discussions in America as well as in England.<sup>22</sup> Editions and critical studies of Chaucer, Wyatt and the Elizabethans proliferated in America.<sup>23</sup> Most notably, discussions regarding the place of iambic pentameter within the broader context of English versification become more commonly centered on the issue, not of mensurability (as in England), but of source. Or, to put it briefly, the problem of British prosodists was in identifying the code of an iambic pentameter, while for the Americans, the problem was to test the utility of iambic pentameter insofar as it formed the paradigm of a code.

One interesting fact about American verse of the later nineteenth century is that American poets wrote proportionately far fewer pentameter verses than their British contemporaries.<sup>24</sup> One reason for this, as I have said, may be that despite the views of some American critics, American poets did not share with their British counterparts a sustained cultural impetus towards writing pentameter verses. However, the place of the pentameter as a 'form,' or to use Emerson's terminology, a 'thought' which was a constituent in the organization of the poetic impulse, was undermined also by its supposed status as an

Anglicized Germanic hybrid. Its prominence within the English tradition did not accord well with the view that English verse evolved in unbroken stages from Anglo-Saxon/Germanic versification. Therefore the principles which previously had been described as essential to iambic pentameter increasingly became detached and artificial when applied to actual verse. This process can be traced in the views of American prosodists regarding the scansion of pentameters from several centuries.

Many of these American critics regarded themselves as radicals. A typical example is the self-proclaimed follower of Sidney Lanier, Julia Parker Dabney (18\*\* - 19\*\*) <sup>25</sup> In her book, *The Musical Basis of Verse* (1901), Dabney gives diverse and often confused accounts of the phenomenon of poetic metre. In her description of the pentameter, she repeats familiar dicta:

[it] is composed of a succession of verses, or lines, in *free 2/5 verse* [or five iambs], in each of which lines the pause may be either final, internal, or both final and internal, or in some cases altogether absent. But the typical scheme must reappear with sufficient persistence to dominate the verse and give it the organic stamp, thus preserving its unity.

--Dabney, *The Musical Basis of Verse* <sup>26</sup>

Thus, to continue her metaphor, if verses do not overtly appear to grow from the same root, they lack the prerequisite unity of form which makes them identifiable as pentameter. (This necessity for an *apparent* formal unity, which through recurrence suggests an inherence in the lexis, provides a notional link between Emerson's organicism and Pound's; cf. Chapters Three and Five.) However, some critics were troubled by the infrequency with which that root-form actually occurs in English verse. Gummere, for instance, remarks that,

... the laws of word-accent, the rhetorical emphasis, and the license of double-endings, etc., so modify the scheme that we seldom find a perfect example of the measure.

--Gummere, *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse* (1885) <sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, he believed that,

... there is no good poetry in this measure where the ear does not easily recognize the underlying rhythm of five beats.

--Gummere, *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse*<sup>28</sup>

Clearly the 'ear' to which Gummere appeals in this context is an intellectual one, formed out of the necessity to systematize verses only broadly similar in number of syllables and number of accents. For despite protestations to the contrary, (for example, Gerard Manley Hopkins' 'counterpoint'<sup>29</sup>) it is difficult to believe that a reader or auditor can perceive two distinct aural rhythms simultaneously. Instead, the metrical *gestalt* which contributes to the voicing of the lines is derived both from the rhythm of the syntactical ordering of the words, as well as the expectation of metrical form elicited by the appearance of the text. In the case of the pentameter, as with other named accentual-syllabic metres, those expectations of form are conditioned by the reader's familiarity with previous models of the presumed form. There is thus an aural expectation-- one pentameter will sound relatively like another. Likewise the visual expectation is conditioned by previous examples-- one pentameter will look relatively like another. But it is when these dual expectations become separated from the words' rhythm when voiced that chaos ensues; as, for example, with an intellectual sound-grid of the pentameter, which supposes the reader to "hear" a five-beat rhythm, despite the (perhaps) four or six lexical/syntactical accents of a given line. However, there was also a counter-proposition which saw the pentameter as composed of binary visual units formed independently of sound. Or, at least, this appears to be the scansion offered by American prosodist James C. Parson (18\*\*-19\*\*) <sup>30</sup>

### II.II.iii.

In his 1891 volume, *English Versification*, Parson appears to follow the conventions of scansion by metrical feet. However, what is exceptional in Parson's work is his complete separation of the aural and visual aspects that that system recommends. Generally,

prosodists in English regarded feet like the iamb and trochee as identifiable by the position of an accented syllable within each designated foot. Placed side-by-side, these metrical feet formed an abstract of the sound-contours of the verse. The only exception to this practice, is the pyrrhic. Among Parson's contemporaries, the pyrrhic foot (if its existence in English was granted at all<sup>31</sup>) is ordinarily accounted for as dependent upon an adjacent foot-- that is to say it must come between a cluster of feet dominated by accented syllables, or as a 'substitution.' But if it was a 'substitution,' as in, for example, iambic pentameter, the "missing" accent would necessarily be compensated for by another foot containing two accents. Thus the correct number of accents would be maintained-- five in the case of the pentameter. But Parson takes the extraordinary step of laying down a visual grid of iambs over the pentameter without regard for the situation of accents. Thus the foot divisions of a pentameter are five, evenly spaced every two syllables, with "extra-metrical" syllables being pushed to the spaces at either end. With this grid in place, Parson then noted the accents of the line. In some cases a foot would have two (a spondee), in others none (a pyrrhic). Trisyllabic 'substitution' of feet, (like an anapaest) was impossible, because the basic unit was regarded as disyllabic. The resulting number of accents might be anything from three to six in a pentameter. Parson introduces this subject laconically, with a single line from Shakespeare. Having shown that in some cases the iambic norm may be varied by trochees, he offers a reading prefaced by this explanation:

Or the stroke may be omitted from each syllable, occasionally, the time being carried on in the mind, during the interval. This gives the pyrrhic in the place of an iambus:

New light / ed on / a heav / en-kiss / ing hill. /  
*-Shakespeare*

Here the second foot is a pyrrhic.

Parson, *English Versification*<sup>32</sup>

Once again there are two streams of "rhythm" in each line-- one aural, and one metrical, with the latter 'carried on in the mind' when the vicissitudes of the former preclude



its aural existence. But the question here, is what purpose the foot-divisions serve, as they offer no pattern for the arrangement of accents, nor offer any suggestion about how the line should be voiced. Quite the contrary, as Parson realized, they may suggest a voicing detrimental to any interpretation based wholly on lexical, syntactical or rhetorical emphasis.

Owing to the large number of particles in English, the pyrrhic is a foot of very common occurrence. Some writers on verse are accustomed to mark the pyrrhic with an accent like the other feet in the line, calling it a metrical accent as distinguished from the true accent. But this leads to a sing-song, scanning movement, which detracts the gracefulness of the natural reading.

--Parson, *English Versification*<sup>33</sup>

The answer must be that Parson viewed the chief facts of the pentameter as its approximation of ten syllables and its predominately iambic movement *only*. (Parson's style of scansion, and his fears for its potential for damage to voicing, are both echoed by Eliot--cf. Chapters Three and Four.)

*what he calls*

This is suggested further by his reading of Coleridge's 'Mont Blanc.' Here is a portion of Parson's scansion, with his comments:

Hast thóu / a charm / to stáy / the morn / ing star /  
 In his / steép course? / So long / he seems / to paúse /  
 On thý / bald aw / ful head, / O sov / ran Blanc! /  
 The Ar / ve and / Arvéi / ron at / thy base /  
 Rave ceás / lessly; / but thóu, / most aw / ful form! /  
 Risest / from forth / thy sí / lent seá / of piñes /  
 How sí / lently! ...

[Overall] in sixteen lines of five feet each, which would regularly contain eighty iambs in this kind of metre, we find fifty-seven iambs, enough to give the iambic movement.

--Parson, *English Versification*<sup>34</sup>

In this way Parson assimilated the visual construct of foot-scansion (in the abstract, 16x5=80 iambs) with the 'new prosody's' precept of isochronous hierarchies. Parson's pentameters are distinguishable by their predominately iambic movement, as well as a syllabic divisibility that ensures each foot and each line will take roughly the same time to pronounce, regardless of how many syllables are accented. This puts his view broadly in

line with Lanier's, that being that rhythmic regularity is not signalled by accent alone, but is 'carried on in the mind.' The difference in their views is that Parson suggests that frequent repetition of one pattern of accents (iamb) over the space of a whole text determines its rhythm. By contrast, Lanier asserts that the overall rhythm depends on a complex network of 'proportionate' durations that we instinctively assign to syllables.

Nevertheless, Parson's views most nearly reflect the tenor of late nineteenth-century metrical discussion in America. For Parson, as for Emerson, the 'form' of poetic expression has an existence independent of the texts in which it occurs. Its appearance signals to both author and audience a complex of responses operating in concert with other features of the poem. However, unlike Emerson, Parson's concept of 'form' is not one of an altogether unchanging presence, or even one uniquely present in each new context. Instead the definition of 'form' which Parson offers is one with multiple dimensions. On the one hand, its presence is signalled by one set of criteria (isosyllabism, or a visual construct); but its coalescence with other abstract generative 'thoughts' which constitute the poem depends upon its unobtrusiveness (irregular accentuation, or an aural variable). This split in the perception of poetic 'form,' and the grotesque attempt to avoid it, either through the application of proscriptive scansion, or the rigid adherence to "traditional" formats, led irreversibly to the violent reaction against identifiable metrical 'form' at the end of the nineteenth, and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

#### **II.II.iv.**

Even before that turning-point was reached, however, there was a growing awareness among American critics that their work was unlike that of their British contemporaries. Dabney remarks that, compared to British Prosodists,

When we turn to American teachers we find them much more radical; yet, though they discard the old, they have not found their way to the new.

--Dabney, *The Musical Basis of Verse*<sup>35</sup>

As James Robertson says in his *New Essays Towards a Critical Method* (1897), this obvious groping about was made worse by the arcane tone adopted by many authors:

And the best of our professional prosodists, by their confident affirmation of things unintelligible, only deepen our distrust.

--Robertson, *New Essays Towards a Critical Method*<sup>36</sup>

Often, despite the radicalism touted by Dabney, there is the appeal to the convention of poetry as a "higher" art-- one that demands greater attention to elevating details.

Telescoping her remarks on poetic 'form,' Dabney's description is typical:

But what *is* form? Is it not expression *per se*; the reduction of the abstract to the concrete? Can anything tangible exist without form? ...Over the inconceivableness of chaos moved the inspiration of divine thought, evolving therefrom the conceivable--organization, measure, proportion, symmetry, co-ordination; in another word *form*.

*Form, then, is merely the law of expression....*

Form being the law of expression, we cannot then, if we are to express ourselves at all, escape the use of form; we can only choose between a good form and a bad form, a lower form and a higher form, a beautiful form and an ugly form, an adapted form and an uncouth or incongruous form. ... says Eckermann, ... ["]Form is handed down, learned, imitated; otherwise progress in art would be out of the question,-- everyone would have to begin anew."

--Dabney, *The Musical Basis of Verse*<sup>37</sup>

Much like Eliot's remarks in 'Reflections on Vers Libre' (1917) regarding the inescapability of formal structures (cf. Chapter Three), there are a number of implicit ideals curiously juxtaposed in Dabney's definition. Like both Emerson and James, she confidently asserts that tangible art is impossible without 'form' of some kind. Like Emerson, she regards 'form' platonically-- the good-equals-the-beautiful-- and to be beautiful, it must be apt. The difference between her view and Emerson's, is the element of volition she ascribes to the artist. For Dabney, the artist *chooses* the form, while for Emerson, the form is self-determining. For both, it is an ideal; for both it is perceived through the recollection of

prior example ("handed down, learned"). But for Emerson, its aptness is a revelation coinciding with the creative impulse. Finally, Dabney's approval of the statement that without this method of acquiring an awareness and mastery of form each artist would have to begin again, puts her squarely at odds with James, who suggests that this is precisely what artists habitually do. (For the compromise between these views as worked out by Eliot, see Chapters Three and Four; for Pound's, as seconded by T.E. Hulme, see Chapters Three and Five.)

Nevertheless, such an impressionistic grasp of the philosophical issues involved in composition is typical among authors of this period. In his *Poetry as a Representative Art* (1909), George Lansing Raymond also endorses this view of poetic form. But Raymond expands the notion to include such other features of "poetic" technique as inversion and archaic diction:

The *transposition* of words, called too *inversion* and *hyperbaton*, is also, like the insertion of them, a development of a tendency not only legitimate but essential to the highest excellence, whenever the thought can be thus more strikingly represented; ... [the poet] must use a special poetic diction. In doing this two things are incumbent upon him. The first is to choose from the mass of language words that have *poetic associations*. All our words convey definite meanings not only, but accompanying suggestions, and some of them are very unpoetic.

--Raymond, *Poetry as a Representative Art*<sup>38</sup>

The effect of these suggestions is, of course, to highlight the altogether artificial application of self-consciously "poetic" structure-- that is to say, to provide a recognizability of the poem suitable to its genre. Dabney's injunction that form is referable to an abstract code which is derived from sources alien to the lexis of the poem, if combined with Raymond's desire for striking effects produced by verbal artifice, constitute a formula for a poetic style of pure surface appeal. It is therefore hardly surprising that the generation which saw the triumph of such a style in America has been described as that of the 'Genteel Tradition.'<sup>39</sup>

Still, the isolation of the "poetic" nature of poetic form was accomplished further by prosodists' insistence that arrangements of sound in accordance with a visually pre-determined pattern possess a semantic role independent of the semantic value of the lexis. Thus, to give an example, the first of these arrangements of syllables, if spoken aloud, will produce an emotional response in the reader which the second arrangement of the same syllables cannot:

Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de  
 Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum  
 Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de  
 Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum

Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de  
 Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum Dum de  
 Dum-de Dum-de  
 Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum-de Dum

Experience would teach the poet ways of varying the pattern of sounds in the first instance to produce further different emotional effects-- a feat also impossible to the prose author. Lanier offers an experiment to describe this process when he says that words which make no sense in the context of a poem may be substituted for others which share an identical arrangement of accents, alliteration or assonance:

...--words of some foreign language not understood by the experimenter being the most effective for this purpose. Upon repeating aloud the poem thus treated it will be found that the verse structure has not been impaired. If, therefore, the ear accepts as perfect verse a series of words from which ideas are wholly absent,-- that is to say, a series of sounds-- it is clear that what we call "verse" is a set of specifically related sounds, ...

Lanier, *The Science of English Verse*<sup>40</sup>

Lanier's definition of "'verse'" as 'a set of specifically related sounds,' implies that sound-relationships alone are responsible for enacting part of a poem's form-- that they in fact *embody* a part of its meaning. But the divorce of sound-meaning from lexis-meaning focuses attention upon why identical sets of syllables produce different rhythmical blocks if

positioned differently-- that is to say, are identical words printed in one way poetry, and in a different way prose?

Both Lanier and Gummere agree that poetry involves a regularizing of sound intervals. For Lanier, this regularity consists in the periodicity of similar sound-groups: all syllables produce *some* sound, the existence of which is proportionate to that of other syllables. If carefully arranged, these proportional shadings, with or without accents, constitute the regularity that rhythm demands.<sup>41</sup> For Gummere, it is the tendency of accents to be evenly spaced *in time* that provides this regularity-- that is to say, regardless of the number of unaccented syllables separating them, the spacing of accents alone determines the limits of rhythm.<sup>42</sup> But however certain Gummere is about rhythm, he hesitates over identifying it with metre. For Lanier, metre is the measurement of the larger rhythmical blocks (lines) constituted of proportionate sound intervals (syllables). Thus,

$$o / o / o = \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{d.} / \text{♩} \text{d.} / \text{♩} \text{d.}$$

is correct for Lanier, while for Gummere, the lines

Break, Break, Break,  
On thy cold, grey stones, O sea, ...

are equivalent because they share an equal number of accents. The difficulty with both views, however, comes when they are applied to lines like those from Coleridge's 'Mont Blanc' as quoted above in the context of Parson's analysis (II.II.iii). As Parson knew, Gummere would be forced to promote the accents in some lines to account for their approximate isochrony. Lanier, by contrast, would say that the lines are equivalent because we measure the our pronunciation instinctively, giving a proportionate duration to the syllables of each line. But if this process of measurement is carried on unconsciously (that is, not signalled by something countable like accent), how do we consciously become aware of the regularity it implies? Is it possible that without meaning to do so, we read a printed text in such a way that we sensitively measure the relative duration of individual syllables,

instantaneously adjusting them as necessary to produce a regularity of metrical beats independent of the words' accents?

While Lanier's scheme is derived from the analogy of poetry and music, the relative time values of notes and rests, which Lanier is forced to equate with syllables and pauses, is fixed in music in a way that is isn't in language. Lanier's musical beat, which falls on the first note of each measure without altering the duration of that note, is not really an apt comparison to a metrical beat falling on a particular syllable. This is because musical notes are determined by a combination of pitch and duration only, while spoken syllables also depend upon the accent which produces them. The complex relationship of sounds that words initiate, measurable if those words are reduced to meaningless syllables, is less so when those syllables relate to one another in ways that musical notes cannot. For a musician reading a musical text, the musical code is essentially one of sound, or absence of sound; there is no "meaning" in the notes which could survive their being transcribed in a different way. By contrast, the semantic relationship of words, insofar as it is determined by the lexical definitions and their grammatical position, is not altered by an alternative printing (allowing, of course, for the role of lineation in heightening the ambiguity of words spanning line-endings). For this reason, the "over-rhythm" of proportionate reading that Lanier proposes is an insufficient explanation of the apprehension of metre in accentual-syllabic verse.

The issue became still more vexing when it was observed that without either the building-blocks of metrical feet or regularly-spaced accents, both of which could be counted, that *anything* can be scanned. If the key to the difference between poetry and prose lay in poetry's supposed regularity, the question remained, regularity of what? Still, as I said in Chapter One, there remained the desire to devise a single system which could be proven to possess a limited *generative* capacity equal to every extant type of versification.

The grand failures in this quest exist because of the irreconcilable extremes inherent in the goal. For example, the reality that all such systems are, at least in part, arbitrary, appears in works such as Parson's. By acknowledging that the visual grid has only a limited relationship to the aural facts of a pentameter, Parson was in advance of his contemporaries. Such a split, however, once made, is impossible to mend. As I have shown, Emerson carried the rhythm of the decasyllabic quatrain in his head as an abstract pattern of sounds. Likewise, Lanier asserted that fixed visual constructs of such patterns have a semantic role distinguishable from that of the lexis from which they are formed. Combining these ideas, it is clear how insurmountable was the difficulty in ascertaining what that semantic role is/has been for everyone who has ever possessed it from Chaucer until now. As this became more widely understood, the need for a single descriptive mode became irrelevant. The Pragmatic view, that 'form' is not fixed, but rather that it is alterable, demonstrated that the generative powers of 'form,' received or instigated, might prove to be one thing for Chaucer and another for Milton. The further effect of this understanding was to open the door to investigations of what it meant to each poet, as well as how such information could be used (or ignored) by later poets. In this way, the power to form metre itself was put into the hands of poets. What I wish to examine next are some important early examples of how this was done by poets writing in America at this time.

### II.III.i.

It is useful to remember at this point that Gummere's *Handbook of Poetics* (1885) and Parson's *English Versification* (1891) were both written as textbooks. The fact that neither of these books proffers scansion by metrical feet in a way like earlier volumes, together with the sometimes relieved tone of reviewers of Lanier's *The Science of English Verse* (1880), can be taken as an indication of the extent to which the drive for a revisionist



approach to poetic format was gaining momentum in America at this time. Still, when the verse of American poets from the period is compared to that of the British contemporaries, the actual volume of experimentation was considerably less in America than in Britain. It was as if in Britain, the desire for new ideas was strongest among the poets, while in America, it was strongest among prosodists.

Given this situation, the metrical experiments of late nineteenth-century American poets assume a special significance. One important factor, is that while experimentation is less widespread, when it does occur, it often of a particularly radical nature. The majority of American poets, if they showed any inclination to experiment at all, generally produced formats comparable to their British peers. Examples include the numerous accentually irregular decasyllables of Lanier, James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) and James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916),<sup>43</sup> the uneven couplets of Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862),<sup>44</sup> and the Irregular Odes of Lanier and Lowell.<sup>45</sup> Some poets, notably Herman Melville (1819-1891), produced almost no verse which was "unmetrical" by the standards of foot-scansion.<sup>46</sup> But clearly the most significant departures from such verse are the works of Walt Whitman (1819-1892), Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Stephen Crane (1871-1900).

### II.III.ii.

While an entire critical literature has developed around defining the principles of Whitman's metric, I believe it is important to remember that *Leaves of Grass* (1855, etc.) made an important contribution within the context of nineteenth-century American prosodic discussion.

Perversely, perhaps, Whitman's mastery of his own peculiar technique is best exemplified when he combined it with conventional features like rhyme. Here is an example from his 1871 poem, 'Ethiopia Saluting the Colors':

Who are you dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,  
 With your woolly white and turban'd head and bare, bony feet?  
 Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colors greet?  
 --Whitman, 'Ethiopia Saluting the Colors,'  
*Leaves of Grass*<sup>47</sup>

The accentual regularity of these lines, (the entire poem is written in this manner), is uncharacteristic of Whitman. The lines are clearly fourteeners, the first internally rhymed ('woman ... human'), the last two end-rhymed, ('feet ... greet'). But Whitman also manipulates the rhythm of the poem in concert with the rhymes in order to signal the prominence of certain accents within each phrase. The need to hear the rhymes effects a closure to the rhythm of the sentences; so much so that it is almost impossible to voice the lines with a dominant syntactical (as opposed to merely "metrical") emphasis, because of the tendency to minimize those accents which threaten to destabilize the implied rhythmical balance between verse segments. Writing without rhyme, Whitman's usual practice, asks that whole lines, even whole passages, be weighed against one another in the same way. By maintaining an obvious lineation, and thus implying imminent rhythmical closure, the expectation funded by recognition of formal elements (like alliteration) is manipulated, while the actual experience of that closure is effected through the fusion of syntactical rhythm, rhetorical parallelism and visual format only. But it is the arousal of this expectation (as well as its consequent satisfaction) that distinguishes Whitman's verse from prose. Likewise this shows Whitman's engagement with previous metrical writing. The response of Whitman's critics to the extent of that engagement, and its particular relevance to Pound's early career, will be taken up again in Chapter Three.

## II.III.iii.

Throughout her very private career as a poet, Emily Dickinson showed an amazing tenacity with regard to poetic format. With few exceptions, her work is comprised of three- and four-beat lines, rhymed either in pairs or in quatrains. But while this may seem self-limiting, it is also an affirmation of the role of form-recognizability. For if Dickinson's poems show little or no inclination to stray from the paths of accentual-syllabic metre, her exploitation of that metre's "traditions" is consummate. Rhymes become half-rhymes, assonances and "eye-rhymes" unpredictably, and patterns of lines are arrested suddenly by truncated phrases. This degree of obvious formal self-consciousness was extraordinary in its time. *Poems by Emily Dickinson, First Series*, appeared in 1890, to be followed by a Second and Third Series in 1891 and 1896. All three were widely discussed, particularly in the literary circle surrounding William Dean Howells (1837-1920).

But certainly the distinguishing feature of Dickinson's poetry, given that her preferred format was the "common-measure" of hymns and popular songs, was the singular way words and clauses relate. For instance, parataxis, ellipsis and hyperbaton all appear with an unusual frequency. Here is an example, first published in 1896:

Split the lark-- and you'll find the Music--  
 Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled--  
 Scantly dealt to the Summer Morning  
 Saved for your Ear when Lutes be old.

Loose the Flood-- you shall find it patent--  
 Gush after Gush, reserved for you--  
 Scarlet experiment! Sceptic Thomas!  
 Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?

--Dickinson, *Poems of Emily Dickinson, Third Series*<sup>48</sup> reprinted in *Emily Dickinson: The Complete Poems*, ed. Thomas H. Jackson (1975)

Here the separation of visual and aural elements, as exemplified by Parson, is carried out in a different way. While the words and metrical schema of the poem are intimately related, each seems to have a function of its own-- twin roles that are mutually exclusive. For instance, it would be very difficult for anyone reading the poem for the first time to unravel

the complex imagery as it is carried forward relentlessly by the poem's rhythm. If the lexis carries with it a part of the poem's "meaning," then a part of that "meaning" is obscured by the insistence of the rhythm. Yet if the rhythm too has a "meaning" (cf. Lanier), then perhaps Dickinson is ~~implying~~ that that "meaning" is alterable, depending upon its presentation in every case (cf. James). But even this point does not completely contradict Emerson. Emerson believed that some rhythms are associated with some feelings (for example, decasyllabic quatrains and pathos), and Dickinson appears to agree-- "common-measure" ironically coupled to *every* feeling deliberately heightens sensitivity to the "meaning" of each, as well as to the "meaning" of their conjunction. In this way Dickinson suggests that such "meanings" are not intrinsic to the 'forms,' but rather an aptitude for discovering such "meanings" is intrinsic to the audience of those 'forms.' As such then, for Dickinson, recognizable 'forms' constituted a further medium of art which could be adapted to suit particular purposes. This particular dimension of Dickinson's work can be seen therefore as an early example of an attitude which, as I will show in Chapter Four, was important in Eliot's early poems.

#### II.III.iv.

Another early example of the widening gulf between the visual and aural experiences of the text is the work of Stephen Crane. It was after Crane's introduction to Dickinson's poems (probably by Howells<sup>49</sup>), that he published his first collection of poems, *The Black Rider and Other Lines* (1895). This collection was remarkable for several reasons. First, there is the look of the words on the page. Each poem is printed in capital letters only, untitled, with one poem per page and nothing to indicate what relationship (if any) they bore one another. Secondly, the lines are completely unrhymed, of irregular length-- both in

number of syllables and number of accents-- and they lack even the rhetorical parallelism of Whitman's verse. As an example, here is poem '3':

IN A DESERT  
 I SAW A CREATURE, NAKED, BESTIAL,  
 WHO, SQUATTING UPON THE GROUND,  
 HELD HIS HEART IN HIS HANDS,  
 AND ATE OF IT.  
 I SAID, 'IS IT GOOD, FRIEND?'  
 'IT IS BITTER, BITTER,' HE ANSWERED.  
 'BUT I LIKE IT BECAUSE IT IS BITTER,  
 AND BECAUSE IT IS MY HEART.'

--Crane, *The Black Rider and Other Lines*,<sup>50</sup> reprinted in  
*The Poems of Stephen Crane*, ed. Joseph Katz (1971)

Each line forms a complete syntactical unit, and the overall structure represents an

incremental build-up of sub-units. Without a nameable metrical format, or even a dominant repetitive rhythm, Crane's contemporary critics debated what kind of writing this was.<sup>51</sup> But the challenge Crane offered is twofold: that it is the poet who determines the integrity of metrical segmentation, with or without obvious reference to an abstract 'form'; and that the primary relationship of such segments is to one another, in a context that is essentially reflexive. Both of these points are clearly contentious, for without rhyme, fixed syllable- or accent-count, large-scale rhetorical parallelism, Crane's poems are decidedly "unmetrical" by virtually all of the prevailing standards. Nevertheless, the existence of such texts, and the enthusiasm with which they were debated, indicates that an important transformation in prosodic ideals was in progress.

#### II.IV.i.

The extent of this transformation can be seen by a look at the critical reactions to Saintsbury's *A History of English Prosody*, around the years of its publication, 1906-1910. Among other things, Saintsbury's critics rebuked him for the lofty authorial manner characterizing his approach to the subject:

The style of the book is a distinct handicap to the student.  
 --*Athenaeum*, 1908<sup>52</sup>

Let us-- to get the statement out of the way-- begin by saying that Professor Saintsbury cannot write.

--*English Review*, 1908<sup>53</sup>

Of Professor Saintsbury's prose it is a kindness to say the least possible.

--*Edinburgh Review*, 1911<sup>54</sup>

More damaging, however, was the critics' awareness that the method of analysis Saintsbury proposed as a unifying factor of English verse from medieval to modern times, the "tradition" of foot-scansion, was itself a conglomerate of unexplained assumptions. Taking as an example the reviews from the *Athenaeum*, initially one of Saintsbury's most sympathetic supporters, it is possible to see how the pressures exerted by the 'new prosody' were forcing critics to question the discrepancies of foot-scansion. First, despite the positive tone of the 1906 review of Saintsbury's Volume I, the reviewer wonders laconically if Saintsbury's view of metrical feet is *truly* irreconcilable with the 'new prosody's' scansion by metrical accents (cf. below, II.IV.iii-iv).<sup>55</sup> Similar murmurings cloud the 1908 review, cited above, but with the completion of the work in 1910, the *Athenaeum* reviewer declares despondently,

All through this work ... we have been told that English verse consists of feet, but we have never been told what an English foot consists of. ... with the best will in the world we do not understand. ... Professor Saintsbury has not founded his book on a theory, but has drawn a theory from his book.

--*Athenaeum*, 1910<sup>56</sup>

Likewise, Saintsbury's contemporary prosodists, while universal in their homage to his erudition, were equally dismissive of his conclusions and methodology:

... most readers of these volumes will share my surprise at the resolute way in which their author declines to discuss the phenomena he chronicles. ... It was surely incumbent upon him to express opinions of some sort, to say on what foundation he conceives his doctrine of "equivalence" to rest. No such foundation is described. ... His scansions are a glorious higgledy-piggledy of iambs and trochees, or dactyls and anapaests, without any clue given as to how these can be interchangeable. He does not only not know how "feet" are constituted, but he resolutely refuses

to inquire.

--T.S. Omond, *English Metrists* (1921)<sup>57</sup>

The tenor of these remarks shows how far literary analysis was moving away from the regions of sophisticated response, towards a more determinedly precise textual (and contextual) appraisal.

Still, the persistent desire for a reliable measurement, together with the notion of poetry as an experience of *sound* as distinct from the *sound* of prose, combined to make temporal metrics a widely adopted alternative to foot-scansion. Temporal metrics focused attention on how a passage of verse ought to be read aloud. Considering the terms in which it is typically described, to many would-be readers of verse, the difficulty must have seemed quite daunting:

Coleridge and Wordsworth read their own blank verse in the chanting manner, and so did Tennyson, but the method is antiquated, and there is now only the faintest suggestion of chanting on a key different from ordinary conversation left in the reading of poetry. The line structure is marked more delicately, but it must still be marked more distinctly. Otherwise the poem falls to pieces.

--James Wilson Bright and Raymond Durbin Miller,  
*The Elements of English Versification* (1910)<sup>58</sup>

Like Saintsbury, Bright and Miller show a cavalier disregard for what they considered the poets' own way of reading their verses, recommending one style as suited to all. Yet problematic texts like *Paradise Lost*, demanded even more "delicacy" in voicing.

Here is an example of these authors' suggestion for reading Milton:

Rocks, <sup>ˈ</sup>caves, lakes, <sup>ˈ</sup>fens, bogs, <sup>ˈ</sup>dens, and shades <sup>ˈ</sup>of death <sup>ˈ</sup>.

--Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II.621

This reading is recommended because, 'the monosyllabic words, ... occur in properly placed pairs, [therefore] the alternate stresses demanded by measured rhythm seemingly become more natural ...'<sup>59</sup> I assume that 'properly placed pairs' means that the total of monosyllabic words is evenly divisible. But even granting Bright and Miller's view that 'poetry is to be read as poetry, not as prose,'<sup>60</sup> I cannot see how such a voicing is suggested by either the

lexis or syntax of Milton's line. Instead, the authors have allowed their interpretation of Milton's metre (in this case, iambic pentameter) to become simply a handhold in an otherwise rhythmically ambiguous line. By doing so, however, they postulate a metre that is virtually irrelevant to the syntax of the line (thus why should 'caves' be accented in a way that 'lakes' is not?) and one incapable of generating this "metrical" line, but not other, apparently identical, "unmetrical" lines (or *any* string of monosyllables could be scanned in the same way, but why not 'Bogs, bogs, bogs, bogs, bogs, bogs, and shades of death'?) The conflict here is in attempting to reconcile two concepts of metre: one as a visually accountable phenomenon (like foot scansion), and another as registered primarily by sound (like accent-counting). An important alternative to this attempted reconciliation is that the paradigm of metrical sound is *merely* an ideal, never fully manifested, yet constantly approximated in voicing. This controversial view was proposed by Bernhard Ten Brink in his book *The Language and Metre of Chaucer* (trans. by M.B. Smith, 1901).

#### II.IV.ii.

Ten Brink's own proposed compromise was between giving precedence to the accentuation of words by reference to their supposed metrical context, and to that of their syntactical and grammatical relationship, regardless of their visual format.

... in delivery a compromise must be attempted of such a character that the hearer remains conscious both of the natural accentuation and of the claims of the rhythm--level stress-- veiled rhythm.

--Ten Brink, *The Language and Metre of Chaucer*<sup>61</sup>

The difference here between Ten Brink's view and that of Bright and Miller cited earlier, is that Ten Brink does not suggest that the reader 'delicately' foreground the (visually characterized) metre of the poem in voicing it, but rather that if 'natural accentuation' (or lexical accent) and 'the claims of rhythm' (or syntactical emphasis) are observed, then the metre of the poem will surface as a muted, or 'veiled rhythm.' In this way, Ten Brink is



proposing not two rhythms heard simultaneously, but rather one rhythm which is constantly approximating an aural ideal, for which a visual ideal is superfluous. However, as the metrical segmentation Ten Brink outlined was basically incompatible with visual transcription, prosodists like Omond and Saintsbury asked how, in passages of extreme rhythmical variation (for example, like some in *Paradise Lost*) it was possible to ascertain any single aural paradigm capable of defining the poem's metre. Or, to use an example cited by Omond, what is the 'veiled [metrical] rhythm' which identifies these lines as being uniformly iambic pentameter?

Immutable, immortal, infinite.

Fountain of light, thyself invisible.

Hail, Son of God, saviour of men, thy name--

--Cited by Omond, *English Metrists*<sup>62</sup>

Omond's own proposal was that all metre is relative, first to individual poets, and then to individual poems, and that an aural paradigm cannot be deduced from any other criteria.

Or, in other words, that we hear no 'veiled rhythm,' no approximated constant, but instead re-create metre (as the poet "created" it initially) by voicing the text in accordance with the visual signals offered by the format as they are themselves representative of language's inherent tendency towards repetition-- in essence, Omond suggested a repetition of isochronous segments demonstrates metrical unity. This suggestion was among the most intriguing ones offered by temporal metrics.

#### II.IV.iii.

For twenty-five years (1897-1921) Omond produced a stream of works reflecting the principles of temporal metrics. He was particularly fond of collecting the ideas of others upon prosody. His *English Metrists* includes a lengthy bibliography (with notes) of every metrical study and poetic experiment he encountered.<sup>63</sup> But Omond's own principles are few. His central tenet is that a poem is "metrical" if the time taken to voice its constituent

verses is symmetrically proportionate. His explanation of the difficult lines from Milton cited above, is that when voiced, they share a time ratio relative to one another, and to the rest of the poem. This is explainable because each poem creates its own rhythmic constant in terms of voicing *only*. The features of this time-structure are stanzas, lines and 'periods.' The function of each of these units is to make the reader aware of the poem's overall regularity. The only one of these features not always visually choreographed is the isochronous 'period':

Every period contains one and only one syllable of stronger accentuation, and these usually alternate with others of weaker accentuation. But this is far from being an absolute law.

--Omond, *A Study of Metre* (1920)<sup>64</sup>

Omond's refusal to say with the accentualists that accent alone marks time, is based on his approval of the four-beat lines in, for instance, Milton. His 'periodicity' is enough to relate one line to another, and each to the whole. As he says elsewhere,

... time can be felt, even when not signaled [sic] by accent, and every period need not necessarily contain a syllable of dominant stress.

--Omond, *English Metrists*<sup>65</sup>

His insistence on this principle led him to assert in *A Study of Metre* that he could only name the metre of the line, 'From the unknown sea to the unknown shore,' if he knew whether its context was pentameter or tetrameter. This proposition that a line's metrical identity is also a reflection of its neighbours'-- that in fact, depending upon the 'time' demanded of it, there may be more than one *metrical* way of voicing it-- shows how far Omond differed from his rival prosodists. Even proponents of musical scansion viewed individual syllables as proportionate. Thus for Lanier, a line's rhythm is determined by the relative duration of the syllables it contains-- one line, one scansion. But because Omond began with a unit larger than the syllable, but not determined either by accent or a terminology that links syllables into a limited set of patterns, his system could be described as a hierarchical structure of

relative durations. Nevertheless, like his rivals, Omond's systems cannot fully accommodate the variables arising from the reception of poetry as *printed* material.

Omond was clearly aware of the effect that an altered visual presentation makes on a reader's perception of a poem.

Here, at the outset, we find precisely what differentiates verse from prose. ... The units of prose are diverse, irregular in length, rarely conformed to a common pattern. In verse, on the other hand, succession is continuous. Something recurs with regularity. ... Typical recurrence, uniform repetition, is the prime postulate of metre.

--Omond, *A Study of Metre*<sup>66</sup>

The 'units' to which Omond refers are time-units, the regular succession of which differentiates verse from prose. Since these time-units, or 'periods,' do not necessarily include an accented syllable, it is important to inquire what they may, or may not, consist of, which makes their 'succession' known to the reader. There must be *something* that signals their occurrence, otherwise the experience of metrical 'time' could not be perceived with the 'uniform repetition' necessary to make the proportions of the poem evident. Omond's answer is that the poem's 'periods' are in part commensurate with its visual aspect. An obvious essential in this respect is the way lineation effects the reader's placement of pauses in voicing.

#### II.IV.iv.

It may be helpful at this point to recall the perspectives of accentualists, foot- and musical-scansionists on the issue of a poem's lineation. As I said in I.I.ix, Saintsbury occasionally discusses the possibility of re-arranging the lines of some poems, when he believed such a re-arrangement would not affect the voicing of the poem. Nevertheless, Saintsbury's scansion technique had no apparatus for describing the effect of pauses within a poem. There is a tacit awareness that lineation *can* effect the voicing of poetry, but for

Saintsbury such variables could not affect the measurement of the poem's essentially syllable-based metre. Likewise, accentual prosodists, like Gummere, whose task it was to count accents only, tended to proceed word-by-word; that is, when a poet reached the correct tally of accented syllables for the presumed metre, he began a new line. Musical scansionists, like Lanier and Dabney, who show considerable sensitivity in rendering the subtle pauses and durations of syllables *within* each line, show little regard for the differences produced by endstopping and enjambement.<sup>67</sup>

By contrast, Omond is keenly aware of the effects that presentation has on voicing:

The prosodial [sic] question is, what determines the length of a line? ... Is it a matter of indifference, or of caprice? If we heard the poem instead of reading it, should we know where the lines end? Or is there no principle involved, and may the printer exercise his choice in the arrangement? ... A poem is itself a whole, but either author or printer usually divides it into lines for our convenience in reading. ... The true point is, supposing a poem came to us without any division at all, could we for ourselves arrange it into lines-- would these reveal themselves as the units of rhythm do, while we read or listen?

--Omond, *A Study of Metre*<sup>68</sup>

Omond's scepticism in this passage highlights the complexity of his position. While I might agree that a poem is a 'whole,' I would disagree that it is a series of lines merely for my convenience in reading it. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any text is ever written as a 'whole' without first emerging successively as parts of that whole. Presentation may or may not reflect accurately the steps by which it was conceived, but it forces me to consider it in a way that it did not force Omond. Omond quotes from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' asking if the first example is really the "same" text as the originally-printed format which follows:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free;  
We were the first that ever burst into that silent sea--

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free;  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea--

Omond believed that they were not, not because Coleridge printed the second version, but because the second is a better reflection of the poem's rhythm. Yet every reader's perception of the potential for a repetition of rhythmical effects in a poem is in some measure proof of an involvement with the text. Such involvement is conditioned by the poem's format, insofar as it invites comparison to similar experiences; those similar experiences arouse further formal expectations; and we experience tension until those expectations are satisfied. However, that is not a license to reconstruct the text in accordance with those expectations.

But this is what Omond suggests that habitually we do. The excuse he offers for us is that we perceive elements of the text *only* through an awareness of similar texts that preceded it in our experience. This is manifest in our ability to find 'units of rhythm' in a text that does not deliberately foreground them (prose). For Omond, the ability marks the split between dual levels of semantic reception: that is, the text is an inscription of sound-patterns to which we respond independently of our response to the lexis. This concept itself is not unusual (cf. Eliot in Chapters Three and Four), although the degree of separation Omond imposes on these responses is. He proceeds very cautiously in this manner, pointing out the mistakes of others:

Patmore, who upheld the view just referred to,  
contended that one of his own poems,

How strange it is to wake  
And watch while others sleep--

owed its specially solemn and mournful effect to the fact that each line was followed by a pause equal to the time of two syllables. His friend Tennyson ridiculed this theory, and set himself to disprove it by composing comic lines in the same measure.

--Omond, *A Study of Metre*<sup>69</sup>

For Omond then, it was not that each 'period' had a semantic role quantifiable without reference to the lexis, but rather that their individual formal structures (syntax and 'units of rhythm') are distinct. This is seen best in his description of the pauses in verse:

We make pauses in reading verse, to bring out the meaning, or merely to draw breath. Some writers have tried to see in these a foundation of verse-structure. ... Such theories seem to confuse the delivery of verse with its essential rhythm. The pauses we make in reading poetry are voluntary and optional; one reader makes them and another leaves them out; the same reader will vary them at different times. These surely cannot be parts of its structure. ... It is something imposed on the line from without; something which affects the sense and expression of the line, not its substance.

--Omond, *A Study of Metre*<sup>70</sup>

Omond suggests here that the reader's perception of the 'sense and expression of the line' are features of individual 'delivery'-- an experience that is transcended by the 'substance' of the poem's 'verse-structure.' This, of course, implies that the 'verse structure' precedes the 'sense and expression' in terms of the poem's composition-- which in metres like iambic pentameter it does-- and that rhythm is the basis of 'verse structure.' But if this is so, at least in these terms, the reader is faced with the rhythm of the 'structure' and the rhythm of the 'expression.' Omond clearly assigns *metrical* priority to the former, but how are the two to be reconciled?

His answer, as seen in the above quotation from Coleridge, is that there is an ideal lineation that will serve best to highlight the rhythms of a text-- rhythms which the reader can then locate instinctively, based on an ability to relate each new text to previous ones. This ideal lineation, Omond believed, could be discovered by readers or listeners to the text who are sensitive enough to mark those pauses in the voicing of the poem which signal the 'periodicity' of its 'units of rhythm.' *All "true" lines of verse are followed by a pause:*

Nothing else will avail to discriminate them. And the first answer must be that only such lines are true units, all others being merely matters of convenience.

--Omond, *A Study of Metre*<sup>71</sup>

Thus the 'periods,' which for Omond distinguish verse from prose, are signalled by pauses, the proportionate distances between which are highlighted most often by accents which similarly bore a proportionate temporal relationship to one another. The occurrence of these pauses in a written text is indicated by a lineation not directed, as it is in prose, by the size of the page. The reader will know when the end of a line is reached because a pause is demanded by the rhythm of the poem's 'verse-structure.' Without such pauses the feeling of 'periodicity' may be lost, and the poem will read as irregularly as prose.

The challenging question this poses is why do some texts printed in one format retain the ability to foreground accentual rhythms if printed in other formats, while other texts do not? The answer, as I have indicated above, is that when the "structure" (=format) of a text precedes the writing of the text, it will "shape" its constituent units. The smallest of these units to be isolated for manipulation, as Omond clearly knew, is the verse line. Therefore a text written to the measure of one form will be influenced by the perceived demands of that measure to such an extent that even when the obvious factors of its existence are removed (it is re-lineated), an approximation of its original "shape" can be restored. I say "shape" with the full acknowledgement that by doing so I am regarding the text of a poem as primarily a printed one. This is, however, the core issue of Omond's work. The question he raises is how do we discuss the "structure" of a text, the voicing of which is determined so much by its physical characteristics, when such characteristics are themselves derived as an approximation of "sound" and therefore mutable? If someone reads 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' aloud to an audience who had never *seen* the poem printed, they might write down what they hear in either of the formats discussed above, or in a different one altogether. In any case, is the "real" poem present in any one version? It may be that some formats *are* more attractive than others. But that attraction lay in the formats' ability to satisfy the expectations of its observers. Such expectations change, of

course, as new pressures and influences develop. But for Omond, format demands a state of proportionate regularity-- and regularity implies a capacity for measurement-- which is integral to the poem's entirety. As will be seen in Chapters Three, Four and Five, it is this nexus of presentation and precedent, which Omond was among the most eloquent and perceptive in describing, that would be of fundamental importance to both Eliot and Pound's early metrical styles.

### II.V.i.

Other writers at this time in both America and Britain (most of whom were without prosodic axes to grind) were also exploring the same area. Many of their comments show the extent to which elements of the 'new prosody' had been generally assimilated. The following remarks from the *Sewanee Review* were published in 1911, and are typical of those essays and reviews from the time which sought a re-definition of poetry without, themselves, offering precise grounds of inquiry:

[speaking of iambs and trochees] ... the truth is, there is no difference between them. ... These names are no longer useful. ... Another error into which we have allowed ourselves to be led is the consideration of meter ... as a vital part of rhythm. It is not. From a mechanical standpoint, the one essential of verse is rhythm.

--Cary F. Jacob, 'Concerning Scansion'<sup>172</sup>

Also like other American prosodists discussed earlier in this chapter (for instance, Bright and Miller), Jacob is interested in the relationship between a poem's potential for scansion, and the effect that that potential has on its voicing:

No system of scansion can be invented that will indicate how the verse should be read ... it can only ... indicate to the eye what the structure is.

--Jacob, 'Concerning Scansion'<sup>173</sup>

In other words, 'structure' (metre) is a phenomenon not to be confused with performance, regardless of its role in generating a textual format that influences such performance. So



why determine the 'structure' *at all*? As I have said, Omond believed that the lineation of the poem, insofar as it signals 'periodicity,' ought to limit the variables of that performance to those of a single set. But when the physical distinctiveness of genres like "iambic pentameter" and "iambic tetrameter" become blurred -- as was increasingly common in the later years of the nineteenth century (cf. Chapter One)--, even though a restricted format is suggested typographically, critics had to consider more closely the impact of visual presentation on the reader's capacity to find a text physically (especially *rhythmically*) satisfying in view of the iconic and proprietary expectations it aroused.

Such a problem occurs in an acute form in an issue of the *Fortnightly Review* from 1910. This particular instance centers on the case of some unrhymed verse of irregular lineation, published by Yone Noguchi:

In *The Summer Cloud*, many of the poems of his earlier books are altered to prose simply by the plan of their printing. The type is differently set on the page and they are called prose poems. I do not know what led Noguchi to make this experiment, but it proved that the broken, irregular lines in which his poems were originally published had a real power over the effect the words produced. The spaces between the lines were a kind of thought-punctuation ... <sup>in</sup> reading them outloud, [sic] it becomes clear that the ritual of line-spacing was more important than ~~of~~ comma<sup>s</sup> or full-stop<sup>s</sup>.

--Arthur Ransome, 'The Poetry of Yone Noguchi'<sup>74</sup>

It is significant that Ransome bases his opinion specifically on the effect that the words produce when read '*outloud*.' The sound of the words, so he insists, is negatively influenced by their re-presentation without the '*ritual*' of line-spaces. These line-spaces, he suggests, were originally determined through interaction with the thoughts each express. There is no suggestion here of an "ideal" lineation referable to any named precedent. Clearly, Ransome prefers the original format as, for him, it helped to underline the relationship of the thoughts the poem expresses. In this way, sight and sound co-operate to form the composite semantic field of the poem. (The possibility of Noguchi's experiments in this respect having

a direct influence on Pound's Imagist poems will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Five.)

Interestingly, Ransome's experience of Noguchi's poems is an example of the experiment Omond proposed (II.IV.iv). Two versions of Noguchi's work were published, each with a different format. For Omond, the key to the ideal disposition of the text lay in the temporal 'periodicity' of its lines. For Ransome, the integrity of the poems' format depends primarily on the significance achieved through the arrangement of syntactical units. Thus for Ransome, formal inherence is operative at a different level in the hierarchy of voicing. This level is one in which all poetry shares a relationship to formal paradigms (or metre) insofar as it attempts to arouse expectations based upon repeated phenomena, which may or may not then be satisfied. Combined with an appreciation of the changing demands of formal aesthetic expectations, and by using altered visual presentation as a tool for manipulating those expectations, these changes mark the final stage in the transition towards the acceptance of "non-metrical" verse as a species of poetry.

## II.V.ii.

No single work better embodies this transition than American Mark Liddell's *An Introduction to the Scientific Study of English Poetry* (1902). Liddell saw a continuity in the traditions of English poetry at least as well-defined as that by Saintsbury. For Liddell, however, that continuity transcended the obvious similarities of metrical format, the value of which, he believed, varied with the ebb and flow of critical assumptions:

And this is because the selected vehicles for the aesthetic appeal of poetry vary with different habits of thought collocation and with different conditions of speech development. And these limitations are so exigent that absolute judgements of aesthetic form play an insignificant part in the history of poetry as compared with the relative associations attached to the poetic form.

--Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study*

*of English Poetry*<sup>75</sup>

Thus for Liddell, the physical text of a poem is simply a 'vehicle' that varies because of 'different habits of thought collocation.' Each of these 'vehicles' is determined by exigency, and, most significantly for the generation including Pound and Eliot, the 'relative associations' attached to them within their own historical contexts. For these reasons, 'absolute judgements of aesthetic form' (reference to an abstract, historically indeterminate code like "iambic pentameter") are relevant only insofar as they reflect contrasts between the complex web of factors within which individual texts were created.

The continuity of tradition that Liddell proposes is, nevertheless, a formal one. The examples he discusses retain their currency with readers of English verse because each shows fundamentally the same adherence to this principle of evident, repeated phenomena. The phenomena Liddell cites are parallels, either in single letters (like alliteration); words; phrases; grammatical constructions; or specified sounds (like rhyme). These parallels are essentially reflexive in the context of the poem, because they require no reference to any other text in order to be apprehended, even when such a reference is possible. In poetry which suggests named formal precedents (such as iambic pentameter), the expectation aroused by such repetitions is enhanced further. But even without such suggestions, the physical text of poetry exists in such a way that specifically formal expectations are aroused.

To demonstrate this, Liddell exploits examples with named and unnamed formats.

Using Shakespeare's sonnet number 146, he asks,

What are the thought-moments in this sonnet? As we examine the course of its ideation it seems to fall into the falling groups of notions:

Poor soul,  
 The centre of my sinful earth,  
 Hemmed by those rebel powers that thee array,  
 Why dost thou pine within,  
 And suffer dearth,  
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?  
 Why so large cost,  
 Having so short a lease,

Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?  
 Shall worms,  
 Inheritors of this excess  
 Eat up thy charge?  
 Is this thy body's end?

Then, soul,  
 Live thou upon thy servant's loss,  
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;  
 But terms divine,  
 In selling hours of dross;  
 Within be fed,  
 Without be rich no more:

So shalt thou feed on Death,  
 That feeds on men,  
 And Death once dead,  
 There's no more dying then.

--Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study  
 of English Poetry*<sup>76</sup>

Liddell does not say that his division of the poem's original lines into these 'groups of notions' represents the only way such divisions could be made. He does suggest, however, that division and juxtaposition on these terms is a primary factor of the poem's rhythm. Each of these 'thought-moments' possesses a rhythmical identity, which when combined with those of the rest of the poem, form its overall rhythmical "character." Clearly the poet's concept of metre has contributed to the formation of a rhythmical identity within each 'thought-moment,' as well as provided a partial pattern for their complete format. "Partial" because, as Liddell recognized, such individually conceived 'thought-moments' are bound to exert a relative degree of rhythmical autonomy that no metrical system could manipulate entirely. Nevertheless, metre's function in providing a starting-point co-existent with other processes contributing to the writing of the poem, is enhanced by <sup>the fact</sup> that such individually conceived 'thought-moments,' possessed with varying rhythms, tend to produce the feeling of repetition Liddell assumed is necessary for poetry to be distinguishable from prose. Thus metre is formed fortuitously from habits of rhythm which have become instituted and codified, while these in turn, encourage 'ideation' within the constructs of similarly satisfying

rhythms-- satisfying because, '*the rhythm ... punctuate[s] the thought-moments into symmetrical groupings.*'<sup>77</sup> (The unusual degree to which these ideas and even examples are echoed by Pound, will be discussed in Chapters Three and Five.)

Liddell demonstrates a similar point by quoting *King Lear*, III.ii.42ff., which he then reprints as prose, with additional words inserted. His object here is to show that a reader's perception of rhythm in a printed text depends only partially on accented and unaccented syllables. The words Liddell inserts do not alter appreciably the style in which accented and unaccented syllables are grouped in the original format. But by extending the text in this way without the restricted lineation, as well as separating more widely Shakespeare's 'thought-moments,' Liddell shows that both appearance and 'ideation' are inseparable from rhythm:

"Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night  
Love not such sights as these; the wrathful skies  
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark  
And make them keep their caves; since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard."

Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love the gloom  
of night, love not such nights as these of wrathful skies  
that terrify the very wanderers of the dark and make  
them keep their caves; since I was a man such sheets of  
fire, such bursts of horrid thunder, such groans of roar-  
ing wind and dash of blinding rain I never remember to  
have heard.

--Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study  
of English Poetry*<sup>78</sup>

As Liddell says, 'the English aesthetic sentiment' is likely to miss 'the verse form that it is use to [sic].'<sup>79</sup> <sup>This is</sup> because Liddell's example is, of course, re-written from its original format.<sup>79</sup> Clearly, these 'verse forms' have associations capable of influencing the reader's ability to grasp the text as something approaching an abstract paradigm. But in texts where no such associations are readily apparent, Liddell deems a comparable feeling of interaction

with an abstraction to be apprehended through the repetition of sound patterns which have an implied (if not actual) limit of variability. So then apart from his suggestion that poetry is the symmetrical grouping of 'thought-moments'-- the symmetry of which is reinforced by a similarity of rhythmic effects highlighted by their visual juxtaposition, and parallels of features like rhyme and alliteration-- there existed no language to explain adequately why some texts *felt* like poetry (for example, *Leaves of Grass*), although they lacked nameable metrical format.

