The "twin monoliths" of the bridge itself evidently provided Hart Crane with an idea--a form, an approach, and with it a pattern of imagery. The imagery itself is not original or even very demanding; it is, in every case that I have studied, archetypal and available to all. One who studies the style will remark on the stunning diction, and one who studies the vision will use the same imagery to substantiate the insubstantial--or so I believe. But the poet qua poet has the prior aim of closure and aesthetic finish. This requires form, an ordering of even a mystical or irrational experience. I believe Crane found such finish in the mirror imagery of the poems which open and close The Bridge.

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EZRA POUND AND PROVENÇAL MELOPOEIA

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Nothing is more apparent in Pound's writings on the troubadours than his desire to recreate their art of "melopoeia," lyric to be sung and not read from a book. But as Noel Stock remarks, "Pound never succeeded in writing a lyric wholly singable"--at least in the conventional sense.[1] (This is not to deny him the unconventional singability exhibited in his opera Le Testament.) The paradox has not been explained; in fact, those who discuss Pound's Provençal, most impressively Stuart Y. McDougal, have concentrated on the historical and philosophic interests, ignoring the superficies of technique.[2] Yet there is the magnet of Pound's attraction to the troubadours, that "one dimension of their workmanship which can be grasped by anyone, whether they know Provençal or not."[3] Personally, I cannot claim authority in Provençal; my study has been Pound's music, his metrics, and their relationship. But my acquaintance with the language has been sufficient, I think, to make audible some features of Pound's work unmentioned before. His early experiments with troubadour rhyme, stanza, and melopoeia were crucial to his technical apprenticeship, and consequently an important strain in the dynamic of English poetry during the second decade of this century.

Provençal is most remarkable for its rhyming; there is no tongue like it "wherein to study the subsidiary arts of rhyme and rhyme-blending."[4] Rhyme, notice, is a subsidiary art. It is also most infrequent in Pound's mature style. Though ingenious rhymes abound in Mauberley, Pound learned from the troubadours, more important than any device of rhyme, the function of rhyme in poetry: he learned to admire and do otherwise. Classical poets considered rhyme a vulgarity, as have some poets since: Campion called rhyme a mere figura verbi, an ornament unrelated to subject matter that deflects attention from matter to treatment. In singing, melopoeia directs or even over-rides the matter; in verse not for singing, rhyme is an artifice which

may only emphasize the Palgrave quality of the printed lyric.

In troubadour song, where rhyme is legitimate, Pound listens almost exclusively to rhyme sounds, rhyme arrangements, patterns of vowels and consonants. In this he follows Dante, who in the famous "chapter of the sieve" (De Vulgari Eloquentiae, II, vii) classifies words as "combed" or "shaggy" according to their sounds. Pound is much taken with Arnaut Daniel's "angry chatter of birds" in "L'aura amara," where the onomatopoeia "obviously depends upon the '-utz, -etz, -encs and -ortz' of the rhyme scheme," all "shaggy" sounds.[5] His translation not only supplies a "map of the relative positions" of the rhymes, but approximates the shaggy sounds themselves--preserving them (with one exception) masculine or feminine, and echoing the staccato monosyllables and clustered consonants of "strips," "glad," "beaks," "brakes," "mates." He imitates shaggy sounds within the lines ("scarce peep" for ten balps), and the feminine rhythm and softened consonants of the last line. The result strains normal English, but the lesson repays study, for Pound as usual means not to soothe but to educate:

> The bitter air
> Strips panoply
> From trees
> Where softer winds set leaves,
> The glad
> Beaks
> Now in brakes are coy
> Scarce peep the wee
> Mates
> And un-mates,
>   What gaud's the work?
>   What good the glees?
> What curse I strive to shake!
> Me hath she cast from high,
> In fell disease
> I lie, and deathly fearing.[6]

Pound realized that nothing can make English sound like Provençal: and since each language has its distinctive field of sound, each articulates a different range of potential musical emotions. Rather than complain about scarcity, in fact, Pound regretted that English rhymes differ in quality from those of the Romance tongues:

> It is not that there aren't rhymes in English; or enough rhymes or even two-syllable rhymes, but that the English two-syllable rhymes are of the wrong timber and weight. They have extra consonants at the end, as in flowing and going; or they go squashy; or they fluff up as in snowy and goeth. They are not rime agute.[7]

English has not the pure singing vowels of, say, Italian. Time after time in his translations, Pound is obliged to replace a feminine rhyme ending on a weak vowel with an English form ending on a consonant, -ed, -ing, -es,

solutions that he found unsatisfactory. We lack the Provençal crispness.

Most remarkable about Provençal rhyming, however, is its invention of stanzas—a technique that does cross language barriers. Rhyme scheme and musical setting are obviously interdependent, so Dante, not surprisingly, begins his discussion of _canzone_ by codifying melodic forms. But the fact of musical setting itself hardly accounts for the troubadours' astounding inventiveness, a fascination that joys in sheer geometric patterning. Measuring his standards of virtuosity by these poets, Pound advises the young that if they wish to impress by technique, their mystery must be "such as will delight the expert."[8] Complaining of monotony in some troubadours who labour the commonest rhyme sounds, he reserves highest praise for Arnaut's skill in averting the monotony of a heavily rhymed language. However entranced by Arnaut's ingenuities, Pound values most his artistic delicacy in his _coblas estrampas_, which have no rhyme at all within the stanza but rhymes line by line in succeeding stanzas—nine of Arnaut's eighteen extant _cansos_ use this form. Arnaut, says Pound, was the first "to realize fully that the music of rhymes depends upon their arrangement, not on their multiplicity;" in the _coblas estrampas_, "stanza answers stanza not boisterously, but with a subtle persistent echo;" he even compares the effect to "blank verse."[9] Again Pound's attitude toward rhyme is ambivalent, and recalling Arnaut's supposed monastic education and the classicist's scorne of rhyme, he praises verses that "satisfy not only the modern ear, gluttonous of rhyme, but also the ear trained to Roman and Hellenic, to which rhyme seemed and seems a vulgarity."[10] Arnaut's excellence was to tame rhyme, to discover in it unexpected subtlety.

