There can be but the one Ezra Pound:
Rearticulating *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* as Modernist Autobiography

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ABSTRACT

Ezra Pound took Eliot's theory of Literary Impersonality seriously and rejected biographical readings of his poetry. Yet, his poem *Hugh Sewlyn Mauberley* contains explicitly autobiographical material, which is directly related to the poem's meaning and has been referenced repeatedly in historical criticism of the poem. This creates a paradox of interpretation, in which the poem's interpretive meaning stands in contrast with the author's preferred style of interpretation. The intent of this Thesis is to work within this paradox by applying new criticism on literary autobiography to the poem; specifically the work of Max Saunders, Kevin Wong, and Hannah Sullivan. As a result of this experiment, the poem can be understood as being intentionally autobiographical in its presentation of Pound's former literary sensibilities. By using autobiography as a formal feature, Pound is able to reject and critique the form in the very act of using it, while remaining impersonal in relation to the expression of self within the poem. The poem can simultaneously be understood as impersonal Modernist poetry, autobiographical expression, and a powerful critique of self-expression in poetry. Overall, this points to Pound's interest in experimenting with subjectivity and objectivity in his poetry; the specific result of this reading presents Modernist poetry as capable of complex depictions of consciousness, which stands in contrast with past studies that focus only on their impersonality.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Modernist autobiography is an under-considered concept. Since Modernists are deeply interested in impersonality, is it possible for them to write autobiography? What I am inferring by using the term "possible" is not a question of literal possibility but more so one of poetic integrity and interpretation; if a Modernist poet writes autobiography then the question then arises of whether or not such an act betrays the concept of impersonality, one that the author assumably takes seriously, and whether or not the critic or reader should understand the text as autobiography. This is not to imply that Modernist autobiography is inherently oxymoronic, but to argue that such a construct is clearly paradoxical in its very nature and must be dealt with as such. Furthermore, this paradox does not necessarily apply to the general concept of autobiography, understood as a form of historical work, but is meant to complicate Modernist fiction that contains autobiographical elements. The theory of impersonality generally applies to texts, usually poetry, that have been created by a writer for artistic purposes and as a result render biographical readings invalid. While there is not a lot of modernist autobiography (of either type) that can be used to interrogate this paradox, Ezra Pound stands as a notable example of an artist caught up within these tensions. Pound embodies the concept of "High Modern" as much as any writer in the earliest 20th Century; yet, he possessed a deep interest in controlling the narrative around himself as well the entire poetic tradition. As a literary gatekeeper, celebrity, and Modernist artist – Pound is full of contradictions and stands as an excellent example to examine in terms of his relationship to autobiography.

The particular work I would like to analyze is Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*; a poem that is almost exclusively understood in terms of biographical elements concerning the Modernist movement in Britain as well as Pound own progression as a poet in this landscape. *Hugh Selwyn*

Mauberley remains as allusive as it was in the 20th Century. The poem is notoriously difficult to work with and for every new reading there is bound to be a rebuttal and rejection. At the heart of this issue is not the poem's artistic meaning and intent as much as it is the question of who is speaking and the progression of the literal events within the work. It is almost unanimously agreed that the poem is about Pound leaving behind his former self: the former expressivist aesthete poet who roamed throughout London before leaving it in the dust for Paris. The tension appears mainly in the poem's unclear narrator and how this voice/character may change or shift throughout the progression of the work. In his scholarship on the work, Vincent Miller comes to an unsatisfactory conclusion after summarizing many of the tensions found in historical interpretations:

> Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley is, one must hasten to say, an overconsidered poem. Disagreed about for half a century, interpreted in contradictory fashions, whoever speaks of it has to begin by explaining how he reads it … For Mauberley is not only one of Pound's major poems, essential to his development and to that of modernist literature, it is still, as Hugh Kenner pointed out forty years ago, 'at its deepest levels ... unread.'[1]

Miller's assertion of the poem being essential to the development of Modernist literature, alongside the personal growth of Pound himself, remains consistent within the criticism and perhaps this is why the debates can get so fierce; to understand this poem is seemingly inseparable from larger ideas concerning Modernism and Pound. Recent scholarship has turned toward this paradoxical relationship between the Modernist autobiographical text and the Modernist author. Broadly speaking, scholarship of this kind aims to reappropriate autobiography as a literary form which an author would use just as much as metaphorical language. Applying this thinking to *Mauberley* allows an impersonal reading to be achieved that is consistent with the scholarship. As a result of this reading a new interpretation begins to take

[1] Vincent Miller, "Mauberley and His Critics" (*ELH*, 1990), 961.

shape that allows the poem to be understood as simultaneously autobiographical and impersonal; it is in the very complexity of voice and narration that Pound is able to achieve this effect. This reading is unable to take into account every component of this very complex poem, yet my desire is that this new way of understanding the work will remain a relevant feature in future studies of Pound and Modernism. Throughout his career, Pound was always experimenting and shifting his philosophies, and for the sake of clarity I will separate his career into three major categories: the younger Pound (before 1919): the Modernist Pound (1919 – 1939): and, the later Pound (1940 – his death). These categories are primarily separated by both Pound's geographical location as well as his literary philosophy. First I will walk through Pound's paradoxical relationship to literary impersonality as can derived from his prose, his major work *The Cantos*, and his sense of self. Then I will turn to the prominent critical challenges of *Hugh Sewlyn Mauberley*. Following this, I will work through new studies in Modernist autobiography and how they can help understand the poem's paradoxical narture. Finally, I will argue for a new variety of potential readings as can be understood in light of autobiographical criticism. The result of this approach is to increase the potential ways in which the poem can be understood, and to present its complexity afresh. Ezra Pound's legacy is ever endangered by his anti-Semitic engagement with Italian Fascism; as a result it is as important as ever to highlight how *Hugh Sewlyn Mauberley* captures many of the period's tensions and is quintessential Modernist poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

POUND'S FORMAL EXPERIMENTS WITH IMPERSONALITY

Before turning to *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* and the question of Modernist autobiography, the specific dynamics of Ezra Pound's relationship to impersonality, and personality, must be considered. Pound in particular is a fascinating figure in this regard due to his progression over time. While Eliot seemed to arrive fully formed as an impersonal poet with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,* Pound famously goes through a variety of stages throughout his career – it is arguable whether or not he every truly found his ideal form (perhaps the image and legacy of Pound will always the kaleidoscope of his every changing style). Modernism as a whole constantly challenged previously held conceptions of identity and form, and most major writers had their own personal philosophy with which they wrestled. Since Pound was consistently writing criticism alongside his poetry, the trajectory of his thought can be mapped relatively accurately. Furthermore, Pound never hesitated to create poetry in the midst of his intellectual developments and as a result the progression of his authorial philosophy runs throughout his poetic work. In the introduction to Pound's collected essays, Eliot speaks directly of the close relationship between Pound's criticism and his poetry: "but Pound has never yet written about a form of verse which he would not care to practice."[2] After mentioning several significance parts of English literature that Pound failed to write on, Eliot clarifies his inclusion of these gaps: "I mention these omissions, not as cautious reservations in my admiration for Pound's criticism, but the better to praise it for what it is."[3] The portrait Eliot creates truly captures the nature of Pound as "himself" – a poet and critic who's relationship between self-production and historical

[2] T.S. Eliot, "Introduction" in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, by Ezra Pound (New Directions Publishing, 1968), xiv.
[3] Ibid.

criticism remain closely tied. In a sense, he presents Pound as pragmatist, who would write on poetry once he read it and mastered it on his own. This is a notable shift in character from early on in his career, in which Pound was looking for an impersonal and objective art. As fluid as his philosophies were, his work remained focused on being set apart and actively rejecting the expressivist ideas of poetic that appeared during the Romantic period. Regardless of this reality, his larger than life sense of self would also often destabilize his attempts at impersonality. The question of form runs parallel; just as much as Pound and his fellow Modernists pondered impersonality, they struggled and experimented with a variety of forms in their attempts to create a truly modern poetry worthy of their literary predecessors, and this pursuit is directly tied to the their perceived need for an art form that could stand tall in the midst of the modern industrial world. Since this research focuses on *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* and Pound's transition out of London and into Paris, I will separate Pound's career into roughly three chronological periods for the sake of clarity: the early Pound refers to his initial career in England and ends when he becomes entangled with Eliot and the high Moderns; following this period is the period in which Pound is at most similar to the other Moderns and I will generally refer to this as his high modernist stage: the late Pound refers to the decade after this when he would become "politically active" in Italy. Obviously, his career extends beyond the Pisan Cantos, but their publication will stand as the historical limit of this study. Overall, in Ezra Pound's life and career we find tensions with impersonality that defined the entire movement, and Pound personally fluctuated between them all; understanding the paradoxical nature of Pound's relationship to these dynamics is critical to any examination of how they function within his art.

Pound's movement towards Modernist impersonality is the result of two dynamics in his life: his engagement with fellow Modernists and his career-long attempt to find a fitting model

for his poetry. Both of these dynamics exist in Pound's life in a parallel manner. It wasn't until he moved to London and met those who would become his fellow Modernists that he began to gravitate toward impersonality, as Ira Nadel notes in her research:

> Pound sought to free himself from the sway, if not the influence, of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites. Browning's dramatic monologues and Yeats's confrontations with history became his new guides in his new search for an objective style. In London, he found models such as Yeats, Eliot, and James Joyce who rejected the subjective and personal for the power of the impersonal.[4]

Pound was always searching for models of poetry, but his search for models included authors as well – this is reflective of how he connected the life of the poet and poetry together. I will touch more on this dynamics later more in depth, but it can be noted this is another way that Pound often resides between personality and impersonality. When looking at Pound's prose, I will often compare it with Eliot's and the goal of this is too show the subtle differences between two of the faces of high Modernism. The two obviously influenced each other and Eliot spoke highly of Pound in many instances regarding the development of poetry in their era: "Mr. Pound is more responsible for the XXth Century revolution in poetry than is any other individual."[5] Along with this, much of Pound's prose comes before Eliot's chronologically. Eliot's prose is more commonly seen as the epitome of high Modernism, and I do not mean to challenge this status quo; Eliot's prose is often much more polished, and he seemingly spent more time articulating his theories and views before writing them down, whereas Pound's constant production of critical prose presents a different picture. In this regard, Pound embodies these tensions in his various experiments and writings about impersonality. As he himself began to wrestle with the larger tensions of the movement, he would always experiment with form in his search of a truly

[4] Ira Nadel, *Approaches to Teaching Pound's Poetry and Prose* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2021), 32.
[5] (qtd. in) William Pratt, *Ezra Pound and the Making of Modernism* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2007) 32.

objective and Modern poetry. In the Modernists he found solace in their similar attempts to create a new poetry. Though his famous call for the artist to "Make it new" doesn't appear until 1934, Pound was always trying out new forms and ideas. The variety of models that Pound used is endless, but by focusing on some of his major attempts to formulate his poetics around a model, his shifting proximity to personality can be articulated.

Before turning to Pound's prose, it is important to establish both what form of aesthetic theory is rejected by Modernism and what was offered in its place. In 1800, William Wordsworth's definition of poetry first was published in the 'Preface' to his *Lyrical Ballads*; his lengthy preface, which aims to defend the nature of his work and art, is often reduced to the statement where he specific defines poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[6] This phrase has been used since its utterance in classrooms and studies of Romanticism as the defining philosophy of the movement. Understanding poetry as an overflow of feelings remains a popular conception of the artistic process in a post-modern world–regardless of Modernism's attempts to irradicate the construct. Yet, there is more to Wordsworth's claims than just this simple definition. A few lines before this definition, he speaks of the potential for the form to be abused by his contemporaries:

> I cannot, however, be insensible of the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge, that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy purpose.[7]

[6] William Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,"* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume D, The Romantic Period*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 295.
[7] Wordsworth, 295.

The two things that Wordsworth is opposed to in contemporary poetry are "triviality" and "meanness." Meanness could mean any number of things, and triviality is a confusing standard in the sense that it is unclear as to why certain poetry lacks worth. Wordsworth explains the parameters by presenting his own work as an example of exemplary poetry that is neither trivial nor mean. The decisive factor is that each of Wordsworth's poems have a "worthy purpose." He clarifies what this purpose is in several lines later:

> I have also informed my Reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But, speaking in language somewhat more appropriate, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature … The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged[8]

Here we see a full picture of how Wordsworth conceives of poetry and more specifically the poet. Poetry may be an overflow of feeling, but it is the poet who has the agency to choose which subject is worthy to be amplified in the poem. Any gross or trivial subject that derives from the mind of humankind could exist in poetry but Wordsworth tasks the poet with the job of discernment. The reader of poetry, who being human is also full of such feelings, will react to the curated emotional experience and find excitement or even an awakening to their emotional core. Therefore, Wordsworth does not understand triviality as the everyday, he argues the poet can give meaning to the everyday through poetry, but instead he views it as something related to a "gross subject." Near the end of the preface, Wordsworth asserts that poetry with this purpose is "genuine": "if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest

[8] Wordsworth, 296.

mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations."[9] Genuine poetry is the kind that is not limited in its potential to excite the mind of the species; this type of work is capable of aiding the growth of moral society. A clear motivation for Wordsworth's essay is to craft an argument for poetry being pragmatic. As a result of the poet's work, people will grow morally and focus their minds on the right things. Percy Shelley writes something similar in his "A Defense of Poetry," yet he argues for a broader, and more formally vague, definition of the form:

> But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than color, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation.[10]

Shelley is far less occupied with the social and moral possibilities of poetry and focuses much more on a general sense of transcendental aestheticism. Yet he is consistent with Wordsworth view of it as an emotional overflow from within the poet. Poetry reflects the internal nature of humanity, and through its creation and consumption we can become more in tune with the realities of ourselves and the universe around us. Perhaps the most explicit claim Shelley makes about poetry's formal function is his view of poetry's ultimate goal: "poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted."[11] This argument insists on poetry's interpretive quality as the form through which the species can give order to chaos – from void to beauty. This is where Wordsworth and Shelley agree the most: an understanding of poetry as a vessel for the

[9] Wordsworth, 304.
[10] Percy Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume D, The Romantic Period,* edited by Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 859.
[11] Shelley, 861.

inconceivable aspects of existence. Though their personal convictions of morality may have been largely different, they both looked to poetry to reveal the inner life of humanity.