Liddell must be among the first to propose systematically in English that a poem may exist, 'though quite unpunctuated by an outward concomitant, ... and ... without being susceptible of any formal classification under the rubrics of known English verse forms.'<sup>180</sup> His observation that the 'English aesthetic sentiment' sometimes 'misses the verse form that it is used to,' is astute because it shows an awareness of the extent to which expectation contributes to evaluation. The task for poets in the wake of such statements, was either to continue satisfying the expectations aroused by nameable metrical formats, or to find an audience whose formal expectations were 'quite unpunctuated by any outward concomitant.' Both of these possibilities, as well as a third (utilizing nameable formats in unprecedented ways) were explored by poets of the succeeding generation. It is to how two of that generation's most influential poets came into contact with these issues (and other related ones of singular importance to themselves), what factors in particular shaped their assimilation of them, and how this can be seen in their own critical remarks, which forms the basis of Chapter Three.

## Notes to Chapter Two

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. William H. Gilman (New York, NY: New American Library, 1965), p. XVII.
2. Ibid. p. 46. *Journals* dated 27 October 1831.
3. Ibid. p. 184. *Journals* undated, 1858?-1870?
4. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Vol. 3 of *New and Complete Copyright Edition of the Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 Vols. (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, [no date]), p. 15.
5. Ibid. p. 160. *Journals* undated, winter 1854?
6. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1902; repr. 1909), p. 486.
7. William James, *The Will to Believe* (New York, NY: Longman's, Green and Co., 1905), pp. 23-25.
8. William James, *Pragmatism, and Four Essays from The Meaning of Truth*, ed. Ralph Barton Perry (New York, NY: Meridian Books, 1943; repr. 1955), p. 146.
9. Ibid. p.45.
10. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 501-502.
11. I have been unable to ascertain Gummere's dates.
12. Francis B. Gummere, *The Oldest English Epic* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1909), p. 174 ff.
13. Francis B. Gummere, *Germanic Origins: A Study in Primitive Culture* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), pp. 4-5.
14. Ibid. p. 113 note.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid. p. 114.
17. Francis B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., repr. 1959), pp. 42-3.
18. 'Memoria' in Sidney Lanier, *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, ed. 'by his wife.' With a Memorial by William Hayes Ward (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884; new edn. 1892), p. XXVI.
19. Ibid. p. 101. Among those nineteenth-century volumes of poetry listed in the Bibliography, I have found no other examples of poems written in German by poets whose first language was English.
20. Sidney Lanier, *Sidney Lanier: The Science of English Verse and Essays on Music*, ed. Paull Franklin Baum (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), p. 110.
21. See Southworth, op.cit., and Robinson, op.cit.
22. For example, Felix Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1891); and Geoffrey Chaucer, *Chaucer's Poetical Works*, ed. W.W. Skeat, 2 Vols. (London, 1899).
23. see Chapter 1, note 1.
24. There is a disproportionate paucity in the works of Emerson, Thoreau and Melville, although such verse is more common in, for example, the works of Lanier and Bryant.
25. I have been unable to ascertain Dabney's dates.
26. J.P. Dabney, *The Musical Basis of Verse* (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1901), p. 212.
27. Francis B. Gummere, *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse* (Boston, MA: Ginn & Company, 1885), p. 208.
28. Ibid.

29. See Chapter 1, note 60.
30. I have been unable to ascertain Parson's dates.
31. For example, Saintsbury, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 400.
32. James C. Parson, *English Versification* (Boston, MA: Sibley & Company, 1891), p. 20.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.* p. 74.
35. Dabney, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-23.
36. James Robertson, *New Essays Towards a Critical Method* (London: John Lane, 1897), p. 352.
37. Dabney, *op.cit.* pp. 242-244.
38. George Lansing Raymond, *Poetry as a Representative Art* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1886), pp. 154-5, p. 188.
39. David Perkins, in *A History of Modern Poetry from the 1890's to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1976), *passim*.
40. Cf. Lanier, *Sidney Lanier: The Science of English Verse and Essays on Music*, p.21 p.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
42. For Gummere's view on this subject, see Gummere, *A Handbook of Poetics for Students of English Verse*, p. 134.
43. For example, 'The Washers of the Shroud' in James Russell Lowell, *Poems*, 4 Vols., (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1900), Vol. 4, pp. 1-5; 'When She Comes Home' and 'Old Chums' in James Whitcomb Riley, *Poems Here at Home* (New York, NY: Century, 1893) pp. 15 and 167; and 'In Absence,' 'The Harlequin of Dreams,' 'To Nannette Falk-Auerbach,' 'Martha Washington' and 'To Wilhelmina' in Lanier, *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, pp. 74-80, 85, 102, 113 and 240.
44. For example, 'Thou Dusky Spirit of the Wood' in Henry David Thoreau, *Collected Poems of Henry Thoreau*, ed. by Carl Bode (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), p. 7; and 'Terminus,' 'In Memoriam: E.B.E.,' and 'Experience' in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Poems* (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1897), pp. 276-7, 281-5 and 289.
45. For example, 'Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration' in Lowell, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-31; and 'The Marshes of Glynn,' 'Corn,' 'The Symphony,' 'The Bee' and 'Ode to the Johns Hopkins University' in Lanier, *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, pp. 14-18, 53-59, 60-70, 83-84 and 108-111.
46. For possible exceptions see 'Bridegroom Dick (1876)' and 'To Our Queen' in Vol. 16 of Herman Melville, *The Works of Herman Melville*, 16 vols. (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, Incorporated, 1963), pp. 205-219 and 341-342.
47. Walt Whitman, *The Portable Walt Whitman*, ed. Mark Van Doren. Revised by Malcolm Cowley; with a chronology and bibliographical checklist by Gay Wilson Allen (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 273 (pp. 273-274).
48. Emily Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson: The Complete Poems*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 412.
49. For a discussion of the special interest shown in Dickinson's work by Crane's American literary milieu see the Introduction to, Stephen Crane, *The Poems of Stephen Crane*, ed. Joseph Katz (New York, NY: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1971).
50. *Ibid.* p. 5.
51. Cf. examples discussed in the Introduction to Crane, *op.cit.*, p. XXXIII.



52. Unsigned rev. of Vol. 2 of George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, *Athenaeum*, 28 Nov. 1908, pp. 673-674, p. 673.
53. 'E.R.', rev. of Vol. 2 of George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, *English Review*, Jan. 1909, pp. 374-376, p. 374.
54. Unsigned rev. of Vol. 3 of George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1911, pp. 1-31, p.5.
55. Unsigned rev. of Vol. 1 of George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, *Athenaeum*, 26 May 1906, pp. 629-630, pp. 629-630.
56. Unsigned rev. of Vol. 3 of George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, *Athenaeum*, 30 July 1910, p. 118, p. 118.
57. T.S. Omond, *English Metrists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 250.
58. James Wilson Bright and Raymond Durbin Miller, *The Elements of English Versification* (Boston, MA: Ginn & Company, 1910), p. 59.
59. *Ibid.* p. 60.
60. A view shared by Omond, cf. T.S. Omond, *A Study of Metre* (London: Alexander Moring, Ltd., 1920), p. 24.
61. Bernhard Ten Brink, *The Language and Metre of Chaucer*, trans. M. Bentinck Smith. Second edition revised by Friedrich Kluge (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901), p. 190.
62. Cited by Omond, *English Metrists*, p. 123.
63. See Chapter 1, note 95.
64. Omond, *A Study of Metre*, p. 24.
65. Omond, *English Metrists*, p. 118.
66. Omond, *A Study of Metre*, p. 121.
67. Cf. T.V.F. Brogan, *English Versification 1570-1980: A Reference Guide with a Global Appendix* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), Prefatory chart showing the relationship of developments both chronologically and interactively.
68. Omond, *A Study of Metre*, pp. 2-3.
69. *Ibid.* pp. 109-111.
70. *Ibid.* p. 112.
71. *Ibid.* p. 111.
72. Cary F. Jacob, 'Concerning Scansion,' *Sewanee Review* 19 (1911): 352-362, pp. 357-358.
73. *Ibid.* p. 360-361.
74. Arthur Ransome, 'The Poetry of Yone Noguchi,' *Fortnightly Review* 94 o.s., 88 n.s. (Sept. 1910), pp. 527-533; p. 532
75. Mark H. Liddell, *An Introduction to the Scientific Study of English Poetry* (London: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1902), p. 60.
76. *Ibid.* p. 149.
77. *Ibid.* p. 153.
78. *Ibid.* pp. 152-3.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.* p. 158.

# Chapter Three

## CONTACTS, CONTINUITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF METRICAL PRINCIPLES

### III. Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate ways in which the formal ideals influential in the early published poems of Pound and Eliot relate to those current in theoretical discussions and practical examples of their own time. In selecting the topics discussed here I have relied upon four principal criteria. The first of these is to bring together from a range of contemporary sources examples of themes, forms and subject matter prevalent in the poetry of Pound and Eliot's early contemporaries and which they too exploited. Secondly, I have attempted to relate this material to the ideals fostered by late nineteenth-century discussions, as well as by Pound's and Eliot's own university instructors. Following this, in section III, is a closer look at how Pound himself expressed his own ideas on poetic form and metre in his critical writing, with a similar discussion of Eliot's views forming section IV.

#### III.I.i.

In searching for factors that distinguish the early poems of Pound and Eliot from those of their contemporaries, it is important to remember the affinities in theme and style that exist between their work and that of other poets of the early twentieth century. Turning first to Pound's early London literary milieu, I will focus primarily on the years between his move to England and the publication of *Cathay*; that is to say, 1908-1915. It was in this period that Pound's poetry began the sometimes volatile synthesis of modern, medieval and oriental materials that would remain visible throughout his career. For example, one of Pound's most significant "discoveries" in these years, and one which would have a profound impact on his later work, was the juxtaposition of words, phrases and images in imitation of the supposed mystical directness of the languages of the Far East.

Both before and after Pound's arrival in England, translations, imitations and adaptations of Chinese and Japanese verse often appeared. Many of these volumes are concerned with how the sparseness and brevity of the imitated language affects the reader. A good example of this is the 1909 volume, *A Hundred Verses From Old Japan*, translated by William N. Porter.<sup>1</sup> Porter was clearly intent on giving his readers the fullest possible encounter with the poems which form the basis of his translation. On the left hand page, this process begins with a phonetic spelling of the original text, beneath which is an engraving based on the illustration which accompanied it in an eighteenth-century edition. Facing this on the right hand page, is the translator's version of the poem-- five lines, rhymed *abcbb*, with a syllable count of 8-6-8-6-6, beneath which is a prose account of the poem's original author. The Japanese poems, the 'Hyaku-Nin-Isshiu,' collected in the thirteenth century, were written in the form of the tanka: thirty-one syllables, arranged in lines of 5-7-5-7-7. In his introduction, Porter explained that his version was undertaken, 'in the hope of retaining at least some resemblance to the original form, while making the sound more familiar to English readers.'<sup>2</sup> Effective or not, Porter's approach to his subject is designed to introduce readers to his material *en bloc*, that is with the intellectual framework necessary to "appreciate" them clearly provided, while at the same time making concessions to the readers' supposed taste for symmetrical accentual-syllabic metre ('making the sound more familiar').

A decidedly different example, was the attempt to translate the sensibility of Japanese verse into English by the poet Yone Noguchi (cf. Chapters Two and Five). Noguchi seems to have been unique in that he chose to write poetry in English although Japanese was his first language. His 1903 volume, *From the Eastern Sea*<sup>3</sup> contains poems varying in length from a few lines to several pages, and it is difficult to cite a single example

as representative of the entire collection. This short lyric, with its verbal repetitions, syntactical parallels, exclamations and contrasted metaphors is fairly typical:

#### THE GODDESS: GOD

The goddess spins the wool of the rivulet to its length:  
 O silver song of the female spinner!  
 O golden silence of the male spinner!  
 God spinning with the wheel of Time,  
 White of day and darkness of the night to eternity.

--Noguchi, *From the Eastern Sea*<sup>4</sup>

Despite the imprecise imagery, ('silver song,' 'white of day'), Noguchi's style excited his British contemporaries. Appended to the volume is a list of nineteen selected remarks in praise of his work from critics as diverse as George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, Alice Meynell, Fiona MacLeod, Andrew Lang, Austin Dobson and Sir Lewis Morris.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Meredith extends his comments beyond Noguchi in order to praise 'the energy, mysteriousness and poetical feeling of the Japanese, from whom we are receiving much instruction.'<sup>6</sup>

However, not everyone found the 'poetical feeling of the Japanese' congenial. Speaking of other verses, a *Fortnightly Review* critic of 1905 would complain that, 'Japanese poetry is essentially descriptive and lacks fulness.'<sup>7</sup> But other disagreements aside, an important characteristic of Noguchi's work was that it was written without the use of any recognised metre, and without rhyme. This particular facet of his poems, as I have shown in Chapter Two, was the subject of comment both by the author and even his sympathetic reviewers. In the case of his book, *The Summer Cloud* (1909), originally written in broadly the same manner as *From the Eastern Sea*, which Noguchi re-issued with the text arranged as prose paragraphs, that critic's remarks are worth re-considering in another context:

I do not know what led Noguchi to make this experiment, but it proved that the broken, irregular lines in which his poems were originally published had a real power over the effect the words produced. The spaces between the lines were a kind of thought punctuation ... in reading them outloud [sic], it becomes clear that the ritual of the line-spacing was more important than that of commas or

full-stops.

--Arthur Ransome, 'The Poetry of Yone Noguchi,'  
*Fortnightly Review* (1910)<sup>8</sup>

Here Noguchi's re-casting of his poems shows a degree of concern (as well as uncertainty) over their total impact similar to that of Porter's. However Ransome's response is also important for other reasons. Firstly, his description of the lines as 'broken,' and of the line-spacings as 'ritual' indicates that he sees the format of Noguchi's poems in relation to accentual-syllabic metre-- a perspective not necessarily shared by Noguchi, but instructive in terms of his audience's response to his poems. Secondly, Noguchi's original format may have been influential in creating the feeling that verse adopting the sensibility, imagery or style of Japanese models is most successful in forms as alien as their themes. As I will show in Chapter Five, a similar critical response followed the appearance of Pound's *Cathay* (1915).

But if critics and older writers were interested in Japanese forms and style, so was the rising generation of poets. Edward Storer, a member of T.E. Hulme's Thursday evening group, which also included Pound, F.S. Flint, Joseph Campbell, F.W. Tancred and Florence Farr, was described in 1909-10 as, '... aiming at a form of expression like the Japanese, in which the image is the resonant heart of an exquisite moment.'<sup>9</sup> Flint later recalled that the group's formal principles in part centred on, '*vers libre*... the Japanese tanka and haikai.'<sup>10</sup> Here again is an example of the belief that the singular qualities of emotional presentation thought to characterize Japanese verse are inseparable from its formal structure.<sup>11</sup>

Still, regardless of the extent to which specifically Japanese-centered verses encouraged these poets to adopt unrhymed "irregular" forms and an "Asian" tone and manner, the majority of resulting verse structures are not remarkably different from those of other poets working alone or in different circles. For example, Sturge Moore's genteel ruminative closet dramas are based largely on unrhymed lines of varying lengths.<sup>12</sup>

Katherine Mansfield, Isaac Rosenberg, Ford Maddox Hueffer and James Stephens all

published short poems before 1915 utilising similar methods of line-structure.<sup>13</sup> How much was drawn exclusively from a perceived notion of a kinship with Far East Asian verse is impossible to estimate. Nevertheless, the amount of critical discussion on the issue at the time indicates that interest in the potential of innovations from this direction was widespread. What is certain is that few, perhaps none, of these poets, had firsthand access to Asian texts, but instead relied upon the translations or remarks of others. For this reason, Noguchi's work, as well as that of translators like Porter, played a significant role in the development of ideas surrounding unrhymed, experimental verse. Likewise, the choices those intermediaries made regarding format are particularly important in subsequent second-hand interpretations like Pound's. This point will be referred to again in Chapter Five, particularly with its importance to the development of Pound's style in *Cathay*.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, Howard Howarth has noted the vogue among Harvard poets in the era of Eliot's study there, of poems reflecting the sterility of modern urban life.<sup>15</sup> Howarth has also shown that poets known to be of interest to Eliot, in particular Henley, Davidson and Symons, were frequently discussed in University publications.<sup>16</sup> Pound's seemingly unique collocation of praises over the stylistic virtues of the Hellenistic Greeks, the troubadours, Dante, Villon and Ronsard, is echoed, all or in part, by critics as widely separated in time and taste as Walter Pater and Ford Madox Huffer.<sup>17</sup> In any case, the perception of newness in the new century in literature that Pound and Eliot shared, was as widespread as knowledge of the range of influences which can be claimed for them. The consciousness of this newness, of the need both to *Blast* and to discuss the relationship of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' extended well beyond its former limits of expansion within the scope of recognised styles and subjects. For example, in introducing his 1917 collection of poems, *Ardours and Endurances*, Englishman Robert Nichols includes some prefatory remarks from a book by American prosodist Mark Liddell to the effect that this new poetry was

founded on the principle of a 'rhythm of ideas.'<sup>18</sup> Nichols' book, which is composed almost entirely in recognizable accentual-syllabic metres, was as dissimilar from his contemporaries Pound and Eliot as was possible to be. Yet Nichols' views on the subject, expressed in a footnote to his quotation from Liddell, were that English metric is 'a thing governed from within by its own necessities, and not by rules of aesthetics imposed on it from without.'<sup>19</sup> Thus regardless of their specific attitudes to the problem of 'making it new,' the point remains clear that poets from a variety of critical standpoints shared a common interest in the ferment of ideas centering both on the re-appraisal of specific, often neglected authors, and the impact of changing social conditions. Yet despite a firm commitment to change, it was necessary to isolate those features of prior, especially nineteenth-century thought, that no longer seemed applicable to the literature of a "modern" world.

### III.I.ii.

A subject of singular importance to nineteenth-century views on poetry is that of a relationship proposed between the concepts of Beauty and poetic 'form' and metre. In an attempt to define the overall role of Beauty in this context, W.J. Courthope (1842-1917), in a passage that originally formed part of a series of lectures entitled 'Life in Poetry,' delivered at Oxford in 1896, sums up a prevailing attitude that the guiding aesthetic of poetry is a neo-platonic one:

I shall ask to be allowed to make but one assumption--one, indeed, which has been regarded as self-evidently true by all sound critics from the time of Aristotle--namely, that the end of the fine arts is to produce enduring pleasure for the imagination ... Many of the spiritual forces in our society, notably reaction from materialism, vulgarity, common-place [sic], impel the imagination towards a state of monasticism, thrust the mind inward upon itself, and urge it to the contemplation of its own ideas without considering the relation of those ideas of others. Poetical conception so formed will by its own innate force command attention and respect from those whose spiritual experience has been in

any way similar, and yet, as it has been framed without reference to the wants of human nature at large, must necessarily lack the main element of enduring life. ... so absolutely did [Robert Browning] exclude all consideration for the reader from his choice of subject, so arbitrarily in his themes, does he compel his audience to place themselves at his own point-of-view, that the life of his art depends on his individuality. Should future generations be less inclined than our own to surrender their imagination to his guidance, he will not be able to appeal to them through the element of life which lies in the Universal.

--Courthope, 'Life in Poetry,' *The Nineteenth Century*, (1896)<sup>20</sup>

Courthope's view then, is that the 'life' of poetry is one of perpetual renewal in succeeding generations of readers-- made possible by the poet's ability to lose his own subjectivity in the evocation of transcendent 'ideas' which exist unchangingly and for all time. However, the modern poet, driven by the grim externals of 'materialism' and 'vulgarity' is liable to elevate his own 'point-of-view' to such an extent that the subjective experience of 'individuality' will become the 'subject' or 'theme' of his writing, rather than poetry's proper aim, the 'appeal' to the reader through shared contact with 'the Universal.' In the more specific matter of form, Courthope's ideals are equally lofty. Faced with the work of arch-radical Walt Whitman, Courthope declares,

Why have poets always written in metre? The answer is, because the laws of artistic expression oblige them to do so ... if you had anything of universal interest to say about yourself, you could say it in a way natural to one of the metres, or metrical movements, established in the English language. What you call metre bears precisely the same relation to these universal laws as the Mormon Church ... [bears] to the doctrine of Catholic Christendom.

--Courthope, 'Life in Poetry,' *The Nineteenth Century* (1897)<sup>21</sup>

Courthope's assumptions that a poet must possess something of 'universal interest' to say about himself, that there is a definite corpus of 'laws of artistic expression,' and that the naturalness of 'established' metres is universally applicable, all would be challenged by the succeeding generation of poets. Likewise, his contrast between new world and old world



faith would prove especially ironic given the subsequent impetus offered by American poets. More importantly, however, Courthope's 'universal laws,' which he granted were open to interpretation, were susceptible nevertheless to changes from only one source-- a source firmly rooted in the habits of native English verse, uncorrupted by foreign influences.

Writing at about the same time, Theodore Watts (1834-1914), was content to extend the pale of "native" English verse to include that written in English in other English-speaking nations.

A poem written in the English language, whether produced in England or in some other part of the vast English-speaking world, is an English poem, no more and no less, and it has to be judged on its own absolute merits, its own absolute defects.

--Watts, 'The Future of American Literature,'  
*Fortnightly Review* (1891)<sup>22</sup>

Although like Courthope, Watts added the proviso that,

... colonial poetry cannot depart from the classical note of the motherland without becoming second-rate.

--Watts, 'The Future of American Literature'<sup>23</sup>

Still, certain irreversible changes were taking place in that 'classical note of the motherland.' In some cases, parallels that existed between styles of foreign verse were offered as examples of the inherent virtues of foreign sources, or, conversely, as a caution against the dangers of imitation. For example, in an 1896 discussion of Mallarmé, Augustus Manston asserted that the French Symbolists were like the Chinese, who contrive 'to say simple things in an obscure way.'<sup>24</sup> But most significantly, just as the treatment of Asian verse-forms by early translators may have influenced the ideas of poets like Flint, Storer and Pound, so too the lure of experimentation in other areas offered by the Symbolists was inextricably joined with the notion that their success depended largely on the "freedom" of their metric. For this reason, the debate over metrical form in poetry may appear to resemble that between Innovation and Tradition, despite the fact that models of Innovation were already present in the generation of poets expiring with the nineteenth century. Bound

up with this issue, was the debate over whether the subject-matter of poetry differed from that of prose (or altered with the passage of time), and whether preferences for various metrical styles were a matter of philology or culture. It is on these points, perhaps as much as any other, that Eliot, Pound, and Pound's London colleagues, differed sharply from their rivals.

### III.I.iii.

A prime example of the view that poetry is a reflection of a cultured response to native traditions in verse, both in form and subject, was Sir William Watson (1858-1935). When Tennyson died in 1892, many felt that the country's poetry had lost its centre, its greatest exponent of the national ideals. So powerful was this assignment of Tennyson as the spokesman of his age that many years later Pound would quip that Tennyson's last address had been Buckingham Palace.<sup>25</sup> A number of poets tried to fill the resulting popular void, but perhaps none more self-consciously so than Watson. Among his earliest successes was his 1892 lament for the Tennyson's death, *Lachrymae musarum*.<sup>26</sup> But despite early enthusiasm for his work, both in England and America,<sup>27</sup> critics eventually perceived that the grandiose tone of his work leant too heavily upon his master, and the public taste eventually deserted him. But in many ways, Watson was the embodiment of a conflict many young poets of his time faced: What to do in the wake of the 'Great Figures' of Browning, Tennyson and Swinburne.<sup>28</sup> The path that Watson followed, and to a lesser extent poets like Newbolt and Noyes after him, was to adopt a 'poetic stateliness ... Severe, chaste, Ionic.'<sup>29</sup> Against the immoral and effeminate outlook of the aesthetic cult as cast in the *Yellow Book* (1894-97), Watson was initially successful because critics felt,

[his] poetry is essentially of the Centre. It belongs to the main stream; therein consists its chief value, its secular merit, its lasting importance.

--Grant Allen, 'Note on a New Poet,'  
*Fortnightly Review* (1891)<sup>30</sup>

Thus despite a pretence of poetic moderation, these poets and their supporting critics were as reactionary as the movements opposing them. In light of these circumstances, the literary genealogies of some of those poets influential to Pound's and Eliot's own teachers assume some importance. For instance, Francis Thompson (1859-1907), whose work Pound read as an undergraduate (see below, III.II.vii), was reviewed early in his career by Coventry Patmore (1823-1896). It is not surprising that Patmore defended Thompson's free approach to English metrics, which style in Thompson's case he called, 'iambic tetrameter with unlimited catalexis.'<sup>131</sup> Patmore himself had been part of that Centre tradition throughout half his career as a Victorian poet, but later came to assert in his own Odes that, 'the metre must be the creation of passionate inspiration.'<sup>132</sup> However his advice to Thompson, and to other poets choosing to follow him in this manner, was that 'unless the motive be manifest, the metre becomes *nonsense*.'<sup>133</sup> These same sentiments were echoed by Pound's tutors, and would surface later in Pound's own remarks on 'free verse' and metre (see below, III.III.ii).

This approach to an attempted sound-structure of poetry as a reflection of its 'inspiration' or 'motive,' as opposed to Courthope's belief in the comprehensive scope of English metre's 'naturalness,' was accompanied by a further change in style. An increased emphasis is placed upon cultivating an anti-discursive pose, with propaganda in favour of poetry as a language of vivid visual stimulation, of the type best exemplified by Arthur Symons (1865-1945). In describing Henley's poetry, Symons himself is especially gratified at finding this trait in a contemporary:

Mr. Henley does certainly succeed in flashing the picture,  
the impression upon us, in realising the intangible,  
in saying new things in a new and fascinating manner.

--Symons, 'Mr. Henley's Poetry,' *Fortnightly Review*  
(1892)<sup>34</sup>

But this particular passage also includes one of Symons' strongest weapons: the insistence that good poetry impresses by the reader's sudden perception of its modernity.

... To be modern in poetry-- to represent really oneself and one's surroundings, the world as it is today-- to be modern and yet poetical, is, perhaps, the most difficult as it is certainly the most interesting of all artistic achievements.

--Symons, 'Mr. Henley's Poetry'<sup>35</sup>

In order to do this, he continues,

... Every word must be emphatic, every stroke must score heavily, every sentence must be an epigram or a picture or a challenge.

--Symons, 'Mr. Henley's Poetry'<sup>36</sup>

Still, despite the progressive tone of Symons' remarks-- he approves of the irregularity of Henley's metre and lauds his subject matter-- he cannot bring himself to accept the further fact of the poems' rhymelessness. Symons' fear is that 'an innovation that begins by dropping rhyme will end by abandoning rhythm'; that is, be indistinguishable from prose.<sup>37</sup> Like the mentality that views short iambic lines as 'broken' pentameters, Symons saw rhyme as an essential part of verse which may not be 'dropped.' Thus we can see that poets who chose to write in the Centre, (for example, Austin Dobson) though labouring under the shadow of the Great Figures, at least had the advantage of continuity with regard to large public acceptance of features like rhyme and recognizable metre. The avant-garde (like the Rhymers' Club), despite being championed by poets and critics like Symons, faced the difficulty of creating a public sensibility capable of appreciating their divergence from the Centre as a conscious decision of style. The remaining disparate group of authors, ranging in time from Meredith and Hardy, to Edward Thomas and the Imagists, prospered artistically through their reluctance to claim universal public recognition. The furore surrounding the Decadents came about, not because they were more radical than the later *New Age* circle, but rather because in their day, the Centre had not been weakened by the subsequent proliferation of critical viewpoints. This fragmentation of the aims of English and American men of letters was largely complete by 1908-9, with the range of individual options fully opened. What I wish to look at next is how the specific options pursued by

Pound and Eliot's university instructors may have contributed to the creation of the two poets' own ideals.

### III.II.i

We can deduce from Eliot's subsequent remarks that two of his experiences at Harvard had particular importance in shaping his future career as a poet and critic. The first of these was his encounter with Arthur Symons', *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), and the second was with the teaching of Irving Babbitt (1865-1933). It is also possible that in some measure, Eliot was able to combine certain views from each direction in the formation of his own poetic.

As I said above, part of the attractiveness of foreign poetry at that time was its combination of an alien sensibility with an alien form. Like Pound, Eliot was vociferous in his condemnation of new English verse in the era surrounding the turn of the century.<sup>38</sup> Therefore in his famous description of his discovery of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, it is no surprise when Eliot says that the quotations in the book that interested him deeply, despite his disapproval of Symons' comments on the poems. Yet Symons' praise of the Symbolists is in many respects a disparagement of what he, like Eliot, believed was lacking in English verse. Indeed, many of the points Symons makes would be echoed in Eliot's own later criticism, particularly in reference to Eliot's doctrine of the 'auditory imagination.' This can be seen by a comparison between a number of Symons' remarks on the style of his subjects.

... the regular beat of verse is broken in order  
that words may fly, upon subtler wings.

Verse, always elegant, is broken up into a kind of  
mockery of prose.

The old cadences, the old eloquences, the ingenious  
seriousness of poetry, are all banished.

--Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*<sup>39</sup>

Here, in French poetry, especially Laforgue to whom the last two quotations refer, that which was 'regular,' 'elegant,' 'old' and 'serious' has been 'broken' and 'banished.' In its place has come a kind of verse where evocation has replaced description, and in which versification becomes 'subtler,' and 'a kind of mockery of prose.'

But why is it not prose? Because,

Here are words which create an atmosphere by the actual suggestive quality of their syllables.

--Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*<sup>40</sup>

The power of this 'suggestive quality' is maximised, Symons claims, because, unlike prose, the impulse to use these syllables has arisen out of a peculiarly private sensation, incommunicable by any other means.

This sensation begins to form in ... [the] brain, at first probably no more than a rhythm, absolutely without words. Gradually thought begins to concentrate itself (but with an extreme care lest it should break the tension on which all depends) upon the sensation, already struggling to find its own consciousness. Delicately, stealthily, with infinitely timid precaution, words present themselves, at first in silence.

--Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*<sup>41</sup>

In Symons' formulation then, a poem proceeds, first from the experience of a unique, unquantifiable sensation; intellection then follows awareness, until a gradual manifestation occurs, possibly taking the form of a toneless rhythm (compare Pound's 'absolute rhythm,' III.III.iv, and both Hulme and Pound in Chapter Five); afterwards, syllables, not yet recognizable as words, let alone grammatical sentences, take the place of the empty rhythmical phrases, until the author is satisfied that his sensation has been suitably transfixed by language. In any case, the poem's genesis is brought about through contact between a variety of highly sensitized receptors. Its subject is the sensation 'formed' in the brain (notice the clinical term, the 'brain' is a sensory manager rather than a reflective instrument like the "mind"). The form that the expression of this sensation will eventually take is twofold. Though it appears to be bound for language, words are only one part of this form.

They are needed, it seems, only insofar as their syllables (sound?) serve to evoke the sensation-- they do not apparently describe the subject which, as the precise nature of the sensation is ineffable, or even indeterminate, is impossible anyway. Instead, the larger sound-structure of the sensation, its rhythm, which may indeed be the sole primary experience of the sensation, is precedent to provide a basis/scope for the sensation's primary characteristic, or mood. Seen in this way, the poet's mood is the poem, the language is the sensation, and the form-- rhythm and diction-- is not mimetic. Rather it is the final manifestation of the complete experience, enfolding author and reader. Therefore, for Symons, the terms "mood," "language" and "form" do not describe separate aspects of the poem at all. His formulation shifts the emotional emphasis away from the poet's experience of the sensation, and places it more on the mystical clarity of the sensation as a phenomenon independent of any single consciousness. The burden of poetic composition then falls on the poet's talent, first as a receptor of such sensations, and secondly, in the degree of delicacy with which he allows the nuances of language to be fully assimilated in his consciousness. Arguably, a poem like Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is an attempt to embody just such an experience of the complex nexus of mood-language-form. But the impact of Babbitt's guidance on Eliot's talent as a receptor of such 'sensations' is also important, as can be seen by a comparison of the two men's views on the relationship between Art and Beauty.

### III.II.ii.

Even at the earliest stages of his career as a poet, Eliot had formed a revulsion against the trend towards ethereal poeticism popular among many of his contemporaries.<sup>42</sup> A look at his early preference for authors like Baudelaire confirms this. But what influence, if any, did Babbitt exert over this preference? Writing much later in life, Eliot still referred

to Babbitt as, 'my old teacher and master, ... to whom I owe so much.'<sup>43</sup> In the same passage, Eliot recalled a meeting with Babbitt in 1927, after he, Eliot, had joined the Church of England.

I knew that it would come as a shock to him to learn  
that any disciple of his had so turned his coat ...

--Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* (1965)<sup>44</sup>

But if a specifically religious conversion marked a turn away from Babbitt's Humanism, the philosophical dimension of Eliot's decision remains in keeping with Babbitt's views on the relationship between Life and Art. It must be remembered that Eliot's acceptance of the Christian faith in 1927, came as the culmination of nearly two decades of spiritual self-searching. This same period saw the creation of some of his finest works of art. If Eliot's early poems resemble the heightened sensibility of Symons' Impressionist technique, (or even the Symbolism Symons described), it may be that Eliot's sensitivity was increased by the combination of his own spiritual uncertainty, with Babbitt's insistence that the artist's view of the abstract must reflect his entire existence. As Babbitt declared,

... the pretension of the aesthete to have a purely personal vision of beauty and then treat as a philistine every one who does not accept it, is intolerable. Either beauty cannot be defined at all or we must say that only is beautiful which seems so to the right kind of man, and the right kind of man is plainly he whose total attitude towards life is correct, who views life with some degree of imaginative wholeness, which is only another way of saying that the problem of beauty is inseparable from the ethical problem.

--Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919)<sup>45</sup>

It was just this 'ethical problem' that perplexed Eliot up to his 1927 conversion. But a similar perspective lay at the foundation of Babbitt's Humanist position on art.

If a man is psychically restless he will see beauty only in motion. ... A complete sacrifice of the principle of repose in beauty (which itself arises from the ethical imagination) ... runs practically into a mixture of charlatanism and madness.

--Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism*<sup>46</sup>



Thus apprehensible Beauty is neither in complete 'motion' (as proposed by the Futurists) nor necessarily in absolute 'repose,' though it is nearer to the latter, because 'repose ... arises from the presence of the ethical imagination.' Therefore if one arranges one's inner life in an ethically harmonious way, it becomes simultaneously more beautiful. This is in some respects, what Eliot's prolonged introspection sought to achieve, while throughout this time his poems, as projections of himself through different personae, marked various plateaux.<sup>47</sup> The relevance of these two concepts to Eliot's metrical practices will be considered more fully later in this chapter.

### III.II.iii.

The personal contacts Pound made in his university years produced an even more discernible impact on his career, as well as on certain lifelong attitudes regarding a poet's practical methods. For one thing, it shaped forever his opinion of American higher education.

American universities took over a decomposed system from the Germans. German education, especially higher education, ... had become a mass means of *deflecting* the scholar's attention from the field of reference, and getting him ever further and further down his mouse hole.

--Pound, *Polite Essays* (1937)<sup>48</sup>

This alignment of American university practises with those of Germany, has been examined in detail by later critics and historians.<sup>49</sup> What is interesting is that Pound's complaints against the products of such a system sound like the same methodological dismissal that his contemporary men-of-letters in England made against many of their own university-trained scholars:

The whole of my college generation was brought up to look for a job. It was admitted that there weren't nearly enough jobs, and ... after producing an instrument (i.e. a philologist) of the utmost refinement, that instrument would be put to doing the grossest possible work.

--Pound, *Polite Essays*<sup>50</sup>

Pound credits this second view to one of his former teachers at the University of Pennsylvania, Professor Felix Schelling. But Pound's own ambivalent feelings towards Schelling, with whom he continued to correspond until Schelling's death, are summed up in his topsy-turvy view of Schelling as a symbol of the whole of American academia:

... the head of an English Department proclaimed to me that: 'The University is not here for the unusual man.' What does this mean? It means putrid thinking; it means short-sightedness in an extreme degree. That professor was too stupid to understand that unless the teaching interests the best mind in the class, the class goes to sleep from the top. ... The gross idiocy in teaching cultural subjects, ... can be no more glaringly shown than in this fumble on the part of a highly (by some people) esteemed Head of English in one of our largest universities. And the chap isn't a bad writer of essays either. He is no worse an idiot than three dozen other elderly gents tucked into comfortable semi-sinecures.

--Pound, *Polite Essays*<sup>51</sup>

But if Pound and Schelling never completely saw things eye-to-eye, Schelling's teaching formed a significant part of Pound's introduction to dramatic literature, especially that of the sixteenth century.

Schelling's own attitude regarding the style of Tudor drama, particularly its versification, shows that although he was decidedly non-committal, he was at least up-to-date on his reading of the specialists.

...notwithstanding Dr. Schipper's excellent and exhaustive treatise on the subject of English versification, which seems to leave little to be desired in the extensive field that it covers, in view of the many existing questions still open to further investigation, we shall seek to set up no absolute standards by which to judge these lucubrations of another age, or, at least, with as little as is consistent with a plain exposition of them.

--Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth* (1891)<sup>52</sup>

But on the same page of this volume, Schelling accepted what was fast becoming an unfashionable view of Tudor metrics:

Mr. Saintsbury has vividly represented to us the state into which English poetry had fallen previous to its revival at the hands of Wyatt and Surrey. Two schools existed; the expiring Chaucerian school, which ... was dragging its weary, superannuated limbs to its legitimate end, the grave; and the vigorous, old, English school of "prosaic doggerel," still hobbling its lame dog-trot, but deaf and blind to those finer qualities of the soul of poetry.

--Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth*<sup>53</sup>

What Pound's response to this view was at the time when he was a pupil of Schelling's can only be guessed at, but his subsequent remarks on poets like Gavin Douglas make it clear that if he ever agreed with Schelling, then his opinion changed over the years.<sup>54</sup> Certainly the tide of opinion was against Schelling, for as I have shown in Chapters One and Two, there was a growing interest in poets from this period. By 1910 in America, an alternative point-of-view was being offered:

There were thus in the drama of the first half of the sixteenth century lines of two, three and four accents, all permitting considerable liberty as to the matter of unaccented syllables ... those who attempt to force it into regular verse-molds are inevitably driven to doubt whether it has the right to be considered verse at all, and even whether its composers could count. Read as verse that is frankly rhythmical, however, it becomes very fair verse of its kind.

--Robert L. Ramsay, 'Changes in Verse Technic in the Sixteenth Century English Drama,' *American Journal of Philology* (1910)<sup>55</sup>

Curiously, in what might seem like a reversal of roles, Schelling also advocated acceptance of a form of "prose-poetry"-- a genre in which Pound would insist that even the name is self-contradictory.<sup>56</sup> But besides Schelling, another of Pound's undergraduate tutors may have contributed to Pound's early studies of versification. That tutor was Cornelius Weygandt, Pound's instructor in Contemporary Poetry.<sup>57</sup>

Weygandt has been described as 'a smooth, polished, wealthy man of the type that many Ivy League schools liked to have around for decoration.'<sup>58</sup> His course 'touched on people like Lionel Johnson'-- an introduction to whose poetry Pound recalled years later in

his own edition of Johnson's poems.<sup>59</sup> Weygandt also 'spoke freely and often about ... [Yeats] in class, since Yeats had entertained him in Ireland in 1902.'<sup>60</sup> Writing more than a decade after Pound had left his classroom, Weygandt summed up his taste in American poetry by saying that,

Frost seems to me to be the American poet of this generation who has counted most, and with Emerson, Poe, Whitman and Emily Dickinson, makes the five of our poets who challenge comparison with English poets of parts.

--Weygandt, 'The Muses in Germantown,'  
reprinted in *Tuesdays at Ten* (1928)<sup>61</sup>

It is interesting to note that of the four nineteenth-century American poets he names, three-- Emerson, Whitman and Dickinson-- represent examples of unconventional attitudes to English metrics, while the fourth published a treatise on the subject.<sup>62</sup> His list is also somewhat surprising for its time in that he omits popular authors like Longfellow and Lowell. But even if Weygandt rated Frost more highly than his former pupil, (he makes one passing reference to Pound in a later article<sup>63</sup>) the subjects of his other essays make it clear that he had a distinct preference for British and Irish poets over all American ones.

Weygandt's actual remarks on these poets are also sometimes curious. In an article from 1903, he offers the following group- portraits of his contemporaries:

More considerable poets of the younger generation: Mr. Robert Bridges, Mr. William Watson, Mr. A.C. Benson, Mr. Stephen Phillips and Mr. Laurence Binyon, who may be grouped as 'The Wordsworthians'; [Thompson and Laurence Houseman]: rhapsodists in the following of Coventry Patmore's later manner; W.E. Henley, Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. Henry Newbolt, the Poets of Empire.

--Weygandt, 'The Irish Literary Revival,'  
*Sewanee Review* (1904)<sup>64</sup>

In the same article, Weygandt finds occasion to mention favourably poems by Symons, Sturge Moore and John Davidson. Elsewhere in his criticism, he praised the work of James Stephens and Coventry Patmore-- both experimenters in metrics<sup>65</sup> and he devoted

full-length essays to Phillips, Yeats, Thompson, Dobson, Masefield, Stephens, Watson, Binyon, Benson and A.E.<sup>66</sup>

But throughout all of this, Weygandt is most at home with discussions of the "spiritual" dimension of poetry, often as it is manifested in sound and imagery. His 1907 essay, 'Francis Thompson: Poet and Pariah,' is a case in point. In this essay, Weygandt is concerned with the poet's method of making his distinctly original feelings accessible by his poem's visual and aural format. While his attitude towards Thompson is one of general approval, Weygandt still complains that,

The pity of it is, this stuff out of which great poetry might be made, is not, in many poems, shaped into great poetry. It remains in most of the poems --in effect-- improvisation.

--Weygandt, 'Francis Thompson: Poet and Pariah,'  
reprinted in *Tuesdays at Ten*<sup>67</sup>

Notice Weygandt's visualizing metaphor, that 'poetry' consists of 'stuff' that can be 'shaped.' For Weygandt, Thompson's fault lay in his failure to grasp the principle of craftsmanship necessary to "finish" his work to a high degree. Nevertheless, in his next sentence, Weygandt says that, 'improvisation is sometimes great art.'<sup>68</sup> As examples, he describes two of Thompson's poems:

'Sister Songs' and 'From the Night of Fore-being' are the most completely realised of the long, irregular odes of Thompson, his characteristic verse form, built-up on Coventry Patmore's odes of *The Unknown Eros* and Crashaw's Odes.

--Weygandt, 'Francis Thompson: Poet and Pariah'<sup>69</sup>

Once again, notice the importance that the visual structure of the poem plays in Weygandt's assessment of the poet's method. Thompson's 'verse form' is 'built-up' on that of Patmore and Crashaw. This distinction is important because it indicates that in this particular poet's work, Weygandt saw the 'irregular ode' as a separate form, not necessarily "natural" to all subjects. He does not disapprove of the form in the abstract, but like Patmore, Weygandt suggests that its use is best restricted to sudden rushes of emotion, inexpressible

('unrealisable') in any other format. Thus, while he describes Patmore's own works as 'daring raptures,' Thompson's are most often 'improvisation.'<sup>70</sup>

But part of what made Thompson's work less successful to Weygandt than Patmore's, was the fact that Thompson combined the 'irregular ode' of Patmore with other stylistic peculiarities. One of these that troubled Weygandt was the apparent exactness of Thompson's descriptions which, when scrutinised, supply a complex of emotional qualities that are difficult to assimilate into any single apprehensible "meaning." Weygandt does not offer a specific example of this phenomenon, but the following passage from Thompson's 'The Hound of Heaven' (1893) may serve to illustrate his point:

I was heavy with the even,  
When she lit her glimmering tapers,  
Round the day's dead sanctities.  
I laughed in the morning's eyes.

--Thompson, 'The Hound of Heaven'<sup>71</sup>

Notice the archaisms like 'even' for evening, and 'tapers' for candles. This, with the combined vagueness of 'sanctities,' and seeming precision of 'dead,' led Weygandt to the ambivalent remark that,

There is always in his verse the suggestion of ceremonial; and his over-emphasis of detail is of the very essence of Gothic beauty.

Weygandt, 'Francis Thompson: Poet and Pariah'<sup>72</sup>

Here, an accumulation of 'detail' may equal 'Gothic beauty,' but it is in Thompson's 'over-emphasis' of these details that Weygandt sees his weakness. That weakness is in the reader's inability to fuse these details into a complete poem; that is to say, they may or may not be firm enough in themselves, but when 'built-up' into a poem, the awareness of them as 'stuff' leaves the poem apparently 'unshaped.' For Weygandt, the result was a 'difficult' poem.

What makes them difficult, generally, is his habit of elliptical expression, or the lack of universality in his symbols.

--Weygandt, 'Francis Thompson: Poet and Pariah'<sup>73</sup>

Notice that compared to Courthope, writing in 1896, . Weygandt, writing in 1907, asks, not for a universality of feeling, but rather one of 'symbols.' If that is achieved, Weygandt says, then whatever the poem's form, its "meaning" will come clear. But if this appears to place Weygandt in alignment with the Symbolists, particularly with his favourite author, Yeats,<sup>74</sup> it must be remembered that Weygandt also believed that, 'a falling short of giving the whole meaning, seems a lack of strength.'<sup>75</sup>

Weygandt is never precise as to how that 'whole meaning' is to be given, or what 'symbols' ought to be employed. But in a later essay, 'The Plays and Poetry of John Masefield' (1914-28), he praises the author of the Anglo-Saxon poem, 'The Seafarer' for the stark authenticity of his description. Weygandt's position in this instance is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, this is a poem that Pound translated and often praised for the same reasons; secondly, Weygandt's attitude to the 'universal' potential of accurately conveyed experiences is echoed in Pound's cross-centuries parallels; and thirdly, perhaps, coincidentally, this is the same essay in which Weygandt mentions Pound by name.

As you think back over all English sea poetry it is surprising to realize how little of it is written "from the inside." As one reads the Old English "Seafarer", and learns how the poet-mariner who writes it tells of his keeping of "the narrow night watch" at the prow of a Viking ship on a night of winter when that ship beat off a rock bound coast and was lashed by showers of hail as well as the wild sea, one feels that the author knew the sea intimately.

--Weygandt, 'The Plays and Poetry of John Masefield,' reprinted in *Tuesdays at Ten*<sup>76</sup>

Weygandt's enthusiasm for the poem is clearly evident in his exuberant repeating of its evocative details. Also his linking of the poem's tone and subject-matter (as well as the proposed "individuality" of its 'author') to Masefield is an example of his stance on the power of firsthand experience as a force in poetic imagery.

How much of Weygandt's teaching on this and other matters of modern and ancient poetic practise lingered in Pound's memory as he set forth the tenets of Imagism, is

impossible to calculate. Certainly, Pound's attitude to 'the whole meaning' eventually differed from Weygandt's. But like so many of Pound's specific enthusiasms, his appreciation of 'The Seafarer' may have been strongly influenced by the person and circumstances through which he came to know his subject. For example, we know that Pound's interest in Anglo-Saxon verse was stimulated as an undergraduate and lasted through the composition of *A Lume Spento* (1908), in the translation of 'The Seafarer' (1912), and at least until the final version of Canto I (1925).<sup>77</sup>

The third important poetic style that was to influence Pound's career from first to last was that of the troubadours. His tutor for this subject <sup>was</sup> William Pierce Shepard. 'Bill,' or 'Shep' Shepard was Professor of Romance Languages during Pound's years at Hamilton College. Pound shared an interest with Shepard in the private lives or *vidas* of the troubadours, and it has been suggested that Shepard's ideas in this area influenced Pound's subsequent belief in the relationship between the 'love-force' and poetic creation.<sup>78</sup> By the time Pound met him, 'Shepard was well on his way to establishing an international reputation as a scholar of Provençal.'<sup>79</sup> He wrote many articles on the subject, and in 1924, published an edition of the poems of the troubadour, Jausbert de Puycibot.<sup>80</sup> But one of the more intriguing articles Shepard published, in view of its proximity to Pound's later 'Ideogrammic Method,' Imagism and Vorticism, is his, 'Parataxis in Provençal' (1906).<sup>81</sup>

It will be helpful at this point to be reminded of what Pound's 'Ideogrammic Method' consisted of. Humphrey Carpenter's succinct outline of Pound's position may serve as a starting point:

The 'method' consisted of doing away with abstract argument, or any other rational process, and instead, 'presenting first one facet and then another' for the reader to contemplate and meditate on-- lining up ideas or images side-by-side, but not linking them by any stated theory.

--Carpenter, *A Serious Character* (1988)<sup>82</sup>

The Life of Ezra Pound



Probably the most famous example of how the 'method' worked in Pound's poetry is his brief poem, 'In a Station of the Metro' (1912):

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

--Pound, 'In a Station of the Metro,'<sup>83</sup> reprinted in  
Pound, *Selected Poems* (1949)

It is important to note, however, that while this poem is a perfect example of the 'method,' it was written before Pound was presented with the Fenellosa manuscripts-- a fact which will be discussed further in Chapter Five. As Carpenter suggests, Fenellosa's views on Chinese poetry served merely to reinforce the procedure Pound was already following.<sup>84</sup> This procedure involved selection and juxtaposition of what Pound called Luminous Details. Pound outlined the value of these Details in the work of past artists in his first series of articles for the *New Age*, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' (1911-1912)<sup>85</sup>. Among the poets he chose as exemplars in the management of these Details was the troubadour, Arnaut Daniel. But given that Pound's introduction to Provençal literature was through Shepard, a comparison of Pound's appraisal of this particular facet of troubadour poetry with that of his former teacher's, is instructive.

Shepard begins his article with a general statement regarding both the antiquity of paratactic structures, as well as their basis in psychological processes:

Comparative philologists have long since realized that the logical relation of mental concepts need not find expression by means of words. Viewed from the standpoint of pure logic a sentence like "I think he will come" contains a subordination; but the student of historical grammar rightly regards it as exhibiting two independent, if not unrelated, sentences. It is altogether likely that such a method of juxtaposing concepts was the only one that prevailed in remote antiquity and that in the course of time such a loosely connected sequence of clauses developed into one organic whole.

--Shepard, 'Parataxis in Provençal,  
*PMLA* (1906)<sup>86</sup>

At this stage in his argument, Shepard was concerned primarily with the juxtaposition of concepts, rather than contrasted images or phrasal patterns. As he explains later on, the

relationship of these concepts is often made clearer in spoken language through characteristics of voicing, although he is aware that such procedures are most often impossible in written texts:

The simplest way of denoting relation arises when two sentences, each containing a common concept, are juxtaposed without any other method of connection between them. The spoken language often hints at relation more or less strongly by means of tone or stress, but such means do not ordinarily find expression in written speech.

--Shepard, 'Parataxis in Provençal'<sup>87</sup>

(Notice Shepard's definition of the text as 'written speech'-- that writing is primarily a form of recorded utterance is a view Pound shared, and one which be discussed further in Chapter Five.) As Shepard makes clear, there are certain grammatical and syntactical practices that can influence the reader's perception of the implied relationship between the concepts expressed:

A fruitful source of subordinate clauses in all languages arises from the contrast of two concept-groups by some similarity in sound, structure or meaning. Generally in the written language some hint is given, by word-order, repetition or correlation, of the relation existing between the two concepts.

--Shepard, 'Parataxis in Provençal'<sup>88</sup>

The effectiveness of this point can be seen by testing it on Pound's, 'In a Station of the Metro.' In the example below, notice how by reversing the order of the two clauses, the significance of their grammatical incompleteness is increased, so that the resulting combination fails to achieve the conceptual unity of the original poem.

Petals on a wet, black bough:  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd.

Here, the grammatical assumption which the reader unconsciously makes in experiencing the poem's original order--that is to say that 'faces in the crowd' *are like* 'petals on a wet black bough'-- is disrupted, and the relevance of the first image to the second is diminished. In this way, as both Pound and Shepard recognized, absolute randomness in verbal

juxtaposition, is distinct from that in poetry which involves interpretation as an originating factor (like Provençal).

In conclusion, Shepard says,

The preceding pages illustrate the remarkable abundance of the paratactic type of sentence in Provençal. It will be seen that nearly every relation ordinarily expressed by means of subordinating conjunctions and pronouns may also be indicated by parataxis.

--Shepard, 'Parataxis in Provençal'<sup>89</sup>

But from this point in Shepard's discussion, he and Pound appear to have different estimates of the value of such paratactic forms. For Shepard, (and probably for Pound), they represent an 'earlier stage of a literary language.'<sup>90</sup> But Shepard maintained that this language was 'struggling to free itself from the primitive method of stringing concepts together without unity.'<sup>91</sup> Indeed, he goes on to play down the importance of parataxis in Provençal verse, because examples of it are numerically inferior to more common forms of hypotaxis.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that Pound, while engaged in writing his 1910 homage to the troubadours *The Spirit of Romance*, and his 1911-12 translations of Provençal verse, recalled Shepard's views on the subject of parataxis, perhaps seeing its relevance to his own growing interest in Asian forms of expression. The ways in which these theories coalesced for Pound, and how a similar process of synthesis occurred in Eliot's evolving practice of poetic form, is the subject of the next section.

### III.II.iv.

We know from several sources in Pound's writing that Emerson's prose figured in his early reading, even before entering the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>93</sup> Pound's tutor for Contemporary Poetry, Cornelius Weygandt, occasionally extended the range of Emerson's stance on poetic composition to include people like A.E., whom Weygandt once referred to as 'the Irish Emerson.'<sup>94</sup> A further factor contributing to the contemporary interest in

Emerson studies, was the 1904 Centenary Edition of Emerson's *Complete Works*.<sup>95</sup> Here, embedded in Emerson's *Journals* were the sort of prosodic discussions described in Chapter Two, as well as examples of the first drafts of poems Emerson later revised. As Gay Wilson Allen has described them, these poems 'are actually what we today [1935] call "free verse."<sup>96</sup> Allen quotes several examples of these first drafts alongside the later, "regularized" versions. Among the best of these comparisons, is a portion of Emerson's poem, 'Spiritual Laws.'

Heaven is alive;  
 Self-built and quarrying itself,  
 Upbuilds eternal towers;  
 Self-commanded works  
 In vital cirque  
 By dint of being all;  
 Its loss is transmutation  
 The living Heaven thy prayers respect,  
 House at once and architect,  
 Quarrying man's rejected hours,  
 Building therewith eternal towers;  
 Sole and self-commanded works,

--Cited by Allen in, *American Prosody* (1935)<sup>97</sup>

Allen suggests that these lines, like many other first drafts in the journals, 'seem to demand the arrangement which Emerson first gave them.'<sup>98</sup>

Yet the important thing is that these fragments show unmistakably Emerson's method of composition; and the technique places greater importance on images, cadenced phrases, and rhetoric than on rimes and meters.

