

ON *IN MEMORY OF YOUR OCCULT CONVOLUTIONS*

Richard Parker

*In Memory of Your Occult Convolutions*¹

¹ Keston Sutherland's 'In Memory of Your Occult Convolutions' was written for, and delivered at, a poetry reading organised to coincide with the 24th Ezra Pound Conference, London, July 5-9, 2011. The audience was predominantly made up of Pound scholars from around the world. The poem is constructed from excerpts from essays by Ezra Pound that deal with the relation of pedagogy to literature; 'How to Read' (1929), 'The Serious Artist' (1913), 'The Teacher's Mission' (1934) and 'The Constant Preaching to the Mob' (1916). They are all collected, consecutively, in T.S. Eliot's edition of the *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (1954) [hereafter *LE*]. Further extracts are taken from the poems 'Fratres Minores' (1914) and *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1919), as well as Pound's early critical work *The Spirit of Romance* (1910).

The 'Occult Convolutions' of the title are taken from section 24 (of the 1892 version) of Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself'.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread
of my own body, or any part of it,
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my
life!
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of
guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!
Sun so generous it shall be you!
Vapors lighting and shading my face, it shall be you!
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be
you!
Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge in
my winding paths, it shall be you!
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever
touch'd, it shall be you. [*The Complete Poems*, pp. 87-88.]

Low-brow reader,² it shall be you;³ those who try to make a bog, a marasmus, a great putridity in place of a sane and active

This is a somewhat reversed Whitman, exchanging his expansive exhortation to address the internal workings of his own body – the ‘one thing’ he will worship ‘more than another’ is made up of the many elements of his physical self, culminating in his genitals in a state of arousal, and all addressed in the second person. While the classical Whitman is famously democratic, a poet that works outwards from the individual towards the edges of the continent and beyond it, here he temporarily reverses this dynamic, engendering an onanistic feedback loop. Through the sex-stuff of ‘milky stream pale strippings’, ‘Root of wash’d sweet-flag’ and ‘guarded duplicate eggs’ Whitman folds Manifest Destiny, the American man, not-yet-Americans and the ‘general reader’ into a hermetic syllogism, and seals them up there.

We might also, at the beginning of this reading, ask ‘whose convolutions?’ In ‘Song of Myself’ they are ascribed to Whitman’s brain; ‘My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!’ Whitman’s thought processes are hidden, occulted, from even his own understanding; they are the buried inspirations that erupt in his singular poetics, though I guess they could also be the unspoken, unspeakable, sexual fantasies that push Whitman on to climax. But the convolutions are not only these things and not only Whitman’s. That the coming work will be made up of decontextualized–occulted?–extracts from Pound’s essays suggests we’re at least partly remembering Pound’s thought here, and we might think of the scholars assembled at the poem’s first reading at the Pound Conference; the work gained a discernible *frisson* when read, in all its second-person spleen, to a group of readers and writers so professedly concerned with Pound’s reading and writing. And they must be all readers’ convolutions, to be memorialised with that capitalised ‘Your’ and, following Whitman, American man as representative of all the peoples of the world, or of that ‘Low-brow reader’ with which Sutherland begins.

² The collage/quotation method that Sutherland uses in his poem has two somewhat contradictory Poundian provenances. The first of these is that of the Ideogram or the gist; to reduce a writer’s works down to the bare bones of single, pithy, representative and affecting line may very well be seen to be derived from the method outlined by Pound in ‘The Teacher’s Mission’ as ‘the examination

and juxtaposition of particular specimens—e.g. particular works, passages of literature’. [LE, p. 61.] The gist would provide Pound’s primary method throughout *The Cantos* and in much of his mature prose, with particular effect in *ABC of Reading* (1934)—an expansion of ‘How to Read’—and *Guide to Kulchur* (1938).

‘How to Read’, however, also suggests another method. There Pound boasts that ‘for two years, we ran fortnightly in the *Egoist*, the sort of fool-column that the French call a *sottisier*, needing nothing for it but quotations from the *Times Literary Supplement*. Two issues of the *Supplement* yielding, easily, one page of the *Egoist*.’ [LE, p. 17.] K.K. Ruthven writes that the *Egoist* compilations ‘were reproduced on the assumption that some statements are so self-evidently stupid that refutation is unnecessary because all you need to do is quote them.’ [*Ezra Pound as Literary Critic*, p. 137.] The *TLS* would be allowed to speak for itself in all its idiocy—and Sutherland, with ‘In Memory of Your Occult Convolutions’ seems to let Pound’s own words do something similar. In *Stupefaction* Sutherland compares Pound’s poetic and critical writings with ‘a comprehensive theoretical account of stupefaction’, celebrating the fact that the poet’s works ‘everywhere project, mock and vilify the halfwit incapable of being bucked up by beauty, hearing the subtle measure of Pound’s verse, or correctly despising Carlo Dolci, as the perennial “Mr. Buggins” cannot.’ [*Stupefaction*, p. 5] The examples that Sutherland quotes here are extracted from Pound’s excoriation in *ABC of Reading*, [p. 26] in a manner that is close to the ‘In Memory of Your Occult Convolutions’ strategy, with context removed and explanation relegated to a footnote. Sutherland seems to be celebrating the wondrous detachable specificity of Pound’s critical methods here; methods that are somehow both hermetic (‘occult involutions’ perhaps) and yet primarily didactic and directed outwards accordingly.

While Sutherland displays a clear relish for Pound’s methods and rhetoric, there is nonetheless something unsatisfying about the *sottisier* as a literary method. Robert Duncan notes a rhetorical devaluing of language in Pound’s criticism and poetry:

[H]is persuasion was against persuasion. It is characteristic of Pound’s nature in saying, of his river of speech, a currency he has in the common sense where it is most disturbed and disturbing, that words that come up in his contentions—

“abstraction,” “rhetoric,” “jew,” or “shit,”—appear deprived of their good sense. “Rhetoric” became a term of derogation in his criticism, just as in *The Cantos* his great river of voices began, sweeping all conflicts up into the persuasion of its Heracleitean flux, having mastery through its triumphant rhetoric. The “one image in a lifetime,” defined “in an instant of time,” in the life-flow of time is no longer discrete and unique but leads to and inherits depths from other times and places. In each instant of time, the tide of its river is impeded. [*The H.D. Book*, p. 56.]