Pound liked to compare Arnaut's rhyming with musical counterpoint; and this analogy, admittedly inexact, he complicates by setting Provençal next to one other musical tradition. The rhyme schemes, he says, might be considered a "sort of" counterpoint,

> if one can conceive a counterpoint which plays not against a sound newly struck, but against the residuum and residua of sounds which hang in the auditory memory.
>
> In the two cases, Arabian music and Provençal verse, where there was no musical "harmony" and no counterpoint in Bach's sense of the word, this elaboration of echo has attained great complexity, and _can_ give great delight. . . .[11]

Unlike Bach's counterpoint but like Arabian music, "verbal rhythm is mono-linear. It can form contrapunto only against its own echo, or against a developed expectancy."[12] Pound's bracketing, evidently idiosyncratic, has been advanced by musicologist Wilfrid Mellers, who, noting the plausible influence of Moorish music in Provence, says that the troubadours,

> being originally their own poets, would have employed flexible additive rhythms derived from their words, and that if the theory of rhymic proportion is appropriate we should see this not as an

> aggressive assertion of accentual dance metre, but as a more rudimentary form of the Indian tala.[13]

Arnaut Daniel's "polyphonic rhyme" is in part simply a function of the music: inflections of the melodic phrase are associated with given rhyme sounds. But it depends as well, as Hugh Kenner observes, on the Provençal language itself, a language which "seems to welcome separations": "Its words clip, bounding the clear distinct syllables modern French has slurred with terminal consonants modern French omits. L'alba e·l jorn clar zones its sounds as l'aube et le jour clair blurs them."[14] It is the difference between pianistic blur and the wiry percussion of the clavichord. The rhymes of Laurence Binyon's Dante likewise, "his past, admits, checked, kings," all leave "a residue of vowel sound in state of potential."[15] This concept of monolinear counterpoint is expressed in Pound's operas not by counterpoint itself, which would obscure the words, but by devices (vocal staccato, pointillistic accompaniment) that highlight the syllabic melodies.

Closely related to rhyme is the line-length. In most oral verse, enjambement is rare; to compensate for the suppleness of run-on lines, however, lyric poetry may vary the lengths of the lines, marked for the ear by end rhyme, cadence, musical phrase. The musical value of varied lines that discourage four-square melodies is obvious. Pound's antagonism to the sonnet is based on the "monotony of 14 even lines as compared to the constantly varying strophes of Ventadour or of Arnaut;" Dante, he continues, courted the difficult in setting a canzone "in unrelieved hendecasyllables as the grand bogey of technical mastery."[16] Arnaut's two surviving melodies show a pleasantly asymmetrical phrasing in response to the verses, but Pound discusses two other cansos; "Can chai la fueilla," "jovial or jazzy," is "cleverly made with five, six, and four and seven" syllables, creating a rhythm like a "sea-chantey swing."[17] Pound's translation is pidgin-English, but it does capture the uneven rhythms. "Lancan son passat li giure" also contains extra syllables in two lines of the stanza. In both cases the rhythmic disturbance would be clarified by melody. The effect is familiar in Elizabethan lyrics, a free shifting from one metre to another in both words and music. Such lyrics are rhythmically unambiguous when sung, but when read in a book they are apt to be confusing: hence the "regularisation" of English metric in the seventeenth-century, when reading replaced the singing of lyrics.

Donald Davie has raised some issues in connection with Pound's Arnaut Daniel translations, but without dwelling long enough to explain thoroughly. Pound, he says, "was looking for the musicality of poetry in such comparatively freakish or primitive features as onomatopoeia and intricately regular full rhyme." Concern for word-sound has subverted diction and syntax:

> It is difficult to believe that the poet who wrote Cathay was at

much the same time writing the "Five Canzoni of Arnaut Daniel" that appear in his volume of 1920, Umbra. What first strikes the reader is the extraordinarily indiscriminate diction of these versions: in order to get onomatopoeic and rhyming words, Pound has to let his diction veer crazily from colloquial slang to bizarre archaisms like "raik" and "wriblis;" the syntax is often crabbed, and word-order obscurely inverted, for the same reason. But more important, in view of the principles behind the distinctive melodies of Cathay, is the way in which the verse-line is no longer the unit; syntax is jerked and heaved around line-endings by violently disconcerting enjambements: "What folly hath infected/The?" or "Disburse/Can she, and wake/Such firm delights, that I/Am hers, froth, lees,/Bigod! from toe to ear-ring." The last example recalls Browning at his worst.[18]

At first, Davie's charges are beyond question. Pound displays "L'aura amara" prominently, with its miming of bird chatter. But the mimetic genius of this canso too easily obscures Pound's concern with word-sound in the abstract. In The Spirit of Romance, Pound strips the word "onomatopoeia" of its mimetic limitations; Dante's, he says, "is not a mere trick of imitating natural noises, but is a mastery in fitting the inarticulate sound of a passage to . . . that mood or passion which the passage describes or expresses."[19] "Onomatopoeia" here is really "melopoeia," word music that corresponds to feelings in the same inexplicable way as instrumental music: in Susanne Langer's familiar terms, word music, like tone music, is an "unconsummated symbol" that "articulates subtle complexes of feeling that language cannot even name, let alone set forth."[20] Pound required full freedom to make any combinations of sounds necessary; but the notion of poetic music circa 1910 was restricted to what Northrop Frye has called "the sentimental fashion of calling any poetry musical if it sounds nice."[21]