--Allen, *American Prosody*<sup>99</sup>

But at what stage is a poem's 'composition' complete? As Jean Gorely has described it,

Emerson, ... believed that poetry is mystical; ... it is sudden and inconsecutive [,] ... the thought takes its own form in language that is rhythmical.

--Cited by Allen in, *American Prosody*<sup>100</sup>

But which rhythm is the poem's "true" form? Are the two versions of 'Spiritual Laws' the same poem? Or, has something been lost/gained as a result of Emerson's revisions? If some forms are "natural" to some poems-- an opinion expressed by Emerson, Weygandt and Pound-- then the answer is expressed primarily in terms of those elements of

the poem that transcription seeks to elucidate (like imagery) rather than to embody (like rhythm) Therefore, armed with a knowledge of Emerson's views on the process of poetic composition as expressed in essays like 'The Poet,' as a student Pound may have encountered Emerson's view that, 'the chief difference between prose and poetry is not necessarily a matter of rhythm but of imagery.'<sup>101</sup> Turning then to Emerson's poems-- first-drafts and revisions-- it would have been clear that,

the great emphasis on the symbol and the image includes more than mere diction. The compression necessary to make the image stand out effectively is itself a trait of versification and always affects the rhythm if used over several consecutive lines. Furthermore, this style of writing compels attention to phrases and lines rather than strophes or stanzas.

--Allen, *American Prosody*<sup>102</sup>

Whether or not such a view coloured Weygandt's teaching of Contemporary Poetry can only be speculated. However, as we have seen, his discussion of Francis Thompson shows a profound concern with the relationship between the crafting of verses and the improvisational character of inspiration. While such a connection is too tenuous to bear much weight, it forms an interesting parallel to the question of "naturalness" in poetic form, one which Pound himself addressed in similar terms. Yet if the extent of Emerson's influence on Pound's early views remains somewhat problematical, it is possible to see more precisely in what ways Pound's ideals were encouraged, even founded upon, certain suggestions from Walter Pater (1839-1894).

Pound remarked on several occasions that he believed the chief role of Pater's work in his own (and by extension, everyone else's) education in literature, was to excite interest in certain authors and certain periods.<sup>103</sup> Judging from his stance in '*How to Read*' (1931) and *A.B.C. of Reading*, (1951) in some respects, Pound saw his own role as a similar one. Indeed his first volume of prose, *The Spirit of Romance* (1910) is, as much as a work of scholarly criticism, an attempt to interest readers in the work of what Pound described as

his own favourite era in western literature. It is probable that Pound was drawn to the period of troubadour literature (and philosophy) through his personal affinity with Professor Shepard, at Hamilton. But it is also likely, that his initial interest in the twelfth century was formed through an early acquaintance with Pater's influential volume, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873, with frequent mutations and reprintings). Here is a somewhat telescoped version of Pater's views on the era, taken from the first chapter of this book in its original/restored form.

French writers, ... have often dwelt on this notion of a Renaissance in the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, a Renaissance within the limits of the middle age itself-- a brilliant, but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done in the fifteenth.

But it is not so much the ecclesiastical art of the middle age, its sculpture and painting ... but rather its profane poetry, the poetry of Provence, and the magnificent after-growth of that poetry in Italy and France, which those French writers have in view when they speak of the medieval Renaissance.

The central love-poetry of Provence, the poetry of the *Tenson* and the *Aubade*, of Bernard de Ventadour and Piere Vidal, is poetry for the few, for the elect and peculiar people of the kingdom of sentiment.

All through it [*Aucassin and Nicolette*] one feels the influence of that faint air of overwrought delicacy, almost of wantonness, which was so strong a characteristic of the poetry of the Troubadours. ... There is a languid Eastern deliciousness in the vast scenery of the story, the full-blown roses, the chamber painted in some mysterious manner ... the cool brown marble, the almost nameless colours, the odour of plucked grass and flowers.

One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart ... was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral

and religious ideas of the time.

--Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*<sup>104</sup>

From even this brief selection it is easy to see how correct Pound was when he praised Pater's gift for enthusing over his chosen subject. But besides a rich enthusiasm, Pater makes a number of suggestions in *The Renaissance* that well accord with Pound's own later views. Among these are Pater's insistence that the appeal of the finest products of the era were created for the pleasure of the 'few,' and that this was done in a 'spirit of rebellion and revolt' against the prevailing tide of the times. The likelihood of these notions' temperamental appeal to Pound is obvious. Similarly, Pound saw himself at this time very much in the role of the Poet, a role about which Pater's remarks gave a clear picture. For instance, in Pater's description of Ronsard, (one of Pound's own principal enthusiasms throughout his early years in London<sup>105</sup>) Pound may have seen himself described:

Ronsard loves, or dreams that he loves, a rare and peculiar type of beauty, ... But he has the ambition not only of being a courtier and a lover, but a great scholar also; ... His poetry is full of quaint, remote learning. He is just a little pedantic, true always to his own express judgement, that to be natural is not enough for one who in poetry desires to produce work worthy of immortality. And therewithal a certain number of Greek words, which charmed Ronsard and his circle by their gaiety and daintiness, and a certain air of foreign elegance about them, crept into the French language; as there were other strange words which the poets of the *Pleiad* [sic] forged for themselves, and which had only an ephemeral existence.

--Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*<sup>106</sup>

Likewise, if we are to take Pound at his word, his early decision to treat literature of all languages and eras as critically comparable, echoes Pater's description of the effects of both the history of Art as well as artefacts on the individual artist:

... individual genius works ever under conditions of time and place: ... But besides these conditions of time and place, and independent of them, there is also an element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses. ... It acts upon the artist, not as

one of the influences of his own age, but through those artistic products of the previous generation which first excited, while they directed into a particular channel, his sense of beauty. The supreme artistic products of succeeding generations thus forms a series of elevated points, taking each from each the reflection of a strange light, ...

--Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*<sup>107</sup>

It was the desire to collect and arrange these illuminating 'elevated points' ('Luminous Details'?) that in part motivated Pound's diversity of styles within both *A Lume Spento* and the *Cantos*.

It is also possible to trace, in a small way, a number of more specific suggestions of Pater's that coincide with Pound's own methods. For example, Pound's (and Gaudier-Brzeska's) Vorticist principle of 'planes in relation' as a source of evocative power in art, may be compared to Pater's discussion of Pico della Mirandola. Describing Pico's attempted harmonizing of Plato, Aristotle and the Bible, Pater felt that while these sources did not show any apparent likeness, by placing them side-by-side, Pico invited his readers to share his own experience of their cabbalistic affinities.

Set side by side, the mere surfaces could never unite in any harmony of design. Therefore one must go below the surface, and bring up the supposed secondary, or still more remote meaning,-- that diviner signification held in reserve, *in recessu divinius aliquid*, latent in some stray touch of Homer, or figure of speech in the books of Moses.

--Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*<sup>108</sup>

The seeming difference between this view and Pound's, is that Pound does not necessarily begin with the same assumption; that is to say, that because there is indeed something that may draw commonly dissociated forces together, that this something is indicative of a "higher" unity of forces. Instead, Pater (and perhaps Pico) insists that our understanding of this unity is achieved when we go 'below the surface' in order to discover the 'harmony of design,' while Pound's position is that understanding of the factors unifying the work of art



occurs simultaneously with recognition of that work as one of artistic dimensions.

Therefore, Pound's view is as much a Neo-platonic one as Pater/Pico's-- that unity transcends diversity-- but for the former, the inherence of unity must be sought, while for the latter it is immediately apprehensible.

But that is not to say that the task of the artist or poet was simply to arrange random sources in an attempt to stumble upon a basic realization of artistic order. On the contrary, the selection of these sources, the 'elevated points' necessary to enact artistic creation, is the artist's chief responsibility, his skill in doing so, proof of his 'genius.' According to Pater, Pico once attempted such a selection on a truly grand scale.

... he composed a Platonic commentary, ... in which, with an ambitious array of every sort of learning, and a profusion of imagery borrowed indifferently from the astrologers, the Cabala, and Homer, and Scripture, and Dionysius the Areopagite, he attempts to define the stages by which the soul passes from the earthly to the unseen beauty.

--Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*<sup>109</sup>

The resemblance of such a project to Pound's *Cantos* may be no more than coincidence, but it is curious to note that while Pound read a number of Pico's works (most of which he did not like), well into the 1930's he continued to link Pico with Pater.<sup>110</sup>

### III.II.v.

Turning to Pater's volume, *Appreciations* (1889), there are several other specific points of comparison. Most significant among these are those literary kinships which Pater posited, and which may have influenced Pound's subsequent view of certain authors.

As several critics have remarked, Pound's earliest poetry shows the considerable attraction that Rossetti had for him during his University years.<sup>111</sup> Pound himself said that in his own early translations of Cavalcanti, Rossetti was his 'father and mother.'<sup>112</sup> But how far did Pater's alignment of these authors serve to influence Pound's judgement? Certainly, Pater

stressed the closeness in style that he believed existed between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Provençal poets.<sup>113</sup> But a significant aspect of Pater's assessment of this closeness, was his belief that part of their likeness was due to a marriage of spirituality with intense craftsmanship. Typically, Pater describes this feeling in visual terms. In recalling the supposed sureness with which Rossetti worked in this area, Pater says,

That he had this gift of transparency in language--the control of a style which did but obediently shift and shape itself to the mental motion, as a well-trained hand can follow on the tracing-paper the line of an original drawing below it, was proved afterwards by typically perfect translations from the delightful but difficult 'early Italian poets': such transparency being indeed the secret of all genuine style, of all such style as can truly belong to one man and not to another. His own meaning was always personal and often recondite, in a certain sense learned and casuistical, sometimes complex or obscure; but the term was always, one could see, deliberately chosen from many competitors, as the just transcript of that peculiar phase of soul which he alone knew, precisely as he knew it.

--Pater, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' in *Appreciations*<sup>114</sup>

Thus as with Ronsard, (Pater's description of whom is cited earlier), the mere surface difficulties of style belie the greater simplicity that spiritual kinship demands. Complexities and obscurities, so Pater says, are a small price to pay for the greater accuracy of feeling derived through a heightened sensitivity. In the case of Dante, as with Rossetti, Pater believed that this accuracy depends to a large extent on both poets' skill in maintaining a precise focus on the object(s) of their rumination.

For Rossetti, as for Dante, without question on his part, the first condition of the poetic way of seeing and presenting things is particularisation.

--Pater, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti'<sup>115</sup>

Once again, notice the visual element of Pater's description: poetry is an art of 'seeing' and 'presenting.' But Pater also expanded this notion of 'particularisation' in both Rossetti and Dante to include personification.

And this delight in concrete definition is allied with another of [Rossetti's] conformities to Dante, the

really imaginative vividness, namely, of his personifications--  
his hold upon them, or rather their hold upon him,...

--Pater, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti'<sup>116</sup>

In this way the objectifying of poetic emotions is achieved, as later in Pound's personae and Imagist writings, through skill in presenting firm outlines and individually realized details.

Therefore if, as his critics and colleagues have suggested, Pound was drawn temperamentally to writing from behind the concealment of literary masks, as well as with historically localised detail, his license for doing so may have come through his faith in the continuity of such a "tradition" as described by Pater<sup>117</sup>

With regard to how this "tradition" of exactness may have affected Pound's attitude towards the precise formation of language into poetry, it is necessary to turn back somewhat from Pater's family group of Greek-Provençal-Pre-Raphaelite poets, to his placement of the entire "tradition" within the greater framework of 'romanticism.' It is important to bear in mind that Pater's definition of 'romanticism' is bound neither by historical era, nor by range of subject matter. Instead, Pater postulated a romanticism founded most completely upon the strength of impulse. 'Outbreaks of this spirit,' Pater says, 'come naturally with particular periods'-- some stronger than others-- but they are 'traceable even in Sophocles.'<sup>118</sup> Such romanticism is characterised by 'a deep thirst for intellectual excitement, after a long ennui, or in reaction against the strain of outward practical things.'<sup>119</sup> Thus periods like those surrounding the troubadours, the early Italian poets, Villon, the Pléiade and the English Romantics provide the catalyst for the releasing of Art's highest emotions. The power of such emotions can be awesome, as can be seen by Pater's own straining attempt to describe one such period:

Here, in the literature of Provence, the very name of romanticism is stamped with its true signification: here we have indeed a romantic world, grotesque even, in the strength of its passions, almost insane in its curious expression of them, drawing all things into its sphere, making the birds, nay! lifeless things, its voices and messengers, yet so penetrated with

the desire for beauty and sweetness, that it begets a wholly new species of poetry, in which the Renaissance may be said to begin.

--Pater, 'Postscript,' in *Appreciations*<sup>120</sup>

Faced with these linguistic challenges, poets writing within such periods, are driven to express themselves in unprecedented ways. Such eras are often distinguished by revolutions in diction and metre. Describing Wordsworth's response, Pater concludes that so intense was the emotional release involved that it threatened to overwhelm language altogether. For this reason, metre served as a restraint, without which the latent power of language might, following the course of Rossetti's hyper-authentic mimesis, transcend the usual process of comprehension.

The music of mere metre performs but a limited, yet a very peculiar and subtly ascertained function, ... With him, metre is but an additional grace, accessory to that deeper music of words and sounds, that moving power, which they exercise in the nobler prose no less than in formal poetry. It is a sedative to that excitement, an excitement almost painful, under which the language, alike of poetry and prose, attains a rhythmical power, independent of metrical combination, and dependent rather on some subtle adjustment of the elementary sounds of words themselves to the image or feeling they convey.

--Pater, 'Wordsworth,' in *Appreciations*<sup>121</sup>

Thus for Pater, the 'rhythmical power' of the 'elementary sounds of words themselves,' is capable of communicating the author's 'excitement,' whether that author writes prose or 'formal poetry.' 'Metre' possesses a 'music' of its own, forcing words into a more sedate pattern than they might otherwise have assumed, but in the most intense poetry, it is little more than 'an additional grace.'

Consequently, when we find both Pound and Eliot complaining of the general stylistic malaise that preceded their own efforts in poetry, it is not difficult to see how both may have come to the conclusion that they were perched squarely on the edge of a potentially explosive moment in literature. Pater's views, which had had such a profound impact on the ideologies of that same stultified generation, were in no way diminished by

that generation's inability to progress in the ways he described. In some measure, perhaps, the time for such a transformation as that produced in the first two decades of the twentieth century, depended upon factors outside those earlier poets' control. What is important, however, is to appreciate the extent to which the generation including Pound and Eliot re-assessed authors like Pater, and the impetus such re-assessments provided for further developments. In Pound's case, many of Pater's suggestions-- notably a genealogy of precision in writing, extending from Greece, through Provence, Italy, France and finally to the Pre-Raphaelites-- would serve as guideposts in his own early quest for literary models with which to 'make it new.' The importance of Pound's engagement with both Rossetti and Pater will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five. But it is Pound's own placement of himself within the context of writers with similar aims as those described here, that I wish to explore next.

### III.III.i.

A comparison of several of the suggested "reading lists" that Pound made over the course of his career can provide the basis for a number of observations upon Pound's own standards of poetic excellence. Such a comparison is interesting in that it highlights those preferences which remained consistent throughout Pound's life, as well as those which he gradually abandoned. Using other sources, it is also possible to draw up a preliminary list of poets who formed the main body of Pound's early research, and who may have served as touchstones for his later estimates.

Among the first "modern" poets to whom Pound gave serious attention was Oscar Wilde, a copy of whose *Salome* (in Lord Alfred Douglas' 1894 English translation) was given to Pound in 1901 by his friend William Brooke Smith.<sup>122</sup> In 1902-3, he was reading Browning, Symons and Dowson, possibly also with Smith's encouragement.<sup>123</sup> By the

following year, he had moved on to Macpherson's *Ossian*, (whom he first discovered in a German translation) and to William Morris, on whose early poems he based an undergraduate essay.<sup>124</sup> By 1905, Pound was reading Rossetti, Swinburne and the early Yeats.<sup>125</sup> Throughout this time Pound was also reading large amounts of poetry in languages other than English. His study of Peire Cardinal, Dante, Villon and Heine, to name only a few, fostered both subject-matter and a set of ideas about the aims of verse. Nevertheless, the format of Pound's writing retained characteristics derived primarily from examples of poems in English. One important reason for this is that Pound clearly believed that the greatest achievements in poetry always involve a fusion of elements drawn from more than one source language. As with *Ossian*, and the now famous purchase of Divus' Latin translation of the *Odyssey*, Pound considered the essential qualities of great verse-- particularly *phanopeia*-- to be translatable throughout the entire range of languages from Chinese to Greek. For his own purposes, however, (practical and pedagogical) the twin problems of selecting catalysts and framing poetry remained one of essentially English-centered phenomena. The proof of this is in the tireless way Pound recommended specific comparisons of foreign-language poems with his own preferred translations. In those cases where no suitable English version existed, Pound often supplied one himself. Otherwise, he would suggest that a similar isolation of the original poem's primary attributes could be gained through comparison with some other language within the reader's grasp (for example, French translations of Chinese). Pound's justification for this lay in his belief that most of the western world's great eras in poetry were stimulated by poets who imported model verses from abroad. This habit, combined with a belief in the inherent likeness of great poetry in all languages, further determined Pound's commitment towards a poetic founded on multi-lingual comparisons, investigations into which would be ultimately

resolved into a single macaronic whole, like the *Cantos*, or brief poems composed of adapted or synthesised foreign sources (as will be discussed in Chapter Five).

Turning then to one of Pound's earliest proposed reading lists (1913), we can see how his instructions to would-be poets are directed towards fixing their attention first upon poets whose work he believes is distinguished by the vitality of its imagery:

That part of your poetry which strikes upon the imaginative eye of the reader will lose nothing by translation into a foreign tongue; that which appeals to the ear can only reach those who take it in the original.

Consider the definiteness of Dante's presentation, as compared with Milton's rhetoric. Read as much of Wordsworth as does not seem too unutterably dull.

If you want the gist of the matter go to Sappho, Catullus, Villon, Heine when he is in the vein, Gautier when he is not too frigid; or if you have not the tongues, seek out the leisurely Chaucer.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>126</sup>

In this example, notice that none of the poets he recommends shares the same language with any other. It is through comparison, Pound suggests, that the singular quality of 'presentation' is to be isolated. In the following year, 1914, the core of Pound's list remains unchanged, as does his motive for comparison. In this example, Pound has expanded his range to include more of his personal favourites, and he now refers to 'presentation' as 'color':

The best Latin poets knew Greek. The troubadours knew several jargons. Dante wrote in Italian, Latin and Provençal, and knew presumably other tongues, including a possible smattering of Hebrew. ... I suppose no two men will agree absolutely respecting 'pure color' or 'good color', but the modern painter recognises the importance of the palette. One can but make one's own spectrum portable. Let us choose Homer, Sappho, Ibycus, Theocritus' idyll of the woman spinning with the charmed wheel; Catullus, ... I should wish for myself at least, a few *sirventes* of Bertran de Born, and a few strophes of Arnaut Daniel, though one might learn from Dante himself all that one could learn from Arnaut: precision of statement, particularisation. ... I should want Dante of course, and the *Poema del Cid*, and the *Sea-farer* and one passage out of *The Wanderer* ... So far as the palette of sheer color is concerned,

one could, at a pinch, do without nearly all the French poets save Villon. ... After Villon, the next poet for an absolutely clear palette is Heine.

--Pound, 'The Renaissance,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>127</sup>

By 1916 Pound was also recommending Anglo-Saxon as a curb to those people who felt poetry's principle aim was 'to entertain.'<sup>128</sup> However, by 1918, with Imagism and Vorticism largely behind him, Pound's interests seemed to be turning once again towards that other important quality of poetry: *sound*. When he came to discuss the poets of his own generation, his colleagues and friends, his assessment of their work is based principally on the impact of those poems which *sound* in his memory:

The first twelve lines of Padraic Colum's 'Drover'; his 'O Woman shapely as a swan, on your account I shall not die'; Joyce's 'I hear an army'; the lines of Yeats that ring in my head and the heads of all young men of my time who care for poetry: Braseal and the Fisherman, 'The fire that stirs about her when she stirs'; the latter lines of 'The Scholars', the faces of the Magi; William Carlos Williams' 'Postlude', Aldington's version of 'Atthis', and H.D.'s waves like pine tops ... These things have worn smooth in my head and I am not through with them, ...

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>129</sup>

Notice that Pound's memory shows an unpredictable *mélange* of sound, images and subjects, which taken together reveals how the various elements of his favourite poems impressed him, resurfacing as proof, so he says, that 'ONLY EMOTION ENDURES'<sup>130</sup> Similarly, his metaphor of a good poem as a good coin, the value of which is proven by its "circulation" in his mind ('worn smooth in my head') echoes his own preoccupation with financial matters as well as his habit of re-using poetic "currency" in his own work. Still, it was, as he said, these poems' capacity to join sound with emotion that caused them to remain in his mind. In the same year, when he came to review Gosse's biography of Swinburne, a similar feeling motivates his discussion of poems that had so impressed him more than a decade before:

Swinburne recognised poetry as an art, and as an



art of verbal music. ... Swinburne's actual writing is very often rather distressing, ... He habitually makes a fine stanzaic form, writes one or two fine strophes in it, and then continues to pour into the mould strophes of diminishing quality. ... He neglected the value of words as words, and was intent on their value as sound, ... Moderns more awake to the value of language will read him with increasing annoyance, but I think few men who read him before their faculty of literary criticism is awakened-- the faculty for purely literary discrimination as contrasted with melopoeic discrimination-- will escape the enthusiasm of his emotions, some of which were indubitably real. ... No man who cares for his art can be deaf to the rhythms of Swinburne ... Swinburne's surging and leaping dactyls had no comparable forerunners in English.

--Pound, 'Swinburne Versus His Biographers,'  
in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>131</sup>

What is important in this passage is Pound's suggestion that the sound of poetry, even more than its imagery, appeals to one aspect of the reader's sensibility ('melopoeic discrimination'), before that sensibility has been refined, discouraged or altered by the development of further more mature aspects ('literary discrimination'). In other words, Pound suggests that as a factor for evoking poetic emotions, sound is more basic than discursive content. Also contained in this description is a further validation of Pound's method of drawing together his seemingly diverse preferences in poetry: the notion that the greatest poets of each era are instinctively drawn to the greatest poets of previous eras whom they themselves resemble. Thus it is probably no coincidence that just as Swinburne translated Villon, or Rossetti Dante and his contemporaries, Pound, in his early admiration for the former, should find himself also drawn to the latter on the terms of the former.

But there are two other ways in which Pound's enthusiasm for certain poets effected his subsequent recommendation of them. One of these, is his habit of transferring his own poetic values on to his predecessors. Thus Pound has been described as reading Dante as though the latter were an Imagist,<sup>132</sup> while his description of certain other poets makes them

sound as though they were direct precursors of Pound's own stylistic proclivities. For example, in Pound's 1915 assessment of Lionel Johnson, (written the same year as *Cathay*) he makes Johnson carry the torch of precision, sincerity and innovation which Pound himself proposed to take up:

The 'nineties' have chiefly gone out because of their muzziness, because of a softness derived, I think, not from books but from impressionist painting. They riot with half decayed fruit.

The impression of Johnson's verse is that of small slabs of ivory, firmly combined and contrived. There is a constant feeling of neatness, a sense of inherited order. Above all he respected his art. ...English poetry ... had been the 'vehicle' of opinion. For Swinburne it was at least the art of musical wording. For Johnson it was the art of good writing. ... I think we respect Johnson today, in part for his hardness, in part for his hatred of amateurishness.

--Pound, 'Lionel Johnson,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>133</sup>

The second of these ways in which Pound's enthusiasm affected his critical appraisals is in the sometimes extraordinary comparisons between authors it leads him to make. In the above example, Pound likens Johnson's devotion to art to that of Swinburne-- a reasonable enough comparison given that the two men lived throughout much of the same era. But Pound often extended this range of comparisons to bridge centuries, sometimes millennia. Quoting a line from Johnson, Pound described it somewhat cryptically, 'It has a beauty like the Chinese.'<sup>134</sup> Likewise, in 1917, he asks rhetorically whether or not alongside Catullus, 'Is not Sappho, in comparison, a little, just a little Swinburnian?'<sup>135</sup>

Pound's purpose through all of this, however, is to isolate the essential factors constituting great poetry, after which both he and others may then emulate the pattern that emerges. One of his most important principles in this quest was his insistence on uncovering the most basic, primary and underived experience of poetry. In this respect we see him turning to the oldest sources available. In English, this meant research in

Anglo-Saxon and Layamon's *Brut*.<sup>136</sup> But in foreign languages, he turned primarily to the acknowledged masters of style: Homer, the troubadours, Dante, Villon. Where such masters could be compared to English translations, Pound generally preferred the earliest available translations. Thus we find him recommending Golding's *Metamorphoses*, Douglas', *Aeneid*, Marlowe's *Amores*, Chapman's *Odyssey*, and Rossetti's versions of the medieval Italian poets. Whenever possible, his preference within those texts is fixed upon the earliest passages composed, as in his special interest in the *Nekuia* section of the *Odyssey*.<sup>137</sup> But despite his often-repeated advice to read certain specified prose authors, like Flaubert and Henry James, I have found no example of his recommending any translations from foreign prose into English. Why?

Apparently Pound's interest in foreign literature served two purposes. First of all, it encouraged, and was encouraged by, his belief that great eras in language are produced through an active involvement with foreign models; hence Pound's interest in the relationship between original poems and their various permutations both in the form of stylistic modifications in their own language as well as translation. And secondly, he believed that his own stature as a poet, like that of Cavalcanti and Swinburne, would depend as much upon the obviousness of his dedication as a poet as it would upon the evidence of his craftsmanship. For these reasons, insisting upon the greatness of largely neglected works, as well as the unforeseen subtleties of masterpieces like *The Divine Comedy*, contributed a dimension of uniqueness to his work, and also an assumption of historical continuity. Seen from this perspective, foreign prose may have contributed to the general *feeling* of precision in language, but the actual product in the form of poetry still counted for most.

The other possible motive for Pound's circuitous ride through foreign verse as a means to English verse, is a belief that in order to be thoroughly modern, one must know

the scope of the past thoroughly (if not deeply). Thus the cause of the poet who would 'make it new' in English is to examine the work of his predecessors in the light of the changing conditions within the language. An expedient way of doing this is by comparing translations of one source text from varying historical periods. The assumption being, of course, that a poet's veracity in translating foreign works is proof of his own place within the stylistic continuity proposed for the original poem's author. In any case, Pound certainly admired poets whom he believed performed this task energetically. When they were successful, the finished product had a life of its own, equivalent in many respects, (sometimes superior) to the original.

Gavin Douglas re-created us Virgil, or rather  
we forget Virgil in reading Gavin's *Aeneids* ...  
Golding made a new Ovid.

--Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (1938)<sup>138</sup>

In any event, Pound is eager to see himself in the company of kindred spirits from the century preceding his own work. While he believed 'the Victorian era is like a stuffy alley-way which we can, for the most part avoid,' he would insist that, 'out of the lot of them only Browning had a revivalist spirit.' ['? and Swinburne'- Pound's note]<sup>139</sup> In this way Pound believed Browning and Swinburne were revitalising English poetry through their contact with foreign sources, as well as their commitment to dynamic innovation in their own language. This notion puts Pound, with his own efforts to be thoroughly modern, in line not only with these two great Victorians, but also with the great "moderns" of more remote eras. Or as Pound put it,

Homer, Villon, Propertius speak of the world as  
I know it, whereas Mr. Tennyson and Dr. Bridges  
did not.

--Pound, *Polite Essays*<sup>140</sup>

(Notice that Pound's insistence on the modernity of such past authors extended to his own grammatical form; Homer, Villon and Propertius continue to 'speak,' while Tennyson and Bridges never 'did'.)

Finally, Pound's enthusiasm for foreign poetry, and poetry in general, is continually centered upon the problem of form. His numerous comments on form in poetry, attempt to define the very relationship between text and communication that gives poetry scope for definition as an individual genre.

### III.III.ii.

An artist's technique is test of his personal validity.

--Ezra Pound, 'Civilization,' in  
*Polite Essays*<sup>141</sup>

Pound's unflinching stance on the primary importance of 'technique' in any artist's work is evident in his writings on the subject throughout the length of his career. But what precisely did he mean by 'technique'? Is it merely an attitude towards art, or does he refer specifically to craftsmanship? Can the two be separated? For instance, what about work like many of Pound's own early poems, which appeared in print virtually unrevised? Are these the products of unconscious 'technique' imbibed through Pound's study of his masters? With regard to the need for a proper attitude towards artistic technique, Pound's comments on the difficulties of translation are illuminating. Speaking specifically of the possibility of translating French verse into English, Pound says,

Even though I know the overwhelming importance of technique, technicalities in a foreign tongue cannot have for me the importance they have to a man writing in that tongue; almost the only technique perceptible to a foreigner is the presentation of content as free as possible from the clutteration of dead technicalities, fustian *à la* Louis XV; and from timidities of workmanship. This is perhaps the only technique that ever matters, the only *maestria*.

--Pound, *Make It New* (1935)<sup>142</sup>

Here one of the factors which for Pound constituted a correct assessment of the 'overwhelming importance' of technique, is an awareness of the difference between 'content' and 'dead technicalities.' These 'technicalities' appear to be synonymous with the 'fustian' of

imprecise writing-- imprecise because it leaves the reader feeling that the work suffers from 'clutteration.' Such imprecision "deadens" writing in that it tempts the writer into using stylistic devices ('technicalities') which betray the writer's "timidity" as a workman-- or, more damning still, show him to be "invalid," unworthy of the name of artist. On the other hand, the 'presentation of content' is a tricky matter. For despite his apparent separation of 'content' from 'workmanship,' Pound's attention to genre distinctions shows an interest in the relevance of 'workmanship' to the real, or potential, generation of 'content.'

An excellent example of how Pound's views on the relationship between 'technique' and 'content' was one of interwoven necessities, is this tightly packed description:

... [this] paragraph, like most so called prose poetry, lacks adequate rhythmic vitality and has, consequently, the dulness [sic] germane to its category.

--Pound, *Polite Essays*<sup>143</sup>  
 although

It is obvious from this sentence that Pound dislikes 'prose poetry,' although he is willing to grant that 'prose poetry' exists as a genre, or 'category.' However, here a certain contradiction in Pound's position begins to emerge. In the first place, he doubts the "validity" ('technique?') of the form-- it is, he says, only a 'so-called ... category.' But then he makes his special demand of the form: that it must possess 'adequate rhythmic vitality.' 'Adequate' for what? It is, after all, a *prose* poem, not a poem. But Pound seems to be insisting that anything bearing the title of 'poem,' must have what he deemed, 'rhythmic vitality'-- something differentiating it from "ordinary" prose. But the degree of rhythmic vitality separating prose from poetry, is left (perhaps, judiciously) unspecified. Pound's complaint then, is that the "necessities" of the 'content' fail to justify, or inform, the technical aspects of the finished work; therefore the result is "invalid" as a work of art.

A similar case of Pound's insistence on the interdependence of 'workmanship' and 'content' is his ambivalent attitude towards the work of Marianne Moore (1887-1972).

Pound was willing to grant a fairly broad scope to the possible styles of *vers libre* current at the time of his introduction to Moore's verse (1917?)<sup>144</sup> and later. However, Marianne Moore provided a special problem to Pound's aesthetic demand of 'rhythmic vitality.' Evidence of her 'workmanship' abounded. Both her syllabic and free verse poems were meticulously constructed and frequently revised. But Pound remains rather at a loss for ways to describe the peculiarities of her style. In *Instigations* (1920), he speaks uncertainly, and without direct comparison, of 'a verbalism less finished than Eliot's.'<sup>145</sup> Still, he is pleased to welcome her as a new poet opposed to 'Palgravian insularity,' although he cannot justify her poems by reference to the same standard with which he condemned others, of 'rhythmic vitality.'<sup>146</sup> Instead he focuses on the obvious features of her 'workmanship,' and expresses his faith that she has emulated his own favourite poets through a supposed anti-Georgian, anti-establishment style of versification:

Miss Moore "rhymes in places." Her versification does not fit in with preconceived notions of *vers libre*. It possesses a strophic structure  
The elderly Newboltian groans. The all-wool  
unbleached Georgian sighs ominously. Another  
author has been reading French poets, and  
using words for the communication of thoughts.  
Alas, times will not stay anchored.

--Pound, *Instigations*<sup>147</sup>

In Pound's description here, it is almost as if 'technical' expertise is sufficient to create, or at least promote, artistic 'content' ('thought'), to an extent that it is capable of defining its own genre. Pound was obviously impressed by Moore's poems, the aesthetic of which, although lacking in 'rhythmic vitality,' was sufficiently convincing of its internal necessities to merit his approval of it as an acceptable alternative to other formal styles of poetry. But despite his approval of Marianne Moore, Pound's own belief in the essential constituent of 'rhythmic vitality' framed his assessment of the effect that a poem's appearance has on its sound, and how that sound affects its 'meaning' or 'content.'

### III.III.iii.

One important influence on Pound's attitude towards the sound of poetry, which will be explored more fully in Chapter Five, was his application of musical analogies to poetry. Music itself, of course, also played a role in shaping Pound's response to the effects of poetry's existence as sound-notation, as it had done for those poets discussed in Chapter Two. Writing in the 1930's about his own opera, based on poems by Villon, Pound recalled,

I sat in the electrician's kitchen in Rapallo when the *Villon* was broadcast from London, and I not only knew who was singing (so far as the singers were known to me), but I could distinguish the words, and the sense of the words.

The music is to that extent a comment on, or an elucidation of, the form of the words and possibly of their meaning, or, if you like, of the emotive contents

--Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*<sup>148</sup>.

So 'music,' even as an accompaniment, can be both a 'comment on,' and an 'elucidation of,' 1.) 'the form of the words'; and 2.) 'their meaning' ('=emotive contents.')

The importance of this statement in a discussion of Pound's attitude towards the sound and appearance of poetry is twofold. By 'the form of the words,' as distinct from the lexis only, I understand Pound to mean the actual physical construction of the text-- the way the words are arranged. Secondly, Pound places the importance of the words' 'meaning' at the level of emotion rather than at that of intellect; therefore, the audience's response is immediate (though indefinite), rather than reflective (potentially determinate). The second of these hypotheses is, of course, supported by Pound's numerous remarks on the superiority of poems where an instantaneous assimilation of the words' import (say, images) is best achieved. However, the first conclusion, that the literal 'form' of a text has an impact upon a poem's ability to communicate its 'meaning ...or ...emotive content,' suggests that Pound's own use of 'form' in his poems is a reflection of both conscious decision, and artistic necessity. A poet's relative skill in the interaction of these forces is ascertainable through



the evidence of his 'presentation of content,' through 'maestria' or 'workmanship' with his material, words. Where there is no music to 'elucidate' or 'comment upon' the 'form' of words presented, an equivalent must be sought through other means. That means, is in creating the impression of 'rhythmic vitality.'

### III.III.iv.

One of Pound's musical analogies once again provides a useful starting point for a discussion of his views on the relevance of textual appearance to textual "sound." In this example, Pound is recalling his own investigations into the relationship between the words and music of troubadour poetry. The particular problem Pound addresses here, is how the lineation of the text, rather than being dependent upon a supposed bar-structure of the music, is perhaps itself an indication of how that (irregular) bar-structure was composed.

I strongly suspect that Rummel and I in 1910, following other students who were supposed then to know more than we did, failed to recognize what might have been supposed to be a ms. indication. I suggest that the next digger try to interpret troubadour tune on the hypothesis that the line (of verse) is the bar and can be graphed to best advantage as a (that is one single) bar.

--Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*<sup>149</sup>

Pound's somewhat muddled account of troubadour music-- which will be discussed further in Chapter Five--, is based on the knowledge that troubadour texts have no bar structure. Therefore the beat of the music, while perfectly regular, was not emphasized in its own right, independently of the words, as Pound supposes it is in more modern compositions where bar divisions mark the recurrence of the musical beat. The implied comparison in Pound's description is, however, between symmetrical and asymmetrical poetic lines. The former being poems in recognized accentual-syllabic metres, are likened to compositions composed with the full consciousness of bar-lengths, and therefore somehow limited by this *apparent* regularity. The latter sort of poetry, Pound's own, for instance, also has a

recurrent beat, though this is not signalled by such an obvious method as standardized line-lengths. Instead, so Pound's argument goes, the lines of verse represent melodic phrases, which, when correctly intoned, signal the rhythm of the music-- which in the case of the troubadours, was no more than a notation of tonic intervals-- by placing the emphatic beats at the beginning of each new line, regardless of the number of accented syllables occurring within that line. Therefore, some accented syllables are part of the poem's metrical structure, while others are not (as Sidney Lanier had proposed, cf. Chapter Two). Seen in this way, the lineation of the poem is the key to its timing, whether voiced, or sung to music.

It must be must emphasized, however, that the 'timing' of a poem's rhythm is not based exclusively on its arrangement of syllables in measured rows, as the analogy with music might suggest. Pound was aware that unlike musical tones, words have a basis in ideation which, together with pronunciation, grammar and syntax, form a nexus of associations that enhances their function as transmitters-- the implications of which, as described by Mark Liddell, are discussed in Chapter Two. The importance of this nexus in shaping poetry, perhaps even a factor in differentiating it from prose, is the scope it affords authors for presenting language in ways that challenge the reader's assumptions about the "meaning" of the text in ways that prose cannot. This can be seen in the way Pound, like Liddell, illustrated rhythmical complexity with an example of a well-known passage from Shakespeare. Writing in 1910, in *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound is attempting to illustrate the rhythmical patterns common in the Spanish playwright, Lope de Vega. In order to do this, Pound takes a selection from Shakespeare, the rhythm of which, Pound says, 'is concealed by his verse structure.'<sup>150</sup> The true rhythmical 'smoothness' of the line, which 'smoothness' formed Shakespeare's 'secondary aim,' so Pound says, is best seen in the re-lineation Pound offers:

Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins  
 remembered,

--Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*<sup>151</sup>

Pound suggests that this division of the words more accurately reflects the rhythm

Shakespeare intended for the sentence. Compared with this, had Lope written the text, he would have meant it to be read in this way:

Nymph,  
 In thine orisons  
 Be all our sins  
 remembered.

--Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*<sup>152</sup>

Notice also the substitution in the second example of 'thine' for 'thy,' and 'our' for 'my,' which, Pound says, places the words more in accordance with Lope's penchant for 'swiftness' and 'speed in dialogue.'<sup>153</sup> What is most important, however, is Pound's sensitivity to the rhythmical variations possible with only slight alteration to the words' arrangement, as well as his insistence that this arrangement can, in the case of symmetrical forms, disguise the real (syntactical) rhythm of the words. From this standpoint it is possible to see how his conviction that the formal characteristics of a poem must reproduce the immediacy of its 'emotive content,' supported his condemnation of 'dead technicalities.' If, for example, even Shakespeare's verse-structure, though perhaps employed for convention's sake, 'concealed' the rhythm implied in his verses, then surely in the hands of lesser poets such verse structures were bound to inhibit 'rhythmic vitality.'

For Pound, the solution was most often to develop distinctive verse structures, preferably based on foreign models. Significantly, his advice (also like Lanier's, cf. Chapter Two) to novices (in 1918), was to internalize these foreign rhythms; the reason being, presumably so that they became perpetually re-instituted, rather than merely copied from originals:

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the

movement.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>154</sup>

However, the examination of these foreign models sometimes requires a mixture of pertinacity and instinct on the part of the reader, if that reader means to assimilate their precise 'movement.' As Pound described it,

One is told in college that Italian verse is not accentual but syllabic but I can't remember anyone's having ever presented the Anglo-American reader with a lucid discrimination between the two systems of measurement.

--Pound, 'Cavalcanti,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>155</sup>

After finishing his formal degree studies, Pound continued to puzzle over this possible dichotomy. He says obliquely that during his time at Wabash, he made, what was for him, a minor breakthrough, which was afterwards confirmed by a fortunate discovery in a nineteenth-century Italian reference book:

... once in Sicily I came upon a century-old Italian school-book containing intelligent remarks upon metric. ... The author did not 'lay down rules,' he merely observed that Dante's hendecasyllables were composed of combinations of rhythm units of various shapes and sizes and that these pieces were put together in lines so as to make, roughly, eleven syllables in all. I say 'roughly' because of the liberties allowed in elision. I had discovered this fact for myself in Indiana twenty years before and in my own work and made use of the knowledge continually, ...

--Pound, 'Cavalcanti'<sup>156</sup>

How Pound in his 'own work ... made use of the knowledge continually,' will be discussed in Chapter Five. What is important at this point is the fact that although Pound correctly equates 'metre' with 'measurement,' his 'rhythm units of various shapes and sizes' are based on syntactical groups. Therefore, as with his complaint against those who would suggest that Italian verse is syllabic (and by implication that English verse is accentual) Pound insists that neither term forms an adequate definition of the whole relationship of rhythm and metre in either language. Instead, Pound suggests that the metre of Italian verse is syllabic, while its rhythm is accentual, or metre reflects design, while rhythm reflects performance.

Likewise metre and rhythm are intertwined to form verses, but neither must be seen in primacy over the other-- 'roughly eleven syllables' may be the pre-conceived plan, but the 'pieces' must be 'put together'-- a view which, as will be seen also in Chapter Five, echoes that of T.E. Hulme. Notice also in this passage that the 'fact' Pound 'discovered' in Dante's poetry, he also 'discovered' in his own: 'I had discovered this fact [about Dante's metre] for myself ... and in my own work and made use of the knowledge ...' This may imply that Pound saw in Dante what he wanted to see there, or that he transferred the principle unknowingly, or that Pound imagined his verse to be more like Dante's than it really is, or even or that all verse has this in common to a greater or lesser extent. In any case, Pound's 'discovery' continued to form a part of his scheme of versification.

There were also, as Pound came to describe them later (1929), three other factors at work within the bounds of those 'rhythm units.' These three factors are:

MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.

PHANOPOEIA, which is casting of images upon the visual imagination.

LOGOPOEIA, 'the dance of the intellect among words', that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play.

--Pound, *'How to Read'*<sup>157</sup>

As I have said, Pound recognised that the complex relationship of these forces make poetry a very different art from music. A fourth characteristic of poetry, surrounding the 'rhythm units' and involving the process of 'measurement,' Pound describes as 'architectonics':

All writing is built up of these three elements, plus 'architectonics' or 'the form of the whole', and to know anything about the relative efficiency of various works one must have some knowledge of the maximum already attained by various authors, irrespective of where and when.

--Pound, *'How to Read'*<sup>158</sup>

In this description of 'the form of the whole,' I understand Pound to mean both the visual format of the poem-- stanzaic structure, rhyme scheme, line lengths (whether based on counted accents, syllables or otherwise)-- as well as the connotations the reader is likely to perceive in them based on an experience of them in various combinations in other poems. Characteristically, Pound's advice to the novice-poet is to experience as many of these combinations as possible prior to writing in any one such form.

As early as 1913, Pound was advising caution in the management of effects produced by 'architectonics' and 'rhythm units.' If the two become confused, the result may be a poem where supposed metrical characteristics dominate the format to such an extent that the important factor of rhythmical intuitiveness is rationalized out of existence.

Don't chop your stuff into separate *iamb*s. Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>159</sup>

Pound's metaphor of 'rhythm units' 'chopped' into iambs, shows that he clearly understood that neither rhythm nor metre begins with prosodic requirements. Likewise, his image of the 'rhythm wave,' which runs across line-divisions, (a phrase also echoed by Eliot, see below, III.IV.iv), reflects a trend in prosodic description flourishing in America after the turn of the century.<sup>160</sup>

Similarly, Pound's discussion of how these 'rhythm units' are formed, echoes certain of his predecessors in America. Pound's declaration on this matter, in many ways the centerpiece of his entire concept of poetic rhythm, is contained in one succinct passage from 1912:

I believe in an 'absolute rhythm', a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>161</sup>

(Notice again the monetary image, cf. III.III.i.) Pound made a similar remark regarding the extent which such an 'absolute rhythm' is 'uncounterfeitable' in 1910 in the context of translation.<sup>162</sup> But his belief in the rhythmical identity of individual emotions, as well as their exclusivity and need for positive replication, opens up an entire range of possible theoretical precedents. Among the most likely of those I have discussed are Emerson and Symons. Nevertheless, the concept of an 'absolute rhythm' like that which Pound describes, was fairly widespread at the time. At least one American prosodist, R.M. Alden, writing in 1904, uses the term 'absolute rhythm' to describe part of the reader's experience of the poem, and which hints at some transcendent communication between the poet and his audience.

Two streams of sound pass constantly through the inner ear of one who understands or appreciates the rhythm of our verse; one, never actually found in the real sounds which are uttered, is the Absolute Rhythm ...; the other, represented by the actual movement of the verse always hovers along the line of the perfect rhythm, and bids the ear refer to the perfect rhythm the succession of its pulsations.

--Cited by Pallister Barkas in, *A Critique of Modern English Prosody 1880-1930* (1934)<sup>163</sup>

Barkas elucidates this passage somewhat, in his discussion of Alden's book:

This perfect rhythm is described as "the perpetually unvarying norm" to which the words and phrases of the verse "continually approximate". (p.211). The syllables of verse are not spoken exactly as in prose, but are shortened or lengthened to occupy the time required by the rhythm (p.403), or slight pauses are introduced. ...

The "*Absolute Rhythm*" and the "*Metrical Scheme*" do not seem to be synonyms, the former being constituted of the recurrent Subjective Ictus, tending to dispose the accents isochronously, (Intr. to P. p.188) the latter being an abstract specification.

--Barkas, *A Critique of Modern English Prosody 1880-1930*<sup>164</sup>

The equation then seems to be that the 'metrical scheme' provides a basis for composition and an initial introduction to the reader of the nature of the poem; this introduction includes a suggestion of an 'absolute rhythm,' to which the reader then refers the 'actual movement of the verse.' For Pound, the accuracy with which the 'absolute rhythm' 'corresponds to the

emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed' is paramount. If the 'metrical scheme' permits, or even encourages, this "correspondence," then it is well chosen. If it does not, then it merely a 'dead technicality.' As a result, Pound's own preferences show how he himself sought to maximise the possibilities for such "correspondences" in his own verse. A discussion of the options available appears in the same conglomeration of essays from 1918:

I think one should write *vers libre* only when one 'must', that is to say, only when the 'thing' builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the 'thing', more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents one with set iambic or set anapaestic.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>165</sup>

Notice here that Pound equates 'set metres' with 'accentual verse;' 'set iambic or anapaestic.' This would indicate that one of the primary factors of non-English verse that Pound wanted to domesticate, was a concept of metrical form not concerned primarily with accents. Pound is aware, however, that such a proposal is fraught with difficulties. As Barkas, following Alden, described it, the reader, influenced by the poem's lineation, is tempted to make the verse rhythmical in ways that may or may not reflect the poet's own; that is to say, the 'absolute rhythm' may not be sufficiently manifest to guide the reader beyond the habits of reading acquired through familiarity with 'set metres.' Pound proposed various ways to combat this possibility. While still at Wabash, he is credited with saying, 'Space words to a mental metronome' [not a physical one].<sup>166</sup> By 1917, he had expanded this analogy in an attempt to account for the rhythmic subtleties of his new friend, T.S. Eliot. We still find Pound belittling the notion that the primary factor of poetic rhythm is metre; rather it is, as he says, that these metres merely reflect common assemblages of 'rhythm units.' What is important, he goes on, is that the 'architectonics' of the poem are sufficiently well



thought-out so as not to force automatic sequencing on to what is an approximate process only:

Alexandrine and other grammarians have made cubby-holes for various groupings of syllables; they have put names upon them, and have given various labels to 'metres' consisting of various combinations of these groups. Thus it would be hard to escape contact with some group or other ... The most fanatical verslibrist will escape them with difficulty. ... On the other hand, I do not believe that Chopin wrote to a metronome. There is undoubtedly a sense of music that takes count of the 'shape' of the rhythm in a melody rather than of bar divisions. ... The creation of such shapes is part of thematic invention. Some musicians have the faculty of invention, rhythmic, melodic. Likewise some poets.

--Pound, 'T.S. Eliot,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*<sup>167</sup>

Pound is also careful not to let this analogy become reversed-- the rhythm of poetry is like music, but musical rhythm is not sufficient to explain poetic effects:

Treatises full of musical notes and of long and short marks have never been convincingly useful. Find a man with thematic invention and all he can say is that he gets what the Celts call a 'chune' in his head, and that the words 'go into it', or when they don't 'go into it' they 'stick out and worry him.'

--Pound, 'T.S. Eliot'<sup>168</sup>

This last comment, in effect that rhythm precedes the words, sounds like the view quoted earlier by Symons (cf. III.II.v). But Pound differs from Symons in that ultimately Pound's estimate of a poem's rhythm gives a broader acceptance to the 'workmanship' involved in the selection of words for their properties as mere sounds, rather than emphasizing, as Symons does, their mystical connotative significance. Thus Pound is able to approve of the relative rhythmic aptness of both Burns' 'Birks o' Aberfeldy,' and Swinburne's first chorus in *Atalanta*, although 'the two things compare almost as the rhythm of a drum compares to the rhythm (not the sound) of the violin or organ.'<sup>169</sup>

### III.IV.i.

Perhaps for personal reasons, or under the influence of *Babbitt*, Eliot's view of literature, much more so than Pound's, involves a greater assessment of one's own standpoint as a factor relative to the "meaning" of literary works, as well as the appreciation of literary style. For this reason, while Pound is principally concerned with the formation of a chain of examples which become representative of his theories (themselves influenced by these examples), Eliot is more deeply concerned with identifying the patterns or codes within himself to which certain works appeal. Therefore, his studies and preferences, in this respect, offer a perspective from which to examine the choices he made regarding the expression of his ideas in his own work, as well as the form in which those ideas are cast.

A considerable amount of critical material has been written about this aspect of Eliot's intellectual development, and I will make no attempt to collate or summarize those opinions here. What I am chiefly concerned with at this juncture is the position Eliot affords poetry as an intermediary between individuals, and individual states of consciousness. It is probable that Eliot synthesized a number of philosophical views into his own theoretical position, sometimes even mutually contradictory ones. Certainly he found a wealth of ideas represented by the principal philosophers of his own time which could be harmonized. Some, however, despite the personal attractiveness of their progenitors, were, or became, insupportable for him. For example, Eliot dismissed the views of Harvard's own George Santayana (1863-1952), by saying that Santayana's philosophy amounted to 'a dressing up of himself rather than an interest in things.'<sup>170</sup> Similarly, the views of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whose lectures at the Sorbonne Eliot attended enthusiastically, attracted him in part through their temperamental appeal. In the words of one recent critic,

Bergson's 'vitalism' justified attention to sensation and made vague but comforting promises that access to sensation could somehow evolve into access to the cosmos.

--Gail McDonald, *Learning to be Modern:*

*Pound, Eliot and the American University*  
(1993)<sup>171</sup>

However, later in life Eliot scorned his early interest in Bergson, particularly when he compared the influence of Bergson's ideas on his own work to the impact made by the writings of F.H. Bradley (1846-1924).

Eliot bought a copy of Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (1893) in June, 1913, and it was 'a purchase which effectively shaped the remainder of his formal education.'<sup>172</sup> But while this book would become the focus of Eliot's doctoral dissertation, many have seen in Eliot's subsequent criticism a mingling of ideas drawn from both Bradley and the founder of Pragmatism, William James (1842-1910, cf. Chapter Two). As Manju Jain describes it,

Eliot is absorbed ... by William James' discussion of dream-like, illusory, hallucinatory states of consciousness, particularly those produced by anaesthetics and intoxicants. ... From James, Eliot also copies the four signs of mysticism: ineffability; noetic quality; transiency; and passivity, in which the mystic feels as if he were grasped by a superior power, together with his admission that he cannot help ascribing to his experiences some mystical significance, and that the keynote is always reconciliation.

--Manju Jain, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*  
(1992)<sup>173</sup>

Such an interest on Eliot's part has promoted the view that at least in his dissertation, Eliot may have been a 'thoroughgoing pragmatist.'<sup>174</sup> Furthermore,

The recognition, in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', of the mutability of the literary canon and the inescapable symbiosis of interpreter and interpretation appears to have originated in Eliot's sceptical vision of these years.

--McDonald, *Learning to be Modern:*  
*Pound, Eliot and the American University*<sup>175</sup>

Regardless of the specific impact of Pragmatism on Eliot's dissertation, and even his later critical writing, such an interest on his part, tempered by the 'Bradleian desire for something more completely true,'<sup>176</sup> is fused with a third component of his university studies to form a guiding principle of his developing poetic. That third component is the literature of India.

Eliot's most telling complaint against the philosophy of William James is the ironical comment that, 'the great weakness of Pragmatism is that it ends by being of no use to anybody.'<sup>177</sup> But in 1911-12, Eliot began his study of Sanskrit.<sup>178</sup> Various reasons have been cited for the appeal of Indian literature to Eliot.<sup>179</sup> But I believe one important reason, if not for its initial attraction, then for its sustained appeal, is that elements of the volumes he read, unlike any of the British or American treatises, are created through the mixture of philosophy, faith and poetry. In an essay written many years after having left Harvard, Eliot speaks of these non-Western texts in terms of the emotions they stirred within him:

I am not a Buddhist, but some of the early  
Buddhist scriptures affect me as parts of the  
Old Testament do;

--Eliot, 'Shelley and Keats,' reprinted in  
*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933)<sup>180</sup>

Notice that Eliot compares these alien religious texts not to the principal expository text of his own faith (the *New Testament*), but rather to the more diffuse (and poetic) *Old Testament*. Likewise, in an earlier essay on Dante, Eliot reserves special praise for an Eastern masterpiece:

... the *Bhagavad-Gita*, ... is the next greatest  
philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within  
my experience.

--Eliot, 'Dante,' in *Selected Essays* (1960)<sup>181</sup>

In this manner, I believe Eliot is expressing one of his primary beliefs regarding the function of poetic form. Insofar as a 'Bradleian' reality exists, or a Pragmatic 'truth' can be evoked, Eliot's own conviction, evident even in his discussion of the 'auditory imagination' (cf. III.IV.iv), is that the existence of the literary artefact can serve as the embodiment of a means to approach both the world and one another. Or as he describes it,

The poem's existence is somewhere between the  
writer and the reader; it has a reality which is  
not simply the reality of what he writer is trying  
to 'express', or of his experience of writing it,  
or of the experience of the reader or of the writer  
as reader.

--Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use  
of Criticism*<sup>182</sup>

Here we have the possibility of a 'truth' constantly remade, of a 'reality' that is embraceable, even if not directly comprehended. This embracing figures in Eliot's work as part of the experience of renewable awareness expressed in the form of verbal allusion and repetition.

### III.IV.ii.

In an interesting discussion of how Eliot's early reading continued to form a part of his subconscious re-ordering of new literary experiences, A. Walton Litz cites the following passage from Peter Ackroyd's biography of Eliot:

Eliot's most significant feelings, as opposed to his conscious intentions, are attached to a certain kind of rhythm derived from his earliest reading ... and to certain literary texts which have been transformed in memory. His feelings cluster around literary cadences; [...] a continual oscillation between what is remembered and what is introduced, the movement of other people's words just beneath the surface of his own.

--Cited by A. Walton Litz, 'The Allusive Poet: T.S. Eliot and His Sources,' in *T.S. Eliot: The Modernist in History*, ed. Ronald Bush (1991)<sup>183</sup>

Expanding these ideas, Litz continues,

Ackroyd's comments, which square with my own experience of the poetry, point to a distinction between two kinds of allusion, what we might call "conscious" allusions ... and "subliminal" allusions. ... The dividing line between these conscious allusions and the more subliminal references is never clear cut, ... [Therefore] It seems quite possible that the poet and his more accomplished readers are operating from instinct than from conscious intention or recognition.

--Litz, 'The Allusive Poet: T.S. Eliot and His Sources'<sup>184</sup>

It is tempting to compare this view with Eliot's statement that 'the ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras'-- the ghost of *someone else's* metre, with which the reader is likely to be more familiar. But however intriguing such a possibility might be, it is still a reduction of Litz's point to suggest that all, or even the majority of Eliot's literary echoes are consciously achieved. Indeed, it is perhaps more important to ask, as a corollary

to Ackroyd's proposal, whether or not it is possible that Eliot's emotional reaction to such early reading continued to influence his later view of the forms themselves, as well as his use of them in his own work--a point which will be demonstrated more fully in Chapter Four.

Eliot's own favourites among his earliest reading are well-documented.

As a small boy he had a taste for such vigorous and extroverted poetry as "Horatius," "The Burial of Sir John Moore," "Bannockburn," Tennyson's "Revenge" and some of the border ballads.

--Bernard Bergonzi, *T.S. Eliot* (1972)<sup>185</sup>

Then, as Eliot himself described it,

... I seem to remember that my early liking for the sort of verse that small boys do like vanished at about the age of twelve, leaving me for a couple of years with no sort of interest in poetry at all. I can recall clearly enough at the age of fourteen or so, I happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's Omar which was lying about, and the almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling which the poem was the occasion of giving me. It was like a sudden conversion; the world appeared anew, painted with bright, delicious and painful colours.

--Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*<sup>186</sup>

Notice that Eliot describes the impression that his reading made upon him as 'almost overwhelming.' This possibility of the inherent power of poetry to transfix the reader by the directness of its emotional appeal, is an idea to which Eliot frequently returns. When it does so, as he says in the case of young poets, one release of the burgeoning feelings it stimulates, is through imitation. As one critic has noted, 'Eliot recalls writing "some very gloomy quatrains in the form of the *Rubaiyat*."<sup>187</sup> Similarly, Eliot remarks elsewhere, that he is able to feel,

... a peculiar reverence, and acknowledge a particular debt, towards poets whose work impressed me deeply in my formative years between the ages of sixteen and twenty. Some were of an earlier age-- the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries--

--Cited by David Ned Tobin in, *The Presence of the Past: T.S. Eliot's Victorian Inheritance* (1983)<sup>188</sup>

Once more notice the hierophantic term Eliot uses to describe his feelings-- 'reverence.' In fact, Eliot's earliest surviving poem, published in the *Smith Academy Record* when he was sixteen, was 'an exercise in the manner of Ben Jonson.'<sup>189</sup> It is interesting, even at this stage, to note that Eliot habitually linked the style of poetry he enjoyed to the form in which it was cast. But how far was Eliot's preference for different poets linked to the congeniality of their own formal styles, and vice-versa?

Certainly, Eliot's dislikes from this period of his life might be as instructive as the list of his favourites. However, lacking such a list, we have only his later remarks upon which to base such a judgement. After his discovery of Fitzgerald, Eliot says,

Thereupon I took the usual adolescent course with  
Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne.

--Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use  
of Criticism*<sup>190</sup>

Eliot's remark makes an interesting comment on his own development. What, for instance, is implied by his description of this reading as a 'course'? Does this mean that at the time of his writing this statement (1933) that he saw this period as one, not of emotional involvement, but rather of educational interest; that is, like a university 'course'? Or, is there perhaps an echo of the notion of these poets as corrective to other poetic tendencies-- a 'course' of drugs? Either way, what does he mean by labelling this group of poets as one likely to appeal to an 'adolescent'? Such a remark surely implies more than the mere notion that Eliot himself outgrew them, but also that others might be expected to do so as well. But why does he propose this somewhat disparate group as the 'usual' one apt for adolescents, though unsatisfactory for more mature sensibilities?

Clearly there is something at work in Eliot's estimation of this matter that lay outside the boundaries of critical appraisal. His lifelong enjoyment of some poems (like the *Rubaiyat*) depended foremost upon the immediacy and magnitude of the emotional experience that they provided him. But in most other cases it also depended upon the

perpetual renewal of that experience made possible through subsequent intellectual speculations upon the poems' complex fusion of originality and comprehensiveness. Eliot's continued fascination with poetry's potential for creating experiences that can seem both universal and unique, is expressed through the tone of his remarks on the young mind's 'possession' by individual works, or poets:

The first step in education is not love of literature, but a passionate admiration for one writer; and probably most of us, recalling our intellectual pubescence, can confess that it was an unexpected contact with some one book or poem which first, by apparent accident, revealed to us our capacities for enjoyment of literature.  
[1919]

[in early life, one] poem, or the poetry of a single poet, invades the youthful consciousness and assumes complete possession for a time. [1933]

Everyone, I believe, who is at all sensible to the seductions of poetry, can remember some moment in youth when he or she was completely carried away by the work of one poet ... The reason for this passing infatuation is not merely that our sensibility for poetry is keener in adolescence than in maturity. What happens is a kind of inundation, of invasion of the undeveloped personality, the empty (swept and garnished) room, by the stronger personality of the poet. [1934]

The only way to learn to manipulate any kind of English verse seemed to be by assimilation and imitation, by becoming so engrossed in the work of a particular poet that one could produce a recognisable derivative.  
[1934]

--Cited by S. Musgrove in, *T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman* (1952)<sup>191</sup>

Eliot's description of this feeling is centered upon a power relation. Notice the extreme nature that the experience assumed for him. He speaks of 'passionate admiration,' 'infatuation' and 'seductions'; he is 'carried away' or experiences 'inundation.' As in the other examples I have described, notice too that here Eliot stresses both the suddenness and unpredictability of such experiences: 'unexpected contact,' 'apparent accident,' 'some



moment in youth.' The fact that Eliot's imagery here, coinciding with his own proposed age for such experiences, as well as the notion of an 'intellectual pubescence' vs. 'maturity,' reveals by its covert sexual suggestiveness just how strongly Eliot encountered these feelings in himself. Likewise the intellectual position he posits for the literary novice--one of keen interest, though powerless except through submission--strikingly resembles the posture of several of his earliest characterizations, (for example, Prufrock).

However, for Eliot himself, the possible internal dominance by any of these poets was limited ultimately by his perpetually shifting emotional needs. The poet who inundated the youth of seventeen could, when that youth's own needs changed, be supplanted by another poet whose appeal was more immediate. But that does not mean that poets who are 'outgrown' are necessarily forgotten. Instead, as the emotional factors which made their relative strengths necessary to Eliot re-surfaced, so too the voices of those poets could be invoked through the manipulation of language into a resemblance of that poetic utterance which was formerly capable of "carrying away" the reader. In essence, the sound-patterns developed by Eliot's predecessors, even more so than the mannerisms of their preferred subjects or perspectives, could re-emerge in Eliot's works as a further kind of literary mask-- the *sound* of, say, Webster as compared to the *sound* of Tennyson-- each invoked subconsciously.

Eliot was certainly aware that something like this happened in his work, although at different times in his career he assigned precedence to different authors. Speaking once again of his youth, Eliot describes how emotional proximity to some authors can inspire the growing mind to believe that one's own "natural" voice can have a "natural" form, as important to one's own expressions as those earlier authors' were to their own:

Such early influences, the influences which, so to speak, first introduce one to oneself, are, I think, due to an impression which is in one aspect, the recognition of a temperament akin to one's own, and in another aspect the discovery of a form of

expression which gives a clue to the discovery of one's own form. These are not two things, but two aspects of the same thing.

--Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me,' in  
*To Criticize the Critic*<sup>192</sup>

Thus, as with Pound, 'temperament' has a 'form' which is best suited to its own expression.

However, the adaptation of such 'forms' by young writers remains one of fluctuating dimensions. For instance, Eliot credits some aspects of his own 'discovery of a form of expression' to Baudelaire, and others to Jules Laforgue. In the following passage, notice how Baudelaire is assigned the principal place in Eliot's mind for his demonstrating that the latter's 'material' was at least suitable for poetry:

... from Baudelaire I learned first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic. From him, as from Laforgue, I learned that the sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in America, could be the material for poetry, ...

--Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me'<sup>193</sup>

Here Eliot's flashback to this 'discovery' takes in the whole of his life, including his childhood in St. Louis. The 'material'-- itself an interesting spatial metaphor-- was the fund of emotions that had thus far remained "unformed," or inexpressible. It was through Baudelaire that Eliot learned that such emotional 'material' had poetic potential. Nevertheless, Eliot makes it clear that no matter how enlightening his experience of Baudelaire was, it was Laforgue who focused this vision on to language in a way that would reform Eliot's whole approach to the subject.

Of Jules Laforgue, ... I can say that he was the first to teach me how to speak, to teach me the poetic possibilities of my own idiom of speech.

--Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me'<sup>194</sup>

Eliot's terms here are instructive. Laforgue, so he says, taught him to 'speak' by showing him the 'poetic possibilities of [his own] idiom.' Idiomatic speech, learned from Laforgue, combined with a 'fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric' along with 'the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic,' makes a fair description of two aspects of Eliot's own early poetry. But elsewhere, Baudelaire's influence on Eliot is completely subsumed by Eliot's recognition of Laforgue:

... the modern poet who influenced me was not  
Baudelaire but Jules Laforgue, ...  
--Eliot, 'To Criticize the Critic,' in  
*To Criticize the Critic*<sup>195</sup>

Jules Laforgue, to whom I owe more than to any one  
poet in any language, ...  
--Eliot, 'To Criticize the Critic'<sup>196</sup>

Yet writing in 1950, Eliot would say, 'I still, after forty years, regard ... [Dante's] poetry as the most persistent and deepest influence upon my own verse.'<sup>197</sup> How can these statements be reconciled? It may be that Eliot was frankly contradicting himself, or that viewing his career from the extreme end, he changed his mind about the relative importance of some poets to his own work. However, I believe it is more likely that Eliot had various levels of influence in mind when he made each statement. We know, for instance, from Eliot's own remarks that he had on at least one occasion mirrored an image from Dante, and that on a later occasion he attempted a metrical form based on *The Divine Comedy*.<sup>198</sup> But what is most important in all of these statements by Eliot on his foremost influences, <sup>is that</sup> not one wrote in English. Eliot may have felt himself to be 'temperamentally akin' at various times with each writer, but never once does he describe himself as having been 'possessed,' 'overwhelmed,' 'carried away,' or 'inundated' by any of these poets. This reservation on Eliot's part, or more specifically, his experience of these writers as distinguished from English poets, would be significant in the development of his own approach to writing verse in English. For although Baudelaire might have stimulated the range of Eliot's 'materials,'

and Laforgue might have influenced both his stance and choice of idiom, the actual making of verses depends on the poet's reproduction of a language that is funded essentially by examples from within that same language. Central to Eliot's assimilation of these examples, already discussed above, was his construction of a release mechanism that allowed him to see himself as something more than a child of these parents. That mechanism involved the combination of an international perspective-- through the introduction of Baudelaire, Laforgue, Dante and others-- with an insider's confidence in the evocative power of isolated cadences from his own literary heritage.

The formation of such an ethos, in its early days, depended in part upon the construction of several critical formulae. The most important of these was what has been called, 'Eliot's "Victorian foil."' <sup>199</sup> In many respects, as Samuel Musgrove suggests in his book on Eliot and Whitman, this attitude of Eliot's (and Pound's) towards the Victorians, was a smokescreen that effectively disguised the importance of poets who had framed the ideals of the younger generation. It was not that young writers like Eliot necessarily wanted to emulate the poetry of their immediate predecessors, or that they simply despised it. The problem was that it abounded. Complicating the issue was the fact that some of this writing still seemed good enough to be re-read-- a very important factor in Eliot's criticism. Among the poems which Eliot himself re-read were pieces by Dowson, Davidson and Symons; some of which he believed expressed 'a new tone,' a capacity for which he felt the later poems of Browning and Swinburne lacked. <sup>200</sup> Even as late as 1961, Eliot recalled that Davidson's 'Thirty Bob a Week' was one such poem that had so impressed him in his early years as a poet. <sup>201</sup> But certainly the poet whom Eliot re-read most, from childhood, through his Harvard years, as an extension lecturer, and later as an editor of his works, was Tennyson. It is for this reason, that Eliot's knowledge of Tennyson's poetry, whether as a foil or otherwise, must be seen as having a direct bearing on Eliot's own work.

### III.IV.iii.

Leaving direct comparison of passages from Tennyson and Eliot to Chapter Four, what I wish to concentrate on here is how Eliot regarded Tennyson as distinguished from his nineteenth-century peers. For while Eliot frequently faults Tennyson, he was never content, as Pound was, to single him out as little more than the exemplar of an outmoded fashion of verse. In part, this may have been because Eliot felt 'temperamentally akin' to Tennyson in ways that Pound could not. Evidence to support this can be seen in Eliot's attitude towards Tennyson when he compared him to another of the Victorian Great Figures: Swinburne.

Like most writers of the early twentieth century who discussed Swinburne's work in any detail, Eliot was eager to underline those qualities of technical virtuosity and metrical fastidiousness that characterize Swinburne. But what for critics like Saintsbury constituted Swinburne's chief glory, Eliot saw also as the source of Swinburne's chief error. In this passage, Eliot pays tribute to Swinburne's mastery of technique, but indicates that that technique is itself deficient.

Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified.

They are identified in the verse of Swinburne solely because the object has ceased to exist, because the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment. ... Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne. His language is not, like the language of bad poetry, dead. It is very much alive, with this singular life of its own.

--Eliot, 'Swinburne as Poet,' in *Selected Essays*<sup>202</sup>

In the original text, of which these extracts form part of the conclusion, Eliot follows what is potentially his most damning criticism of Swinburne, with this somewhat commonplace praise. This is because his attitude to Swinburne is shaped both by his own needs as a poet,

as well as his awareness of the arbitrary power of subsequent critics upon the reputations of poets from previous generations. Eliot chose to conclude his essay on 'Swinburne as Poet,' on a note of praise for a master of a by-then bygone aesthetic-- a position that puts him in line with older critics. His concluding remark shows that his real aim is to construct a praise of Swinburne that left room for his successors to differ, without being seen as inferior:

But the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects ...

--Eliot, 'Swinburne as Poet'<sup>203</sup>

This view can also be seen in Eliot's earlier and more drastic attempt in 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*' (1917) to shelve Swinburne altogether as a mere consummate craftsman.

Here, Eliot makes what is surely an unjustly limiting equation of

'scansion'='prosody'='Swinburnian metre.'

Scansion tells us very little. It is probable that there is not much to be gained by an elaborate system of prosody, by the erudite complexities of Swinburnian metre. With Swinburne, once the trick is perceived and the scholarship appreciated, the effect is somewhat diminished. ... Swinburne mastered his technique, which is a great deal, but he did not master it to the extent of being able to take liberties with it, which is everything. If anything promising for English poetry is hidden in the metres of Swinburne, it probably lies far beyond the point to which Swinburne has developed them.

--Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*,' reprinted in *To Criticize the Critic*<sup>204</sup>

The difficult balance Eliot is attempting here is how to praise one of the most widely acknowledged masters of versification for his skill in that area alone, while at the same time suggesting reductively that such mastery is one confined to 'scansion' and to 'an elaborate system of prosody.' To do this Eliot suggests that Swinburne's utility to modern readers and poets-- what is 'to be gained' from reading his poems-- is diminished because Swinburne represents a cul-de-sac in the development of versification. The 'tricks' and 'scholarship'

beloved by the last century, he says, are insufficient to the more permanent aims of English poetry. Eliot goes so far to suggest that Swinburne is not even in the mainstream, because,

... the most interesting verse which has yet been written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse.

--Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*'<sup>1205</sup>

Thus by placing Swinburne in the position of an outsider, Eliot was able to side-step any apparent necessity of following the older poet's lead, and at the same time suggest even earlier precedents for his own preferred style. But if the degree of partisanship in this appraisal is obvious, so is the focusing of aesthetic differences upon the integral relationship between the thing said and the form of the thing said. Eliot's claim is that Swinburne says nothing at all, that form alone is the crucial factor, that indeed Swinburne's verse is to real poetry what humming is to singing. Eliot's primary claim, in fact, is that for all of Swinburne's skill, he was unable to create, 'the inexplicable line with the music which can never be recaptured in other words.'<sup>1206</sup> But this is, as I have shown in Chapter One, the same demand for absolute union of words to ideas as a justification for metrical irregularities offered by Patmore, and others. Therefore, Eliot's stream of a tradition in versification which includes 'the most interesting verse which has yet been written in our language,' and which excludes Swinburne, ought to be broad enough to include the iconoclastic Patmore-- whom Eliot virtually ignores-- as well selective enough to exclude that idol of nineteenth-century prosodists, Tennyson-- which it does not. So why (and how) is Tennyson "in" for Eliot, though Swinburne is "out"-- particularly when the opposite view is more appropriate for Eliot's colleague, Pound?

The answer, I believe, is not so much that Tennyson, even for Eliot, was better than Swinburne at fusing word-to-object, and therefore object-to-form (metre), but rather that

Eliot experienced the 'objects' of Tennyson's poems with the same resonance with which he experienced his own 'materials.' This can be seen in the way Eliot contrasts the two poets.

In describing Tennyson, Eliot declared,

He was the master of Swinburne; and the versification of Swinburne, himself a classical scholar, is often crude and sometimes cheap in comparison with Tennyson's. Tennyson extended very widely the range of active metrical forms in English; in *Maud* alone the variety is prodigious.

--Eliot, 'Tennyson's *In Memoriam*,' reprinted in *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (1953)<sup>207</sup>

In this passage Eliot makes a very important value judgement that reflects his entire attitude to the two men. Whether or not we agree with his statement that Swinburne's versification is sometimes 'crude'-- perhaps, "obvious" is what Eliot had in mind-- his description of Swinburne's style as occasionally 'cheap' is significant. The implication of such a remark is that Tennyson valued metric as something inherent to his 'materials,' while for Swinburne it was often either an adornment, or even a motive for his work. Thus Eliot suggests that Tennyson's metres were natural to Tennyson's way of thinking, although Swinburne's were not. Eliot also goes to some lengths to explain how Tennyson's metrical practices, which appear relatively orthodox when compared to those of, say, Patmore, Hopkins or Bridges, nevertheless show the same emotional reflexiveness that Eliot claims distinguish his own contemporaries. After all, Eliot says Tennyson did not "invent" new forms, nor "perfect" them (as was sometimes said of Swinburne), but rather that he 'extended ... the range of active metrical forms'; or, Tennyson "re-activated" existing forms through his use of them. The fact that in his mature verse Tennyson seldom invented "new" metres, however, is not to be denigrated as a lack of metrical invention, because, as Eliot says, 'innovation in metric is not to be measured solely by the width of the deviation from accepted practice. It is a matter of historical situation; ...'<sup>208</sup> From Eliot's point-of-view, for Tennyson, that situation demanded a regular metric, which Tennyson more than any other poet, appeared to find



congenial with his own temperament. Eliot's own opinion on this is contained in his discussion of *In Memoriam*.

It is, in my opinion, in *In Memoriam*, that Tennyson finds full expression. Its technical merit alone is enough to ensure its perpetuity. While Tennyson's technical competence is everywhere masterly and satisfying, *In Memoriam* is the most unapproachable of all his poems. Here are 132 passages, each of several quatrains in the same form, and never monotony or repetition ...

--Eliot, 'Tennyson's *In Memoriam*'<sup>209</sup>

Once more we can see the awe that some poems inspired in Eliot. Here again is the language of devotee, in phrases like 'most unapproachable of all his poems.' 'Unapproachable' because of its excellence? Here, so Eliot suggests, is the work of a poet who had so completely absorbed the standard measure of his form that his reproduction of that form shows no trace of artificiality. This was the separation of styles that, for Eliot, distinguished Tennyson from Swinburne. Whereas Swinburne proposed various forms for the reader's aesthetic enjoyment, Tennyson treated form as an inextricable part of 'objects.' Such was his ability in this regard, that for Eliot, Tennyson was the model of language empowered by form. That Eliot came to prefer different forms from those used by Tennyson himself, is not surprising. Rather it is a logical extension of the same idea; Eliot's own formal characteristics having the same relevance to his 'materials' that Tennyson's had for Tennyson. Nevertheless, elements of Tennyson's own resulting concatenations lingered in Eliot's mind, gradually assuming the stature of defining characteristics of "Tennyson" (cf. Chapter Five for Pound's similar construction of a "language-image.") For example, notice in the following description how Eliot's beliefs regarding Tennyson's skill are nicely paired with similar views on Tennyson's emotional range:

Tennyson is the great master of metric as well as of melancholia; I do not think any poet in English has ever had a finer ear for vowel sound, as well as a subtler feeling for some moods of anguish:

--Eliot, 'Tennyson's *In Memoriam*'<sup>210</sup>

'Metric' and 'melancholia,' 'vowel sound' and 'anguish,' may not be particularly logical pairings, but their importance for Eliot's view of Tennyson, as well as how that view and others like it contributed to the shape of Eliot's own metric, will form part of Chapter Four. Eliot's desire for an expressive metric, like that with which he credited Tennyson, was operative in his own evaluation of poets from whom there was something 'to be gained.'

### III.IV.iv.

One such poet to whom Eliot turned was Théophile Gautier (1811-1872). With Pound's encouragement, Eliot read Gautier's *Émaux et Camées* as part of a project to revivify their own art, as well as that of their contemporaries. As Eliot later told a Paris Review interviewer,

We studied Gautier's poems and then we thought, 'Have I anything to say in which this form will be useful?' And we experimented. The form gave the impetus to the content.

--Eliot, cited by Eric Svarny in, *The Men of 1914: T.S. Eliot and Early Modernism* (1988)<sup>211</sup>

It is important to remember here that Eliot's definition of 'form' involves certain assumptions like those described in Chapters One and Two. One of these is that any 'form' that is immediately recognizable by an institutionalized name, carries with it a certain proscriptiveness. As I have shown, Eliot's praise of Tennyson involves the suggestion that Tennyson had so internalized these proscriptions that they formed a part of his apprehension at its deepest level. As much as Eliot would like to do the same thing, in this case learning to think in quatrains, he confesses that there are certain obstacles to be overcome. As he says, 'a different metre is a different mode of thought.'<sup>212</sup> As an example of this, he claims that a part of Dante's skill lay in the fact that 'Dante *thought* in *terza rima*.'<sup>213</sup> The difficulty with simply adopting a new form into which thoughts could be fitted, or even through which thoughts could be evoked, is that each metre, 'is a different kind of punctuation, for the

emphases and breath pauses do not come in the same place.<sup>1214</sup> In other words, Eliot's fear, like that of the poets discussed in Chapter One, is that the reader's assumptions about the way a given text should be voiced, when that text resembles others with which the reader is familiar, will block the significance with which Eliot sought to infuse the words-- part of which significance is controlled by the way they sound when spoken together.

This fear on Eliot's part is all the more justifiable when we remember to what extent it shaped his own view of some of his contemporaries' verse. For example, here is one of Eliot's comments upon some of Bridges' work:

I do not even believe that the metric of the  
*Testament of Beauty* is successful, ...

--Eliot, 'Apology for the Countess of Pembroke,'  
reprinted in *The Use of Poetry and the Use  
of Criticism*<sup>215</sup>

The difficulty here is agreeing upon a definition for 'successful.' The metre of the *Testament of Beauty* is successful insofar as part of its aim was to provide a mode through which Bridges could write his poetry. As a principle of construction, this 'success' is obvious when the poem is scanned on the terms Bridges proposed. It can only be an 'unsuccessful' *metre* to a reader whose formal demands differ from those Bridges set for himself. For a reader like Eliot, to whom metre is largely a measure of *sound*, Bridges' style could never be more than partially 'successful,' as its primary concern is format rather than voicing.

This view is reinforced by Eliot's own cautions to readers of Pound's verse, where he advises that 'any verse is called "free" by people whose ears are not accustomed to it.'<sup>1216</sup> Thus for Eliot the "freedom" of *vers libre*, is the freedom to make verse *sound* different from verse in symmetrical accentual-syllabic metres. But-- and this is his criticism of Bridges' metric as opposed to Pound's-- the sound of this "freed" verse must still resemble the sound of such metres. For Eliot, the rhythms of Bridges' poem failed in this respect, and for this, Eliot faults Bridges' metre. The main factor making Pound's metre 'successful,' was that Pound, like Eliot himself, never dissociates format from rhythm. For Eliot, the

danger of adopting any preconceived format not based on sounds was the possibility of conceding it priority, of sacrificing 'the inner unity which is unique to every poem,' in favour of 'the outer unity which is typical.'<sup>217</sup> His insistence that 'the poem comes before the form, in the sense that a form grows out of the attempt of somebody to say something;' belies the fact that, as with Tennyson and Gautier, the presence of these forms in the guise of previously existent poems, exerts an influence over how the sound of every poem is initially conceived.<sup>218</sup> Echoing Symons (cf. Chapter Two), Eliot goes on to say, 'Forms have to be broken and remade,<sup>219</sup> what is broken, as in Eliot's own early poems, is the format, not the sound. Eliot's visual metaphor, like Pound's 'breaking' of the pentameter, shows just how much their view of the structural integrity of accentual-syllabic metre resembled that of their nineteenth-century predecessors.

In Eliot's case this can also be seen by the confusion in his use of prosodic terms, and the uncertain way in which he applies them. For example, comparing his own times to Wordsworth's, he says, 'such revolutions always bring with them an alteration in metric, a new appeal to the ear.'<sup>220</sup> In other words, 'metre' implies a fixed rhythm, which when historical necessity demands, is overthrown by a new 'metre' (that is, rhythm) which is more acceptable to the prevailing critical 'ear.' In the same essay, he complains that,

We can also be led to the reflection that a monotony of unscannable verse fatigues the attention even more quickly than a monotony of exact feet.

--Eliot, 'Milton' (1947), reprinted in *Selected Prose*<sup>221</sup>

But as Eliot himself observed thirty years prior to this, 'What sort of a line that would be which would not scan at all I cannot say.'<sup>222</sup> In any case his terminology is anything but exact, as is his description of 'a monotony of exact feet.' Presumably, he is referring once again to the rhythm of an entire passage of verse, although this makes the range of combinations possible for 'exact feet' prodigious. It is likely that he meant a too-frequent

recurrence of identical feet-- although in reality, this seldom occurs even in technically poor verse.

Elsewhere, in describing rhythm, Eliot, like Pound, speaks of the 'wave-length' of certain verses,<sup>223</sup> although his analogies between the structuring of verses and that of music are considerably rarer than Pound's. Further confusion is obvious in the following passage:

Any line can be divided into feet and accents.  
The simpler metres are a repetition of one  
combination, perhaps a long and a short, or a  
short and a long syllable, five times repeated.

--Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*'<sup>224</sup>

'Feet and accents'? In the sort of verse Eliot himself wrote, the identity of metrical feet and of accents are part of the same phenomenon. (The nearest equivalent to this suggestion is that of James Parson, discussed in Chapter Two, from whom Eliot may have derived his own view.) But this confusion of terminology did not change the way in which Eliot voiced his own lines, or others which he saw as similar to his own. Capable of appreciating the rhythm of verses which pleased him, Eliot lacked a reason to inquire more thoroughly into the prosodic terminology describing his sensations. In this respect, he differed from Pound.

Still, out of these needs, Eliot forged his own tools. On the one hand, like Ruskin and Patmore before him, he held the belief that 'some artificial limitation is necessary except in moments of the first intensity,'<sup>225</sup> otherwise all that is achieved is what he elsewhere called 'pointless irregularity.'<sup>226</sup> For Eliot, the strength of his argument also lay in the belief that 'genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.'<sup>227</sup> This is because the sound of verse appeals to a level of understanding deeper than that consciously experienced:

What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most

ancient and the most civilised mentality.

--Eliot, 'Matthew Arnold,' reprinted in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*<sup>228</sup>

Here, in the company of 'the old and obliterated and the trite,' is that wealth of language identified with 'objects,' the poetry of Tennyson and so many others, that Eliot would fuse with his own 'materials,' 'the current, the new and surprising,' to form the substance of that 'artificial limitation' which for him made his own verse 'metrical.' The breakthrough for Eliot came when this fusion could be enacted without the added necessity of providing a presentational format that detracted from a voicing responsive foremost to the 'inner unity ... unique to every poem.' How Eliot came to create, vary and manipulate this 'inner unity,' forms the subject of the next chapter.

## Notes to Chapter Three

1. William N. Porter, trans., *A Hundred Verses from Old Japan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909).
2. Ibid. p. IV.
3. Yone Noguchi, *From the Eastern Sea* (London: The Unicorn, 1903).
4. Ibid. p. 39.
5. Ibid. unnumbered endsheets.
6. Ibid. second unnumbered endsheet.
7. J.C. Balot and L. DeGrange, 'Japanese Poetry,' *Fortnightly Review* 83 o.s., 77 n.s., (April 1905), pp. 640-653; p. 642.
8. Arthur Ransome, 'The Poetry of Yone Noguchi,' *Fortnightly Review* 94 o.s., 88 n.s. (Sept. 1910), pp. 527-533; p. 532.
9. F.S. Flint, 'Verse,' *New Age* 9 Dec. 1909, pp. 137-138; p.137.
10. Cited in *Imagist Poetry*, ed. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 15.
11. Likewise, in America, the poet and metrist Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914) showed a keen interest in Noguchi's work as well as translations of Japanese poems into both English and French. Her research in metrics, carried out in part at the British Library in 1910-11, was encouraged by the eminent British metrist, T.S. Omond, and led to a posthumous volume of her findings, *A Study in English Metrics* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1918) This work itself is a very tentative one; particularly so in comparison with her experiments in verse. Nevertheless, Crapsey's investigations led to the development of a distinctive form, which she called the cinquain. Despite the views of subsequent critics, it is now thought that this form-- unrhymed lines of 1-2-3-4-1 stresses-- is not primarily syllabic, although manuscript evidence suggests that syllable-counting formed some part of her principles. (Cf. the discussion in *The Complete Poems and Collected Letters of Adelaide Crapsey*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Susan Sutton Smith (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 25-27.) In any case, her volume of poems, *Verse*, (1915) was reprinted three times by 1930, and demonstrates yet another response to the problem of finding a form suitable to the style (real or imagined) of Japanese poetry. (Cf. Adelaide Crapsey, *Verse* (Rochester, NY: Manas Press, 1915; repr. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1922, 1926, 1929, 1934, 1938).
12. For example, see T. Sturge Moore, *The Centaur's Booty* (London: Duckworth and Company, 1903).
13. For example, see the following: 'Butterfly Laughter' (1909-10) in Katherine Mansfield, *Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), p. 20; 'Night and Day' (1912) in Isaac Rosenberg, *The Collected Poems of Isaac Rosenberg*, eds. Gordon Bottomley and Denys Harding (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), pp. 5-19; and 'Beginnings' (1897) in Ford Madox Hueffer, *Collected Poems* (London: Max Goschen, Limited, 1914), pp. 160-161.
14. It must be added in retrospect that this desire to claim a widening of the possibilities of verse structure as a necessary evolution in poetry was also reflected by similar views then current elsewhere in Europe. Certainly in Germany, poets like August Stramm, Gottfried Benn, Arno Holz, Georg Heym and Georg Trakl were rejecting the bounds of their native metric, in some cases on principles sounding like those later proposed by the Imagists. Selections from all of these poets appear in *The Penguin Book of German Verse*, trans. and ed. by Leonard Forster (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957). Meanwhile in Italy, Giosue Carducci and Giuseppe Ungaretti followed a similar course, as did Guillaume Apollinaire in France. (Carducci and Ungaretti both appear in *The Penguin*

*Book of Italian Verse*, trans. and ed. by George Kay (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965; repr. 1967) For Apollinaire, see *The Penguin Book of French Verse: The Twentieth Century*, trans. and ed., Anthony Hartley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959).

15. Howard Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), pp. 98-100.

16. *Ibid.* p. 100.

17. For example, see C.H. Herford, 'Dante's Theory of Poetry,' *Quarterly Review* 213 (1910): 402-430; and Francis St. John Thackeray, 'Dante and Tennyson,' *Temple Bar* 102 (June 1894), pp. 387-397. Also two of the publisher's series devoted to Asian materials were: The Wisdom of the East Series, published in London by Murray; and Lanham's Harvard Oriental Series, published in Cambridge, MA by Harvard University Press.

18. Robert Nichols, *Ardours and Endurances* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917).

19. *Ibid.*

20. W.J. Courthope, 'Life in Poetry,' *The Nineteenth Century* 40 (Aug. 1896), pp. 260-273; p. 261.

21. W.J. Courthope, 'Life in Poetry,' *The Nineteenth Century* 41 (Feb. 1897), pp. 270-284; p. 279.

22. Theodore Watts, 'The Future of American Literature,' *Fortnightly Review* 55 o.s., 49 n.s. (June 1891), pp. 910-926; p. 917.

23. *Ibid.* p. 918.

24. Augustus Manston, 'M. Stephane Mallarmé,' *Temple Bar* 109 (Oct. 1896), pp. 242-253; p. 250.

25. In '*How to Read*,' reprinted in Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited with an Introduction by T.S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1954; repr. 1985), p. 32.

26. See William Watson, *Lachrymae musarum, and Other Poems* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1893).

27. For example, compare the views in the following: Grant Allen, 'Note on a New Poet,' *Fortnightly Review* 56 o.s., 50 n.s. (Aug. 1891) pp. 196-202; G.K. Chesterton, 'The Political Poetry of Mr. William Watson,' *Fortnightly Review* 89 o.s., 84 n.s., (Nov. 1903) p. 761; and C.H. Ross, 'The Poetry of William Watson,' *Sewanee Review* 3 (1894-5): 157-171.

28. This phrase was used frequently by Ford Madox Hueffer, for example in, *The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1906; repr. 1920).

29. Grant Allen, 'Note on a New Poet,' *Fortnightly Review* 56 o.s., 50 n.s. (Aug. 1891), pp. 196-202; p. 202.

30. *Ibid.* p. 198.

31. Coventry Patmore, 'Mr. Francis Thompson, A New Poet,' *Fortnightly Review* 61 o.s., 55 n.s. (Jan. 1894), pp. 19-24; p. 21.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.* p. 22.

34. Arthur Symons, 'Mr. Henley's Poetry,' *Fortnightly Review* 58 o.s., 52 n.s. (Aug. 1892), pp. 182-192; p. 191.

35. *Ibid.* p. 184.

36. *Ibid.* pp. 190-191.

37. *Ibid.* p. 192.

38. For example, see T.S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1965), p. 58.

39. Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1899; repr. 1911), p. 8, p. 103, p. 104.

40. *Ibid.* p. 32.



41. Ibid. p. 129.
42. See note 38 above.
43. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic*, p. 15.
44. Ibid.
45. Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919; repr. 1979), p. 208.
46. Ibid. p. 208.
47. For one discussion of this topic see Eric Svarny, *'The Men of 1914': T.S. Eliot and Early Modernism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), pp. 4-5.
48. Ezra Pound, *Polite Essays* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1966. Originally published in Great Britain by Faber & Faber in 1937.), p. 107.
49. For example, see Carl Diehl, *American and German Scholarship 1770-1870* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1978).
50. Pound, *Polite Essays*, p. 109.
51. Ibid. pp. 110-111.
52. Felix Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1891), p. 4.
53. Ibid.
54. For example, see Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: Faber & Faber, 1951; repr. 1973), p. 115-123.
55. Robert L. Ramsay, 'Changes in Verse Technic in the Sixteenth Century English Drama,' *American Journal of Philology* 31 (1910): 175-202, pp. 188-189.
56. Schelling, *op.cit.*, p. 71.
57. For a discussion of whom see, J.J. Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985), p. 152-154.
58. Ibid. p. 153.
59. See 'Lionel Johnson,' in Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 367. However, note that Pound says he was a 'post-graduate' when Weygandt introduced him to Johnson's poetry. This may mean that Pound's memory was faulty on this point, or that he kept up his acquaintance with Weygandt after his own undergraduate studies were finished.
60. Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*, p. 154.
61. Cornelius Weygandt, *Tuesdays at Ten* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), p. 105.
62. Cf. Edgar Allen Poe, 'The Poetic Principle,' and 'The Philosophy of Composition,' included in *Poems of Edgar Allen Poe* (New York, NY: John B. Alden, Publisher, 1883).
63. Ibid. p. 285.
64. Cornelius Weygandt, 'The Irish Literary Revival,' *Sewanee Review* 12 (1904): 420-431, pp. 430-431.
65. Weygandt, *Tuesdays at Ten*, pp. 121-132.
66. For a brief list of works by Weygandt, see *Bibliography*
67. Weygandt, *Tuesdays at Ten*, p. 200.
68. Ibid. *loc.cit.*
69. Ibid. p. 200-201.
70. Ibid.
71. Reprinted in R.K.R. Thornton, ed., *Poetry of the Nineties* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 107 (pp. 105-107).
72. Weygandt, *Tuesdays at Ten*, p. 202.
73. Ibid. p. 205.
74. For example, see Weygandt, 'The Irish Literary Revival,' p. 421.
75. Weygandt, *Tuesdays at Ten*, p. 205.

76. Ibid. p. 284.

77. Pound's version of the phrase, 'nearo nihtwaco', from 'The Seafarer', was after all the same as his old teacher's 'narrow nightwatch', when a more exact reading, following Sweet, would have been 'anxious nightwatch'. S.A.J. Bradley suggests, 'hazardous nightwatch.' It is also possible that Weygandt based his comment on a reading of Pound. Cf. the following: Ezra Pound, *Translations*, ed. Hugh Kenner (London: Faber & Faber, 1953; repr. 1970), p. 207; Henry Sweet, *SWEET'S Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, revised throughout by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 [orig. 1876]), p. 358; S.A.J. Bradley, trans. and ed., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1982; repr. 1987), p. 332.

78. For a discussion of which see, Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*, p. 130.

79. Ibid. p. 128.

80. For a discussion of which see, Ibid. p. 129.

81. William Pierce Shepard, 'Parataxis in Provencal,' *PMLA* 21 (1906): 519-571.

82. Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p. 273.  
*The Life of Ezra Pound*

83. Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1949; repr. 1957), p. 35.

84. Cf. Carpenter, op.cit., pp. 270-273.

85. Reprinted in Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound: Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson. London: Faber & Faber, 1973; repr. 1978), pp. 21-43.

86. Shepard, op.cit., p. 519.

87. Ibid. p. 523.

88. Ibid. p. 536.

89. Ibid. pp. 570-571.

90. Ibid. p. 571.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. For a discussion of which see, Wendy Stallard Flory, *The American Ezra Pound* (New York, NY: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 27-28, and Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*, p. 58.

94. Cornelius Weygandt, 'A.E.: The Irish Emerson,' *Sewanee Review* 15 (1907): 148-165.

95. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward W. Emerson, Centenary Edition, 1904.

96. Gay Wilson Allen, *American Prosody* (New York, NY: American Book Company, 1935), p. 119.

97. Ibid. p. 121.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Cited by Allen, *American Prosody*, p. 92.

101. Ibid. p. 93.

102. Ibid. p. 95.

103. For example see, Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen, Limited, 1960. Originally published in Great Britain by Faber & Faber in 1938), p. 207.

104. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1873; repr. 1910), p. 1, p. 3, pp. 15-16, p. 20, p. 24.

105. Cf. Carpenter, op.cit., p. 117.

106. Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, pp. 167-8.

107. Ibid. p. 199.

108. Ibid. p. 35.
109. Ibid. p. 42.
110. For example, see Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 160.
111. For example, see Carpenter, op.cit., p. 63.
112. Cited by Carpenter, op.cit., p. 146.
113. Walter Pater, 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti,' in *Appreciations*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889; repr. 1890), passim.
114. Ibid. p. 214-215.
115. Ibid. p. 216
116. Ibid. p. 216-217.
117. For example, see Carpenter, op.cit., especially the early chapters where he habitually refers to Pound being in, for instance, his 'Villon mood,' etc.
118. Pater, 'Postscript,' in *Appreciations*, p. 262.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid. p. 263.
121. Pater, 'Wordsworth,' *Appreciations*, p. 58.
122. See Carpenter, op.cit., p. 38.
123. Ibid. p. 41.
124. See Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*, p. 132.
125. Carpenter, op.cit., p. 63.
126. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 3-14; p. 7.
127. Pound, 'The Renaissance,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 214-216.
128. Pound, 'The Constant Preaching to the Mob,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 64-5; p. 64.
129. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' p. 14.
130. Ibid.
131. Pound, 'Swinburne Versus His Biographers,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 292-3.
132. Wilhelm, *The American Roots of Ezra Pound*, p. 138.
133. Pound, 'Lionel Johnson,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 363.
134. Ibid. p. 362.
135. Pound, 'Notes on Elizabethan Classicists,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 240.
136. For Pound's comments see, Pound, *Ezra Pound: Selected Prose: 1909-1965*, p. 289.
137. For a discussion of Pound's interest, see William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 3-4.
138. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 249.
139. Ezra Pound, *Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with An Essay on the Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenollosa* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967; repr. 1969. Originally published in part in Great Britain by Elkin Mathews in 1920), p. 224; and Pound, *Polite Essays*, p. 290.
140. Pound, *Polite Essays*, p. 137.
141. Ibid. p. 193.
142. Ezra Pound, *Make It New* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935; republished, St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, Inc., 1971), p. 160.
143. Pound, *Polite Essays*, p. 141.
144. Probably in 1917, see Carpenter, op.cit., p. 311.

145. Pound, *Instigations of Ezra Pound*, p. 238; also compare his remarks as cited by Carpenter, op.cit., p. 311.
146. Ibid. p. 239.
147. Ibid.
148. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 366.
149. Ibid. p. 199.
150. Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (New York: New Directions, [date?]. Originally published in Great Britain by J.M. Dent in 1910), p. 204.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.
154. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 5.
155. Pound, 'Cavalcanti,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 169.
156. Ibid. pp. 169-170.
157. Pound, 'How to Read,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 25.
158. Ibid. p. 26.
159. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 6.
160. Ibid. loc.cit.
161. Ibid. p. 9.
162. 'Rhythm is the hardest quality of a man's style to counterfeit ...' Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p. 103.
163. Cited by Pallister Barkas in, *A Critique of Modern English Prosody 1880-1930* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1934), p. 41.
164. Ibid. p. 41.
165. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 12.
166. Cited by Thomas H. Jackson, *The Early Poetry of Ezra Pound* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 203.
167. Pound, 'T.S. Eliot,' reprinted in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, pp. 418-422; p. 421.
168. Ibid. pp. 421-422.
169. Pound, *Polite Essays*, p. 205.
170. Cited by Gail McDonald in, *Learning to be Modern: Pound, Eliot and the American University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 33.
171. Ibid. p. 32.
172. Ibid. p. 35.
173. Manju Jain, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 174-175.
174. Gail McDonald, op.cit., p. 39.
175. Ibid. p. 37.
176. Ibid. p. 39.
177. In T.S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1928; New Edition, 1970), p. 67.
178. Gail McDonald, op.cit., p. 35.
179. For example, see Gail McDonald, op.cit., pp. 34-5.
180. T.S. Eliot, 'Shelley and Keats' (1933), reprinted in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1933) pp. 87-107; p. 91.
181. T.S. Eliot, 'Dante' (1929), reprinted in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1951; repr. 1966), pp. 237-277; p. 258.
182. Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, p. 30.

183. A. Walton Litz, 'The Allusive Poet: Eliot and His Sources,' *T.S. Eliot: The Modernist in History*, ed. Ronald Bush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 141.
184. Ibid. pp. 141-143.
185. Bernard Bergonzi, *T.S. Eliot* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1972), pp. 3-4.
186. Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, p. 33.
187. Bergonzi, op.cit., p. 4.
188. David Ned Tobin, *The Presence of the Past: T.S. Eliot's Victorian Inheritance* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), p. 96
189. Described by Bergonzi, op.cit., p. 4.
190. Eliot, 'Introduction,' *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, p. 33.
191. Cited in S. Musgrove, *T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman* (Wellington: University of New Zealand Press, 1952), pp. 13-14
192. T.S. Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me' (1950), reprinted in *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 125-135; p. 126.
193. Ibid.
194. Ibid.
195. Eliot, 'To Criticize the Critic' (1961), reprinted in, *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 11-26; p. 18.
196. Ibid. p. 22.
197. Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me,' in *To Criticize the Critic* p. 125.
198. Ibid. pp. 128-129.
199. By Tobin, op.cit., p. 94.
200. Eliot, 'American Literature and Language' (1953), reprinted in *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 43-60; p. 58.
201. Remark cited in Tobin, op.cit., p. 96.
202. Eliot, 'Swinburne as Poet' (1920), reprinted in, *Selected Essays*, pp. 323-327, p. 327.
203. Ibid.
204. Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*' (1917), reprinted in *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 183-189; p. 185.
205. Ibid.
206. Ibid.
207. Eliot, 'Tennyson's *In Memoriam*' (1936), reprinted in, *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 177.
208. Ibid.
209. Ibid. p. 179.
210. Ibid. p. 183.
211. Cited by Eric Svarny, op.cit., p. 81.
212. Eliot, 'What Dante Means to Me,' in *To Criticize the Critic*, p. 129.
213. Ibid.
214. Ibid.
215. Eliot, 'Apology for the Countess of Pembroke' (1932), reprinted in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, pp. 37-52; p. 38.
216. Eliot, 'Ezra Pound: His Metric and His Poetry' (1917), reprinted in, *To Criticize the Critic*, pp. 162-182; p. 167.
217. Eliot, 'The Music of Poetry,' in *Selected Prose*, p. 65.
218. Ibid.
219. Ibid. p. 66.
220. Eliot, 'Milton' (1947), reprinted in, *Selected Prose*, p. 147.

221. Ibid. p. 149.
222. Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*,' in *To Criticize the Critic*, p. 184.
223. For example, see Eliot, 'Milton,' in *Selected Prose*, p. 145.
224. Eliot, 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*,' in *To Criticize the Critic*, p. 185.
225. Ibid. p. 187.
226. Eliot, 'Milton,' in *Selected Prose*, p. 149.
227. Eliot, 'Dante,' in *Selected Essays*, p. 238.
228. Eliot, 'Matthew Arnold' (1933), reprinted in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, pp. 103-119; pp. 118-119.

# *Chapter Four*

## **METRE AND PATTERN IN ELIOT'S EARLY VERSE**

### **IV. Introduction.**

In proposing a close look at the evolution of Eliot's own metrical practice, it is important to distinguish between the terminologies he himself used, and the different applications such terms have acquired since that time. Part of these differences can be ascribed to the growth and fragmentation of prosodic discussion outlined in Chapters One and Two, but significant factors, then as now, are the contrasting aims of prosodic analysis and the varying degrees of centrality proposed for it. At this juncture what is most relevant is to distinguish between the terms Eliot himself applied to poetry (his own and other people's) and those which I will apply to Eliot's work. Two levels of understanding are thus suggested. Firstly, to place Eliot's own achievements in versification within an historical context larger than his own lifetime by using methods subsequently developed for prosodic analysis; thereby I hope to suggest that the corpus of Eliot's work is substantially within the boundaries of an Anglo-American prosodic heritage. And secondly, to look at Eliot's work from the special viewpoint of his contemporary critics, considering especially how their remarks and attitudes-- at once important to Eliot's predecessors-- also contributed to Eliot's views on metre. In this way I believe it will be possible to appreciate more clearly the ways in which Eliot was both an innovator as well as a collaborator with the discourse of metrical literature.

A key problem in any such discussion is the need to define precisely what is implied by the suggestion that poetry is a kind of language susceptible to measurement. The implication of such a fundamental distinction between poetry and prose is one to which Eliot frequently referred (see below, IV.I.i) For my own purposes, I shall rely on views

expressed by several recent specialists. The first of these, which may serve as a description of the proposed field of research, is by Derek Attridge:

A minimal definition of verse might be that it is a form of language which heightens the reader's awareness of its own working-- its movement, its sounds, its capacity to represent sensations and feelings. And it would be widely agreed that the minimal device whereby verse achieves this heightened awareness is the division of the continuous flow of language into segments, even though no sharp distinction can be made between verse and prose on this basis alone. ... Segmentation is, in fact, nothing other than a signal to the eye or to the ear that a division of some sort occurs at a point not necessarily determined by anything within the conventions of the language itself.

--Attridge, 'Poetry Unbound? Observations in Free Verse,' *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1987)<sup>1</sup>

As I have shown in Chapters One and Two, such a definition is by no means in accord with those offered by prosodists working in the generation before, or even the one contemporary with Eliot's early work. However, many of Eliot's poems from this period appear to be exploring new ways in which just such segmentation can be signalled, while at the same time utilizing conventional devices such as rhyme.

A second difficulty centers upon a widespread confusion of the terms *stress* and *accent*. As I have shown in III.IV.iv, Eliot himself appears to use these words interchangeably-- a fact which may stem from a confusion inherited from his predecessors, but which nevertheless allows him considerable scope for the development of a critical stance regarding metrical foregrounding (see below IV.II.ii) For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to make it clear that I shall regard *stress* as the degree of loudness accorded to the pronunciation (real or imagined) of syllables while, as David Crystal summarises it:

*Accent* refers to a syllable which has been made prominent owing to a combination of both loudness and pitch factors.



--Crystal, *The English Tone of Voice* (1975)<sup>2</sup>

The final challenge presented by this discussion is to suggest a name which is characteristic of the kind or kinds of versification being discussed, which is also capable of distinguishing it in some meaningful way from those types of verse adequately described by older terms. I realize, of course, that any such naming procedure is bound to imply limitations which are at best only approximate. Nevertheless, given the degree of concern expressed by both Pound and Eliot in showing that their own separate procedures were both a revision and an extension of metrical habits relating to those of their literary forebears, such a classification seems warranted. Therefore rejecting both the negativity (and inaccuracy) of the term "non-metrical," throughout this chapter and the following one I shall refer to the overall style of versification developed by Eliot and Pound at this time as 'metrically variable.'<sup>3</sup> Again my justification for doing so will become more clear in the following discussions highlighting the ways in which both poets developed various means of measuring their verses.

My discussion will begin therefore with a consideration of how Eliot himself sought to distinguish prose from verse, as well as how the "measure" of verses is dependent in part upon the relationship that poetic diction, syntax and grammar bears to pre-existing models.

#### IV.I.i.

One of Eliot's more curious early prose pieces is an article published in the *New Statesman* on 19 May 1917, entitled, 'The Borderline of Prose.'<sup>4</sup> In this article Eliot is concerned particularly with the phenomenon of prose-poems. Among other things, what makes this text unusual is that it is one of only two published examples of Eliot's own use of the form prior to his translation of St. John Perse's *Anabase* (1930). In fact, I may be wrong altogether in assuming that this is how Eliot meant the opening sentence to be read, but given his proposed subject, his subsequent ironic tone, and the curious grammatical

structure he uses in the text, I believe this is a kind of serious send-up intended as a pointed criticism of the form itself. The passage is worth quoting in full:

In the days when prosperous middle-class chimneys were decorated with overmantels and flanked by tall jars of pampas grass; when knowing amateurs began to talk of Outamaro and Toyakuni; in the days when Mrs. Pennel's friends found some source of laughter in feeding peacocks with sponge-cake soaked in absinthe; when Mr. George Moore was wearing a sugarloaf hat with a flat brim; then, or perhaps a little later; in the age of music-halls and cabmen's shelters; in the long-forgotten 'Nineties when sins were still scarlet, there appeared a little book called *Pastels in Prose*.

--Eliot, 'The Borderline of Prose'<sup>5</sup>

Apart from his patronising tone, what is interesting first of all is Eliot's desire to typify a particular era as especially germane to this style of writing. That the details he chooses to select as characteristic of that era (reflect his view that it was <sup>one of</sup> superciliousness) prepares us for his later remarks on that era's critical insufficiency-- at least with regard to his contemporaries' needs. Still, his attention to the lushness of detail ('tall jars of pampas grass') and the cataloguing manner of presentation shows how familiar he was with his subject. But what is also striking, as I suggested above, is the curious punctuation which gives a form to the entire utterance. While the text is after all one sentence, there are some elements which bear an altogether different communicative burden ~~from~~ others. For example, notice the way the phrase 'then, or perhaps a little later' is left separate from the other "facts" of the description, as if this rumination, this self-conscious act of remembering is also somehow a part of his sequence of images. Indeed, this structural isolation of an image of time's passing is familiar from Eliot's poetry, as in the repeated statements of 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'-- 'Twelve o'clock,' 'Half-past one.' In this way Eliot develops not an image, but an image-of-an-image; that is the image of "someone" noticing the passing of time. Likewise, his conjuring up of 'the 'Nineties' leads him to use an uncharacteristically

high proportion of compound words, as if the lushness of detail makes special demands upon the language: 'chimmney-pieces,' 'overmantels,' 'sponge-cake,' 'sugarloaf,' 'music-hall,' 'long-forgotten.' The conclusion implied by this is that Eliot associates this particular kind of "rich" diction with the poetry of a bygone era. But most importantly, it suggests that Eliot entertained certain convictions about what distinguishes the *sound* of poetry from the *sound* of prose.