The rise of Modernism in the early 20th Century is often personified by the rise of T.S. Eliot as critic and poet; Eliot brought forth the new wave of thought concerning the purpose of poetry and led the charge against Romanticism. It is necessary to consider Eliot's theories as a general place holder for Modernist experiments with personality and rejection of the previous generation's ideas. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* is commonly used as a placeholder for the turning point of the era, but his other famous early work *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock* is often used as well. While these works mark the rise of Modernist poetics, Eliot's prose also functions in a similar way for Modernist criticism. Similar to Pound, Eliot was always a major critic alongside his poetic endeavors. The seminal essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" marks the radical shift towards Modernist impersonality in the same way Prufrock's jarring opening image of a "patient etherized upon a table"[12] marks the rise of a new form of poetry. John Childs refers to the essay as the "most extreme expression of poetic personality"[13] available. The element of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that is perhaps most radical, and most relevant to this discussion, is Eliot's ideas concerning the personality and more specifically the relationship between the poet, their own emotions, and the emotions that can exist within a poem. In place of the emotional, philosophical, and civil intent behind poetry-making in the Romantic period, Eliot presents his theories using scientific language and imagery:

> The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It

[12] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2005), 9.
[13] John Childs, *Modernist Form: Pound's Style in the Early Cantos* (Selinsgrove, Pa: Susquehanna University Press, 1986), 12.

> may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.[14]

It must be noted that Eliot obviously is dealing with the nature of emotions within the mind of the poet, similar to the Romantics. Yet it is here that Eliot makes the critical caveat concerning poetic quality that will set him apart from them; the greater the poet, the greater the distance between their personal emotions and the emotions within the poem. In this viewpoint, the poet will function as a mere vessel for universal emotions instead of one who infuses their work with their own personal emotions and personality. Eliot specifically speaks on this point later on in the essay: "The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."[15] While he uses scientific terminology, the nature of this process is described as something mystic or even spiritual – this is perhaps the closest similarity between Eliot and the Romantic theory of poetry. The poet still stores up feelings and creates poetry full of emotion, but the emotions within the finished poem stand separate from the personality of the poet. Similarly, Virginia Woolf connected this type of thinking to figures who were lost to history in a biographical sense. In "A Room of One's Own," she connects Shakespeare's literary mastery with his impersonality: "The reason perhaps why we know so little of Shakespeare's state of mind . . . is that his grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us . . .Therefore his poetry flows from him free and unimpeded. If ever a human being got his work expressed completely . . . If ever a mind was . . . unimpeded."[16] Perhaps the most

[14] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[15] Ibid.
[16] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 56.

explicit statement about impersonality is found in Eliot's famous pronunciation, which rhetorically recalls Wordsworth's "Preface":

> Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.[17]

Eliot isn't arguing for a rejection of emotions and personality in poetry as much as he is arguing for re-posturing of the poet towards these dynamics; the poet is full of emotion and personality but this is transformed into the finished work, which stands as an objective piece of art.

Though Eliot's work remains perhaps the most direct and extensive writing on impersonality within the period, Pound also was also working with these dynamics; Pound would slowly move towards impersonality throughout his career as is reflected in his criticism, though his earlier writing is very similar to the Romantics he publicly rejected. As I already stated, Pound's criticism gives the reader a unique insight into his thought process for he rarely wrote about anything he himself did not practice in his poetry (or attempt to practice). Notably, Pound's views towards poetry fluctuate between a hard formalism and a Romantic leaning that highlights the art's personal dimensions. For Pound poetry was both a craft and an emotional experience. Originally, Pound was a much more expressivist poet, as any would have been coming out of the Romantic period, and is generally understood to be an "aesthete" with a great love for art and beauty.[18] Even early on in his life his poetic skill can clearly be observed for the early Pound wrote a great deal of expressivist poetry: often times placing himself and his experience alongside, or inside, the mythological to give his subjectivity a sense of grandeur. In one his earlier passages of criticism "The Serious Artist" (published in 1913), Pound articulates a

[17] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[18] F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: a Study of the Contemporary Situation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 140.

view of poetry that is somewhat vague and focuses mostly on the unique experience of a piece of art:

> We might come to believe that the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radioactivity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying. A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in swift motion. You may make what image you like.[19]

The emphasis on experience is notable in this case, and while there is some scientific imagery, Pound at this moment is still articulating his beliefs concerning poetry. Later in the essay, Pound speaks on the necessity of training in the cultivation of artistic skill, which he would lean into more as he embraced Modernism:

> Obviously great art must be an exceptional thing. It cannot be the sort of thing anyone can do after a few hours practice. It must be the result of some exceptional faculty, strength, or perception. It must almost be that strength of perception working with the connivance of fate, or chance, or whatever you choose to call it.[20]

While this moment in the text reflects Pound's constant emphasis on the seriousness of the craft, it also reflects his uncertain sense of how to assess these things. In both quotations from this essay, we find a younger Pound who has strong opinions but also is not entirely confident in his views on poetry and art in general. He is leaning on a more universal sense that beauty is a natural truth, which stands in opposition to the hard sense of asceticism he would develop in the next decade. This is also present in his brief essay "The Constant Preaching to the Mob," (written in 1916) which shows his passionate disagreement with the idea that art was created for humankinds' entertainment, and also includes an attempt to articulate the origins of great art:

> 'The beginnings—for entertainment'—has the writer of this sentence read *The Seafarer* in Anglo-Saxon? Will the author tell us for whose benefit these lines, which alone in the works of our forbears are fit to compare with Homer—for whose entertainment were they made? They were made for no man's entertainment, but because a man believing in silence found himself unable to withhold himself from speaking … Such poems are not made for after-dinner speakers, nor was the eleventh book of the Odyssey. Still it flatters

[19] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New Directions Publishing, 1968), 49.
[20] Pound, 56.

> the mob to tell them that their importance is so great that the solace of lonely men, and the lordliest of the arts, was created for their amusement.[21]

The intensity with which he views great art is indeed stirring, and it reveals the significance Pound placed upon the works of great poetry he deemed as great. Yet his view that art comes out of a silence to the solace of humankind, and not needing a purpose of any kind other than to be simply the lordliest of arts, leans toward romantic sentiment—obviously, his belief that poetry does not need pragmatic quality separates his theory from Wordsworth's ideas of art's contributions to civil society. In his early prose, when he was part of the Imagist movement, Pound attempted to describe the quality that defines art. The terminology that Stanley Coffman Jr. uses in his research on Imagism is notably similar to the language in the essay: "he defended his assertion that art need have no message, make no criticism of life, that its justification is its beauty. In 1910, he defined its purpose: 'Great art is made, not to please, but to call forth, or create, an ecstasy. The finer the quality of this ecstasy, the finer the art.'"[22] This quote shows early Pound viewing poetry in highly emotional and personal terms, similar to those of the Romantics. Pound would seem to agree from afar with the moral virtue of art and its impact on society. Just as Wordsworth argues for the necessity of art being taken seriously and its significant impactful on human society, Pound argues that good art is moral and bad art is immoral. Specifically, Pound's theory of art claims great art is true in its need to accurately represent the inner workings of the human mind. Yet Pound insists on art being beautiful in an unexplainably manner, though some people will "not appreciate it."[23] He describes the beauty of art in the same way one describes the wind:

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[21] Pound, 64-65.
[22] Stanley Coffman, *Imagism : a Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), 126-127.
[23] Pound, 41.

> Beauty in art reminds one what is worth while. I am not now speaking of shams. I mean beauty, not slither, not sentimentalizing about beauty, not telling people that beauty is the proper and respectable thing. I mean beauty. You don't argue about an April wind, you feel bucked up when you meet it. You feel bucked up when you come on a swift moving thought in Plato or on a fine line in a statute[24]

Often Pound was insistent in his prose, whether he had a fully formed thought or not. In "The Constant Preaching to the Mob," he argues strongly but fails to give specific qualities that define great art; instead he simply demands that there must be a genuine sense of aesthetic. This aesthetic insistence is tied inherently to the situation of the poet in modernity, and Pound's intensity is connected to a belief that his views on beauty and aesthetic have been lost (or are being challenged). He opens "The Serious Artist" by bringing up this situation:

> During the intervening centuries, and before them, other centres of civilization had decided that good art was a blessing and that bad art was criminal, and they had spent some time and thought in trying to find means whereby to distinguish the true art from the sham. But in England now … we are asked if the arts are moral. We are asked to refine the relation of the arts to economics, we are asked what position the arts are to hold in the ideal republic.[25]

Here we see Pound connect the issues of asceticism with that of Modern society. The posture he often takes as antagonist toward the masses, institutions, and society at large is a defining feature of any Poundian criticism, and he would slowly intensify his emphasis. The conditions of modernity is a driving factor in Pound's disillusionment with his former ideas concerning aesthetics.

Late in his London Career, Pound wrote two notable pieces, "The Hard and Soft in French Poetry" in 1918 and "The Tradition" in 1919, and then while in Italy he wrote "How to Read" in 1929; when placed next to each other, these three pieces of prose highlight his former understandings of aesthetics and his gradual movement toward an impersonality poetry. In the

[24] Pound, 45.
[25] Pound, 41.

first essay Pound attempts to articulate the difference of sound in French and English poetry, and in the second he aims to narrate the history of poetry, as he sees it, before turning to the topic of "vers libre." These two works work together in the sense that they both work within a larger Poundian version of history, where modern French and English literature are the result of a grand poetic tradition that has been progressing strongly for centuries. The most notable relevance of the essay to my subect is Pound's understanding of the English poetic history and form. Specifically, Pound claims that English presents a unique opportunity for the poet to wield the language for their own artistic purposes:

> And after that we have 'isms' and 'eses': the pseudo-Elizabethean – i.e., bad keats; the romantics, Swinburneses, Browningese, neo-celticism. And how the devil a poet writing English manages to find or make a language for poems is a mystery … English prose is good in proportion as a man makes it an individual language, one which he alone uses[26]

While Pound uses the term "prose" here which could imply this idea does not apply to poetry, it is clear from his later statement about Chaucer, and the larger context, that this is not the case: "in the time of Henry VIII – Englishmen could scarcely make a clear formulation even in documents of state and instructions to envoys; so backward were things in this island, so rude in prose the language which had been exquisite in the lyrics of Chaucer"[27] The way in which Pound speaks about English ties the form to personality; it is in the power of each individual poet to shape the language in their image. Pound's emphasis on a personal language is also connected to his emphasis on the autonomy of the author in their ability to shape the very poetic tradition alongside the language. His criticism of the English language is mostly tied to his critiques of English society at large—his departure from London was preeminent. Yet at the heart of his categorization of the language's various artistic styles is his own conception of the poetic

[26] Pound, 287.
[27] Pound, 287.

tradition. Many of his critiques of English Literature derive from his understanding of the poetic tradition, which views English as a new and developing language still trying to find its footing among the rest. The opening rhetorical move in the essay "The Tradition" reveals his intent to set English in its place among many other movements that have led to the current moment: "The tradition is a beauty which we preserve and not a setoff fetters to bind us. This tradition did not begin in A.D. 1870, nor in 1776, nor in 1632, nor in 1564. It did not begin even with Chaucer."[28] The intent of this move is to place English poetry alongside the rest of the world as part of a global tradition that continually grows and changes, a process which Pound describes very beautifully in the essay: "Thus as always one wave of one of these traditions has caught and overflowed an earlier wave receding. The finest troubadour had sun at the court of Coeur de Leon, Chaucer had brought in the 'making' of France and ended the Anglo-Saxon alliterative fashions."[29] An interest in world poetry famously becomes a defining feature of Pound's criticism and translation work. Though most of the essay focuses on the poetry derived from the Melic poets and poetry out of Provence, Pound makes a fascinating and revealing claim about poetry's earliest origins: "Doubtless there existed before either of these traditions a Babylonian and a Hittie tradition whereof knowledge is for the most part lost. We know men worshipped Mithra with an arrangement of pure vowel-sounds. We know that men made verses in Egypt and in China, we assume that they made them in Uruk."[30] Here, Pound is making assumptions about history that fit into his own conception of the tradition. The idea that all ancient civilizations have a poetic core is attractive to him and supports his emphasis on the arts in relation to society. Pound's tendency to create his own personal history and tradition, as a place where he can situate

[28] Pound, 91.
[29] Pound, 92.
[30] Pound, 91.

his own work, is consistent with his emphasis on author autonomy in "The Hard and Soft in French" and various other works of criticism. This type of thinking is consistent throughout Pound's career; the shift toward a hard formalism comes more so in the second half of the essay where he addresses the phenomenon of "vers libre" or free verse. His dealing with the subject is directly attached to his shift toward the viewing poetry as scientific and formal, as he correlates the entire process of writing vers libre with the application of musical theory. Vers Libre demands the mastery of formal skills and techniques, and these constitute impersonal poetic standards. Pound was always dramatic and demanding towards the poet and the critic in his work, but in his treatment of vers libre there is a new emphasis on a level of elite knowledge required to reach certain aesthetic heights. This emphasis is consistent with Eliot's emphasis on a scientific poetry and he says something similar concerning the form: "No verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job."[31] The notable turn towards this view of the art is inherently connected with Pound's movements towards Eliot's style of Modernism, which considers impersonality as one of the major elements that allows for a new formal aestheticism. Eliot clearly states how these two dynamics are interrelated in "Tradition": "There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science."[32] This correlation becomes more prevalent for Pound in his essay "How to Read," which would come after the creation of his friendship with Eliot. The essay marks a notable move in the direction of impersonal and scientific modernism, and Pound opens the piece by referring to institutions of learning, which taught literature as "institutions for the obstruction of learning."[33] Though

[31] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 6: The War Years, 1940-1946* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd., 2017), 273.
[32] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[33] Pound, 15.

Pound's high emphasis on form is present in his section on vers libre in "The Tradition," it is not until the introduction of "How to Read" that Pound takes on scientific terminology and specifically reduces the role of personality in the study of poetry:

> When studying physics we are not asked to investigate the biographies of all the disciples of Newton who showed interest in science, but who failed to make any discovery. Neither are their unrewarded groupings, hopes, passions, laundry bills, or erotic experiences thrust on the hurried student or considered germane to the subject.[34]

This turn towards a hard formal and scientific look at the study of literature shows a shift in Pound that is distinct from the roaming aesthete days of his past. By drawing a comparison between the formal innerworkings of poetry and physics, Pound sets the stage for a new understanding of how poetry ought to be studied and understood – and how it ought to be crafted. In this essay, Pound is found at his most Eliot-like, and he summarizes his purposes with the brief retort: "our subject – the art of getting meaning into words."[35] Yet even in the midst of this new and hard view of literature, Pound still held to literature as intrinsically connected to the expressions of the human-being. "People regard literature as something vastly more flabby and floating and complicated and indefinite than, let us say, mathematics. Its subject matter, the human consciousness, is more complicated than are number and space."[36] Most of the essay's text is spent laying out Pound's personal view on what should be required in the literary education, which ranges from Confucius to Voltaire, and provocatively omits writers such as Shakespeare due to the fact that, "one absorbs quite enough knowledge of them from boring circumjacent conversation."[37] Furthermore, this essay shows Pound at the peak of his elitism. In the same way that he sets a high standard for the poet's need to understand musical structures in

[34] Pound, 15.
[35] Pound, 32.
[36] Pound, 18.
[37] Pound, 38.

order to compose vers libre, Pound claims a knowledge of poetry is required for all those who write it and write about it: "If a man is too lazy to read the brief works of these poets, he cannot hope to understand writing, verse writing, prose writing, any writing."[38] Also this quotation shows the close relationship in which Pound places all forms of literary work and how the great writer is the master of all forms. As noted in "The Tradition," it is the musical and metric nature of poetry that sets it apart from other forms. Overall, throughout these essays the trajectory of Pound from an optimistic young poet to a high Modern is seen clearly; yet, Pound's movement in this direction is hardly definitive as he never lets go of his former tendencies. He would fluctuate along these lines for the rest of poetic career.

