Hugh Selwyn Mauberley Study Guide

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley by Ezra Pound

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BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Ezra Pound's 1920 poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is a landmark in the career of the great American modernist poet. In the poem, Pound uses two alter egos to discuss the first twelve years of his career, a period during which aesthetic and literary concerns fully engaged Pound's attention. The poem reconstructs literary London of the Edwardian period, recreating the dominant feeling about what literature should be and also describing Pound's own rebellious aesthetic beliefs. The poem also takes us to the catastrophe of the early twentieth century, World War I, and bluntly illustrates its effects on the literary world. The poem then proceeds to an "envoi," or a send-off, and then to five poems told through the eyes of a second alter ego.

In the first section of the poem, Pound portrays himself as "E. P.," a typical turn-of-the-century aesthete, and then in the second he becomes "Mauberley," an aesthete of a different kind. Both E. P. and Mauberley are facets of Pound's own character that, in a sense, the poem is meant to exorcise. After composing this poem, Pound left London for Paris and, soon after, for Italy, where his view of his role as a poet changed dramatically. No longer would his work be primarily concerned with aesthetics; after 1920, he started to concentrate on writing *The Cantos* and on studying politics and economics. "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is not just Pound's farewell to London; it is Pound's definitive good-bye to his earlier selves.

Author Biography

Ezra Pound was born October 30, 1885, in Hailey, Idaho. When he was two years old, his parents moved to Wyncote, a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Ezra's father Homer worked for the U.S. Mint. While in high school, Pound studied Latin, and this study moved him to concentrate on poetry and literary history. He enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania, where he met William Carlos Williams and Hilda Doolittle (both later to become, with Pound, prominent modernist poets). Pound transferred to Hamilton College in New York, graduated from there in 1905, and then returned to the University of Pennsylvania to pursue graduate study in languages, including old English, old French, Provençal, Italian, and Latin. He received his master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1906 and took a job teaching at Wabash College in Indiana. This teaching experience, however, was a disaster for the bohemian Pound, for Indiana society was deeply conservative. He was fired before the school year ended for having a woman in his room without a chaperone.

Disgusted by America's conservatism, Pound resolved to go to Europe to become a poet. He went first to Venice, Italy, where he produced a small book of poems but suffered from poverty. Pound then left for London, England, and quickly became a member of a number of literary circles. Within a few years, Pound became the center of a nascent literary movement, imagism, and through the sheer force of his will also became one of London's most important literary figures. He met Henry James, worked as William Butler Yeats's personal secretary, and gathered around him such writers as Richard Aldington, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot. He tirelessly promoted himself and his compatriots from his position as foreign editor of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine. At this time, Pound was driven by the dictum "make it new." He campaigned against the very Victorian poetry that had initially drawn him to literature. He also incorporated influences into his own work that were new to English-language poetry: the Chinese written character, Japanese Noh drama, Provençal troubador lays, and medieval Italian forms and themes.

All of this literary ferment came to a dramatic halt in 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. During the war, Pound and his wife Dorothy (a British citizen) were forced to stay in England. Pound's writings from the period of this war barely acknowledge the carnage taking place off England's shores. In 1917, Pound began composing what he called his "poem containing history," *The Cantos*, an epic that would take him the rest of his life to finish.

In 1920, after eleven years in London, Pound moved to Paris, France. "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" served as his farewell to London, the city that had brought him from obscurity to prominence. It was also the last short poem Pound ever wrote. From that time on, all of his poetic efforts were put into *The Cantos*.

In Paris, Pound found that he could not occupy his customary role at the center of the literary world, for another American□Gertrude Stein□already held that position. The drunken, hedonistic ethos of "lost generation" Paris conflicted with Pound's sense of

seriousness and mission and after a few years, he relocated again, this time to the small Italian coastal town of Rapallo.

Pound's life grew significantly more difficult and complicated after his move to Italy, for he stopped seeing himself as a poet and began to feel that he was a public intellectual, a sage, a man who should be consulted by world leaders. He began to study history and economics, attempting to discover a solution for the problems of the world. At this time, he also grew increasingly attracted to Italy's fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, and began to manifest a deep anti-Semitism. For twenty years, Pound continued to write cantos, but he also spoke more and more loudly against Roosevelt, against capitalism, and in favor of fascism.

When the United States joined World War II in 1941, Pound tried to return to his home country but was not allowed to do so. To support himself and his family during the war, Pound volunteered to do radio broadcasts for Italian state radio. In response, the U.S. government indicted Pound for treason in 1943, and, after Italy fell, Pound was arrested, held in a cage near Pisa, and returned to Washington to face trial.

Pound escaped the execution that could have been his fate when the judge found him mentally unfit to face trial, but he was sentenced to an indefinite period in a mental hospital. He spent thirteen years in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., refusing to disavow his beliefs. Even incarcerated, he continued to produce poetry, and even won the prestigious Bollingen Library of Congress Award for his 1949 volume *The Pisan Cantos*, composed while Pound was held prisoner by the U.S. Army. Finally, in 1958, Pound was released from the hospital and returned to Italy.

Pound lived the remainder of his life quietly. Settling in Venice, Pound initially continued to work and write, but, in the early 1960s, he fell into a deep depression and an unbreakable silence. Young poets such as Allen Ginsberg visited him, but Pound would not speak. Near the end of his life, largely because of the tireless efforts of his publisher James Laughlin, Pound finally began to enjoy the honors that had been denied him for decades and also began earning enough money from his poetry to live on. He died in Venice in November 1972.

Poem Text

E.P. ODE POUR L'ELECTION DE SON SEPULCHRE

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;
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;
Capaneus; trout for factitious bait;

. . . . . .
Caught in the unstopped ear;10
Giving the rocks small lee-way
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.
His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

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.

II

The age demanded an image
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze;
Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,

Made with no loss of time,
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.

III

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
the pianola "replaces"
Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations;
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,
Sage Heracleitus says;
But a tawdry cheapness
Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty
Defects after Samothrace;

We see . . .
Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,
Nor the saint's vision.
We have the press for wafer;
Franchise for circumcision.
All men, in law, are equals.
Free of Pisistratus,
We choose a knave or an eunuch
To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,
. . . . . .
What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

IV

These fought in any case,
and some believing,
pro domo, in any case. . .
Some quick to arm,
some for adventure,
some from fear of weakness,
some from fear of censure,
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,
learning later . . .
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;

Died some, pro patria,
non "dulce" non "et decor". . .
walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old and new infamy;
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.
Young blood and high blood,
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,
disillusions as never told in the days,
hysterias, trench confessions,
laughter out of dead bellies.

V

There died a myriad,
and of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

YEUX GLAUQUES

Gladstone was still respected,
When John Ruskin produced
"Kings' Treasuries"; Swinburne
And Rossetti still abused.

Foetid Buchanan lifted up his voice
When that faun's head of hers
Became a pastime for
Painters and adulterers.

The Burne-Jones cartons
Have preserved her eyes;
Still, at the Tate, they teach
Cophetua to rhapsodize;

Thin like brook-water,
With a vacant gaze.
The English Rubaiyat was still-born
In those days.

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faunlike from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive. . . .
"Ah, poor Jenny's case" . . .

Bewildered that a world
Shows no surprise
At her last maquero's
Adulteries.

"SIENA MI FE'; DISFECEMI MAREMMA"

Among the pickled foetuses and bottled bones,
Engaged in perfecting the catalogue,
I found the last scion of the
Senatorial families of Strasbourg, Monsieur Verog.

For two hours he talked of Galliffet;
Of Dowson; of the Rhymers' Club;
Told me how Johnson (Lionel) died
By falling from a high stool in a pub . . .

But showed no trace of alcohol
At the autopsy, privately performed□
Tissue preserved□the pure mind
Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed.

Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels;
Headlam for uplift; Image impartially imbued
With raptures for Bacchus, Terpsichore and the
Church.
So spoke the author of "The Dorian Mood,"

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,
Detached from his contemporaries,
Neglected by the young,
Because of these reveries.

BRENNBAUM

The skylike limpid eyes,
The circular infant's face,

The stiffness from spats to collar
Never relaxing into grace;

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty
years,
Showed only when the daylight fell
Level across the face
Of Brennbaum "The Impeccable."

MR. NIXON

In the cream gilded cabin of his steam yacht
Mr. Nixon advised me kindly, to advance with
fewer
Dangers of delay. "Consider

"Carefully the reviewer.

"I was as poor as you are;
"When I began I got, of course,
"Advance on royalties, fifty at first," said Mr.
Nixon,
"Follow me, and take a column,
"Even if you have to work free.

"Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred
"I rose in eighteen months;
"The hardest nut I had to crack
"Was Dr. Dundas.

"I never mentioned a man but with the view
"Of selling my own works.
"The tip's a good one, as for literature
"It gives no man a sinecure.

"And no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece.
"And give up verse, my boy,
"There's nothing in it."

Likewise a friend of Blougram's once advised me:
Don't kick against the pricks,
Accept opinion. The "Nineties" tried your game
And died, there's nothing in it.

X

Beneath the sagging roof
The stylist has taken shelter,
Unpaid, uncelebrated,
At last from the world's welter

Nature receives him;
With a placid and uneducated mistress
He exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress.

The haven from sophistications and contentions
Leaks through its thatch;
He offers succulent cooking;

The door has a creaking latch.

XI

"Conservatrix of Milésien"
Habits of mind and feeling,
Possibly. But in Ealing
With the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen?

No, "Milesian" is an exaggeration.
No instinct has survived in her
Older than those her grandmother
Told her would fit her station.

XII

"Daphne with her thighs in bark
"Stretches toward me her leafy hands,"□
Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion;
Doubtful, somewhat, of the value
Of Well-gowned approbation
Of literary effort,
But never of The Lady Valentine's vocation:

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata
Where the lower and higher have ending;

A hook to catch the Lady Jane's attention,
A modulation toward the theatre,
Also, in the case of revolution,
A possible friend and comforter.
Conduct, on the other hand, the soul
"Which the highest cultures have nourished"
To Fleet St. where

Dr. Johnson flourished;

Besides this thoroughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

ENVOI (1919)

Go,dumb-born book,
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:
Hadst thou but song
As thou has subjects known,
Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,
And build her glories their longevity.

Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Recking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

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,
Sifting on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.

MAUBERLEY (1920)

"Vacuos exercet in aera morsus."

Turned from the "eau-forte
Par Jacquemart"
To the strait head
Of Messalina:

"His true Penelope
Was Flaubert,"
And his tool
The engraver's.
Firmness,
Not the full smile,
His art, but an art
In profile;

Colourless
Pier Francesca,
Pisanello lacking the skill
To forge Achaia.

II

"Qu'est ce qu'ils savent de l'amour, et qu'est ce qu'ils peuvent comprendre?
S'ils ne comprennent pas la poésie, s'ils ne sentent pas la musique,
qu'est ce qu'ils peuvent comprendre de cette passion en comparaison
avec laquelle la rose est grossière et le parfum des violettes un
tonnerre?" CAID ALI
For three years, diabolus in the scale,
He drank ambrosia,
All passes, ANANGKE prevails,
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

He had moved amid her phantasmagoria,
Amid her galaxies,
NUKTIS'AGALMA

Drifted . . . drifted precipitate
Asking time to be rid of . . .
Of his bewilderment; to designate
His new found orchid. . . .

To be certain . . . certain . . .
(Amid ærial flowers) . . . time for arrangements□
Drifted on
To the final estrangement;

Unable in the supervening blankness
To sift TO AGATHON from the chaff

Until he found his sieve . . .
Ultimately, his seismograph:

□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□

He had passed, inconscient, full gaze,
The wide-banded irides
And botticellian sprays implied
In their diastasis;

Which anæsthesis, noted a year late
, And weighed, revealed his great affect,
(Orchid), mandate
Of Eros, a retrospect.

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

"THE AGE DEMANDED"

For this agility chance found
Him of all men, unfit

As the red-beaked steeds of
The Cytheræan for a chain bit.

The glow of porcelain
Brought no reforming sense
To his perception
Of the social inconsequence.

Thus, if her colour
Came against his gaze,

Tempered as if
It were through a perfect glaze

He made no immediate application
Of this to relation of the state
To the individual, the month was more temperate
Because this beauty had been.
The coral isle, the lion-coloured sand
Burst in upon the porcelain revery:
Impetuous troubling
Of his imagery.

Mildness, amid the neo-Nietzschean clatter,
His sense of graduations,
Quite out of place amid
Resistance to current exacerbations,

Invitation, mere invitation to perceptivity
Gradually led him to the isolation
Which these presents place
Under a more tolerant, perhaps, examination.

By constant elimination
The manifest universe
Yielded an armour
Against utter consternation,

A Minoan undulation,
Seen, we admit, amid ambrosial circumstances
Strengthened him against
The discouraging doctrine of chances,

And his desire for survival,
Faint in the most strenuous moods,
Became an Olympian *apathein*
In the presence of selected perceptions.

A pale gold, in the aforesaid pattern,
The unexpected palms
Destroying, certainly, the artist's urge,
Left him delighted with the imaginary
Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge,

Incapable of the least utterance or composition,
Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition,"
Refinement of medium, elimination of superfluities,

August attraction or concentration.

Nothing, in brief, but maudlin confession,
Irresponse to human aggression,
Amid the precipitation, down-float
Of insubstantial manna,
Lifting the faint susurrus
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.

IV

Scattered Moluccas
Not knowing, day to day,
The first day's end, in the next noon;
The placid water
Unbroken by the Simoon;

Thick foliage
Placid beneath warm suns,
Tawn fore-shores
Washed in the cobalt of oblivions;

Or through dawn-mist
The grey and rose
Of the juridical
Flamingoes;

A consciousness disjunct,
Being but this overblotted
Series
Of intermittences;

Coracle of Pacific voyages,
The unforecasted beach;
Then on an oar

Read this:
"I was "And I no more exist;
"Here drifted
"An hedonist."