The aspects of Sutherland’s project that conform to the *sottisier* method communicate a similar perception about Pound; such contextless gisting, while pointing up the American’s baroque mastery of the insult, also serves to emphasise a deficiency in Pound’s method, revealing his ‘occult convolutions’ as limitingly rhetorical. More of a closing down of thought than a careful teasing out of possibilities. Gilles Deleuze dismisses the *sottisier* as an ‘especially atrocious pseudo-literary genre’, [*Difference and Repetition*, p. 151.] thus damning both compiler and compiled. Those *TLS* idiocies are indeed idiotic, but Pound is also a terrible pseud for compiling them for the *Egoist* coterie—and Sutherland must be the worst of them all for forking the dung once again so unashamedly in this poem. Of course Sutherland is aware of the pretence in his actions, and just as Whitman’s celebration in ‘Song of Myself’ turns inward, so Sutherland generously admits his own pomposity to his critique.

Sutherland’s quarrying of Pound’s polemic insists, then, on another function of that poet’s Ideogrammic method; to the constructive, educative function a critical, destructive function is added, *The Egoist’s* version of ‘Pseud’s Corner’. The first method, the *echt* gist, in which, as Hugh Kenner describes it, ‘[f]ragments of a fragment grow into radiant gists’ [*The Pound Era*, p. 68.], disseminates the essence of the author through a kind of literary homeopathy, while the second exposes stupidity and emptiness by exaggerating those qualities through the act of collage.

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Sutherland’s ideogrammic *sottisier* begins with a selection of quotations drawn from Pound’s ‘How to Read’, an essay first

ebullience, from sheer simian and pig-like stupidity;⁴ half-knowing and half-thinking critics with one barrel of sawdust to each half-bunch of grapes;⁵ out-weariers of Apollo continuing in Martian

published in the 'Books' section of the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1929—a venue that offered Pound a singular opportunity to address a large and various readership. Pound responded with an article that approached his topic with great vigour and little compromise to the *Tribune's* readership.

We begin close to the outset of the essay; the 'low-brow reader' can be traced to Pound's attempt '[t]o tranquillize the low-brow reader, let me say at once that I do not wish to muddle him by making him read more books, but to allow him to read fewer with greater result.' [*LE*, p. 16.] This comes in the midst of an argument in which the academy is found guilty for the faults in reading habits of the contemporary educated reader. Such readers suffer from 'an error still being propagated, consciously or unconsciously, by a number of educators, from laziness, from habits, or from natural cussedness.' [*LE*, p. 16.]

³ Sutherland's injunctive epistrophe, 'it shall be you', is, like his poem's title, drawn from section 24 of 'Song of Myself'. Here, through the embedding of this inclusive refrain in the midst of Pound's exacting rhetoric, the conventional understanding of Whitman's expansive democracy is retooled into something more coercive; Michael Kindellan describes Whitman's epistrophic method here as 'very controlled and controlling'. [*Credible Practices: Whitman's Candour, Pound's Sincerity, Olson's Literalism* (unpublished D.Phil. dissertation), p. 53.] Kindellan's suspicion is proved by Sutherland's exploded version of autocratic Whitmanism here; with Whitman's exhortation revealed as instruction.

⁴ 'How to Read': 'They try to make a bog, a marasmus, a great putridity in place of a sane and active ebullience. And they do this from sheer simian and pig-like stupidity, and from their failure to understand the function of letters.' [*LE*, p. 21.]

⁵ 'How to Read': 'In introducing a person to literature one would do well to have him examine works where language is efficiently used; to devise a system for getting directly and expeditiously at such works, despite the smokescreens erected by half-knowing and half-thinking critics. To get at them, despite the mass of dead matter that these people have heaped up and conserved round

generalities,⁶ it shall be you; all those with minds still hovering above their testicles;⁷ less determinate sorts of people who comprise the periphery;⁸ the diluters whose produce is of low

about them in the proportion: one barrel of sawdust to each half-bunch of grapes.’ [*LE*, p. 23.]

⁶ *Homage To Sextus Propertius*, I (1919): ‘Out-weariers of Apollo will, as we know, continue their Martian generalities.’ [*Poems & Translations*, p. 527.] Sean Pryor has demonstrated the importance of the Pound of *Propertius* to Sutherland’s Poundianism (see ‘Some Thoughts on Refrigeration’ in the forthcoming collection *Ezra Pound and Contemporary British Poetry*).

⁷ ‘Fratres Minores’ (1914), [*Poems & Translations*, p. 572]:

With minds still hovering above their testicles
 Certain poets here and in France
 Still sigh over established and natural fact
 Long since fully discussed by Ovid.
 They howl. They complain in delicate and exhausted metres
 That the twitching of three abdominal nerves
 Is incapable of producing a lasting Nirvana.

This poem first appeared in the first number of *BLAST* with its first and final two lines redacted. In his essay ‘Wrong Poetry’ Sutherland makes reference to ‘Fratres Minores’, writing that ‘for the poet who is just a man ambitious of the fame of being what he is means a successful poet, a poet who is right, one of Pound’s still sighing but comfortable remunerated “Fratres Minores”, then it is better (meaning that you are really a poet) not to know yourself as actual. Truly being wrong to the point of perdition is a prophylactic against transcendence.’ [*Stupefaction*, p. 136.]

⁸ ‘How to Read’:

Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.

When we set about examining it we find that this charging has been done by several clearly definable sorts of people, and by a periphery of less determinate sorts. [*LE*, p. 23.]

The extracts up to note 12 are taken from Pound’s list of these contributors to literature.

intensity, some flabbier variant, some diffuseness in the wake of the valid;⁹ those who add but some slight personal flavour, some minor variant of a mode, without affecting the main course of the story;¹⁰ those who at their faintest do not exist,¹¹ it shall be you; the starters of crazes whose wave of fashion flows over writing for a few centuries or a few decades, only then to subside, leaving things as they were,¹² it shall be you; the communicators of known maladies, specimens for the good physician¹³ or neuropsychiatric

⁹ 'How to Read': '(c) *The diluters*, these who follow either the inventors or the "great writers," and who produce something of lower intensity, some flabbier variant, some diffuseness or tumidity in the wake of the valid.' [LE, p. 23.]

¹⁰ 'How to Read'; '(d) (And this class produces the great bulk of all writing.) The men who do more or less good work in the more or less good style of a period. of these the delightful anthologies, the song books, are full, and choice among them is the matter of taste, for you prefer Wyatt to Donne, Donne to Herrick, Drummond of Hawthornden to Browne, in response to some purely personal sympathy, these people add but some slight personal flavour, some minor variant of a mode, without affecting the main course of the story.' [LE, p. 23.]