Pound's ultimate concept of melopoeia results from his struggle against the sentimental musicality of post-Tennysonian verse. W. P. Ker, who puzzled over Dante's praise of Arnaut, failed to comprehend how Dante, with his rules for euphony, could find him pleasing; only in 1952 did Sir Maurice Bowra point out the obvious, that Dante's point was to include words both "combed" and "shaggy" as they should be needed.[22] Pound searching within the same milieu as Ker for Dante's meaning (and with the harsh music of Browning in his ear), arrived at his own distinction between sounds "combed" and "shaggy" (variously expressed as "legato" versus "staccato," "gummy" versus "clear" or "lucid"), and thence at his perception of an absolute musicality of word-sound in which any concentrations are potentially expressive.

Davie's question of diction and syntax is more complex. Right as he is, he does not begin to suggest the factors that simultaneously forced themselves on Pound's attention. T. H. Jackson, too, has simply blamed the awkwardnesses on Pound's straining after false elegance, particularly in the poems of Canzoni (1911): "Occasionally," he says,

> this odd phrasing is a means of subduing a recalcitrant thought or sentence to the iambic swing. But most often it seems merely to reflect a young poet's idea of properly poetic discourse: "and fast/ My pulses run, knowing thy thought hath passed/That beareth thee as doth the wind a rose."[23]

Pound, however, accounts for his diction differently. First, he points out that the Provençal language was still highly inflected, and the particularities of word order were unsettled; hence rhyme words fit into position with relative ease:

word order

> I would point out that the Provençals were not constrained by the modern literary sense. Their restraints were the tune and rhyme-scheme, they were not constrained by a need for certain qualities of writing, without which no modern poem is complete or satisfactory. They were not competing with De Maupassant's prose.[24]

Pound defends Laurence Binyon's Dante on similar principles:

> It WOULD be quite possible to conserve the natural word order, without giving up the rhymes used by Binyon, IF one used run-on instead of end-stopped verses. BUT Dante's verses are mostly end-stopped. Various alternatives are offered at every juncture, but let the neophyte try half a dozen before deciding that Binyon has sacrificed the greater virtue for the less in every case.[25]

English prose word order is simply incompatible with full, end-stopped rhyme, and no modern poem is complete or satisfactory without observing normal word order. No modern poem that is, but returning to Binyon's Dante, "The fact that this idiom, which was never spoken on sea or land, is NOT fit for use in the new poetry of 1933-4 does not mean that it is unfit for use in translation of a poem finished in 1321."[26] Likewise his own versions of Provençal:

> The point of the archaic language in the Prov. trans. is that the Latin is really "modern." We are just getting back to a Roman state of civilization, or in reach of it; whereas the Provençal feeling is archaic, we are ages away from it. "Whether I have managed to convey this or not, I can't say; but it is the reason for the archaic dialect."[27]

The Latin to which Pound refers is that of Propertius; in Quia Pauper Amavi, Pound juxtaposed the archaic Provençal translations against both the quasi-modern Rome of the "Homage to Sextus Propertius" and the contemporary satire of "Moeurs Contemporaines." If the inversions and archaisms of Pound's first Provençal imitations were a straining after elegance, Pound held to them even after establishing prose diction in his other poems.

Provencal rhymes are impossible in English without sacrifice; but even so, says Pound,

> I do not think that rhyme aesthetic, <u>any</u> rhyme aesthetic, can ever do as much damage to English verse as that done by latinization, in Milton's time and before. The rhyme pattern is, after all, a matter of chiselling, and a question of the <u>lima amorosa</u>, whereas latinization is a matter or compost, and in the very substance of speech. By latinization, I mean here the attempt to use an uninflected language as if it were an inflected one.[28]

word order

Pound's distinction between a greater and a lesser kind of damage is not clear-cut, but it seems that inversion caused by the constraints of rhyme has in each case an observable purpose, while habitual latinization "shows a fundamental mis-comprehension of the organism of language." Some inversions, then, are less bad than others. But any inversion must disrupt the reader's, and even more the listener's, comprehension. Yeats, who saw the need for prose order while working with oral recitation to the psaltery records his discovery in similar terms:

> Miss Farr has found . . . a little modern lyric verse to be vocal, but when one gets back a few generations lyric verse ceases to be vocal until it gets vocal as song not as speech is, as one approaches the Elizabethans. We had great difficulty even with Keats and though we got a passage which is splendidly vocal we had to transpose a line because of its construction, which could only be clear to the eye which can see several words at once.[29]

Pound is acutely conscious--perhaps too conscious for his own good--of the dilemma of English lyric. Song begs for the ornament of rhyme, yet rhyme, as it becomes more complex, must disrupt the linear prose word order necessary for aural comprehension. Struggling to bring into English the most demanding rhymes ever devised, Pound reached an impasse and eventually abandoned his attempts to resuscitate the song lyric. His "diagrammatic translations" of Arnaut have, nevertheless,

> proved that the Provençal rhyme schemes are not <u>impossible</u> in English. They are probably <u>inadvisable</u>. The troubadour was not worried by our sense of style, our "literary values," he could shovel in words in any order he liked. Milton ruined his work by not understanding that the genius of English is not the genius of Latin. . . . The troubadour, fortunately perhaps, was not worried about English order; he got certain musical effects because he cd. concentrate on music without bothering about literary values.[30]

"Of the uses of rhyme," he concludes, "I would say nothing save that it is neither a necessity nor a taboo."[31] But rhyme must always be measured by standards set in Provence.

