ALLUSION IN EZRA POUND'S HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY

"We must learn what we can from the past, we must learn what other nations have done

successful under similar circumstances."

Ezra Pound

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Modern writers perceive themselves as having the ability to look back to the best elements in earlier poets and make use of the cultural examples found at their times. Mostly they included ancient Greek writings, Chinese and Japanese poetry, the Troubadours, Dante and the medieval Italian philosophical poets as Guido Cavalcanti, and the Metaphysical poets. In Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Pound presented a critical satirical point of view related with the time he was living in. The device he used to show the great gab found in the artistic mind and its effect upon the mentality of the masses was the disconnected references and allusions that played a decisive role in the development of his poem and his personality. Allusions are defined as references made to other works, literary pieces, historical events, a famous person, or a valuable statement. Their benefit lies in providing more depth to the writer's work, and to express the inner turmoil caused by the cultural decay he witnessed.

The poem discussed what "the age demanded," which was the need for a truthful leading figure just as Odysseus to take this dying culture out of its grave; in this way Pound resembled Walter Benjamin's idea that the world looked like a "text of ruins in which the past and present, fragmented intertwined, offered themselves <u>materially</u> as capable of both lulling the masses into a dream state or awakening them into awareness and control of their own surroundings." Pound wanted to awaken the masses to the ideology and to show the materials used for overcoming it. In other words, there was a desire to find the earthly paradise, which was to be accomplished only by making a "radical socio-political reformation" leading to the foundation of his cultural critique in poetry. Pound's reason for leaving his native country was similar to Henry James' reason. He did not think that the United States was a place where art might flourish. He began his journey to find a new "spiritual home", in this case it was England. It was clear that he found Europe to be the perfect place, but with the coming

of the war,he changed his view starting another new search for a model that was needed in the human life rather than just a new home.

In <u>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</u>, Pound decided to leave London which has changed and it was no more suitable for artists like him. In an attempt to sum up his years there, he called the poem a "farewell to London" and a picture of an "empire (here the British) declining into the shit pile." Though he refused the assumption most critics made that the poem is an autobiographical one for it is related with the poet's inner thoughts and feelings, yet he used the appreviation E.P. in most of his letters to refer to Ezra Pound; that are the same letters found in the introductory line of the poem, "E.P.Ode pour 1 election de son sepulcher." The line is in French taken from Pierre Ronsard,"On the choice of his burial place." Pound is trying to start his search for a new land to be his final residence. Allen Tate said that Pound lived in a world in which the atmosphere is of the great Odyssey and all the surroundings are the shores of Circe, a place in which man became "modern and hater of modernity." The poem opened with an important epigraph, "Vocat aestus in umbram," (The heat calls us into the shade), which is taken from the 4th Eclogue of the Roman poet Marcus Aurelius Nemesianus.Pound assures in many occasions that Mauberley has buried E.P. in the first poem:

For three years, out of key with his time,

He strove to resuscitate the dead art

Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born

In a half savage country, out of date;

Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acron;

Capaneus; trout for factitious bait; (ll.1-8)

For Pound, all the ideas were mixed together as in Ovid's <u>Metamorphoses</u> which presented a world of "permanent values." Pound referred to Dante's <u>Purgatorio</u> (I, 1.7), in the struggle to make reincarnations for the singers of the past who were concerned with the production of harmony and beauty. His country is "half savage,"

he was born in Haily, Idaho, in 1885; but his real reference here was to the American frontiers. The words were found also in a letter by Walter Villerant when he wrote of spending years in a "barbarous country." Here, the poet's search for this new poetic form is as Ulysses' search for his home. He tried to write poetry for three years and failed like Ulysses in his search for Penelope.

Pound made many definitions for the artist's role in the life of his people, as in "Patria Mia" when he said that,

The artistic statement of man is not his statement of the detached and theoretic part of himself, but of his well and of his emotions. As touching "art for art's sake"; the oak does not

grow for the purpose or with the intention of being built into ships and tables, yet a wise nation will take care to preserve the forests. It is the oak ('s) business to grow good oak.