From Pound's literary criticism, we can now turn toward the specific models with which he experimented with personality in his attempts to find a fitting model for modern poetry. The Imagist movement was one of Pound's earliest attempts to create a new type of objective poetry. As I have already made clear, Pound was especially interested in the emotional experience of poetry during this moment in his career, as Coffman records: "he defended his assertion that art need have no message, make no criticism of life, that its justification is its beauty. In 1910, he defined its purpose: 'Great art is made, not to please, but to call forth, or create, an ecstasy. The finer the quality of this ecstasy, the finer the art."[39] Though Pound's beliefs concerning aesthetics were more romantic than Modern during this period, it is clear that he was interested in experiments with how to represent personality in poetry. When writing about Pound's earliest works in the movement, Coffman notes how they experimented with personality: "Many of Pound's poems are what he referred to as 'dramatic lyrics' … the dramatic lyrics frequently

[38] Pound, 33.
[39] Coffman,126-127.

recreate a personality whom he has discovered in the course of his studies."[40] Furthermore, Ira Nadel notes that in this early work a "dialogue between subjective and the objective"[41] already was present. The goal of Imagism was to present an image as clearly and objectively as possible, in a type of minimalistic poetry. Therefore, Pound's shift toward Modernist impersonality was not just because of his friendship with the moderns, but would have been a natural shift; Modernism offered a new doctrine of impersonality that took the place of Pound's previous experiments with impersonal form. In his work on Pound's *Cantos*, Ronald Bush also writes of how Pound's early experiments are similar to his work in London: "The pattern of exploration of dramatic voices between 1913 and 1919 repeated the shape of his earliest experiments with lyric personae."[42] After his departure from Imagism, Pound turned toward Vorticism and along with Wyndham Lewis published the famous *BLAST* magazine. Vorticism primarily is found in the forms of painting and sculpture, and literary versions are less definable. Although his name is often associated with the movement, Pound hardly wrote any Vorticist poetry as Reed Dasenbrock points out in his book on the movement:

> "The only works that we can certain consider Vorticist are the poems Pound published in *Blast*. This fact more than any other has made it easy to consider Vorticism an unimportant and rather unpleasant episode in Pound's career. Most of these poems seem utterly out of place in *Blast*, typical of Pound's work of the preceding years and without any conceivable relation to Vorticism."[43]

Alan Durant also points out the unclear boundaries between poetic Vorticism and Imagism in Pound's poetry during this period: "Any consideration of the Vortex in particular regard to poetry becomes inevitably confused with Imagism, in that Pound's explanation of Vorticism

[40] Coffman, 124.
[41] Nadel, 32.
[42] Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1976), 143.
[43] Reed Dasenbrock, (*The Literary Vorticisim of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis : Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 87.

proposes precisely the continued practice of the doctrine of the image. Indeed in the first issue of Blast the poetic Vortex is described simply as 'The IMAGE.'"[44] Therefore, the two movements can be viewed, at least in formal terms, in the same breath when considering the formal experiments of Pound. It does not seem that his move away from Imagism and toward Vorticism reflects any new formal experimentation with personality. Another consistent feature found in Pound's career with Imagism and Vorticism is his eventual rejection of them both. A 1963 collection of Imagist poetry titled *The Imagist Poem,* edited by William Pratt, contains the following dedication: "For Ezra Pound, If He Wants It."[45] This dedication speaks a thousand works, in the Imagist sense, concerning Pound's tendency to move throughout various forms. Imagism was a movement he played a role in starting and defended; eventually he would leave it behind. The first critics to attempt to memorialize this movement clearly are unsure how to connect Pound to his former movement that he had abandoned. The rejection of these two movements directly correlate with Pound's rejection of his former tendencies as well as his rejection of English society as a whole—a rejection that would occur right before 1920. Even in this early moment in his career, there is tension between objectivity and personality in the form of poetry, and also present is Pound's career long tendency to whole-heartedly embrace a movement and then reject it outright.

As he rejected his former romantic tendencies, Pound embraced the Modernist emphasis on the past and the Tradition. He had already been interested in this dynamic, especially in contrast with the Futurists, who rejected the past. Pound's essay "The Tradition" reflects Pound

[44] Alan Durant, *Ezra Pound, Identity in Crisis : a Fundamental Reassessment of the Poet and His Work* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), 28.
[45] William Pratt, *The Imagist Poem : Modern Poetry in Miniature* (New York: Dutton, 1963), 7.

turning toward the construct of the literary tradition as a model for himself to operate under as both a worldview and as a model for poetic genesis. Eliot is much more famous for his method of evoking tradition in his poetry, yet this is a method Pound was deeply interested in as well. In 1919, Pound wrote the following concerning the poets relationship to the Tradition: "A return to origins invigorates because it is a return to nature and reason. The man who returns to origins does so because he wishes to behave in the eternally sensible manner. That is to say, naturally, reasonably, intuitively."[46] This essay comes after the beginning of his friendship with Eliot, but before Eliot's writing own on the matter. Eliot writes something similar in "Tradition":

> the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.[47]

While Eliot emphasized the experience of writing with the historical sense as mystical, Pound looked at it more practically. Generally, Pound's interest in the tradition is much more educational in nature, as he demands any poet to have knowledge and experience of their predecessors before writing. Just as he demanded that any writer of vers libre needed to master previous forms of verse and musical theory, he demanded that all poets need to master the tradition before crafting their own poetry. We can revisit Eliot's statement concerning the close relationship between poetry and prose found in Pound: "Pound has never yet written about a form of verse which he would not care to practice."[48] In Pound's work the evoking of the tradition was correlated with the mastery of the tradition. This reflects his intense emphasis on

[46] Pound, 92.
[47] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[48] T.S. Eliot, "Introduction" in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, by Ezra Pound (New Directions Publishing, 1968), xiv.

the agency of the author. In contrast with this is Eliot's view on the tradition changing instantaneously as a new piece of work is created:

> what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.[49]

There is a humility found in Eliot's treatment of the tradition. It is a surrendering of the personal to the monolith that is history and tradition. Interpretative meaning functions in the same sense for Eliot, who claims, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone."[50] Pound on the other hand aims to master the tradition and set parameters for such mastery. The tradition presented a form with which Pound could give his poetic career shape similar to that of past authors he respected. While Eliot's embrace of the tradition is a simultaneous surrender of personality, Pound's use of the construct shows his interest in aligning himself with past authors and models to give meaning and shape to his work and view of self.

As I have previous placed Eliot and Pound's theories in contrast with that of the Romantics, it is notable how the Modernists rejected the Romantics almost entirely in their construction of a literary tradition. F.R. Leavis writes in his in 1948 work *The Great Tradition*, "It passes as fact that I pronounce Milton negligible, dismiss 'the Romantics,' and hold that, since Donne, there is not poet we need bother about."[51] In the same breath that Modernists turned toward the past and encouraged an embrace of the tradition, they would consistently reject the Romantics. As soon as he began writing criticism and poetry, T.S. Eliot rejected the century before as an artistic failure. C.B. Davies writes of the nature of Eliot's artistic and public debut:

[49] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[50] Ibid.
[51] F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), 1.

"Eliot began his career as poet and critic by disowning publicly his immediate literary past in order to safeguard his desired status as a modern poet. In his early defensive criticism, he developed a pattern for literary history which called for a by-passing of the nineteenth century."[52] Though Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is often seen as the starting point of the movement, and specifically the move toward impersonality, the move away from Romanticism had already began to spread among the Modernist poets. Ezra Pound opens the "The Serious Artist," which was published in *The Egoist* in 1913, by articulating its intent to deal with the very nature of poetry: "It is curious that one should be asked to rewrite Sidney's *Defense of Poesy* in the year of grace 1913."[53] Notably Pound places his own criticism in direct lineage to Philip Sydney skips over the influential manifestos of Wordsworth and Shelley. This would imply that Sydney's work is sufficient in his mind and did not need to be re-written until his current moment. In other words, Pound sees the crisis of art as a new condition of modernity, and feels that Romanticism did not offer a sufficient solution or defense. This is also a rhetorical move that gives the work a sense of intensity and characterizes the true nature of the literary crisis; it is only the current civilization that needs to be reminded of what Pound and Eliot see as objectively clear.

With his vision of the tradition established, Eliot would argue that writing in the traditional sense goes farther than writing in the 'historic sense'; the Modernists would look to literature in the tradition as capable of giving their work meaning in the midst of modernity. In this sense, the tradition and literary past functioned as a model for the creation of modern literature. This would go far beyond just being inspired by the writers of the past, and Eliot

[52] C.B. Davies, "'Natural Evolution' in 'Dramatic Essences' from Robert Browning to T. S. Eliot" (*Browning Institute Studies*, 1983), 23.
[53] Pound, 41.

would specifically argue for artists to follow what he called the 'mythic method.' This specific theory is first articulated in Eliot's review of James Joyce's *Ulysses,* which he titled "Ulysses, Order, and Myth":

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious … Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.[54]

It is important to note how Eliot also connects this style to Yeats' poetry, who was a major influence on early Pound in a broad sense and because of the secretarial work he did for him for a time. The method is a formal way to achieve impersonality: by connecting the contemporary text to ancient literature, the artist can infuse it with meaning apart from self-expression. This new theory of poetry brings forth with it not just rejection of personal poetry, but a new emphasis on form—in particular the forms from the literary past were embraced as models and a place of artistic grounding. Since poetry cannot be directly connected to the personality and emotions of the author, it must be grounded in its objective formal qualities. This text captures the essential nature of the catalyst between traditional forms of literature, the past, and modern literature that are prevalent in Modernism. Early Pound's engagement with this concept would take the form of his reliance on two major models for influence: the Epic, and the work of Robert Browning. Both of these models reflect his attempts to find an impersonal poetry.

The trajectory of his interest in these dynamics can be traced by looking at his usage of the two models in the beginnings of his career-defining *The Cantos*. Though the purpose of this

[54] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition, Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press and Faber & Faber Ltd., 2014), 480.

study is to look at *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, *The Cantos* provide an in-depth look into Pound's poetic development after his engagement with the Modernists. Pound wrote *Mauberley* as this transition was happening, while *The Cantos* spans both this shift and the later period of Pound's career. When writing about *Mauberley*, Pound makes clear that it is a reaction to a specific moment in his career, and the poem functions as a disavowal. Because of this distinction, *Mauberley* can be understand as a poem significant to a specific moment in Pound's career. In contrast, *The Cantos* are clearly Pound's main poetic work. Due to its length, the poem contains Pound's formal experiments spanning from London to his eventual imprisonment in America. Therefore, any attempt to articulate broad dynamics within Pound's artistic sensibilities requires, at the least, minor consideration of *The Cantos*.

The Epic form was one of the major models that the modernists were attracted to in their writing, and Pound looked to it as a powerful model to give his poetry form and significance grounded in the past. His career's outstanding work *The Cantos* stands as his attempt to create a modern Epic. For Pound the form stood as more than just a model to give his masterwork form in modernity—the Epic was an impersonal model for poetry. In *The Theory of the Novel*, George Lukacs defines the Epic's object as "life itself."[55] The Epic is an impersonal form because its subject is history in the place of self-expression. Stephen Sicari argues that Pound's interest in the form is directly related to his desire to "master Western history": "While his definition of an epic as … 'a poem containing history' is deliberately reductive, it testifies to a fundamental conviction, that the epic poet works to fashion a poetic form that can contain what we normally think of as the concerns of history."[56] Regardless, Pound would stretch the limits of the Epic in

[55]George Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel; a Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1971), 47.
[56] Stephen Sicari, *Pound's Epic Ambition : Dante and the Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), ix.

The Cantos and experiment with personality and narration throughout its length. Among many Modernists other than Pound, the model of ancient Greek literature often came to the forefront. This attention to the Greek model is inherently tied to both its place in the tradition and its aesthetic ideals of artistic impersonality. The location of ancient Greek literature within historical antiquity, and its significance to the literary tradition, made it an ideal candidate for Eliot's "mythic method." Virginia Woolf speaks directly on the impersonal nature of Greek poetry in her essay "On Not Knowing Greek": "It is obvious in the first place that Greek literature is the impersonal literature … Fate has been kind there too. She preserved them from vulgarity, Euripides was eaten by dogs; Aeschylus killed by a stone; Sappho leapt from a cliff. We know no more of them than that. We have their poetry, and that is all."[57] Though Woolf is speaking more directly about the lack of biographical information, she considers such omissions as aesthetically powerful; her sentiment is consistent with the connection many of her fellow modernists found between form, personality, and tradition. To write in the Greek fashion was to simultaneously channel the tradition and be an impersonal author. Woolf herself would incorporate elements of Epic Greek literature into her work, but not nearly as heavily as her contemporaries—such as Pound. "Canto I" is entirely a retelling of parts of Homer's *Odyssey*, which Pound is presenting in a new verse form. By beginning the work in this way, Pound sets the intent and scale for the rest of the work to follow. Alan Durant observes the narrative impersonality of Pound within the first major sections of the work: "one remarkable feature of Pound's poetic writing—at least until the composition of the Pisan Cantos—is its virtual exclusion of an avowedly confessional first person."[58] Throughout the work, he would

[57] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and company, 1925), 39-40.
[58] Durant, 16.

experiment with personality in narration while remaining mostly invisible as the explicit author—the hero Odysseus would be the initial caricature for the optimistic starting point of the work. Another part of Pound's attraction to the Epic form is its literary significance and grandeur, as Ronald Bush points out in his research on the Cantos: "He sensed the vitality of what Frye calls 'the story of all things,' and returned again and again for support to the epics of the past."[59] Carroll Terrell observes this in her work *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, in her commentary on "Canto II," in which Pound directly references the poem "Sordello" by Robert Browning: "Browning's *Sordello* is, for Pound, the last instance of the epic tradition in the English language, which he intends to take up from there on."[60] Pound's interest in "Sordello" is a significant factor in this period of his life and goes beyond his interest in Epic, which I will elaborate upon momentarily. While Pound gave his work formal grounding in the impersonal form of the Epic, he was also interested in experimenting with the form and using it in new ways. Bush observes Pound's growing appreciation of the *Divine Comedy* as a personal Epic:

> In 1910's *The Spirit of Romance*, although he fashionably wrote that it would be 'unprofitable' to compare 'the tremendous lyric of the subjective Dante' to an epic, he went on to compare it to the poems of Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Whitman. Years later, his symbolist reticence gone, he would openly affirm that the *Divine Comedy* was an interiorization of the epic histories of Homer and Virgil."[61]

This is an interesting distinction given our subject matter. Though he initially understood Dante as subjective and therefore not Epic, he would eventually place Dante's Epic in a new category of an 'interior' Epic. The implication of this is that this type of work is somewhere between the subjective lyrical poetry of the romantics, and the impersonal Epic—perhaps it is a work that has

[59] Bush, 74.
[60] Carroll, Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine at Orono, 1980), 5.
[61] Bush, 74-75.

elements of both. By making this clarification, Pound presents the potential for a poetic form to use both personal and impersonal elements. Instead of putting personality and subjectivity at odds with the Epic form, he identifies an in-between, which is very similar to what he would do in his own work. Even in the midst of his embrace of the impersonal Epic, Pound still did not fully embrace a hard impersonality. This fusing of these elements will set the stage for his treatment of personality in *The Cantos,* as well as *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. Regardless of the Epic being commonly understood as an ideal form for impersonality in the mind of Modernists, Pound's usage of the form shows his tendency to create tension between these dynamics and shift between personality and impersonality.