II

Pound's original poems on Provençal subjects include the several dramatic monologues preserved in Personae in which he was transplanting Browning to Renaissance Italy. Only two things need be said about them here: that they are Pound's most wholly successful efforts in this direction; and that they have little to do with sung melopoeia. But not long after "Cino" and "Na Audiart" appeared in A Lume Spento, Pound experimented in a series of studies in Provençal forms, written in 1909 and last printed in Canzoni (1911). The central exhibit among these is a group of six poems labelled "canzone." Of these, "Canzone: The Yearly Slain" has a seven-line stanza in regular coblas estrampas, while the others are modelled after specific troubadour poems. There are a few other poems wearing titles like "Sonnet," "Octave," "Sonnet in Tenzone," plus no fewer than three sestinas, one of them the "Sestina: Altaforte."

Pound's melopoeia in all of these poems but the last may fairly be described as "sentimental musicality":

Ah! red-leafed time hath driven out the rose
And crimson dew is fallen on the leaf
Ere ever yet the cold white wheat be sown
That hideth all earth's green and sere and red;
The moon-flower's fallen and the branch is bare,
Holding no honey for the starry bees;
The Maiden turns to her dark lord's demesne.

Fairer than Enna's field when Ceres sows
The stars of hyacinth and puts off grief
Fairer than petals on May morning blown
Through apple-orchards where the sun hath shed
His brighter petals down to make them fair;
Fairer than these the poppy-crowned One flees
And joy goes weeping in her scarlet train.

Pound's technical achievement here impressed T. S. Eliot enough for him to rescue two of these pieces for the Faber Selected Poems.[32] This passage is typical in its homogenous, pinguid texture, its luxuriant long and gliding vowels, its avoidance of mute consonants while spiraling around sounds of l, r, m, n, w, and th. The rhyme sounds, here all masculine, are chosen to conform with the overall texture, with long vowels and sustained voiced consonants. The iambic rhythm spins unruffled; the lines are end-stopped to the point of exaggeration.

Oddly, despite Dante's warning that monosyllables (at least in Italian) are "shaggy," Pound's texture is densely, weightily monosyllabic, reached an extreme in "Canzone: The Spear":

That fair far spear of light now lays
Its long gold shaft upon the waters.
Ah! might I pass upon its rays
To where it gleams upon the waters,
Or might my troubled heart be fed
Upon the frail clear light there shed,
Then were my pain at last allay'd. . . .

Here too we see Pound's trick of matching slightly dissimilar rhyme sounds--"shed," "allay'd"--gradually lengthening their duration; this device, not uncommon in Provençal, appears to better advantage in "Canzone: To Be Sung beneath a Window," modelled after Peire Vidal's "Ab l'alen tir vas me l'aire":

Heart mine, art mine, whose embraces
Clasp but wind that past thee bloweth?
E'en this air so subtly gloweth,
Guerdoned by the sun-gold traces
That my heart is half afraid
For the fragrance on him laid;
Even so love's might amazes!

Matching the rhyme sounds "traces" and "amazes," lengthening the latter by voicing the consonant, Pound achieves a fine discrimination between sounds and an awareness of quality. Throughout these poems, however, Pound thickens the sound with close repetitions--"Heart mine, art mine . . .," or "As flame flament . . ."--this mannerism culminating in the final stanza of the poem just quoted:

If my praise her grace effaces,
Then 'tis not my heart that showeth,
But the skilless tongue that soweth
Words unworthy of her graces. . . .

For all their dexterity, these studies are remarkable for what they reveal that Pound had not yet learned from troubadour poetry. He has not yet distinguished between "music in words" and words which have "an aptitude for, or suggestion of, accompanying music."33 The sentimental musicality of Pound's canzones remains on the page, the kind of melopoeia which Pound later termed "opaque" or "gummy." The ear is anaesthetized against meaning. The vowels blended so laboriously dissolve into one another. The vocabulary is studded with arresting archaisms like "troweth," "guerdoned," "hereward," "sans gloze," "mingled" (with three syllables). Many of these compress syntax to fit the metre ("sans" for "without"), many are dragged in for rhyme; but many have no excuse but Pound's faulty sense of decoration.

This diction sometimes leads to confusion:

> The melody upon clear strings inflected
> Were dull when o'er taut sense thy presence floweth. . . .

Is "o'er taut" an adjective or the beginning of a prepositional phrase?

> When first I saw thee 'neath the silver mist,
> Ruling thy bark of painted sandalwood. . . .

Does "bark" refer to boats or tree trunks?

> And thus my nobler parts, to grief's confounding. . . .

Is "grief's" possessive or plural? "confounding" noun or adjective? The eye knows, but the ear is misled. Frequent ambiguities like these show why Pound valued Robert Bridges' warning against homophones so highly, and why he later urged students to beware expressions "clear on paper but ambiguous if spoken aloud."[34]

Perhaps the most unexpected failing in these poems, however, is their stubborn adherence to a single line length. The apprentice Pound not only imitates Dante's seventeen-line stanza in "Canzone: Of Angels," but in five of the six canzones he writes unrelieved pentameter or tetrameter. The exception, "Canzone: Of Incense," is modelled on Arnaut Daniel's "Doutz brais e critz":

> Thy gracious ways,
> O Lady of my heart, have
> As amber torch-flames, where strange men-at-arms
> Tread softly 'neath the damask shield of night,
> Rise from the flowing steel in part reflected,
> So on my mailed thought that with thee goeth,
> Though dark the way, a golden glamour falleth.