He expressed his intention from the very beginning throughout referring to "Capaneus," who is one of the seven warriors sent from Argos to attack Thebes; the story is found in Aeschylus' <u>Seven Against Thebes</u>. It is associated with the rebellious character that stood against the power of gods. As a punishment, he was burnt to a cinder. His story has been mentioned by Dante and Virgil. Pound used the idea of "All flows" towards actual and fictive characters. This led to the Sirens song to Odysseus,

"Idmen gar toi panth, os eni Troie"

Caught in the unstopped ear ;(ll.9-10)

Pound presented this song (for indeed we know all that the Argives and Trojans have suffered at Troy by the will of the Gods) to get a closer connection with Odysseus. Indirectly, there is an allusion to the art of "melopoeia"that means the changing of words with some musical tools. Melopoeia is important for Pound because it is "a force tending to lull, or to distract the reader from the exact sense of the language," as he said. The hero put wax in his crews ears, and tied himself to the mast to hear the sirens' song. Babette Deutsch believed that Pound's journey throughout Europe before coming to London made him wash all his "sensibilities" in the waters

of other golden ages to mix him with Odysseus' experience who remained on Circes island of Aeaea for one year, ⁹ "The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year."(1.12)

His true Penelope was Flaubert,

He fished by obstinate isles;

Observed the elegance of Circes hair

Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials. (II.13-16)

Here, he alludes to Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) the French novelist who was a model in prose writing, for he believed in putting things as they are in reality and finding the nearest word to the thing he describes. These were the aims of Pound in the imagist movement, the direct treatment of the thing and the elimination of any word that is not contributing to the meaning. For Pound, Flaubert was like Penelope for Odysseus who represents home, life, safety, and the end of his journey. Also, Ulysses' journey to the lily and the acron and his adventure with Circe were assimilated to E.P.'s living on the "obstinate isles" (Great Britain). Pound's attempt to create art that is appreciated by the society equals Ulysses' effort to free men from Circe's isle.

The second poem opened with a repetition of the idea that there is an urgent need for an archetypal character in the modern age,

The age demanded an image

Of its accelerated grimace,

Something for the modern stage,

Not, at any rate, an Attic grace ; (Il.21-24)

The poet demanded a vision of "Unities" that means the power to produce something to the human life. He believed in the past and affected by his hidden job as a drama critic, "modern stage" through which he tried to retain the beauty of the old ages that have been covered by the shadows of civilization. In "Propria persona," Pound said that,

As for 'expressing the age', surely there are five thousand sculptors all busy expressing the inanities, the pettinesses, the sillinesses...of the age. Of course the age is 'not so bad as all that'. But the man who tries to express his age, instead of expressing himself, is doomed to destruction.¹⁰

These words lead to the third poem that visualizes the "cultural decline" he witnessed. Pound mentioned the different changes, linking them with the World War I and the death of his friend Henri Gaudier-Brezeska. The poem is presenting modern simplicity that is replacing the ancient beauty; which led to the modern democracy that is inferior in front of the old tyranny.¹¹

It is clear that the age has declined in everything. Music and poetry are essential elements in any ancient scene. The beauty of words in the "barbitos" of the Greek poetess Sappho, who lived in the seventh century B.C., has been replaced by the sound of the "pianola". The "barbitos" is an early form of lyre or lute. Pound possessed an interest in following the development of all lyric poetry to their origin which gave him the impression the modern life is moving towards its destruction. Even the religious concepts, represented by Christ, were changed for the leading power now is Dionysus the god of fertility. Also, he made a reference to "Caliban" who is mentioned in Shakespeare's The Tempest as a "savage and deformed slave to Ariel's airy sprite." This is the real "decline in standards" the poet is talking about. 12

However the situation is bad, Pound is still believing in the ability of the masses to achieve something better. The guide is Heracleitus (540-480 B.C.), the Greek philosopher of Ephesus who believed in the idea that everything is in a "constant state of flux" 13 In Vorticism, Pound concentrated upon the dynamic side of life for the Vorticist image was a "force rather than a picture." 14 Thus, all things around him are in a state of change and development; which is shown in the choice of different historical

and cultural factors to be presented in his poem, "We choose a Knave or an eunuch/To rule over us"(ll.55-56).

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley was composed with a mind full of the musical incidents in London and an aspiration to write an "epic of man of today." This took Pound to the important event, World War I. The fourth poem clarified the war's effect through the figures and experiences that are mentioned. It begins with a quotation from Horace's (65-68 B.C.)Odes 3.2.13:"pro domo"(for one's home).Pound refused this particular excuse to have a war showing the real reasons for killing and bloodshed as follows:

some in fear, learning love of slaughter (ll.61-70)

The idea of war reminded him of the people who died believing in "old men's lies." His interest in the topic came from his best friends T.E.Hulme and Gaudier Brezeska who used to send him letters and poems talking about the front trenches. Pounds poetry shows the growing realism and the disillusionment of war poetry .He was neither interested in the glory nor in the horrors of war; his main concern was the civilization that is dying which is quite clear in the fifth poem when he said:

There died a myriad,

And of the best, among them,

For an old bitch gone in the teeth,

For a botched civilization, (ll.88-91)

People who died in that war affected him greatly as to consider them to be the mistake that is not supposed to be repeated. The "best" is referring to his close friends, T.E. Hulme who was killed in France in 1917, Rupert Brooke who was killed in the Dardanelles in 1915, and Gaudier-Brezeska who died in 1915 at Neuville St. Vaast. 15

This point represented the beginning of his literary sketch for the literary figures in his time; which showed his intention in making a clear and definite picture for the change that happen to the human life .His anger led him to disdain even the Greek sculpture during the war ,"For two gross of broken statues."(1.94)

Of course, the war's effect is still dominant in the coming few poems, that present a "gallery of symptomatic writers" to show the culture in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries as a preparation for the coming of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. So, his aim was to shed the light on late-Victorian Poetry. Yeux Glauques, which is the sixth poem that attack the morality of the majority accused of destroying the Pre-Raphaelite movement because they disagree with their individual spirit, refers to a well known image in 19th c.poetry that is the "dull blush-green or grey eyes." Pound is talking about the eyes of Elizabeth Siddal; the model in many paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). He was the leader of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, who married here two years before her death. The title is also mentioned in Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin, where he mentioned the expression "Lœil glauque". Pound said that in France the period was "glauque" just like the goddess of Pallas Athene who was mentioned in Homer's Odyssey.

Gladstone was still respected,
When John Ruskin produced
"Kings'Treasuries"; Swinburne
And Rossetti still abused.
Fætid Buchanan lifted up his voice

•••••

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. (II.97-111)

Gladstone is William Ewart Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1859-66 and four times Liberal Prime Minister in the period 1868-94. Pound suggests that to be'really conversant 'with Gladstone's activities would secure a knowledge of his period. Then, he refers to John Ruskin (1819-1900), the historian and social critic, who defended Pre-Raphaelitism and Rossetti; and used "Kings Treasuries" which is the first section of his book Sesame and Lilies (1865). The writer's argument is that important books in a civilized country should be within the reach of everyone, that was supported by Pound. This led to Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), who is praised for his unique adaptation from Villon as being equal to Rossetti and the Rubaiyat among Victorian translations. Despite this, there were other figures, like Robert Buchanan (1841-1901) the poet and reviewer, who attacked Rossetti's poems. He wrote his articles under the pseudonym"Caliban", that is mentioned later on in the next poem. The eyes of Elizabeth are immortal as Aphrodite and observing through the faces of London girls who are painted by Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) as a beggar maid. This shows his desire in catching the "aesthetic glimpses" which is an early period in Pound's poetry that ends with Sappho.¹⁷

Although Pound tried his best to be away from religion, the religious tendencies were deeply innate in his mind. The seventh poem, *Siena Mi Fe; Disfecemi Maremma*, is borrowed from Dante's <u>Purgatoria</u> (V, 1.134) and means "Siena made me:Maremma undid me". Dante here is referring to the story of 'La Pia dei 'Tolomei'who is captured and imprisoned by her husband ,the Guelph Lord Paganello dei Pannocchieschi, in the marshland of Maremma where she died of malaria or from poison.Rossetti pictured this scene in one of his paintings and placed these words upon it.So,it is another example for the sudden and unprepared death; which took Pound again to the conditions of the First World War, to Rosetti's betrayal of Elizabeth Siddal and forward to the death of Dowson and Lionel Johnson.

For two hours he talked of Galliffet;
Of Dowson; of the Rhymer's Club
Told me how Johnson (Lionel) died
By falling from a high stool in a pub.... (ll.124-7)

Galliffet was the Marquis de Galliffet (1830-1909), the French general and later the minister of war who was the leader in the final battle of Sedan during the Franco-Prussian War that France lost. Ernest Dowson (1867-1900) is admired greatly by Pound due to his ideas about modernity .He was one of the members of the Rhymer's Club which is a circle of poets including Lionel Johnson, W.B. Yeats, Arthur Symons, Plarr and Image.

The same spirit continues in *Brennbaun*, which may be pointing to Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) who was known as "the Incomparable Max", the caricaturist and essayist of limited achievement. Pound mistakenly thought he was Jewish.

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty years.