Pound's initial engagement with the Epic directly ties to his engagement with Robert Browning, who was his predecessor in both the English tradition, and the epic lineage; Browning's experimenting with personality, in the form of personas, stands as one of the largest influences for early Pound. It is also important to note Browning's location in the previous century that was generally rejected by Modernist criticism. Pound viewed Browning as a major poet in the modern English tradition and speaks highly of him on several occasions including in "How to Read": "Against this serious action England can offer only Robert Browning. He has no French or European parallel."[62] Eliot was often inconsistent in his views on Browning, who was often lumped into the rejected previous generation of poetry. Yet, C.B. Davies points out in his research on Eliot and Browning how Eliot was in actuality influenced by the work of Browning and even viewed him as a predecessor in a similar manner as Pound:

> A consciously modern critic, in a review of 14 May 1920 in the *Athenaeum*, recommended that for the twentieth century poet 'the natural evolution would be to proceed in the direction indicated by Browning; to distil the dramatic essences, if we can, and infuse them into some other liquor.' Since, in this critic's eyes, Browning 'invented the dramatic monologue,' a form responsive to the demands of the English dramatic

[62] Pound, 33.

> tradition, Browning's poetry was taken as indicating a direction which modern poets should follow. And, later in the review, the critic implied that Browning's work on 'a kind of dramatic form' prepared the reading public to respond to the works of the dramatic poets who follow - himself included. The critic was T. S. Eliot.[63]

Davies dramatic presentation of this quote aims to go against the consistently held belief that Eliot totally rejected the influence of Browning. The specific content of Eliot's claims are very similar to those of Pound, who viewed Browning as a modern to follow in his experiments with dramatic monologues as a way to present personality in poetry: "Browning held a special place as Pound's immediate major English predecessor … Each interacts with past figures both by the direct creation of quasi-historical masks and by a more complex process of creating a persona."[64] Browning's experiments with persona are one of the clearest influences for Pound's view on this subject—just like Pound, Browning infused his personas with a sense of self as well elements of past historical figures. In this regard, Browning stands as one of the original influences in the development of the modern construct of literary impersonality. Browning is directly corelated with Pound's interest in the Epic, as noted in the previous paragraph, for Pound saw Browning's poem "Sordello" as the most recent Epic in the tradition. The proximity is critical for it allowed Pound's interest in the Epic form not to be a far reach back into antiquity, but a simple continuation of the tradition spanning Epic tradition. In "Sordello," Pound saw an attempt from Browning to create an Epic that could contain history, while being uniquely capable of containing historical selves and the personality of the author; Browning's poetry serves as a major influence on his early poetry and especially his conception of *The Cantos.* Peter Liebregts sums up these tensions well in his commentary on "Canto II";

> Pound struggles with the question of the relation between himself as speaker-author and his poetic material, and the form he should give it. He discusses the possibility of taking as his model for his own epic Robert Browning's long narrative poem Sordello (1840).

[63] Davies, 23.
[64] George Bornstein, *Ezra Pound Among the Poets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 107.

> This text mixes fact and fiction, past and present, in an attempt to produce a biography of a historical character … as well as a veiled attempt at autobiography, using the earlier poet as a mask for himself. At the same time, the poem deal with questions of the self and problems posed in interpreting and resurrecting history.[65]

Furthermore, Mary Gibson points out how these tensions were present for Pound even before he had published a single Canto: "Even the earliest notes and drafts for The Cantos reveal Pound struggling with the ways a fragmented culture and a historicist poetry could be made adequate to epic ambitions."[66] It was in Browning's usage of persona that early Pound found a way to work within these many dynamics and a large portion of his early career is dedicated to experimenting with these ideas. Pound's modern Epic would be like that of Browning's and use subjectivity and personality alongside traditional Epic elements. The opening of Canto II is one of the most notable moments in Pound's poetry concerning personality, where he captures the seeming impossibility to achieve true impersonality and the nature of personality at the same time. Canto II opens by directly addressing Browning and "Sordello":

> Hang it all, Robert Browning,
> There can be but the one "Sordello."
> But Sordello, and my Sordello?
> Lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana.[67]

By addressing Browning by name, Pound is presenting the tensions in the work of Browning as parallel to his own. He then turns to Browning's poem "Sordello"; in the context of Browning's poem Sordello is both a historical character, a fiction version of the historical character, and a version of autobiography for Browning. Furthermore, Pound is using Browning and Sordello as personas in his own work as well, which will stand alongside the already established persona of Odysseus in "Canto I." The final line in this excerpt refers the true Sordello historical figure that

[65] Peter Liebregts, "Canto 2," in *Readings in the Cantos*, ed. Parker, R. T. A. (Clemson, South Carolina: Clemson University Press in association with Liverpool University Press, 2018), 43.
[66] Mary Ellis Gibson, *Epic Reinvented : Ezra Pound and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 82.
[67] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1972), 6.

Brownings work is based upon.[68] The situation in these opening lines brings up the issue of personality and persona in the work. In Carroll Terrell's annotations to Canto II, she writes of this specific moment in the poem: "Browning gives an unconventional image of the troubadour as a lyrical persona or of himself … The point is that there is no way of seeing the personality of Sordello objectively but only of seeing subjective perspectives of the facts."[69] Pound would aim to control the subjective perspectives as best he could, and aim to create ambiguity between himself as the author and his movement through a variety of personas in each of his poems. Similar to his interest in an 'interior' Epic, Pound looks to use these tensions to his advantage and his poetry aims to master them as well as meditate upon the potential impossibility of finding a truly ideal solution. It is in these moments that Pound shows a rare humility—he is humble in his inability to fully master his forms and models. As a result, "Canto II" presents his speculations frozen in their unsolved state. Not shortly after this moment in Pound's career, he would begin his shift toward the Modernist understanding of impersonality. Ronald Bush writes about this transition, and specific ties it to his moving away from using Browning as his main model: "Between *Three Cantos* (1915) and the publication in 1919 of a very different Canto IV, Pound grew disenchanted with Browning's rhetorical mannerisms, and sought more subtle methods to dramatize a different kind of speaking voice."[70] Shortly after this transition, Pound would compose *Mauberley,* which contains these same dynamics of personality—only in a more subtle manner. Pound continuously experiments with personality throughout his career and especially throughout the length of *The Cantos*.

[68] Terrell, 5.
[69] Terrell, 4.
[70] Bush, 142.

Though Pound turned toward a stronger sense of impersonality in his post-Imagism career, later in his life he would embrace his mostly explicitly personal poetry during his notorious engagement with Mussolini and the rise of Italian Fascism. Pound would be a simpler subject if after he turned toward high Modernism he had remained in that frame of thought; instead, he allowed his poetry to engage with politics and even function in a pragmatic sense. Young Pound believed that the arts didn't need to speak for their purpose or relation to society, but after his movement toward Fascism he would use his art to express his political, social, and economical beliefs. In particular this is manifested in later parts of *The Cantos,* which Stephen Sicari observes in his research on Pound and his proximity to the philosopher of humanism:

> "the boldest and most fatal moment of the poem, the poet's decision to include Mussolini as the current manifestation of the epic hero, an extraordinary blurring of the boundaries of literature and politics, of the aesthetic and historical … Pound opened his poem to contemporary politics in an unprecedented way in an effort to make his poem capable of intervening in current events, attempting to mold and shape them."[71]

Sicari points out Pound's usage of his poetry to actively intervene in history, which is fascinating concerning his previous desire for his Epic to contain history and use history as a force of stability. Instead of this, the later Pound looks to wield and shape the world and history around him. Pound is consistently obsessed with his agency as an author, as I have observed in the majority of his criticism, and this turn in his career is anything but surprising. But the movement toward a poetry actively engaged in the world is indeed new to this part of his career. Previously, his prose was the location for his commentary upon society and politics. Yet after the fall of Mussolini, Pound wrote "The Pisan Cantos," which reveal anything but arrogance at the shift in his form and content. Sciari points out the radical shift of imagery that emerges in these later poems:

[71] Stephen Sicari, *Modernist Humanism and the Men of 1914 : Joyce, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2011), 125.

> Pound began the Cantos as Odysseus, in full control of his destination and with confidence in his destiny. Here that sense of mastery is striking absent. He used this image of the raft breaking and the waters covering him back in Pisa in the climactic Canto LXXX … These are images of a loss of control and mastery, and as such announce a radically different orientation towards his project. Earlier he strove to be the master of history, understanding the past and connecting it to the present and even hoping to direct the future; now, history has become so complex that he cannot maintain control and becomes almost list in the effort to assemble some fragments into a unity.[72]

In the elderly Pound, there is found a new humility, and perhaps humiliation, at his inability to find the form fit for his work. There is also seemingly a sense of wasted time – whether that be with his many experiments or with his alignment to Mussolini. Before, in "Canto II," Pound showed a humility at the complexity of undertaking writing an Epic and attempted to exist in ambiguity as the author who elusively existed in a variety of personas. But now Pound's humility is connected to his failure. It is also in the Pisan Cantos that Pound uses the Homeric phrase "ou tis" or "noman."[73] This term makes logical sense for Pound use in light of his past workings with the concept of persona, but there is an irony of him using it at this point in his career. How can he be no-man while embracing a new sense of personality in his poetry? While this moment reflects many of the contradictions in his presentations of self, it is most likely intentional in relation to the beginning of the work. The opening persona of "Canto I" is Pound as Odysseus the mighty hero and now he is ship-wrecked and defaced. Even in his failure and loss of dramatic masks he still is elusive as the author of the Epic. He is still aware of his poetic form and is again embracing a removal of self by using a traditional poetic moment from the tradition. It is in "The Pisan Cantos" that we find Pound at his most autobiographical and yet he still aims for a form of impersonality. In the midst of these ambiguities, Sicari also brings up the complicated question of how to read *The Cantos* as a text: "Despite protestations to the contrary, most critics of "The

[72] Sicari, 152.
[73] Pound, 446.

Cantos of Ezra Pound" treat the poem as a uniform text, making claims about the entire poem based on a section or sequence and ignoring the rather obvious fact that the poem is a "work in progress" stretching over forty years in the making and undergoing continual shifts in focus, purpose, and technique."[74] Here he argues that the text should not be read as an artistic whole and instead as a complex work in progress; it is still unified as a whole but needs to be understood as full of Pound's ever changing allegiance. The result of such a reading is that the text stands as a profound monument to Pound's personality and its many tensions and contradictions. Because he consistently experimented with personality, the work contains a truly unique expression of the human consciousness and its potential to change. The poem contains totality of his personality and reflects almost all of Pound's experimentations, visions, and goals throughout his long career. In this regard, he did indeed achieve an "interior Epic." What is further revealed by his shift in style late in life is Pound's every present need to control and shape the future. In this late moment of his career, his interest in Modernism impersonality is replaced by a model that can give his work a political and historical power. While Eliot argued for the power of the past, and Pound did at points as well – the fascist Pound looked only to the present and to his own ability to craft the future he desired. This tendency exists throughout his career and would always complicate and threaten to undo his attempts at impersonality.

It is in both his criticism and *The Cantos* that we see the major tension in Pound's career: personality and impersonality: the desire for control and our inability to fully achieve it. The purely aesthetic failed him and he turned to a hard modernism, and eventually he found himself turning toward a more pragmatic and confessional poetry. This need for control was consistent throughout his life. A few years before the writing of "The Pisan Cantos," Pound would write the

[74] Sicari, 124.

critical essay "The Teacher's Mission" (1934), which opens with the following claim: "'Artists are the antennae of the race.' … a nation's writers are the voltometers and steam-gauges of that nation's intellectual life. They are the registering instruments, and if they falsify their reports there is no measure to the harm they do."[75] This argument is eerily similar to the claims made in Wordsworth's "Preface"; as Pound moved toward a political poetic, his view of art also moved away from the Modernist sensibilities he had been interested in for years. The majority of this chapter's focus has been to walk through major moments in Pound's criticism and poetry which pertain to his aesthetic views on artistic impersonality and his formal experiments with the construct. For Pound's interest in impersonality cannot be separated from his usage of it as a literary form. Obviously, tensions are ever present as his views on the matter shift over time. Yet, the situation becomes even more complicated when considered in light of Pound's sense of self—a sense of self that creates tension with artistic impersonality. Even at the moment of his strongest embrace of an impersonal poetry, Pound's sense of self, and views concerning the agency and authority of the author, consistently destabilize his formal experiments.

While "The Pisan Cantos" show a turn away from Modernist impersonality in the later Pound, these tensions are hardly new and have been with Pound throughout his entire career; though he looked for a model of an objective art, this would always be challenged by his enormous sense of self and a need to shape history. Ira Nadel concisely points out this contradiction found throughout Pound's career, when writing about the challenges of teaching Pound:

> In his critical work and poetry, Ezra Pound consistently objects to, and often rages against, reductive pedagogy that fetishizes biographical criticism. This contradicts his own practice, however, where biography plays an important part in his aesthetic. Indeed, Pound thought of himself … as a celebrity.[76]

[75] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T.S. Eliot (New Directions Publishing, 1968), 58.
[76] Nadel, 31.