Here the beginning of each stanza is heightened by the internal rhyme and the peculiar hovering over the feminine ending; but thereafter the stanza rumbles on in regular pentameters. And this is the only canzone in which such slight variation occurs. This could perhaps be blamed on the particular cansos Pound chose as models, but since his poems are meant as technical display pieces, it is hard to see why he overlooked so vital a part of song technique.

Pound's efforts to write words under notes in Walter Rummel's Hesternae Rosae (1913) are depressing failures, but again they signal the sincerity of Pound's inquiry. They were doomed to failure because Pound was trying to bring both sound and sense into English as literally as possible, preserving end-stopped lines, matching vowel quantities to note-values, and constructing straight English sentences. A few are included in

the Translations of Ezra Pound, but little can be made of them there. One useful approach is to compare the two versions of Arnaut's "Chansson doil motz," the first printed without music in the New Age (December 28, 1911):

> I'll make a song with exquisite
> Clear words, for buds are blowing sweet
> Where the sprays meet,
> And flowers don
> Their bold blazon
> Where leafage springeth greenly
> O'ershadowing
> The birds that sing
> And cry in coppice seemly.
>
> The bosques among they're singing fleet.
> In shame's avoid my staves compete,
> Fine-filed and neat,
> With love's glaives on
> His ways they run;
> From him no whim can turn me,
> Although he bring
> Great sorrowing,
> Although he proudly spurn me.

For this Pound apologizes--a bit smugly--saying,

> The poem runs on four rhymes. Their order in the stanzas changes. Whether I transgressed in translating with three rhymes and an assonance cannot be determined until we know more twelfth-century orthography and the various dialects of Provence.

Pound's purpose is still to convey an impression of the melopoeia, though his standards are somewhat relaxed, so he manages smoother sentences in English than in the later "L'aura amara." He matches masculine and feminine rhymes; he echoes the long e of the first three lines of the original, and the l sound of the last line.

The singing version for Hesternae Rosae is little changed, but the changes are instructive:

> With words both clear and exquisite
> I'll sing, for buds are blowing sweet
> Where frail sprays meet
> And flowers don
> Their bold blazon
> Where leafage springeth greenly
> O'ershadowing

The birds that sing
And cry through coppice seemly.

Among the boughs their song is fleet
In shame's avoid my staves compete
Fine-filed and neat
With love's glaives on,
His way they run,
From him I may not turn me
Although he bring
Great sorrowing
And though he proudly spurn me.

Pound has dropped the internal rhymes in the first lines, thus removing the enjambement from the first stanza and the syntactic violence from the second. "Where the sprays meet" becomes "Where frail sprays meet" to provide a long vowel for a long note; likewise "they're singing fleet" becomes "their song is fleet." "From him no whim can turn me" is made more comprehensible, "From him I may not turn me." But Pound has not changed enough. He clings to his original rhymes, even though they require the last syllable of "exquisite" (rhymed with "sweet") to be sung on a long note. (English unfortunately lacks the French exquise to fill this void in the singer's vocabulary.) Pound's "bold blazon" is equally absurd. Ballad rhymes like "coun-tree" and "la-die" have at least the sanction of convention. Added to this, the awkwardnesses of "In shame's avoid" and "with love's glaives on" complete the ruin. The singing versions for Hesternae Rosae might seem hopeless incompetence, if we had not the poetry of Cathay and "The Seafarer" to sustain our faith. Pound, as in all his Provençal translations, is attempting more than English can bear. He makes himself look bad in a dogged effort to preserve the outward form of Arnaut's canso and the interior feeling of the melopoeia at once.

Pound's final versions of Arnaut Daniel, intended to be examined beside the original texts, were probably made around 1917, when Pound was writing the "Langue d'Oc" sequence. Pound now perceives something in the original he had missed before, "a clear sound with staccato."[35] Compare the "Canzone: Of Incense," quoted above, with Pound's translation of the poem on which it was modelled, "Doutz brais e critz":

Sweet cries and cracks
and lays and chants inflected
By auzels who, in their Latin belikes,
Chirm each to each, even as you and I
Pipe toward those girls on whom our thoughts attract;
Are but more cause that I, whose overweening
Search is toward the Noblest, set in cluster
Lines where no words pull wry, no rhymes break gauges.

Stuart Y. MacDougal, in Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition, comments correctly that Pound's diction here has benefitted from his reading of early translators, particularly Gavin Douglas and Arthur Golding.[36] But the changed perception of melopoeia is at least as important, and could have resulted from rehearing the original. In The Spirit of Romance, Pound had seen in "L'aura amara" only the mimetic onomatopoeia, and disturbed by Professor Ker's objections, had apologized lamely that though "letz, becs, mutz are, it is true, 'shaggy' rhyme words," still, "if the ear is to carry seventeen rhymes at once, some of them must be acute sounds."[37] In the later essay, Pound welcomes the clear, staccato sounds for themselves. The extraordinary onomatopoeia obscures Pound's chief interest in the translation, to break with the habitual legato of earlier English verse.

Another sign of this break appears in two versions of Arnaut's "Autet e bas," the first printed in the New Age, January 1912, where Pound observed that in this canso,

> you will, if you try it in sing-song, notice that the short lines rhyming in "uce" break the rhythms of the long lines and sing themselves to the bird note itself.
>
> "Mas pel us
> Estauc clus."
>
> The sound of the original is a little more clear and staccato than that of the words I have been able to find in English
>
> Now high and low where leaves are new,
> The flower 's i-comen on the bough,
> And no throat or beak is muted,
> But each bird his song unwasted
> Letteth loose,
> Singeth spruce;
> Joy for them and spring would set
> Song on me, but Love assaileth
> Me and sets my words a-dancing.