MEDALLION

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

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 Minos' hall
From metal, or intractable amber,

The face-oval beneath the glaze,
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as,
Beneath half-watt rays,
The eyes turn topaz.

Plot Summary

E.P. Ode pour l'election de sonepulchre

The first section of this long sequence introduces the reader to almost all of the themes and content of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." The displacement of Pound's own self into a persona, the allusions to literary history, the foreign phrases: all of these typical Poundian elements appear in this first poem.

The section's title means "E. P. Ode for the Selection of His Tomb" (an allusion to the French poet Ronsard) and this section is, in a sense, a eulogy for "E. P.," Pound's aesthete alter ego. Written like most of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" in quatrains (four-line stanzas), this section tells of E. P., who "strove to resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry" by means of resurrecting the old idea of "'the sublime'." The poem's subject is clearly based on Pound himself, "born / In a half savage country" (Pound was born in Idaho). In this section, E. P. is an aspiring artist, admiring Flaubert (who, famously, pursued "le mot juste," or the exact word, and sought to create an art that was all style and no content) and "unaffected by 'the march of events.'" The portrait of E. P. is of an erudite, welleducated, classically-steeped aesthete: the very model of the late Victorian poet. Yet we already know that this E. P. will die, for he "passed from men's memory" in his thirty-first year (the French quote is from Pound's idol Francois Villon, and the reference is to the profound change in Pound's poetry that occurred in his thirty-first year).

II

The second section moves away from the subject of Pound himself and attempts to describe the artistic scene in London in the early 1900s. "The age demanded," Pound tells us, merely images; the age will settle for "mendacities" (lies) rather than the "classics in paraphrase" (this reference is to the hostility that greeted Pound's loose translation of Sextus Propertius's Latin lyric poems). Many art lovers in London in the 1910s were interested in art that was outwardly attractive but not deeply beautiful, immediately pleasing but not enduringly rewarding. Contrasting a "prose kinema" (i.e., versions of primitive movies told in literature) to alabaster (one of the most beautiful materials used in classical sculpture), Pound asserts that "the age demanded" the former. One of the primary themes of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is the difference between art that aspires only to outer beauty and art that aims at profundity. In the early poems, Pound portrays E. P. as a figure only too happy to pursue shallowness in art and the cheap reproduction of what has worked before.

III

In the third section, Pound details objects that "tasteful" people appreciated in the 1910s. Much of this section is simply contrast: Pound contrasts a typical artifact of Edwardian London with a legendary classical object and wants the reader to understand

the cheapness of the former. He contrasts a "tea-rose tea-gown" with the legendary gauzy fabric produced by the Greek island of Cos and the pianola (a player-piano) with the legendary lyre on which the Greek poet Sappho composed her verse.

As the section progresses, Pound begins to forward some explanations for this "tawdry cheapness" that characterizes his age. Capitalism and Christianity, he feels, have eaten away at the great- ness and authenticity of classical culture. He compares the "maceration" (wasting away of the body, as by extreme fasting) of Christ's body in the communion sacrament to the festivals of wine and music that honored the Greek god Dionysus, and states that Caliban (the savage slave in Shakespeare's *Tempest*) has replaced Ariel (a fairy in the same play). In the fourth stanza Pound states that "beauty" in ancient Greek, is "decreed in the market place." This section bemoans the cheapness that capitalism and the melodrama of Christianity have brought to culture.

IV

The fourth section takes readers from the parlors of early twentieth-century London to the muddy battlefields of World War I. This section's main thrust is that the slaughter of the war was perpetuated by lies and by the intentional deceits perpetrated by politicians and the wealthy. Focusing on why young men would volunteer to fight, Pound identifies several varieties of self-delusion. Some of the men fought "pro domo," or "for home"; some fought because they sought adventure; some because they wanted glory; some because they feared ridicule; and some just because they were disposed to violence. Nowhere in this poem does Pound mention the kinds of soldiers that politicians and generals talk about: young men who are willing to give up their lives for abstract concepts defined and defended by those in power.

After listing the reasons some went to war, Pound describes the war's effects. He alludes to Horace's famous line about patriotism, "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country) and angrily denies it: "non 'dulce' non 'et decor'. . . / walked eye-deep in hell." Pound tersely illustrates the conditions of trench warfare and angrily attacks the "old men's lies" that caused so many to die.

V

Although it is short, this section may be Pound's most well-known from this poem. In its eight lines, Pound bitterly states that there was no point to the war, that even if the war was, as the "old men" of section IV said, a sacred effort to defend civilization as we know it, civilization's defense was not worth all of those deaths. In the end, Pound says, "a myriad" died "For an old [b□□] gone in the teeth, / For a botched civilization." Especially surprising is Pound's verdict that art is not worth defending with young men's lives: he boils down the aesthetic heritage of section II to "two gross of broken statues . . . a few thousand battered books." At this point in the poem, Pound the narrator can clearly be seen to disagree with E. P., who presumably would hold art as being the most valuable thing in the world, very much worth defending with one's life.

Yeux glauques

The subject of "Yeux glaugues" ("grey eyes") is the artistic movement known as the Pre-Raphaelites. These artists led by Edward Burne- Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Rossetti's sister Christina named themselves after the period before the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael became dominant. They favored a shimmering, detailed, highly emotional presentation of their subject matter, such as is present in Burne-Jones's painting *King Cophetua and the Beggar-Maid*.

This section describes the hypocritical relationship between English politics of the late Victorian period and Pre-Raphaelite art. Prime Minister Gladstone and the art reviewer Robert Buchanan represent the conservative Victorian culture that disliked Pre-Raphaelite art and condemned its lack of morality. Pound viewed Gladstone and Buchanan as comics but feels they were still very harmful in their own time. And although Pound sympathized with the Pre-Raphaelites (and certainly E. P. would have found them kindred spirits), he felt that such Pre-Raphaelite art as Burne-Jones's aforementioned painting did not sufficiently confront social conditions. Such art aestheticized poverty while Pound would have had them attack the conditions that cause poverty.

"Siena mi Fe'; Disfecemi Maremma"

The title of this section comes from Dante's *Purgatorio*; it means "Siena Made Me; Maremma Unmade Me." This quote was spoken by "La Pia dei Tolomei," who was murdered by her husband in the swampy Maremma region. Rossetti painted her. This section presents a number of anecdotes of the aestheticists whom E. P. admires. While the previous section focused on the visual arts and the relation between politics and painting, this section discusses poetry and, in particular, the "Rhymers' Club" of poets of the 1890s. Lionel Johnson was the central figure of this group (Pound edited a collection of his verse during his early days in London), and Pound's friend and mentor William Butler Yeats also was a member. John Espey, an early scholar of this poem, identifies M. Verog as Victor Plarr, who was librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1909 (when Pound first came to London). This section is suffused with images of decay, of unnatural preservation, and of tawdriness.

Brennbaum

This short section is generally regarded as an early manifestation of Pound's growing anti- Semitism. "Brennbaum" is a figure for Max Beerbohm, a Jewish artist active in London in the 1910s, whom T. S. Eliot also caricatured.

Mr. Nixon

One of Pound's favorite stories to tell was of his meeting with Henry James soon after Pound arrived in London. James at the time was unquestionably the leading figure in American literature, and, in "Mr. Nixon," Pound provides a short, satirical portrait of James's advice to him. Some critics feel that Mr. Nixon is also a representation of Arnold Bennett, an important figure in the English literary scene in the early 1900s whose practical and capitalistic approach to art Pound would have reviled. At the same time, this section is a parody of one of James's own stories, "The Advice of the Master." The primary thrust of this section is to present another kind of figure from London's literary scene of the early 1900s, the practical-minded, pretentious, self-appointed advisor to a young writer.

X

This short section, according to scholar Christine Froula, is based on an interlude in the life of Ford Madox Ford, a novelist active in London at the time and a friend of Pound's. Contrasting with the well-fed, self-satisfied Mr. Nixon is the starving artist of this section, who returns to his cabin with its "sagging roof" and "creaking latch" where he and his "placid and uneducated mistress" enjoy each other's company.

XI

Like section X, this poem is a subtle description of sexual behavior of the time. The bohemian lovers become the proper woman and the "Conservatrix of Milésien." This obscure allusion is to the lost ancient Greek erotic text, the *Milesian Tales*. Broken up into two short stanzas, this section describes a "bank-clerkly" Englishman, presumably shy and sexually inexperienced, about to have a rendezvous with his lover, whose own sexual attitudes are based on her grandmother's advice about what is proper for her station.

XII

This section illustrates the literary salon culture in which Pound refused to take part. The salons, generally led by women, were a development of the eighteenth century, when upper-middle-class women cultivated an appreciation for art. In this poem the "I" goes to the home of the Lady Valentine, the *salonniere*, to seek her approval for his verse. The narrator here is nervous about frivolous things such as his coat and his appearance, which Pound emphasizes to illustrate how salon society was primarily concerned with appearances, social niceties, and the like, rather than the value of art. The end of the section, contrasting the sale of "halfhose" (stockings) with "Pierian roses," alludes to Sappho's line about Pierian roses and again indicates how Pound felt that literary salons were not really concerned with genuine evaluation of art.

Envoi (1919)

An "envoi" is a send-off; often it is an author's final word to his or her literary composition, wishing it well as it goes to be appreciated by the public. This envoi is a send-off in a number of ways: it is the poem's farewell to the character of E. P.; it is an imitation of the Renaissance poem "Go, Lovely Rose" by Thomas Campion; and it says a definitive goodbye to the aestheticist verse of E. P. and the Victorian period. The poem is remarkably accomplished both in its imitation of Campion's poem and in its sophisticated use of musical rhythms. Pound argued for a meter that was based on the musical phrase, and "Envoi" clearly embodies this, especially when compared to the short, irregular, and often forced tempos of the earlier sections of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley."

Mauberley (1920)

In this section, Pound introduces a new character, "Mauberley." Mauberley is an aesthete like E. P. but less earnest, less naive, and less desirous of joining the literary circles of his time. However, he is no more sophisticated than was E. P. This first poem portrays Mauberley as another kind of aesthete, one for whom art is engravings and etchings. Pound also introduces the motif of the medallion here with the allusion to Pisanello, an Italian Renaissance artist who struck medals.

II

This long and complex section illustrates how Mauberley's growing fascination with aestheticism prevents him from reaching a sexual connection with a woman. Pound was fascinated with the relationship between creative energy and sexual energy, and developed a number of spurious theories about sex and creativity. In this section, Mauberley's fascination with the bric-a-brac of the aesthetic life (ambrosia, orchids) and his immersion in cultural heritage render him unable to relate on an immediate physical level with a woman.

"The Age Demanded"

"The Age Demanded" puts the reader deeply into the head of Mauberley, who is lapsing into solipsism (a theory holding that the self is the only existent thing). The Latinate words of this section and its long lines contrast with the short lines and more concrete diction of earlier sections and underscore Mauberley's retreat into his own head. As Mauberley develops an ever-finer aesthetic sense, he begins to lose touch with the outside world. "Beauty," as in line 321, could make his month more "temperate." Mauberley is retreating into isolation; "By constant elimination" of the outside world, "The manifest universe" of aesthetic refinement "Yielded an armour / Against utter consternation." As he further develops his artistic sensibility, Mauberley becomes less

and less capable of creating original art. Pound notes in the later stanzas of this section that this development will lead "To his final / Exclusion from the world of letters."

IV

Although it is not explicitly mentioned, the image underlying this whole section is that of the lotus-eaters of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which many of Odysseus's sailors are lured onto an island where they learn to eat the fruit of the lotus. This fruit is like a drug and makes the sailors never want to leave the island. Mauberley's drift into aesthetic reverie, Pound suggests, is like the surrender of the sailors to the fruit of the lotus. The section is dominated by images of warm places (Molucca, the Simoon winds of the African deserts) and islands (a "coracle" is a small boat). The section ends with Mauberley's possible end: "'I was / And I no more exist; / Here drifted / An hedonist'."

Medallion

Like "Envoi," "Medallion" completes one of the poem's sections and is therefore doubly complicated. Most of the sections either observe E. P./Mauberley or are in the voice of the character; "Envoi" and "Medallion," by contrast, might be examples of their own work, or might be examples of Pound's work as influenced by them, or might be something else entirely. Scholar Christine Froula argues that "whereas the 'Envoi' represents the lyric mode, 'Medallion' represents 'Imagistic' poetics." ("Imagism" was a school of verse headed by Pound in the mid-1910s.) But Jo Brantley Berryman, another critic, feels that "Medallion" is actually the voice of the contemporary Pound because the poem exhibits characteristics of the Vorticist movement. The Vorticist movement was a literary/artistic movement in London that took place around 1915-1917. The main instigators were Pound and Wyndham Lewis, who published a journal called *BLAST*. The movement was much like Imagism but valued art that was more intense, violent, and powerful.

"Medallion" is an attempt "To present the series / Of curious heads in medallion," in the words of an earlier section, and, unlike the rest of the sections here, "Medallion" follows imagist dogma: it presents images, but it does not comment. In many ways, "Medallion" is the most accomplished and sophisticated poem that Mauberley could have produced, and it is indeed a fine poem from a sure hand with imagery. However, it is bloodless and irrelevant. Mauberley's careful cultivation of his aesthetic sensibilities rendered him unable to create, and this limits his verse's importance. "Medallion" shows that Mauberley's aesthetic sensibilities are indeed very sharp, but at the same time the section leaves the reader unsure as to its relevance. We understand why Pound felt that he had to leave this kind of aestheticism behind when he left London, especially because he wanted his poetry to become more, not less, socially involved.