His celebrity would take the form of his constant and eclectic involvement with the literary happenings of early the 20th Century Modernist movement. Pound's involvement in intellectual society was enormous and he seemed to be fully aware of his own significance and influence. Often this ego was expressed in his attempts to shape his own history as well as the history of others. Even in his relationship to other poets he showed a tendency to be controlling. For example, when writing about his relationship to Hilda Dolittle, Hugh Kenner writes, "Pound became enamored of the woman he would rechristen for literary purposes 'H.D.'"[77] Even at this early point in his career, he exerts a form of control over H.D. and has the audacity to craft an identity for her. This would be consistent throughout his life as an editor as well—he would open doors to new artists while totally denying those he was not impressed with or interested in. The level of significance that he gives his own sense of judgement is directly related to the ways in which he conceived himself as a gatekeeper of the literary tradition. As previously stated, his critical prose argues strongly and unapologetically for what parts of the tradition deserved to be remembered and which newly discovered parts deserved to be added into the construct. This intense rhetoric reaches a boiling point in "The Teacher's Mission," which contains Pound's arguments against what he sees as the rise of a deeply flawed literary education. Ultimately he argues actions should be taken against people who are part of the problem: "What ought to be done? … A definite campaign against the human deadwood still clogging the system. A demand either the sabotage cease, or that the saboteurs be removed."[78] The language used is dangerously similar to the rhetoric used in his propaganda radio-broadcasts concerning Jews and their danger to society. Furthermore, Pound's desire for control of his history extended to the interpretations

[77] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 3.
[78] Pound, 61.

of his own poetry. Often he would express extreme displeasure at mis-readings of his work and in response would offer notes on understanding it properly. This happened rather often in the case of *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, which was often interpreted more biographically than Pound would have preferred. He would go so far as to edit the subtitle of the poem in an attempt to help the reader interpret in the way he intended—I will elaborate upon his specific comments later when dealing with the poem directly. When Eliot of spoke of artistic meaning in "Tradition," he claimed that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone."[79] While Eliot surrendered his work to both the tradition and the interpreter to give it meaning, Pound grabbed the tradition and presented his own curated version, which was required to understand his poetry; he also refused to let the interpreter have their way with work and was insistent upon interpretation. This tendency makes the removal of the personality of the author challenging for Pound, who could never fully let go of control and himself.

A unique way in which Pound engaged with the tradition was imagining of his own life as similar to that of authors he respected; this is another dynamic through which he understood himself as significant and a major part of the tradition he sought to preserve. Regardless of Pound's insistence on persevering the literary tradition, his entire conception of it was connected to his placement within the construct. William Pratt writes of this dynamic in the early career of Pound: "Pound … sets out to transform himself into real poets he has read."[80] Pratt's point refers to both the formal personas in his poetry and his view of self. In the same way that he gave much of his poetry a sense of grandeur through allusions, Pound placed his own biography in relation to authors he respected. For the most part, he would imagine himself in a similar light to that of Henry James and Robert Browning, who both had a major impact on his work and stand as his

[79] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent."
[80] William Pratt, *Ezra Pound and the Making of Modernism* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2007), 33.

predecessors from the generation before. As I mentioned previously, Pound viewed his poetry as taking up the mantle from these figures and continuing in their footsteps in a formal sense. Yet, Pound took this much more seriously and looked to them to help his place in literary history. George Bornstein writes of how Pound looked to Browning specifically in an attempt to give his many struggles a sense of importance and: "Pound continually emphasizes Browning's exile from England to Italy in a way that paralleled his own expatriation from America … Pound focused instead on Browning's self-imposed exile, opposition to Victorian literary norms, and long battle against obscurity, in all of which he resembled Pound himself struggling against contemporary America."[81] A specific dynamic always emphasized is movement from one country to another—especially after a rejection. In the *Cambridge Introduction to Ezra Pound*, Nadel points out how Pound saw his every shifting locations as similar to that of artists before him: "Between the ages of 13 and 16, Pound made five trips to Europe, extraordinary for a young American, but loosely duplicating the early trips made by the young Henry James."[82] In "How to Read," Pound directly ties the decline of English poets, and society, to that of authors leaving it: "The decline of England began on the day when Landor packed his trunks and departed to Tuscany. Up till then England had been able to contain her best authors; after that we see Shelley, Keats, Byron, Beddoes on the Continent, and still later observe the edifying spectacle of Browning in Italy."[83] Just like Joyce's Stephen had to leave Dublin in order to write about it, Pound views his various relocations as part of being a serious poet. This gives much context to Pound's rejection of both America and England as hindrances to his poetic career. The way in which he understood himself has a rhetoric that uses these past models of history to give

[81] Bornstein, 118.
[82] Ira Nadel, *The Cambridge Introduction to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.
[83] Pound, 32.

his present situation a sense of meaning and significance. Along with this, Pound presents his own biography as an example for others to follow as well. Before presenting the bulk of his argument in "How to Read," Pound claims that for the sake of presenting his argument he "shall lapse or plunge into autobiography".[84] Even in this minor moment there is Pound's tendency to use his autobiographical example for the sake of articulating a critical point. He would present his own experience as sufficient evidence of the things he argued for in the same way that he mostly glamorized the poetry he himself could master. In "The Hard and Soft of French Poetry," there is a similar moment where he uses his own career as a model for his arguments of literary quality: "I should say that Spire and Arcos write 'more or less as I do myself.' I do not mean to make any comparison of merits, but this comparison is the easiest or simplest way of telling the general reader 'what sort of poems' they have written."[85] While he denies any claim of merit, there is a veiled statement of quality concerning his own poetry. The poets, whom he argues are modern and creating original work, write in the same style he does; the result is that he is also defending his own work in the process of arguing for the quality of other poets. The level of self-importance with which he viewed and presented himself would be the root of a variety of contradictions and failures in his career. While his intent was to give his work a sense of importance, sometimes this attempt would backfire. When writing about Pound's prose on Imagism, Coffman notes the messy and convoluted nature of it, something I noted about Pound's prose as compared to Eliot on a variety of subjects: "Through his critical writing one can trace the desire to modernize his poetry and his way of talking about art. Unfortunately, he expressed his theories in a hastily written prose—he was anything but a systematic thinker; and, as he was primarily interested in poetry rather than aesthetics, theory was of less importance to him … yet

[84] Pound, 15.
[85] Pound, 288.

he assumed the functions of the critic and the theorist"[86] Here we see Pound wants to just focus on the poetics themselves but feels the need to assert his own narrative which has the potential to shape the movement. Even though he thinks the poetry stands on its own as beautiful, he needs to argue in its defense constantly—even if the prose and criticism are hardly formed and the idea barely honed. This failure to craft a fully developed prose at times is the result of Pound's self-imposed need to shape the histories happening around him. Overall, these tensions reveal how Pound understood himself in light of the past and the present. The way in which he understood himself and aimed to craft history would consistently threaten to undo his variety of experiments in crafting an objective modern poetry.

In an earlier draft of the Cantos, Ezra Pound wrote the following line: "You can have no cosmos until you order it."[87] The early Pound was fighting for the very existence and necessity of the arts to modern society. While he praised many forms, these forms would fail him ultimately. Even his famous Imagism would grow tired and old to him. Pound's struggles with agency, personality, and self are consistent throughout Pound's career, making him a unique candidate with which we can analyze impersonality and autobiography. It is unclear if Pound ever comprehensively articulated his opinion on these matters. *The Cantos* more than anything are a testament to his every changing views and attempts to find a model for his poetry. By viewing Pound's life and work as a whole, multiple contradictions are suspended alongside each other. While he may not have every fully embraced a true vision of himself, he was always fully investing himself in whichever movement he was caught up in at a time. Everything he touched, he would attempt to master.

[86] Coffman, 125.
[87] (qtd. in) Gibson, ix.

CHAPTER THREE

ARTICULATING *HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY* AS MODERNIST AUTOBIOGRAPHY

With the image of Pound's shifting tendencies, models, and interests before us, as revealed through his prose and major poetic work, *The Cantos*, the focus can now shift to *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* explicitly; the poem works as an ideal subject through which one can study Modernist Autobiography. The purpose of the first chapter has been primarily to establish Pound as an ideal candidate for this specific inquiry, and to present a case for his poetry being full of many tensions and experiments with personality. Obviously, *The Cantos* supply plenty of material to analyze Pound's shifts in relation to this topic. Therefore, the questions must be asked: why is *Mauberley* uniquely suited to my purposes of analyzing the tension between autobiography and impersonality in the poetry of Ezra Pound and by extension Modernism in general? It is entirely because *Mauberley* is a poem that is explicitly caught between being autobiographical and impersonal, and it is a poem that exists in Pound's canon right in the midst of one of his major transitions. While *The Cantos* reflect an ever-changing Pound and move through his many shifts in thought, *Mauberley* captures a very specific and pivotal moment in the career of Pound. *Mauberley* represents a literal physical shift for Pound as well as a major shift in his artistry. For all his experimenting and ever-changing loyalties, it was his engaging with the Modernists that would and still does define his career. In other words, the Pound who emerged in Paris after leaving London and finishing *Mauberley* is the Pound that most critics cling to as the most "Poundian Pound" (if there is such a person). Certainly, one could zoom into specific moments in *The Cantos* in an attempt to understand the specific tension of a certain moment in his career, but *Mauberley* presents a clear moment of true artistic transition. It could even be

argued that the work is a Bildungsroman, or more accurately a Kunstlerroman. The early romantic Pound was becoming the new Modernist Pound. The Pound who emerges would have been deeply interested in impersonality. Just as the poem is showing his shift in tendencies, it is also capturing the moment he is leaving behind, as well as the moment he was within. As a result, the poem ironically appears to be confessional to a degree and contain elements of Pound's biography—even though the Pound who wrote it should be at his most impersonal. Due to these factors, the poem has been understood in a variety of ways over time. By tackling these tensions head on and analyzing the poem through the lens of studies in Modernist Autobiography, we can examine the poem afresh and explore its many complexities.

The larger issue at hand is the paradox of Modernist Autobiography in general and more specifically how it is to be handled in an interpretive sense. If the intent behind many works of Modernist literature is literary impersonality, the erasure of the self and personal emotions from the work, then what is the reader to do when these works contain autobiographical details? If part of the author's world and personality is included, then how can it achieve impersonality in an aesthetic sense? The easy answer would be to simply conclude that some works do this properly, while others do not; Eliot's theory of impersonality includes a claim of aesthetic literary quality. Taking this at face value would mean that the writers and poets who do not fully remove themselves are simply lesser, or not as talented as those who fully embrace impersonality. Yet in the case of Pound and specifically in *Mauberley* we find a unique challenge; as previously observed in his prose, Pound was deeply opposed to autobiographical criticism of literature and was always looking for an ideal form with which he could achieve an objective sensibility in his poetry. This desire is obviously consistently threatened by a variety of factors throughout his career, as I detailed in the previous chapter, and the content of *Mauberley* makes this all the more

confusing. If Pound despised autobiographical criticism, why did he include such information with the poem? How then is the critic to interpret his work without falling into this pattern? Many critics do not make a distinction at all. Since the poem's release, it has almost entirely been interpreted in terms of its seemingly undeniable autobiographical elements.

Reading the poem as autobiographical is hardly a radical move for the Poundian critic and remains the most common way to understand the poem. Why is this a problem at all? It would seem easy to understand the poem in this light as it obviously has been a convincing interpretation for many critics. I do not intend to argue that the poem does not contain elements of autobiography, but I am challenging the notion that the work is *explicitly* autobiographical. This distinction does not necessary move criticism in any new direction, but it is one I think is necessary to make before proceeding. Furthermore, in autobiography, generally speaking, the goal of the genre is the expression of self and the curating of a personal history. Even the parts of *Mauberley* that contain autobiographical elements do not do so for the sake of indulgent self-expression. The goal of the work is clearly to reject English society, London, the literary movements of the period, and perhaps the Ezra Pound who existed within those spaces. Almost all critics agree on the poem rejecting the former three items, but where the younger Ezra Pound fits in has always been the place for disagreement. In the 1971 addition of *Personae,* which contains the poem, there is following footnote at the bottom of the title page: "The sequence is so distinctly a farewell to London that the reader who chooses to regard this as exclusively American edition may as well omit it an turn at once to page 205."[88] I do not know when this note was added in but the implication is that Pound is no longer interested in what the poem was doing. Yet, the bigger take away from this note is that Pound explicitly connects the work to his

[88] Ezra Pound, *Personae* (New York: New Directions, 1971), 185.

departure from London. Of course, this is not the only reason that critics consider this poem to be autobiographical. The opening poem in the first sequence of the work has the title, "E.P. Ode Pour L'Election de Son Sepulchre,"[89] which roughly translates to "E.P. Ode for the selection of his tomb." The initials E.P. are the most notable feature of this title; E.P. was how Pound signed his early Imagist poems, and he used initials to minimize the author's role. The opening poem of *Mauberley* describes a poetic figure who is very similar to Pound and the lines describe, confirmed by his prose, many of his attitudes during the earlier part of his career:

> For three years, out of key with his time,
> He strove to resuscitate the dead art
> Of poetry; to maintain the "sublime"
> In the old sense. Wrong from the start—
>
> No, hardly, but seeing he had been born
> In a half savage country, out of date;
> …
>
> Unaffected by "the march of events,"
> He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentuniesme*
> *De son eage*; the case presents
> No adjunct to the Muses' diadem. [90]

These lines describe how Pound often felt about his role in bringing about a poetic revolution as well as his disillusionment with English society. Just reading this poem in isolation could lead the reader to think that the work is entirely confessional and autobiographical. Yet the at the end of these lines he claims that the poet "passed" from memory at the age of 30, and was forgotten by both men and the Muses. In no way was Pound forgotten during this time, and, in fact, he was in many ways at the height of his influence. Furthermore, Pound would have been 35 in 1920: meaning that if this is meant to be explicitly about Pound, then this decline would have happened in 1915. Obviously, Pound's poetic career did not stop in the slightest during this time. This

[89] Pound, 187.
[90] Ibid.

moment is around the time when Pound had become engaged with the Modernists: he had met Yeats in 1909, Joyce in 1913, and Eliot in 1914. Therefore, we can conclude that the younger Pound, who called himself "E.P." became the Modernist Pound around the age of 30. Based on this first poem alone, Pound's usage of his former authorial title, and the dates within the poem, it would seem that reading the poem as autobiographical is perfectly reasonable.