Pound's revisions for the later essay invent a more "staccato" diction:

> Now high and low, where leaves renew,
> Come buds on bough and spalliard pleach
> And no beak or throat is muted;
> Auzel each in tune contrasted
> Letteth loose
> Wriblis spruce.
> Joy for them and spring would set
> Song on me, but Love assaileth
> Me and sets my words t'his dancing.[38]

Accompanying Pound's break from "sentimental musicality" is a perception that words written for music must not sound too rich in themselves. That this was impressed on him by Ford Madox Ford is suggested by Pound's June 1914 review of Ford's poetry:

> It is true that since Dante's day--and indeed his day and Casella's saw a rebeginning of it--"music and poetry" have drifted apart, and we have had a third thing which is called "word music," I mean we have poems which are read or even, in a fashion, intoned, and are "musical" in some sort of complete or inclusive sense that makes it impossible or inadvisable to "set them to music." I mean obviously such poems as the First Chorus of "Atlanta" or many of Mr. Yeats' lyrics.[39]

Pound criticised Yeats for his limited range of melopoeia:

> Yeats himself in his early work produced marvellous rhythmic effects "legato," verse, that is, very fine to murmur and that may be understood if whispered in a drawing-room, even though the better readers may gradually pull the words out of shape (by excessive lengthening of vowel sounds).
>
> The musical terms "staccato" and "legato" apply to verse. The common verse of Britain from 1890 to 1910 was a horrible agglomerate compost, not minted, most of it not even baked, all legato, a doughy mess of third-hand Keats, Wordsworth, heaven knows what, fourth-hand Elizabethan sonority blunted, half-melted, lumpy. The Elizabethan "iambic" verse was largely made to bawl in theatres.[40]

This comment occurs during a discussion of Binyon's Dante: "melodious smoothness is not the characteristic of Dante's verse," he says, praising Binyon's avoidance of lulling melopoeia, his ability to "distinguish muddy from clear."[41] Ford's influence, usually connected with "the prose tradition" in verse, with image and prose word order, also includes the notion that melopoeia, in order to express the emotion of the image rhythmically, must be freed not only from regular metres but also from preconceptions of of self-contained word-music.

Once this is realized, the Browning strain in Pound no longer seems at odds with his yearning for melopoeia. Browning, no longer the "Old Hippety-hop o' the accents" of A Lume Spento,[42] valuable only for his density of thought and his skill at projecting personae, becomes a positive model of melopoeia, "clear" and "staccato," especially in his Sordello: "There is here a certain lucidity of sound that I think you will find with difficulty elsewhere in English." "Clarity" and "lucidity" are qualities not often ascribed to Sordello, but Pound uses these words with reference to the zoned sounds of Browning's melopoeia:

And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them; constant at eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space; and awe
Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed. . . .

"The author," says Pound (perhaps thinking of his own efforts) "is not hunting about for large high-sounding words, there is a very great variety in the rhyme but the reader runs on unaware. Again as is the case of Golding, the reader must read it as prose, pausing for the sense and not hammering the line-terminations."[43] So too the wrenching enjambements in the Arnaut Daniel translations, which reminded Donald Davie of "Browning at his worst":

Disburse
Can she, and wake
Such firm delights, that I
Am hers, froth, lees,
Bigod! from toe to earring.[44]

Sense can be grasped if, and only if, one pauses for the sense rather than the line-terminations, as Pound instructs. But he has now veered from song lyric toward another direction; attaining the staccato of Arnaut, he is forced into non-lyric enjambements suitable for continuous narrative but not for song.

The sequence "Langue d'Oc" (published in 1918), plus two poems of Bertrans de Born, the "Planh for the Young English King" (1909) and "Dompna pois de me no'us cal" (1914), and a few earlier pieces not reprinted, together constitute the small group of Provençal translations which Pound offered as self-sufficient English poems. All are more satisfying than any of the works yet discussed. The "Planh for the Young English King" is in Pound's early style, adequate to its elegaic mood. The other poems, written in the midst of Pound's imagist phase, show more interest in the matter of the troubadours than in their melopoeia.

"Langue d'Oc" is a loosely arranged group of troubadour <u>cansos</u> dominated by the alba, the dawn song. There is a brief prefatory alba, followed by four poems of which the first and last are the best known Provençal albas. The enclosed two poems are different in tone and technique. The prefatory alba is, in its tiny scale, Pound at his most appealing:

When the nightingale to his mate
Sings day-long and night late
My love and I keep state
In bower,
In flower,
'Till the watchman on the tower
Cry:
"Up! Thou rascal, Rise,
I see the white
Light
And the night
Flies."

Melopoeia cannot be translated "save perhaps by divine accident, and for half a line at a time."[45] Here divine accident sustains the whole poem, and everything falls right. Making no attempt to preserve rhyme sounds or any sounds literally (not even masculine and feminine endings), Pound lets his simple rhymes stand as if effortless, even elaborating on the complex strophe of the original. And just as important, by freeing himself from a too literal attempt to preserve word sounds, Pound captures the flow of the single sentence that makes the poem. With no affectation of musicality, the lilt of this tiny song arises from the varied line length and the irregularly placed rhymes. The result is as fragile and perfect as the best Herrick.

The first of the longer poems in the group is the alba "Reis glorios" by Giraut de Bornelh, defender of trobar clar whom Pound thought "facile, diffuse, without distinction of style, without personality."[46] The canso is sung, all but the last stanza, by the watchman who guards the lovers against surprise--a role, says Pound, "which would have fitted Giraut most admirably."[47] Pound accordingly titles the poem "Compleynt of a gentleman who has been waiting outside for some time," and the tone has more of Pound than of Giraut:

O Plamatour and true celestial light,
Lord powerful, engirdled all with might,
Give my food-fellow aid in fools' despite
Who stirs not forth this night,
And day comes on.