¹¹ 'How to Read': 'At their faintest "*Ils n'existent pas, leur ambiance leur confert une existence.*" They do not exist: their ambience confers existence upon them. When they are most prolific they produce dubious cases like Virgil and Petrarch, who probably pass, among the less exigent, for colossi.' LE, p. 24. The French quote, '*Ils n'existent pas, leur ambiance leur confert une existence*' can also be found in Canto 77 [*The Cantos*, p. 485] and in *ABC of Reading*. Terrell does not identify its source and translates it as 'They don't exist, their surroundings confer an existence upon them.' [*A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p. 410.]

¹² 'How to Read': '(f) And there is a supplementary or sixth class of writers, the starters of crazes, the ossianic McPhersons, the Gongoras whose wave of fashion flows over writing for a few centuries or a few decades, and then subsides, leaving things as they were.' [LE, p. 24.]

¹³ 'How to Read': 'The good physician will recognize a known malady, even if the manifestation be superficially different.' [LE, p. 24.]

aristocrat;¹⁴ those who prolong the use of demoded terminology;¹⁵ those who continue dangling in mid-chaos emitting the most imbecile estimates that vitiate their whole lifetime's production;¹⁶ those who acquire what is acquirable without having the root,¹⁷ it shall be you; conflaters of poetry with 'lofty and flowery language',¹⁸ it shall be you; those who cannot follow the method of annihilating imbecility employed by Voltaire, Bayle, and Lorenzo Valla,¹⁹ it shall be you; the floribund;²⁰ those who lick off the page

¹⁴ Unidentified.

¹⁵ 'How to Read': 'Bad critics have prolonged the use of demoded terminology, usually a terminology originally invented to describe what had been done before 300 B.C., and to describe it in a rather exterior fashion.' [*LE*, p. 25.]

¹⁶ 'How to Read': 'There are, on the other hand, a few books that I still keep on my desk, and a great number that I shall never open again. But the books that a man needs to know in order to "get his bearings," in order to have a sound judgement of any bit of writing that may come before him, are very few. The list is so short, indeed, that one wonders that people, professional writers in particular, are willing to leave them ignored and to continue dangling in mid-chaos emitting the most imbecile estimates, and often vitiating their whole lifetime's production.' *LE*, p. 27.

¹⁷ 'How to Read': 'I mean that Horace is the perfect example of a man who acquired all that is acquirable, without having the root.' [*LE*, p. 28.]

¹⁸ 'How to Read': 'The "language" had not been heard on the London stage, but it had been heard in the Italian law courts, etc.; there were local attempts, all over Europe, to teach the public (in Spain, Italy, England) Latin diction. "Poetry" was considered to be (as it still is considered by a great number of drivelling imbeciles) synonymous with "lofty and flowery language."' [*LE*, p. 29.]

¹⁹ 'How to Read': 'Before Stendhal there is probably nothing in prose that does not also exist in verse or that can't be done by verse just as well as by prose. Even the method of annihilating imbecility employed by Voltaire, Bayle, and Lorenzo Valla can be managed quite as well in rhymed couplets.' [*LE*, p. 31.]

²⁰ 'How to Read'? 'To put it perhaps more strongly, he will learn more about the art of charging words from Flaubert than he will from the floribund sixteenth-century dramatists.' [*LE*, p. 32.]

in rapid, half-attentive skim-over;²¹ the half-civilized and barbarous and those who never have shed barbarism²² it shall be you; shaggy and uncouth marginalians²³ it shall be you; those who are wholly muddled with accessories;²⁴ those who cannot spot the best painting or who are absorbed in idle consternation at the defects of the tertiary painter;²⁵ she who, content with her ignorance, simply admits that her particular mind is of less importance than her kidneys or her automobile,²⁶ it shall be you; those who are blind to

²¹ 'How to Read': 'The art of popular success lies simply in never putting more on any one page than the most ordinary reader can lick off it in his normally rapid, half-attentive skim-over.' [*LE*, p. 32.]

²² The next four extracts from 'How to Read' are taken from the 'England' section, offering the de-particularised gist of Pound's (already chronically curtailed) reading of the English literary canon. 'How to Read', [*LE*, p. 35.]:

It is the natural spreading ripple that moves from the civilized Mediterranean centre out through the half-civilized and into the barbarous peoples.

The Britons never have shed barbarism; they are proud to tell you that Tacitus said the last word about Germans.

²³ 'How to Read': 'The men who tried to civilize these shaggy and uncouth marginalians by bringing them news of civilization have left a certain number of translations that are better reading today than are the works of the ignorant islanders who were too proud to translate.' [*LE*, p. 35.]

²⁴ 'How to Read': 'Chapman and Pope have left Iliads that are of interest to specialists; so far as I know, the only translation of Homer that one can read with continued pleasure is in early French by Hugues Salel; he, at least, was intent on telling the story, and not wholly muddled with accessories.' [*LE*, p. 35.],

²⁵ 'How to Read': 'It is one thing to be able to spot the best painting and quite another and far less vital thing to know just where some secondary or tertiary painter learned certain defects.' [*LE*, p. 36.]

²⁶ 'How to Read': 'The writer or reader who is content with such ignorance simply admits that his particular mind is of less importance than his kidneys or his automobile.' [*LE*, p. 36.]

some part of the spectrum;²⁷ those who are clumsy at languages;²⁸ those who use vague general terms;²⁹ those who ascribe ridiculous values to works of secondary intensity;³⁰ those who neglect to omit all study of monistic totemism and voodoo;³¹ those who treat the ostrich and the polar bear in the same fashion, universalists

²⁷ ‘How to Read’: ‘The man who does not know the Italian of the duocento and trecento has in him a painful lacuna, not necessarily painful to himself, but there are simply certain things he don’t know, and can’t; it is as if he were blind to some part of the spectrum.’ [*LE*, p. 37.]

²⁸ ‘How to Read’: ‘Another point miscomprehended by people who are clumsy at languages is that one does not need to learn a whole language in order to understand some one or some dozen poems. It is often enough to understand thoroughly the poem, and every one of the few dozen or few hundred words that compose it.’ [*LE*, p. 37.]