This is demonstrated further in the same article by Eliot's analysis of a prose-poem by Richard Aldington (1892-1962). Eliot's remarks on the opening lines are instructive:

'For my sake Eos, in a cloudless sky, gliding  
from the many-isled sea'-- is verse, but what  
immediately follows--

must be more tender and more thrilling--  
is prose (aside from the fact that 'thrilling'  
is a word more suitable to prose than to poetry.

--Eliot, 'The Borderline of Prose'<sup>6</sup>

'A word more suitable to prose than to poetry'? What determines this "suitability" for Eliot is left unexplained, but what is important is that he regarded such a standard to exist.

Ironically, perhaps, the passage he declares 'poetry' contains yet another compound word, 'many-isled,' and his prosaic word 'thrilling' echoes a passage from *Measure for Measure*, with which Eliot was certainly familiar.<sup>7</sup> The whole text of Aldington's prose-poem as selected by Eliot, and Eliot's comments, are as follows:

For my sake Eos, in a cloudless sky, gliding  
from the many-isled sea, must be more tender and more  
thrilling; for my sake the scent of ripe apples in the  
dim-gold autumn must be keener and more odorous; for  
my sake the music of Pindar and Theocritus must be more  
stately, more flower-like, more melancholy sweet; for  
my sake the ecstasy of love must be sharper, wilder;  
for my sake you must be more beautiful, more alert,  
more delicate.

I submit that, if this is read as prose, it is found jerky  
and fatiguing because there is verse rhythm in it; and that if  
read as verse, it will be found worrying, because of the  
presence of prose rhythms.

--Eliot, 'The Borderline of Prose'<sup>8</sup>

By 'read as prose' I understand Eliot to mean a reading without any overt sensitivity to the suggestion of artificial segmentation; by 'read as verse,' exactly the opposite, with our prior experiences of verse as a further point of reference. That there were certain clear precedents for the view that poetry and prose are read in different ways can be recalled from Chapters One and Two. But what Eliot proposes is that Aldington's prose-poem is flawed by the fact that it offers too little in the way of apparent rhythmical randomness (like prose), but too much in the way of apparent rhythmic repetition (like verse). To assume prose is rhythmically random is both reductive and a little too easy-- Eliot, unlike some prosodists, does not go that far (cf. II.IV.iii). Instead, I believe he is alerting us to the fact that rhetorical repetition like that used by Aldington, ('for my sake ... must be,' etc.) has an affinity with metrical segmentation which, if used in conjunction with relatively short lines exhibiting no strong rhythmic similarities, will result in a reading felt as 'jerky,' 'fatiguing' and 'worrying.' Compare, for example, Eliot's own probable parody of the form quoted above, and notice how the length of Eliot's clauses are considerably more varied, and how his own rhetorical repetitions reveal certain subtle variation: 'In the days,' 'when,' 'in the days when,' 'when,' 'in the age,' 'in the long-forgotten 'Nineties.'

The root of Eliot's criticism is expressed in the paragraph immediately preceding his discussion of Aldington's work. Speaking of the *Illuminations* of Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), Eliot says,

They find their proper expression in prose because they seem to have come to their author already clothed in that form; just as Dante's account of the Aristotelian soul is right in verse, because it seems to have come to the author in that form;

--Eliot, 'The Borderline of Prose'<sup>9</sup>

It is an impressive display of self-confidence on Eliot's part to suggest what is the 'proper expression' of ideas in two languages in which he lacked native-speaker competence.

Nevertheless, the significant factor is his repeated word 'seems.' It may be that Eliot's

assessment of the 'rightness' of those forms used by Dante and by Rimbaud is conditioned by his incomplete familiarity with their languages; but in any case, his sensitivity to English assures him that, 'Mr Aldington *seems* ... to be avoiding the limitations of either poetry or prose; to use either when he wishes; and so to lose the necessary articulation of rhythm. '[my italics]<sup>10</sup> The element of volition here ('to use ... when he wishes') which Eliot sees as precluded by a literal faithfulness to the "original" form of ideas takes us back to the discussions of the origins of metre outlined in II.I.i and III.II.v, and I will return to this subject again below (IV. Conclusion). What I wish to focus on here is Eliot's belief that only one kind of form or metre should be perceptible *at one time*. Aldington's flaw then, in Eliot's terms, is to allow too many forms to be partially realized at once. To Eliot this suggests that some confusion of ideas has taken place, resulting in rhythms which compete rather than coalesce. Or as he puts it, Aldington's prose poems lack evidence of an 'inner necessity.'<sup>11</sup>

However, that the limited scale of this 'inner necessity' has a special relevance to Eliot's own work can be seen by a remark he made four years later, in an article entitled 'Prose and Verse,' published in *The Chapbook* on 22 April 1921.<sup>12</sup> Here Eliot defines somewhat more closely how far this 'inner necessity' determines the structure of a poem.

A single work must have some metrical unity. This may vary widely in practice: I see no reason why a considerable variety of verse forms may not be employed within the limits of a single poem;

--Eliot, 'Prose and Verse'<sup>13</sup>

As I have shown in Chapter Three, Eliot does not dismiss the vocabulary of prosodic analysis, but rather he has chosen to focus his attention upon the rhythmic structure of individual lines. As we have seen in Chapters One and Two, the most widely accepted view among prosodists at that time was that no isolated reading of a poem's rhythm-- let alone that of individual lines-- was sufficient to determine its metre. Instead, the metre of the

entire poem could only be inferred by a general comparison to abstract forms generated by a composite analysis of other poems within the supposed "tradition" of the metre most suggested by individual case examples. Thus the *Canterbury Tales* was said to be a very good example of iambic pentameter, while the *Temple of Glas* was not because, while both were referable to an abstract norm, the rhythm of the former could be more completely plotted on such a graph, and the rhythm of the latter could not. By shifting the emphasis on to individual lines, or even differing groups of lines within the same poem, Eliot has managed simultaneously to maintain both the terminology and the concept of metricality-based-on-tradition ('the ghost of some simple metre,') while at the same time side-stepping the problem of "metrical-or-unmetrical." In other words, a poem is metrical if it suggests the repetition of a pattern--generally a pattern manifested somewhere else in English poetry-- but it need not manifest one pattern only throughout its entire length.

Encouragement for this view, as I have shown in Chapters One, Two and Three, could have come in the form of opinions expressed by any number of poets or critics offering alternative scansion techniques or experimental poems. Perhaps, following Symons for example (III.II.iv), if Eliot shared the view that standard lines of verse like the iambic pentameter could be 'broken,' the resulting fragments would still share a rhythmic relationship to their "unbroken" forebears; that they were in fact still metrical. A necessary corollary to this idea however, is the need to signal to the reader precisely what 'inner necessity' is responsible for determining the particular pattern of 'broken' lines in any given text. There are several ways in which Eliot does just that.

#### IV.I.ii.

As Thomas Rees has shown in his study of Eliot's early work, there are several self-contained circles of reference within the poems eventually published as *Prufrock and*

*Other Observations* (1917). Besides the common themes of urban decay and ironic detachment which characterize most of the collection, there is also Eliot's stylistic device of creating a pattern of distinctly obvious verbal echoes within each poem. In the Appendix to his volume, Rees has drawn together these verbal repetitions under separate headings for each poem. Here is one example of the kind of repetitions Rees has highlighted from 'Portrait of a Lady' with the numbers indicating the 'paragraphs' (Rees' word) in which they occur:

Feeling, Knowing, Understanding

2 You do not know  
you knew?

4 you do not know  
you do not know  
understand

5 My feelings  
feel

9 feel  
hardly know  
learn

10 know

11 hardly understand

13 understand  
Not knowing  
feel  
understand

--Rees, *The Technique of T.S. Eliot* (1974)<sup>14</sup>

While I have doubts about some of the other inclusions he makes, <sup>15</sup> Rees' classifications under the headings, 'Music,' 'Friends,' 'Public & Outdoor Images,' 'Time of Day,' 'Month, Season,' 'Flowers, Garden,' 'Smoke, Tobacco,' 'Death' and 'Cosmopolitanism' reveal to what extent Eliot's individual poems derive a feeling of structure based upon a limited series of repetitions. As I have shown above (IV.I.i) Eliot was clearly aware that such verbal patterning can serve as means of metrical segmentation. By thus creating a limited scope for such repetitions, Eliot offers the reader one strictly self-referential code for assessing the poem's metrical structure. But within the larger bounds of that code, Eliot is also able to a

greater or lesser extent to draw upon other systems of reference based upon entirely separate texts.

Eliot does this in several ways, some perhaps unconsciously. For example, many critics have noticed how Eliot's echoes of earlier poems often appear in clusters of related images. Martin Scofield, for instance, has pointed out the verbal similarities of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' to W.E. Henley's *In Hospital* (1875) with its 'patient anaesthetised on the operating table, ... the street organ, the "magic lantern," April in the city [and] sprinkled pavements.'<sup>16</sup> Yet it is doubtful whether Eliot wishes us to recall Henley in reading either of his own poems. More significant are those passages where Eliot follows one or more poems closely enough to establish some definite verbal echoes which lend form to Eliot's own writing. One such poem is his 'Conversation Galante' (1909).

As Hugh Kenner and Piers Gray (among others) have observed, Eliot's 'Conversation Galante' relies very heavily upon Laforgue's 'Autres Complaintes de Lord Pierrot' for its subject-matter and for some items of diction which Eliot translates.<sup>17</sup> However, I would like to suggest that this poem, among the first Eliot composed after reading Symons' *Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), is not merely a pastiche of Laforgue, but that elements of the poem's *sound* echo Verlaine. There is, of course, the obvious parallel between the title of the poem and Verlaine's volume *Fetes Gallantes* (1869). Likewise, within *Fetes Gallantes* there is a poem entitled, 'Colloque Sentimental' which may have suggested the form 'Conversation'-- particularly as the 'sentimental' of Verlaine's title (which does not occur in Laforgue) is picked up by Eliot's first line:

I observe: 'Our sentimental friend the moon!

--Eliot, 'Conversation Ga lante'<sup>18</sup>



The parallel with Verlaine is strengthened by the fact that while both Eliot and Laforgue treat a similar subject in a similar way-- in its simplest terms a man and a woman speaking together-- the pattern of Laforgue's proposition-and-response is very different from Eliot's. In Laforgue's poem the entire situation appears to be hypothetical, in the speaker's imagination. Eliot, on the other hand, leaves the "actuality" of the encounter unclear. Also Eliot's poem shows a simpler pattern of proposition-and-response, one which links it more closely to Verlaine's own pattern in 'Colloque Sentimental' with its similar pattern of male proposition and female response.

But whether or not Eliot's poem is a kind of superimposing of Verlaine on to Laforgue, the result has an unmistakable French *sound*. Looking only at the rhyme-words in the first stanza, we find three words with obvious French analogues, 'confess ... distress ... digress,' as well as the curious 'moon ... balloon' (="de lune"?) The third stanza is equally rich with, 'humorist ... absolute ... imperious ... confute ... serious,' while elsewhere, the poem abounds in similar words, 'fantastic ... exquisite ... vacuity ... ' Now given that the entire poem has only eighteen lines, this concentrated evocation of French diction seems to be a deliberate attempt to create a definite range of sounds within which the poem is to operate. Also considering that the majority of such sounds are grouped at line-endings, I would suggest that they form an integral part of the poem's metre-- that for Eliot, "kinds" of sounds are as important as their arrangement in specific poetic contexts. Possibly, as in IV.I.i, this would explain Eliot's view that thrilling is 'a word more suitable to prose than to poetry.' But it may also be that as in 'Conversation Galante' the words placed at line-endings make a decisive contribution to the poem's tone by signalling the 'inner necessity' which determines its segmentation. Thus in a poem which synthesizes a number of French influences, the reader will be, however subliminally, forced to notice words which possess a lingering sound of Gallic derivation. For this reason, reinforcing what I said

above, the conclusion must be that Eliot's metre is determined primarily by the formation of individual lines with especial consideration of how those lines end.

Besides rhyme, the most obvious way Eliot highlights the individuality of his lines is with his management of the pause which separates them. As S. Musgrove has described it,

Enjambement is ... rare in Eliot, whose verse, from first to last, is marked by a very strong terminal pause. For myself, I had not realized just how strong Eliot felt this pause until I heard his recorded readings of the *Four Quartets*, which show that, to his own ear, his poetry is built on the self-contained line as the basic unit. Even in places where the sense seems to demand an enjambement he avoids it.

--S. Musgrove, *T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman*  
(1952)<sup>19</sup>

Insofar as this statement is true, I believe that it is here that Eliot's proposition regarding the 'auditory imagination' finds its importance to his own work. As I have said in III.IV.iv, Eliot's belief that a poem can 'communicate before it is understood' may stem from the same impulse which led him to believe that 'the ghost of some simple metre' lurks behind every good line. It is possible that Eliot's own 'auditory imagination,' fostered upon a great deal of English and French verse, was happiest when activated by the 'communication' of resonances-- syntactical, rhythmical-- of some poem which it had previously encountered. What this means to the development of Eliot's own metrical style, is that in his memory certain words, images and ideas are resolutely fused with certain patterns of sound. In effect, whether he intended to do so or not, the kind of vocabulary he associated with "French" influence finds its way into 'Conversation Galante' in such a manner that it contributes significantly to the structure of his lines, which in turn influences the way we read the rhythm of the poem. Consequently, the range of Eliot's diction in individual poems, particularly as it influences line-endings, must be seen as making an important contribution to his specific metrical styles. I will return to this discussion of the influence of specified

"fields" of diction in IV.II.ii, but first I would like to demonstrate its interaction with features of Eliot's syntax and grammar in relation to poetic rhythm.

#### IV.I.iii.

One of the models Eliot himself gives as a "source" for his own style is the work of the Jacobean playwrights. There is at first, however, apparently little in Eliot's early technique which shows any indebtedness to specifically Jacobean versification. For example, the two extremes of Shakespeare's knottier syntax in *Coriolanus* and the prosy unaffectedness of Ford's tragedies seem to have little in common with the predominantly short-lined, rhyme-dependent verse of *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Nevertheless, two points deserve to be singled out. The first of these is aptly described by Hugh Kenner:

A soliloquy by Middleton or Tourneur arrests a mood for inspection, and by the enveloping assertions of blank verse rhythm protects its vulnerability. And these moods-- this was their relevance for *Prufrock*-- are affectingly self-contained, the speaker imprisoned by his own eloquence, committed to a partial view of life, beyond the reach of correction or communication, out of which arises the tragic partiality of his actions.

--Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot* (1950)<sup>20</sup>

The significant fact that Kenner points to here, that the 'self-contained' nature of a poem's 'eloquence'-- at once conscious of the limits of language, as well as imprisoned by those limits-- is one that Eliot was able to develop in a variety of ways in his early poems. I have already shown how a particular range and disposition of diction as in 'Conversation Galante' can be seen as an example of how the sounds of a poem may be focused upon a given linguistic style so as to suggest a specific, limited context like that offered to a character in a Jacobean play. A more complex, extensive development of this possibility for interweaving a "set" range of diction, with complementary syntactical forms and related rhythmical

patterns, will be examined further in my discussion of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' below (IV.II.i).

The second point of resemblance between Eliot's versification and that of the Jacobean is Eliot's sustained use of several rhetorical figures. Keith Wright, in his essay, 'Rhetorical Repetition in T.S. Eliot's Early Verse,' singles out a number of these figures for comparison, among which are the following:

*Anaphora* [the repetition of a word or group of words in successive clauses<sup>21</sup>] ... 'You tossed a blanket from the bed,/ You lay upon your back and waited;/ You dozed, and watched the night revealing ...' ('Preludes')

*Symploce* [the repetition of a word or group of words at the beginning and ending of successive clauses] ... 'The *yellow fog* that rubs its back upon the *window panes*, [sic]/ The *yellow smoke* that rubs its muzzle on the *window-panes*' ('Prufrock')

...*anadiplosis* [repetition of a word or group of words at the end of one clause and the beginning of the next] ... 'Compelled my imagination *many days*,/ *Many days* and many hours' ('La Figlia Che Piange')

--Wright, 'Rhetorical Repetition in T.S. Eliot's Early Verse,' *A Review of English Literature* (1965)<sup>22</sup>

Wright discusses a number of other rhetorical figures used by Eliot, especially in relation to their description by Elizabethan writers on prosody, but it is these specific kinds of rhetorical structuring that are most relevant here. For certainly the most obvious factor linking these devices with a discussion of Eliot's metrical styles is the fact that in each of these cases Eliot's use of a particular rhetorical figure underlines the significance of the individual line *regarded as such*. Each of these figures possesses an unmistakable air of verbal artifice, achieving the dual purpose of differentiating verse segments that are clearly dependent upon a single limited linguistic context. Once again, this is a further example of how Eliot was able to derive a poetic frame of reference that was simultaneously "literary"

(that is to say, in keeping with larger specific modes of "tradition") and innovative (for example, in the unusually contrasting rhythms of adjacent lines.) In this case, the effect upon the reader's perception of a poem's metre is necessarily influenced by the repeated words or groups of words in adjacent lines forming parallel rhythmic structures, and thus lending an obvious metrical constant despite equally obvious deviations from any supposed single metrical model.

A further, probably less overtly manipulated factor influencing rhythm in Eliot's early poetry, is the poet's habit of repeating certain grammatical structures. As Christopher Ricks has observed, the prepositional phrases which serve as line-endings in 'Morning at the Window' reinforce a feeling of 'visionary dreariness.' The parallel structure of these phrases also encourages a slowed reading of the poem, allowing verse segment after verse segment to accumulate, while retaining their individuality within the composite framework of the poem:

in basement kitchens,  
of the street  
of housemaids  
at area gates.  
to me  
of the street,  
with muddy skirts  
in the air  
of the roofs.

--Ricks, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (1988)<sup>23</sup>

But such a grammatical structure at line-endings is also widespread throughout *Prufrock and Other Observations*. At times it appears to combine with the rhetorical figures cited above, as in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night,' where we find these five consecutive line-endings:

in crevices,  
in the streets  
in shuttered rooms,  
in corridors  
in bars.

--Eliot, 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'<sup>24</sup>

Or, as in 'Aunt Helen,' where combined with the pause at line-endings it reinforces the irony of the diction:

on the mantelpiece,  
upon the dining table  
on his knees--

--Eliot, 'Aunt Helen'<sup>25</sup>

Likewise in 'Mr Apollinax,' where the more exact pairings may serve as a kind of rhyme:

among the teacups.  
among the birch-trees,  
in the shrubbery  
in the swing.

--Eliot, 'Mr. Apollinax'<sup>26</sup>

Notice also in this last example how the parallel syntax also suggests a parallel rhythm:

among the teacups.

among the birch-trees,

Clearly the frequency of such structures in the small group of poems collected in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, whether by predilection or design, has a profound effect on the rhythms that the poems produce. It may be that given the relative freedom of his own particular sort of *vers libre*, this grammatical form often recurs where it does because it serves an unformulated purpose in Eliot's metrical segmentation process. This is, of course, to enter the shadowy area of "design-or-habit," but it is possible to point out how, to a certain extent, Eliot has created a dominant pattern within the limited contexts of individual poems. Here, for example are the line endings for the first section of 'La Figlia Che Piange':

of the stair--  
on a garden urn--  
in your hair--  
with a pained surprise--  
to the ground and turn  
in your eyes  
in your hair.

--Eliot, 'Le Figlia Che Piange'<sup>27</sup>

As they stand thus, these line-endings suggest little in the way of a pattern. However, as

Sister M. Martin Barry has shown in her study of Eliot's early poems, 'La Figlia Che

Piange,' like others of Eliot's early poems achieves a feeling of rhythmical continuity by reliance on a limited number of repeated patterns. In this case, she highlights the following:

Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair  
 With a fugitive resentment in your eyes  
 But weave, weave the sunlight in your hair  
 As the mind deserts the body it has used  
 Simple and faithless as a smile and a shake of the hand  
 I should have lost a gesture and a pose

--Barry, *An Analysis of the Prosodic Structure of Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (1969)<sup>28</sup>

I would suggest that as all but one of her examples occurs as a line-ending, combined with the frequency of this grammatical form in the poem's opening section, that it is Eliot's attention (willed or not) to the precise format of line-endings that contributes most to the rhythm-pattern which dominates in the poem. However, that such a grammatical form, consistently located, is also widespread in Eliot's work at this time, does suggest that grammatical repetition, as a basis of rhythmic patterning in individual poems, may present some guidelines for determining the metrical paradigms of individual contexts. Or, in other words, where a particular grammatical structure frequently recurs in a poem, it too forms a part of that poem's metrical contract.

Support for this view that the rhythm of line-endings plays an important role in Eliot's creation of a metrical context for his poems is given in an article by Jiri Levy entitled, 'Rhythmical Ambivalence in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot.'<sup>29</sup> One of Levy's examples shows how one possible format for Eliot's *Ash-Wednesday* may have been submerged by the poem's eventual published form. Condensing Levy's examples somewhat, here is Eliot's own published form of the text with Levy's re-writing:

Where shall the word be *found*, where will the word  
*Resound*? Not here, there is not enough *silence*  
 Not on the sea or on the *islands*, not

On the *mainland*, in the desert or the *rain land*,  
 For those who walk in darkness  
 Both in the day *time* and in the *night time*  
 The *right time* and the *right place* are not here  
 No *place of grace* for those who avoid the *face*  
 No time to *rejoice* for those who walk among *noise* and deny the *voice*

Where shall the word be found,  
 Where will the word resound?  
 Not here, there is not enough silence  
 Not on the sea or on the islands,  
 Not on the mainland,  
 In the desert or the rain land,  
 For those who walk in darkness  
 Both in the day time  
 And in the night time  
 The right time and the right place  
 Are not here, no place of grace  
 For those who avoid the face  
 No time to rejoice  
 For those who walk among noise  
 And deny the voice

--Levy, 'Rhythmical Ambivalence in the Poetry  
 of T.S. Eliot,' *Anglia* (1959)<sup>30</sup>

Not surprisingly, Eliot's use of rhetorical figures remains like that discussed earlier. What is interesting, first of all, is that the phrasal units which Levy highlights are all grammatically complete, and that with only one exception they are also reinforced by rhyme. Likewise, of the fifteen segments Levy posits, eight are marked off by the same pattern of prepositional phrases discussed above. What this means is that even if Levy's re-written format played no obvious part in Eliot's composition of these lines, their rhythmical segmentation is still signified by the same factors of rhetorical figure and grammatical repetition, partially signalled by rhyme.

But the importance of rhyme in Eliot's early poetry as a metrical factor, (rather than as simply a rhythmical one), needs further investigation. Obviously, where rhymes occur at line-endings their importance as an encouragement to a particular rhythmical reading seems clear. For example, Eliot can be teasingly effective when his rhymes confront our



disposition for conversational accentuation with our equally strong desire to maximise rhyme sounds.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michaelangelo.

--Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'<sup>31</sup>

Thus our propensity to lengthen the sound of the antepenultimate syllable of the second rhyming word in this couplet ('Michael-AN---gelo') in order to voice the rhyme, creates a rhythm different from that manifested if the rhyme is removed, or the lineation altered:

In the room the women come and sit  
Talking of Michaelangelo.

In the room the come and go talking  
Of Michaelangelo.

The feeling of deliberate artificiality we get when we know we are manipulating the sound of a famous name in order to produce a rhyme, contributes a literary irony to the larger context of the poem. Aware of this, it may also be that Eliot is exploiting the attention of readers long-accustomed to maximizing rhyme-effects by giving prominence to rhyme-words in such a way that effects like this take precedence in the formation of whole rhythmical segments. If this is so, then particular "types of rhyme" are also a contributing metrical factor.

#### IV.I.iv.

Of the twelve poems that eventually constituted *Prufrock and Other Observations* all utilize rhyme to a greater or lesser degree. But to a surprising extent, the rhyme-sounds that Eliot uses form a comparatively limited group. Readers familiar with Eliot's verse will also be familiar with the frequency with which rhyme-sounds like 'stair-dare' and 'fall-all' seem to echo through the poems. I say "seem" because it is a measure of Eliot's success in so joining sounds to particular poems that he has engendered a familiarity of style in our

expectations that makes even the slightest disruption of his rhythm or rhymes noticeably un-Eliotic:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread against the sky.

The winter evening settles in  
With smell of steaks in narrow lanes

But how is it then that a collection of poems composed over a period of seven years (1909-1915) can so establish an apparently controlled range of aural effects?

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the particular choice of phonemes Eliot was disposed to place at line-endings. Instead, what I propose is to consider how some entire words --not merely rhyme-sounds-- appear to have held a special significance for Eliot at this time as segmental "dividers."

It is important at the outset to differentiate the specific kind of use of rhyme-words that I believe has a function relative to the broader question of Eliot's metrical structuring from those which serve a more limited role as signifiers in individual poems. For example, although the word 'all' occurs as a line-ending in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' a total of ten times-- which use makes it particularly observable as a segmental "divider"-- it is scarcely used so elsewhere in the book. (It occurs as such twice in 'Portrait of a Lady'.) This would suggest that Eliot has used the word 'all' in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' as a signifier in several dimensions-- dimensions that are not utilized (at least not to the same extent) by his use of the same word in such a position elsewhere. In contrast to this, Eliot uses the word 'street' as a line-ending sixteen times in this volume; it appears in eight of the twelve poems. Similarly, 'room' is repeated six times, as is 'hair.' A small scattering of other words appear to be used in the same way that 'all' is used in 'Prufrock' (that is, brief concentrated repetitions within individual poems), and even words with very specific denotations recur as line-endings in different poems (for example, 'screen,' 'table,' 'afternoon,' 'pin').

I believe this particular kind of repetition suggests two things. First, and seemingly most obvious, the poems share a limited range of thematic material, and are therefore *likely* to bear strong resemblances of diction. But while this is undoubtedly true, as it is likewise true that a large number of other words are echoed between poems both mid-line and at line-endings, it is still curious that such words should so *frequently* occur at line-endings. In a lesser poet this might suggest a poverty of imagination with regard to rhyming. But in Eliot's case, I believe this frequent repetition of sounds in this way operates as a kind of measure, suggesting by their very obviousness to the reader that a verbal pattern, often a rhythmic one, is being foregrounded. Finally, this view is strengthened further by the ways in which these patterns of sound coincide with Eliot's foregrounding (deliberate or otherwise) of literary echoes carrying the stamp of their own original rhythmical and metrical contexts. The extent to which this is true can be seen by even a brief look at the suggestions made by Eliot's critics for possible analogues to some of his most famous lines.

#### IV.I.v.

Among the many analogues, or indeed "sources," offered for passages in Eliot's poetry, some, because of their similarity in more than one area of comparison (for instance, diction, context) appear to be reasonable suggestions. Whether or not Eliot has consciously re-rendered a particular passage that appealed to him, or unconsciously recalled elements of a previous poem-- or simply produced verses which coincidentally resemble earlier ones-- will probably never be established. Nevertheless, his works are frequently explored in this way, as for example in this comparison by David Ned Tobin of passages by Eliot and Tennyson:

And I loathe the squares and streets  
 And the faces that one meets,  
 Hearts with no love for me.

And indeed there will be a time

For the yellow smoke that slides along the street ...  
 There will be a time, there will be a time  
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;

--Tobin, *The Presence of the Past: T.S. Eliot's  
 Victorian Inheritance* (1983)<sup>32</sup>

Here, to me at least, the comparison is justified less by the sound of the verses-- which despite the rhymes, is very different-- than by the identical metonymy of 'faces.' Elsewhere, however, the sound of Eliot's verses has prompted a range of comparisons based almost exclusively on factors of rhythm and rhyme. For example, this well-known couplet from 'Prufrock,'

In the room the women come and go  
 Talking of Michaelangelo.

--Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'<sup>33</sup>

has been seen as a relative of the following:

Yet oft, in his marble hearth's bright glow,  
 He watched a picture come and go.

But how should any Sign-post-dawber know  
 The worth of *Titian*, or of *Angelo*?

That future ages must confess they owe  
 To Streeter more than Michael Angelo.

--Musgrove, *T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman*, and  
 Ricks, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*<sup>34</sup>

For my own part, I might even suggest the following two examples, both from Tennyson as further analogues:

And up and down the people go,  
 Gazing where the lilies blow ...

And seem to lift the form, and glow

The bar of Michael Angelo.

--Tennyson, 'The Lady of Shalott,' and  
*In Memoriam*<sup>35</sup>

In the first of these examples, S. Musgrove stresses not merely the coincidence of the phrase 'come and go,' but also the fact that the "glowing-on-the-marble" image later recurs in *The Waste Land*.<sup>36</sup> In the second two examples, Christopher Ricks is making the point the rhymes on the sound of '-angelo' have not, in themselves, a "characteristic" tone. If I were

making a case for my own choices, I would point out that in the first instance the pause between Tennyson's 'go' and the next line's participle 'Gazing' has the same effect on the rhythm as that of Eliot's 'go' and his participle 'Talking.' Similarly, in the second example, I could argue that the rhythm of Tennyson's context, being predominately four-beat, enforces a promotion of the accent on the first syllable of 'Angelo' ("ANN-ge-lo") in exactly the same way Eliot's use of the word does. However, my point in drawing together these comparisons is to pose the question of why it is that the sound of Eliot's verses seem to suggest to his readers such a range of "related" sound-contexts.

A possible answer might be that Eliot's overt use of literary allusion ('No! I am not Prince Hamlet,') encourages his readers to see his poems as possessing a special dependence upon a larger tradition of literature. After all, some of the allusions he makes to relatively more obscure works, may be a way of nominating a kind of revisionist attitude to the very notion of a single, definable "tradition." But clearly a poem like 'Portrait of a Lady' by its very title suggests a kinship with the more widely known corpus of English writing. Likewise titles such as 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' may be lineal descendants of similar titles from the 'Nineties, or they may be playing ironically on such associations, or they may be both. But in any case, such associations are inescapable given the frequency with which they occur. Now recalling for a moment Eliot's statements discussed in Chapter Three regarding the young poet's 'inundation' by the work of poets he himself admires (III.IV.ii) it seems likely that where Eliot's poems sound very like those of his predecessors, that resemblance is both deliberate and unavoidable. The power of poetic segmentation-- evident both in those habitual ways Eliot forms lines, as well as the analogues we persist in associating with them-- implies that a network of linguistic considerations (grammar, syntax, rhythm, rhyme) is consulted both deliberately and subconsciously when we "measure" verses, as is a network of "higher" considerations based

on literary precedent, such as recalled formal associations and the tone of the work relative to similar texts. For this reason, I believe the "metre" of Eliot's verses-- that which made them acceptable to his ear and that which relates them to the many systems of "metric" proposed for the identification of metrical verse in English-- is the entire complex of patterned sound elements which are distinguishable as repeated phenomena within the limited contexts of his own verse-segments. I have so far given most of my attention to the linguistic details that characterize the beginnings and endings of those verse-segments because I believe it is here that Eliot most clearly defines those sound dispositions which for him constituted the extreme boundaries of "metricality." It is to how the acceptance of those boundaries effected the sound-dispositions in the rest of his verse-segments that I wish to turn next.

#### IV.II.i.

In 1918, one year after the publication of *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Arthur Waley used a passage from Eliot's work to illustrate a particular point about the use of simile in Chinese verse:

... but nothing could be found analogous to Mr. T.S. Eliot's comparison of the sky to a "patient etherised upon a table."

--Waley, trans., *One Hundred & Seventy Chinese Poems*<sup>37</sup>

Obviously Eliot's image had made a sizeable impact on Waley, not only because he himself remembered it, but because he assumed that his own readers would recognize both the line and its singularity. But it could be that Waley, and those critics who follow him in this reading of Eliot's text at this point, are mistaken in assuming that Eliot's analogy is between the 'patient' and the 'sky.'

We may begin once again by looking closely at this part of the text, paying particular attention to the grammar, syntax and punctuation of Eliot's verse segments.

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
 Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
 --Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'<sup>138</sup>

Judging from Eliot's syntax, it is not the 'sky' which is 'like a patient,' but rather the way in which the 'evening is spread out' that suggests the etherised patient. Here, the difference in interpretation depends upon the emphasis given to parts of one more of Eliot's prepositional phrases 'against the sky.' Thus the two readings look like this:

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out  
 Against the sky like a patient etherised upon a table.  
 [Waley]

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening (like a patient etherised upon a table)  
 Is spread out against the sky.

But a third possible reading is also suggested by the ambiguity of Eliot's syntax. That reading is that it is neither the 'evening' nor the 'sky' which is analogous to the etherised patient, but rather the way 'you and I' are being asked to 'go.' This reading might look like this:

When the evening is spread out against the sky,  
 Let us go then, you and I,  
 Like a patient etherised upon a table.

If the unfamiliarity of this reading of a very familiar passage makes it seem far-fetched, we have only to reconsider the original syntactical order of the words when printed as prose to see how far the ambiguity is inherent in the text:

Let us go then, you and I, when the evening is spread  
 out against the sky like a patient etherised upon a table.

Or if our original *gestalt* reading of Eliot is still too strong, try the same experiment with these words:

Shall we walk, the two of us, when night is opened  
 up on the horizon like a spirit raised above a grave;

Does the word 'spirit' here refer to 'us' or to 'night'? 'Shall we walk ... like a spirit ...;' or, referring again to Eliot's words, 'Let us go ... like a patient ...'

The answer to these questions, of course, is that in an important way, all of these readings can be justified through recourse to the literary text. My point in raising the question, however, is threefold: First, that like certain of those nineteenth-century critics discussed in Chapters One and Two, we must not through long familiarity with a text become complacent about the semantic elusiveness it maintains which, if anything, is increased with the passing of time. Secondly, that features of that elusiveness depend upon the text's peculiar visual format-- whether it be Chaucerian half-line punctuation, or Eliot's maximising of syntactical ambivalence through segmentation. And thirdly, that that format represents a coalescence of features within which rhythmicity is inextricable, and therefore some concept of "aptness"--or metrical relation-- is almost unavoidable. After all, the difference between Waley's reading of this passage, as cited above, from that offered in comparison with it, really depends upon a combination of pause-and-emphasis in voicing the words 'spread out against.' For Waley, an acceleration of the last group of words determines the simile:

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out ...against-the-sky-  
Like-a-patient-etherised-upon-a-table.

Compared to this, the contrasted reading makes much of the pause between the words 'sky' and 'like'-- the closure of the first couplet by the rhyme, perhaps, reinforcing a perceptible gulf in the voicing between the two halves of the proposed simile:

Let us go then, you and I  
When the evening is spread out against the sky ...  
Like a patient etherised upon a table.

Finally, the third reading proposed above demands a slowed reading of the first and third lines, with a faster, lower-pitched, parenthetical treatment of the second line:

Let us go then, you and I,  
(When-the-evening-is-spread-out-against-the-sky)  
Like a patient etherised upon a table.

Nevertheless, however we choose to read the rhythm of these lines-- and our interpretation of them clearly depends in part on this-- there is *something* in Eliot's



arrangement of these words that suggests each of these possibilities. That *something* may be accidental, or at the very least undirected. Still, I believe the degree to which each of these readings is mutually exclusive (as well as the tenacity with which only one possible *gestalt* suggests itself to us as "best") is an example of how Eliot was able to exploit our internalized sensitivity for metrical, rather than merely rhythmical, patterns. Obviously, as my re-writings of the lines show, the words' appeal to us as potentially rhythmical is not based exclusively on either their grammar, syntax or even segmentation, but rather somehow through a combination of all of these things to our experience of them in relation to our own personally-formed abstract of their potential rhythm. An abstract, or metre, formed of course through the other metres they suggest to us that we have already encountered elsewhere, made personal (or mutually exclusive) by their incomplete conformity to any of those specific abstracts.

These specific abstracts, of course, are made more durable by their abundant use in poems part of whose metrical aesthetic includes demonstrating repeatedly the suggestion of the same abstract. Beginning with this knowledge, this sensitivity born of sensibility, we begin to read Eliot's poem with the aesthetic which dominates the majority of English poems, that of a repeated metrical structure. The result may or may not be something like this:

( ) ( ) ( )      /      /  
 Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
 Like a patient etherised upon a table;

In any case, as I said above, our long familiarity with these lines, combined with our experience of aesthetic changes subsequent to those prevailing in the era of their first publication, means that we have developed a predisposition towards reading verse of this type, and probably doubt the efficacy of the comparison between readings. But Eliot's first

readers, lacking our perspective, were pressed to make use of other resources. As I said in Chapters One and Two, it was not that they lacked adequate precedent for metrically variable verse, rhymed or unrhymed. What matters here is that Eliot's combination of a metrically ambiguous style with an intensely ambiguous word order, meant that when his first readers sought an explanation for one by means of the other, they were frustrated.

Given that the context of literature at this time was the same for Eliot as for his readers, it is impossible that Eliot could have been unaware of this. Therefore such patterns of measure as Eliot does offer his readers assume an increased importance as they form the terms of a new kind of metrical contract. Likewise the restraint Eliot exhibits in selecting terms for himself within that contract reveals the extent of his understanding of the parameters of his own era's metrical context. What I wish to focus upon next is how Eliot was able to signal metrical segmentation through positioning rhythmical constructs.

#### IV.II.ii.

In this section I propose to take a detailed look at those poems Eliot published in the *Harvard Advocate*. Alongside these poems I will also consider that part of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' which Eliot described as being among the first composed, and for which statement Pound offers some corroboration.<sup>39</sup> This small collection of *Advocate* poems, later assembled in *Poems Written in Early Youth* (1967) were excluded from Eliot's first published volume in 1917. This fact, combined with the poems' general appearance of a metrical uniformity unlike that found in Eliot's later poems, is probably the chief cause of the subsequent lack of critical comment afforded to these early works. While various critics have seen the influence of several earlier poets' work surfacing in these short pieces, I know of no detailed comparative analysis of the poems' various formal structures, let alone one which links them either to the metrical debates concurrent with their composition or their

place in the development of Eliot's own metrical practice. For these reasons, I believe it is necessary to consider each of these short poems individually, utilizing a number of those observations made in the earlier sections of this chapter. Likewise my decision to treat the poems in chronological order by publication date (even though in one case this may violate their compositional order) is less for convenience, than because I believe these poems represent an important stage in Eliot's development as a poet-- one in which the chronology of his development is evident through his repeated interest in certain specific metrical collocations.

The earliest of Eliot's poems to appear in the *Harvard Advocate* was entitled, 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill'), which was published on 24 May 1907. The poem consists of two quatrains linked by the rhyme scheme *abbc addc*. Eliot's four line stanzas, each centered with a pair of rhymed lines, suggests a comparison with Tennyson's *In Memoriam* stanza, rhymed *abba cddc* etc. As I have already discussed in Chapter Three (III.IV.iii) Eliot's early acquaintance with Tennyson's poem affected him profoundly. This likeness is strengthened if we compare Eliot's first stanza to a part of Tennyson's poem:

When we came home across the hill  
 No leaves were fallen from the trees;  
 The gentle fingers of the breeze  
 Had torn no quivering cobweb down.

The hedgerow bloomed with flowers still,  
 No withered petals lay beneath;  
 But the wild roses in your wreath  
 Were faded, and the leaves were brown.

[Eliot]

The names are signed and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells  
 The joy to every wandering breeze;  
 The blind wall rocks, and on the trees  
 The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

[Tennyson]

--Eliot, 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill'), and Tennyson, *In Memoriam*<sup>40</sup>

Here not only do Eliot's stanza form, imagery and rhymes recall Tennyson, but the theme of Eliot's poem, the ever-present threat of decay and eventual death lurking in the shadows surrounding our happiness, forms an ironic comment on Tennyson's similar description of a pair of newlyweds where such a threat seems to have been surmounted.

It is also important to note the various rhythmical symmetries which characterize this short poem. For example, while the voicing of each of the eight lines demands a varying degree of end-stopping, the two lines which require it least, lines three and seven, are parallel in each stanza, and end immediately prior to the verb:

Had torn ...	... of the breeze
Were faded, ...	... in your wreath

--Eliot, 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill')<sup>41</sup>

Thus albeit in a small way, through its suggestion of a literary precedent and its pattern of verbal parallels, 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill,') foreshadows features of Eliot's later style.

Eighteen months later, on 13 November 1908, the Harvard *Advocate* published Eliot's, 'Before Morning.' This poem shows certain obvious similarities with its immediate predecessor. Like 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill') 'Before Morning' consists of two quatrains. Also like the earlier poem, 'Before Morning' has a very precisely controlled rhyme scheme: *aBaB aBaB* where the *B* rhymes repeat the single word 'dawn.' Here each of the poem's eight lines ends with a prepositional phrase, but in seven instances those phrases consist of two words only:

with gray
toward dawn
for the day
of dawn
of yesterday
at dawn
of decay
of dawn

--Eliot, 'Before Morning'<sup>42</sup>

Unlike the previous poem, 'Before Morning' shows greater flexibility in its syllable count which, depending upon the pronunciation of some words (for example, 'flowers') may vary from ten to twelve syllables per line. A further difference between these two poems is that in the latter example, every line but one has end-line punctuation.

When combined these facts form an unusual poem in metrical terms. The first line encourages a fairly definite five beat reading,

While all the East was weaving red with gray,

but the rest of the stanza is altogether more ambiguous:

The flowers at the window turned toward dawn,  
 Petal on petal waiting for the day,  
 Fresh flowers, withered flowers, flowers of dawn.

The second stanza maintains this degree of ambiguity:

This morning's flowers and flowers of yesterday  
 Their fragrance drifts across the room at dawn,  
 Fragrance of bloom and fragrance of decay,  
 Fresh flowers, withered flowers, flowers of dawn.

Notice that a five-beat scansion is only really possible with a promoted emphasis on the prepositions. Yet when voiced, Eliot's lines move from one to another without any jarring dissonances, even as in my much inferior re-writing, the expectation of rhymes is thwarted:

While all the East was weaving red with white,  
 The flowers at the window turned toward dawn,  
 Petal on petal, waiting for the day,  
 Fresh flowers, withered flowers, flowers of love.

So what then is the metrical contract that Eliot has offered us, and which we are capable of accepting as apt even without being able to identify immediately?

My first observation is that Eliot's end-line punctuation enforces an obvious pause between each verse segment. In the one case where this end-line punctuation is absent,

Eliot offers a curious syntactical juxtaposition which, because of its singularity, demands a momentary break in order to consider the words' relationship:

... flowers of yesterday  
Their fragrance drifts ...

Secondly, this endstopping in every case is reinforced further by the abruptness of those short prepositional phrases. Combined with the repetition of the rhyming words, Eliot may have marked these verse segments especially clearly in order to provide some lee-way for the variables which constitute the rest of their make-up. It is worth noting how many of these variables consist of words whose primary accent falls on the first of two syllables, allowing their voicing to be either prolonged or shortened indeterminately:

'flówers,' 'windów,' 'Pétal,' 'wáiting,' 'withéred,'  
'mórníng's,' 'frágrance'

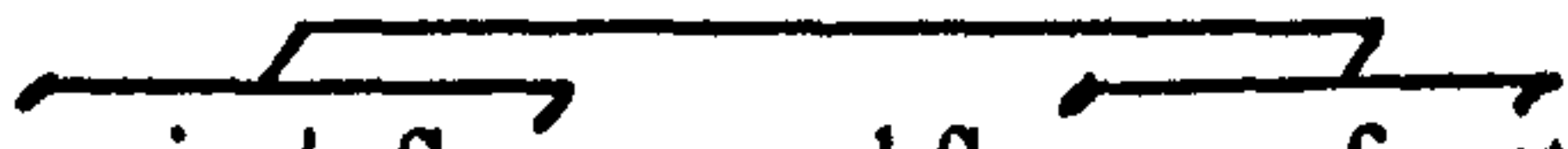
Also notice the consonant clusters which characterise the ends of these words, elongating their pronunciation, so that a line whose accentuation seems clear when voiced in isolation:

Their frágrance drífts acróss the róom at dáwn,

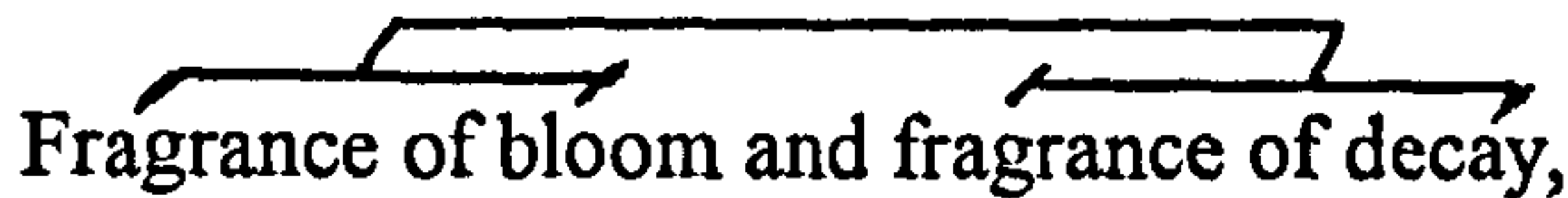
is transformed when re-placed in its original context:

( - )      /      /      /      /      ( - )  
This mórníng's flówers and flówers of yésterday  
Their frágrance drífts acróss ( - )      /      /      /      /

Here the consonants of 'fragrance drifts across' coalesce to such an extent that any potentially dominant accented syllable is muffled. Likewise the peculiarly isolated, yet balanced groups of repeated words and phrases out of which the poem is built, ('petal on petal'), easily encourage a foregrounding of dipodic hierarchies:

  
This mórníng's flówers and flówers of yésterday

  
Their frágrance drífts acróss the róom at dáwn,


  
Fragrance of bloom and fragrance of decay,


  
Fresh flowers, withered flowers, flowers of dawn.

This reading is also reinforced by the dominant alliteration pattern in this stanza (*f* and *d*) which coincides with most of the salient stresses of each dipody-- first of each "half" line, and the final stress of the entire segment. It is also apparent, though less marked, in the first stanza, where each line stresses an alliterating *w*: ('While,') 'weaving,' 'window,' 'toward,' 'waiting,' 'withered.' The conclusion then, is that in 'Before Morning,' Eliot's concentrated use of verbal repetition, alliteration and grammatical or punctuated verse segmentation combine to produce a marked dipodic reading, and as such may be said to form the metre of the poem. As I have shown in I.III.iv, this particular kind of experimentation was common in the years immediately surrounding Eliot's writing of 'Before Morning.' Indeed, as I have indicated, it is especially common in Swinburne, whose work is recalled by both the theme and verbal artistry of Eliot's poem. (For example, notice the frequency with which *r* sounds are repeated in 'Before Morning.')

Likewise, elements of this balancing of verbal elements will continue to re-appear as an important constituent in Eliot's later poems (cf. 'Le Figlia Che Piange').

The third of Eliot's poems to appear in the Harvard *Advocate* was 'Circe's Palace.' Like 'Before Morning,' 'Circe's Palace' shows some resemblances to Swinburne's style, particularly in its imagery. However, the verse form Eliot uses here is very different from his two previously published poems. 'Circe's Palace' consists of fourteen lines, divided into two seven-line stanzas, with the rhyme scheme *abacbc dedfefe*. As in 'Before Morning,' the syllable count varies considerably; between six and nine syllables per line. Also the number of prepositional phrases ending lines is proportionally fewer, in this case only occurring in four lines. Likewise five lines have no end-line punctuation. Although what is

curious about the structure of this poem is the frequency with which Eliot is now beginning lines with prepositional phrases:

Around her fountain ...  
With the voice ...

With hideous streak ...

In the forest ...  
Along the garden stairs

Of men ...

--Eliot, 'Circe's Palace'<sup>43</sup>

Neither of Eliot's earlier poems has such a line opening, nor do any of his later poems show such a high proportion of prepositional phrases beginning verse segments. Taken together this suggests that they form some part (intentional or accidental) in the aural effect Eliot was trying to achieve.

What the aural effect was may also depend in part on recalling Swinburne. As I have shown in **I.III.iv**, Swinburne's verse, sometimes to the annoyance of his early critics, shows a predisposition towards what were called 'triple measures.' These 'triple measures' (in Saintsbury's terminology 'anapaests' and 'dactyls') frequently are made up of prepositions or multi-syllable words in combination. Thus in 'Circe's Palace,' with its decadent imagery of poisonous love-- ironically counterpointed by the fourteen-line poem's resemblance to a sonnet-- Eliot may be attempting a Swinburnian mask:

With the voice ...

With hideous streak ...

...of the dead.--

...from their lairs

In the forest ...

...with the eyes

Indeed many of the poem's phrases repeat this pattern, particularly in the second stanza:

...which thickens below,



...stately and slow,

...whom we knew long ago.

Another Swinburnian feature is the dominant alliteration in each section. Thus in the first stanza we find, 'fountain,' 'flows,' 'flowers,' 'fanged,' in the first five lines, while in the second stanza, all of the beasts mentioned alliterate, 'panthers,' 'python,' 'peacocks.'

As if this were not enough, this densely-packed little poem shows, as I have said above, a wide-range of syllabic variation, even between adjacent lines:

In the forest which thickens below,  
Along the garden stairs

But what these two lines have in common metrically, along with every other line of the poem but one, is a fairly definite three-beat rhythm. The single notable exception is line twelve:

The peacocks walk, stately and slow,

The possibility of a three-beat rhythm here is masked by the mid-line comma, which, if removed, allows for a possible three-beat reading:

The peacocks walk stately and slow,

Now it may be that this comma was an after-thought in what is a poem written in a three-beat accentual metre. However, it is also possible that this single exception underlines the diction mimetically, retarding the voicing of the words and creating a slight rhythmical shift immediately before the poem's conclusion:

Along the garden stairs

The sluggish python lies;

The peacocks walk, stately and slow,

And they look at us with the eyes

Of men whom we knew long ago.

In any case, 'Circe's Palace' is the nearest example of a purely accentual metre in any of Eliot's early poems, and may also foreshadow the style developed in his much later verse and dramas.<sup>44</sup>

The fourth of Eliot's poems to appear in the *Advocate* was 'On a Portrait,' published on 26 January 1909. This poem's title and theme both suggest an obvious comparison with Eliot's own later 'Portrait of a Lady.' Curiously, certain phrases and rhymes recall both 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' For example, the family-group of rhymes so often repeated in *Prufrock and Other Observations* ('feet-street-meet') first appears in this poem, as does the frequently-repeated line-end image of 'hands' (three times repeated in 'Portrait of a Lady.') The poem itself, like 'Circe's Palace' is a sonnet: fourteen lines arranged as three quatrains and a couplet rhymed *abba abba cdcd ee*. Of the poem's fourteen lines, five end, and three begin, with prepositional phrases. However, unlike the earlier examples cited above, these phrases are either so elongated or abbreviated that they offer little scope as determining metrical factors:

Among a crowd ...  
 To us ...  
 ...  
 ...in the room alone.  
 ...  
 ...of stone  
 ...  
 ...in some wood-retreat,  
 ...of one's own.  
 ...  
 ...from us,  
 ...  
 Beyond the circle ...

--Eliot, 'On a Portrait'<sup>45</sup>

Nevertheless, the most obvious factor of the poem's metrical structure is its syllabic regularity; each line contains either the ten or eleven syllables commonly ascribed to the iambic pentameter, making this one of only two complete published poems by Eliot entirely

in this form. That this particular syllabic shaping of verses formed a part of Eliot's design also seems evident from the unusual number of modifiers which pad out the lines:

...*tenuous* dreams, ...  
 ...*restless* brain ...  
 ...*weary* feet ...  
 ...*tranquil* goddess ...  
 ...*pensive* lamia ...  
 ...*immaterial* fancy ...  
 ...*slender* hands ...  
 ...*dark* eyes ...  
 ...*silent* spy ...  
 ...*patient* curious eye.

Furthermore, while all of the lines in this poem are undoubtedly "acceptable" iambic pentameters, a five-beat accentuation of some lines can offer a considerable distortion of their voicing:

But e˘vanesc˘ent, as if one should meet  
 A p˘ensive lamia in some wood retreat,  
 No meditations glad or ominous  
 Disturb her lips, or move the slender hands;  
 Her dark eyes keep their secrets hid from us,  
 Beyond the circle of our thoughts she stands.

For these reasons, it may be that 'On a Portrait' is a poem in which Eliot --like some American prosodists (cf. II.II.iii)-- viewed the principal determining factor of the iambic pentameter as syllable *count*, without regard for the number or placement of accents. If the latter possibility is true, then it might explain Eliot's comment cited in III.IV.iv, that, 'any line can be divided into feet and accents'--which of course, all of these lines can be.<sup>46</sup>

The next of Eliot's poems to appear in the *Advocate* was 'Song' ('The moonflower opens to the moth,') published along with 'On a Portrait' on 26 January 1909.<sup>47</sup> Like 'Song' ('When we came home across the hill') and 'Before Morning,' this poem consists of two quatrains, in this case rhymed *aBcb dBeb* where the *B* rhymes repeat the single word 'sea.'

The poem's lines alternate between eight and six syllables, with the exception of line six, which has seven syllables. Once again Eliot's syllabification may vary according to the pronunciation of problematic words like 'flowers.' but even so, at first glance the poem seems to be in a straightforward ballad metre. There are, however, several peculiarities which distinguish this poem from those of Eliot's most resembling it.

Like most of Eliot's poems composed around this time, 'Song' ('The moonflower opens to the moth') contains a high proportion of lines ending with prepositional phrases; in this case five out of a total of eight. There is also an unusually high number of metrically ambiguous monosyllables grouped in the middle of lines. For example, consider the following possibilities:

moonflower opens  
 mist crawls in  
 great white bird  
 Love, you hold  
 white mist on the sea

Similarly, the syntax of the second line also encourages a levelling-off of the metrical stresses, in a way different from the comparable syntax of the sixth line:

The mist crawls in from sea; [noticeably more staccato than,  
 "The mist crawls in from the sea;"]  
 Than the white mist on the sea [more variable than,  
 "Than the white mist on sea."]

Finally, line seven, the only one lacking end-line punctuation, nevertheless discourages enjambement through the next line's initial prepositional phrase, which, curiously, is marked off by a comma seemingly placed more as a rhythmic marker supporting the final rhyme than a grammatical one reinforcing the sense:

But have you no brighter tropic flowers  
 With scarlet life, for *me*?

[my italics]

Thus even in such a brief poem with a recognized format, Eliot appears to be maximising the ambiguities which characterize the rhythmical possibilities of a given form.