Yet, this is where such a reading ends; the rest of the poem is hardly autobiographical in any sense and moves through ever changing images while following assumably the fictional character of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. A variety of attempts have been made to articulate who this character could represent, other than Pound, and I would argue hardly any of them offer a comprehensive reading of the poem. The work does contain two more dates: the last poem of the first sequence is titled "Envoi (1919),"[91] and the second sequence overall is given the title "Mauberley (1920)."[92] It is in 1919 that Pound decided to leave London and in 1920 he finally did. While these dates are significant, there is not clear autobiographical reason that can explain their specific placement in the poem. "Envoi (1919)" is entirely in italics, which indicates that it is to be interpreted as a specific work of poetry within the work published in 1919, and the date in the second sequence presents the events as happening to Mauberley in the year 1920. While these dates are significant, they offer very little that is clearly autobiographical. The poem also contains the subtitle, "Life and Contacts," which is most likely a play on the phrase "life and times" (and its variations) commonly found in autobiography. After the poem's publication, Pound would switch the order of the subtitle to read "Contacts and Life" because he claimed it more accurately reflected the poem's content. This is, furthermore, consistent with the reading of the second half of the poem as reflecting the life of Mauberley, starting in 1920, while the first

[91] Pound, 197.
[92] Pound, 198.

half reflects Mauberley's social interactions and contacts. Peter Brooker writes in his essay on Pound's time in London that the work lacks concrete biographical data: "As commentators have regularly reported, the poem chronicles moments in artistic history from the Pre-Raphaelites and the nineties … But none of this, it has to be said, is of 'today' if we understand this to designate the moment of composition in 1919-20. The poem includes nothing of Pound's 'Contacts and Life.'"[93] Based on these elements, the challenge in an explicitly autobiographical reading becomes clear—for the poem clearly contains autobiographical elements but they hardly are consistent. In F. R. Leavis's early work on the poem he sums the seemingly dual nature of the work:

> *Maublerey* is in the first place the summing up of an individual life … One might call it … quintessential autobiography … *Mauberley* is in the first place the summing-up of an individual life … however, to add that it has the impersonality of great poetry: its technical perfection means a complete detachment and control."[94]

While Leavis calls the poem both autobiographical and impersonal, he does not explain how the work can achieve both dynamics at the same time. The common critical consensus is to conclude that the poem contains both sensibilities but never to fully articulate how the work does this formally and why Pound would work in such ambiguity.

Most interpretations of the work agree on these basic ideas concerning the poem's structure; most disagreements center around the relationship between Pound and Mauberley. Are parts of the poem by Pound and others by Mauberley? Is Mauberley an expression of Pound's self? Where does one end and the other begin? The only thing that critics agree on in this matter is that Mauberley is clearly an expressivist poet similar to the former Pound. In his letters, Pound

[93] Peter Brooker, "London," in *Ezra Pound in Context*, ed. Ira Nadel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 231-241.
[94] F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: a Study of the Contemporary Situation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 138-139.

directly denies Mauberley being a stand-in for himself and further denies that the poem is autobiographical: "I'm no more Mauberley than Eliot is Prufrock."[95] Along with this, he goes on to directly state that the first poem in the sequence does away with E.P.: "The worst muddle they make is in failing to see that Mauberley buries E.P. in the first poem; gets rid of all his troublesome energies."[96] Pound is not denying the character of E.P. being in the poem or being related to himself, but he is denying that Mauberley is explicitly himself. The only thing this clarification adds to an attempt at the reading the poem is that E.P.'s role is only in the first poem and the rest is from the perspective of Mauberley. While it is helpful to know some of Pound's intent, this clarification leaves one in the exact same place they were before. A more unique yet helpful note from Pound speaks of the formal intent of the poem: "Mauberley is a mere surface. Again a study in form, an attempt to condense the James novel."[97] This note complicates everything yet gives the clearest presentation of Pound's intent thus far. While Mauberley is not Pound himself, he is a surface for the poet—or a persona to use the term from Browning and the later Pound. Furthermore, while *The Cantos* are an attempt at the impersonal form of the Epic, it would appear that Pound intents *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* to be understood as an attempt at the novel form. In comparison with the Epic, the novel is much more capable of interiority and dialogue between multiple characters. This specification brings us back to Pound's understanding of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as being an internal and subjective Epic, and a work that is in-between these dynamics, and since the poem is meant to be understood as an experiment with the novel, we can conclude that the poem is ambiguous in its formal

[95] (qtd. in) Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 376.
[96] (qtd. in) Kevin Arthur Wong, "Blurring of Poet and Persona in Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley'" (*National Poetry Foundation*, 2000), 195.
[97] (qtd. In) Saunders, 376.

categorization. The clarification of the form explains why Pound includes elements of autobiography in a poem that aims for artistic impersonality. Both these formal clarifications offer helpful explanations to the nature of the poem, but still do not fully clarify why Pound is combining these elements and creating ambiguity.

It is in this ambiguity that I want to suggest a new way of looking at the poem as attempting to be simultaneously autobiographical and impersonal. Instead of viewing the work in terms of the simplified binary between autobiography and impersonal poetry, we can complicate the concept and usage of autobiography as an aesthetic construct. Instead of viewing Pound's inclusion of autobiography as inherently tied to personality, autobiography can be understood as a literary form capable of being used by the artist. The result of this re-posturing is a new understanding of the poet's use of autobiography; they are not just expressing themselves but they are doing so in verse and therefore in a crafted and aesthetic matter. Mauberley is a fictional character, who is based on Pound, and contains elements of self-critique. Because the use of autobiography is for the sake of self-critique, Pound can still be impersonal. Because the poem resembles a novel, it is well suited to contain interiority and dialogue between characters. Pound experiments with the craft of the poem, as well as the breakdown of voice, to create complex discourse situations. As a result, he can create distance between the self being expressed in the poem and his position as the author, and he uses this distance to alienate and objectify his former self. To be clear, I do not want to argue that the goal of criticism in this case is the articulation of which elements are biographical and which are not, but instead I want to work with the poem with this discrepancy in mind. Regardless of who Mauberley is understood to be, the poem's paradoxical nature can be analyzed in light of new studies in Modernist autobiography. Two out of the three critics I am working with have written explicitly on *Mauberley* and this be the

starting point for my analysis. Overall, I will analyze the poem through three new understandings of how autobiography can function in a formal and literary sense: I intend to work with their arguments as a base for understanding and add in my own interpretations. By turning to this criticism and applying it to *Mauberley*, we can begin to understand the poem in new and complex ways unarticulated by previous approaches.

Max Saunders' recent book *Self Impression* appears to be the largest study in recent years done on the topic of autobiography broadly, and presents a helpful lens to begin analyzing *Mauberley*; his book covers a large range of texts, and his readings range from Proust to Nabokov. Saunders' chapter devoted to the poem makes up the basis for my work as he has made a very strong argument for reading the poem in a new light that understands it both as a form of autobiography and yet still capable of being impersonal. The chapter opens with his claim that Pound's writing is generally autobiographical: "all his writing has an autobiographical dimension, though not of the salacious kind to interest the publishers."[98] This claim is seemingly radical, but he defends his position by arguing that Pound's proximity to Eliot has skewed readings of the autobiographical nature of his early work.[99] In other words, much of Pounds early work and even later work such as "The Pisan Cantos" contain elements of autobiography. Furthermore, when addressing the poem's strange form, he claims it is made up of fragments in a similar sense to that of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. He proceeds to work through the poem's many characters and presents scholarship on their origins. Initially, Saunders appears to be building toward arguing for the expansiveness of autobiographical detail within the poem. This is in direct contrast to the criticism of Brooker, whose previously quoted work claims the poem contains no autobiographical material at all. Yet, Saunders eventually explains why he is working to present

[98] Saunders, 372.
[99] Saunders, 374.

potential autobiographical flourishes; he claims that while the poem contains many caricatures that could be derived from Pound's life, Pound does not present them realistically. Instead, Saunders argues that Pound creates "imaginary portraits"[100] and intentionally obscures any actual figures. He concludes that Pound uses these portraits, which are Mauberley's "contacts," to create an image of London's intellectual society—the society he is rejecting. In other words, the basis is autobiographical but Pound is sculpting them so that the autobiographical elements become aestheticized. Following this argument, he makes his main argument that Pound does a similar thing with the character of Mauberley: Mauberley can be understood as an imaginary portrait of Pound, and more specifically a Pound who had never met the Modernists.[101] He claims through the character of Mauberley Pound creates an "impersonation of subjectivity."[102] While Mauberley is clearly distinct from Pound and probably much older, he is based on the potential autobiography of a Pound who had never left London and progressed as an author. He agrees with the general consensus that the second sequence is clearly about the life of Mauberley; once the nature of English intellectual society has been sketched, the poem can turn to Mauberley's decline within this society. Near the end of the chapter, Saunders concludes that Mauberley is best understood as a "portrait of the aesthete as a middle aged man," [103] confirming his argument that Mauberley is rooted in Pound's past but exists in the poem as an imagined future caricature. Critical to his overall argument is Saunders's view on autobiography as a literary form that can be wielded and experimented upon. Ultimately, Saunders concludes that Pound uses autobiography in *Mauberley* to create an "imaginary … literary consciousness."[104]

[100] Saunders, 392.
[101] Saunders. 378.
[102] Saunders, 381.
[103] Saunders, 419.
[104] Saunders, 417.

Saunders believes Pound is able to achieve impersonality in the midst of using the autobiographical form, because the subjectivity of the poem is presented through the lens of an imaginary narrator. Reading *Mauberley* as an example of Pound experimenting with form gives way to a potentially sufficient reading of the text within the overall paradox. Pound is expanding the potential of autobiography by using it formally and not just as expression. The character of Mauberley, and even the former Pound, embraces autobiography in an indulgent way, but Pound the author is intentionally creating the poem in this regard and is therefore separated from the personality of the poem. This distinction allows the creator to be distanced from the entire construct and use it experimentally.

Turning now to the criticism of Kevin Wong, who presents new strategies for analyzing the breakdown of voice and speaker. Wong argues, in "Blurring of Poet and Persona in Pound's 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,'" for two new primary approaches that can be used to unravel the poem's complexities. Wong opens his article by claiming that the intent of his work is not to present a new interpretation of the poem, but instead to focus on new methods of analysis. Here he quotes Eliot as saying that he is less interested in what Pound "is saying" and far more interesting in "how he says it."[105] By combing the approaches of Wong with the already established mostly comprehensive reading from Saunders, we are able to craft a deeper understanding of what Pound is saying and the complexity of how it is stated. By placing his work alongside that of others, it is possible to advance and develop his thesis. The goal of Wong's work is to apply linguistic theories to *Mauberley* with the hope that these can work as new strategies for articulating the complexity of voice and personality within the poem. First of

[105] Wong, 193.

all, Wong brings forward new ways to conceive of voice in a work of literature from the work of linguists Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short:

> In the study of fiction, progress has been made in the differentiation of "voices" in literature—both those of the real-life author and reader, and of the characters and participants in the work itself. Leech and Short have a systematic approach to classifying these various voices, and supply us with an unambiguous terminology.[106]

This illuminates the way voices in a work of literature engage with each other in discourse and therefore allows the discourse situation to be analyzed for the sake of finding new understandings. Specifically, Leech and Short break voice into several dynamic levels that often can exist within any work:

> First, the terms author and reader refer to the real-life entities who put words on paper and who go to bookstores and purchase the books. On the next level down, we have an implied author and an implied reader. The implied author is the person who is taking responsibility for the words on the page; he is the one whose point of view is being represented (which does not necessarily coincide with that of the author). The implied reader is the one whom the implied author is addressing (and is not necessarily the same as the reader. An author writing a novel may not have envisioned its success and subsequent translation into, say, Portuguese, and would not have intended his work for an audience in Portugal or Brazil.) And on yet another level down, there is the narrator (or in poetry, the persona) and the interlocutor. The narrator can be the story-teller either inside or outside of the diegetic world, and he is presumably telling his story to some interlocutor.[107]

Splitting voice into more than just the classical distinction of narrator and author allows works such as autobiography to be analyzed more complexly. Wong also presents a second linguistic theory which comes from Oswald Ducrot's studies in polyphony: "Oswald Ducrot … speaks of two different 'instances' of the speaker: the speaker as such, and the speaker as a being of the world. These he terms locuteur-L and locuteur-λ. "[108] To clarify how these terms function, Wong presents his own interpretation (from the French) of Ducrot:

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[106] Wong, 195.
[107] Wong, 196.
[108] Wong, 199.

> The first [locuteur-L] designates the speaker considered from the sole point of view of his act of expression, as a being of discourse. The locuteur-λ, on the other hand, designates the speaker inasmuch as the latter, moreover, possesses other qualities, constituting a being in the world.[109]

These two linguistic strategies offer two new ways of understanding voice in any work, and if we apply them to *Mauberley*, we discover a new and complex reading can begin to take form. Wong briefly attempts to apply his analysis to the poem, but doesn't go in depth:

> Now let us apply this same system to Pound. Pound, of course, is the author. Though the identity of the implied author is still uncertain, the two best candidates are a representation of Pound himself, and Mauberley. Yet there is still the identity of the narrator, or in the case of poetry the persona. Whether the implied author be Pound, or Mauberley, or some unidentified third party, there is still the question of through whose eyes we are seeing.[110]

This is far as Wong goes in his work, and I think it is beneficial to work with these categories and further Wong's criticism. It is important to note the claim that Pound is the author isn't as obvious as it seems and, in fact, requires a critical clarification: the Present Pound who has left London is the author, and if Pound also exists somewhere in the poem as implied author or narrator, perhaps this is not entirely the same Pound. Wong observes that the implied author is probably Pound or Mauberley, which is consistent with the ambiguity within the poem. It is his addition of the category of a narrator, who is separate from the implied author, that presents a case for a new understanding. In the first sequence of poems, it seems that it all happens from the perspective of Mauberley, and "Envoi" would seem to be a creation of his own. To say that "Envoi" is a representation of a published work by Mauberley means that in this moment within the poem, Mauberley is clearly the implied author. Since this is the only section formally set apart as a work of poetry, this calls into question whether or not Mauberley is the implied author of the preceding poems. It is in this ambiguity that a potential new reading emerges. It could be

[109] Wong, 199.
[110] Wong, 197.

argued that the former Pound, E.P., is the implied author while Mauberley is the narrator. What this means is that Pound is crafting a complex presentation of both his former self and former literary sensibilities. To refer back to a quote from Saunders, this means Pound is crafting an "impersonation of subjectivity."[111] I will elaborate more upon this reading and its potential ramifications for interpretation in the Fourth Chapter. Whether or not this is how the layers of voice and character break down, any reading is challenged by the shift that occurs in the second sequence of poems, "Mauberley (1920)." After "Envoi," which is perhaps the poem's most explicitly personal piece, the second sequence opens with a person we presume to be Mauberley gazing upon images of past Italian and French art:

> Turned from the "eau-forte
> Par Jacquemart"
> To the strait head
> Of Messalina:
>
> "His true Penelope
> Was Flaubert,"
> And his tool
> The engraver's.[112]

Suddenly, the work is in a form of indirect third-person narration, which is differs from the dialogue heavy first sequence. While Mauberley is the character within the work, the roles of the implied author and narrator are both unclear. Any attempt to articulate the speaker in the first half is inherently challenged by this shift. Many attempts have been to articulate the shift in narration, but I think Wong's criticism allows us to see Pound as doing something intentional with this ambiguity outside of simply making the poem challenging. The distance between Mauberley and the present Pound is increased by this formal move. If Mauberley in the first sequence, which happened assumably pre-1919, is a portrait of the former Pound, then Pound is

[111] Saunders, 381.
[112] Pound, 198.

clearly marking Mauberley post-1920 as separate from himself, and this separation happens entirely on a textual level. As the poem progresses, the distance between the current Pound (the real author) and Mauberley increases. The poem opened with E.P. and by the end Pound is entirely absent. It is in this move that we can see Pound formally depicting his progression away from autobiography and toward impersonality. Another result of this move is to add dramatic intensity to Mauberley's decline within society and the "world of letters."[113] As Pound moves away from Mauberley in sense of their discourse, Mauberley is actively losing touch with society as voices vanish from the poem and it becomes mostly a minimalized text full of static images of art. These complex dimensions can only be understood by breaking down the nature of author, narrator, and voice within the poem.