Themes

Aestheticism

"Aestheticism" was the nineteenth-century term for the desire to live one's life completely in pursuit of aesthetic beauty. The "aesthete," or one who lived an aestheticist life, disdained the world as a fallen, brutal, ugly place. Only in art could the aestheticist find solace. Aesthetes spent their lives attempting to refine their own aesthetic taste, to be able to make finer and finer distinctions between the beautiful and the ugly. In the end, aesthetes dreamed of surrounding themselves with beauty.

In the mid-Victorian period, aestheticism gained a new popularity among the upper middle classes. An Oxford scholar named Walter Pater, active in the mid-nineteenth century, has become the very emblem of aestheticism. His book *The Renaissance* is a series of essays on Italian Renaissance painters, but many of the essays stray from scholarship toward simple appreciation and even reverie□especially in his essay on da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. "All art," Pater once said, "aspires toward the condition of music," by which Pater intended to say that the aesthetic experience at its most pure is without content or themes. It is intoxicating, it simply carries one away.

Inspired by Pater and by his followers, many of London's important literary figures of the 1880s and 1890s adopted aestheticist ideas and poses. The Pre-Raphaelites attempted to bring art back to medieval times, but in reality their art was unlike medieval art. Instead, it is shimmering, complicated, ravishing, and highly romantic. The Pre-Raphaelites also wrote poetry, and their verse concentrated primarily on sensual pleasures. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and Algernon Charles Swinburne are the best-known of the Pre-Raphaelite or, as they later came to be called, "decadent" poets. Their poems were caught up in the beauty and complexity of language, and often piled on adjective after adjective in an attempt to make language carry the weight of sensory experience.

Eventually the aesthetes or decadents became parodies of themselves. Eschewing seriousness, social commitment, or any kind of relevance whatsoever, decadent literature became the verbal equivalent of opium for many readers: a stimulant for sensory pleasure and a spur to "drop out" of society.

The ultimate expression of decadent or aestheticist literature is J. K. Huysmans's book *Against the Grain*, which tells of a wealthy Frenchman, des Esseintes, who spends his life insulating himself from the world and searching for the rarest, most refined sensory pleasures possible. He orders strange plants from all over the world and fills his house with them. He spends weeks locked in his overstuffed basement sampling the liqueurs of the world. In becoming decadent, aestheticism moved from being simple appreciation for good art and became a way of turning one's back on the world. In "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," Pound sketches out a portrait of such decadents, ridiculing their

shallowness and suggesting that literature must be involved in the world or risk utter irrelevance.

World War I

World War I was a cataclysmic event in Pound's early career, although he barely mentioned it while the war was taking place in either his correspondence or his literary work. Imagism's harsh attacks on late Victorian poetry and the frankly violent language of the Vorticist movement headed by Pound seemed ridiculous when the real slaughter began. Eventually and inevitably, Pound lost friends in the conflict. He even wrote a book about one of these friends, a French sculptor named Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who had carved a "Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound" out of a discarded chunk of marble Pound found for him under a London bridge.

It was not until the publication of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" in 1920 that Pound finally confronted the war in his writing. Pound's verdict on the war's meaning was blunt. He condemns the rhetoric used by leaders to inspire young men to fight and die. He conjures up terse, memorable images for death more effective than paragraphs of long-winded prose. He determines, memorably, that the civilization for which these men were fighting consisted of nothing more than "broken statues" and "battered books." Nothing justified war for Pound. War was the ultimate evil, and throughout his life Pound tried to identify war's deepest causes and bring them to public light. Pound came to the conclusion that wars occur because wealthy peoples' financial interests benefit from war: banks, arms manufacturers and dealers, and politicians all benefit when a country must go to war. Sadly, though, beginning in the 1930s, Pound brought this insight to a disturbing conclusion when he began arguing that Jews were behind most war profiteering and decided that Mussolini's Italy was a state that would never contribute to the causes of war.

Style

Point of View

The most enduringly difficult aspect of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is the maddening way that Pound creates two alter egos. These alter egos may be aspects of himself but to what extent? What in them does he admire, what in them does he wish us to condemn, what of himself does he unconsciously include? E. P., one of the alter egos, even has Pound's own initials□is he an earlier version of Pound, accurately portrayed, or is he (like James Joyce's character Stephen Dedalus) a satirized version of some of the author's old traits?

E. P. is the first alter ego. We learn this from the fact that the first poem is called "E.P. Ode pour l'election de son sepulchre," or "E.P. Ode for the Selection of His Tomb." E. P. is clearly the "he" of this first poem, a young poet who came to Europe from his own "half-savage country" and wanted to "resuscitate" the art of poetry and the old-style "sublime." The imagery of the poem presents E. P. as an aesthete, contemplating "the elegance of Circe's hair" while history passes him by. Most of the poems of the E. P. section of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" show snapshots of late Victorian London and its literary scene; E. P. is either absent or his presence barely registers (much as Pound seems to think is the case with aesthetes in general). However, throughout the poem, he observes everything that is going on around himself. But a knowledge of Pound's own life shows that E. P. and Pound have much in common: acquaintances, artistic tastes, life experiences.

Mauberley is a different matter. He almost literally fades out of the poems as he refines his aesthetic tastes even more. Pound often uses the image of a medallion throughout the five poems of the Mauberley sequence, alluding to Pound's own fascination with Pisanello, with coinage, and "mould in plaster" that "the age demanded" in the second poem of the E. P. sequence. Like the profile on a medallion or a coin, Mauberley is only seen in halfview; he is never fully there. Mauberley is a different kind of aesthete than E. P. While E. P. will follow the sirens, Mauberley will lose himself in the sensual pleasures of the land of the lotus-eaters. E. P. exists in the world but does nothing of importance in it, while Mauberley, a man of admittedly more refined aesthetic sensibilities, runs the risk of just fading out as he melts into his sensual pleasures.

Allusion

Allusions (implied or indirect reference) to dozens of sources fill "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." Whole books have been written tracking down all of Pound's allusions, but it is possible to understand the essential message of the poem with the explanation of just a few of them. Most of the allusions fall into two categories: allusions to the classical world and allusions to the aesthetic/decadent worlds.

Most important, probably, are the allusions to classical civilization, for at this point in his career Pound was searching for a way to use classical civilization as a way to understand the modern world. On a basic level, E. P. and Mauberley represent two types of Odysseus's companions from Homer's *Odyssey*: E. P., the sailors lured by the sirens, and Mauberley, the sailors who stay on the island of the lotus-eaters. But these are by no means the only classical allusions. The poem begins with an epigram by the Carthaginian poet Nemesianus, and in the first poem Pound also alludes to the *Odyssey* three times, the muses, and one of the "Seven against Thebes" from Sophocles's play. The rest of the poem continues to allude to the Greeks and Romans, referring to "an Attic grace," "the mousseline of Cos," Samothrace, Pisistratus, Horace, and many others, in the first few poems alone. There is no unifying structure to the allusions; Pound saw the classical world as still being alive and relevant, and the poem shows how both E. P. and Mauberley felt the same.

The allusions to the late 1800s and early 1900s in London are much more specific and less accessible to the nonspecialist. "Mr. Nixon," for instance, alludes to authors Arnold Bennett and Henry James, and "Yeux glaugues" alludes to Victorian politicians Robert Buchanan and Prime Minister William Gladstone and writers John Ruskin and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Some of the allusions are plain; others, such as Brennbaum, are disguised.

Historical Context

Pound's poem provides a number of brief vignettes and portraits of literary London in the 1890s and 1900s. The frivolity of these times, though, becomes patent when the poem abruptly moves to a discussion of the unthinkable catastrophe that became known as World War I. In the years leading up to World War I, the London literary scene fragmented into ever-smaller feuding movements, all based on minute distinctions in aesthetics. Because of what they saw as their daring in challenging the morality of the Victorian age, modernist writers found themselves cast in the roles of rebels, pariahs, even dangerous men and women. Such writers as Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis even began to believe their own hype about being dangerous to society.

The coming of World War I, though, fulfilled the modernist predictions of a coming fragmentation and destruction beyond anything they could have imagined. The war itself came upon an unsuspecting Europe almost in a way that the modernists might have envisioned, for it was society's faith in its own structures that ended up destroying it. Specifically, the complicated network of alliances dividing Europe into two moderately hostile camps (one consisting largely of democracies such as Great Britain and France, the other consisting of monarchies or dictatorships such as Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but even these categories had exceptions□Czarist Russia fought on the side of the democracies) became not a means of stability but the mechanism of Europe's destruction.

The war began when the Serbian rebel Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Austro-Hungarian archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. Austria- Hungary sought reprisals against Serbia, the Russians came to the Serbian defense, the Germans came to the assistance of the Austro-Hungarians, and Eastern Europe was at war. At the same time, the Germans took this opportunity to try out a plan they had been developing for years. The German strategic command had worked out a way to march across Belgium and northeastern France and take Paris in six weeks, and in 1914 they attempted to do just this. The plan bogged down, though, and soon the English came to the assistance of the French and Belgians. Pushing the Germans back from the very suburbs of Paris, the Allied forces managed to save the French nation, but the armies soon found themselves waging trench warfare in the forests and fens of northern France and Belgium. Millions died in futile attempts to move the line forward a few yards. Among these were a number of modernist artists and writers, including the French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, a friend of Ezra Pound's.

The tone of excitement about violence that characterized early modernist writing disappeared after the war, for the writers who exalted in the promise of destruction were utterly numbed by the effects of real destruction. Although the soldier-writers like Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon have left readers with vivid, horrifying pictures of combat, perhaps the most enduring modernist imagery of the war is contained in two poems: Eliot's "The Waste Land" and Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." Pound's poem addresses the war directly, stating "There died a myriad, / and of the best, among them, / For an old bitch gone in the teeth, / For a botched civilization."

Critical Overview

"Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" was originally published by the small private press of John Rodker, a printer who specialized in expensive, finely made editions of books by modernist authors. At the time, Pound was often issuing his works twice in quick succession—once with small publishers such as Rodker, who would sell books to collectors and devoted fans of Pound's, and again with trade literary publishers such as Alfred A. Knopf or Farrar and Rinehart, whose books were sold in bookstores and purchased by a broader group of readers. As a result, it is important to keep in mind that early readers and reviewers are often responding to two different presentations of the poem, for "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" appears quite different when printed on fine paper, accompanied by illustrations, and bound in hand-tooled leather versus when it is printed on inexpensive paper and machine bound.

The earliest reviewers read the Rodker edition and were often swayed by the poem's classy, or very established, face in that version. An anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (reprinted in Eric Homberger's book *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*) in July 1920 remarks on the "beautifully printed book" but finds the poems "needlessly obscure." The reviewer notes that the book "has no wish to appeal to more than a small circle of readers." The poems, the reviewer continues, seem to be both courting and hostile to readers; however, they have a "mathematical charm."

Other contemporary reviewers caught the acerbic tone of the poem but, as with the *Times Literary Supplement* writer, felt that Pound was unnecessarily obscure. Writing in the *New Age* (as reprinted and quoted from *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*) in 1922, Edwin Muir wished that "the condemnation of our age which is implicitly damning in this book had been explicitly so." Muir was impressed by Pound's refusal to slip into "rhetoric"; his scorn "is so great that it does not even express itself." However, Muir felt that the poem simply pronounces the end of the possibility of poetry: "the tragedy," Muir says, "is that an artist here tells us that art is no longer possible, and that the only thing we can utter now is our desperation and our contempt." In January 1922, John Peale Bishop of *Vanity Fair* (also reprinted in *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*) compared Mauberley unfavorably to a contemporary's work, stating that the poems are "elliptical, coolly wrought, delicately pointed satires, but there is nothing here so poignant as the poems of T. S. Eliot in a similar genre."

As Pound's fame grew and critics began to look at "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" not simply as an isolated poem but as a moment in a long career, judgements on it grew more sophisticated and more accepting. In 1928, T. S. Eliot wrote in the introduction for an English edition of Pound's selected poems that "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" was "a great poem . . . I know very well that the apparent roughness and naivete of the verse and rhyming of 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley' are inevitably the result of many years of hard work." Other critics of the day are similarly favorable. Maxwell Bodenheim, writing for the *Dial* (reprinted in *Ezra Pound: The Critical Heritage*), found the two war poems to be "the most condensed and deftly sardonic account of the war and its causes that has so far appeared."

In his 1932 book *New Bearings in English Poetry*, the eminent British critic F. R. Leavis took Eliot's judgments and refines them, arguing that "the verse is extraordinarily subtle, and its subtlety is the subtlety of the sensibility that it expresses." After describing the individual poems, Leavis concludes that "the whole is great poetry, at once traditional and original. Mr. Pound's standing as a poet rests upon it and rests securely." However, this was faint praise; Leavis believed that Pound's earlier work was substandard, and that *The Cantos* were simply obscure and sloppy.

The first full-length study of Ezra Pound's work appeared in 1951 from an emerging Canadian scholar. Hugh Kenner placed Pound, not Eliot or Joyce, at the center of the movement. In his book, Kenner states unequivocally that "had not a single Canto been finished, ['Hugh Selwyn Mauberley'] dispels any doubt of Pound's being a major poet." But Kenner also argues with Leavis explicitly, denying that "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is the high-water mark in Pound's career and insisting instead that the poem simply sets the stage for the much greater and more important *The Cantos* (which Kenner definitively explains in his 1973 volume, *The Pound Era*).

After Kenner, dozens of critics began writing on Pound, and two scholars produced book-length studies of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." John Espey's *Ezra Pound's "Mauberley": A Study in Composition* is an "experiment," in Espey's words,

> focused on the question of how effective the traditional
> academic method of attack, with its full
> panoply of textual collation, identification of sources,
> and historical method, would prove when used in
> analysing a piece of contemporary poetry.

Its purpose is less to judge the value or importance of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" than to judge the viability of academic criticism. A later study, Jo Brantley Berryman's *Circe's Craft: Ezra Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,"* is intended to use a greater knowledge of Pound's early readings and aesthetic beliefs to shed light on the meaning of the poem.