²⁹ ‘How to Read’, under the heading ‘Vaccine’: ‘Do I suggest a remedy? I do. I suggest several remedies. I suggest that we throw out all critics who use vague general terms. Not merely those who use vague terms because they are too ignorant to have a meaning; but the critics who use vague terms to *conceal* their meaning, and all critics who use terms so vaguely that the reader can think he agrees with them or assents to their statements when he doesn’t.’ [*LE*, p. 37.] Pound is now moving towards the solution to the problems in reading that he has identified in the foregoing material.

³⁰ ‘How to Read’. In reference to a selected reading list that Pound terms ‘the minimum basis for a sound and liberal education in letters’: ‘This would not overburden the three- or four-year student. After this inoculation he could be “with safety exposed” to modernity or anything else in literature. I mean he wouldn’t lose his head or ascribe ridiculous values to works of secondary intensity. He would have axes of reference and, would I think, find them dependable.’ [*LE*, p. 38.]

³¹ ‘How to Read’: ‘For the purposes of general education we could omit all study of monistic totemism and voodoo for at least fifty years and study of Shakespeare for thirty on the ground that acquaintance with these subjects is already very widely diffused, and that one absorbs quite enough knowledge of them from boring circumjacent conversation.’ [*LE*, p. 38.]

undeterred by the precisions of zoology it shall be you;³² those who falsify their reports as to the nature of man, as also to their own natures, as also to the nature of their ideals of this, that or the other³³ it shall be you; those who have nothing within them differing from the contents of apes;³⁴ those who, rather than liking

³² 'It would be manifestly inequitable to treat the ostrich and the polar bear in the same fashion, granted that it is not unjust to have them pent up where you can treat them at all.' [*LE*, p. 42.] Sutherland's collage now continues from 'How to Read' into the next essay in *Literary Essays*; the far earlier 'The Serious Artist', which was first published in *The Egoist* in 1913. Sutherland's sources are adjacent only through Eliot's ordering of *Literary Essays*—the essays follow no chronological progression and are grouped thematically. By allowing his collage to proceed across this arbitrary conjunction Sutherland is following a precedent set by Pound, who orders the patchwork of the Adams Cantos according to the volume divisions of Charles Francis Adams's ten-volume edition of *The Works of John Adams* (1856), thereby eschewing the smoother chronological progression of the preceding China Cantos.

'The Serious Artist' employs the second person to greater effect than 'How to Read', feeding into the particular Poundian invective that Sutherland wishes to emphasise. It also broadens the front of attack to focus more fulsomely on the practicing artist as opposed to the ineffective educators that are the target of much of Pound's bile in 'How to Read', while the connection between medicine and aesthetics is also found here.

³³ 'The Serious Artist': 'If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, as to the nature of his ideal of this, that or the other, of god, if god exist, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, of the force with which he believes or disbelieves this, that or the other, of the degree in which he suffers or is made glad; if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the taste of his time, to the properties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies.' [*LE*, pp. 43-44.]

³⁴ 'The Serious Artist': 'We have the Victory and the Taj to witness that there was something within them differing from the contents of apes and of the other swinelike men.' [*LE*, p. 45.]

beauty, covet or make do with slither, sentimentalizing about beauty, and telling people that beauty is the proper and respectable thing;³⁵ those who seek the kind of art they don't like, who read the classics because they are told to, who aspire to good taste but do not have it, who sham before a work of art;³⁶ those who wish to be slobbered over by people with less brains than they have³⁷ it shall be you; the vulgus, genus aegrum or grovelling; shareholders in the Marconi company;³⁸ those who do not detest quackery;³⁹ those of

³⁵ 'The Serious Artist': 'Beauty in art reminds one what is worthwhile. I am not now speaking of shams. I mean beauty, not slither, not sentimentalizing about beauty, not telling people that beauty is the proper and respectable thing.' [*LE*, p. 45.] We should perhaps also think of Pound's contemporaneous collage of early essays 'A Retrospect', where he argues for a future poetry 'austere, direct, free from emotional slither.' [*LE*, p. 12.]

³⁶ 'The Serious Artist': 'Also you are a fool to seek the kind of art you don't like. You are a fool to read classics because you are told to and not because you like them. You are a fool to aspire to good taste if you haven't naturally got it. If there is one place where it is idiotic to sham that place is before a work of art' [*LE*, p. 46.] Here Pound is approaching the nub of the aesthetic militancy that Sutherland is presenting in this work. The flattening effect of Sutherland's arrangement should be noted; insults crucial to Pound's aesthetic programme such as this are presented alongside comparatively offhand sallies—the waxing and waning import they hold in their original contexts is elided, perhaps after Whitman's vertiginous levelling out of the North American continent and his mountainous sense of his corporate being in 'Song of Myself'.

³⁷ 'The Serious Artist': 'Lots of people who don't even pretend to be artists have the same desire to be slobbered over, by people with less brains than they have.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

³⁸ 'The Serious Artist': 'The serious artist is usually, or is often as far from the aegrum vulgus as is the serious scientist. Nobody has heard of the abstract mathematicians who worked out the determinants that Marconi made use of in his computations for the wireless telegraph. The public, the public so dear to the journalistic heart, is far more concerned with the shareholders in the Marconi company.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

³⁹ 'The Serious Artist': 'The very fact that many men hate the arts is of value, for we are enabled by finding out what part of the arts

defective hearing;⁴⁰ the sloppy, inaccurate and negligent;⁴¹ denizens of the fog and outer darkness⁴² it shall be you; the unserious who are the commoner brand it shall be you; those who obfuscate the lines of demarcation it shall be you;⁴³ those of insufficient intelligence to tell whether or not a person is in good health and who cannot spot the lurking disease beneath the appearance of vigour⁴⁴ it shall be you; those who endeavour conscientiously to be great but are not great⁴⁵ it shall be you; those who do not exercise perfect control, or who control only a thing

they hate, to learn something of their nature. Usually when men say they hate the arts we find that they merely detest quackery and bad artists.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

⁴⁰ 'The Serious Artist': 'In the case of a man's hating one art and not the others we may learn that he is of defective hearing or of defective intelligence. Thus an intelligent man may hate music or a good musician may detest very excellent authors.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

⁴¹ 'The Serious Artist': 'Among thinking and sentient people the bad artist is contemned as would condemn a negligent physician or a sloppy, inaccurate scientist, and the serious artist is left in peace, or even supported and encouraged.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

⁴² 'The Serious Artist': 'In the fog and the outer darkness no measures are taken to distinguish between the serious and the unserious artist.' [*LE*, p. 47.]