Sst! my good fellow, art awake or sleeping?
Sleep thou no more. I see the star upleaping
That hath the dawn in keeping.
And day comes on!

Hi! Harry, hear me, for I sing aright
Sleep not thou now, I hear the bird in flight
That plaineth of the going of the night,
And day comes on. . . .

The mixture of Giraut's high style with Pound's conversational tone works well. The functional archaisms fall comfortably into place. Even the odd "Plasmatour" (Old French for "Creator"), and later the phrase "with her venust and noblest" (from Catullus's venustus), have perhaps enough aural associations in English to satisfy. Giraut's song is balanced by the last poem in the group, the anonymous alba "en un vergier sotz fueilla d'albespi," which Pound considered the finest example of the genre in Provençal.[48] Pound's translation repeats the refrain of "Reis glorios" as well as the coinages "Plasmatour" and "venust," to round out the group symmetrically.

The enclosed poems, however, reveal a Pound who has learned from his imagist experience. There are two cansos not before translated, "Ab lo dolchor" by the first troubadour Guilhem de Peitieus, and "Quant l'aura doussa s'amarzis" by Cerclamon. As in the earlier troubadour monologues, Pound is most interested here in the dramatic projection of character. Cercamon, in fact, Pound thought "insouciant in cadence,"[49] and neither canso is technically remarkable in any way. In "Avril," Pound is interested in the lordly, off-hand sexual manner of Guilhem de Peitieus, a subject to which he returned in Canto VI; Pound described him as "satyric--the 'leer' can be his, quite correctly." The first two stanzas reduce conventional images of spring and sexual awakening to flat statement:

> When the springtime is sweet
> And the birds repeat
> Their new song in the leaves.
> 'Tis meet
> A man go where he will.
>
> But from where my heart is set
> No message I get;
> My heart all wakes and grieves;
> Defeat
> Or luck, I must have my fill

The paraphrase is accurate enough, but Pound gives the lines a new, perfunctory quality. Guilhem's four-beat lines run unexceptionably, with neatly turned rhymes. Pound has compressed, removed syntactic padding as if to get over the preliminaries as quickly as possible; his lines are curt, his stanza shorter by one line, giving the "turn" an elliptical feeling with the monometer line. These first stanzas introduce a pattern; but the third, introducing less conventional matter, is stretched to accommodate it:

> Our love comes out
> Like the branch that turns about
> On the top of the hawthorne,
> With frost and hail at night
> Suffers despite
> 'Till the sun come, and the green leaf on the bough.

The image is given room to expand into its precision, while the rhythm of the stanza relaxes into genuine lyricism. From this stanza no line in the poem is rhythmically identical to any other. The last line of this stanza unfolds in luxuriance that suffices without rhyme, with mere assonance. The last stanzas, while preserving a relationship to the opening pattern, continue in through-composed rhythmic invention:

> I remember the young day
> When we set strife away
> And she gave me such gesning,
> Her love and her ring:
> God grant I die not by any man's stroke
> 'Till I have my hand 'neath her cloak.
>
> I care not for their clamour
> Who have come between me and my charmer,
> For I know how words run loose,
> Big talk and little use.
> Spoilers of pleasure,
> We take their measure.

"Clamour" and "charmer," Pound comments in a long, important letter to Felix Schelling, "are not intended to be an impression of rhyme, but of syzogy such as one finds in Arnaut's stanzas without internal rhyme: 'comba,' 'trembla,' 'pona' followed in that strophe by rhyme in 'oigna.' Or the '-*iers*' '-*ors* sequence."[50] Pound, not tied by imitation, freely applies what he has learned from Arnaut to Guilhem. But most striking is the rhythmic freedom. Each line creates its own rhythmic feeling--the casual "When we set strife away," the thumping "'Till I have my hand 'neath her cloak," the mocking dismissal of the last three verses. Guilhem is made an audible voice from the past.

Pound's "Descant on a Theme by Cerclamon," which he thought the best of these poems, is his freest treatment of the original text. He paraphrases loosely, compresses or ignores lines, shifts stanzas about, translates one stanza twice using different words. He establishes no stanzaic pattern of his own. This poem, which seems to me less pleasing than "Avril" only because Cerclamon's voice is not as distinctive as Guilhem's, is more adventurously irregular. Indeed, Pound writes to Schelling of his "free verse translation and adaptations": "The charm and lyricism may be gone, but I think you were wrong about the 'music and ease' (try 'em aloud). . . . However, you are right in not finding the 'Langue d'Oc' satisfactory. (Save perhaps the "Descant"? On Cerclamon.)"[51] Pound's distinction apparently equates "lyricism" with the regular metres and rhymes of the originals, and perhaps with the sentimental musicality of his earlier efforts, while he has found a new meaning for "music" in verse. In the two central poems of "Langue d'Oc" Pound has given up the ideal of reproducing Provençal melopoeia in English, and he invents rather a word-music adequate to the new English poem.

Pound has moved beyond mere variations of line-length. Each line is a unique entity in itself, in "absolute rhythm." He approaches here the deceptive "regularity" of _Mauberley_, even the sinuosity of his own _vers libre_. In later translations, the _Confucian Odes_ for example, Pound seems governed by a system of priorities under which melopoeia may be subordinated. Thus he advises Louis Untermeyer in 1930 not to bother with anything but the meaning in his translations of Heine:

> Where the poems have been set to music you are right to keep every syllable (I hope the b--y singers are duly grateful), but for those that remain I don't see that there is much point bothering with it. ANY tightening up of phrase being worth any possible preservation of jingle.[52]

In Heine, remarkable to Pound mainly for his "logopoeia," melopoeia becomes important only in true song lyrics; but there every syllable must be weighed and measured. Pound perhaps never wrote a conventionally singable lyric. But his study of the troubadours' art of song contributed importantly to his perception of melopoeia and absolute rhythm.