More recent criticism of Pound has generally focused on the prose and *The Cantos*, but scholars still continue to put "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" in context as a number of different interpretations of Pound's ultimate importance compete with each other. If *The Cantos* fail because of their ultimately fascist meaning, what does that mean for "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"? Is the poem a more perceptive analysis of late Victorian aestheticism than readers realize? Are E. P. and Mauberley ironic versions of Pound himself, or are they creatures that "the age demanded" and that Pound is ridiculing? These and other questions about gender, sexuality, war, and aestheticism dominate current studies of the poem.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Barnhisel directs the Writing Center at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In this essay, Barnhisel discusses the use of the image of the medallion in the second half of Pound's poem and how it prefigures Pound's later interests in the confluence of economics and literature.

In his 1928 introduction to the *Selected Poems* of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot writes that "I am sure of 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,' whatever else I am sure of." "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is generally seen as the poem that takes Pound from his early adventures in poetry to his mature lifelong endeavor of *The Cantos*. Admirers of Pound's epic poem praise "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" as a prefiguration of the methods and subject matter of *The Cantos*, while critics who see *The Cantos* as a failure laud "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" for its traces of imagism, Vorticism, and Pound's other early obsessions. Almost all critics, though, admire "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" as perhaps Pound's most purely successful creation.

Much of the commentary on "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" centers on the personae Pound constructs in the poem. E. P. and Mauberley represent two types of aesthete and, most critics agree, also represent two aspects of Pound himself that he wished to exorcise. E. P. is callow and immature, a follower, a hanger-on to the literary scene of early 1900s London. He latches onto people such as Mr. Nixon, the Lady Valentine, and Monsieur Verog but ultimately creates nothing of any importance. Mauberley, by contrast, is an older and more selfassured E. P. His aesthetic sense is more refined, but at the same time, he is more separated from the world, desiring more to observe and appreciate rather than to interact. It is telling that the poet compares E. P. to a sailor lured by a siren (i.e., one who wants contact) and Mauberley to a lotus-eater (i.e., one who wants to be alone with his objects).

In addition to being equated to a lotus-eater, Mauberley is repeatedly associated with a "medallion." The medallion□its appearance and the process of its creation□are both indicative of Mauberley's aesthetic tastes, but at the same time, the use of the medallion indicates that Mauberley's taste in objects was a stage that led, later, to Pound's own taste. In the 1910s, Pound went through a series of aesthetic incarnations, moving from the caped Swinburnian decadent to the austere imagist to the blustering Vorticist to, ultimately, his final incarnation as the man who tells the "tale of the tribe," as he called *The Cantos*.

Driving that evolution was a belief that energy, meaning, and aesthetic power could all be concentrated in a single thing. At times, that "thing" was a particular artwork (such as the mosaic in the church on the island of Torcello, near Venice, or the relief medallions of Sigismondo and Isotta Malatesta in the church of San Francesco in Rimini); at times, that "thing" was a "luminous detail" of history. For years, influenced by the scholar Ernest Fenollosa, Pound pursued the (ultimately incorrect) theory that the Chinese written character was a unique combination of the sign for and picture of an object. Sometimes this combination was a person, a "factive personality" in Pound's terms, a

man who embodied the spirit of a time and place and single-handedly sought to fuse the artificially sundered strains of power and politics and art. And for the later Pound, obsessed with money and the machinations of power, coinage itself was also one of these combinations of material fact, power, and symbolic value. The images of medallions that recur in the "Mauberley" section of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" are another example of Pound's preoccupation with coins. Their meaning in the poem is just a stage in the development of Pound's thought about the conjunction of aesthetics and politics.

The first section is dominated by images of different kinds of artistic production but focuses on the art of the engraver. The poem begins "Turned from the 'eau-forte / Par Jacquemart' / To the strait head / Of Messalina," a confusing batch of images. "Eau-forte" means "strong water" and is the French term for an etching (a type of print that uses acid to make the image); Jules Jacquemart was a Parisian artist who did an etching of the French poet Theophile Gautier. But, the unnamed subject of the verb "turned," a subject that we can assume is Mauberley, has left the aestheticism of Gautier and the art of the etcher behind for the "strait head of Messalina," a reference to the Roman emperor Claudius's wife whose head appeared on Roman coins of the first century A.D. Like E. P., Mauberley's "'true Penelope / Was Flaubert,'" indicating his essential aestheticism, but Mauberley grounds his art in the concrete: "his tool / The engraver's." Mauberley's art is "colorless," "not the full smile," "an art / In profile." In other words, Mauberley's art is incomplete, lifeless. The poem ends with an implicit comparison of the engraver's art to the craft of the ironworker: "Pisanello [an Italian carver who made medallions] lacking the skill / To forge Achaia [ancient Greece]."

The incomplete art of the engraver, the art in profile, is paralleled to Mauberley's own life in the second poem, which is (in the words of Christine Froula in *A Guide to Ezra Pound's "Selected Poems,"*) "a fable of Mauberley's uncomprehending response to the urgings of Eros." Mauberley's response to the woman's advances is stiff, jerky, nonrhythmic, much like the rhythm of the poem itself. The erotic drives of the woman are incomprehensible to Mauberley, whose "fundamental passion" is for art: he wants to describe her, to present "the series / Of curious heads in medallion." Unable to respond to her as a woman, Mauberley is metaphorically turned to stone. Unlike in the E. P. section, the Greek phrases here are rendered in phonetic translation rather than in the Attic script□like a medallion carving in profile, the Greek is rendered only partially faithful to the original.

The third poem, "The Age Demanded," moves us from the private to the public. Criticizing Mauberley's ultimate irrelevance, the poet notes, "The glow of porcelain / Brought no reforming sense / To his perception / Of the social inconsequence." (The reference to "the glow of porcelain" alludes, as well, to another school of artists, the della Robbia family of Renaissance Florence who made medallion-shaped, glazed terra-cotta sculptures that were placed over doorways and over wall altars.) Mauberley has retreated into aestheticism, into antiquarianism, and as a result, suffers "social inconsequence," or an ultimate irrelevance to society. In the poem, Mauberley's perceptions are filtered through his preoccupations with art. He sees women not as they are but as they might be portrayed in an engraving or a porcelain representation.

Mauberley's aestheticism, moreover, has made him incapable of even creating art any more. All he can do is appreciate art, evaluate it, eat the lotuses; he is "incapable of the least utterance or composition."

"Medallion," the final section of the Mauberley sequence and of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" as a whole, has generated some critical controversy. Is this poem Mauberley's own? Is Pound trying to indicate the kind of verse that Mauberley might write? Or is this poem a production of the narrator, or of Pound himself? Is it a good poem or a bad poem? "Critical opinions over the past several decades," writes Jo Brantley Berryman (writing in *Circe's Craft: Ezra Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"*) in her study of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," "have agreed in assigning 'Medallion' to Mauberley." However, Berryman argues that Pound himself speaks in "Medallion." Basing her argument on Pound's Vorticist dogma, she states that "Medallion" "can be vindicated and identified as Pound's own poem." The poem, she continues, illustrates the Vorticist preference for "hardness of outline," sharpness, gauntness, and austerity.

In this, of course, it is like a medallion or a coin, and thus it represents a link between Mauberley's characteristics (antiquarianism, lifelessness) and Pound's interest in the luminous detail or the node of power. The poem is stripped of all unnecessary words and attempts simply to construct a luminous image of a woman's face. Returning to the second poem of the Mauberley sequence, this poem can be seen as what Mauberley is seeking to create when the real woman is trying to connect with him: "This urge," the poet says, "to convey the relation / Of eye-lid and cheek-bone / By verbal manifestation." "Medallion" accomplishes this. But, at the same time, the poem condemns the living woman it describes to the dusty pages of archaeology— specifically, of the archaeological writings of Solomon Reinach, alluded to in the eighth line. This musician, her sensual face, the heat of the room, the sound of her voice and of the piano, are transformed into a static, lifeless medallion through the intervention of Mauberley. They are beautiful, the description accomplished, but the fact is that they are devoid of inspiration ("inspiration" deriving from the Greek term for "to blow life into something"). Even the eyes, the seats of life, "turn topaz." Life becomes stone.

In later years, Pound's own thoughts on economics began to reflect just such ideas about medallions, coins, and the like. Pound viewed purchasing power as a dynamic thing. Money was simply a flawed representation of purchasing power, he felt, and should not be admired or valued for itself. In the 1920s and 1930s, Pound developed a quite complicated theory about banks and their control over purchasing power. Money, initially used as simply a marker or a symbol, becomes itself value, and eventually, banks are able to create money out of money by charging interest on credit. This, for Pound, was an abomination, for one should not be able to create value out of nothing— this perverted the idea that all value was in the end based in human effort. The coin "petrifies," or turns to stone, the dynamic nature of purchasing power and allows an essentially free entity to be captured and owned. Even more than being lifeless, it petrifies life itself, taking purchasing power and turning it into an object. Similarly, Mauberley's medallions are valuable things, desirable and wellcrafted, but lifeless. "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is not only a stylistic indication of where Pound has been and

where he will eventually go; the poem also contains a structure of symbols and images that will make sense only in the light of Pound's later beliefs and writings.

Source: Greg Barnhisel, Critical Essay on "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," in *Poetry for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Witemeyer examines the artist portraits Pound creates as an "aesthetic heritage for Mauberley." The first major work in which Pound expresses this embittered social vision is *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920).

Pound wrote the sequence as a poetic farewell to London on the eve of his departure for Paris. In it, he adumbrates the reasons why, after a residence of twelve years, he no longer finds England congenial to art and artists.

His analysis is complex and uncompromising. To begin with, his formidable style makes few concessions to the common reader. Those tackling the poem for the first time may well come away with little more than a general impression of angry urgency and bitter irony. A major source of difficulty is the extreme condensation of the images and allusions, which often imply discursive arguments made elsewhere in Pound's writings but not repeated here. In the absence of an easily identifiable central speaker or *persona*, another problem lies in gauging the point of view and tone of voice of the various sections of the sequence. The reader is forced to construe unfamiliar, heterogeneous materials juxtaposed according to a logic that is not immediately apparent. It is as though the imagistic technique of "In a Station of the Metro" had fissioned.

To bring the *Mauberley* sequence under control, each reader must make a set of personal hermeneutic decisions about the meaning and connection of its various elements. Here is one set of choices that may prove helpful. In its first twelve sections, the sequence analyzes the false values of modern civilization by showing their effects upon the market for art and upon the careers of a series of minor artists. As in many of his earlier poems, Pound takes the *vida* of the secondary artist to be a valid index of the general culture of his society. The poem is by no means a neo-romantic *"Kunstlerroman"* (novel of the education of the artist) in verse, however. Ironically, the title character, a fictive poet named Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, does not even appear until the second part of the sequence, beginning with "Mauberley 1920." Instead of spotlighting a protagonist, the first part of the poem presents a critique of "the age" and shows its effects upon the lives and works of other English artists, from the mid-Victorian period on.

These portraits provide an aesthetic heritage for Mauberley and a glance at some contemporary careers with which his may be compared. The voice that knits the sequence is the flexible voice of Pound himself, speaking in various tones of irony, rage, detachment and impersonal sympathy; but the voice does not build up a *persona* or generate an illusion of dramatic character. There are moments of lyric affirmation, especially in the "Envoi" and "Medallion," but the predominant tone is diagnostic, ironic, and satiric.

Pound's criticism is two-edged. First, he condemns the philistine priorities of a society which values money more than life, profit more than beauty. Secondly, he criticizes

modern artists themselves for their escapist responses to the pressures of the age, for either giving up or taking refuge in a hedonistic aestheticism. In other words, *Mauberley* is an extended case study of what happens when, as Eliot put it, the doctrine of "Art for Art's sake" is challenged by the demand that art "be instrumental to social purposes."

After the opening "Ode," sections II-V present Pound's critique of British values in an era of "tawdry cheapness." In art, the age demands a prettified image of itself, a "mould in plaster" or a photographically realistic drama and fiction which are endlessly replicable for a mass market. When beauty (TO KALON) is "decreed in the market place," art becomes mechanical; the pianola which "replaces" Sappho's barbitos or lyre symbolizes this decline. In politics, a mechanical democracy of electoral franchise and mass-circulation newspapers displaces a traditional religious sense of community and chooses corrupt or ineffectual leaders. Aesthetic and political ideals "defect" and turn into hollow mockeries.

The Great War of 1914-18 was the logical outcome of this displacement of life values by money values. Those who went to battle out of patriotic idealism returned with no illusions:

believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy;
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.

The Social-Credit conspiracy-theory of the economic and political causes of the war underpins these bitter lines, which mark the first appearance of the term *usury* in Pound's poetry.

Pound traces the philistine phase of modern British society back some seventy-five years, to the Pre-Raphaelite controversies of the mid-Victorian period. Much of *Mauberley* is devoted to showing how different artists have responded to economic and social pressures during this period. Pound does not let his sympathy for the artists' cause prevent him from making an unsentimental diagnosis of the flaws in their will and their aesthetic views. After all, "the age" is not wholly to blame if its minor talents do not succeed.

Mauberley's gallery of impaired, failed, and compromised artists begins with the *"E.P."* of the opening ode, a version of Pound himself in the years just after his arrival in London. Well-meaning but immobilized by the dated cultural baggage of his provincial American upbringing, *"E.P."* fails to modernize his style and falls behind, trapped in the contemplation of an old-fashioned ideal of beauty.