⁴³ 'The Serious Artist': 'The unserious artist being the commoner brand and greatly outnumbering the serious variety, and it being to the temporary and apparent advantage of the false artist to gain the rewards proper to the serious artist, it is natural that the unserious artist should do all in his power to obfuscate the lines of demarcation.' [*LE*, pp. 47-48.]

⁴⁴ 'The Serious Artist': 'An intelligent person can usually tell whether or not a person is in good health. It is none the less true that it takes a skilful physician to make certain diagnoses or to discern the lurking disease beneath the appearance of vigour.' [*LE*, p. 48.]

⁴⁵ 'The Serious Artist': 'Obviously, it is not easy to be a great poet. If it were, many more people would have done so. At no period in history has the world been free of people who have mildly desired to be great poets and not a few have endeavoured conscientiously to be such.' [*LE*, p. 48.] This paragraph marks the opening of the third section of 'The Serious Artist'; 'Emotion and Poesy'.

that has in it no energy⁴⁶ it shall be you; the mystificateurs⁴⁷ it shall be you; whoever skimps paper or screws about like Tacitus to get his thought crowded into the least possible space⁴⁸ it shall be you; he who will never communicate with the greatest possible despatch;⁴⁹ those who do not develop beyond the yeowl and the bark into the dance and the music, but keep up their yeowling and barking;⁵⁰ those whose acorn does not yield an oak;⁵¹ the admirers

⁴⁶ ‘The Serious Artist’: ‘And ‘Good writing’ is perfect control. And it is quite easy to control a thing that has in it no energy—provided that it be not too heavy and that you do not wish to make it move.’ [*LE*, p. 49.] The subtle realignment of Pound’s invective should be noted here; Sutherland exaggerates the corruscatingly negative aspects in Pound’s style even when a certain amount of moderation enters into the source text.

⁴⁷ ‘The Serious Artist’: ‘And if one does not care about being taken for a mystificateur one may as well try to give approximate answers to questions asked in good faith.’ [*LE*, p. 50.]

⁴⁸ ‘The Serious Artist’: ‘Roughly then, Good writing is writing that is perfectly controlled, the writer says just what he means. He says it with complete clarity and simplicity. He uses the smallest possible number of words. I do not mean that he skimps paper, or that he screws about like Tacitus to get his thought crowded into the least possible space.’ [*LE*, p. 50.]

⁴⁹ ‘The Serious Artist’ (continuing directly from the previous extract): ‘But, granting that two sentences are at times easier to understand than one sentence containing the double meaning, the author tries to communicate with the reader with the greatest possible despatch, save where for any one of forty reasons he does not wish to do so.’ [*LE*, p. 50.]

⁵⁰ ‘The Serious Artist’: ‘You begin with the yeowl and the bark, and you develop into the dance and into music, and into music with words, and finally into words with music, and finally into words with a vague adumbration of music, words suggestive of music, words measured, or words in a rhythm that preserves some accurate trait of the emotive impression, or of the sheer character of the fostering or parental emotion.’ [*LE*, p. 51.]

⁵¹ ‘The Serious Artist’: ‘Also the “prose”, the words and their sense must be such as fit the emotion. Or, from the other side, ideas, or fragments of ideas, the emotion and concomitant emotions of this ‘Intellectual and Emotional Complex’ (for we have come to the

of Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*; those whose lamentations jiggle to the same tune as *A little peach in the orchard grew* and who do not recover to write the fifth act of the Cenci,⁵² it shall be you; very good marksmen who however cannot shoot from a horse⁵³ it shall be you; those who poetize more or less, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three; those who do not have much mind or personality to be moved;⁵⁴ those who go in for elaboration and complication rather than swiftness and violence;⁵⁵ the gorgers on flummery and fustian;⁵⁶ contemporary versifiers with their pests

intellectual and emotional complex) must be in harmony, they must form an organism, they must be an oak sprung from an acorn.' [LE, p. 51.]

⁵² 'The Serious Artist': 'When you have words of a lament set to the rhythm and tempo of *There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town to-night* you have either an intentional burlesque or you have rotten art. Shelley's *Sensitive Plant* is one of the rottenest poems ever written, at least one of the worst ascribable to a recognized author. It jiggles to the same tune as *A little peach in the orchard grew*. Yet Shelley recovered and wrote the fifth act of the Cenci.' [LE, p. 51.]

⁵³ 'The Serious Artist': 'I dare say there are very good marksmen who just can't shoot from a horse.' [LE, p. 52.]

⁵⁴ 'The Serious Artist': 'It is true that most people poetize more or less, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. The emotions are new, and, to their possessor, interesting, and there is not much mind or personality to be moved.' [LE, p. 52.]

⁵⁵ 'The Serious Artist': 'By 'apt use', I should say it were well to understand, a swiftness, almost a violence, and certainly a vividness. This does not mean elaboration and complication.' [LE, p. 52.]

⁵⁶ 'The Serious Artist':

La poésie, avec ses comparaisons obligées, sa mythologie que ne croit pas le poète, sa dignité de style à la Louis XIV, et tout l'attirail de ses ornements appelés poétiques, est bien audessous de la prose dès qu'il s'agit de donner une idée claire et précise des mouvements du coeur; or, dans ce genre, on n'émeut que par la clarté. – *Stendhal*

And that is precisely why one employs oneself in seeking precisely the poetry that shall be without this

and abominations⁵⁷ it shall be you; those who lack technique because they do not do the thing they set out to do, who take three pages to say nothing;⁵⁸ those who have never *seen* a work of art because they are apt to want to buy the rare at one price and sell it at another;⁵⁹ those who do not acknowledge that their art, like the art of dancing in armour, is out of date and out of fashion;⁶⁰ those who do not write a poetry that can be carried as a communication between intelligent men;⁶¹ those who do not know what one means

flummery, this fustian *à la Louis XIV*, '*farcié de comme*'. [LE, p. 54.]

⁵⁷ 'The Serious Artist': 'It is precisely because of this fustian that the Parnassiads and epics of the eighteenth century and most of the present-day works of most of our contemporary versifiers are pests and abominations.' [LE, p. 54.]

⁵⁸ 'The Serious Artist': 'As the most efficient way to say nothing is to keep quiet, and as technique consists precisely in doing the thing that one sets out to do, in the most efficient manner, no man who takes three pages to say nothing can expect to be seriously considered as a technician. To take three pages to say nothing is not style, in the serious sense of that word.' [LE, p. 54.]