While the next phase of Eliot's writing shows the immediate impact of his reading of Jules Laforgue, the first of his published poems utilizing Laforgue is an interesting hybrid of his "old" and "new" styles. This particular poem is 'Nocturne,' published by the *Advocate* on 12 November, 1909.<sup>48</sup> Like 'Circe's Palace' and 'On a Portrait,' 'Nocturne' is written in fourteen lines. Even more than the other two, however, the poem's theme (an ironic account of Romeo and Juliet), plus its division into octave and sestet, suggest it is both a sonnet, as well as a statement upon the sonnet-form. Once again, the syllable count of the lines shows that all could be scanned as iambic pentameter. Of the poem's fourteen lines, nine end with prepositional phrases, but, perhaps coincidentally, like Eliot's only other pentameter poem, 'On a Portrait,' these phrases show a considerable variation in length and complexity. But while this poem shows some of its predecessor's predilection for modifiers, ('*courteous* moon,' '*moonlit* ground'), Eliot has made a virtue of his seeming necessity by inverting the order of these modifiers with their respective nouns. Thus after the final line of the octet, when Juliet is stabbed by a servant and the peculiar irony of the poem is climaxed, Eliot comments indirectly on the entire love sonnet genre in the sestet by ending three lines with inversions:

...mode oblique  
 ...eye profound,  
 ...in tears are drowned:--

But if these inversions constitute a statement regarding the "poetic" style of the sonnet, in a more radical way so do the disruptions of the abruptly isolated words and phrases beginning most of the lines of the octet:

Romeo,

...

With Juliet,

Of love,

...

Banal,

...

Stab,

was

Lastly, it is intriguing to note that in what <sup>was</sup> certainly among the earliest of Eliot's poems written after he read Laforgue, that he has already begun to cultivate that peculiar "French" sound to his verses, like that I described above in my discussion of 'Conversation Galante' (IV.I.ii). For instance, it is certainly a strange coincidence that in the four poems in which Eliot specifically alludes to Laforgue-- 'Conversation Galante,' 'Nocturne,' 'Humouresque' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'-- he bases at least one rhyming pair on that "-oon" sound which was so common in the French poets he read at this time.<sup>49</sup>

The attempt to develop and incorporate features of that sound further into his own work clearly dominate Eliot's next published poem, 'Humouresque.' This poem was published in the *Advocate* on 12 January, 1910; although in Eliot's surviving manuscript it is dated November 1909.<sup>50</sup> Despite Eliot's subtitle, '(AFTER J. LAFORGUE)'-- modestly placed in parentheses (cf. I.III.ii)-- like 'Nocturne,' 'Humouresque' is in one of Eliot's two now-practiced forms, the quatrain. Still, the six quatrains of the poem, rhymed *abab* throughout, make it the longest poem he published prior to 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' Likewise the proportion of lines ending with prepositional phrases, four out of twenty-four, is the lowest so far. Perhaps more importantly for our understanding of the poem's metre, it is also the first of Eliot's poems in which he announces with the title that the speaker of the poem is wearing a mask.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly the requirements of Eliot's chosen mask placed a severe strain on the inscription of his text. For example, in twenty four lines, the poem contains three parenthetical phrases; four clauses marked off by dashes; the archaic accentuation of the

word 'deceased' (ironic?); three lines with words or phrases isolated mid-line by commas ('maybe,' 'on earth,' even at that'); one italicized word ('*bizarre!*'); and eight other lines with mid-line punctuated pauses. Finally, every stanza but the second ends with a punctuated closure, while the second ends with a semi-colon-- all of which serves to isolate each stanza further as an independent rhythmic unit. Therefore despite the poem's appearance as that of ballad stanzas, any attempt to voice it thus simply will prove somehow inadequate, as the following comparisons of first lines from each stanza shows:

( / ) ( / ) ( / )     /     /  
 One of my marionettes is dead,  
        /     /     ( / ) ( / )     /  
 But this deceased marionette  
        /     /     /     /     /  
 Half bullying, half imploring air,  
        /     /     /     /     /  
 With Limbo's other useless things  
        ( / ) ( / ) ( / )     /     ( / )     /  
 'Why don't you people get some class?'  
        /     /     ( / )     /     /     /  
 Logic a marionette's, all wrong

--Eliot, 'Humouresque'<sup>52</sup>

I say 'somewhat' inadequate, because I believe that what happens in this poem is an example of Eliot teasing us with the intuitive way we cling to the first strong, recognizably familiar rhythm which suggests itself, even when, as in this poem, such a rhythm blurs the already difficult grammar and syntax. Eliot's obvious suggestion, as I have said, is that of the ballad stanza. We may recall once more his statement regarding 'the ghost of some simple metre.' But when we apply this to Eliot's printed text, such a 'simple metre' becomes even more "ghostly." This can be seen even from the first stanza, which offers a plausible reading as ballad-metre fairly clearly, with or without the suggestion of an implied off-beat offered by the dash at the end of line two:

       /     /     /     /     /  
 One of my marionettes is dead,  
        /     /     /     /     /  
 Though not yet tired of the game--

Continuing thus, the rhetorical emphasis of the next line suggests,

But wéak in bódy ás in héad,

But then there is a disruption caused by the lowered voice suggested by the parentheses, which aptly suits the tenuous grammatical relationship of the individual lines:

(A jumping-jáck has súch a fráme).

Eliot produces similar effects elsewhere in the poem, as in the second stanza where we may voice the final line as either,

Pinched in a cómic, dúll grímace; or

Pinched in a cómic, dúll grímáce;

Here either pronunciation is slightly ridiculous, given that the first produces the combination of a faulty rhyme and a limp rhythm, and that the second maintains the rhyme-sound to the complete distortion of the word-- in either case the anti-poetic tone of the poem is furthered. Still, this is a concise example of how Eliot has used our capacity to seize upon the suggestion of rhythm in a given line to underscore grammatical and semantic ambiguity.

As in my earlier discussion of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (IV.II.i), notice how the semantic ramifications of this text increase when the different rhythmical options are compared:

Logic a marionette's, all wóng  
 Of prémisses; yet in some star  
 A hero!--Where would he belong?  
 But, even at that, what mask *bizarre*!

Not only does each line consist of at least two juxtaposed phrases, but the logical or grammatical relationship between those phrases, like that of the marionette they describe, is insoluble. Thus the first phrase may mean, "The logic of a marionette ..." if we voice it,

Logic (a marionette's)



or, more doubtfully, if 'Logic' is being used as a transitive verb, it may mean, "For us to apply logic to the remarks of a marionette is wrong even in premise," in which case it would probably be voiced more quickly, but with a greater pause before the next phrase:

Logic a marionette's ... all wrong

A similar analysis could be developed for virtually every other phrase in this stanza. But in any case, what this shows is the beginning stage of Eliot's incorporation of Laforgue's manner into his own style, particularly how that style depends for part of its power upon the extent to which it draws upon resonances that obvious metrical conventions suggest, while at the same time exploiting the degree to which the reader's own involvement with the text includes a certain measure of conventional expectations. The next major step in Eliot's poetic development would be in his combination of this technique with forms other than the quatrain or the sonnet.

That development can be seen in Eliot's next published poem, 'Spleen.' Printed in the Harvard *Advocate* on 26 January 1910, it was, with the exception of his class 'Ode,' the last of his poem's published before the 1915 appearance of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' In many ways, 'Spleen' is both the culmination of Eliot's apprenticeship, and a concise foreshadowing of his now-famous early manner. Like all of Eliot's early poems, 'Spleen' has a very compact, inter-related rhyme scheme. The poem consists of three stanzas, rhymed *abbbaa cddc effgeg*. Its theme, especially in the final stanza, anticipates 'Prufrock,' as do certain elements of its diction:

...  
 And life, a little bald and gray,  
 Languid, fastidious and bland,  
 Waits, hat and gloves in hand,  
 Punctilious of tie and suit  
 (Somewhat impatient of delay)  
 On the doorstep of the Absolute.  
 --Eliot, 'Spleen'<sup>53</sup>

...  
 And indeed there will be time

To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'  
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair--  
 (They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')  
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin--  
 (They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')  
 Do I dare  
 Disturb the universe?

--Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'<sup>54</sup>

But besides its anticipation of 'Prufrock' in imagery and diction, 'Spleen' also marks a significant departure from Eliot's earlier published poems in that it shows the greatest variability in the relative number of syllables per line-- between five and nine. This fact is important because it represents not a 'loosening' of Eliot's metrical style, but rather an even sharper focusing upon contrasting and/or repeated verbal elements as indicators of rhythmical balancing. Notice, for example, that each stanza contains one line consisting of a tripartite list:

Bonnets, silk hats, and conscious graces  
 ...  
 Evening, lights, and tea!  
 ...  
 Languid, fastidious, and bland,

It is worth noting also that as in 'Nocturne,' the rhythm of many lines is slowed, (perhaps underscoring the languorous tone of the poem) by the punctuated suspension of one or two words at the beginning of the line:

Sunday:  
 ...  
 Bonnets,  
 ...  
 Evening,  
 ...  
 And Life,  
 Languid,  
 Waits,

Finally, the 'spleen' of the poem's speaker is also manifested by Eliot's concentrated use of polysyllabic words, which, in such short lines, give a shuffling, discomfiting effect appropriate to his theme: 'repetition,' 'self-possession,' 'unwarranted,' 'conspiracy,'

'fastidious,' 'Punctilious.' A similar effect is produced by the frequent use of phrases with clusters of metrically unaccented syllables: 'this satisfied procession,' 'doorstep of the Absolute.' But when this shuffling effect is combined with the impact of short, densely rhymed lines, the result is that the pauses between lines have a feel of peculiarly indeterminate length-- as if we know we ought to hesitate, although the rhythm of the line is not definite enough to suggest a beat steady enough to carry on unquestioningly. Thus the grammatical and syntactical parallel exhibited by the following two lines,

Bonnets, silk hats, and conscious graces

Evening, lights, and tea!

despite their obvious accentual and syllabic dissimilarity, is given an approximate rhythmical isochrony by the reader on account of their rhetorical balance within the limited framework of the poem and the suggestion of symmetry offered by the end rhymes. This is, I believe, the extreme point to which Eliot's development of a metrical style based upon the 'ghost of some simple metre' tended. The refinement of this technique appears in the final published version of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.'

One section of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' which was among the earliest composed is that now numbered as lines 111-119. According to Eliot, this passage shows 'the influence of Jules Laforgue,' and its composition has been tentatively dated as February, 1910-- or approximately one month after the publication of 'Spleen,' and less than four months after Eliot was introduced to Laforgue's work.<sup>55</sup> Now it may be a bit pat to suggest that there is any clear progression in the way in which Eliot incorporated Laforgue's manner into his own. Nevertheless, certain characteristics of Eliot's versification at this time, by the very consistency with which they appear, do suggest that Eliot had a particular range of aural effects in mind which deeply influenced the way his verses are composed. Once again we find words isolated at the beginnings of lines:

No!

...  
 Deferential,  
 Politic,  
 ...  
 At times,  
 Almost,

--Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'<sup>156</sup>

Similarly, every line has a punctuated mid-line syntactical break, while like 'Humouresque,' three have mid-line clausal interjections: 'no doubt,' 'indeed,' 'at times.'

However, there are some further departures from his earlier poems which suggest an increasing stylistic confidence on Eliot's part. For example, while the syllable-count for individual lines varies over the entire passage from six to twelve, these extremes represent only the first and last lines of the group. The seven lines separating these two extremes all can be scanned as iambic pentameter which, given the theme of the passage, seems to be a gesture towards the iconic significance accompanying that form. It is also possible that, depending upon Eliot's pronunciation of 'Deferential'-- archaically *def-er-ent-i-al*-- these seven lines may be decasyllabic. If so, this would explain the unusual absence of the first person pronoun in the second line in the group, contracted to 'Am' rather than 'I am' in order to maintain the syllable count:

Am an attendant lord, one that will do

Lastly, like Eliot's earlier poems, this section shows a highly controlled rhyme scheme, with the nine lines rhymed as follows: *abbcdddc*. This rhyme scheme is important for its two significant departures from Eliot's earlier poems. Firstly, the wide separation between the two *c* rhymes is the largest of its kind in Eliot's work so far, and one which he would later develop more fully. And secondly, this section is the first to contain that singularly Eliotic feature of the occasional unrhymed line. Now as this section is overtly reminiscent of the Jacobean pentameters which Eliot admired, it is likely that the foreshortened final line also recalls the similar manner of closure common to Jacobean soliloquies. But as the only line lacking such an obvious precedent is also the only

unrhymed line, as well as being a kind of lead-in to the passage, it may be that Eliot added this line to the group when he fitted the various poem-fragments together more than a year later. This is, of course, speculation, but given the rapid transitions that overtook Eliot's style at this time as he worked to incorporate features learned from Laforgue, and that this is the first appearance of such an anomaly in an otherwise consistent manner, I believe there is some justification for this suggestion.

Support is also given to this view if we compare the other unrhymed lines in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' At first glance, the poem appears to be made up of twenty individual sections marked off by spaces, ranging in size from twelve lines to the single line,

I do not think that they will sing to me.

However, closer inspection shows that many of these apparently separate sections are in fact linked by rhyme. The result is that the poem consists of only fourteen groups of lines not joined by a contiguous pattern of rhymes.<sup>57</sup> Of these fourteen groups, three are rhymed couplets, and one a rhymed triplet. Of the other ten groups, all but two contain at least one unrhymed line, with a total of fourteen unrhymed lines in the entire poem. One must, of course be wary of the many superficial symmetries which suggest themselves when the poem is considered in this way. For example, it might be observed that of the poem's twenty printed sections, six consist of twelve lines each, which may suggest that this was somehow a basic measure of the poem at one stage of its composition. Indeed, it is possible to read the poem as consisting of the following numerically-related groups of lines:

12-2-8-12-2-12-13-13-12-12-12-9-2-12, possibly resolving the discrepancy of the odd '9' group by the "later" addition of the 'Hamlet' line cited above. Still, as intriguing as this near-symmetry is, it is not, for reasons like the odd '9' group, ultimately definitive of the poem's structure.

Nevertheless, with regard to these unrhymed lines, certain things do emerge as evidence of Eliot's structural ordering of the poem, either at the stage of composition or in later revision. If we begin by looking at those sections of the poem actually printed as groups of twelve lines, we can see how some features of the poem reveal a kind of metrical uniformity. Thus the only unrhymed line in the group between lines 87 and 98 is:

To roll it towards some overwhelming question,

This, of course, repeats a portion of one of the two unrhymed lines in the group numbered 1 to 12:

To lead you to an overwhelming question ...

Now as the group numbered 1-12 is the only one of these twelve line sections to contain more than one unrhymed line, and as the parallel syntax is so close, it may be that in this case it represents a revision by Eliot designed to draw his poem-fragments together with stronger verbal echoes than they originally contained. Furthermore, if the last twelve lines of the poem do form such a single group, then the pattern of one-unrhymed-line-per-twelve-line-group is consistent.

The other unrhymed lines of the poem are concentrated in two sections, one of which, lines 70-74, contains four such lines.

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?...  
I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

. . . . .

Clearly one of the most important things differentiating this section (or sections) of the poem is its isolation from the rest of the text by the pair of dotted lines. The only other section of the poem to show such a marking is the 'Hamlet' passage cited above. We know of course from Pound's comment on this later section that it was composed separately from

the rest of the poem, and later incorporated into it, and it may be that this section was likewise originally entirely separate as well.<sup>58</sup> If this is so, it may be that such rhymes as possibly matched the existing terminal words in each line disappeared with Eliot's subsequent revision. This would at least explain the otherwise unique occurrence of such a large number of unrhymed lines in such a small compass.

The second passage containing unrhymed lines, is the group consisting of lines 15 to 22.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
 The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
 Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
 Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
 Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
 And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
 Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

This group forms the longest passage of metrically long lines in the poem unbroken by either line-spacing, or considerably shorter lines. The two sections which most resemble this one, perhaps coincidentally, are the two I have already shown to be the least like the rest of the poem; that is to say, lines 70-74 and lines 120-131. Even so, this particular passage stands out from the rest of the poems for several reasons. First of all, it shares the distinction with the 'Michaelangelo' couplets of being the only section of the poem lacking the personal pronoun 'I,' and in part because of this, its relation to that 'I' is, at best, uncertain. Secondly, this passage, which consists of only one sentence, is broken up by the longest consecutive string of end-line commas in the poem. This two facts are important rhythmically because although each line is insisted upon as an individual syntactical unit, the grammatical unity of the entire passage depends upon maintaining a semantic relationship between these constituent parts-- a process which depends crucially upon the emphasis each part receives in voicing. The management of this process is one of Eliot's most deft pieces of metrical writing.

For example, notice that the first five lines of the passage, (which together form the semantic antecedent answered by the last three lines) each end with the now-familiar Eliotic prepositional phrase. Like those elsewhere in Eliot's work, these phrases form brief, self-contained rhythmical units with fairly definite beginnings and endings, aptly suited to the purpose of marking-off adjacent verse segments:

...upon the window-panes,  
 ...on the window-panes,  
 ...of the evening,  
 ...in drains,  
 ...from chimneys,

But besides this phrasal patterning and the use of syntactical signals like the commas, it is interesting to note that every word coming at line-endings in this passage contains at least one long vowel, which further slows the voicing:

window-panes

window-panes

evening

drains

chimneys

leap

night

asleep

As if this were not enough unconscious data for the reader to absorb, notice as well that in the last six lines, after these drawn-out endings, Eliot begins each new line with a verb to start the "motion" of the next line:

Licked ...  
 Lingered ...  
 Let fall ...  
 Slipped ...  
 And seeing ...  
 Curled ...



In my own reading of these lines, I experience a very slight, indeterminate hesitancy between these verbs and the words which follow them. This feeling is most evident in the last five lines of the group, where each verb is followed by several metrically ambiguous syllables:

Lingered *upon the* pools ...  
 Let fall *upon its* back ...  
 Slipped *by the* terrace ...  
 And seeing *that it was a* soft October night,  
 Curled *once about the* house, ...  
 (or, Curled once *about the* house, ...

Although the third line is very similar:

Licked its tongue *into the* corners ...

Altogether, I believe the experience of a unified rhythmical identity in this passage comes from the repeated instancing of syllables made particularly prominent, in part by their semantic importance to the text, but especially so by their separation by numerous "lighter" syllables.

Yet while this might suggest a metrical paradigm rather like that of strong stress metre, there are other features in the passage which indicate that this is only (possibly) part of Eliot's "measure." For example, the first two lines can be read as fourteeners, the utility of which, with their end-of-line implied offbeats, is to initiate a kind of basic rhythmical expectation:

The yellow f<sup>ó</sup>g that r<sup>ú</sup>bs its b<sup>á</sup>ck up<sup>ó</sup>n the w<sup>í</sup>ndow-p<sup>á</sup>nes,  
 The yellow sm<sup>ó</sup>ke that r<sup>ú</sup>bs its m<sup>ú</sup>zzle ó<sup>ó</sup>n the w<sup>í</sup>ndow-p<sup>á</sup>nes,

Possibly because a sustained repetition of the fourteener can become both intoxicating and monotonous, Eliot immediately changes line-lengths. (For instance, notice the tendency to place a stress upon the final preposition for the sake of rhythmical regularity.) Thus with the exception of the line ending with 'chimneys,' the rest of the passage alternates lines of twelve syllables with lines of ten. Now, at last, it is worth noticing that the longer lines of

this passage are the unrhymed ones. Thus once again a kind of metrical consistency appears, where none at first seemed likely.

It would be wrong, or at the very least foolhardy, of course, to suggest that commas, long-syllables and verbs were somehow present as patterning devices in Eliot's mind when he wrote this section, or indeed any section, of what became 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.' Still, the design of a poem must be seen as consisting of consciously managed constituents like rhyme and syllable-count, fused with unconscious estimates of the aptness of particular sound organizations involving grammar, punctuation, diction and pronunciation. Therefore it is impossible to draw firm distinctions between what are and what are not exclusively *metrical* factors. Obviously, counting syllables looks like a specifically metrical exercise, but as I have shown in Chapters One and Two, even "metrically" identical lines like decasyllables can be, and were perceived as possessing more than one "metrical" identity. The precise locus for the metricality of a given text really depends upon the individual poet's relation to specific concepts of versification within, but not necessarily bound by, that poet's historical era. Thus by assessing elements of the rhythmicity of Eliot's early verse-- itself a somewhat arbitrary procedure-- it is possible to deduce certain parameters for what were likely to be his individually-derived concepts of metre as manifested in certain specific cases. If we then compare these parameters to the discussions which form the historical context for those concepts, particularly alongside Eliot's own remarks upon the subject, it is possible to focus more sharply upon what Eliot himself may have regarded as the role of metre in the writing of his poetry.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

From the evidence of the preceding discussions it is obvious that, besides being the proving ground for many of the themes and images that would characterize his later work,

Eliot's earliest published poems were also explorations into the relationship between metrical segmentation and poetic language. This view is strengthened, of course, by the fact that none of the various metrical "systems" current at the time of the poems' composition is alone sufficient to scan all of these poems felicitously. I must stress the importance of this last word because, as I quoted from George Saintsbury in I.I.ii, 'perfect poetry according to its own scheme is always transposable into other schemes,'-- although unlike Saintsbury, I am unwilling to form a qualitative rating of a poem's metrical "perfection" based upon the ease of that "transposition."<sup>59</sup> Instead, I believe it is important to see these few works by Eliot as an attempt to formulate a working procedure through repeated efforts to incorporate certain stylistic innovations with other stylistic constants. Thus we find Eliot allying (possibly) isosyllabism, accentualism, dipodism and foot scansion with the iconically rich forms of quatrain and sonnet *only*. But while it is too much to suggest that Eliot sat down to write with such a program in mind, he was, as his many literary allusions prove, clearly aware of the extent to which certain conventions of versification proffer information to the reader. Therefore even if Eliot knew nothing of the prosodic discussion current with his own poetic practice, deriving his methods solely from prior examples of verse, the sheer discrepancy of styles he effected in his writing reveals an involvement with metricality like that of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries.

However, we do know that Eliot took some interest in prosodic matters, while a certain amount of exposure to such discussions was unavoidable in the literary circles of his time. Certainly Eliot's numerous articles on topics like the relationship between prose and verse, the nature of *vers libre*, as well as his comments on the metrical merits (and demerits) of Tennyson and Swinburne, Seneca and Dante, show to what extent as a critic, he was aware of how important these issues were to his contemporaries.<sup>60</sup> Likewise by the 1920's at least, it is certain that Eliot was familiar with texts specifically concerned with

prosodic issues; for example, early theorists like Campion and the Elizabethans, as well as twentieth-century texts like those by Bridges, Jespersen and, very probably, Saintsbury.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, if Eliot was practicing different metrical styles in these early poems, methodologies for doing so were easily available in popular American textbooks on the subject from the era of Eliot's education. For example the accentualism which seems to lend a structure to 'Circe's Palace' might derive from Francis Gummere's work, while the peculiar foot-scansion of 'On a Portrait' resembles the proposals of James Parson.<sup>62</sup>

Still, it is also possible that each of these poems is independently derived from some model verse Eliot admired, or that each is structurally independent from any conscious model, or again, that each is a kind of hybrid developed by an emerging poet coming to grips with the problems of accommodating a poetic vision to a rhythmic necessity operative within the context of powerful metrical conventions. In any case, what remains consistent throughout these poems as well as those collected in *Prufrock and Other Observations*, is Eliot's determination to fuse the observably regular with the subtly irregular. Quatrains, sonnets, "iambic pentameters," complex rhyme schemes, repeated words and rhetorical devices are all combined with surprising innovations like foreshortened lines, echoed phrasal patterns, uncertain accentuation, limited fields of diction as well as relative prominence given to specific features of that diction, grammatical and syntactical ambiguities, dropped rhymes and ironic inversions, forming what we may now call a unique Eliotic subtext to the poems. We know that Eliot shared the dissatisfaction of his contemporaries with what they had come to regard as the unquestioning acceptance of limiting metrical format. However, unlike those who attempted to abandon that process of formatting altogether (like Aldington), Eliot realized the potential that lay in utilizing the surface details of what could be usefully regarded as traditional forms. By doing so, Eliot offers the view that such forms are themselves inadequate to the (then) current needs of practicing poets, while at the same

time exploiting the significance that such forms possessed for his readers. Eliot received an incalculable amount of help from those prosodists discussed in Chapters One and Two whose task it had been to explain precisely what that significance was, and how it had come to be both formed and maintained in English writing. Whether or not the theories of these prosodists shaped Eliot's own style directly by providing either stylistic guidance or by suggesting historical echoes, their work certainly contributed to the formation of those poems both Eliot and his contemporaries admired, as well as contributed to the milieu in which Eliot's own poems were produced. Eliot's involvement with the specific issues they raised is therefore clearly evident in his critical writings as well as in the ways he was able to exploit the discrepancies which existed between them as a positive factor in his own poetry.

## Notes to Chapter Four

1. Derek Attridge, 'Poetry Unbound? Observations in Free Verse,' *Proceedings of the British Academy* 73 (1987): 353-373, p. 356.
2. David Crystal, *The English Tone of Voice* (London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1975), p. 94.
3. The term is used by Annie Finch, *The Ghost of Meter* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 1.
4. T.S. Eliot, 'The Borderline of Prose,' *The New Statesman* 9 (1917): 157-159.
5. Eliot, op.cit., p. 157.
6. Ibid., p. 158.
7. The passage from *Measure for Measure* occurs in III.i.117-122:  
Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside  
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;  
(Cited from William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. J.W. Lever (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1964; repr. 1984, pp. 73-74.) For a discussion of Eliot's possible echoing of this passage in *Four Quartets*, see Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1956; repr. 1960), pp. 290, 309.
8. Eliot, op.cit., p. 158.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 159.
12. T.S. Eliot, 'Prose and Verse,' *The Chapbook* 22 (1921): 3-10.
13. T.S. Eliot, 'Prose and Verse,' p. 5.
14. Thomas R. Rees, *The Technique of T.S. Eliot* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 380.
15. For example, under the heading, 'Public & Outdoor Images,' Rees includes the following items: 'drink our bocks,' 'comics,' and 'bank defaulter.' Rees, op.cit., p. 380.
16. Martin Scofield, *T.S. Eliot: The Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 11.
17. For example, see Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1960), pp. 17-18.
18. T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1974), p. 35. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.
19. S. Musgrove, *T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman* (Wellington: University of New Zealand Press, 1952), p. 26.
20. Kenner, op.cit., p. 19.
21. This definition is based on that offered by J.A. Cuddon in, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 40.
22. Keith Wright, 'Rhetorical Repetition in T.S. Eliot's Early Verse,' *A Review of English Literature* 6 (April 1965), pp. 93-100; pp. 95-96.
23. This, and the phrase 'visionary darkness,' are taken from Christopher Ricks, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1988), pp. 265-266.
24. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, p. 28.
25. Ibid., p. 31.
26. Ibid., p. 33
27. Ibid., p. 36.

28. Sister M. Martin Barry, O.P., *An Analysis of the Prosodic Structure of Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1969), p. 17.
29. Jiri Levy, 'Rhythmical Ambivalence in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot,' *Anglia* 77 (1959): 54-64.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
31. T.S. Eliot, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' in Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, p. 13.
32. David Ned Tobin, *The Presence of the Past: T.S. Eliot's Victorian Inheritance* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), p. 134.
33. Cf. Note 31.
34. The first citation is from Musgrove, *op.cit.*, p. 10; the second and third from Ricks, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.
35. From 'In Memoriam,' LXXXVII, in Alfred Tennyson, *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (New York, NY: Macmillan and Company, 1892), p. 271.
36. Musgrove, *op.cit.*, p. 10.
37. Arthur Waley, trans., *One Hundred & Seventy Chinese Poems* (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1918; repr. 1939), p. 7.
38. Cf. Note 31.
39. Cf. B.C. Southam, *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 41; and Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, ed. D.D. Paige (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), p. 50.
40. T.S. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1967), p. 24; Tennyson, *op.cit.*, p. 285. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.
41. T.S. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, *loc.cit.*.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
44. For Eliot's own description of this metre, as well as a critical discussion of the topic, see J.M. Reibetanz, 'Accentual Forms in Eliot's Poetry from *The Hollow Men* to *Four Quartets*,' *English Studies* 65 (1984): 334-349.
45. T.S. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, p. 27.
46. See Chapter Three, note 224.
47. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, p.28.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
49. Cf. Chapter Three for a discussion of Eliot's engagement with French poetry subsequent to his reading of Arthur Symons', *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*.
50. For the dating of this manuscript, see John T. Mayer, *T.S. Eliot's Silent Voices* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 39, and Chapter 3 *passim*. The text used here is taken from Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, pp. 30-31.
51. Unlike Eliot's previously published poems the identity of a narrator is reinforced by a subtitle; in later poems this suggestion of a narrator, as distinct from the poem's *author*, is sometimes made through a combination of titles like, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and the use of a first person pronoun.
52. T.S. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, pp. 30-31.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
54. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, p. 14.
55. So dated by Southam, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
56. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, p. 17.

57. As it appears in the format of the *Collected Poems 1909-1962* edition. But for a discussion of possible modifications to that format, see Southam, *op.cit.*, pp. 39-43.

58. See above, note 39.

59. Cf. Chapter One, note 14.

60. For examples of Eliot's views on Seneca's prosody, as well as that of the Tudors and Jacobean, see T.S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), pp. 20, 34-35, 38-39. For his similar views on Tennyson and Swinburne, see T.S. Eliot *Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953), pp. 176-179, 182-183.

61. For a concise summary of Eliot's views on Tudor experimenters, Jespersen, Bridges, Tennyson and scansion in general, see T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1957), pp. 26-29. For Eliot's remarks about Bridges' views on Milton, see Eliot, *Selected Prose*, pp. 145-149; for Saintsbury, see T.S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1965), p. 12, and T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1933), pp. 37 and 61. Eliot's most complete statement regarding Tudor prosody is his 1932 essay, 'Apology for the Countess of Pembroke,' which is contained in this volume.

62. For a comparison with Gummere, see II.II.i and II.II.ii; for Parson, see II.II.iii.



## Chapter Five

### POUND'S METRE: TOWARDS A MODALITY OF READING

#### V.Introduction.

As I said in III.III.i, when assessing the degree of originality assignable to Pound's innovations it is important to remember the larger critical context in which they were conceived. For example, in the following extract from a review of Pound's 1909 volume, *Personae*, notice how Pound's work is described primarily by the ways in which it differs from most of its contemporary volumes:

He disdains the fetters of regular rhyme; his metrical harmonies are frequently unfamiliar, and at times seem crude and harsh, perhaps because our ears are unused to them; he conjures largely with assonance and alliteration. Again and again his verse strikes you as too artificial, too tricky; the frequent use of old words and eccentricities of phrasing give it an affectation;

--'Unsigned Review,' *Bookman* (1909)<sup>1</sup>

Notice also the emphasis here upon the formal dimension of Pound's verse-- factors of rhyme, metre, assonance, alliteration, diction and phrasing constitute the author's most obvious challenge to poetic conventionality. But although this unnamed reviewer, (probably Edward Thomas<sup>2</sup>), characterizes Pound's poems by their discrepancies from supposed "standards," he goes on to suggest that those "standards" are also subject to an ongoing review:

... in the meantime, *Personae* is a profoundly interesting achievement; no new book of poems for years past has had such a freshness of inspiration, such a strongly individual note, or been more alive with undoubtable promise.

--'Unsigned Review'<sup>3</sup>

Thus at least some of the critical circles in which Pound first circulated his work were receptive, even encouraging, to an expansion of formal styles, while at the same time fully aware of just how far formal expectations conditioned that receptiveness.

The focus of this chapter, therefore, will be upon how far this dual perspective operated within Pound himself, and what its effects were in shaping his actual poetry at this time. To do this, I will begin by outlining those definitions of metrical formation with which Pound is likely to have come into contact with *at university*, and which are evident in his work for some time. This will be followed by a discussion of the influences he met with in his early days in London, and the various processes of assimilation he subsequently undertook. Finally, this will lead to an analysis of what I believe are the three principal metrical modes in Pound's work, their relationship to both the prosodic context of the era as well as other dimensions of Pound's unique poetic, and lastly their implications for the development of Pound's later style.

### V.I.i.

Among the most important poetic genres contributing to Pound's early interest in metrical styles was the Provençal lyric. Pound's mentor for this subject, as discussed in Chapter Three, was William Pierce Shepard, to whom Pound had intended to dedicate his proposed volume of translations, 'Arnaut Daniel.'<sup>4</sup> Pound's work with Shepard was carried out on a largely informal basis, or as Pound expressed it, Shepard's 'kindness' and regard for Pound's enthusiasm drew the two men together.<sup>5</sup> On the strength of this temperamental kinship, as well as recalling the degree of sharply focused scholarship in Shepard's research as described in III.II.vi, it would be surprising if the two men did not discuss the finer points of versification characterising Provençal and early medieval verse. Indeed, as I have shown in Chapter Three, Shepard's views on paratactic structures in Provençal verse may have influenced Pound's own ideas about grammatical signification in poetry. Similarly, Shepard's interest in the crucial relationship between troubadour words and music also seems to be echoed by Pound's own later remarks and practice.

Certainly, as Arthur Wayne Glowka describes it, the role of rhythm in medieval composition was like that which Pound would later put forward as belonging to his own compositional theories:

Ancient and medieval theory tends to regard rhythm, whether it is part of music, quantitative or accentual poetry, or rhythmic prose, as an affective device in composition. Therefore the value of rhythm as a rhetorical tool is high: the writer molds words into rhythms, and in theory at least, the rhythms move the emotions of the audience to the purpose of the writer.

--Glowka, 'The Function of Metre According to Ancient and Medieval Theory,' *Allegorica* (1987)<sup>6</sup>

For comparison, we may remember Pound's many similar pronouncements from the period surrounding his early work cited in III.III.iii. But such a view remained important to Pound even as so late a work as Canto 104, where we find him describing how,

Bassinio left greek tags in his margins  
moulding the cadence

--Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1970)<sup>7</sup>

What is perhaps most important in this comparison, however, is the way in which the separate phenomena of rhythm and words are brought into coalescence, with primacy ascribed to rhythm. Describing the practice of specifically antiphonal texts, O.B. Hardsion, Jr. explains,

Since melody precedes text, text must follow melody. The melodies are not, however, simple compositions. In the first place, they are subdivided into phrases or measures (*clausulae*). The text of a sequence is constructed so that it falls into grammatical units reflecting the phrasing of the melody. Verses subdivided into two units are standard, but verses having three or more units are common. A melody of two units produces a text of two phrases, usually expressed visually as a text of two lines. ... Typically the text is constructed so that the pauses coincide with standard syntactic units-- comma, colon, and period. ... The result is a dynamic blend of uniformity and change. Since the musical phrasing shapes the text, its dynamic is mirrored by the verbal *clausulae*, which are further

ornamented by rhetorical devices associated with construction.

--Hardison, *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (1989)<sup>8</sup>

While this is far from being the whole story, it does form not only an apt description of both the visual and grammatical structure of much of Pound's work, but also goes some way towards explaining his otherwise vague remark cited in III.III.iv that poetry should be composed to the 'sequence of the musical phrase' and not to the 'metronome.'

Pound's chief sourcebook for much of this kind of information was Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, in which Dante gives specific advice about the composition of that most difficult of forms, the *canzone*. John Heath-Stubbs summarizes some of Dante's chief points this way:

Dante considers the lines of eleven syllables and seven syllables to have the greatest dignity. These correspond approximately to the five-stress and three-stress lines of English verse; and it is precisely these lines which form the basic units in English poems of this type which came to be considered as the greater ode and which derives fundamentally from the *canzone* form.

--Heath-Stubbs, *The Ode* (1969)<sup>9</sup>

As I have shown through the examples cited in Chapters One and Two, such styles were widespread in the generation immediately prior to Pound's own, and thus, had he desired one, a range of possible models already existed in English.

In any case, as Pound's critics have later remarked,

...Pound's great contribution to modern prosody was his focus on the line, rather than the larger stanzaic block, "as the unit of composition."

--Marjorie Perloff, 'The Contemporary of Our Grandchildren' in, *Ezra Pound Among the Poets*, ed. George Bornstein (1985)<sup>10</sup>

As the foregoing discussion shows, this focus on Pound's part was very probably stimulated by his early involvement with medieval poetry, and in particular, through his study of Provençal lyric forms. This grounding in medieval versification also made a significant contribution to the basis of his *vers libre* aesthetic when he first arrived in London. What I

wish to explore are the ways in which Pound's exposure to *avant-garde* London trends was gradually assimilated by him, and in part encouraged a renewed interest in another early mode of versification.

### V.I.ii.

Pound's ambivalent remarks about the importance that T.E. Hulme's ideas had for him in his early years in London have led his later critics into disagreement over how far Hulme's theories influenced Pound's work. What is indisputable is that Hulme was at the forefront of a group of young *avant-garde* writers to which Pound became attached not long after his arrival in London. The ideas expressed by Hulme's writing, whether formulated by Hulme alone, or through a cross-fertilization with other members of the group, clearly represent a manner of expression --particularly poetic expression-- the terms of which re-appear in Pound's own critical writings from this period. This is not to say that Pound merely borrowed Hulme's (or the Hulme/Flint group's) notions and reproduced them without modification. Instead, Pound absorbed those elements expressed by Hulme which could best be assimilated into Pound's own developing theoretical discussions. What this section seeks to analyse through Hulme's writings, is the degree to which elements then under discussion within this particular *avant-garde* group can be seen as characterizing the second important dimension of Pound's struggle to 'make it new.' Or, in other words, to make explicit some important contributions to Pound's development of *phanopeia*, beside the rudiments of *melopoeia* described in the last section.

In his remarks, 'Notes on Language and Style,' (c.1907) Hulme addresses directly the problem of how a poem proceeds from an unspecific desire-for-a-poem, to an actual, transcribed text:

The form of a poem is shaped by the intention.  
Vague phrases containing ideas which at past moments have strongly moved us; as the purpose

of the poem is narrative or emotional the phrases become altered. The choice of a form is as important as the individual pieces and scraps of emotion of which the poem is made up. In the actual making accidental phrases are hit upon. Just as musician [sic] in striking notes on piano [sic] comes across what he wants, the painter on the canvas, so the poet not only gets the phrases he wants, but even more the words get a *new image*.

--Hulme, 'Notes on Language and Style'<sup>11</sup>

In this basic formulation, Hulme begins with the assumption that a poem proceeds from an indiscriminate conglomeration of 'ideas,' which are perceivable in 'vague phrases,' each being the representation of 'pieces and scraps of emotion.' At some early stage in the poem's composition, a 'form' is chosen 'by the intention,' the choice of which gives rise to further 'accidental phrases,' which, perhaps fortuitously, may spawn a 'new image.' Expanded in this way, Hulme's compositional process differs somewhat from that offered by Arthur Symons (cf. III.II.v) insofar as Hulme's initial creative impulse is altogether more fragmentary. As we have seen, for Symons a poem begins life as a 'toneless rhythm,' without so much as syllables, let alone words. For Hulme, the whole process begins with the emergence of 'individual pieces and scraps,' for which a larger form is *chosen*. This element of volition, of course, leaves open the possibility of a poet's selecting forms with iconic significance, or in his relying upon the veracity of those idea-laden phrases to generate a larger form sufficient to convince the poem's reader of its formal integrity/necessity. It is this possibility (cf. Eliot's 'inner necessity' in Chapter Four) to which Pound alludes in his statement in *How to Read* (1931):

I think one should write vers libre only when one 'must', that is to say only when the 'thing' builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the 'thing', more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents one with set iambic or set anapaestic.

--Pound, *How to Read*<sup>12</sup>

Along with Hulme, Pound's preoccupation at this time was the development of an authentic language, capable of communicating the unformatted materials of intellect and emotion, and realizable as either an 'absolute rhythm' (cf. III.III.iv) or a 'new image,' or, preferably, as a combination of both. The essential constituent in this quest was the need to make the apprehension of such a language as immediate as the initial experience itself. For Hulme, the vitality of an 'image' depended upon an originality achievable through an unexpectedly dynamic treatment of language-- dynamic insofar as the associative power of words is maximised through a comparatively free process of text-formation. This 'freedom' is only comparatively so because of the restraints of grammar, syntax, orthography and, in some cases, the symmetries of proscribed metrical form. But while all of these restraints were later challenged in Pound's *Cantos*, the priority at this stage of Pound's development was in working out how the possibility of immediate communication through 'images' could be effectively combined with a similar process of rhythm, and the extent to which a methodology could be devised to make such a process repeatable.

For the two processes of communication to work in conjunction it was necessary to be certain about how each one affected the potential observer of the artistic text/performance. For Hulme, the primacy of poetry as an art form consists in its ability to offer language in both a literal and "transcendental" state simultaneously. Part of this ability stems from poetry's formal condensation of language into a structure that may be mimetic at the levels of both sound and semantics.

[Unlike prose, poetry] ... is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily.

Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language.

--Hulme, 'Searchers After Reality-- II: Haldane, ' reprinted in *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, ed. Karen Csengeri (1994)<sup>13</sup>

There may be an unintentional wordplay in the second sentence here: Does Hulme mean that the entire complex of 'sensation' is to be "handed over" *intact*, or that it is to be "handed over" *through physical response*? In any case, it is clear that what he is striving for is the communication of 'bodily sensation.' For Hulme this 'sensation' is evoked by a language operating as a substitute for 'intuition.' As a gloss for what Hulme meant by 'intuition,' we may compare his own translation from Bergson:

By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.

--Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*  
(1913)<sup>14</sup>

Thus the aim of poetic discourse, as Hulme conceived it was to draw us into the experience of the poet's 'bodily sensations' through an 'intellectual sympathy,' the process of which exceeds the limits of our own conscious volition, although the result of such an interaction on our part is a similar 'bodily sensation.' Given the physicality of this aspect of Hulme's thought, it is hardly surprising that his terminology relies upon what is physically perceivable. Reading somewhat further on in Hulme's translation from Bergson, notice how the process Bergson describes, and the spatial element of his description, form an apt account of the linguistic juxtapositions later practiced by Pound, the Imagists, and Hulme himself:

Now the image has at least this advantage, that it keeps us in the concrete. No image can replace the intuition of duration, but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized. By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals.

--Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*<sup>15</sup>



It should be clear from this last suggestion that the related roles of poetic format and rhythm-- both physical experiences-- in such a transaction are crucial to the entire process. Hulme addresses this point explicitly in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' (undated, probably November 1908<sup>16</sup>).

Starting from this standpoint of extreme modernism, what are the principal features of verse at the present time? It is this: that it is read and not chanted. We may set aside all theories that we read verse internally as mere verbal quibbles. ... I am not speaking of the whole of poetry, but of this distinct new art which is gradually separating itself from the older one and becoming independent.

I quite admit that poetry intended to be recited must be written in regular metre, but I contend that this method of recording impressions by visual images in distinct lines does not require the old metric system.

--Hulme, 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry'<sup>17</sup>

There are a great many assumptions in these two paragraphs which demonstrate how far Hulme's theory reflects a personal bias peculiar to his analyses. Firstly, there is his belief that his art and that of certain of his contemporaries was capable of 'separating itself from the older one and becoming independent,' because theirs was an art to be 'read and not chanted.' Or in other words, an art where the important factor of voicing (real or imagined) was not the supposed 'counter language' ascribed to iconic forms. But how far our understanding of "older" verse is shaped by the conditions of our 'reading' it, whether indeed it was written to be 'read' or 'chanted,' Hulme does not say. Still, what he is suggesting is that the visual format of a text recommends a mode of apprehension, which itself reflects a portion of the artist's compositional motive-- that 'poetry intended to be recited' is clearly so because the symmetries of its visual format recommend (to Hulme at least) a rhythm for 'chanting.' By contrast, the 'distinct new art' Hulme describes proceeds by 'recording impressions by visual images,' which are rendered individually through the similarly visual formatting device of 'distinct lines.' Remembering for a moment Hulme's remarks cited

above regarding the "choice" of a form-- that is, an overall relationship for these 'distinct lines'-- we can see at once the difference between his position and Pound's. While Pound could suggest that the 'form' of the poem must depend upon the individual necessity of the "thing"-- be it an iconically suggestive format or *vers libre*-- Hulme can offer each as merely a style of reading (for example, 'chanting'). For Pound every feature of a "poem" is significant, for which features the text operates as a series of coded symbols-- alphabet, punctuation, white spaces-- while for Hulme, language is a substitute medium for shared 'intuition.' Hulme, rather reductively, offers discontinuity of method as the necessary factor for apprehending via this communicative process, while Pound selects from the range of available continuities to maximise his resources.

### V.I.iii.

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; e.g. Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare-- if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>18</sup>

This statement by Pound in 1913 is important for a variety of reasons. As I have shown in II.II.ii, the principle expressed here echoes a similar statement by nineteenth-century American prosodist Sidney Lanier. More important, however, is the difference between Pound's view of the relationship between 'vocabulary' and 'cadence,' and the one described by Eliot in Chapter Three. As I have shown in Chapter Four, far from trying to 'dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence,' Eliot's 'auditory imagination' depends in part for its effectiveness upon the reader's ability-- consciously or unconsciously-- to recall the emotions raised by a prior exposure to similar 'cadences' with their lexis, thereby discovering a further dimension of the poem's meaning. Or, to put it in Hulme's terms, the

intertextuality of an Eliot poem, by the 'new images' it forms, stimulates an 'intuitive' response by the reader, thereby indirectly developing an 'intellectual sympathy' sufficient to communicate a part of the poet's 'sensations.' For Pound, however, the same process demands what he seems to regard as a more direct control by the poet of the poem's 'cadence'; or, as I described it in V.I.i, the selection from a variety of available affective rhythms the one most suited to the 'thing' in hand. Pound's catalogue of possible sources for these rhythms is as various as the separate needs of his polemic. But this particular quotation is interesting because it offers the unusual addition of 'Hebridean Folk Song,' an example for which Pound would later provide some specific guidance.

Marjory Kennedy-Fraser has brought out another album of "Songs from the Hebrides." ... Miss M. Kennedy-Fraser sang "with no voice" but with a magnificent comprehension of the whole rhythm-structure: ... It is just possible that this curious "Figure eight" rhythm cannot be conveyed to the musician by contemporary musical notation.

Early puts the sun greeting on Stroa,  
 Early chant the birds the beauty of Donnan.

--Pound, reprinted in *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer (1978)<sup>19</sup>

Here is an explicit example of Pound's belief that in order to communicate successfully the 'sensations' peculiar to an individual text, it is necessary to possess an 'intellectual sympathy' with that text that embraces the intrinsic identity of its unique rhythm; failure to do so, means that the text's auditor or reader will be unable to intuit the 'sensations' out of which the text is formed. Therefore it is the business of the poet (or performer) to contrive a means whereby that rhythm is clearly manifested by the text. Thus, in attempting to follow Pound's singular notation of these lines, I assume that his accenting of 'Early' is an approximation of Hebridean accentuation; that the line spaces represent pauses; and that the marks above, 'greeting' and 'Stroa' represent an audible lengthening of

vowel or consonant sounds. More curious is his comment that it possesses a "Figure eight" rhythm.' This may reflect the time signature of the words' accompanying music, or it may be Pound's own name for a possible dipodic reading of the lines. In any case, Pound believed that the words, 'have in them the wildness of the sea and of the wind and the shrillness of the sea-birds,' which belongs in part to their rhythm; and, when M. Kennedy-Fraser's understudy failed to reproduce this rhythm properly, the 'elder woman's fire and wildness' --as suggested by her words-- was lost.<sup>20</sup>

Now regardless of the extent to which we consider Pound's self-acknowledged 'intellectual sympathy' with the 'sensations' being conveyed by 'Hebridean Folk Song' as the product of his own will or imagination, it remains true that his belief in the communicative function of language is based in a large part upon the community of language users' common alertness to auditory rhythm. As I have shown in Chapter Three, for Pound, this rhythm was inseparable from the 'pieces and scraps' described by Hulme. But unlike Hulme, Pound was willing to concede that the rhythmic element of those 'pieces and scraps' was recognizable in a way unlike that of their lexical content.

I believe that every emotion, and every  
phase of emotion has some toneless phrase,  
some rhythm-phrase to express it.

--Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916)<sup>21</sup>

But like his peculiar notation of 'Hebridean Folk Song,' for the reader lacking Pound's unique sensitivity for the 'absolute rhythm' of a given text (like the muffled version of Kennedy-Fraser's understudy), a special foregrounding procedure is necessary. Following the above statement, Pound remarks,

(This belief leads to *vers libre* and to  
experiments in quantitative verse.)

--Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*<sup>22</sup>

It might be argued, of course, that if indeed such a 'toneless phrase' does form some part of 'every emotion,' then such precautions are unnecessary. But I believe what Pound is trying to express is that there is always the danger of the written text becoming too much like the

unqualified understudy of Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser. To avoid this artistic pitfall, Pound sought in his criticism to provide analogies to assist those readers, like the one cited in

**V.Introduction**, for whom 'his metrical harmonies are frequently unfamiliar.' What I wish to explore next is how those analogies relate to the nature of Pound's specifically metrical practices.

#### **V.I.iv.**

Like both his contemporaries and his Victorian predecessors, Pound frequently found analogies for poetry with other of the fine arts. Recalling his statements on the musical performance described in V.I.iii., we may compare his remarks in 'VORTICISM':

"It is no more ridiculous that a person should receive or convey an emotion by means of an arrangement of shapes or planes, or colours, than that they should receive or convey such emotion by an arrangement of musical notes."

--Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*<sup>23</sup>

Pound expounds this concept elsewhere in the book, like this:

*Every concept, every emotion presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form. It belongs to the art of this form. If sound, to music; if formed words, to literature; the image, to poetry; form, to design; colour in position, to painting; form or design in three planes, to sculpture; movement, to the dance or to the rhythm of music or verses.*

--Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*<sup>24</sup>

We may compare this 'primary form' with Hulme's 'pieces and scraps' and Pound's own 'toneless phrase,' noting, however, that in this example, Pound has clearly identified the 'primary form' of poetry as 'the image' and 'movement ... to the rhythm of verses.' That is to say, that the 'primary forms' of 'image' and 'rhythm' co-operate to make a poem.

Now it may seem misleading to regard Pound's assignment of the 'primary form' of 'rhythm' specifically to 'verses' (that is, individual lines rather than whole poems) as being of

special significance, but given the context in which these statements are made, it is clear that Pound regarded individual 'verses' as possessing 'primary forms' capable of contributing to a larger 'form' by their juxtaposition. Remembering Hulme's statement concerning the complex of emotions expressible through a combination of 'images' (V.I.i), as well as Pound's own conviction regarding the rhythmic individuality of those emotions, we may compare Pound's citation of Gaudier-Brzeska's description of how his own art was formulated to invite 'intellectual sympathy':

I SHALL DERIVE MY EMOTIONS SOLELY FROM  
THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES, I shall  
present my emotions by the ARRANGEMENT  
OF MY SURFACES, THE PLANES AND LINES BY  
WHICH THEY ARE DEFINED.

--Cited by Pound in, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*<sup>25</sup>

The application of this principle in verse, as Pound suggests and Hulme recommends, was *vers libre*, the methodology of which included the juxtaposition of 'primary forms' (based upon the 'pieces and scraps' of 'sensation'), each possessing a further 'primary form' in the guise of a 'toneless rhythm,' with the resulting configuration (shaped by 'the intention') attempting to enable the poem's reader/auditor to intuit the poet's 'sensations' through their own affiliation with the proffered 'primary forms.'

Such at least was the program that Pound eventually evolved, although it was formulated with something like this completeness by 1915. However, there remains the degree to which unquantifiable elements of personal style and historical predilection continued to influence the formation of Pound's distinctive poetic. For example, as John Porter Houston has observed, the 'movement' of Pound's 'verses,' even in the mature style of the early Cantos derives its characteristic manner in part through what Houston calls Pound's 'handling of the verb.'<sup>26</sup> Does this then represent the work of 'intention,' or is it the coincidence of 'primary form' operating within the limited framework of a single sensibility? In which case, how far can we regard the repetition of such features in Pound's *vers libre* as

examples of metrical regulating? Kenneth Burke has put the case very well in his book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1967):

There is an indeterminate realm between the conscious and the unconscious where one is "aware" in the sense that he recognises a special kind of event to be going on, and yet is not "aware" in the sense that he could offer you an analytic description and classification of this event. The first kind of awareness we might call a consciousness of method, the second a consciousness of methodology. And I presume that we should not attribute the second kind to an artist unless explicit statements by the artist provide us with an authorization. Furthermore, even where such explicit statements are available, we need not describe the awareness as wholly of the methodological sort. Very often in writing, for instance, one is conscious of using a tactic that seems to him like a tactic he had used before (that is, that is he feels that both instances could be classifiable together on the basis of a method in common). Yet he may sense this kinship quite accurately without necessarily finding for it a corresponding analytic or methodological formulation.

--Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*<sup>27</sup>

Given the comparatively enormous number of formulations Pound offered as explanations for various facets of his own verse (and by implication that of other people's as well), I believe it is important to bear this caution in mind. It seems obvious now that Pound's many pronouncements upon the writing of verse, when not strictly polemical, were attempts to clarify for himself as much as for his readers the way he believed great poetry ought to be written. The expression of these formulations may have been necessary for Pound because of the unusual stance he took regarding the significance of literary "traditions." As I have shown in Chapter Three, Pound's theorizing mind was given to the habit of drawing forth a procedural method based upon a very large and eclectic series of examples. In some respects, this habit echoes that of the nineteenth-century prosodists discussed in Chapters One and Two. The methodology that Pound devised from this process, also like those early

prosodists, shows an uneven mixture of "scientific" data and aesthetic response. What unites the two for Pound's subsequent use, is the strength of what may or may not be coincidences in those works to which the content of his own preferences led him. Therefore the formal nature of those poems influential for Pound's own work, and the comparable aesthetics from other artistic fields which he persists in associating with them, achieve a unique significance in determining the role of metrical segmentation in Pound's writing. As Burke explains it, Pound may not know why he admires a particular poem given only the context of that particular poem; but when he is able to consider that poem in relation to others he also admires, and the kind of expression he hoped to achieve himself, he was quick to offer reasons for his admiration, and equally prompt in incorporating its own values into his own work.