The gallery resumes in *"Yeux Glauques"* and proceeds in roughly chronological order, from Ruskin, Rossetti, Swinburne and Burne-Jones, to the Rhymers of the Nineties (Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson), to Max Beerbohm (*"Brennbaum"*), Arnold Bennett

(*"Mr. Nixon"*) and Ford Madox Ford ("the stylist"). In Sections XI and XII, the focus shifts from the artists to their audience, as Pound satirizes bourgeois, aristocratic and popular representatives of modern public taste. If the economic and social demands of the age induce escapism or compromise among artists, among consumers of the arts they erase all notions of patronage based upon aesthetic merit.

The second part of the sequence, beginning with *"Mauberley 1920"*, traces the effect of these forces upon the career of a fictive English poet. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley is not modelled upon any identifiable, historical individual. Rather, he is a type of the aesthete. Mauberley begins as an Imagist poet but declines, under the pressures of the age, into hedonistic impressionism.

Mauberley starts out as an admirer of the Parnassian poetry of Théophile Gautier in *Emaux et Camées*. (The "eau-forte / Par Jacquemart" is the engraved portrait bust of Gautier on the frontispiece of the 1881 edition. With this allusion, the poem is also declaring its own aesthetic allegiances, for Gautier's quatrains are one model for those of *Mauberley* itself.) The connoisseur admires engravings, coins, medallions, relief sculpture and the linear style of Italian Renaissance portraiture. With Flaubertian precision, he models his own imagistic poetry upon this lapidary visual art. Indeed, the "Medallion" which closes the entire poem should probably be read as a work by Mauberley himself, a typical profile portrait in "sculpted" rhyme of a beautiful woman singing. (The "Envoi" offers a more melodic treatment of the same subject).

After three productive years, however, Mauberley's talent recedes into silence. He misses an opportunity for love because he simply lacks erotic desire. (For Pound, as the French epigraph from "Caid Ali" suggests, eros and creativity are different manifestations of the same energy.) Mauberley's response to the age is not to yield to its demands but to withdraw into a private, subjective world of "selected impressions," rare and exquisite apperceptions of beauty passively received but not returned to the world as art.

A pale gold, in the aforesaid pattern,
The unexpected palms
Destroying, certainly, the artist's urge,
Left him delighted with the imaginary
Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge.

Mauberley drifts into psychic isolation or solipsism, depicted as a tropical lotos-land where he need do nothing but enjoy the "overblotted / Series / Of intermittences" which now constitutes his consciousness. His poetic quest is over. Like one of the failed crewmen of Odysseus, he leaves an engraved oar (his "Medallion") to commemorate his passing.

With this bleak critique of the modern poet's dilemma, Pound himself ceased to write minor poetry. He did not lapse out like Mauberley, but turned his considerable energies to his epic. After 1921, all of Pound's serious, original poetry went into *The Cantos*. But his conception of that project had changed since the palmy days of his novitiate. After

writing *Propertius* and *Mauberley*, he was convinced that only a huge, indigestible poem would stick in the craw of a monstrous, all-consuming age. Into that poem he would put what needed saving. Few might read it, yet only thus could he continue to serve both art and society.

Source: Hugh Witemeyer, "Early Poetry: 1908-1920," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, edited by Ira B. Nadel, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 43-58.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Grieve details some of the critical observations that have been made about Pound's poem.

It might be best, given all the vexed and vexing discussion that has surrounded Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, to begin with some simple observations. After briefly making these, I would like, less briefly I'm afraid, to draw out their implications for a reading of Pound's poem and for some perspective on the critical debate that has engulfed it for some seventy years. Whether we agree or not with A. L. French's assessment that "*Mauberley* has never really caught on," the poem has certainly caught many a reader up in its accomplishments and demands, and threatens to continue doing so. The success of *Mauberley* in stirring up strife among its commentators is due in large part, I believe, to its being a unique sort of poem□ a "homage," to borrow the designation that Pound applied to its companion piece, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*. Understood as a homage□which, as we will see, is the particular form taken by the confrontation Pound stages between tradition and the individual talent□*Mauberley* exhibits both internal coherence and the consistent line of development of Pound's pre-*Cantos* poetics.

First, then, and, on the surface at least, most simply, *Mauberley* exploits the conventions of the dramatic monologue. "Exploits" is a better word here than "adapts" or "works within" because it draws attention to the deliberate violence that the poem enacts upon these conventions and the pervasively (and, some might say, perversely) selfconscious and self-aggrandizing irony observable in this relentless unsettling. As well, "exploits" seems a more appropriate term to identify the poem's ambitious play with various normative expectations that come with the genre, expectations regarding consistency of tone and voice, the identity of the speaker and interlocutor, and a generally perspicuous orderliness of discourse, narrative and context. Of course, Pound had exploited the monologue and unsettled its conventions long before *Mauberley*. It could well be argued, based on the evidence of many of the poems in *Personae* that precede it, that he had made a career of doing just this. The adaptations of Browning's form in such performances as "Cino," "Marvoil," or "Piere Vidal Old," or the hybridization of translation and monologue in "The Seafarer," "Exile's Letter," and *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, are different in degree but not in kind from the radical formal experiment of *Mauberley*. Pound had practiced these scales long enough to earn the right to improvise.

Second, *Mauberley* is a love song, by which I mean it places itself, again deliberately and with a fine ironic gusto, in the tradition of courtly love. Circe and the Sirens, pre-Raphaelite muses and Edwardian patronesses, Penelope and Messalina, singers and models, and, as John Espey was so patient to explain, the sexual innuendo of irides and orchids, lilies and acorns□these are not empty allusions, one time name-dropping as French would have it, but concomitants in a complex structure of genre markers in Pound's play on the stock euphemisms of this convention. This tradition had been an obsessive concern and the dominant theme of Pound's early verse and translations.

The pre- *Mauberley* poetry covers the spectrum: from the mawkish and lugubrious posturing of so much of the *Exultations* (1909) and *Canzoni* (1911) volumes, through the gentle ironies of *Riposte*'s "Silet" and "Portrait d'une Femme" (1912), to the indecorous satire of "Tenzone," "The Garden" and "The Garret" (1913), and the vitriolic barbs of *Lustra*'s epigrams (1916). Pound's translations from this period rarely stray from the theme, a consistency not surprising given his preoccupation with the Troubadours and Cavalcanti. The imagist poet, presumably, can practice "direct treatment" in his presentation of any subject, but more often than not the terse products of Pound's contribution to the movement□"In a Station of the Metro," say, or "Liu Ch'e"□fasten on courtly love. This is the ground that Pound cultivates for the reticent regret of such poems, as it is for the sustained brio of the *Homage to Sextus Propertius*. If the amorous exploits he patched together out of Propertius's opus are questionably courtly, it is clearly the purchase that Propertius gave him on the theme that attracted him. Just as *Mauberley* represents a sort of completion of Pound's project in transforming the monologue, so too it is a consummation of his efforts to put the courtly love tradition to use in modern poetry in a way that is not maudlin, trite or merely cynical. What is crucial is that all these resuscitations of the dramatic monologue and the courtly love lyric not be reduced to either the imitative or the parodic. From very early on, at least from *Canzoni*'s "Und Drang" (1911), Pound had worked to realize the precarious equilibrium between preservation and rejection, affirmation and denial, self-defense and self-indictment that characterizes the homage registered in *Mauberley*.

Third, *Mauberley* is a poem including history. If this history is both real and fabricated, public and private, actual and literary, in being such it is representative of a consistent tension in Pound's early poetry and directs us to see *Mauberley* as a culmination of his decade-long effort to free his poetry from the constraints of lyric utterance and to stake out some middle ground between a subjective and an objective poetics. The poles of this opposition were personified for Pound by his two early masters, Yeats and Browning, and it is instructive to read his early work as a sort of dialogue between these two influences as he answers his Yeatsian exercises in autobiographical mask-making with Browningesque excursions into "objective" history. "Near Perigord" (1915) is the most interesting instance before *Mauberley* of Pound dramatizing the rival claims of the two poetics in a single poem, and "Three Cantos" (1917) is a revealing exhibition of Pound's failure to turn his "phantastikon" to objective account. This failure instigated not only the lengthy project of revision on the early cantos, but the catharsis and exorcism undertaken in the homages of *Propertius* and *Mauberley*.

Fourth, *Mauberley* is a surface. By this I mean, and I think that Pound meant, that it is a poem more concerned with registering tone, attitude and treatment through its multiple voicings than with investigating the inner life of its protagonist. *Mauberley* does not present a personality or indepth psychology; it presents an indictment, which is at times inextricable from a self-indictment, through a mode that I am calling a homage and that Pound was later to explain (in the 1934 essay, "Date Line") as "Criticism by exercise in the style of a given period". I also mean that *Mauberley* is a work of art that, as the work of Marjorie Perloff, Reed Way Dasenbrock and Vincent Sherry has helped us to see, is true to its vorticist aesthetic foundations in drawing attention to its constructedness, to its "surface," to its experimentation with form in order to display the creative energies of

the maker through the "composition" and "arrangement" of that art's materials. In this case, the materials are not "shapes, or planes, or colours", nor are they "masses in relation"; they are the verbal textures and tonalities of the various homages that, from part to part, compose the poem's "surface." Whether this surface is "mere" or "thin," terms that Pound applied to his technical accomplishment in *Mauberley* in moments of self-deprecation in his letters, and which unsympathetic critics have been only too quick to fasten on, is another story. R. P. Blackmur was the first of the persuasion (and I doubt whether Donald Davie will be the last) that *Mauberley*'s display of craft and "workmanship" is at the expense of substance, which for him is merely "commonplace" and "conventional". His assessment□that "the poem flows into the medium and is lost in it, like water in sand"□was delivered in a memorable enough simile to convince a number of later detractors who did not take the trouble to see that *Mauberley*'s hard and highly polished surface is, among other things, a mirror that reveals the limitations of the presuppositions and conventional expectations that are brought to it. Such dichotomizing of surface and substance, treatment and subject, outer and inner, which always privileges the latter term in an oversimplified opposition, is a commonplace in the criticism, not only of *Mauberley*, but of Pound's work as a whole. "I believe in technique as the test of man's sincerity," Pound had the temerity to announce to an audience complacent in the belief that sincerity was a matter of unproblematized authenticity of utterance, of confessional self-exposure, or of sententious moralizing. Perhaps he is still paying the price, not just for saying it, but for writing poetry out of this belief.

Source: Thomas F. Grieve, "Pound's Other Homage: 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,'" in *Paideuma*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 1998, pp. 9-30.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, San Juan advocates focusing on the end results of Mauberley*, rather than the means used to achieve those ends.*

Conceived as a poem with formal parts so unified as to subserve the whole□complete and possessing a certain magnitude□Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* reveals its virtues and powers in the style□the devices of representation□by which the poet is able to "imitate" or render in expressive form the subtle, refined workings of a unique sensibility. Our idea of the sensibility to which we attribute the nuances of attitudes and feelings, the antinomies of imaginative logic, articulated in the poem is of course an inference which depends on our grasp of the structure of the poem itself. For Pound, sensibility is a method of transfiguring personae or masks in order to actualize a complex harmony of vision. In *Mauberley*, the speaking voice syncopates in fugal arrangement the splenetic, the maudlin, the serious, and the sublime. Style accordingly conforms in texture and tone□confessional, ironic, pompous, banal□to the shifts of personalities that one will observe as the main cause, the primary rationale, for the intricate variety and the highly allusive, elliptical mode of representation in the poem.

Critical opinion concerning the formal organization of *Mauberley* has in general been diffuse, impressionistic, or ingeniously assured□in any case, unable to define cogently the formal unity of the multiple elements contained within the architectonic rhythm of the whole utterance. While there is agreement about the themes of aesthetic revolt, the polemic of self-justification, and the rhetoric of elegant irony, we still lack a clear and precise elucidation of the organizing principle behind the poem. F. R. Leavis' comments, for example, betray a simplistic opacity: "The poems together form one poem, a representative experience of life□ tragedy, comedy, pathos, and irony." In his synoptic gloss, Leavis fails to distinguish the speaker of the first poem from that of the rest. Hugh Kenner, by contrast, is infinitely suggestive about Pound's impersonality: his style is "an effacement of the personal accidents of the perceiving medium in the interests of accurate registration of moeurs contemporaines." But his actual explication fails to yield the total pattern and orchestration of the various motifs and topics. I suggest that the limitations of modern exegeses of *Mauberley* stem from the approaches and procedures used to determine the informing motivations of the poem by emphasizing language and its symbolic resources to the neglect of the ends or purposes for which language is only a means.

Pound him\self demanded a refocusing of attention on the underlying forces that determine poetic structure or, in his terminology, "major form." He implicitly stresses the primacy of ends, controlling intentions, in the creative process:

Any work of art is a compound of freedom and order.
It is perfectly obvious that art hangs between chaos on
the one side and mechanics on the other. A pedantic
insistence upon detail tends to drive out "major form."
A firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of

detail. In painting men intent on minutiae gradually
lost the sense of form and form-combination. An attempt
to restore this sense is branded as "revolution."
It is revolution in the philological sense of the term.

By "major form" Pound means exactly the shaping principle which measures and adjusts the possibilities of material and technique toward the realization of an intelligible form. In interpreting *Mauberley*, our concern should be with the kind of action or activity—Aristotle's *praxis* includes doings, thoughts, feelings in dynamic suspension—the poem seeks to present by means appropriate to the attainment of that end.

Our concern, in short, would be with "major form." Explicating the poem on the basis of its organizing principle, of the thematic argument which determines the dialectic interplay of incidents, character, thought, and linguistic properties crystallized in style, we would then formulate the meaning of the poem from the inside, as it were, since our knowledge of what the poet's ends are would tell us by inference the means which he employed to accomplish his ends. These propositions about critical method will make sense only as they show pragmatic efficacy in the process of textual analysis.