Showed only when the daylight fell

Level across the face

Of Brennbaum "The Impeccable." (II.144-7)

Here, Pound is referring to the Hebraic exodus and forty-years of quest for Canaan. Moses made water flow from the rock of Mt.Horeb and received the Ten Commandments on Mt.Sinai (Exodus 3:2, 19:20).Beerbohm was not Jewish but of mixed Dutch, Luthuanian and German blood.

It is time now to talk about *Mr.Nixon*, who is to be drawn after the highly successful English editor, journalist, and novelist Arnold Bennett (1867-1931).

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

•••••

Likewise a friend of Blougrams' once advised me:

Don't kick against the pricks,

Accept opinion, "The Nineties" tried your game

And died, there s nothing in it. (ll.148-71)

The first advice shows the rich and luxurious life of Bennett, with his yacht *Velsa*; however, Pound was so aesthetic at this specific period and didn't follow it. There is an implied comparison between his real life and his would be life if he had

listened to Bennett. The second advice came from "a friend of Blougrams."The "friend" is referring to Gigadibs, the literary man, in Robert Browning's poem "Bishop Blougrams Apology". It tells the story of a bishop who like Nixon sacrifices all integrity for earthly things and both possess the same image about man, that each human being has a fixed role which he is not suppose to surpass. Despite this, Gigadibs makes a choice that is a cabin for three and moved to Australia to announce the birth of a new "pastoral retreat" in the twentieth century. ¹⁸

The tenth poem focused upon the "stylist," who is either James Joyce who lived in poverty in order to perfect himself without being affected by the commercial life style; or to Ford Madox Fords traveling to the village of Hurston in West Sussex.

Beneath the sagging roof

The stylist has taken shelter

Upaid, uncelebrated,

At last from the worlds welter. (ll.172-5)

The simplicity of nature reminds him again of England, women's role in the society, and the type of life he led there,

"Conservatrix of Milesien"

Habits of mind and feeling,

Possibly. But in Ealing

With the most bank-clerkly of Englishment?

No,"Milesian" is an exaggeration.

No instinct has survived in her

Older than those her grandmother

Told her would fit her station.(ll.184-91)

The first line is taken from Remy de Gourmont's <u>Histories Magiques</u> (1894), and it means "women, the conservator, [and] the inheritor of past gestures." While in England the monetary side was controlling life to the utmost as in Ealing which is a western part of London associated with "dull respectability." Also, it is found in the disquisition on suburbia in the fourth of the "Imaginary Letters" from Walter Villerant to the newly remarried 'Ex Mrs. Burn.' The "Milesien" alludes to the <u>Milesian Tales</u> which are a series of erotic romances of the first century B.C.by Aristides of

Miletus. The same word refers to a member of the Irish race. Pound believed that the "instinct" keeps the useful gestures only. 19 The mythological references are still clear in the poem as when the poet refers to "Daphne," in the twelfth part, where he alludes to Gautier's <u>The Castle of Memory</u>. In Greek mythology ,Daphne was transformed into a bay tree when pursued by Apollo. Thus, the tree became sacred to Apollo and a symbol for the poets crown. The same scene is parallel to the scene of the drawing-room.

"Daphne with her thighs in bark

Stretches toward me her leafy hands,"

Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room

I wait The Lady Valentines commands, (Il.192-5)

Pound, Eliot and Yeats were gathered on April 1916 for the first performance of Yeats's <u>At the Hawk's Well</u> in the drawing room of Lady Cunard in Cavendish Square. The meeting and the woman made him speak just like Prufrock in Eliots"The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock,"

Knowing my coat has never been

Of precisely the fashion

To stimulate, in her,

A durable passion; (ll.196-199)

Eliot was introduced to the circle gathered by Lady Ottoline Morrell at Garsington Manor by Bertrand Russell in 1915.Pound believed in the crucial role played by women in the society.Henceforth,he wrote in <u>Patria Mia</u>,that ,"art criticism is one of her functions...She believed in catholicity of taste, in admiring no one thing more than anything else." ²⁰

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, (ll.204-8)

It seems that Pound through the voice of Mauberly is trying to show the meaning of being a poet which is an invocation from God to help him find a true value

for his existence. In such a world, it is difficult to find any sort of discrimination or differences among people except in understanding their real selves. Lady Jane appeared as a literary hostess in Henry James's story "The Figure in the Carpet," in Embarrassment (1896). This part ends with an obligation to look at and understand the soul of art, when he says,

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. (ll.212-19)