This can be seen in practical terms by the way Pound's work relates stylistically to that of his predecessors. For example, in his book *Syntax in English Poetry* (1967), William Baker concludes,

All questions of diction and subject matter aside, it would appear that poets of and after Pound's generation have not broken sharply with the style of their predecessors, but have exaggerated certain stylistic idiosyncrasies already partially developed. The originality of the later poets lies in their attempt to make these idiosyncrasies not variant but standard structures-- structures capable of forming a meaningful pattern as large as a whole poem.

--Baker, *Syntax in English Poetry*<sup>28</sup>

As will be seen later in this chapter, the relationship of many of Pound's poems, in matters of diction and syntax to those of specific works he admired is clear, as are the sometimes extraordinary pains he took to reproduce the effects of rhyme and rhythm in poems he translated. What I wish to consider next is the way in which Pound's determination to communicate through 'primary forms' contributes to his perception of formal characteristics



in verse, as well as how far that perception is made evident through Pound's own foregrounding of formal (that is to say, metrical) factors.

#### V.I.v.

As with my remarks on Eliot in Chapter Four, in attempting to determine those factors of Pound's writing that contribute to their metrical organization, it is important to bear in mind the sometimes problematic relationship between features of artifice and those of aesthetic predilection. Like Eliot, Pound offers the model of emotion as existing in a 'primary form,' a kind of ur-poem, for which the language of poetry represents a compromise. As such, or in spite of such, there appear to be certain verbal collocations each poet found especially fructifying in the composition of individual texts. Again, as with Eliot, the examples in Pound's writing that can be singled out as representative of such collocations probably reflect the unconscious method of a poet aiming for a particular effect, rather than those of a psychologist eliciting responses to a specific program. For this reason, the complex intertextuality of Pound's poems makes the problem of differentiating the "metrical" features of his writing one of special significance. Although like Eliot, Pound's regularities, the signposts of mensurability, rely substantially upon derived characteristics, iconic signification, and foregrounded devices such as syntactical codes, much more than Eliot, Pound maximises the interaction of a confluence of distinctive compositional theories. In order to appreciate this aspect of his work, Pound demands a considerable involvement by the reader with what he himself considered a nexus of sound-patterning through visual representation, and an appeal to the mind's eye through the artifice of represented sounds.

The result of this demand on Pound's part included a substantial amount of theoretical exposition, much of which I have outlined in Chapter Three. But perhaps

Pound's most concise statement concerning this process is given in a 1920 letter to Ford

Madox Ford:

Re/vers libre etc. May I summarize.

Dante: "A poem is a composition of words set to music."

That bloody well differentiates prose and verse.  
Now vers libre simply discards a fallacy that french [sic] or English need be versified by a metronomic regularity in smacked and non-smacked, or "long and short" syllables.

I have pointed out, the obvious, that any art is a mixture of a constant and an inconstant elements [sic].

In verse one can take any damn constant one likes, one can alliterate, or assone, or rhyme, or quant, or smack, only one MUST leave the other elements irregular.

The rhimm, rhamm, rhuff, became INTOLERABLE when people abandoned the utterly libre Ang-Saxon [sic] metric, and tried to fit REGULAR assonance, with French regular-syllabic verse.

--Pound, reprinted in *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*, ed. Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (1982)<sup>29</sup>

There is much in these statements that will be of relevance later in this chapter. What I am concerned with here is Pound's belief that poetry involves a controlled interaction of regularity and irregularity, the process of which interaction contributes significantly to the poem's status as a work of art. Pound's conviction here depends upon the value he attaches to the experience of emotions stimulated by the recurrence of some constant feature within the text itself. Nevertheless, the recurrence of images or verbal collocations in texts prior to Pound's own appear to have offered him confirmation of their emotionally evocative power. They may also have offered the possibility of a thematic context as well-- reappearing in Pound's own writing as factors of 'primary form' (or 'method' in Burke's sense). Similarly, the recurrence in Pound's diverse reading of similar theoretical propositions centered on textual presentation, offered confirmation of the existence of a single related process of

text-formation, or 'methodology.' In some senses, both types of textual recurrence ultimately influence the formation of Pound's own poems. Although the latter case is easier to distinguish as a specifically metrical phenomenon. To illustrate the difference between these two elements of Pound's writing, we may begin with an example of the first.

In an article on Pound's 1911 poem, 'Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula,' Stuart Y. McDougal describes the poem's multi-level engagement with Pater's works.<sup>30</sup> McDougal begins by pointing out the obvious resemblance between the poem's title and the first line of a verse by Hadrian which is quoted as the epigraph to Chapter VIII of *Marius the Epicurean*. But more interesting is McDougal's observation that the first line of Pound's poem, ('What hast thou, O my soul, with paradise?'), 'echoes the first line of Aucassin's most famous speech in *Aucassin and Nicolette*, a story discussed at length in *The Renaissance*.<sup>31</sup>

What this means is that contributing to the 'primary form' of Pound's poem-- his diction or syntax, for example-- is his response to a reading of Pater. While that may seem a bland enough conclusion to draw, the notion is that an essential part of Pound's poem-- one we need to grasp-- is that an attempt to form a kind of tripartite arrangement between Pound, Pater and ourselves, based upon Pater's reading, Pound's reading of Pater, and our reading of Pound. The aim of this triad is to manoeuvre us into a position to grasp intuitively the 'primary form' of Pound's poem. That is not to say that that poem is a figured echoing of any particular passage of Pater's work-- the very diffuseness of the poem's relationship to Pater makes that impossible. Instead, the practical result of Pound's poem is the incorporation of references, each seemingly inconsequential, which together express one dimension of the poem's meaning. To form a somewhat misleading analogy, it is as if Pound's emotions have passed through a Paterian filter, without which their 'primary form' would (perhaps) be rather different. In any case, the consequence for the reader is that Pound's text provides its own unique contextualizing element, without which, or outside of

which, it is incomplete. Pound demands a frame-of-reference within which we must move in order to grasp the fullness of his poem. The determining of this frame-of-reference-- which later will demand a working knowledge of Chinese history, monetary reform and Pound's own biography-- forms the extreme limit of Pound's effort to communicate through evident form. Used iconographically, the suggestion of "Pater" bears with it a host of linguistic associations and mannerisms, as does that of Henry James or Dante. Indeed, such a conclusion is supported by the many otherwise unaccountable references Pound makes to the influence upon his work of writers like Flaubert and Bion. Its most obvious manifestation is in the archaisms that characterize many of Pound's *personae*, and establish differing voices in his translations and adaptations. And it is to this level of understanding that I believe Pound is appealing through his multi-tiered intertextuality; a re-creation of the emotions centered upon reading, and responsible for his own experience of 'primary form' as well as being suggestive of one to his own readers; the formation of a "language-image" or "style" that communicates emotions unexpectedly through unpremeditated levels of reference. As Pound pointed out, such images are not symbols, because the author interacts with his perceptions through the medium of language, which interaction forms the text of the poem.

The formal results of this process have been analysed by a number of Pound's critics. Louis Menand, in his book, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* (1987) also sees Pound's development of what I have called a language-image as deriving from a Paterian model. As Menand explains it,

Pater is not content to define "style" as that which a piece of writing presents, and a reader responds to, as the special flavour of the writer's way of experiencing, because style is not a game for two players; it is a discipline, and Pater wants the virtue he assigns to it-- "truth ... to some personal sense of fact"-- to be measurable:

For just in proportion as the writer's aim,  
consciously or unconsciously, come to be the  
transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact,  
but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist,  
his work *fine art*; and good art ... in  
proportion to the truth of his presentment.

--Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot  
and His Context*<sup>32</sup>

We may compare the last statement of Pater's that Menand quotes, 'good art ... in the proportion to the truth of his presentment,' to Pound's 'technique is the test of a man's validity,' discussed in III.III.ii. The result of this need for an authentic (or "true") presentation by the artist of his 'sense of the world' is, for a poet, twofold. There is, as I have described it in Chapter Three, the need to 'present' the 'primary form' of the poet's 'sense of the world' in terms of a visual image; and secondly, the need to transcribe the 'primary form' of its 'absolute rhythm'-- part of which is a reproduction of affective rhythms (or language-images) that have become inseparable from the poet's own method, (not methodology).

Menand also describes both the theoretical value of this as well as its most obvious consequence for text-formation.

By removing the traditional object of mimesis from the outer world to the inner, Pater must have thought he had found a way to make it representable, since it no longer depended on a correspondence relation to language; and he did not intend to appear hyperbolic when he asserted that "in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage."

--Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot  
and His Context*<sup>33</sup>

The result for Pound's writing, Menand says, is a graphic demonstration of askesis:

The size of an Imagist poem is therefore in a sense the emblem of its value-- such an enormous quantity of superfluity has been cut away-- and its austerity is offered as the guarantee of the authenticity of the emotion.

--Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot  
and His Context*<sup>34</sup>

But if this is true of the overall size and character of the Imagist poem, it is also demonstrably true of its constituent parts. The grammatical contortions, paratactic structures, line-spacing; even the peculiarities of rhyme and the hyper-attention to "effects" in Pound's translations, are a gesture towards such a process of authentic transcription of originality ('primary form'), whether Pound's own, or that of his "source." Likewise the diction and style of his *personae*, while retaining characteristics that are unmistakably Pound's own, are a gesture towards repeating that same triad of participation-- author-source-reader-- described above as a language-image. So potent a force is this idea for Pound, so necessary was the concept of participation in order to communicate effectively, that he turned away from English in order to derive a hybrid model of expression that could be fused with his native language in order to foreground the need for revitalization. Given the almost physiological nature of Pound's concept-- Poetry as a thing seen, heard and felt-- it is not surprising that much of Pound's early experimentation in verse is towards defining the minimum of language required by the exchange, as well as the discovery of an essential form: essential because it is evident in more than one language.

Like those factors cited in Chapter Four, this too focuses attention upon the single poetic line as the device most capable of foregrounding evident (and recurrent) form. Graphic inscription is, after all, a device, and it is in the poet's hands, operating potentially in this context towards an aesthetic response, as Christine Brooke-Rose puts it, by

the deliberate prolongation of what Walter Pater calls "intervals of time" in which aesthetic perception occurs ... in a tranced stillness.

--Brooke-Rose citing Donald Davie in,  
*A ZBC of Ezra Pound*<sup>35</sup>

As Donald Davie remarks elsewhere, Pound ruminated for nearly thirty years on Laurence Binyon's remark that "'Slowness is Beauty.'"<sup>36</sup> But in any case, Pound's theories and poems tend towards the development of a minimalist technique involving the presentation of words

that evoke a rhythm and imagery striking to the reader (demanding impassivity) because of a juxtaposition of features identifiable by type ("style," "language-image"), but which are credible as authentic language because of the feeling of irreducibility their combination produces. Similar motives, and similar processes, (albeit less controversially developed) also characterize Pound's London contemporaries.

#### V.I.vi.

To summarize the conclusions of the foregoing sections: The important formalist goal of Pound's early poems and theories centered on devising a written medium capable of expressing the 'primary forms' of poetry. These 'primary' (uncombined) 'forms' consist of the affective rhythms that language can possess, and its capacity to stimulate communication through images. As I have shown in Chapter Four, Eliot's development of a metrical style depended upon the resonances that earlier poems in English had for him and that he could expect them to possess for his readers, which could then be transformed by his own writing as a part of his own meaning. Pound, however, knowing that the power of such resonances could also mask the poem's ability to communicate what he considered a vital rhythmical identity, often tried to dissociate the rhythms of his poems from those of his literary forebears by deriving rhythms unlike those of his predecessors in English (so that they have no resonances outside of Pound's direct control). Part of Pound's effectiveness comes from his use of an affective language-image-- diction, syntax, grammar-- which, drawn from another context (like Swinburne or Bertran de Born) co-operate with his unique 'absolute rhythm.' Extreme examples of this in Pound's early writing cause us to look at individual poems and feel that this is distinctly like Browning, and that is in the manner of Dowson, despite the fact that often we can point to no precise reason for this feeling, other than that Pound has so far absorbed independent styles ("language-images") that we are able to

recognize them based upon our own intuitive response. This, together with the (predominantly) visual images which constitute the other half of Pound's own experience of 'primary form'-- become the substance of his text. Ultimately, whether Pound intended them to be so or not, the actual formats that his 'absolute rhythms' take, regardless of their inspiration in Bion or Gautier, are not radically dissimilar from others writing in English. Pound's method, as set out in the last few sections, was incorporated into a gradually formulated methodology, parts of which are derived from foreign sources. What I wish to consider now is the relationship of that developing methodology with those practiced by Pound's contemporaries.

Writing in retrospect, Pound himself acknowledged both the likenesses and differences between his own brand of poetry and that of his peers. In a 1927 letter to Glenn Hughes, Pound speaks of those poets originally allied as Imagists, who, whatever their differences, were all 'non-symmetricals.'<sup>37</sup> To an outsider like Carl Sandburg, it seemed that some features of the Imagist manner were an outgrowth of nineteenth-century avant-garde writers like Emily Dickinson and Steven Crane (cf. Chapter Two).<sup>38</sup> More importantly, however, the work of Pound's most influential London associate, W.B. Yeats also shows an attempt to relate specific metrical methodologies to specific compositional methods. Thomas Parkinson, in his book, *W.B. Yeats, The Later Poetry* (1964), describes how the metres Yeats adopted in his poems bore a methodological relevance to the kinds of poem Yeats sought to write:

In his meditative speeches, his dramatic attempts to project a persona, now more, now less directly related to his circumstantial daily character, his sense of the line tended to stay within the limits of syllabic measure; that is, his lines were not pentameter but decasyllabic in intent. In his songs, his attempts to speak out of an impersonal depth of primitive feeling, the line tended to be measured by stresses, so that a three-stress line might have as few as three and as many as seven syllables.



--Parkinson, *W.B. Yeats, The Later Poetry*<sup>39</sup>

While Pound is much freer in his relating of differing concepts of metricality to the other dimensions of his poems, Yeats' faith in the relevance of one measure to one "kind of verse" forms an interesting contrast to Pound's practice.<sup>40</sup>

Another of Pound's early London associates, Edward Storer, shared with Pound an interest in Coleridge's critical writings. We know from Pound's own remarks that he, himself, found support for his ideas from those expressed by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria*,<sup>41</sup> and it is very possible that his categories of *melopoeia*, *phanopeia* and *logopoeia* in part stem from this source. (cf. Chapter Three)<sup>42</sup> Storer's own claim, that Coleridge was a precursor of *vers libre* in English, echoes the claims of some of his contemporary prosodists who cite Coleridge as the fountainhead of the 'New Prosody.'<sup>43</sup> Likewise both Coleridge and Henley have been seen by later critics possibly to have provided practical examples of *vers libre*-like poems for Storer, Hulme and Flint.<sup>44</sup>

Neither was Pound alone among his colleagues in exploring the possibilities of foreign versification techniques as a mode for English poetry. In a 1912 review, Flint described the "new" principles of Duhamel and Vildrac's *Notes sur la Technique Poétique* (1910), a book that Pound himself would later recommend.<sup>45</sup> Here is Flint's version of their technique:

The cadence of a strophe or a poetical paragraph is due to the repetition in each verse of a fixed numerical quantity or *rhythmic constant*, which beats the time of the continuous melody. The traditional alexandrine had a rhythmic constant of six syllables, and a line was composed of two of these. But the modern verse is composed of a constant of any number of syllables, plus an element numerically variable, which gives it an individuality closely adapted to the sense. The rhythmic constant has no fixed place in the verse; it may begin it, support it in the centre, or terminate it. A strophe may be governed by one or two rhythmic constants, and although the constant has been given a numerical value, this may be modified by the quantity of the syllables, the only law here and always being the

instinct of the poet.

--Flint, 'Contemporary French Poetry,'  
*Poetry Review* (1912)<sup>46</sup>

In one very important respect, Flint's 'instinct of the poet' is no different from Saintsbury's concept of 'ear.' Still it may be that Pound was influenced by this notion of a rhythmic constant, when at about the same time, he wrote a description of Rémy De Gourmont's poetry:

I give one strophe entire to illustrate the wave-length of his rhythm. And this is no slight matter if we consider that the development of the Greek verse-art came with the lengthening of the foot or bar.

--Pound, 'The Approach to Paris. II.,' *New Age*,  
(1913)<sup>47</sup>

By 'foot or bar' Pound seems to have in mind the same notion as Flint's (Vildrac and Duhamel's) rhythmic constant, the irregular scope of which is nevertheless clearly demarcated (syntactically?) as Pound obviously believed the four-or-more-syllabled feet of Greek classical verse to be. The analogy with music also resembles Pound's remarks cited in III.III.iv, regarding the lineation and rhythmic structure of Provencal verse.

The other important style of versification to which Pound may have been introduced to by his friends was that of English imitations of Japanese verse. Jeremy Harmer has shown that Flint's exercises in this manner preceded Pound's, and that they share a common format.<sup>48</sup> That format is one of two matched unrhymed lines like that used by B.H. Chamberlain in his book *Japanese Poetry* (1911). Harmer believes that based upon Pound's frequent use of the term *hokku* for the form he adopted, the term recommended by Chamberlain, that this book was instrumental in shaping his ideas about Japanese verse form.<sup>49</sup> The agreement of this format with that suggested by other models of Japanese-style verses, will be taken up later in this chapter.

Finally, a more curious demonstration of Pound's metrical practice at this time are his repeated attempts to master the Sapphic stanza. Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, which

has been shown to have had other influences on Pound's early poems includes a stanza in this form, and as I have shown in Chapter One, it was the bugbear of many Victorian poets.<sup>50</sup> Pound's letters to Dorothy Shakespear from the years 1911-1913 contain much discussion and some examples of his own attempts. One stanza from 1911 strangely resembles the alliterative and isosyllabic manner of Thomas Hardy's experiment described in

**I.III.ii:**

Surely strange art was in the secret, subtle  
Stronger craftsmanship in the woven wonder  
Made in deathless woof of the rain of heaven,  
Silver unfeigned.

--Pound, reprinted in *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914*, eds. Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (1984)<sup>51</sup>

Indeed Pound's interest in the Sapphic as a corrective to sloppy versification was an abiding one, leading him to recommend it to aspiring poet Iris Barry as late as the 1930's.<sup>52</sup> Pound's own interest in the form however seems to have peaked with the publication of his 'Apparuit' in 1913. Pound's comment that the stanza quoted above is 'stupidly done, without variety & with no skilful disturbance of the accents' shows that his interest in the Sapphic was in exploring the relevance of syllabic duration to his own style of composition.<sup>53</sup> Whether or not he achieved this aim to his own satisfaction, later critics, among them Stephen J. Adams, regard Pound's method of determining syllabic duration in 'Apparuit' as distinctly his own.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless the period of 1911-1913 shows the most concentrated effort on Pound's part, not to discover new metrics (as he had done from at least 1908-1911) but rather to synthesize them into a manageable methodology. It is in these years that we see the crystallization of those metrical styles that will form the basis of his subsequent work. Not only did he get together with people like Flint, Storer and Fletcher to compare notes on their reading, and discuss prosody in his conversations with Tagore,<sup>55</sup> but these years were

also the time of his drawing together the ideas of Hulme (and even Richard of St Victor<sup>56</sup>) upon the communicative power of the image and its effects upon the poetic line, all of which contributed profoundly to the tenets of Imagism. In the midst of this surge of creativity the poems Pound produced give evidence of both categorization by metrical format, as well as a quest for central principles of rhythmical structuring that can be united with those of the Image. The poems which best display this process along with the incumbency of the language-image, are 'The Seafarer' (1911), the Cavalcanti translations (1912) and the earliest adaptations of Chinese and Japanese verse (1911-1915).

### V.II.i.

Stylistically, if not chronologically, Pound's 'Seafarer' (1911) comes midway between his two most similar pieces, 'At the Heart O' Me' (1909) and Canto I (1917). A number of interesting parallels relate these three works, which taken together reveal facets of how Pound's application of metrical principles is derived from those characteristics described in the foregoing sections.

'At the Heart O' Me' was first published in Pound's 1909 volume, *Personae*.<sup>57</sup> Its subtitle, 'A.D. 751,' demonstrates a similar use of this device as that described in I.III.ii; offering explicit "terms" of a metrical contract. If there was any remaining doubt about the poem's attempt to recreate an Anglo-Saxon metrical context, Pound has provided a pedagogical footnote to his use of the word, "'Middan-gard'"-- 'Anglo-Saxon, "Earth."' What is curious is that in one of the first instances of a distinctly un-English word appearing in the body of one of Pound's poems (as compared to a title) he has chosen to set that word off by quotation marks, and to supply a definition. It may be that this seemed like a good opportunity to show off his erudition, but the effect upon the voicing of the poem is peculiarly disruptive. Are we being asked to accord this word special emphasis? And if so,

how does this emphasis relate to that afforded the similarly punctuated kennings (and kenning-like words) in the poem, all but two of which occur at line endings:

sea-coasts  
 Grey-Falcon  
 land-caressing  
 in-streams  
 whale-ways  
 chain-mail  
 many-twined  
 Middan-gard

--Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me'<sup>58</sup>

Clearly Pound is feeling his way towards a verse-design here, in which a number of obvious textual devices play a part. This is his first sustained use of a poetic line segmented into an appearance of two half-lines, achieved by printing the second "half-line" beneath the first "half":

Long by still sea-coasts  
     coursed my Grey-Falcon,  
 And the twin delights  
     of shore and sea were mine,  
                     --Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me'<sup>59</sup>

Here, as throughout the poem, the second "half-line" is also distinguishable from the first because it begins without the capital letter assigned to each "first half." But is there a rhythmical marking as well? The last stanza of the poem develops a rhetorical pattern based upon the phrase 'what should avail me' repeated five times as a "half-line" ending, and thereby achieving a rhythmic symmetry. Likewise many of the poem's lines divide over a syntactical pause:

An thou should'st grow weary  
     ere my returning,  
 And "*they*" should call to thee  
     from out the borderland,  
                     --Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me'<sup>60</sup>

But in the following lines a division based on a syntactical break ought logically to come one word before it does in each case:

Sapphire and emerald with  
     fine pearls between.

Through the pale courses of

the land-caressing in-streams  
 Glided my barge and  
 the kindly strange peoples [...]  
 --Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me'<sup>61</sup>

So why has Pound divided the lines in this way?

It may be useful to recall one of Pound's remarks cited in Chapter Three:

Don't make each line stop dead at the end,  
 and then begin every next line with a heave.  
 Let the beginning of the next line catch  
 the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want  
 a definite longish pause.

--Pound, 'A Retrospect'<sup>62</sup>

Pound's motive in dividing his words thus may then represent such a wish to avoid monotony-- a monotony he found particularly threatening in this deliberate evocation of an Anglo-Saxon style. As I have said, one way to avoid this was in actually maximising its appearance through the rhetorical repetition of an identical phrase where such a monotony is most likely to be apparent. A similar way is through a muted alliteration:

Long by sea-coasts  
                   *coursed* my Grey-Falcon,

*Sapphire* and emerald with  
                   *fine* pearls between.

--Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me' [my italics]<sup>63</sup>

Still, strong alliteration and definite line breaks are features of Anglo-Saxon versification that Pound has avoided, despite a familiarity with them based upon his university study of the language. The point is then that the metre of 'At the Heart O' Me' is decidedly Pound's own-- a hybrid, bearing (however clumsily) emblematic features of an original with which his readers are presumed to be familiar. Gestures towards these features include the archaic (phonetic?) spellings ('O'="of") and the "kennings" cited above. Arguably, the clusters of accented and unaccented syllables are an attempt to reproduce, what was defined at the time as a tendency in Anglo-Saxon verse towards dactylic and spondaic effects (for example, like classical-era Latin)-- a fact to which Pound's habit of synthesizing disparate, yet congenial practises often drew him.<sup>64</sup>

And the cities gave me welcome  
 and the fields free passage,  
 With ever one fear  
 at the heart o' me.

--Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me'<sup>65</sup>

Finally the language of 'At the Heart O' Me' shows a singular thematic link with the 'Seafarer,' Canto I and the other occasion in Pound's work when he uses an approximation of early English, the Layamon passages in the later *Cantos*.<sup>66</sup> In each case Pound has used a version of early English to describe some aspect of the theme of journeying. Clearly, for Pound at least, there exists some bond between the format of early English, and the emotions of the wanderer. This bond of thematic material, along with the diction and visual format Pound created, form a part of the "language-image" through which Pound sought to evoke an 'intellectual sympathy' with the emotions of these poems. Here, once again we are being asked to participate in a tripartite unity of poetic text-formation. We are not simply being asked to read a poem, or even one with certain suggestions of a sensibility to be shared (like that of Francis Thompson's Anglo-Saxon imitation cited in I.III.vi). Instead Pound's incomplete approximation of a technique with which he has presumed us to be familiar puts us in the position of having to take account of both the poem, its relationship to its suggested context, and, through their discrepancies, the author's (and our own) relationship to that context. The goal seems to be to test whether or not the powers of that context retain any potency as a means of communicating 'primary form'; whether the 'absolute rhythm' of Pound's 'scraps of emotion'-- including those of his engagement with the chosen format-- succeed in moving us in a similar way.

Taking into account a certain amount of hindsight, my own response to this question is that the scale of obvious deliberation in 'At the Heart O' Me' causes it to be neither fish nor flesh; it is not, like Thompson's poem, merely a work in a specified metric, nor like

Pound's other work in this manner, suggestive of a self-sufficiency (for instance, without a subtitle) that demands recognition as possessing the 'germane, intimate, interpretative' quality he later propounded.<sup>67</sup>

This same response has been echoed by a number of Pound's later critics and also has been applied frequently to the more difficult issue of his metrical style in 'The Seafarer.' Typical of the negative views is that offered by Christine Brooke-Rose in *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (1971).<sup>68</sup> Brooke-Rose's comments on this are based largely on what she sees as Pound's mishandling of the typical Anglo-Saxon metrical form. Her analysis devotes several paragraphs to outlining in brief the salient factors of Anglo-Saxon metre, two conclusions of which analysis point to the form's obvious attractiveness to Pound:

The important point is that the first 'half-line' could be in a different metre from that of the second, and usually was.

The fact that two half-lines could be and should be of different types meant that the total line was extremely varied and supple, within the rigid rules.

--Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound*<sup>69</sup>

The basic disagreement here between Brooke-Rose's view of Anglo-Saxon metric and Pound's, is in her belief in the form's 'rigid rules,' and Pound's view that Anglo-Saxon verse was 'utterly libre.' Still, her statement that each half-line is most often in a 'different *metre*' [my italics]-- rather than, say as constituent parts of one metre generative of the entire line-- may show an unwonted affinity with Pound's perspective. For instance, if each half-line represents a different 'image' and/or emotion-sponsored 'absolute rhythm,' then indeed Pound would be right in claiming that each half is in a different metre, for which the total line need not be in accord with customary Anglo-Saxon practise; or that his 'handing over' of the poem represents an approximation and not a copy. But judging from the specifics of her criticism, this does not appear to be what Brooke-Rose means. Leaving Pound very little room to operate, she says that such a copy 'would be undesirable in Modern English



and in fact impossible.<sup>170</sup> To her taste, Pound's version, 'without actually obeying the complicated Anglo-Saxon rules of scansion ... contrives nevertheless to remain close enough for absurdity.'<sup>171</sup> It seems then that both poet and critic possess a language-image upon which to judge the suitability of the approximation involved by translation, although their aesthetics for that image differ.

Certain particularities of each aesthetic become apparent in Brooke-Rose's description of what she regarded as Pound's principal blunders:

... serious faults such as alliterating on the fourth stress (which in Anglo-Saxon was always left non-alliterating, as a kind of neutral ground towards the next line); or alliterating on the same sound two lines running, or alliterating on one sound in the first half-line and on another, twice, in the second;

--Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound*<sup>172</sup>

While these facts no doubt exist in Pound's 'Seafarer,' it is important to remember the context of Anglo-Saxon verse translations in which it appeared; or, in other words, to consider influences contributing to Pound's language-image that are lacking for his critics. If we apply Brooke-Rose's criticisms to Pound's predecessor William Morris's work (which she sees as only marginally inferior to Pound's), then it is possible to see how Pound approached his Anglo-Saxon original. For comparison's sake, as we know how important a place Morris's poetry had in Pound's early reading (cf. Chapter Three), and also that the theme of journeying is one that Pound consistently associates with early English, I have chosen a brief passage from Morris's *Beowulf* translation, describing the sea-voyage of Beowulf to Denmark. For ease of discussion, I have italicized the alliterating words which violate Brooke-Rose's 'rigid rules'

Wore then a while, on the waves was the floater,  
 The *boat* under the *berg*, and yare then the warriors [\*]  
 Strode up on the stem; the streams were a winding  
 The sea 'gainst the sands. Upbore the swains then  
 Up into the bark's barm the bright fretted weapons,  
 The war-array stately; then out the lads shov'd her,

The folk on the welcome way shov'd out the wood-bound. [+]  
 Then by the wind driven out o'er the wave-holm [+]  
 Far'd the foamy-neck'd floater most like to fowl, ... [#]

(# 'alliterating on the fourth stress')  
 (+ 'alliterating on the same sound two lines running')  
 (\* 'alliterating on one sound in the first half-line  
 and on another, twice, in the second')

--Reprinted in Volume 10 of, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. Mary Morris (1992)<sup>73</sup>

Such persistent 'faults' by Morris and Pound may point to faulty scholarship on the part of both poets, or it may indicate a feeling that the exact metrical terms of an original are not relevant for a translation-- that in fact it is the *feel* of a foreign metre rather than its duplication which is, in Pound's phrase 'necessary to the "thing".'

As Brooke-Rose acknowledged, one important aspect of Pound's involvement with Anglo-Saxon verse was the contribution it made to, what she calls, his 'poetics of juxtaposition.'<sup>74</sup> John Hollander demonstrates a further effect such an involvement had for Pound's later metrical practice when he says that Pound

... saw an essential symmetry between the scholarly space added between half-lines of early Germanic poetry and the word boundary frequently marked by a stronger syntactic juncture at the caesura of the Classical quantitative line.

--Hollander, *Vision and Resonance* (1975)<sup>75</sup>

But what fails to emerge completely from these discussions is the general cohesion of Pound's apparently disparate remarks. This cohesion is demonstrated by the advancement in style Pound's 'Seafarer' shows over his earlier 'At the Heart O' Me.' For one thing, the metrical context for the later poem is established initially by its title, rather than through a defining subtitle. The difficulty with the title 'Seafarer,' of course, is that it presents itself as a translation-- itself almost a statement of genre. A few years later Pound would overcome this difficulty in similar circumstances by titling a poem, 'Homage to Sextus Propertius' (where "Propertius," like "Pater" informs the language-image). But in the case of the

'Seafarer,' Pound had to confront head-on the range of connotations suggested by such a famous poem. Unlike 'At the Heart O' Me' and those other poems in Pound's early books for which he claimed formal derivation from a specific (usually foreign) source, the challenge to anyone presenting a version of the 'Seafarer' was to propose a series of choices regarding the centrality of prosodic rules in relation to textual transcription. While critics then and now could question the completeness of Pound's grasp of the principles of Sapphic metre in his poem 'Apparuit,' no subtitle declares the poem a "Sapphic" poem, nor, unlike some poets, has Pound supplied an even more specific description as "Accentual Sapphics" or any other declaration. Instead, to the initiated, 'Apparuit' resembles a Sapphic-- closely enough to suggest that such resemblance is deliberate-- and thus the resulting critiques and apologetics. But the 'Seafarer' approaches that group of initiated readers at the level of formal characteristics and literal interpretation.

As a comparison of the earlier sections of this chapter show, for Pound, these two levels are one. After all, no translation is absolutely "literal"-- no language other than the original can do more than approximate the range of suggestions possible to that language. It is possible that the special relationship between Anglo-Saxon ("Old *English*") and modern English gives rise to the belief that such an approximation can be at least convincingly close in "meaning." But there is more than one way to demonstrate that closeness. As I have shown in V.I.i, it is more than likely that Pound regarded the long domestication of certain metrical formats as capable of affording them power as affective rhythms. Indeed, much of the nineteenth-century prosodic discussion recounted in Chapters One and Two is concerned with this experience of poetic form. It is also clear that Pound felt that some persistently emergent, trans-language-group rhythms possess a deep-rooted psychological cause that similarly empowers them. Likewise, he considered presentational mode as a reflection of a poem's emotional integrity, without which resulting formal integrity

'intellectual sympathy' is impossible. Therefore, Pound's decision to treat the 'Seafarer' in a verse-form that bore a physical relationship to its Anglo-Saxon original demonstrates a conviction of the necessity for interaction between "form and content" as constituents of communication-- in this case communicating the sensibility of a thousand-year old poem through the physicalities of utterance (rhythm and lexis). Pound's critics have seized upon his compromises of either one fact or the other as evidence of his failure to communicate fully based upon the terms to which they themselves give preference. Like his description of 'Hebridean Folk Song,' Pound felt himself to be in a privileged position with regard to forming the correct balance of compromised features, based upon his self-assured affinity with formal technique. Thus whether or not Pound "understood" fully the 'rigid rules' of Anglo-Saxon versification, he felt himself possessed of sufficient 'intellectual sympathy' to communicate the 'primary forms' of his original. This may be, as John Hollander observed above, because Pound saw in Anglo-Saxon a 'primary form,' or affective rhythm, to which he was temperamentally drawn because through its multi-language affinities it offered validation for what was becoming Pound's 'poetics of juxtaposition.' Such affinities, like temperamental inclinations, do not diminish the aptness of Pound's development of the form in 'The Seafarer.' The essentially binary code of Anglo-Saxon metrics, pairs of stresses building to larger pairs, alliteration forming pairs of words that may have no grammatical or logical relationship outside of their sound "quality," remain present in Pound's version, dominating his attempts to find either "equivalent" expressions in modern English for its predecessor, or to compromise his impression of Anglo-Saxon in favour of the niceties of metrical format. Or, as I have quoted him in above, 'In verse one can take any damn constant one likes, ... only one MUST leave the other elements irregular.'<sup>76</sup>

The first of these facts, that of a perceptible relationship between syntactically distinct groups of words-- possibly, as I have suggested above, representative of the

'primary forms' of 'image' and 'absolute rhythm'-- while to some extent present in Pound's earlier poems, becomes increasingly well-developed in the poems that follow 'The Seafarer.' And I will address this development more fully below. What I wish to examine now is Pound's exploration of sound "quality" as a factor of metrical significance, and the contribution such a view makes to his translations from Cavalcanti.

### V.II.ii.

One of the most popular poetic formats of nineteenth-century English verse was the sonnet. Most poets used it intermittently, some produced their best work in it, while some, for example Charles Tennyson Turner and John Addington Symonds, wrote little else. The iconography of the sonnet format was so widely discussed that it is likely that George Meredith's bitter, unrhymed sixteen line poem sequence *Modern Love* (1862) derived some of its power through the poems' resemblance to the sonnet format and their telling of the sequence's opposite number, the breakdown of a marriage. Similarly, translations of foreign sonnets abounded, with many poets producing whole volumes, while others, like Swinburne, produced only a few poems from select authors. In any case, the degree of "literariness" ascribable to the form could not have been outside of the range of Pound's reading of the poems. By the early twentieth century this "literariness" posed several obstacles to the aspiring poet. As I have shown in Chapter Four, Eliot chose to meet this challenge face to face, by both adopting and controverting the traditional iconographic values of the sonnet to produce a unique response. For Pound, both as an original poet and as a translator, the dilemma was how to uncover the essential virtues of the sonnet format-- the 'primary form' that fostered affective rhythms-- from what he saw as several centuries' worth of accretions overlaying them. That Pound was both aware of these accretions and,

to an extent, willing to maximise their effects is observable in the three sonnets included in *A Lume Spento*.

The first of these sonnets is the appropriately titled 'Masks.'

These tales of old disguisings, are they not  
Strange myths of souls ...

Old singers half-forgetful of their tunes,  
Old painters color-blind come back once more,  
Old poets skill-less in the wind-heart runes,  
Old wizards lacking in their wonder-lore:

Ponder in silence o'er earth's queynt devyse?  
--Pound, 'Masks'<sup>77</sup>

Pound's poem, from which these lines come, is made up of two long questions: are not all poems merely 'strange myths of souls,' the authors of which mutually 'ponder' over the 'queynt devyse' formed by earthly existence? Logically enough then, Pound's persona in asking these questions is aligned with the 'ballad-makers ... of Camelot' both through the perception of that existence's portion of artificiality, its 'queynt devyse,' as well as by participating in its legacy through the format of the poem's transcription.<sup>78</sup> Indeed there may or may not be an intention of precocity in Pound's Chaucerian-sounding (and looking) 'queynt devyse.' The theme of the poem, that the subject of "Poetry" is in recounting the emotions of poets-- who are themselves outsiders to both Society and Time-- observes that as 'brothers' poets stand side by side, but that by participating in the 'queynt devyses' of terrestrial life and art ('tunes,' 'wonder-lore') they stand on one another's heads. Or, in other words, Pound is reaching backwards through a language of 'old disguisings' in recognition of that language's continuity.

It is no coincidence then that both the second and third sonnets in *A Lume Spento*, also relate the theme of poetic immortality with a demonstration of formal intertextuality. As in 'Masks,' Pound's 'Redivivus' describes the 'torpor' affecting a poet's 'soul' as it seeks the 'quickness' of inspiration, through the 'light' of 'thought ... glorious deed ... [or] strain/

Of any song that half remembered were.<sup>179</sup> In this case, however, the poet in question addresses 'Michael Agnolo,' who appears to offer guidance at two levels. First of all, the touchstone of 'Michael Agnolo' (Michaelangelo), author of a large group of sonnets, has provided the poet for a format in which to cast his dilemma. And secondly, 'Michael Agnolo's' own praise of Dante offers the poet some hope of 'quickness':

Hail Michael Agnolo! my soul lay slain  
 Or else in torpor such, death seems more fair.  
 I looked upon the light, if light were there  
 I knew it not. ...

Gaunt walls alone me seemed it to remain.  
 Thou praisest Dante well, My Lord: "No tongue  
 "Can tell of him what told of him should be  
 For on blind eyes his splendor shines too strong."  
 If so his soul goes on unceasingly  
 Shall mine own flame count flesh one life too long  
 To hold its light and bear ye company?

--Pound, 'Reivivus'<sup>180</sup>

What is significant here is that the echoing emptiness of those 'gaunt walls' inside the poet's 'soul,' is soon replaced by the resounding voices of 'Michael Agnolo' and 'Dante.' Pound's persona looks outward for support to a literary forebear, who in turn looks backward to one of his own, the process of which looking outward and backward becomes itself the theme of the poem, particularly as the formerly silent persona hopes that in the future others will likewise turn backwards to him for 'light.' We may assume then that the embodiment of that 'light' is, in this case as derived from 'Michael Agnolo,' inseparable from that poet's own format.

Likewise the narrator of Pound's 'Plotinus' inhabits a world of potential silences, enlivened only through a backward progress that supplies an identity:

As one that would draw thru the node of things,  
 Back sweeping to the vortex of the cone,  
 Cloistered about with memories, alone  
 Alone in chaos, while the waiting silence sings.

God! Should I be the hand upon the strings?!

And then for utter loneliness, made I

New thoughts as crescent images of *me*.  
 And with them was my essence reconciled  
 While fear went forth from my eternity.  
 --Pound, 'Plotinus'<sup>81</sup>

Once again the imagery of the poem is dominated by the smallness and isolation of the individual, with an interior life architecturally modelled on the past ('cloistered'); release from this isolation ('loneliness') comes in the form of a self-awareness constructed out of personae ('images of *me*'), which in turn give scope for participation in the larger world of time and space ('eternity'). Such an association of ideas and images persists in Pound's use of the sonnet format through *A Quinzaine for this Yule* (1908).<sup>82</sup> Taken together with the examples from *A Lume Spento* this association demonstrates how far the format of Pound's early poems form a proprietary interaction with their thematic materials. Indeed, this is also seen by the relationship between the motif of journeying and Anglo-Saxon styled techniques described above.

But there is one further important factor about the format of these poems, linking them to one another as well as other even earlier examples of Pound's sonnets: all are decasyllabic. It is (just) possible that this is coincidence-- that is to say that Pound is writing iambic pentameters, that fortuitously are ten-syllabled. However, the sonnets of *A Quinzaine for this Yule* and the 'San Trovaso Notebook' also show this same determined regularity, although the fourteen line stanzas of 'To La Contessa Bianzafior (Cent. XIV)' do not.<sup>83</sup> What this implies is that for a time, Pound viewed syllable-counting as an important metrical adjunct to the sonnet format. Just as the sonnet itself represented both an iconic and proprietary statement apt for the 'emotion' of Pound's poets-and-immortality theme, so too the model of a formalized line-type is the acknowledgement of the sonnet's "literary" heritage. Pound is clearly exploiting this idea much later in his 1912 poem 'A Virginal.' Here, each line is hendecasyllabic, and the persistent two-syllable rhymes combine with the



archaic diction and phraseology to form a language-image unmistakably engaged with the sonnet's Tudor past:

No, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.  
 I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness,  
 For my surrounding air has a new lightness;  
 Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly  
 And left me cloaked as with a veil of aether;  
 As with sweet leaves; as with a subtle clearness.  
 Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness  
 To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.

--Pound, 'A Virginal'<sup>84</sup>

But even earlier Pound's interest in exploiting the evocative power of apparent regularities-- both in stanza type and line-type-- is capable of producing effects that demand recognition of the specific language-image Pound seeks to create. The best example of this is in his prolonged involvement with the sonnets of Guido Cavalcanti (1255-1300).

### V.II.iii.

Pound's interest in Cavalcanti's poems spanned most of his adult life. It is probable that his first encounter with Cavalcanti's work was through Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1861 translations, published in Rossetti's *Early Italian Poets*. In any case, by 1910 Pound had begun his own first efforts at translating Cavalcanti, with a few lines appearing in *The Spirit of Romance*, as well as several manuscript versions of individual poems dated the same year.<sup>85</sup> When Pound's first published version of the poems appeared in 1912 as *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*, he acknowledged in the Introduction to the volume that Rossetti had been 'my father and my mother' for the work.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, Pound continued to revise his own translations of the poems, producing successive manuscript variations before the publication of his *Cavalcanti Rime* in 1932, as well as a version of Cavalcanti's 'Donna mi prega' for Canto XXXVI, and some slight changes for inclusion in the 1953 *Translations*. All of these textual variants have at last been assembled for comparison by David Anderson in his book, *Pound's Cavalcanti* (1983).<sup>87</sup>

There may be many reasons why Pound's interest in Cavalcanti's work considerably intensified after 1910, but certain of his remarks about what Cavalcanti's verse represented to him show an important relationship to those points discussed earlier in this chapter. As I have shown above, the terminology Pound encountered in his friendship with T.E. Hulme surfaces in Pound's own aesthetic formulations. This is seen again in an article about Cavalcanti Pound published in 1911:

[Cavalcanti's work demonstrates] an exact psychology ... an attempt to render emotions precisely,'

--Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. III,' *The New Age* (1911)<sup>88</sup>

Given the timing of this piece-- the same year that Pound produced 'The Seafarer,' was at work on the first published version of his own translations of Cavalcanti, began his experiments with Japanese styles (like 'In a Station of the Metro'), as well as published the formally exacting poems of *Canzoni*-- the coincidence of phrasing is significant. For Pound, Cavalcanti clearly represented the embodiment of those dimensions of versification he considered fundamental: evocation of 'emotion' interactive with formal characteristics both significant and demonstrative. Here, despite Pound's difficulties with Italian, was a poet he could admire because he believed there were no gaps between the language he used and the 'emotions' he sought to express. If the techniques intrinsic to the 'primary forms' of Cavalcanti's poetry could be isolated, then a similarly affective style of writing could be achieved despite the differences of historical context. Thus for Pound the discontinuities of chronological time could be bridged by an enlightened discovery of essential techniques, or 'primary forms' that exist below the surface discrepancies of language usage. Or, to put it another way, an adequate grasp of methodology enabled the language user to uncover and subsequently reproduce the methods of bygone eras-- methods which otherwise recur only sporadically through unintentional (or partially comprehended) moments of insight, but which nevertheless "inform" great poems. For these reasons a comparison of the results of

Pound's persistent efforts to recapture the 'primary forms' of Cavalcanti's work through his own translations is instructive.

Judging from the number of versions he produced, one of the Cavalcanti poems that interested Pound most was the one Pound titled, 'Sonnet VII.'<sup>89</sup> The earliest complete version of this poem that Anderson prints in full is dated 1910:

Who is she coming, whom all gaze upon,  
 Who makes the whole air tremulous with light,  
 And leadeth with her Love, so no man hath  
 Power of speech, but each one sigheth?  
 5 Ah God! the thing she's like when her eyes turn,  
 Let Amor < speak it, >  
 tell! Tis past mine utterance:  
 And so she seems mistress of modesty  
 That every other woman is named "Wrath."  
 Her charm could never be a thing to tell  
 10 For all the noble powers lean toward her.  
 Beauty displays her for an holy sign.  
 Our daring ne'er before did look so high;  
 But ye! there is not in you so much grace  
 That we can understand her rightfully.

--Pound, 'Sonnet VII,' reprinted in  
*Pound's Cavalcanti*, ed. David Anderson<sup>90</sup>

Reading with the second of the two options Anderson ambiguously offers for line six, this sonnet consists of the normal fourteen lines, but like all of the poems in this particular manuscript collection, it is unrhymed. Also reading 'powers' as one syllable, all of the lines are decasyllabic apart from line four which is octosyllabic. A comparison of this translation with Rossetti's version of the same poem reveals just how far Pound was right to acknowledge the debt to his English predecessor:

Who is she coming, whom all gaze upon,  
 Who makes the air all tremulous with light,  
 And at whose side is Love himself? that none  
 Dare speak, but each man's sighs are infinite.  
 Ah me! how she looks round from left to right,  
 Let Love discourse: I may not speak thereon.  
 Lady she seems of such high benison  
 As makes all others graceless in men's sight.  
 The honour which is hers cannot be said;  
 To whom are subject all things virtuous,  
 While all things beauteous own her deity.  
 Ne'er was the mind of man so nobly led,

Nor yet was such redemption granted us  
 That we should ever know her perfectly  
 --Rossetti, *The Collected Works of Dante*  
*Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. W.M. Rossetti (1886)<sup>91</sup>

Unlike Pound's translation, Rossetti's poem is decasyllabic throughout. Also despite differences in phrasing, both poets have produced an enjambement between lines three and four. But while Pound's first line copies Rossetti's exactly, his alteration of a single word in the second line changes the rhythm considerably. As I read the line in both versions, I find that the slight hiatus of Rossetti's 'air all' masks the important word 'tremulous' which follows, while Pound's substitution of the aspirate and palatal sounds of 'whole' with its long vowel, together with the long vowel of 'air' slows the reading, enforcing a slight pause before the sound of 'tremulous':

Who makes the air all tremulous with light,  
 Who makes the whole air tremulous with light,

Still, not only has Rossetti produced a rhyme scheme at least comparable to the Italian original, but his trisyllabic line-endings produce an Italianate rhythmic signature that Pound follows less frequently:

Rossetti	Pound
infinite	utterance
benison	modesty
virtuous	rightfully
deity	
perfectly	

In comparison with this, the version of the poem Pound published in 1912 shows a movement towards a more fully developed technique. Here the number of trisyllabic endings is increased to five, the syllable count has become a regular ten per line, there is a rhyme scheme similar to Cavalcanti's, and Pound fixes upon the grouping of lines that he would maintain in all but two of his subsequent translations of Cavalcanti:

Who is she coming, drawing all men's gaze,  
 Who makes the air one trembling clarity  
 Till none can speak but each sighs piteously  
 Where she leads Love adown her trodden ways?

Ah God! The thing she's like when her glance strays,  
 Let Amor tell. 'Tis no fit speech for me.  
 Mistress she seems of such great modesty  
 That every other woman were called "Wrath."

No one could ever tell the charm she hath  
 For all the noble powers bend toward her,  
 She being beauty's godhead manifest.

Our daring ne'er before held such high quest;  
 But ye! there is not in you so much grace  
 That we can understand her rightfully.

--Pound, *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*,  
*Cavalcanti*, reprinted in *Pound's Cavalcanti*<sup>92</sup>

As Humphrey Carpenter points out, Pound's *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* was not well-received.<sup>93</sup> Carpenter himself ascribes this poor reception to a combination of slipshod scholarship on Pound's part and the apparent confusion of styles resulting from Pound's search for a distinctive language for the poems, a language which Carpenter calls 'neo-Elizabethan (or perhaps ersatz-Metaphysical).'<sup>94</sup>

But whether or not Pound's style in this poem is reminiscent of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, it is certainly not modern. But then why should it be? Inversions that appear to be demanded by rhyme appear in both Pound and Rossetti's versions: 'godhead manifest' [Pound], 'things virtuous' [Rossetti]. Elisions appear in both texts, as do archaic words. Indeed, Pound's phraseology often appears to be mimicking Rossetti's, as in line seven: 'Lady she seems' [Rossetti] 'Mistress she seems' [Pound]. On at least one occasion, in line four, Pound seems to have used an archaism for a specifically metrical purpose:

Where she leads Love *adown* her trodden ways.  
[my italics]

The metrical point here is that the two-syllable 'adown' (rather than say 'down') increases the syllable count to ten, as well as makes the line read very much as an iambic pentameter. This latter fact is important perhaps because the slowed voicing of line four retards the

momentum towards a dipodic reading that the clusters of accents in the first three lines encourage:

Who is she coming,	drawing all men's gaze,
Who makes the air	one trembling clarity
Till none can speak	but each sighs piteously

In any case the poem is no more Elizabethan than it is Victorian. What Pound is trying to bring about through this retrograde movement of language is to evoke the 'emotion' inherent in encountering the fossilized portions of bygone styles. The ultimate point to which this impulse tended can be seen in Pound's 1932 translation:

Who is she that comes, makyng turn every man's eye  
 And makyng the air to tremble with a bright clearnesse  
 That leadeth with her Love, in such nearnesse

No man may proffer of speech more than a sigh?  
 Ah, God, what she is like when her owne eye turneth, is  
 Fir for Amor to speake, for I can not at all.

--Pound, *Cavalcanti Rime*, reprinted in  
*Pound's Cavalcanti*<sup>95</sup>

In this case Pound is seeking a similar 'emotion' through the disturbance of the visual aspects of the poem. For example, the reader may or may not know that 'clearnesse' looks and sounds Chaucerian, but if so, then that reader has to decide whether it is pronounced 'clearnesse' or 'clēarnesse.' Likewise, words like 'makyng' and 'speake' are visual archaisms, designed to suit the language-image Pound wishes to establish for the poem.

But a significant difference between Pound's 1912 and 1932 versions of that language-image lay in the different emphasis assigned to the metrical factor of isosyllabism. While the 1912 translation is uniformly decasyllabic-- Victorian, Elizabethan-- the 1932 version ranges from lines of nine to lines of fourteen syllables. Not only is the pentameter soundly broken by the later version, but the language-image of the poem no longer suggests a specific intermediary in English. Instead, Pound has settled on an approximation of

English's nearest chronological "equivalent" to Cavalcanti, namely Chaucerian verse. What this means is that while the tripartite formulation of Pound-Text-Reader remains in force, Pound's own involvement with the Text in question has continued to develop. The framework of continuities Pound emphasized in the introduction to his first published translations of Cavalcanti-- Cavalcanti-Rossetti-Pound-- has now become the more generalized Cavalcanti-Archaic English-Pound. The same process can be seen in Pound's later works, for example in Canto I as Homer-Andreas Divus-Pound. The fluctuating factor in this process, however, remains Pound's own "estimate" of his materials, how his own responses, conditioned by those influences described above led him to fashion the link between himself and his appreciation of 'primary forms' and the resulting textual formats designed to be the link between his writing and his readers. The best example of this is the one in which Pound was freest to invent the language-image in which his many "influences" (and predilections) could be assembled. I mean, of course, Pound's development of a technique uniquely modelled on Asian verse.

#### V.II.iv.

The "one image poem" is a form of superposition, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work "of second intensity." Six months later I made a poem of half that length; a year later I made the following *hokku*-like sentence:--

"The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals, on a wet, black bough."

I dare say it is meaningless unless one has drifted into a certain vein of thought. In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts inward into a thing inward and subjective.

--Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*<sup>96</sup>

This particular quotation is from 1916. Pound also published slightly different versions of the same story and its explanation in 1913 and in 1914, and these versions usually remain undifferentiated by Pound's critics. Yet many of these critics have found this text interesting for what they feel it reveals about Pound's compositional methods. Louis Menand has cited one version of this passage as an example of Pound's practicing of Paterian *askesis*.<sup>97</sup> Jeremy Harmer has observed that Pound's use of the word *hokku* rather than, say the more typical *haiku*, or even the *haikai* used by Flint (derived from the French habit), as an indication that Pound's probable source of information was B.H. Chamberlain's *Japanese Poetry* (1911), where the term *hokku* is recommended.<sup>98</sup> Both of these observations seem correct, but what is most interesting about them is the way in which they, and Pound's alterations to his account of this poem's creation, are particularly bound-up with other events in the chronology Pound describes. By considering those events sequentially, it is possible to trace with some certainty the evolution of those ideas Pound expresses here, as well as the various influences contributing to them.

For the details surrounding the "origin" of 'In a Station of the Metro' we may begin with a look at the fullest account of the events, which Pound gave in 1914:

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.

That evening in the Rue Raynouard, I realized quite vividly that if I were a painter, or if I had, often, *that* kind of emotion, or even if I had the energy to get paints and brushes and keep at it, I might found a new school of painting, of "non-representative" painting, a painting that would



Speak only by arrangements of colour.

--Pound, 'Vorticism,' *Fortnightly Review* (1914)<sup>99</sup>

(At this point, Pound's text repeats the paragraph cited earlier.) The only significant omission from the 1913 version of these events is Pound's more precise dating of his attempts to write out his experience:

I tried to write the poem weeks after in Italy, but found it useless. Then only the other night, wondering how I should tell the adventure, it struck me that in Japan, where a work of art is not estimated by its acreage and where sixteen syllables are counted enough for a poem if you arrange and punctuate them properly, one might make a very little poem ...

--Pound, 'How I Began,' cited in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character* (1988)<sup>100</sup>

By comparing this information with what we know about Pound's movements and contacts at this time, it is possible to see how Pound assimilated various factors into what became the program for Imagism as well as the style of *Cathay*.