Mauberley consists of two parts: the first part, with thirteen sections, projects the negative milieu of the artist by mock-elegy, condensed report, and satiric editorializing; by retrospect, direct monologue, and other means. The concluding poem, "Envoi," may be unquestionably assigned to the persona nearly coinciding with Pound, assuming that the work is partly autobiographical. But I propose that the different personae here be deemed functions of Pound's sensibility; and despite the short-circuiting nexus or asyndetons in syntax and thought, each persona is never exactly equivalent to the poet's mind in its isolation and integral place in the sequence. The totality of the poem may be considered identical with a process of awareness occurring in Pound's mind. In this sense "Envoi" with its rich lyrical cadence affirms a part of the ideal poetic self whose orientation is not toward the Pre-Raphaelite earthly paradise, to recollected scenes in his life, but to the complementing and reconciling possibilities of the future. The address to "dumb-born" (because mutely renouncing) artifice— the bulk of the poem—descants on the *sic transit* idea with triumphant confidence that time and change will prove "Beauty's" immortality.

Like the first poem, presumably E. P.'s "election" or choice of his tomb, "Envoi" confronts the finitude of existence and looks backward, prophetic in adventurousness. But unlike the mock-elegy of the "Ode," which condemns the poet in terms of the past without any hope of appeal, "Envoi" asserts the power of the poet to resurrect the splendid past and reinstate by alchemical magic what time has destroyed in the realm of eternal permanence: "Giving life to the moment,"

I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

And the third stanza accepts the future with qualification: "Till change hath broken down / All things save Beauty alone." Within this tight contrastive frame, between the varyingly ironic and pathetic assessment of the poet's heroic aspirations in the "Ode'" and the intimate, cantabile praise of beauty ("her" may refer to integrity, the glorious past, beauty, and England), the ten poems fall in a deliberate sequence whose development leads toward the *peripeteia*, the hypothetical twist, of the "Envoi." In this last section, the poet, cognizing the degenerate times, reverses his fortune by passionately affirming the metempsychosis of experience into vision. The second part of the poem entitled "Mauberley" may be designated as the exploration of conscience, the elaborate plight of identification: the speaker recognizes at last that Mauberley, with his cult of *"l'art pour l'art"* (theory and practice now being delineated in a quasi-narrative manner), has caused his own downfall. "Medallion," the epilogue vindicating his private if passive strength, counterpoints "Envoi" by a successful confrontation of "the face-oval" (the oval being an image of completion or perfection) and a dazzling lucidity transcending the flux of sensual, chaotic experience.

Turning now to the stages of establishing the situation in part one for a character like Mauberley who composes the twelve poems, I would like to trace Pound's ventriloquism□the constant incommensurability of leading motives and surface complexity□ as a method of characterizing his persona. In the first poem, as Pound testified, we perceive Mauberley trying to get rid of the poet□a fragment trying to eschew the whole psyche. A certain duplicity, a mixture of condescending praise□ "wringing lilies from the acorn"□and restrained, unresolved scorn may be observed in this passage:

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

Note the verbs of motivation in context: "strove," "bent resolutely," and "fished," with positive accent laid on the intensive effort giving vital thrust and pressure to the career and poetic vocation which is the object of mourning. Ronsard, Villon, and Flaubert exemplify the creative agents redeeming the apparent failure of the poet to realize the ambition of transforming the tastes of a historical period by cultural discipline. But Pound's death, Mauberley (construing him as the funeral orator) suggests, bears heroic justification. Later the "Envoi's" melodic and delicate speech of farewell will transubstantiate the "Ode's" epigrammatic terseness.

I submit that Mauberley's "juridicial" pronouncement on Pound presents an ambiguous "case": he admires and yet censures, by turns lamenting and casuistic. He thus creates a curious "bastard" genre that violates the elegiac form by ramified yet conscientiously accurate and compact descriptions of the ordeals Pound has undergone for the sake of preserving his integrity and his exemplary ideal of cultural engagement. The siren song of surrender and escape to the ivory tower beguiles and chastens at the same time: Circe counsels the pursuit of knowledge when he conveys to Odysseus the importance of communicating with Tiresias, as *Cantos* I and XLVII indicate. Such active passion

lurking behind the scrupulous gravity of the poet demonstrates itself in the pure, absolute devotion in the "Envoi" and, by empathy, in the trancelike elevation of "Medallion."

After disclosing his ambivalent but comprehensible attitude to the "dead" and buried self, the whole poet embracing the dualities of self and the world, Mauberley proceeds to place the celebrated figure in relation to his milieu: the "age" demanded exactly the opposite of what Pound intended to achieve. It wanted not "the obscure reveries / Of the inward gaze" but "chiefly a mould in plaster," a mass-manufactured icon for gratifying its narcissistic impulse and death-drive. Poem II identifies the denied offering: the static harmony of truthful, objective synthesis. It accounts also for the futility of the poet's existence: his works "still-born," he becomes useless, later associated with the image of "pickled foetuses."

With a notion of the radical disparity between the poet's conception of the ideal and the epoch's need for "an image / Of its accelerated grimace," Mauberley elaborates on the massive corruption of the body politic and the exorbitant decay of ritual, the commercialized vulgarity of the middle class subverting Attic grace and "ambrosial" Dionysus. The philistine public has ruined tradition, profaned Eros and the mysteries, and annihilated any hope for a transvaluation of norms:

All things are a flowing,
Sage Heracleitus says;
But a tawdry cheapness
Shall outlast our days.

The flowing image of reality is fully evoked in Mauberley's drifting and drowning in the second part. But now Mauberley parodies Pindar's invocation: instead of bestowing a wreath on Olympic heroes, Mauberley registers the deplorable decay of honor and virtue in his milieu. Less a jubilant praiser than a mordant mourner, he criticizes the age in sharply juxtaposed contrasting imagery. Poem III seeks to assign responsibility for the poet's passage "from men's memory"—the phrase itself being a non-committal remark. In context, the passage signifies a temporal and spatial departure in a questpilgrimage to the past, later projected in Mauberley's drift to solipsistic ecstasy in part two. In cinematic montage, Poems II to XII seek to diagnose the malady and explain the death of the poet by attributing the cause to the convergence of time and place to which fate has consigned him.

Poem IV locates corruption and denounces the perversion of ideals embodied in the sanctity of the homeland by the sacrifice of lives in meaningless mass-slaughter. The allusions to Cicero and Horace point to the discrepancy between past and present: the present is witness to the inane confusion of motives, the desecration of qualities (the fortitude and frankness of youthful combatants) exacted by the crisis. Hence the age with its fraud and avarice ultimately gets what it deserves: "laughter out of dead bellies." Yet Mauberley does not descend into hell (the Homeric motif) simply because he is in hell. He remains the unflinching if Mephistophelian observer of reality, austerely bitter but not savagely cynical. Here one discerns an elegiac homage, a truncated bucolic

inspired by Bion, whose intensity is measured by the indignant response to the visible survivor—in effect, Poem V attacks the equivocal mourner in Poem I and converts Mauberley from a grudging obituarist to an outraged spirit instigating revolt by incantatory repetitions—his remedy for the absence of ritual, Yeats's "custom and ceremony." The balance is restored: the kind of death acknowledged here, though futile, redeems Pound's "death" from ignominy or innocuous obscurity:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,
Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid.

Poems VI to XII, with swift incisive rhythms and sensitive transcriptions, render a plot-like continuum: from retrospective portrayal of the Nineties and the Pre-Raphaelites, then a gradual transit to the present via the interview with Mr. Nixon, a visit to the "stylist," and witty sizing-up of sophisticated females in Poems X and XI. Poem XII ushers us into a drawing-room as setting from which Mauberley launches his tempered indictment of the genteel but debased elite: Lady Valentine's heart seems made up of papier-mâché. On the whole, this section prepares us for Pound's "Envoi" which may be considered as the authentic, noble heritage the dead poet bequeaths to his contemporary apologist-arbiter Mauberley. Clarification of this movement will further disclose the probability of the "Envoi" appearing at this point in the sequence as an eloquent reversal of what the "age" would expect despite the hostile tenor of the previous forensic quatrains.

Yet Mauberley's true sympathy—for the dead Pound (a persona within the poem), not for society— chooses the last two stanzas of Poem XII as the epiphanic contact between the soul and its paradisal repose: the Augustan poise of Dr. Johnson's culture. Charting the sordid plight of the artists from "Yeux Glauques" up to the "stylist" cultivating his own garden so to speak, Mauberley nonetheless halts that merciless, self-chastising exposure of the artist's vanity in order to pay sincere tribute to the dead poet—his real total self—by evoking "Pierian roses" and introducing the matrix of music-flower-love motifs which integrate the second part.

Poems VI to IX present concrete dramatic situations in stylized patterns, the persons and their surroundings contrived to illustrate those who compromised with the age and those who persisted in intransigent defiance. These scenes also serve to distill emotions recollected in tranquil review affording sardonic and aphoristic violence of notation. Spiritual discipline is exercised in achieving balance, a "perspective by incongruity" yielding comic innuendo, as for instance: Lionel Johnson's "pure mind / Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed" or "Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels."

In Poems IV and V, the demands of the age receive exaggerated and abusive response in the loss of innocence and potentiality, a cataclysmic holocaust reducing all human

purpose into dust. A reversal of the idea that piety and mores always prevail occurs here. Mauberley painstakingly discovers in disillusionment the vain delusive cause which mocks the value of sacrifice and deprives life of all sacramental import. To withdraw into memory seems the only alternative out of the impasse (later merging into "apathein," impassivity), the intractable mood of nihilism, in Poem V. With "Yeux Glauques," Mauberley strives to resurrect those "quick eyes" swallowed by war's ruins.

Poem VI incorporates in the figure of the female victim the larger scheme of transformation in the whole poem. The Muse here becomes a prostitute: art, represented by Ruskin, Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites, has already entered its dying phase at the apotheosis of the pandering bourgeoisie. For the puritanical prudes of Victorian England, beauty smacked of obscene pagan deviations:

Foetid Buchanan lifted up his voice
When that faun's head of hers
Became a pastime for
Painters and adulterers.

Yet Burne-Jone's painting, levelling the ranks of king and beggar-maid, has ably transfixed an orgiastic moment which defies mutability and fashionable canons of taste. Now, however, the beautiful features of the Pre-Raphaelite model (Elizabeth Siddal) seem artificially fragile, destitute: "Thin like brook-water, / With a vacant gaze." Her luminous eyes still search for a sympathetic or possessive gaze, such as the mesmerized Mauberley's in "Medallion." But there, of course, the rapturous vision explodes so powerfully as to dissolve the firm, "suave bounding-line" and immediately impose self-transcendence. Despite the oppressive indifference of the audience, Mauberley preserves a suspicious distance and reveals the fidelity and sincerity of art in the person of an animated fiction. Thus the persona Mauberley energizes another persona, Jenny the pure unfortunate, liberating the aesthetic vision from the stasis of memory and incarnating its presence in the vivifying context of secular betrayal:

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faunlike from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive.□
"Ah, poor Jenny's case" □

Bewildered that a world
Shows no surprise
At her last maquero's
Adulteries.

Indignant but cautious, aware of the great propensity for sentimentalism in his subject, Mauberley handles language with ascetic and economical finesse. He does not really believe that Jenny's status is hopeless and beyond rectification. His tone and mode of representing her decline obviously deride the age for its hypocritical rectitude; amidst all indignities, Jenny's beauty remains unblemished, radiant. The pathos of her situation assumes allegorical significance in the quotation heading Poem VII: in Dante's

Purgatory, Pia de' Tolomei's flat statement of birth- and death-place attests to a possible salvaging of which Pound's "Envoi" is the prophetic affirmation.

Poem VII resumes the elegiac but detached, condensed critique of a hermetic aestheticism founded of Flaubert's code of *le mot juste* and the anti-bourgeois policy of the French Symbolistes. If eunuchs and maqueros ruin the vital erotic union between man and woman (by extension, between artists and the Muse), they also disrupt the continuity of a viable tradition. Paralyzing deracination afflicts Verog's existence:

Among the pickled foetuses and bottled bones,
Engaged in perfecting the catalogue,
I found the last scion of the
Senatorial families of Strasbourg, Monsieur Verog.

In a recollection within the framework of nostalgic recall, Verog imparts information about the last days of the Rhymers: Dowson's dissipation, Lionel Johnson's fall, etc. His reminiscences, refracted through splintered immediacies of detail, give proof of the arbitrary, shifting *modus vivendi* that the Nineties adopted amidst universal anarchy and disorder. Lumping Bacchus, Terpsichore and the Church, they pursued a Paterian goal of attaining organic beatitude. Intoxicated by alcohol and hashish, Dowson succumbed to his "artificial paradise"; in part two, Mauberley sails toward his occult mirage, an island of spices, but drowns in the process. Aesthetics, exemplified by Pound's assimilation of "influences", appears to be the only hope for restoring a sacramental ambience to the industrial, dehumanized atmosphere of the years circa World War I. With the public's rejection of the "inward gaze," we find Mauberley defining the estranged distinction of the gentleman-scholar:

M. Verog, out of step with the decade,
Detached from his contemporaries,
Neglected by the young,
Because of these reveries.

Where Poem VII conveyed Mauberley's imitation of Verog's conversation, the next poem "Brennbaum" renders with impressionistic vigor the countenance of a ludicrous "clerk," or connoisseurintellectual. Infantile and lugubrious stiffness in conformity with orthodox norms blights Brennbaum "The Impeccable." His subservience to the rule of prudence and punctilio undermines memory and repudiates genealogy. Thus Brennbaum appears as Mauberley's nemesis in so far as Brennbaum represents the futility of looking backward, the vapid past signified by his ignoring Mt. Horeb (life-renewing water gushing from the rock) and Sinai, and the mechanical efficiency of mere formal correctness:

The skylike limpid eyes,
The circular infant's face,
The stiffness from spats to collar
Never relaxing into grace;

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty
years,
Showed only when the daylight fell
Level across the face
Of Brennbaum "The Impeccable."