⁵⁹ 'The Serious Artist': 'The person possessed of connoisseurship is so apt to want to buy the rare at one price and sell it at another. I do not believe that a person with this spirit has ever *seen* a work of art.' [LE, p. 55.]

⁶⁰ 'The Serious Artist': 'As for Stendhal's stricture if we can have a poetry that comes as close as prose, *pour donner une idée claire et précise*, let us have it, '*E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso... che la mia vita per alquanti anni duri*.'... And if we cannot attain to such a poetry, noi altri poeti, for God's sake let us shut up. Let us 'Give up, go down', etcetera; let us acknowledge that our art, like the art of dancing in armour, is out of date and out of fashion.' [LE, p. 55.]

⁶¹ 'The Serious Artist' (continuing directly from the previous extract): 'Or let us go to our ignominious ends knowing that we have strained at the cords, that we have spent our strength in trying to pave the way for a new sort of poetic art—it is not a new sort but an old sort—but let us know that we have tried to make it more nearly possible for our successors to recapture this art. To write a poetry that can be carried as a communication between intelligent men.' [LE, p. 55.]

by great art, for they do not know that one means by great art something more or less proportionate to one's experience,⁶² it shall be you; those who make the grand abnegation, who refuse to say what they think, if they do think, and who quote accepted opinion, and who are vermin, treacherous to the past,⁶³ it shall be you; those who sell defective thermometers to hospitals;⁶⁴ those who are replicas of the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*; the affable, suave and moderate, all of them incapable of any twinge of conscience on account of any form of mental cowardice or any falsification of reports whatsoever;⁶⁵ those who sin against the well-being of the

⁶² 'The Serious Artist': 'It is about as useless to search for a definition of 'great art' as it is to search for a scientific definition of life. One knows fairly well what one means. One means something more or less proportionate to one's experience.' [*LE*, pp. 55-56.]

⁶³ 'The Serious Artist': 'The only really vicious criticism is the academic criticism of those who make the grand abnegation, who refuse to say what they think, if they do think, and who quote accepted opinion; these men are the vermin, their treachery to the great work of the past is as great as that of the false artist to the present.' [*LE*, p. 56.]

⁶⁴ Here Sutherland continues to the next piece collected in *LE*, 'The Teacher's Mission', published twenty-one years after 'The Serious Artist', in the *English Journal* in 1934. This piece once more returns to the injurious influence of the educator, though here the boundary between writer and preceptor is blurred. Sutherland begins his quarrying in the essay's first paragraph. 'If you saw a man selling defective thermometers to a hospital, you would consider him a particularly vile kind of cheat.' [*LE*, p. 58.] Again, the link between medical cure and aesthetic authenticity is maintained.

⁶⁵ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'I am personally would not feel myself guilty of manslaughter if by any miracle I ever had the pleasure of killing Canby or the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and their replicas, or of ordering a wholesale death and/or deportation of a great number of affable, suave, moderate men, all of them perfectly and snugly convinced of their respectability, and all incapable of any twinge of conscience on account of any form of mental cowardice or any falsification of reports whatsoever. [*LE*, p. 58.] 'Canby' is Henry Seidel Canby, professor, critic and editor, as well as chair of the editorial board of the Book of the Month Club and

nation's mind;⁶⁶ those of so humble a mind as to profess incomprehension of the criminality of lacking intellectual interests,⁶⁷ it shall be you; those whose personal vanity in reportage remains unabolished;⁶⁸ doctors who try to tell you that the fever temperature of patients from Chicago is always lower than that of sufferers from the same kind of fever in Singapore,⁶⁹ it shall be you; the magazine blokes;⁷⁰ the local practitioner who disdains to

therefore a figure of great influence on the habits of American readers. Pound also suggested that James Laughlin assassinate him. Ellery Sedgwick was the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1934.

⁶⁶ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'Is it clear to the teacher of literature that writers who falsify their registration, sin against the well-being of the nation's mind?' [*LE*, p. 58.] Sutherland is simplifying some of the (atypical) ambiguity implied in 'The Teacher's Mission' by eliminating Pound's question.

⁶⁷ 'The Teacher's Mission' (continuing directly from the previous extract): 'Is there any reader so humble of mind as to profess incomprehension of this statement?' [*LE*, p. 58.]

⁶⁸ 'The Teacher's Mission':

[T]he first step of educational reform is to proclaim the necessity of HONEST REGISTRATION, and to exercise an antiseptic intolerance of all inaccurate reports about letters—intolerance of the same sort that one would exercise about a false hospital chart or a false analysis in a hospital laboratory.

This means abolition of personal vanity in the reporting; it means abolition of this vanity, whether this writer is reporting on society at large; on the social and economic order, or on literature itself. [*LE*, pp. 58-59.]

⁶⁹ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'You would not tolerate a doctor who tried to tell you the fever temperature of patients in Chicago was always lower than that of sufferers from the same kind of fever in Singapore (unless accurate instruments registered such a difference).' [*LE*, p. 59.]

⁷⁰ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'As the press, daily, weekly, and monthly, is utterly corrupted, either from economic or personal causes, it is manifestly UP TO the teaching profession to act for themselves without waiting for the journalists and magazine blokes to assist them.' [*LE*, p. 59.]

make use of known prophylactics;⁷¹ those distinguished by mental laziness, lack of curiosity and the desire to be undisturbed, whose habit it nonetheless is to be very busy along habitual lines⁷² it shall be you; those whose erasers are in disorder;⁷³ those whose abstraction has spread like tuberculosis;⁷⁴ those who are just lumps of dead clay clogging up the system since they do not wish to distinguish the branches from the twigs⁷⁵ it shall be you; those who transmit knowledge by general statement without knowledge of particulars;⁷⁶ those who fill the student's mind with a great mass of

⁷¹ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The function of the teaching profession is to maintain the HEALTH OF THE NATIONAL MIND. As there are great specialists and medical discoverers, so there are "leading writers"; but once a discovery is made, the local practitioner is just as inexcusable as the discoverer himself if he fails to make use of known remedies and known prophylactics.' [*LE*, p. 59.]

⁷² 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The first symptom he finds will, in all probability, be mental LAZINESS, lack of curiosity, desire to be undisturbed. This is not in the least incompatible with the habit of being very BUSY along habitual lines. [*LE*, p. 59.]

⁷³ *Homage to Sextus Propertius* I: 'We have kept our erasers in order[.]' This line immediately follows the previous extract from *Sextus*, 'Out-wearers of Apollo will, as we know, continue their Martian generalities.' [*Poems & Translations*, p. 527.]