Beginning then with Pound's 1914 remark that the La Concorde encounter occurred 'three years ago,' the origins of 'In a Station of the Metro' appear to have been in 1911. In March of that year Pound was staying in Paris with his friend Walter Rummel.<sup>101</sup> Pound had met Rummel for the first time in Paris a year previous to this, and had again met up in New York later that year. Rummel was a talented musician and shared with Pound an interest in troubadour music. On this occasion in 1911, the two men collaborated on some troubadour (and troubadour-style) settings, which were published later in that year (cf. III.III.iv). It was also during this visit that Pound completed the Introduction to his translations of Cavalcanti, which Introduction included his statements on 'absolute rhythm.' It is worthwhile to recall this statement because of the marked similarities between its description of how ideas are translated through the medium of art in such a way as to achieve authenticity:

As for the verse itself: I believe in

an ultimate and absolute rhythm as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence. It is only, then, in perfect rhythm joined to the perfect word that the two-fold vision can be recorded. I would liken Guido's cadence to nothing less powerful than line in Blake's drawing.

In painting, the colour is always finite. It may match the colour of the infinite spheres, but it is in a way confined within the frame and its appearance is modified by the colours about it. The line is unbounded, it marks the passage of a force, it continues beyond the frame.

--Pound, 'Cavalcanti Poems, Introduction,' reprinted in *Translations*, ed. Hugh Kenner (1953)<sup>102</sup>

Apparently then, as 'line' equals 'absolute rhythm,' and 'colour' equals 'absolute symbol or metaphor,' Pound's 'metro emotion' was, so far, only a series of 'colours' ('symbols,' 'metaphors'), for which he had as yet no clear perception of 'line' ('rhythm'). It may be therefore more than coincidence that in recalling the episode years later, Pound expresses it once again in these same words. Not only do the two descriptions share an identical analogy between poetry and painting, but Pound's statement that his 'metro emotion' formed a wordless 'equation' is matched by his remark on the fusion of 'absolute rhythm' with 'absolute symbol or metaphor.' This relationship, or rather the need to express this relationship, produced Pound's resulting search for an adequate textual format.

Pound's first venture towards that format, he says, occurred 'weeks after in Italy.' In May 1911, Pound went to Sirmione, and it was probably here that this first version of the poem was made. Pound seems to have found the environs of Sirmione especially conducive to creativity, for it was here in March or April of the previous year that he probably began work on the poems which became *Canzoni*. Pound's feelings for the place may have stirred because it had been the favoured spot of Catullus, Dante and Marcus Antonius Flaminius, all of who composed there. This view is strengthened by the fact that Pound's poems from the 1910 stay, as well as his letters from 1911, develop an interaction with these names,

particularly as they are filtered through Pater (who also crops up in Pound's letters).<sup>103</sup> In any case, for Pound it seems to have been a place of pilgrimage, where the subsoil of poetic activity was especially invigorating. On this particular occasion in 1911, Pound also composed his version of 'The Seafarer,' and was probably also at work on the revisions of his Arnaut Daniel translations, which were completed by midsummer. Altogether it was not only a time of feverish composition, but one in which the possibilities of two metrical styles described at the beginning of this chapter-- syllabic and accentual-- were in the forefront of Pound's mind.

*Canzoni* was published in July, 1911. Pound returned to London towards the end of August, at about which time he received a gift of two books by Japanese poet Yone Noguchi (cf. II.V.i and III.I.i). In a letter to Dorothy Shakespear, tentatively dated as either 24 or 31 August, Pound described with some amusement the contents of one of these books:

His poems seem to be rather beautiful. I dont [sic] quite know what to think about them. The line

"Fill me a cup with the tea ancient-browed"  
is I suppose a printer's error. But he seems "to do better" in his "next".

"She is an art (let me call her so)  
Hung, as a web, in the air of perfume.["]

His matter is poetic & his stuff is not like everything else, he is doubtless sent to save my artistic future.

--Reprinted in *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914*<sup>104</sup>

While there is a great deal of sarcasm in Pound's remarks (he continues with a private joke at Noguchi's expense), he was, at least, polite to Noguchi in the letter he wrote to him a few days later:

I had, of course, known of you, but I am much occupied with mediaeval [sic] studies & had neglected to read your books altho' they lie with my own in Mathews [sic] shop and I am very

familliar [sic] with the appearance of their covers.

I am reading those you sent me but I do not yet know what to say of them except that they have delighted me.

Of your country I know almost nothing--...

You ask me about my "criticism". ... But I might be more to the point if we who are artists should discuss the matters of technique and motive between ourseles [sic].

--Reprinted in *Yone Noguchi: Collected English Letters*, ed. Ikuko Atsumi (1975)<sup>105</sup>

Whether or not Pound actually met Noguchi some time in the next twelve months is unrecorded. But what is curious is that Pound's revision of his first 'Metro' poem-- 'six months later'-- was at about this time. Also Pound's 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris' series, in which he sets out the principles of the 'Luminous Detail' began to appear in November. Likewise 'The Seafarer' was published in November, and it was also at this time that T.E. Hulme gave his series of lectures on Bergson. Therefore it is possible that the 'limbs' Pound was gathering included those principles of accentual, syllabic and Asian-style metre which he proceeded to synthesize in his own unique way.

The next stage in the composition of 'In a Station of the Metro' Pound says occurred 'a year later.' The completed poem was sent to *Poetry* in October, 1912, which timing is in accordance with the chronology sketched out above. As I have quoted Pound saying, the poem's final form came about through his involvement with ideas centering on Japanese verse. However, several interesting facts coincide at this point, which make some dimensions of that involvement significant. For one thing there is the protean visual format of the poem. The original layout of the poem, as sent to *Poetry*, was like this:

The apparition                    of these faces in the crowd    :  
Petals                    on a wet, black                    bough .

--Pound, 'In a Station of the Metro'<sup>106</sup>

Before the poem was published in April 1913, Pound explained to Harriet Monroe (in a letter dated 30 March, 1913) his reasons for using this unusual layout:

In the 'Metro' hokku, I was careful, I think,  
to indicate spaces between the rhythmic units,  
and I want them observed.

--Reprinted in *The Letters of Ezra Pound  
1907-1941*, ed. D.D. Paige (1951)<sup>107</sup>

Several things are important about this statement. Firstly, at this stage Pound clearly thought of the poem as a 'hokku'-- not the '*hokku*-like sentence' he would refer to it as in 1914. Secondly, he refers to each individual word or word-group as a 'rhythmic unit.' It is difficult to see how either 'Petals' or 'bough' can, independently from the rest of the poem be considered as 'rhythmic units' unless we recall Pound's belief that these words reflect 'the perception of the intellect,' that they are 'colours' and distinctive 'absolute symbols or metaphors.' The assumption then is that insofar as these 'colours' are 'absolute' then the 'line' or 'rhythm' they achieve by this demarcation is a reflection of their 'absolute rhythm.' A similar process of rhythmic juxtapositions, as we have seen above operates in 'The Seafarer' and as shown in Chapter Three informs many of Pound's subsequent views on how metrical principles resemble one another in the works of poets as different in time and place as Dante and Li Po. As we shall see, such a process began to develop most cohesively in Pound's work with the publication of *Cathay*.

Nevertheless, the sublimation of the unusual textual format in this poem was a gradual one. Pound's version of the poem printed in 1916 (see above) removes the interlinear spaces, but adds a comma after 'Petals.' This comma may have represented a lingering feature of the poem's original separation into 'rhythmic units,' but it disappeared from later printed versions of the poem. Most intriguing, however, is the fact that, according to the editor of Noguchi's letters, Pound sent a copy of the poem to Noguchi, which looked like this:

To Yone Noguchi

In a station of the "Metro"  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

Ezra Pound

--Reprinted in *Yone Noguchi: Collected English Letters*<sup>108</sup>

While Ikuko Atsumi's editing of these letters is erratic, if the format in which the poem is here cast *does* reproduce one which Pound gave it, then its appearance as such is both unique and significant. According to Atsumi there was an exchange of letters between Noguchi and Pound-- which mysteriously Atsumi does not print-- and presumably this extract is undated. It is possible that this version pre-dates the one sent to *Poetry*-- in which case Pound's reason for dedicating the poem to Noguchi is clear-- but otherwise his reasons remain uncertain. Atsumi thinks that the letter may date from the winter of 1913-14 when Noguchi was in London after having given a lecture on Japanese poetry at Oxford University.<sup>109</sup> But even if this later date is correct (in which case Pound's dedication is either belated or facetious) the format of the poem given above resembles that used in Pound's earliest Chinese "translations"-- made at a time when Noguchi was a visitor at Stone Cottage.

#### V.II.v.

As I have said above, Pound's first description of the inspiration and writing of 'In a Station of the Metro' was published in June, 1913, in an article entitled, 'How I Began'<sup>110</sup> In September of that year, Alan Upward gave Pound a copy of Herbert Giles's *A History of Chinese Literature* (1901), and in October, Pound obtained the Fenellosa manuscripts.<sup>111</sup> A month later, in November, Pound accompanied Yeats to Stone Cottage, and it was there between December, 1913 and January, 1914, that he met Yone Noguchi.<sup>112</sup> While it would be wrong to suggest that Noguchi's influence on Pound's developing attitudes to Asian verse is likely to have been anything more than incidental, several of the poems which Pound was working on at this time show a curious blending of Asian (Japanese and

Chinese) elements. These poems first appeared in *Des Imagistes* in March, 1914-- three months after Pound sent his first version of a Japanese *Noh* play to *Poetry*<sup>113</sup>

Among the most interesting of Pound's adaptations from Giles's book-- which Pound worked on before beginning the Fenellosa manuscripts-- is the poem Pound entitled, 'Fan-piece, for her Imperial Lord.' Here is Pound's version, side-by-side with Giles's:

O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's loom,  
 Clear as the frost, bright as the winter snow--  
 See! friendship fashions out of thee a fan,  
 Round as the round moon shines in heaven above,  
 At home, abroad, a close companion thou,  
 Stirring at every move the grateful gale.  
 And yet I fear, ah me! that autumn chills,  
 Cooling the torrid summer's torrid rage,  
 Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,  
 All thoughts of bygone days, like them bygone.

--Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature*<sup>114</sup>

O fan of white silk,  
       clear as frost on the grass-blade,  
 You also are laid aside.

--Pound, 'Fan-piece, for her Imperial Lord'<sup>115</sup>

Several things are observable in Pound's technique in this poem which reflect the processes outlined in this chapter. Firstly, despite the obvious condensing of materials that Pound makes (Paterian askesis?), as well as the selection of Luminous Details for juxtaposition, there is the role of Giles's poem as an intermediary between Pound's poem and the Chinese original. This can be seen clearly in the way Pound reproduces the vocative form of Giles's opening phrase. Also the fact that the second line of Pound's poem does not begin with a capital letter may indicate that Pound considered the poem as having a fundamentally two-part structure, like 'In a Station of the Metro.' It may even be that the poem is simply a very small work of *vers libre*. But if this is so, then it is a curious coincidence that the poem consists of seventeen words, arranged in groups of 5-7-5, like the Japanese *hokku* with its arrangement of characters in similar fashion. Now as I have indicated above, the three-line format of the poem is not derived from Pound's probable reading of Chamberlain, where a

two-line format is used instead. Therefore despite the fact that he is working on an ostensibly Chinese "original," Pound has cast his poem in the form of a *hokku*. Of course part of the impetus to do so may have come from the fact that the Fenellosa manuscripts included both Japanese and Chinese texts, albeit that the Chinese texts reproduced the views of Fenellosa's Japanese instructors. However the texts in the Fenellosa papers were unformatted, and rejecting Giles's rhymed translations, Pound chose to improvise a new structure. It may be that his meeting with Noguchi stimulated a renewed interest in the *hokku*, this time with a design unlike that suggested by Chamberlain.

A further experiment in this way is Pound's 'Ts'ai Chi'h.' Here, it seems, that unlike the reading of 'grass-blade' in the 'Fan-piece, for her Imperial Lord' which scans as two words, the hyphenated words of the second line count as one word each. This gives a reading of 6-5-6, for a total of seventeen words, once again with the possibility that the second line's addition of detail to the first is signalled by the uncapitalized first word:

The petals fall in the fountain,  
                   the orange-coloured rose-leaves,  
 Their ochre clings to the stone.  
                                   --Pound, 'Ts'ai Chi'h'<sup>116</sup>

An altogether more complex working out of this numerical patterning, one which may form a bridge to the poems of *Cathay* derived from Fenellosa, is Pound's 'Liu Ch'e.'

Here is Pound's poem alongside the version Pound read in Giles's translation:

The sound of rustling silk is stilled,  
 With dust the marble courtyard filled;  
 No footfalls echo on the floor,  
 Fallen leaves in heaps block up the door. ...  
 For she, my pride, my lovely one, is lost,  
 And I am left, in hopeless anguish tossed.  
                                   --Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature*<sup>117</sup>

The rustling of silk is discontinued,  
 Dust drifts over the courtyard,  
 There is no sound of footfall, and the leaves  
 Scurry into heaps and lie still,  
 And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them:

A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.



--Pound, 'Liu Ch'e'<sup>118</sup>

Once again, Pound has retained elements of Giles's diction without the least knowledge of whether or not they are in any sense literal "equivalents" to the Chinese, but rather as a set of props for his own version of the poem's small drama.

rustling silk  
dust  
courtyard  
footfall  
heaps

This is, in an important sense, a way for Pound to turn Hulme's theory of the dead "counters" of living language to his own use by foregrounding their very archaism through the dissonance such diction creates when used in conjunction with an unspecified poetic format. For example, the steadily iambic lines of Giles's rhymed poem are completely apt among the nineteenth-century precedents for the poem with their 'rustling silk' diction and word order:

The sound of rustling silk is stilled,  
With dust the marble courtyard filled;

However, notice how far removed this feeling is from the way Pound accomplishes a foregrounding of what sounds like "translationese" by his use of the same words in lines that are metrically variable:

The rustling of silk is discontinued,  
Dust drifts over the courtyard,

It is not that Pound's poem is more "faithful" to its Chinese counterpart-- after all Pound has translated English into English-- but rather that because Pound's poem mixes styles of diction with metrically independent lines that his poem feels like it is approximating some, presumably archaic, source. This feeling is underlined by Pound's importing of what, in this context, seem poetically disjunctive words like 'discontinued.'

A further dimension of this feeling for a "source," this suggestion of intertextuality, becomes clear when we notice that Pound's poem is not entirely without an identifiable metrical code. For example, the first four lines of the poem look remarkably like the experiments in Japanese *hokku* described above. Notice that these lines form alternate pairs of ten and seven syllables (similar to the *hokku*), and that each presents an image, or 'Luminous Detail,' juxtaposed to that of the adjacent line, all of which are uncommented upon until the final two lines:

The rustling of silk is discontinued,  
Dust drifts over the courtyard,

There is no sound of footfall, and the leaves  
Scurry into heaps and lie still,

On its own, this might seem like coincidence, but given the examples cited earlier in this section, it is obvious that Pound was experimenting with an approximation of the *hokku*'s numerical system of metricality. Likewise, Pound copies Giles's six-line format for the poem. Where in the first four lines Giles is writing in a four-beat metre, Pound follows with the ten-seven-ten-seven pattern. But in the last two lines Giles shifts to a five beat metre:

For she, my pride, my lovely one, is lost,  
And I am left, in hopeless anguish tossed.

Pound follows this shift in verse design with one of his own: two lines with a total of eighteen words, and twenty-two syllables, spread over a line space-- that is to say, lengthened lines that mimetically follow Giles's longer lines. In any case, through a coalescence of metrical models, Pound has produced an 'equation' of metricality that is referable to the catalogue of its predecessors much in the same way his 'equation' of 'emotions' can be seen to relate to the nexus of theoretical discussions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The vital link is, of course, Pound himself, and the degree to which we are willing to accept the terms for poetic format he offers us-- accentual, syllabic, Asian. After all, as Pound explained in 1917,

The subject is Chinese, the language of the translations is mine-- I think.

--Pound in a letter to Kate Buss dated, 4 January 1917, reprinted in *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*<sup>119</sup>

In this same letter, Pound invites comparison between his own 'Song of the Bowmen of Shu' and those versions of the same Chinese poem offered by his predecessors.<sup>120</sup> As this is an excellent example of how Pound himself came to assimilate features from each of the foregoing metrical styles, I propose to do just that.

#### V.II.vi.

They gather the fern, the royal fern,  
     Now at its first appearing.  
 O when shall we turn, aye homeward turn?  
     One year its end is nearing.  
 O still, because of the wild Hin-Yuns,  
     From house and home remain we;  
 O still, because of the wild Hin-Yuns,  
     Nor rest nor leisure gain we.

--William Jennings, *The Shi-King* (1891)<sup>121</sup>

'Tis spring; the fern shoots now appear,  
     For us to pick them on the lea.  
 'Twill be the last month of the year  
     Ere we may hope our home to see.  
 Husband and wife apart must weep  
     Until the course of war has run,  
 No time is given for rest or sleep  
     To those who have to fight the Hun.

--Clement Francis Romilly Allen, *The Book of Chinese Poetry* (1891)<sup>122</sup>

Pick a fern, pick a fern, ferns are high,  
 "Home," I'll say: home the year's gone by,  
 no house, no roof, these huns on the hoof,  
 Work, work, work, that's how it runs,  
 We are here because of these huns.

--Pound, *The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius*, (1955)<sup>123</sup>

These three excerpts form an interesting comparison to the poem Pound published in 1915 as 'The Song of the Bow-men of Shu.' The first selection, from Jennings' *The Shi-King*, was the volume with which Pound invited Kate Buss in 1917 to compare his own

poem.<sup>124</sup> But Jennings' translation, with its eight-line, rhymed stanzas and 4-3-4-3 double ballad metre, shows little in common with Pound's poem, either in phrasing, rhythm or diction. As such, it was (and is) an excellent foil with which Pound could highlight the individualities of his own poem. Likewise, the second translation also pre-dates Pound's *Cathay* poems, and its eight-line, four-beat stanzas seem equally removed from Pound's style. But while Pound does not discuss any familiarity with Allen's text, it may be that his word 'fern-shoots' in the *Cathay* poem-- a word *not* used by Fenellosa-- is borrowed from this source. Finally, the third extract is from Pound's own later version of the poem, published thirty-nine years after of 'The Song of the Bow-men of Shu.' The most striking thing about this later version (made with the Chinese text and several cribs to hand) is its radical departure from the rhythm and style of Pound's earlier poem. In place of the dignified sonorities of the 1915 poem, Pound has given us the rhythm of 'Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake Ba-ker man.' Why the change?

Both Jennings and Allen have translated their Chinese original into a nameable English metre, thereby demonstrating an aesthetic that sees the distinctive features of the Chinese poem (such as words like 'Hin-Yuns') as transmutable into a recognizable English format. That is to say that their poems are English poems first, in the same way that an English translation of a French poem which describes Napoleon is an English poem and not a French one. The feeling of the translator for the "original" never loses touch with some proposal for what constitutes the readers' feeling for specifically English verse. Pound's 1955 translation has a similar aesthetic. Rather than 'making it new' as he had done in 1915 by developing a format without specific precedent, relying more on his feeling for the (admittedly unreadable) "original" together with a poetic forged out of beliefs in the essential congruencies of major versification types, Pound chose in this later version to challenge us with that which we know only too well. The relevance of the nursery-rhyme

metre to a Chinese poem from several millennia in the past is that the antiquity of the metre in Pound's original, its tradition of extreme familiarity and homeliness, are echoed by the immediacy of the 'pick a fern' rhythm. As Pound came into greater contact with his Chinese predecessors after 1915, so too the language-image of his translation style changed accordingly. Before that change, however, the "third-man" in Pound's image of Chinese verse was the one substantially constructed upon the Fenellosa manuscripts.

As Ronald Bush has observed, Fenellosa began his scholarly career as a 'devotee of Emerson.'<sup>125</sup> This fact may have coloured Fenellosa's subsequent views on the relationship between various dimensions of the Chinese language as both a written and verbal medium, as expressed in his 'Essay on the Chinese Written Character'-- views which were, of course, fully endorsed by Pound (cf. II.I.i and III.II.vii). Similarly, these ideas may be at work in Fenellosa's transcriptions from Chinese, which Pound maintains derive their literalness through a kind of "insight," transcending the inadequacies of Fenellosa's Japanese guides.<sup>126</sup> In any case, the text resulting from Fenellosa's work on Chinese poetry is a series of prose sentences, remarkable only for their candid rendering of first-person statements and observations, and for the fact that Pound borrowed many whole phrases for his poems. Here are the opening few lines of Fenellosa's transcription, which form the basis of Pound's 'Song of the Bow-men of Shu':

We pick off the "Warabi" (an edible fern) which first grow from  
the earth.  
We say to each other, "When will we return to our country?" It will  
be the last of the year.  
Here we are far from our home because we have the "ken-in" as our  
enemy.  
We have no leisure to sit down comfortably (as we did at home)  
because we have "ken-in" as our enemy.  
We pick off the "Warabi" which are soft.  
When we say the returning our mind is full of sorrow.  
We are very sorrowful. We are hungry and thirsty.

--Reprinted in Lawrence W. Chisolm,  
*Fenellosa: The Far East and American Culture*  
(1963)<sup>127</sup>

Here is how Pound re-rendered these lines as the opening of his 1915 'Song of the Bowmen of Shu':

Here we are, picking the first fern-shoots  
 And saying: *When shall we get back to our country?*  
*Here we are because we have the Ken-nin for our foemen,*  
*We have no comfort* because of these Mongols.  
 We grub the soft fern-shoots.  
 When anyone says "Return," the others are *full of sorrow*.  
 Sorrowful minds, sorrow is strong, *we are hungry and thirsty*.  
 --Pound, 'Song of the Bowmen of Shu,'  
 [my italics]<sup>128</sup>

The phrases I have italicized in Pound's text show a direct link to those of Fenellosa's earlier transcription. Clearly Pound has taken over many of these forms, especially syntactical ones, verbatim. There are many others. For instance, if we read on, comparing only the line-openings and closures between the two texts, the following parallels appear:

[Fenellosa]	[Pound]
We say ... October.	We say ... October?
Our sorrow ... country.	Our sorrow ... country.
Whose ... general's.	Whose ... General's.
... month.	... month.
The generals ...	The generals ...
... snows.	... snow.
Our mind ... our grief?	Our mind ... our grief?

While it is true that Pound was making a poem out of the words he found in Fenellosa's text, he was under no obligation to follow this aspect of the older man's notes so closely. The reason seems to be that what for Fenellosa's expansive text was a faithful, line-by-line, translation of the Chinese, in Pound's condensed format gives the appearance of being a rhetorical patterning of like constructions:

We have no comfort ...  
 We grub the soft fern-shoots, ...  
 We grub the old fern-stalks ...  
 We say: ...  
 We have no rest ...  
 We come back ...  
 We go slowly ...

A similar pattern is formed out of the series of questions:

When shall we get back ...?  
 Will be let to go ...?  
 What flower ...?  
 Whose chariot ...?  
 ... Who will know of our grief?

That this kind of parallelism forms a part of the poem's design can also be seen in places where Pound departs from Fenellosa's syntax, in order to form a parallel where none previously existed. For example, Fenellosa writes 'We are hungry and thirsty' the first time, but 'We are thirsty and hungry' the second; Pound copies the first phrase on both occasions. Likewise, Pound expanded Fenellosa's laconic 'We are very sorrowful,' to 'Sorrowful minds, sorrow is strong.'

But this kind of repetition also has an important function in the overall structuring of lines. Thus despite the difference in scale, some parts of the poem seem related to the two-line format, or seventeen character style of the earlier *hokku*-modelled verses:

Here we are, picking the first fern-shoots  
 And saying: When shall we get back to our country?  
 [seventeen words]

Still, as tantalizing as such suggestions are, I am able to discover no single principle of syllabic metre (or word-counting either) capable of generating the format of the entire poem. Instead it seems more likely that being fresh from his work on the earlier *hokku*-like poems, Pound retained certain features of their range of sound-patterns in his mind, assimilated as part of his method rather than as a directed function of his methodology.

In place of this countable aspect of metre, the format of the poem is based in part on a rhetorical balancing of clauses. Thus eighteen of the poem's twenty-four lines have at least one punctuated mid-line pause. The opening phrase is often very brief, the abrupt voicing of which phrases serves to lengthen that mid-line pause into a conspicuous factor of the poem's rhythm:

Here we are,  
 And saying:  
 Sorrowful minds,  
 We say:  
 Horses,

By heaven,  
We go slowly.

In some cases this shortness is particularly effective in heightening the significance of the concluding half-line:

Whose chariot? The General's.

But if this kind of repetition is signalled syntactically at the beginnings and middles of lines, Pound's attentiveness to the sound of line-endings is also marked with extraordinary care. Once again all but six of the poems twenty-four endstopped lines conclude with words in one of the two following rhythmic patterns:

fern-shoots	country
foemen	Mongols
fern-shoots	sorrow
fern-stalks	thirsty
were strong	comfort
are tired	country
fish-skin	blossom
our grief	by them
	careful
	thirsty

In each case of the two-word endings, the emphasis is suggested by the semantic relation of the words in the entire line. For example: 'The generals are *on* them, the soldiers are *by* them.'

This kind of line-ending later became a feature of Pound's mature style. Indeed, as I have shown above, it may be derived from Pound's adaptation of Anglo-Saxon metrical elements. But in any case such an extensive use of these two forms in a poem of this length indicates that such a rhythmical closure is a prominent feature of the poem's metrical style. This is of course even more significant when we remember the extent to which the balancing



of clauses was also a feature in Pound's more certainly Anglo-Saxon inspired poems (cf. V.II.i). It may also be worthwhile once again to recall that Pound considered obvious juxtapositions of phrases-- each with distinctive rhythmical characteristics-- as a constituent of all competently written poetry. In this case the primitivism suggested by the poem's abrupt, sharply worded declarations, has the same iconic function as foregrounding a recognized, contextualizing methodology had for the Cavalcanti translations. As before, Pound is translating a sensibility through the medium of approximate, transcribable, textual format.

The subtle coalescence of this process can be seen by a comparison between 'The Song of the Bow-men of Shu' and 'The Seafarer.' Just as Pound's choice of an Anglo-Saxon original recommended the potential of a rhythmic structure enhanced by alliteration, so too the primitive aspect of his Chinese text (Pound's footnote says, 'Reputedly 1100 B.C.') suggests that a similarity in English format is warranted.

Here we are, picking the *first fern-shoots*  
 And saying: When shall we go back to our country?  
 Here we are because we have the *Ken-nin* for our foemen,  
 We have no comfort because of these Mongols.  
 We grub the soft *fern-shoots*,  
 When anyone says "Return," the others are full of sorrow.  
 Sorrowful minds, sorrow is strong, we are hungry and thirsty.  
 Our defence is not yet made sure, no one can let his friend return.  
 We grub the old *fern-stalks*.

[my italics]

Obviously such an intense interweaving of sounds, even in the three groups I've highlighted, cannot be described simply as methodological. Still, however we read these lines, enough alliterating consonants are accented so as to achieve the prominence ascribed to metrical foregrounding. Thus however elusive, an underlying structure is at least in places distinguishable. As my italics show, Pound has either clung to those portions of Fenellosa's text which convey this subtle suggestion of poetic styling, or added enough of his own, to give these lines a feeling of regularity, even predictability, which cannot be measured by any

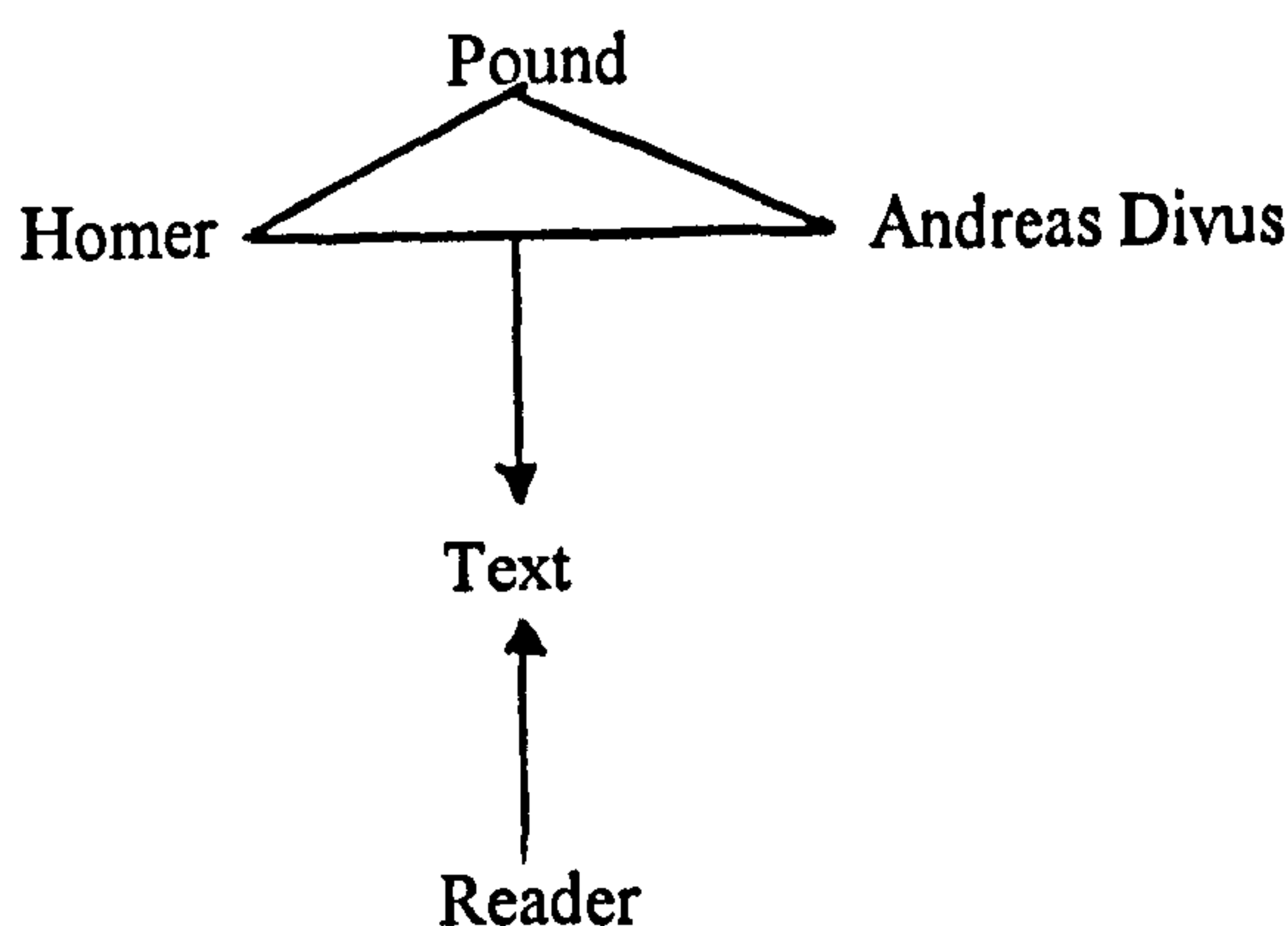
one set of terms. It is noteworthy, for example, that among the lines Pound changes least from the model of Fenellosa's originals, is the last group in the poem. Notice here how the repetition of the long *o*-sounds may serve to underline the plaintive elegiac nature of the words:

When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring,  
 We come back in the snow,  
 We *go* slowly, we are hungry and thirsty,  
 Our mind is full of sorrow, who will know of our grief?  
 [my italics]

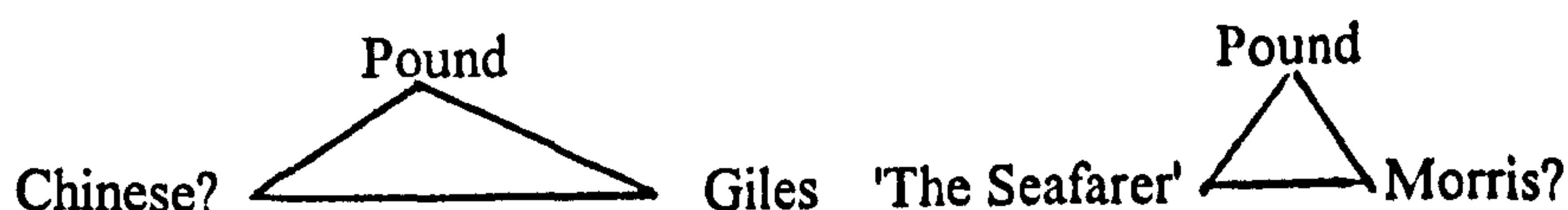
If any further proof was required to demonstrate this poem's relationship to Pound's other, more obvious, evocations of Anglo-Saxon metrical features, it may be worthwhile to point out in passing that this poem, like the others, is of men exiled from home, facing danger and hardship. Thus perhaps even the most personally emotive level of Pound's creation of individual language-images remains consistent.

### V. Conclusion.

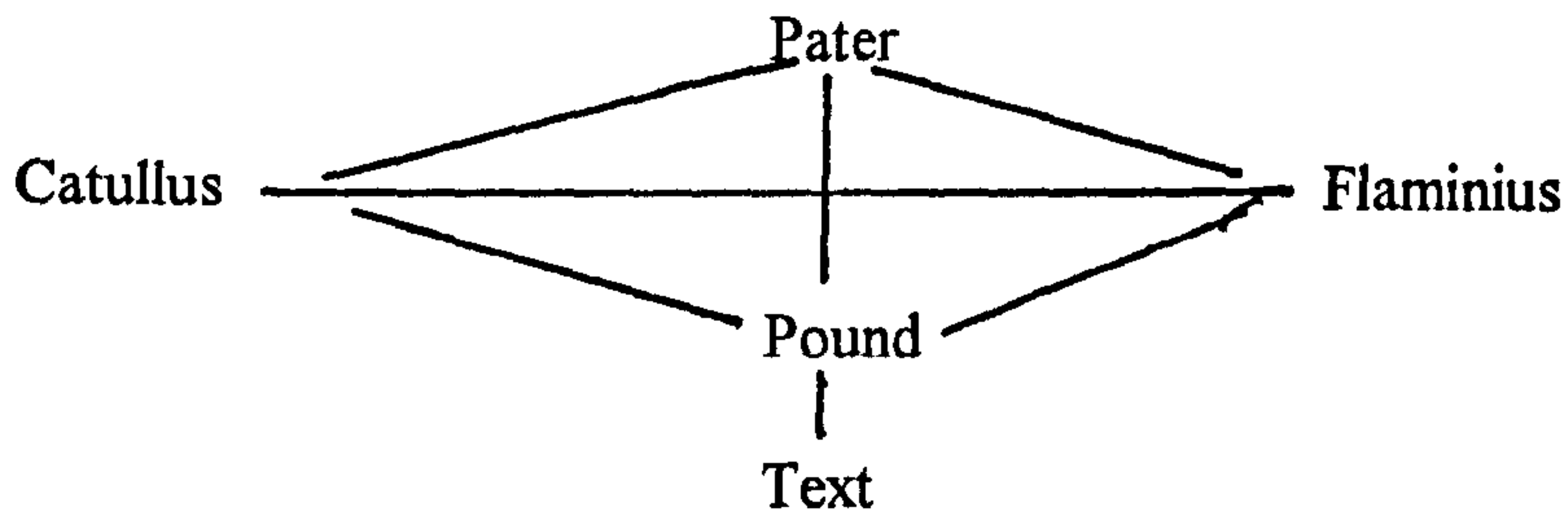
The central conclusion of this chapter is that the evocation of a language-image is fundamental to Pound's process of metrical writing. In some cases aspects of that language-image are easy to define:



But in other cases, such a triad seems more dubious:



Therefore the defining characteristic is the 'equation' Pound sought to express his own experience of this relationship. That experience is manifested most clearly by the isolation (or construction) of formal categories which Pound could assume that his readers would grasp (consciously or intuitively). The methodology Pound developed in order to foreground those formal categories has as a part of its origin the concept of affective rhythms as selected 'by the intention,' like those of medieval verse. Pound's long quest to uncover the essential "qualities" of those affective rhythms, to grasp what identifies and thus empowers them, is shown through his long engagement with medieval versification in its many forms. His pursuit of continuities in metrical formatting principles was, unlike that of Saintsbury for example, not one of contiguous influence. Instead Pound sought to purify the process of verse-formation by isolating the characteristics which he believed existed at a level that was perceptible in the text, without itself seeming inessential to the 'primary forms' of what he saw as the unique essence of the 'thing itself.' Pound is not, like many poets before him, content to take the implications of a language-image for granted. The seeming assignment of a proprietary significance to the sonnet format, for instance, in Pound's early writing suggests that he did indeed associate certain formal characteristics with specifically Pound-centered 'primary forms.' However Pound knew that we too possess a certain degree of immediacy in our own concepts of forms like that of 'The Seafarer' or the sonnet. It was in response to this that Pound sought to break the pentameter by uncovering what came to represent for him the incontrovertible extent to which both he and ourselves share an identical affiliation with those language-types. As a means of guaranteeing his success, Pound has to a very great extent removed much of the power from our hands by insisting that we share a perspective that is undoubtedly his own. Thus triads of language-image making become more complex:



In this way, it is not 'The Seafarer' or Bunno, or Cavalcanti, or even more rarely, Pound himself, that Pound's poems offer us. It is the interaction of "Pound" with some other feature of the world-- reading, foreign policy, history-- or that of an equivalent persona's constitution of "Pound," that we are meant to interpret. Part of that interaction occurs formally, in rhythms which sometimes we can name, which sometimes resemble those we can name despite the mutations that "Pound" has accorded them, or indeed others which are given as both a manifestation of 'primary form'--ours as much as "Pound's"-- and as a re-enactment of something intrinsic to the medium of writing. Or as Pound explained it in a passage first included in Canto I:

... there can be but one "Sordello."  
 But Sordello, and my Sordello?  
 Lo Sordels si fo di Manovana.

--Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*<sup>29</sup>

The way out of this confusion is a formal one: all "Sordellos," 'ply over ply' in a language that encompasses Pound's sense of his 'primary form'-- 'absolute rhythm' and 'Image'-- and yet is apprehensible by us in its possessing the formalities of a language we are prepared to describe as authentically significant, or vital in its format. In this sense Pound is relying upon the iconography of metre as much as Eliot was in his early poems. But Eliot's design included subverting the will-to-take-for-granted systematic measurements of forms like the iambic pentameter. For Pound the process is rather to augment this iconographic dimension through a careful determination of proprietary authority. Thus, Cavalcanti is translated into decasyllables because Pound judges the English reader's iconographic sensibility is conditioned to respond acceptingly to that style as authentic to its original's proprietary

aims. At the same time this allows Pound to vary the rhythm of the lines with great freedom, thereby offering some hope that such rhythms are also mimetic. The breakthrough which came with the publication of *Cathay* was that for the first time Pound could combine these independently derived factors of the metrical frame, proprietary and iconographic format in poems that like the *Cantos* are of 'no known category.'<sup>130</sup>

## Notes to Chapter Five

1. 'Unsigned Review,' *Bookman* (London) 36 (July 1909): 188-189; reprinted in Eric Homberger, ed., *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 54-55; p. 54.
2. This is Homberger's view. Cf. Homberger, *op.cit.*, p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
4. This is a view cited in Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 46-47.
5. Cf. Pound's remarks cited in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p. 56; and in Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn 1915-1924*, ed. Timothy Materer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 107.
6. Arthur Wayne Glowka, 'The Function of Metre According to Ancient and Medieval Theory,' *Allegorica* 7 (1987): 100-109, p. 107.
7. Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York, NY: New Directions, 1970), p. 740.
8. O.B. Hardison Jr., *Prosody and Purpose in the English Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 48.
9. John Heath-Stubbs, *The Ode* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 11.
10. Marjorie Perloff, 'The Contemporary of Our Grandchildren,' *Ezra Pound Among the Poets*, ed. George Bornstein (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 195-209; p. 203.
11. T.E. Hulme, 'Notes on Language and Style,' reprinted in Hulme, *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, ed. Karen Csengeri (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 23-45; p.40. The text also appears with slightly different punctuation in *Further Speculations by T.E. Hulme*, ed. Sam Hynes (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 95.
12. Reprinted in, Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited with an Introduction by T.S. Eliot (London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1954; repr. 1985), pp. 1-14; p. 12.
13. T.E. Hulme, 'Searchers after Reality-- II: Haldane,' reprinted in Hulme, *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, pp. 93-98; p.95.
14. Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1913), p. 6.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
16. This date is suggested by Csengeri in, Hulme, *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, p. 49. The 'Lecture' was not published in Hulme's lifetime.
17. T.E. Hulme, 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry,' reprinted in Hulme, *The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme*, pp. 49-58; p. 54.
18. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' *op.cit.*, p. 5.
19. Reprinted in Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), pp. 92-93; p. 92.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Hesle: The Marvell Press, 1960), p. 84.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

26. Cf. the discussion in John Porter Houston, *French Symbolism and the Modernist Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 168-171.
27. Kenneth Burke, 'On Musicality in Verse,' *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 369-378; p. 376.
28. William E. Baker, *Syntax in English Poetry 1870-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 52.
29. Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford, *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship*, edited with an Introduction and Narrative Commentary and Notes by Brita Lindberg-Seyersted (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 35.
30. Stuart Y. McDougal, 'The Presence of Pater in "Blandula, Tenolla, Vagula,"' *Paideuma* 4 (1975): 317-321.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
32. Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 38-39.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
35. Christine Brooke-Rose, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 91.
36. Donald Davie, *Studies in Ezra Pound* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1991), p. 228.
37. Reprinted in Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, ed. D.D. Paige, (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), p. 288.
38. Cf. 'Letters to Dead Imagists,' in Carl Sandburg, *Chicago Poems* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1916), p. 176.
39. Thomas Parkinson, *W.B. Yeats: The Later Poetry* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1964), p. 187.
40. According to Parkinson, it is likely that Pound annotated Yeats' copies of Thomas MacDonagh's *Thomas Campion and the Art of English Poetry* and *Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish*. For Parkinson's discussion of this possibility, see Parkinson, *op.cit.*, pp. 189-190.
41. Cf. Pound's 'Advice to a Young Poet,' reprinted in Margaret Anderson, ed., *The Little Review Anthology* (New York, NY: Hermitage House, Inc., 1953), pp. 135-137; and K.K. Ruth ven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), p. 154.
42. This is Ruth ven's suggestion. Cf. Chapter 2 of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited, with an Introduction, by George Watson (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1975; repr. 1984).
43. For a discussion of Storer's views, see J.B. Harmer, *Victory in Limbo: Imagism 1908-1917* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), pp. 106-107.
44. For example, cf. Harmer, *op.cit.*, pp. 107-109, and Wallace Martin, *The New Age Under Orage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 165.
45. In Pound, 'A Retrospect,' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 7.
46. F.S. Flint, 'Contemporary French Poetry,' *The Poetry Review* 1 (Aug. 1912), pp. 355-414. Reprinted in Cyrena N. Pondrom, *The Road From Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 86-145; pp. 119-120.
47. Ezra Pound, 'The Approach to Paris. II.,' *New Age* 13 (11 Sept. 1913), pp. 577-579. Reprinted in Pondrom, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-178; p. 176.
48. Harmer, *op.cit.*, pp. 132-133.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

50. For Pater's example, see Vol. 2 of Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 2 Vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), p. 104; or Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, edited with an Introduction by Ian Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 201.

51. Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear, *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914*, eds. Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1984), p. 63.

52. For example, cf. Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, pp. 337, 339 and 348.

53. Also, the alliteration in this poem, as Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz have pointed out in their edition of Pound and Shakespear's letters, coincides stylistically and chronologically with Pound's work on 'The Seafarer.' See *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters 1909-1914*, p. 64 note.

54. Cf. Stephen J. Adams, 'Pound's Quantities and "Absolute Rhythm,"' *Essays in Literature* 4 (1977): 95-109.

55. For reference to which see, Pound and Shakespear, op.cit., pp. 162-163.

56. For example, Richard of St. Victor, *Selected Writings on Contemplation*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by Clare Kirchberger (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1957), p. 94.

57. Reprinted in Ezra Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, ed. Michael John King, with an Introduction by Louis L. Martz (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), pp. 81-82. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 81.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Pound, 'A Retrospect,' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 6.

63. Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me,' *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 81.

64. Cf. Chapter One, and Edwin Guest, *A History of English Rhythms*, ed. Walter Skeat (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), p. 169.

65. Pound, 'At the Heart O' Me,' *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 81.

66. Cf. Pound, Canto 91, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, pp. 612-613.

67. Cited in Pound, 'A Retrospect,' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 12.

68. For example, see Brooke-Rose, op.cit., p. 86.

69. Ibid., p. 88 and p. 89.

70. Ibid., p. 86.

71. Ibid., pp. 86-87.

72. Ibid., p. 87.

73. William Morris, Vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of William Morris*, with Introductions by his daughter Mary Morris, 22 Vols. (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1992), p. 185.

74. Brooke-Rose, op.cit., p. 92.

75. John Hollander, *Vision and Resonance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 236.

76. See above note 29.

77. Ezra Pound, 'Masks,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 34.

78. Ibid.

79. Ezra Pound, 'Redivius,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 44. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.

80. Ibid.



81. Ezra Pound, 'Plotinus,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 36.
82. In particular see 'To T.H.: The Amphora,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 72.
83. For example, see 'Sonnet of the August Calm,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 235; and 'To La Contessa Bianzafior (Cent. XIV),' pp. 63-65 of the same volume.
84. Ezra Pound, 'A Virginal,' reprinted in Pound, *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. 195.
85. For Pound's early reading of Rossetti, cf. Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
86. Reprinted with alterations in Ezra Pound, *Translations*, ed. Hugh Kenner (London: Faber & Faber, 1953; repr. 1970), pp 17-25. This particular quotation from the original version is cited by Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
87. Ezra Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, ed. David Anderson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).
88. Ezra Pound, 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris. III.,' *New Age* 11 (14 Dec. 1911), pp. 155-156. Cited in Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 145.
89. Reprinted with differing versions and textual variants in Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, pp. 43-46.
90. Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, p. 43. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.
91. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Volume 2 of *The Collected Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 2 Vols., edited with a Preface and Notes by William M. Rossetti (London: Ellis and Scrutton, 1886), p. 119.
92. Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, p. 45.
93. Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
95. Pound, *Pound's Cavalcanti*, p. 46.
96. Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*, p.89.
97. See above, note 34.
98. See above, note 49.
99. Ezra Pound, 'Vorticism,' *Fortnightly Review* 102 o.s., 96 n.s. (Sept. 1914), pp. 461-471. Excerpted in Rutheven, *op.cit.* pp. 152-153.
100. Cited by Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 190.
101. See Carpenter, *op.cit.*, pp. 134-135.
102. Pound, *Translations*, p. 23.
103. For example, see Pound's letter to Dorothy Shakespear cited below in note 104, which letter includes references to Pico and Pater; also compare these references to McDougal, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
104. Pound and Shakespear, *op.cit.*, pp. 43-45; p. 44.
105. Reprinted in Yone Noguchi, *Yone Noguchi: Collected English Letters*, ed. Ikuko Atsumi (Tokyo: The Yone Noguchi Society, 1975), pp. 210-211; p. 211.
106. Reprinted in Rutheven, *op.cit.*, p. 152.
107. Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 53.
108. Noguchi, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
110. See above, note 100.
111. According to Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 218 and p. 220.
112. This is Atsumi's view; Noguchi, *op.cit.*, p. 15.
113. Cf. Carpenter, *op.cit.*, p. 223.

114. Herbert Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), p. 101.

115. This comparison is cited by Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound's Cathay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 61.

116. Peter Jones, ed., *Imagist Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 95.

117. Giles, *op.cit.*, p. 100. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.

118. Reprinted in Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 94. All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.

119. Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941*, p. 154.

120. *Ibid.*

121. William Jennings, trans., *The Shi King* (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1891), pp. 180-181.

122. Clement Francis Romilly Allen, trans., *The Book of Chinese Poetry* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1891), pp. 220-221

123. Reprinted in Lawrence W. Chisolm, *Fenellosa: The Far East and American Culture* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 254. *All subsequent quotations from this text are based on this edition.*

124. See above note 119.

125. Ronald Bush, 'Pound and Li Po: What Becomes a Man,' in Bornstein, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-62; p. 37.

126. Cf. Pound's discussion of Fenellosa's views contained in, Ezra Pound, *Instigations of Ezra Pound, Together with An Essay on the Chinese Written Character by Ernest Fenellosa* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1967; repr. 1969).

127. Chisolm, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

129. Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 6.

130. Ezra Pound in a letter to James Joyce dated 1917; cited in William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. XVII.

## Conclusion

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to 'the tradition' or 'a tradition'; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is traditional or even 'too traditional'. Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure.

--T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'  
(1919)<sup>1</sup>

When is a fourteen-line English poem, with ten syllables and five dominant accents per line, rhymed *ababcdcdefefgg* not a sonnet? Is every line in *Idylls of the King* an iambic pentameter, or are some "deficient"? If we perceive some of them as deficient, what does this tell us about the author, his era, the "form" and, indeed, ourselves as readers of verse? When these questions can be answered with something like empirical certainty, then the need for a 'tradition' is truly at an end. And yet we must be content to know that some kind of parameters exist in these matters. As Eliot's statement cited above shows, we are patently aware of when these parameters have been transgressed-- leaving us with the feeling that a poem is either "'too traditional'" or that a relationship to 'tradition' is regrettably 'absent.'

Many of the prosodic theories discussed in Chapters One and Two, and the genealogies of poems and poets that accompany them, represent examples of various attempts to arrive at a working model of such empirical truths about English metre. Most clearly opposed to these theories was the species of philosophical analysis that sought the basis of poetic format in the primordial world of psychological, even spiritual processes of "meaning." In either case, the very indeterminacy of the experience of metre itself meant that a universally satisfactory conclusion would remain elusive. Yet, as in the point demonstrated by the child who asks, 'How long is a metre?' and who is satisfied with the answer, 'About thirty-nine inches,' there remains the need to possess a concept of

measurement and to make that concept immediately applicable-- self-referential in a sense by being dependent upon our own experience for its relevance. Therefore with more than 1000 years of English poems as precedents, it is impossible to dispute the powerful reality of a 'tradition,' when such 'traditions' are given substance by a feeling of historical continuity shared among people who perceive themselves in some particular relationship to the whole of that continuity (real or imagined). Such assumptions may differ to the extent of forming, on the one hand, Saintsbury's construction of a cultured brotherhood, emblematic of values transcending strict codification, or on the other hand, a quasi-scientific quest to determine the underlying strata of "natural selection" governing the manifestation of poetic rhythm. Central to both is the necessity of expressing the vitality constituted by the interaction of aural and visual presentation, with proposed abstractions of "form" as a factor implicit in communication.

Chapter Three represents an attempt to show how, within a limited historical framework, Pound and Eliot experienced the values implicit in these two points-of-view. The effects that these individual experiences had upon their own ideals regarding the poetic synthesis between abstractions of "form" and "meaning," as drawn from their many remarks upon these subjects discussed in this chapter, may then be viewed within the context in which they were formed, that is, the background discussed in Chapters One and Two. Seen in this way, the differences that characterize their responses to both perspectives are illuminating, as can be seen from the practical results examined in Chapters Four and Five. Clearly, there is no simple distinction that can be drawn between the two men's work, nor, for that matter, within the *oeuvre* of each poet. Both depend upon the functioning of an adequate construct of tradition to establish a basis for apparent metrical segmentation. Both are aware that receptiveness to such apparent segmentation is conditioned by factors that are simultaneously personal and cultural, proprietary and iconic. Yet each exploited the

potential of that receptivity in differing ways. For Eliot, the emphasis was decidedly upon the experience of metrical format as it represents (however incompletely or inaccurately) a process of *recognition*-- of metre as the statement of known, quantifiable assertions, within which experience a variety of re-adjustments constitutes a revivifying contact with prior assumptions. In contrast to this, Pound's method was predominantly based upon a faith in the ability of metre to both fuse with its lexis, and to transcend it, unlocking those mysteries of utterance that foster the recurrence of "form" across the boundaries of time and specific language groups.

Fortunately neither Pound nor Eliot's work began nor ended with a simple challenge to existing concepts of metre. The conditions that fostered their own early development as poets had made such a challenge unnecessary. Instead, the task that each man faced was in uncovering for himself a series of prosodic principles adequate to his own individual needs as a writer of verse, and one which, through its interaction with comparable systems as they existed elsewhere, would enable his readers to perceive a functional significance in the formal dimension of his poetry. The exact nature of which significance, while as potentially inscrutable as all poetic meanings, remains a living factor of the verse itself, and one that, perhaps more than any other, offers a commentary on those poems that precede and follow it. As such, the establishment of prosodic principles must remain a field of importance as it is undeniably one of perpetual renewal.

## *Notes to Conclusion*

1. T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' reprinted in, T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1960; repr. 1964), p. 3.

## *Bibliography*

(NOTE: Besides listing all those works cited in the body of the thesis, this bibliography contains many items which will be of interest to scholars interested in viewing Pound and Eliot's early verse against a backdrop of their contemporaries' ideals of poetic 'form.' Because this field involves a considerable amount of interaction with other facets of the two poets' critical views and personal dispositions, I have also included items by their own favourite authors. I have found that when viewed collectively, often these can provide some insight into Eliot and Pound's own distinctive modes of apprehension. There are also a few slight deviations from standard bibliographical practice that may require explanation. The first of these is a variation in the format of publishers' names, e.g. 'Faber and Faber,' 'Faber & Faber.' In some cases, the publisher's format as it appears on the particular edition used reflects bibliographical data which demands to be preserved. But in any case such variations represent changing attitudes towards the information they include, and therefore, given the comparatively large scope of this bibliography, to standardize such formats seems inappropriate. For this reason, I have reproduced this information in exactly the same format as it appears on the particular edition cited. Similarly, as scholarly editions and compilations of earlier authors' work often include complex crediting of individual editor's contributions, for which standard abbreviations can be inadequate, where necessary I have reproduced this information in its original format. To avoid any confusion over American publishers' whereabouts, I have also included state abbreviations in every case. Finally, there may be some books included here that appear to be without relevance to the core subjects of Pound, Eliot and Prosody, but which nevertheless provided some useful source of bibliographical material. An example of this is, *Birds Through a Ceiling of Alabaster* (1975), which while not relevant in terms of its own text, nevertheless includes references to early twentieth-century translations of Arabic poetry, which potentially bore some relationship to the question of "foreign-verse-foreign-format" as discussed throughout this thesis. Likewise, some books appear because earlier Pound and Eliot scholars have seen in them a relationship to the principal authors' work-- a relationship duly examined.)

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