Mauberley's act of describing what is basically the studied shape of a cadaver, anticipated by the preceding "pickled foetuses and bottled bones," constitutes a severe epitaph for Brennbaum. Contrasting with the eulogistic overtones of Poem I, "Brennbaum" factually states what is left of a human being. Anesthetized by empty decorum, Brennbaum's substance reflects his unhonored origin and the tenebrous exodus and liberation of the tribe left unheeded by his public self.

Another case of a death-in-life existence is dramatized in Poem IX, where Mr. Nixon advises compromise in a smugly opportunistic expertise. Selfish Mr. Nixon, however, is seriously limited by his surroundings; he looms as the anti-Odysseus (a composite of worldly, complacent citizens) who negates all the values Mauberley upholds in his twin role of ironist and annalist:

"I never mentioned a man but with the view
"Of selling my own works.
"The tip's a good one, as for literature
"It gives no man a sinecure.

"And no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece.
"And give up verse, my boy,
"There's nothing in it."

Mr. Nixon's coaxing and proverbial rhetoric, though ultimately intended to purge suicidal ambitions, aims to persuade Mauberley to sacrifice his life for the glory of the bitch goddess Success. Mauberley, however, recalls Bloughram and the anti-pastoral equations and imperatives of Victorian evangelists. He recalls the aesthetes whose deaths burlesque those of the soldiers in Poems IV and V. The Rhymers and the Pre-Raphaelites served a spiritual ideal□"the thin, clear gaze" of Venus in her temporal revelations□that was once immanent but is now hardly perceptible.

The next three poems attempt to effect a reincarnation of beauty (Venus) in a female figure only to end in the resigned news that the sale of "half-hose" has superseded the appreciation of art in the city. As an answer to Mr. Nixon's doubleedged program□to save one's life by violating one's integrity□Mauberley allies himself with the impoverished "stylist" who has retreated to the country. But Poem X is not less ambiguous, no more pro- or anti-art, as the first poem if one notes the allowance of positive gifts to the "stylist" and recognizes his incapacity to conduct a harmonious transaction or rapport with his society. Nonetheless, his talent and gusto flourish by coalescing with nature's self-renewing life:

Nature receives him;
With a placid and uneducated mistress
He exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress.

The haven from sophistications and contentions
Leaks through its thatch;
He offers succulent cooking;
The door has a creaking latch.

But what then is the "placid and uneducated mistress" doing if the stylist manages household affairs? The next two poems show Mauberley's discriminating insight into the fate of art as personified by female personages or acquaintances.

By the evidence of Poem X, Mauberley conceives of Nature as generous and patronizing, set beside which the stylist's companion is an ineffectual mistress. Certainly it is difficult to envisage this mistress as one of the metamorphosed forms of Sappho or Penelope, let alone Circe. Yet she is one of the representatives of the generative, erotic force in *Mauberley*. Although the house is wretchedly falling apart, the stylist is happy and at peace with his environment. If his proper function is to observe "the elegance of Circe's hair" like Pound's in Poem I, then he is temporarily defunct. But Circe is concealed nowhere; the fault is not his, perhaps. In Poem XI, Mauberley hardly suspects the wife-mistress of "the most bank-clerkly of Englishmen" to be one of her profane re-incarnations. In "habits of mind and feeling," she scarcely evokes the fabled seductiveness of the archetypal goddess. To call her "Conservatrix of Milesien" would be an insinuating joke if not forthright anachronism; her "tea-gown" and her alliance with the commercial class betoken her low pedigree.

In Poem XII, Mauberley projects himself in a drawing-room where amid the insipid and pretentious crowd he suffers an eclipsed consciousness:

"Daphne with her thighs in bark
Stretches toward me her leafy hands,"□
Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion;

(Note the repeated "bass" beat of aesthetic stasis in frozen Daphne/laurel tree, "tin wreath" of Poem III, metallic flowers, pickled foetuses, porcelain images, etc.) Mauberley experiences an illusory triumph: he imagines Daphne the legendary nymph stretching out a laurelled crown. But that happens "Subjectively," he bravely confesses. In truth he apprehends his actual circumstance with self-deprecatory reference to his

non-dandiacal appearance, his nondescript clothes being a natural consequence of his loathing for frills or fustian:

Doubtful, somewhat, of the value
Of well-gowned approbation
Of literary effort,
But never of The Lady Valentine's vocation:

Mauberley sees the Lady Valentine as a powerful authority who, like Circe, can accomplish her sinister designs by exploiting the thaumaturgy of art. Lady Valentine also functions here as mock- Muse to the poet-Pierrot (Petrushka in Stravinsky's ballet). Defensive and shrewdly realistic, Mauberley would seize this opportunity for his own advancement: for promoting a dubious liaison or ingratiating himself into theater business. Throughout the sequence, Mauberley's sexual prowess is sublimated into Latin ribaldry and etymological punning□as Espey has shown□to fulfill Venus' mandate. In revolution or in any emergency, Lady Valentine would be a refuge, a possible "comforter." Mauberley's physical self as free agent accepts the circumscribed realm of action imposed by a degenerate milieu. But if he can perceive the possibility of living in another manner□ the stylist and the dead Pound of the "Ode" offer alternatives□it is because he has a virile spirit capable of epic dignity and tragic purposiveness, a spirit which does not share the mood of resigned futility and his later castrating numbness, nor participate in the body's commitments. Yet his "soul" sent on a journey to an Augustan haven of the imagination only intensifies his awareness that such a haven cannot be found anywhere today:

Conduct, on the other hand, the soul
"Which the highest cultures have nourished"
To Fleet St. where
Dr. Johnson flourished;

Beside this thoroughfare
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

We encountered this "ubi sunt" motif before in Poem III where we learned that the discordant "pianola" has overthrown Sappho's lure. Cheap imitations flood the market. Nourishment of sensibility is succeeded by "macerations"; the memory of Dr. Johnson's (like Lionel Johnson's) career receives the discounting pun in "Fleet Street"□for fleeting time spoils the genuine artifice and dissolves sensations into phantasmagoria□as part two exhibits. Perhaps the anatomical connotation of "half-hose" escapes the diffident but restrained Mauberley. He forgets the ubiquity of those roses in the "tea-rose" of Poem III; his temperament favors only the precious, rarefied luxuries: "The thin, clear gaze, the same / Still darts out faunlike from the half-ruin'd face." Contrast further Pieria, seat of the worship of the Muses, with Ealing where the lady curator of Milesian ware languishes in chill respectability.

Comparing the amorous "Envoi" and the chiselled strophes of the first part, we note that except for the change in cadence and texture there exists between them a unity of focus on an idealized past (Mauberley celebrated the Pre-Raphaelite model; Pound casts his challenging valedictory in Waller's mold) and in a dualistic notion of existence as comprised by perishable flesh and undying spirit, the spirit able to preserve in art the lineaments of fleshly beauty. Two or three lines uttered by Mauberley may be orchestrated with the climactic bravura of "Envoi":

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faunlike from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive □
(Poem VI)

"Daphne with her thighs in bark
"Stretches toward me her leafy hands,"□
(Poem XII)

Young blood and high blood,
Fair cheeks, and fine bodies;
(Poem IV)

The thirteenth poem, instead of enacting a disproof of Mauberley's sentiments, offers him a finely-controlled modulation into Pound's voice. It is as if the poet, whose death occasioned the memorial in Poem I, were resuscitated by the enigmatic verbal magic of Poems II to XII□both the dissonant and the mellifluous□while Mauberley, in speculative and abstracted vigil over his corpse, muses on the whys and wherefores of the artist's ordeal in this mercantile, inimical world. Can one then plausibly construe the "Envoi" as the envoy/ embassy of Pound (The dead poet's ghost) speaking with the oracular gestures of hindsight and foresight?

In the second part entitled "Mauberley," Pound vigorously turns the tables over and maneuvers the situation so that Mauberley assumes the role of partisan and accomplice, and alter ego with his flawed consciousness. In a condensed and telescoped summation of Mauberley's struggles, this second part modifies and enhances by specific demonstration the attitudes supporting the manner of expression in the first part. Messalina, her licentious urge curbed by her rigorously defined head, supplants Circe; Mauberley, to the speaker Pound (tagged here as the persona), also regards Flaubert "His true Penelope." Kins or brothers by elective affinity, Mauberley and Pound share many interests in common. But Mauberley is distinguished by the kind of art-form he has chosen to concentrate on (announced in Poem I):

Firmness,
Not the full smile,
His art, but an art
In profile;

The laconic characterization hits the bull'seye: Mauberley himself has fearfully turned sideways and avoided the full gaze of the female sex: Lady Valentine, the "Conservatrix," and the stylist's mistress. With his satiric craft, however, he was able to depict Brennbaum's countenance: "The skylike limpid eyes, / The circular infant's face"□ but then Brennbaum turned out to be a frigid corpse. After Poem II where he indirectly refuses to indulge the age's egocentric delight in beholding its grimace, he is stunned by the impact of war's grotesque testimony: "Charm, smiling at the good mouth, / Quick eyes gone under earth's lid" (Poem V of part one). Brutalized by the ignoble present, he recoils to the past and for a moment he can contemplate directly not Circe's hair but the Pre- Raphaelite nymph, her eyes "Thin like brook-water, / With a vacant gaze." And he records his sympathy and sad impotence in yoking polished loveliness and carnal corruption together:

The thin, clear gaze, the same
Still darts out faunlike from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive□
"Ah, poor Jenny's case"□

This inclination to retreat into an idealized past and witness amid insidious decay the last desperate gasp of the adored Muse (an eclipsed Medusa/Circe/Venus type) seems to have caused Mauberley's "anaesthesis" and his slow disintegration in cosmic nirvana. Poems II, III, and IV in the second part relate the progressive extinction of Mauberley's spirit. The epigraph at the head of Poem II, signed by Caid Ali (Pound masquerading as a persona stepping out of an exotic Oriental utopia, or out of the *Rubaiyat*), functions as Pound's flamboyant tribute to his moribund proxy. If Mauberley's passion is too mystical as to be incomprehensible to ordinary mortals, then□Caid Ali (Pound's persona within a persona) implies□ whatever feeling or attitude we may have toward Mauberley's earthly vicissitudes will fail to correspond with the real worth of the motives or purposes that have governed his spirit. Fatality has "translated" Mauberley into the empyrean of dreamy necessity, somewhat analogous to Baudelaire's artificial paradise (duly authenticated in *Canto* LXXVI):

For three years, diabolus in the scale,
He drank ambrosia,
All passes, ANANGKE prevails,
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

He had moved amid her phantasmagoria,
Amid her galaxies,
NUKTIS 'AGALMA

Is beauty then a deceitful and traumatic hallucination? The experience is valid nonetheless as an example of what "the obscure reveries / Of the inward gaze" can generate. Drifting away from time, Mauberley with his "orchid" as the possessed grail finally reaches "the final estrangement." The erotic associations of orchid-iris-mouth-eyes cluster of images combine with allusions to Hesper, Arcadia, flamingo, thunder, etc., to produce a consistent unifying theme of Eros-in-action throughout the poem.

Indeed, the mandate of Eros requires Mauberley's introspective recollection and subtle conjuring: for instance, the perception of "The thin, clear gaze." Obeying such a mandate, he becomes "inconscient" to the phenomena of normal life. He does not need a "sieve" to sift beauty from chaos□in "Envoi," Pound described the "siftings on siftings in oblivion" as ultimately a refining technique. What Mauberley needs is a "seismograph," an inner equipment, fit for his experiment whereby *aesthesis* evolves into "anaesthesis":

□Given that is his "fundamental passion,"
This urge to convey the relation
Of eye-lid and cheek-bone
By verbal manifestations;

To present the series
Of curious heads in medallion□

Mauberley as engraver concerns himself with anatomy. Somehow his knowledge or technique fails to reconcile "eye-lid and cheek-bone"□objective perception□with "aerial flowers," his "orchid": organic sensations, physiological vibrations. Thus Pound's oblique judgment of the simultaneous victory and defeat of his enterprise is foregrounded in an Ovidian tableau:

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

Transfixed in this posture, the dogs accompanying the hunt are freed from their violent biological urge. Yet such freedom manifests the impotence, the vitiating inability, of mere animal existence to satisfy man's infinite desires.

Poem III centers on Mauberley's rejection of the age's demands, thus confirming his sympathy for Pound the dead persona-poet in the "Ode." Chance found Mauberley and his unctuous vanity unfit for fulfilling any civic responsibility: his mind is all focused on "The glow of porcelain," the vibrant color of his model's beauty reflected in "a perfect glaze," a translucent veil: to him "the month was more temperate / Because this beauty had been." Inner mood dictates outer climate. But just as in Poem XII in part one, Mauberley suffers from a worsening imbalance: his will to inhabit Arcadia heightens the conflict between *Anangke* and the "manifest universe" and his confessed "diastasis" (separation) from all life, ignoring the erotic or sexual ("The wide-banded irides / And botticellian sprays."). His psychic malady is suggested:

The coral isle, the lion-coloured sand
Burst in upon the porcelain revery:
Impetuous troubling
Of his imagery.

Exclusion of everything alien to his sensibility induces "the imaginary / Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge," linking up with the earlier signal of "Minoan undulation □ amid ambrosial circumstances." "Olympian *apathein"* postulates the antithesis to Dionysian celebration and loss of self which accompanies creation; art as icon mediates between the spiritual and the sensual, mobilizing knowledge into action. The deterioration of Mauberley's ego increases with the coagulated sounds of the polysyllabic diction toward the close of Poem III:

Incapable of the least utterance or composition,
Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition,"
Refinement of medium, elimination of superfluities,
August attraction or concentration.

In spite of Pound's sensitive appreciation of Mauberley's delirious union with deity ("subjective hossanah") in the context of a depraved world, he maintains ironic distance throughout with fastidious quotation marks and subdued parodic touches in such phrases as "insubstantial manna," in sly idiom or parenthetical asides.