⁷⁴ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The disease of the last century and a half has been "abstraction". This has spread like tuberculosis.' [*LE*, p. 59.]

⁷⁵ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'Until the teacher wants to know all the facts, and to sort out the roots from the branches, the branches from the twigs, and to grasp the MAIN STRUCTURE of his subject, and the relative weights and importances of its parts, he is just a lump of the dead clay in the system.' [*LE*, p. 59.]

⁷⁶ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'All teaching of literature should be performed by the presentation and juxtaposition of specimens of writing and NOT by discussion of some other discussor's opinion about the general standing of a poet or author. Any teacher of biology would tell you that knowledge can NOT be transmitted by general statement without knowledge of particulars.' [*LE*, p. 60.] The direction of Pound's interest in the connection of scientific and literary professionalism during the 1930s owes much to a growing interest in the writings of biologist Louis Agassiz, originator of

prejudice and error;⁷⁷ assistants in the successive dilutions;⁷⁸ the hurried and usually incompetent; the dispersers and waterers down;⁷⁹ those who contrived to allow the idea of liberty to degenerate into mere irresponsibility and the right to be just as piffingly idiotic as the laziest sub-human, and whose exercise of almost ‘any and every’ activity has been utterly regardless of its

scientific racism and polygenist. This is a new aspect to Pound’s medicine/writing/education ideogram in ‘The Teacher’s Mission’ that is not present in ‘How to Read’ and ‘The Serious Artist’. The malaise in the academic community is ‘inexcusable AFTER the era of “Agassiz and the fish”—by which I mean now that general education is in position to profit by the parallels of biological study based on EXAMINATION and COMPARISON of particular specimens.’ [LE, p. 60.] The proximity of Pound’s invective against the academics to his racial views at this point in his career should be remembered. He writes to E.E. Cummings in October 1939 that ‘with moderation I think one <material> egg (as minimum) might well be heaved at EVERY lecturer, whether yittisch or brittisch or whoseeverbloody son in law he be. with we hope the benefit of baseball training beeforeheave whenever such “lecturer” try to git the boys over to yourup to fight for the interest on british loans, Das Leihkapital, Das WucherReich etc.’ [*The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E.E. Cummings*, p. 140.]

⁷⁷ ‘The Teacher’s Mission’: ‘By this method [the Agassiz method] of presentation and juxtaposition even a moderately ignorant teacher can transmit most of what he knows WITHOUT filling the student’s mind with a great mass of prejudice and error.’ [LE, p. 60.]

⁷⁸ ‘The Teacher’s Mission’: ‘The whole system of intercommunication via the printed page in America is now, and has been, a mere matter of successive *dilutions* of knowledge.’ [LE, p. 60.]

⁷⁹ ‘The Teacher’s Mission’: ‘When some European got tired of an idea he wrote it down, it was printed after an interval, and it was reviewed in, say, London, by a hurried and harassed reviewer, usually lazy, almost always indifferent. The London periodicals were rediluted by still more hurried and usually incompetent New York reviewers, and their “opinion” was dispersed and watered down via American trade distribution.’ [LE, p. 60.]

effect on the commonweal,⁸⁰ it shall be you; displayers of appalling, blameless simplicity;⁸¹ those who, because they do not direct the will toward the light, do not concurrently slough off laziness and prejudice;⁸² those whose demand for the facts is not inexorable,⁸³ it shall be you; the human deadwood still clogging the system; the saboteurs⁸⁴ and suppressors of the searchers for Truth, adjuncts to the pillar of infamy;⁸⁵ those who do not abandon a false idea as soon as they are made aware of its falsity, or a misstatement of fact as soon as it is corrected;⁸⁶ the treasonable and

⁸⁰ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The idea of liberty degenerated into meaning mere irresponsibility and the right to be just as piffingly idiotic as the laziest sub-human pleased, and to exercise almost "any and every" activity utterly regardless of its effect on the commonweal.' [LE, p. 60.]

⁸¹ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The simple ignorance displayed, even in the *English Journal*, is appalling, and the individuals cannot always be blamed.' [LE, p. 61.]

⁸² 'The Teacher's Mission'. In response to his notional editor's question 'What ought to be done?' Pound here introduces a series of pithy cures to the infirmity he has diagnosed, the second of which is '2. Direction of the will toward the light, with concurrent sloughing off of laziness and prejudice.' [LE, p. 61.]

⁸³ 'The Teacher's Mission': '3. An inexorable demand for the facts.' [LE, p. 61.]

⁸⁴ 'The Teacher's Mission': '5. A definite campaign against human deadwood still clogging the system. A demand either that the sabotage cease, or that the saboteurs be removed.' [LE, p. 61.]

⁸⁵ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'Such suppression of the searchers for Truth is NOT suited to the era of the New Deal, and should be posted on the pillar of infamy as a symptom of the Wilson-Harding-Coolidge-Hoover epoch.' [LE, p. 61.] Note the relative openness of Pound to the New Deal here, a contrasting position to that that he would adopt in later years; in Canto LXXXVII Pound writes of 'The total dirt that was Roosevelt' [Section: *Rock-Drill De Los Cantares* (1955). *The Cantos*, p. 584.], while in XCVII Pound plaintively enquires 'Will they get rid of the Rooseveltian dung-hill' [*Thrones de los Cantares* (1959). *The Cantos*, p. 685.]

⁸⁶ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'A man of good-will abandons a false idea as soon as he is made aware of its falsity, he abandons a misstatement of fact as soon as corrected.' [LE, p. 62.]

dastardly who may yet well be charming on the surface but whose fundamental perversion is damnable,⁸⁷ it shall be you; those who are chosen for their sycophantic talents and not for their intellectual acumen or their desire to enliven;⁸⁸ those who consider anything not from the 1890s as bumptious silliness;⁸⁹ the pretenders who prosper by preventing contemporary ideas from penetrating the Carnegie library until they have gathered a decade's mildew or two decades' mildew;⁹⁰ those who let printed inaccuracy pass unproved;⁹¹ those who do not correct their errors gladly;⁹² those who are ignorant and who therefore have no criteria,⁹³ it shall be you; those who say for the one-thousand-one-

⁸⁷ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'There are no words permitted in a polite educational bulletin that can describe the dastardliness of the American university system as we have known it. By which I don't mean that the surface hasn't been, often, charming. I mean that the *fundamental* perversion has been damnable.' [LE, p. 62.]