This complex separation can also be understood in terms of Wong's division of the speaker into two "instances"[114]: locuteur-L and locuteur-λ. The locteur-L "designates the speaker considered from the sole point of view of his act of expression, as a being of discourse"[115]; in the first sequence of poems this role belongs either to the former Pound or Mauberley, who are engaging with many other voices within English society, and in the second it is entirely unclear. On the other hand, the locuteur-λ functions as a being/character within the world of the discourse; this is Mauberley in both sequences. In the first, Pound may be implying that his former self is behind the mask of Mauberley, but Mauberley remains the persona, and in the second the life of Mauberley is narrated by an unknown voice. This distinction does not add anything particularly, but falls in line with the shifting discourse situation of the poem. In the first sequence, Mauberley has some level of control over his situation as he exists in both roles of

[113] Pound, 202.
[114] Wong, 199.
[115] Ibid.

discourse. The removal of a clear role of locuteur-L in the second sequence reflects the disillusionment of Mauberley within English society, who presents "No adjunct to the Muses' diadem"[116] and is abandoned by Pound in his pursuit of Modernism and new forms of impersonality. Overall, the result of reading the poem with Wong's work in mind presents a clearer picture of how Pound experiments with voice and personality within the poem, and we can articulate the potential of the work emulating his formal artistic tendencies for the sake of ultimately rejecting them.

The final study of Modernist autobiography that I will apply to the poem is Hannah Sullivan's "Autobiography and the Problem of Finish." In this article, Sullivan analyzes two dynamics of autobiography: genetic process and ending. She is particularly interested in the challenges authors face in ending autobiography, and this is the focus of most of her article. Furthermore, she argues that to study literary autobiography, the critic must understand works as in process as often the author lives beyond the creation of the autobiography. Overall she argues that to study autobiography the entire genetic process of the text must be taken into account:

> By paying attention to the genetic process and publication history of autobiography--by asking how it was planned, composed, revised, brought into print, and reissued--we might accordingly refine our sense of what it is, and how it has developed over time.[117]

To follow Sullivan's claims, autobiography must be studied as a complex literary form that has the ability to both denounce the end of the author and be altered beyond its creation. By approaching *Mauberley* with Sullivan's work in mind, two new dynamics of reading emerge. First of all, a genetic reading allows for Pound's own notes to be incorporated into the interpretation of the work. I have already quoted several statements Pound made retroactively about the poem as if they are canonical to any understanding of the work. While it is hardly

[116] Pound, 187.
[117] Hannah Sullivan, "Autobiography and the Problem of Finish" (*Biography,* 2011).

uncommon to use an author's notes in pursuit of understanding their work, Sullivan presents the use of such work as part of the autobiography. In this regard, since *Mauberley* is in some sense autobiographical, the inclusion of Pound's notes is part of the genetic process and his creative work of crafting autobiography. Similarly, *The Cantos* can also be understood in this way—as an ever evolving work that would consistently be altered as a whole throughout Pound's life. When I mentioned Pound's interpretive insistence in the second chapter, I presented it as a more so a flaw—sometime that held him back from a true literary impersonality. But, with Sullivan's work in mind, it can be seen as a strength, or at least as a normal thing for an author to do when working with autobiographical literature. Many great poets would work on their works throughout their lifetime and Pound is no exception. Even if Pound wrote *Mauberley* with perfect literary impersonality, his later addition of edits goes against such a move and is an act of autobiography in its own right that reveals the tension he faces with impersonality. The irony is that Pound's comments aim to explain how he is separate from the character of Mauberley, in defense of him being impersonal, while applying them as part of the overall artistic product is connected to understanding the work as autobiographical. I say this show that even as we use Pound's notes to articulate his attempts at formal impersonality, he can hardly let the work exist without needing to assert the correct interpretation, an act that according to Sullivan causes his personality to enter the work. Furthermore, Sullivan draws attention to Derrida's conception of autobiography and how it related to the death of the author: "As Derrida observes in his essay 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes'; finishing means pronouncing, albeit implicitly, a sentence that is 'legitimately impossible as a performative utterance': 'I am dead.'"[118] The form of autobiography therefore is perfectly suited for Pound's purposes as the very act of writing

[118] Sullivan, "Autobiography and the Problem of Finish."

autobiography functions as a form of killing the author. By writing autobiography of a past time in his life, Pound can put the past self to death. He can utter "I am dead" because he is donning the mask of the former self. The declaration of the former self's death means that the poet who is speaking is new person. Saunders argued that Mauberley was a portrait of the former Pound, and through Wong's analysis we can break down that the entire poem is a portrait of Pound's formal literary sensibilities. If we also apply Sullivan's thinking to the poem, we can understand that Pound is declaring the death of the former self at the same time as he is declaring the death of the former self's stylistic tendencies. E.P. is dead and the Modernist Ezra Pound is able to be born. Though the poem can be understood as a bildungsroman, it is also appropriate to understand it as an elegy to Pound's past sensibilities.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY'S CRITIQUE OF SELF-EXPRESSION

Now that these new perspectives have been considered, I can begin to synthesize their conclusions to dig deeper into the content of the poem. Already I have mentioned the various interpretations that arise from their work being applied to the poem, and now by using their work as a starting point, I can offer more take-aways and fill in uncovered gaps. For the sake of clarity, let me quickly summarize what I have established about the work's meaning based on both Pound's notes and the research of Saunders, Wong, and Sullivan. It is important to note initially that this reading relies on Sullivan's ideas concerning a genetic reading that allows Pound's notes to be incorporated into the work. Pound's notes as well as formal features in the poem present the following scenario which we can use as a starting point: the character of Mauberley is not meant to be a direct stand in for the present Pound, and in fact by the end of the first poem "E.P." is dead and "buried." The first sequence of poems is Mauberley's pre-1920 contacts, while the second Sequence is Mauberley's life starting in 1920 and moving forward indefinitely. E.P. can be understood as one of Mauberley's contacts, and as Saunders observes the first sequence, startin with "Yeux Glauques" and minus "Envoi," is full of imaginary portraits of English intellectual society. The first five poems present the state of modern society after World War I. Due to its form, "Envoi" can be understood as a poem composed by Mauberley in 1919. By applying Wong's work concerning the instances of the speaker, we can articulate that "Envoi" being explicitly written by Mauberley destabilizes his role as implied author of the first sequence. Saunder's argues further that Mauberley can also be understood as a portrait, or as Pound says a surface, of the middle-aged aesthete, which is a role Pound filled in his youngers years when he was E.P. Therefore, we can understand Mauberley as an imaginary portrait of the

former Pound if he had never shifted away from his early artistic sensibilities—Mauberley is an imagined hypothetical future for such a figure as Pound. There is also the potential implication that the first sequence, or even the work as a whole, is meant to be written with the former Pound as the implied author, meaning that Pound is showing the type of autobiographical work, using personas, his former self would have crafted. Mauberley laments E.P. in the first poem and his artistic failure, and yet his own work "Envoi" ends with the following lines:

> Tell her that goes
> With song upon her lips
> But sings not out the song, nor knows
> The maker of it, some other mouth,
> May be as fair as hers,
> Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,
> When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
> Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
> Till change hath broken down
> All things save Beauty alone.[119]

These lines are full of emotional sentimentality about two figures who's romance or relationship lasts into oblivion and even gains a transcendent quality as the world ends. Since this is the type of poetry Mauberley is writing, it reflects his interest in pouring his soul into his work. It also is similar to the poetry Pound wrote early in his career: an expression of the self using imagery that gives it a sense of grandeur. That is not to say that "Envoi" is a bad poem at all, but it is precisely the type of overly-emotional work that the Modernists were looking to reject with a new aesthetic. Even though Mauberley has observed the decline of E.P. in English society, he romanticizes none-the-less and even in 1919 still creates romantic poetry. This all leads to the second sequence of poems, which begins in 1920, after Pound himself has left London. Again looking to Wong's work, we can observe the change in voice from first-person, as well as many moments of dialogue, to a distanced third person. The implied author is entirely unclear and the

[119] Pound, 197.

work moves through images of Mauberley's life and its slow decline into nothingness. Though Mauberley imagined his love for art and beauty to last forever, the poem's final images depict him both lost at sea, and also frozen in time as an aesthetic object. Then by turning to Sullivan's work again, we can conclude that by evoking the form of autobiography, both the present Pound as the literal author using elements of his autobiography and the implied past Pound doing so indulgently, Pound is able declare the self within the poem to be dead. The utterance of the end is a death sentence. The combination of these readings present the work as a complex meditation on autobiography and show its potential when used as a literary form; it is also a fascinating experiment in narration and voice. *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* is both an experiment in autobiography as much as it is an experiment in impersonality, and Pound works within both dynamics.

Pound began to move away from Browning after 1919 and moved toward new experiments with narration and impersonality as his engagement with the Modernists became far more serious. Browning had stood as one of his original models for an objective poetry, but even this became uninteresting to Pound. It is around this time in his career that *Mauberley* was composed. Ira Nadel observes this shift in Pound's career: "[*Mauberley*] marks a shift for Pound away from the device of personae. In it, the author shows the dangers of the biographical and subjective in the trapped poet Mauberley."[120] During this period in his career, Pound begin to pursue narrative forms of poetry such as Novel and Epic. Why then does Pound still use autobiography in *Mauberley*? Mauberley is referred to as a "surface" by Pound and at the same time the portraits he creates, as Saunders observes, in the first sequence of poems is basically this

[120] Ira Nadel, *Approaches to Teaching Pound's Poetry and Prose* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2021), 34.

same model he has used before. The character of Mauberley is just another one of these portraits. Turning to Wong again, we can understand the former Pound as the implied narrator of the first sequence of poems and understand Mauberley as a persona of him. Therefore, the use of the persona technique is something that the former Pound would have had used. Mauberley in "Envoi" is explicitly romantic, while the former Pound uses the persona of Mauberley to attempt to create an objective art. Overall, Pound is rejecting both his former self and his former techniques. He is moving toward a new kind of impersonality, and his major work, *The Cantos*, aspires to be an Epic, his primary new mode.

Turning to Sullivan, we can understand this presentation of autobiography, in the form of his former identity E.P. as well as his formal artistic techniques, as capable of ushering in its own end. To present a masked autobiography, as Pound does in the first sequence of poems, is to declare the end of this moment in his career. The first sequence observed on its own presents itself as a tomb for the former Pound. The task of rejecting the former self seemed to be challenging for Pound as he did not simply move on and forget. Turning to the title of the first poem, in which E.P. is "buried," we see Pound present the intent of the first poem, and by extension the rest of the work: "E.P. Ode Pour L'Election de Son Sepulchre."[121] The imagery evokes the moment in Book 11 of *The Odyssey* in which Odysseus visits the land of the dead to consult the prophet Tiresias. As they wait, they observe the ghost of their crewmate, Elpenor, who had died after drunkenly fallen from the roof of Circe's palace. Elpenor asks Odysseus to return and give him the proper burial rites before he continues on his voyage:

> …Don't sail off
> And desert me, left behind unwept, unburied
> …
> Heap my mound by the churning gray surf—
> …

[121] Pound, 187.

So even men to come will learn my story.
Perform my rites, and plant on my tomb that oar
I swung with mates when I rowed among the living.[122]

This is the imagery being evoked in E.P. selecting his own tomb. The imagery implies that the ghost of E.P. was restless and haunted Pound. As a result, he turned to the project of the poem of *Mauberley* as a way to excise this ghost and give the past self a fitting tomb. Though Pound now sails on to new forms of poetry (he sets sail as Odysseus in the first "Canto"), he must return and bury the past self. This imagery is evoked again in second to last poem in the second sequence, where Mauberley comes across a similar monument:

The unforecasted beach;
Then on an oar
Read this:

"I was
And I no more exist;
Here drifted
An hedonist."[123]

Both sequences contain imagery of E.P.'s burial. By applying the thinking of Sullivan we can understand this act of burying the self is also an act of killing the self. By using the form of autobiography, Pound can actively declare the death and then present the poem as a burial mound. The result of this reading is the paradox that Pound uses autobiography to reject autobiography; *Mauberley* stands a grave and monument to the former and abandoned self. Traditionally, many critics have argued that Mauberley is a mask that Pound wears within the poem. This is an accurate claim, yet it must be adjusted; it is the former Pound who wears the mask. The current Pound impersonally crafts a mask for his former self to wear. The entire poem is an ode to the grave the former Pound has chosen: the character of Mauberley. After this burial

[122] Homer, and Robert. Fagles, *The Odyssey* (New York: Viking, 1996), 251.
[123] Pound, 203.

has happened it is the current Pound who closes the casket and artistically renders the grave in splendor. Pound himself is the murderer and the writer of the obituary.