Poem IV represents Mauberley's death by the metaphoric vehicle of an aborted voyage cursed and waylaid by the constellation of Hesperus (Beauty). Elpenor's image, the voluptuary aspect of the heroic Odysseus, hovers over the last stanza which discharges Mauberley's barren epitaph on a defunct oar:

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

With "consciousness disjunct," Mauberley attains a kind of supernatural insight into transcendence with the vividly pigmented landscape of his tropic paradise. Associations with Daphne, rose, water, Pindar's wreath, aereal flowers, faun's flesh, oar and foam substantiate the regenerative implications of Mauberley's last glimpses of the world, a world half-dreamt and half-real:

Thick foliage
Placid beneath warm suns,
Tawn fore-shores
Washed in the cobalt of oblivions;
Or through dawn-mist
The grey and rose
Of the juridical
Flamingoes;

The grey and rose flamingoes seem to render a judgment on Mauberley's struggles, a verdict cancelling the drowning utterance of the "hedonist" inscribed on a drifting oar. But just as Poems II to XII of the first part delivered over the poet's corpse, miraculously revived the poet so that he could sing his "Envoi," so here Poems I to IV succeed in

effect, summoning the spirit of the drowned Mauberley back to life in order to recite "Medallion," his true "epilogue" and his humble "adjunct to the Muses' diadem."

Conceived as an epitaph as well as a last will and testament, "Medallion" aptly illuminates the surface complexity, the overall pattern, of the poem. The principle of coherence in the poem lies in the process involving the transfiguration of Venus Anadyomene's face, seen in a reproduction, into a dazzling vision. The depth of Mauberley's inward gaze has succeeded in embodying beauty in a medium perfectly indivisible with the content of his intuition: the verbal medallion redeems the second part just as "Envoi" redeems the whole of the poem. Plunged in "porcelain revery," Mauberley insulates himself against the "profane intrusions" of the blasphemous hollow world. Avoiding direct confrontation with reality, Mauberley sought only the profile; but now nature, in her guise of Anadyomene the goddess of fertility and love, forces him to look straight and recognize that art draws its energy and life-enhancing *virtù* (the emphasis on light accords with Pound's concept of paradise in the later *Cantos*) from the erotic experience itself which lies at the core of the imagination.

In his essay on "Cavalcanti," Pound writes: "The Greek aesthetic would seem to consist wholly in plastic, or in plastic moving toward coitus□" That truth Mauberley has sought to obscure by pure aestheticism and timorous pride, but now this truth asserts itself. "Medallion" embodies this slow awakening into the mystery, the artifact becoming a vessel of the sublime:

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 Minos' hall
From metal, or intractable amber;

The face-oval beneath the glaze,
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as,
Beneath half-watt rays,
The eyes turn topaz.

(Note the affinity between the "Envoi's" "in magic amber laid" and the phrase "intractable amber" in "Medallion.") All the other disgraced female personages in the poem, in particular the Pre-Raphaelite Muse with her "clear gaze," merge with the oval face and luminous eyes of sea-borne Aphrodite (Anadyomene: literally, "birth foam"). "Topaz," usually transparent yellowish mineral, continues and amplifies "glaucous eyes" of the Muse-Siddall-Jenny-harlot constellation in the first part. The Sirens, Circe, Penelope, Messalina, Venus, and the courted virgin in "Envoi" (Circe's hair finds analogue in the "basket-work of braids" in "Medallion") blend into the radiant image of Venus arrested yet hauntingly moving in Mauberley's verbal artifice. The poetic

"Medallion" then provides a foundation in experience and myth for the dominant action symbolized in the two parts of the whole poem.

For the action imitated by *Mauberley* is essentially the tragic experience of death metaphoric and literal after the loss of psychic equilibrium, conducing to an inquiry by turns comic, satiric, serious, and detached, into motives and ideals in the context of a civilization which has victimized the bearers of the life-sustaining vision of mystery. Poem I states the death of the clairvoyant poet; Poems II to XII survey past and present to define Mauberley's anger, doubts, and despair. Poem XIII, a lyrical affirmation of the spirit, may have inspired Mauberley's "Medallion" since both poems dramatize metamorphosis and exaltation by art. Poems I to IV in the second part recount Mauberley's fortunes, with a reversal effected in "Medallion."

Celebrating the symbolic death and rebirth through art of two poets in a reflexive mode, the whole sequence of *Mauberley* may be seen from one point of view as an extended epitaph to the tombstone of art at a specific time and place: England circa 1918-20. Exorcising demonic skepticism, it functions as a cathartic consolation for the speakerelegist whose technique, resisting the temptations of the lotus-life ascribed to the exiled Mauberley as well as to the successful literati, changes completely our expectations of the conventional elegy by its problematic orientation. Although the power of nature and pagan cults determine the sympathetic response of the speaker to the poet's predicament, the manner of elucidating death alternately depends on the human resources of rhetoric, calculated irony, recollection, music, intuitive learning, insights, etc.□in short, the complete ensemble of faculties harnessed against the human condition of finitude and contingency. Oscillating between the polarities of "faun's flesh" and "saint's vision," the whole poem evolves as a new species of "ode," neither Pindaric nor Horatian; at first subverting the sublime and elegiac, then developing into a sustained counterpoint between past and present in order to resolve the tension of the predicament (bondage by Circe/art) in the first poem. After showing how civilization drives men to senseless death in war and hinting the prospect of a bleak future, Mauberley is left with no other choice but to seek refuge in the pathetic relics of memory. If he acquiesces to a mediating position in Poem XII, he still implicitly subscribes to the premise of a sharp disparity between, say, neo-classic urbanity and the vulgar materialism of the present.

With "Envoi," Pound himself shifts the modality of expression to pure lyrical assertion of art's transcending life. In the second part of the poem, such a transcendence is projected as immanent in Mauberley's "porcelain revery" which fuses vision and artifice together. The second part functions as the validating framework of the first part, for here Mauberley's character is drawn in terms of his behavior, his decisions, which are needed to clarify his utterance of Poems I and XII of the first part. Pound traces Mauberley's career after the first part has furnished us by suggestion and implication all we want to know (from Mauberley himself) of his "contacts" or crucial experiences, his thoughts and feelings about them. It remains for the poet to give an objective accounting, a graphic résumé, of Mauberley's endeavors to pursue his vocation amidst the perils of the market and the drawing room. But he would not remain for long in

society: the exile-death wish motif is announced in the poem's epigraph, a quotation from Eclogue IV of Nemesianus, a counterpart to the sportsmanscholar of the *Rubaiyat*.

Withdrawing from any profound involvement with the issues of his age, Mauberley proceeds to commit the error of the inveterate pleasure-seeker: he elevates the means□sensual experience□into an end. He therefore condemns himself to exhaustion, abandoning the aesthetic imperative of justifying his own thoughts and feelings. Paradoxically, sensuality leads to "anaesthesis"; but this detachment does not yield any knowledge or insight of an informing purpose□except "Medallion." With "Medallion," his scrupulous indulgence of the senses may be thought redeemed because of his having experienced (for he has been by training and disposition prepared for this and has indeed practically brought it about) an illumination equal to the degree of his devotion and talent. One cannot legitimately expect anything more from Mauberley at this point, given his character and the conditions of his existence. The nature of the action imitated by *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* is then organized around the idea of life's affirmation by art as achieved in the tragi-comic quest of a hero assuming varied personae□his ethos in the mode of disclosing its formal wholeness□according to the tensions and resolutions of his agonizing, incandescent consciousness.

Source: E. San Juan Jr., "Ezra Pound's Craftsmanship: An Interpretation of 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,'" in *Critics on Ezra Pound*, edited by E. San Juan Jr., University of Miami Press, 1972, pp. 106-24.

Adaptations

In 1958, after being released from St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., Pound made a series of recordings that feature him reading his own poetry, including "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," for the Caedmon record label. Many libraries still have the original vinyl LPs of these recordings, and they have been reissued by HarperCollins in audiocassette form and by Caedmon/HarperCollins in audiobook format (2001).

Topics for Further Study

How did various writers respond to World War I? Compare and contrast the works of two writers of the time. Examples are the poems of Rupert Brooke and Siegfried Sassoon and novels such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

Although he stayed in London for most of World War I and did not take part in it, a much older Ezra Pound lived in Italy throughout World War II and wrote and performed radio broadcasts for Mussolini's state radio network. For this act, he was indicted for treason in 1943. Research the "case of Ezra Pound" and write an essay about his life during World War II. How did his writings from World War II compare and contrast with his writings from World War I?

Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly" takes place largely in a London that is long gone. It is hard to imagine what daily life was like in that city in 1909, when Pound first moved there. Research the details of daily life in London in 1909 and write an essay about it. How did people move around the city? How was the nation governed? What were the popular pastimes? How did people find out about world events?

In 1914, Pound edited a collection of poems that he called *Des Imagistes*, or "some imagists." He created the imagist movement, wrote its manifestos, and recruited the poets who took part in this literary group. Research the imagists and prepare a speech about them. Who were they? What were the "rules" of the school? What group did Pound found after he grew tired of imagism? Who took over the movement?

Compare and Contrast

1920s: Calvin Coolidge is elected President of the United States. After Woodrow Wilson□an intellectual who tried to persuade the reluctant, isolationist United States to join the League of Nations□Coolidge is a drastic change. While Wilson was cerebral and visionary, Coolidge is practical and bourgeois. Advancing U.S. business interests is his primary concern.

Today: In the election to succeed, U.S. President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, and Texas Governor George W. Bush face-off. After the closest election in American history, the Supreme Court declares Bush the winner.

1920s: The aftereffects of World War I continue to resonate in defeated Germany. Because of its need to pay off massive war reparations, the German government simply prints more money. The effect is massive inflation, so much so that in the 1920s German shoppers must bring wheelbarrows full of cash in order to do their grocery shopping.

Today: After almost eight years of continuous record economic expansion, the U.S. economy begins to slow down. Large corporations decree massive layoffs, and small companies simply go out of business. A terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, only exacerbates the economic troubles, putting the airlines in particular at risk.

1920s: Theaters dedicated exclusively to the exhibition of motion pictures spring up around the United States. This new form of entertainment proves to be surprisingly popular, so much so that a number of performers become internationally famous. Some industry experts predict that within twenty years, motion pictures will have simultaneous soundtracks.

Today: The film industry is perhaps America's most powerful export. American film stars such as Tom Cruise and John Travolta are more recognizable than the leaders of most nations. And although Congress continues to grumble about violent, antisocial, or sexual content in Hollywood films, the major studios are able to avoid federal regulation by policing themselves.

1920s: The Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote, is ratified. For the first time in U.S. history, women can have a direct say in the governance of the nation.

Today: In the Presidential election of 2000, numerous voting irregularities in states such as Florida may have determined the outcome. As a result of the contested election, many commentators and even some politicians begin arguing that the Constitutional prohibition against convicted felons voting be eliminated.

1920s: The first Red Scare (a public hysteria, led by politicians and business leaders, about the presence of communists in America) reaches its climax, and Attorney General

A. Mitchell Palmer stages raids in thirty-three cities without search warrants to seek communists. Four thousand people are jailed and denied counsel, and more than five hundred are deported, as the labor leader Emma Goldman was in 1919.

Today: After the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, thousands of U.S. residents of Arab or Middle Eastern descent are detained without charge. Almost six thousand people are rounded up in the Justice Department's search for collaborators.

What Do I Read Next?

After finishing "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," Pound stopped writing short poems and focused his literary attention almost exclusively on *The Cantos*, a series of longer poems that he ultimately finished in the late 1960s. The poems are difficult and at times obscure.

Perhaps a more immediately rewarding Pound book would be his *ABC of Reading*, a sort of textbook/literary manifesto that Pound first published in 1934.

A movement that was dissimilar to modernism in its formal features but provided many modernist writers with a model of artistic rebellion was the so-called "decadent" movement of the 1890s. One of the best-known decadent writers was the Anglo-Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde, whose *Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and "Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1898) are hallmarks of the decadent movement.

In France, literary decadence also took hold. Among dozens of other writers, the novelist J. K. Huysmans stands out. Read Huysmans's *Against the Grain* (1894) for an idea of the nature of French decadent literature.

World War I was the central historical event affecting modernism. Paul Fussel's study *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1977) provides a detailed and often moving discussion of this war and its effects on contemporaries.

Further Study

Brooker, Peter, *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, Faber and Faber, 1979.

Like Christine Froula's book, this critical resource is less a study of Pound than a guide to the references and allusions of the poems collected in Pound's *Selected Poems* anthology.

Carpenter, Humphrey, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound*, Houghton Mifflin, 1988.

Of the dozen or so biographies of Pound, Carpenter's is the most thorough and least ideologically driven.

Kenner, Hugh, *The Pound Era*, University of California Press, 1973.

Kenner's book magisterially surveys Pound's entire career. Although the majority of the book is concerned with Pound's *The Cantos*, Kenner discusses "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" extensively, including its influences and its place in Pound's career as a whole.

Sutton, Walter, *Ezra Pound: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Sutton provides a good introduction to critical thought on Pound. This anthology includes essays from a number of important literary critics and spans all of Pound's work and almost his entire career.

Witemeyer, Hugh, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewal 1908-1920*, University of California Press, 1969.

After Kenner, Witemeyer is probably the leading Ezra Pound scholar in the world. Witemeyer, moreover, tends to ground his studies in the particulars of Pound's life and contacts, while Kenner is much more interested in larger cultural trends. This book contains an excellent chapter on "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" that draws parallels between the poem and James Joyce's great novel *Ulysses*.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, PfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of PfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of PfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by PfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

PfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Poetry for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Poetry for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Poetry for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from PfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from PfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Poetry for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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