⁸⁸ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'Some college presidents have been chosen rather for their sycophantic talents than for their intellectual acumen or their desire to enliven and build intellectual life.' [LE, p. 62.]

⁸⁹ 'The Teacher's Mission': '[T]he London nineties were maintained in New York up to 1915. Anything else was considered as bumptious silliness.' [LE, p. 63.]

⁹⁰ 'The Teacher's Mission': '[T]he pretenders, the men who [...] set themselves up as critics and editors, still prosper, and still prevent contemporary ideas from penetrating the Carnegie library system or from reaching the teaching profession, until they have gathered a decade's mildew—or two decade's mildew.' [LE, p. 63.]

⁹¹ 'The Teacher's Mission': 'The humblest teacher in grammar school CAN CONTRIBUTE to the national education if he or she refuse to let printed inaccuracy pass unproved[.]' [LE, p. 63.]

⁹² 'The Teacher's Mission'. Pound gives two pointers as to how the above contribution might be achieved, the second of which is: '(B) By correcting his or her own errors gladly and as a matter of course, at the earliest possible moment.' [LE, p. 63.]

⁹³ Sutherland, still following Eliot's ordering of *Literary Essays*, now moves on to the next piece in the book, 'The Constant Preaching to the Mob', another early essay, first published in the June 1916 number of *Poetry*, a squib which takes umbrage with the state of American letters and the blocking of a meaningful distribution of

hundred-and-eleventh time that poetry is made to entertain;⁹⁴ those whose statements are made to curry favour with those who sit at fat sterile tables, or are made in ignorance which is charlatanry when it goes out to vend itself as sacred and impeccable knowledge;⁹⁵ those who like to be flattered into believing that the lordliest of the arts was created for their amusement;⁹⁶ you, *ut credo*, a few buckets

progressive literature and Poundian ideas. ‘There is no use talking to the ignorant about lies, for they have no criteria.’ [*LE*, p. 64.]

⁹⁴ ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’: ‘[W]e read again for the one-thousand-one-hundred-and-eleventh time that poetry is made to entertain.’ [*LE*, p. 64.] ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’ was written in response to an editorial in the March 1916 number of *Poetry* written by Alice Corbin Henderson that praised a lecture by John Masefield delivered to ‘the literary department of the Chicago Women’s Club’ [*Poetry* Vol. 7, No. 6, Mar., 1916, p. 302]. Henderson describes Masefield touching on subjects that would have readily set Pound to print:

In speaking of the beginnings of English poetry, Mr. Masefield said that it was made by a rude war-faring people for the entertainment of men-at-arms, or for men at the monks’ tables; that at the time of ‘the new learning’ the poet’s audience became divided into two classes, the lettered and the unlettered; and that in some sort the two classes had persisted until today. [*Poetry* Vol. 7, No. 6, Mar., 1916, p. 301.]

Pound quotes from and responds to this passage in ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’.

⁹⁵ ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’. Pound continues his tirade against Henderson/Masefield: ‘Either such statements are made to curry favor with other people sitting at fat sterile tables, or they are made in an ignorance which is charlatanry when it goes out to vend itself as sacred and impeccable knowledge.’ [*LE*, p. 64.]

⁹⁶ ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’: ‘Such poems [‘The Seafarer’ and ‘The Wanderer’] are not made for after-dinner speakers, nor was the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*. Still it flatters the mob to tell them that their importance is so great that the solace of lonely men, and the lordliest of the arts, was created for their amusement.’ [*LE*, p. 65.] These are the closing words of ‘The Constant Preaching to the Mob’ and present Pound at his most provocatively elitist, perhaps at his least Whitmanesque—though

of water tied up in a complicated fig leaf, whose minds are circumvolved about you like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos,⁹⁷ our author dotes forever on yourselves.⁹⁸

the implicit comparison of these poets throughout Sutherland's piece mitigates for a rethinking of this contrast.

⁹⁷ Sutherland's final excerpt from Pound returns to the beginning of the American's critical career. It is taken from *The Spirit of Romance*, a book of lectures delivered at the London Polytechnic in 1909 and published the following year. The lectures would mark Pound's last move towards academic inclusion, as well as the first steps towards his mature criticism:

We have about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germinal universe of wood alive, of stone alive. Man is—the sensitive physical part of him—a mechanism, for the purpose of our further discussion a mechanism rather like an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc. Chemically speaking, he is *ut credo*, a few buckets of water, tied up in a complicated sort of fig-leaf. As to his consciousness, the consciousness of some seems to rest, or to have its center more properly, in what the Greek psychologists called the *phantastikon*. Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos. And with certain others their consciousness is “germinal.” Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or the grain, or the blossom. [*Spirit of Romance*, p. 92.]

As well as providing a bridge between Pound's academic and anti-academic phases, *The Spirit of Romance* offers some insight into the development of Pound's scientific, materialist rhetoric from out of his abiding interest in the heightened sensations of the 1890s. The spasmodic, sexualised aestheticism of this extract reads like a spiced-up Pater, or like an Aestheticised Whitman, just the kind of thing that *BLAST*-era Pound would dismiss in 'Fratres Minores'. The image here is also, however, thoroughly modernist in its denigration of the physical self and in its concomitant comparison of the person with 'white goods' like electrical appliances, and thus somewhat a movement out of 'Song of Myself'. We also see this interest in the 'frigidaire patent' of the 1926, *Personæ* version of *Homage to Sextus Propertius* [See *Poems & Translations*, note to p. 528,

l. 28.], a connection of importance to Sutherland's *The Stats on Infinity* that has been explored by Sean Pryor. [See his essay 'Some Thoughts on Refrigeration' in the forthcoming volume *Ezra Pound and Contemporary British Poetry*.]

⁹⁸ Immediately following the verse paragraph of section 24 of 'Song of Myself', that paragraph from which the title and epistrophe of 'In Memory of Your Occult Convolutions' are drawn, Whitman continues:

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,
 Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,
 I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my
 faintest wish,
 Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the
 friendship I take again. [*The Complete Poems*, p. 88.]

By finishing with the insistence that 'our author dotes forever on yourselves' Sutherland's *sottisier* concludes with Whitman, though a Whitman reversed from myself-doting to yourself-doting.

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Richard Parker is an Assistant Professor of American Literature at the University of Gaziantep in Turkey. He is currently working on a book on American modernism in the 1950s '60s, as well as projects related to sports literature and the avant-garde, dialectical printing and Augustan animals.