If the poem ended with "Envoi," it would seem that Pound is memorializing his former self and tendencies. Mauberley could be understood to stand in as a version of someone who he could have been, and perhaps he even regretted his shift in focus. A major part of the first sequence is Pound depiction of the utter societal decay caused by the war. Initially, Mauberley faces the harsh demands of the age:

> The age demanded an image
> Of its accelerated grimace,
> Something for the modern stage,
> …
> Better mendacities
> Than the classics in paraphrase![124]

This moment reflects Pound's insistence on crafting a new art that is better than just the "classics in paraphrase." The implication is that Mauberley would have felt this as well and had a desire to craft a modern poetry. These opening lines are often connected to the Imagist movement and justifying the need for an "image" in the age. Yet, the entire nature of the age is thrown into chaos after the war. It is presented as, "wastage as never before"[125] in poem IV, and then poem V presents a brief interlude concerning the death toll and the worthlessness of the event and its cause:

> There died a myriad,
> And of the best, among them,
> For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
> For a botched civilization…[126]

[124] Pound, 188.
[125] Pound, 190.
[126] Pound, 191.

The distain in these lines is unmatched in tone by the rest of the poem. Ezra Pound wrote to his parents in 1920, "I have been over to London for a week; english race terminates below the cervical ganglion"[127] Though Pound was able to escape and reject English society, he is appalled that there were people, great people, who sacrificed their life for a cause he considers as worthless. His reduction of English civilization to the role of an "old bitch gone in the teeth" shows the depths of Mauberley's despair at what has happened, and the poetic voice in this moment is replaced with vulgar speech and imagery. Following poem V is the collection of Mauberley's contacts. After memorializing E.P. and the toll of the war, Mauberley does not leave like Pound and instead continues to move through English intellectual circles. All of this leads to "Envoi," where Mauberley presents his poetry regardless of the state of society. The romantic nature of the work is surprising in relation to the societal decline Mauberley faces. As I previously stated, if the poem ended here it could be seen as a memorial more so than a tomb for the former self. The poem could be Pound memorializing his time in London and the hope he had once had in the romantic and expressive power of poetry. Mauberey could be understood as "of the best" of people, who still believed in beauty after the war. By turning our attention to the second sequence of poems, which present the actual life of Mauberley, it is clear that the poem stands as a tomb more so than a memorial.

The second sequence of poems, which detail Mauberley's life, are characterized by a shift in the narrative voice into a distant third person. The events are narrated as they are, though still in stanzas, and the form is relatively consistent. It is not that the tone is notably dry, but the juxtaposition between the elated language of "Envoi" and the next section's diction is shocking. Mauberley moves among images of classical and Renaissance art, and slowly seems to drift

[127] Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929*, edited by Mary de. Rachewiltz, Anthony David. Moody, and Joanna. Moody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 489.

away into nothingness. This shift in voice dramatizes the distance between Mauberley and the location of the author. While the implied author of the first sequence is simultaneously the former Pound and Mauberley, the implied author of the second sequence is unclear. Mauberley plays the role of the locuteur-λ, a being within the world of discourse, but there is no clear locuteur-L. The dramatic situation is that of Mauberley losing his voice and ability to express himself. He looked to his expressive poetry as a way to give beauty power in the midst of the conditions of Modernity. Yet, as 1920 dawns and he faces life in the modern world, he can no longer express himself like he did before. Pound presents a subtle argument that the form of autobiographical expression in poetry has no power in the midst of the changing modern world. He himself left London as well as the form of autobiographical poetry. Mauberley on the other hand is left to face his own failure to escape the horrors of being a hopeful aesthete in post-World War I English society. In other words he failed to find a poetry and form that was sufficiently modern.

Furthermore, this breakdown shows the impossibility of expressing a whole consciousness under the conditions of modernity. The consciousness of the poet faces a crisis of personality and requires experimental forms to be fully expressed. Ronald Bush writes of how Robert Browning's experiments with personality directly this reflect this phenomenon: "For Browning, in order to be authentically modern, a poem must forego narrative continuity and render the fragmentation of a modern consciousness. His solution was taken over by Pound."[128] This dynamic explains the poem's breakdown of voice and the ambiguous role of the implied author. Mauberley is left with a "consciousness disjunct."[129] Eliot presents a similar situation in *The Waste Land*, and in the final lines presents a veiled argument for the Mythic Method's

[128] Bush, 80.
[129] Ezra Pound, *Personae* (New York: New Directions, 1971), 203.

ability to give his art meaning in the midst of modernity: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins."[130] Though Eliot was able to find a poetic method capable of giving form to his shattered consciousness, Mauberley looked to the faulty past form of autobiography, and held to a romantic view of poetry, and as a result was "doomed from the start"[131] in the same manner as E.P.

Pound goes much further in the second sequence of poems in his rejection of autobiography, and ultimately uses the life of Mauberley as an example of the failure of expressive formal methods. The first poem in "Mauberley 1920" begins with the following quotation from Ovid: "Vacuos exercet in aera morsus. (His empty mouth snaps at the air)"[132] This image in repeated in the second poem of the sequence:

> Mouths biting empty air,
> The still stone dogs,
> Caught in metamorphosis, were
> Left him as epilogues.[133]

Mauberley's life is presented as similar to a stone dog with its mouth open and frozen—forever not biting. The imagery is connected to the quotation from Ovid, which is from *Metamorphoses*, and the imagery of metamorphosis is evoked throughout the sequence. The dogs are left as epilogues in the midst of their transformation into stone. This foreshadows the fate of Mauberley in the rest of the sequence, and this doom is directly connected to his autobiographical poetry. In the first poem, Mauberley is described by quoting the first poem of the first sequence and then giving him the tool of the engraver:

> "His true Penelope
> Was Flaubert,"
> And his tool

[130] Eliot, 81.
[131] Pound, 187.
[132] Pound, 198.
[133] Pound, 200.

The engraver's.[134]

Though Mauberley is like E.P. in sentiment, he failed to becomes sufficiently modern; he is left with the tool of the engraver and is only capable of engraving his own name into works. Autobiography is his only tool. As the sequence progresses, it addresses Mauberley's subjectivity more directly:

—Given that is his "fundamental passion,"
This urge to convey the relation
Of eye-lid and cheek-bone
By verbal manifestation:

To present the series
Of curious heads in medallion…[135]

The passion of Mauberley is liked to that of capturing real life in art through "verbal manifestation." The result of this work is the creation of mundane medallions with heads upon them. Again, the creation of a medallion evokes the image and action of engraving. In other words, he is incapable of crafting a serious art. Then in the third poem within the sequence the fate of Mauberley is revealed and directly tied to his subjectivity:

Of his subjective hosannah.

Ultimate affronts to
Human redundancies;

Non-esteem of self-styled "his betters"
Leading, as he well knew,
To his final
Exclusion from the world of letters.[136]

Mauberley is characterized by the use of his "subjective hosannah," or in other words the work of autobiography is in a sense the praise of self. His "self-styled" work and subjectivity is the

[134] Pound, 198.
[135] Pound, 200.
[136] Pound, 202.

source behind his alienation from the world of literature. Pound views his poetic style as an "Ultimate affront" and inherently redundant. In the second to last poem in the sequence, Mauberley seems to be afloat and lost at sea—in this process he finds the burial mound of E.P. This all leads to the final poem in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*—"Medallion." In this poem the result of subjectivity in art is fully revealed in stunning brevity. Pound opens the poem with the work's most musical stanza:

> Luini in porcelain!
> The grand piano
> Utters a profane
> Protest with her clear soprano.[137]

Again the imagery of classic art evoked with the evocation of Luini, but Luini is in porcelain. This imagery is similar to that of Mauberley's earlier metamorphosis into stone, for we see another artist turned into an aesthetic object. Furthermore this imagery draws upon the tendency of classic works of arts to be reduce to mere decoration. The artistry of Luini is reduced to that of a porcelain plate. Then Pound utters in the shrill notes of a piano to usher in the final dramatic reveal of Mauberley's fate:

> The sleek head emerges
> From the gold-yellow frock
> As Anadyomene in the opening
> Pages of Reinach.
>
> Honey-red, closing the face-oval,
> A basket work of braids which seem as if they were
> Spun in King Minoas' hall
> From metal, or intractable amber;
>
> The face-oval beneath the glaze,
> Bright in its suave bounding-lines, as,
> Beneath half-watt rays,
> The eyes turn topaz.[138]

[137] Pound, 204.
[138] Pound, 204.

In these final lines, Mauberley goes through a series of metamorphosis's. Mauberley's head emerges from a golden frock transformed into Venus Anadyomene, who is obviously an allegorical figure of beauty. In the previous poem he was adrift and now he emerges from the sea anew. Around his neck are a crafted basket work of braids spun from metal and amber. Amber in particular presents the image of an object frozen for centuries. The face is glazed over by dim rays of light, perhaps implying the light of the sun losing its shine, and then the eyes of Mauberley "turn topaz." Just as the opening lines from Ovid foreshadowed, Mauberley has been transformed into an aesthetic object, frozen in time, and adorned in a woven frock of beauty. As he emerges from this creation he himself becomes part of the artistic piece. This is the destiny of autobiography. Pound presents autobiography as a self-indulgent craft that ultimately is entirely focused on the artistic rendering of the self. The destiny of the aesthete is to be a frozen piece of classic art themselves that offers nothing against the onslaught of modernity. Mauberley is left as a statue and a medallion—just like Luini—mere mundane pretty things. For all his poetic effort, he is left with just a golden frock capable of adorning himself. All of this is reflected in the title of the work—*Hugh Selywn Mauberley*—the work of autobiography has his name engraved upon its surface. The lines between his identity and the poem have been blurred as he transforms into an aesthetic object. Just as the final images present Mauberley turned into an object of beauty, the title reflects that the poem is Mauberley. This is not a "love song" or even a poem—it is entirely an expression of Mauberley. The result of autobiography is the aesthetic surrender of the self into the form.

Ultimately, Pound is not praising Mauberley's transition as much as he is critiquing his trajectory and fate. The intent of the poem was to declare his former self and formal sensibility dead. E.P. was buried before he could be objectified, and the present Pound escaped. Pound was

able to escape by moving onto the form of the Epic, which contains "history." In the same sense, Pound's composing of *Mauberley,* though it contains autobiography, in the form of narrative allows him to remain impersonal, while the implied former Pound fell into self-expression in the character of Mauberley. The age demanded an image and all Mauberley has to present is his expression of self, while Pound is able to move onto new forms of modern poetry. By no means is this poem meant to memorialize his former self as much as it is an exercise in catharsis. Pound embraces autobiography and masters it in order to reject it formally. The tragedy of Mauberley is much more so for Pound's own maturity as it is for his readers—as is reflected in his suggestion in *Personae* that the reader skip past it. Furthermore, the poem is a veiled critique of his contemporaries. Mauberley's engagement with classical Italian art cannot but evoke the pre-Raphaelites that Pound wished to reject. The second half of Mauberley reflects the depths of Pound's disinterest in their art and the poem is his presentation of their failure to create art capable of having aesthetic power under the conditions of modernity. Perhaps it would have been better for him to end up like Mauberley. Though he would have fallen into the same fate, it could have prevented his descend into Fascism. The destiny of the elderly roaming aesthete wouldn't be too horrible of a fate. Yet, Pound would eventually become "Old Ez," a play on "ou tis." Though he escaped the subjective world of Mauberley, he would still face defacement in the midst of modernity. From the contemporary vantage point, there is the every present irony of Pound never truly finding an art form worthy of his ambitions. But in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,* we see the Pound as his most proud and most ambitious rejecting decades of his life as he sets sail in search of an ideal form for modern poetry.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley is a highly complex poem that embodies a variety of ideological paradoxes through its experimental narrative form. In other words it is a truly modern poem. Pound shows the poetic potential of using autobiography and voice through the poem's various formal dynamics. Just as his entire career reflects a tension between personality and impersonality, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* creates a powerful depiction of poetic consciousness in the very act of rejecting such a construct. Through Mauberley, Pound shows the fragmentation of the modern consciousness and the need to express the self in new and complex ways in order for artistic expression to have any power. Though Mauberley fails to succeed in the "world of letters,"[139] Pound succeeds in his presentation of the complex consciousness of an artist in the early 20th Century. In this regard, Pound cannot fully escape the personality of the poem as its very poetic power reveals the potential of the expressivist poetic form. Omari Moses argues against the traditional opinions of modernist critics concerning impersonality in his work *Out of Character*, where he argues that to remove personality entirely from a work of modernism is inaccurate to actual goals of impersonality:

> "Was it not to escape the realm of the muddy, the idiosyncratic, the subjective, the personally prejudiced, and the inartistic that a range of modernist adopted the rhetoric of impersonality to begin with? Yes and no. Certainly, the discourse gave modernist writers a chance to emphasize the tough-minded aesthetic protocols of the artistic product. But I will argue that the literary practices it named offered them something more: the chance to devise new ways of staging the psychological experiences of individuals."[140]

[139] Pound, 202.
[140] Omri Moses, *Out of Character : Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 29-30.

The embrace of impersonality and turn towards an emphasis on formal aestheticism allowed the modernists to work with character and personality in new and innovative ways. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, has some of the most powerful and elaborate depictions of the workings of the human psyche in perhaps all of literary history – regardless of Bloom's shifting metaphorical character, and relation to the thematical and metaphorical workings of the whole novel. A Modernist poem like *Mauberley* presents a truly complex and innovation presentation of consciousness in the very act of meditating upon the form and showing its potential harms. Though it contains autobiography, it is all the more complex as a result. Therefore, autobiography need not be entirely rejected in the study of *Mauberley*—or wholly embraced. Instead the critic can analyze the unique ways that Pound creates a literary consciousness and allows his work to exist in ambiguity between autobiography and impersonality; *Mauberley* is both about his life and not about it at all. As a result, Pound's poetry remains as revolutionary and provocative as it was when it was first published.

Pound wrote in "The Serious Artist," "I take no great pleasure in writing prose about aesthetic. I think one work of art is worth forty prefaces and as many apologiae."[141] The rejection of subjectivity in *Mauberley* is perhaps more powerful than any piece of prose by Pound on the subject, for the poem is uniquely suited to dwell within ambiguity. I think this has been one of the major reasons the poem has always been challenging to critics. Unless it is approached paradoxically, it will remain elusive. Focusing entirely on the autobiography or the impersonality will limit any reading of the text and fail to capture its many subtleties and complexities. The study of autobiography as a form is still newer within critical discourse, and the further development of this work offers the critic complex strategies for understanding the breakdown of

[141] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, edited by T.S. Eliot (New Directions Publishing, 1968), 41.

character and subjectivity within literary works. The work of Saunders, Wong, and Sullivan presents a new trajectory for Modernist studies in the 21st Century. Moses's work also shows a willingness for modern critics to challenge decades old statutes of interpretation for the sake of uncovering new understandings of texts. The result of this critical work is not to reject past studies but to present anew the revolutionary nature of Modernist literature.

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