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was an English poet, essayist, and editor who stands here as a model for the eighteenth-century writers. They were famous in the Fleet which is a street was and still a center of London journalism. In mythology, Pieria is a district on the slopes of Mount Olympus. This place is known as the birth-place of the Muses, the inspirers of arts. So, the part ended with a well known reference taken from old –past writings to remind the masses of the possibility of having a change; at the same time, it presents an implied comparison between the sublimity and beauty of the past and the corruption of the present times represented by the war and materialism. Of course, such a soul is needed in the world of the poet and the "Pierian roses" mixed with "amber" turned into the "Red overwrought with orange "that is able to survive throughout the passage of time. 21

The *Envoi* (1919) is the last part in this biographical –long poem, in which it is clear that Pound is the sole speaker who shows his ideas courageously from behind all the masks of "irony". It recalls the English moment in the tradition of poetry as a song. Pound's wish was to "resurrect the art of the lyric," as he wrote to Margaret Anderson.²² The opening lines allude to Edmund Waller's (1606-1687) "Go Lovely Rose!"

Go, dumb-born book,

Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:

Hadst thou but song

As thou hast 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 (II.220-6)

Pound refers to the singing of Raymonde Collignon, who in April 1918, at the Aeolian Hall, London, sang the Provencal songs Pound contributed to Morse Rummel's Hesternae Rosae (1913). As a music critic of the New Age writing under the name of William Atheling, Pound reviewed this and two subsequent concerts, the last on 15 April 1920, the year of Mauberley's publication. Then, he refers to Henry Lawes (1596-1662), the English composer and musician who put Waller's poem "Go Lovely Rose" to music.²³ The poet tried his best diagnosing the ills of civilization and drawing the attention to the declining state of England, which played a leading role in the past; whereas now it is sunk in ignorance and corruption.

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. (II.227-35)

Pound is referring to England by "her" or may be he is intending the English poetic tradition, the English muse. At the beginning of the poem, he argues that his poem is a "farewell to London" and it seems that he is referring to the ignorance and indifference of the English toward their lyric tradition making it an excellent reason for his departure. Thus, he complete his argument by referring to himself as an American writer who tries to keep their tradition.

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 sifting in oblivion,

Till change hath broken down

All things save Beauty alone. (II.236-45)

All Pound's early poetry rises the question "Who am I?" that led him to be E.P. "wrong from the start" whom Mauberley buries with "all his troublesome energies." He worked hard to turn the War into an occasion to remind people of the humanity they are about to lose. In <u>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</u>, he manipulates the fact that life is a journey of experiencing and knowing to be the Odysseus of the modern Age.

NOTES

¹Ezra Pound, "The Renaissance,"(1935), in <u>What the Architecture Said: A Benjaminian Reading of Ezra Pound's *Quest for the Paradiso* by William M. Northcutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.219.</u>

²"Modernist Poetry in English", in <u>Wikipedia Encyclopedia</u>, http://en.wikipedia.org.

³Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz, eds., <u>Persona: The Shorter Poems by Ezra Pound</u> (New York: New Directions, 1990), p.145.

⁴Axel Nesme, 2004, <u>Intertextual Tissue Preserved: A Reading of Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, http://www.e-rea.org.</u>

⁵Richard Ellmann and Robert O'clair, eds., <u>The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry</u>, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1988), p.382.All subsequent references to the poem are taken from the same source.

⁶Peter Brookes, <u>A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.54.

⁷Traci Gardner,"Pound's <u>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</u>,"in <u>The Explicator</u> 44:3(spring, 1986), p.46.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Brookes, p.190.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Donald Lyons, <u>A Major Minor: Ezra Pound</u> (London: n.p., 1965), p.78.

¹²Hugh Kenner, <u>The Pound Era</u> (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p.408.

¹³Sister M.Bernetta Quin, <u>The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry: Ezra Pound, Wallas Stevens, William Carlos Williams, T.S.Eliot, Hart Crane, Randall Jarrell, and William Butler Yeats</u> (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), p.19.

¹⁴William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, <u>A Handbook to Literature</u> (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), p.376.

¹⁵Brookes, p.200.

²¹Donald Davie, "Ezra Pound's <u>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</u>,"in <u>The Modern Age</u>,ed.Boris Ford 7 vol.(London: Penguin Books,n.d.),p.325.

²²Ibid.p.326.

²³Brookes, p.213.

²⁴Hans Georg Gadamer, <u>Truth and Method</u> (Paris: Seuil Press, 1965), p.123.

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¹⁶Ellmann, p.385.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Kenner, p.408.

¹⁹Brookes, p.210.

²⁰Ibid., pp.211-12.