NOTES

[1]Noel Stock, _Poet in Exile_ (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 97-8.

[2]Stuart Y. McDougal, _Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition_ (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 114. Other periodical literature includes Leonard Casper, "Apprenticed in Provence," _Poetry_, 81 (Dec. 1952), 203-11; Alexander H. Schultz, "Pound as Provençalist," _Romance Notes_, 3 (1962), 58-63; John Hummel, "The Provençal Translations," _Texas Quarterly_, 10 (1967), 47-51; Mark Turner, "Pound and Provence," _Occident_, 7 (1973), 54-63.

[3]_ABC of Reading_ (1934; New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 55.

[4]_Literary Essays of Ezra Pound_, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), p. 215.

[5]_Ibid._, p. 127

[6]_Ibid._

[7]_Ibid._, p. 168

[8]_Ibid._, p. 5.

[9]_Ibid._, p. 110; _Spirit of Romance_ (1910; New York: New Directions, 1953), p. 38

[10] Spirit of Romance, p. 22.

[11] Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony (1924; rev. ed. of 1927 rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1968), p. 123.

[12] Ibid., p. 47.

[13] Wilfrid Mellers, Caliban Revisited: Renewal in Twentiety-Century Music (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 10-11.

[14] Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 85.

[15] Literary Essays, p. 206

[16] Ibid., p. 170.

[17] Spirit of Romance, p. 38; Literary Essays, p. 116.

[18] Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor (New York: Oxford, 1964), p. 46.

[19] Spirit of Romance, p. 160.

[20] Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 189.

[21] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957). p. 87.

[22] W. P. Ker, "Dante, Guido Guinizelli and Arnaut Daniel," Modern Language Review, 4 (1909), pp. 145-52; cf. Spirit of Romance, pp. 22-3; Sir Maurice Bowra, "Dante and Arnaut Daniel," Speculum, 27 (1952), p. 474.

[23] The Early Poetry of Ezra Pound (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 126.

[24] Literary Essays, p. 115.

[25] Ibid., p. 206

[26] Ibid.

[27] The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, 1950), p. 179.

[28] Literary Essays, p. 169

[29] The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade (London: Hart-Davis,

1954), p. 354. Pound too remarked that Arnaut's lyrics "often required close study in print," and that the clauses of Guinizelli "could only have been set down by a man accustomed not so much to hear poetry as to read it, one would say, in Latin;" see Spirit of Roamnce, pp. 113 and 107.

[30] Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 179

[31] Literary Essays, p. 92

[32] Selected Poems, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, rev. ed., 1948). Eliot's introduction calls Pound's pre-Cantos work "a text-book of modern versification."

[33] Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 179.

[34] ABC of Reading, p. 65

[35] Literary Essays, p. 114.

[36] McDougal, p. 114.

[37] Spirit of Romance, p. 30

[38] "Arnaut Daniel: Canzoni of His Middle Period," New Age, 10 (11 January 1912), pp. 249-51; and Literary Essays, p. 124.

[39] Literary Essays, p. 376.

[40] Ibid., p. 205

[41] Ibid., pp. 203 and 205.

[42] "Mesmerism," retained in the 1926 Personae.

[43] ABC of Reading, p. 191.

[44] Literary Essays, p. 128.

[45] Ibid., p. 25. The other poems in this group are "Belangal Alba" (May 1905), rpt, in Charles Norman, Ezra Pound, 2d ed. (New York: Minverva Press, 1969), p. 12; "From Syria," in Personae (London: E. Matthews, 1909); and "Alba Innominata," in Exultations (London: E. Matthews, 1909).

[46] Spirit of Romance, p. 49.

[47] Ibid., p. 51.

[48] Ibid., p. 41. Early printings of "Langue d'Oc" include Pound's version of Arnaut Daniel's "Sols sui qui sai lo sobrafan quem sortz" as the

fifth of the sequence; this text may now be found in Ezra Pound: Translations (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 179.

[49]Letters of Ezra Pound, p. 181.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., p. 127

[52]E.P. to L.U.: Nine Letters Written to Louis Untermeyer by Ezra Pound, ed. J. A. Robbins (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1963), p. 20.

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STEVENS' "THE EMPEROR OF ICE-CREAM" AND EMERSON'S "THE POET"

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There are many different interpretations of "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," but all agree that the poem is ironic and ambiguous, including Stevens' statement in response to a query about it.[1] Critics have approached the poem in two ways: by perceiving the form of its words and knowing their meaning (the dictum of R. P. Blackmur) or by regarding it in the context of other poems by Stevens.[2] The poem has been so explored and discussion has evidently played itself out. My question is whether these are the only approaches to the poem. That is, are the words and poetic context the only resources by which one hopes to understand and appreciate this perplexing poem? I think not. Another valid, useful approach lies in discerning its literary source.

Richard Ellmann has observed that Stevens' early poems are often concerned with "rebuking others for erroneous ideas of death,"[3] which leads me to infer that the poems of Harmonium may be understood in relation to other sources. If we may assume that the poems often engage in a dialectic, it is obviously helpful to know who Stevens is arguing against, so that we may better see how he conceives his response. The source of a poem may, therefore, illuminate its meaning, and it is to this area of critical inquiry I should like to return.

The role of the poet in a non-Romantic age is a recurrent theme in Stevens' poetry. Materialism has diminished the modern poet's heritage of Transcendental idealism and denied its claims of the visionary power of the imagination. "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" asserts the fact of such a materialism; it reassesses the function of the post-Romantic poet, once