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# REPRESENTATION OF OTHERNESS IN LITERARY AVANT-GARDE OF EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: DAVID BURLIUK'S AND EZRA POUND'S JAPAN

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of the dissertation is the East-West opposition and the image of Japan in the works of Ezra Pound and David Burliuk, representatives of European/American Vorticism and Russian cubo-futurism respectively. The opposition is discussed in the cultural and historical context of the early twentieth-century Russian and European avant-garde esthetics with a focus on the typological similarities and radical differences between the two literary groups.

The primary material used in the analysis consists of little-studied Japan-related materials in the oeuvre of the two authors: Pound's Noh-based dramatic works *A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel* and *Tristan* (1916, published in 1987), as well as his Japanese correspondence (published in 1987) and essays which appeared in Japanese periodicals (1939-1940), and, on the other hand, Burliuk's prose narratives and poetry written during his stay in Japan in 1920-1922 (*The Ascent to Fuji-san, Oshima, and In the Pacific Ocean*, published in the USA in 1926-1927 and never reprinted, as well as verse collections *Marusia-san* and *½ Century* published in the USA in 1925 and 1932 respectively).

The dissertation draws on Roman Jakobson's dichotomy (outlined in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances", 1954) of two opposite language modes, those of metaphor and metonymy, understood by the scholar in a broad sense as paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships structuring any semiotic system. In accordance with Jakobson's view, the dissertation discusses the Vorticist and cubo-futurist esthetic assumptions, and the representation of the East/West opposition in particular, as examples of respectively metaphoric (based on analogy) and metonymic (based on contiguity) approaches.

The analysis of Pound's and Burliuk's Japan-related texts within the frame of Jakobson's dichotomy allows foregrounding the essential difference between the Oriental projects of the two poets: while Pound builds a similarity-based East-West paradigm that challenges the familiar Western culture, Burliuk creates a contiguous background image of Japan, which legitimizes familiar cultural assumptions and essentially frames his dialogue with the West.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirjan aiheena on itä-länsi -oppositio ja Japania koskevat representaatiot eurooppalais-amerikkalaisen vorticismin edustajan Ezra Poundin ja venäläisen kubo-futurismin edustajan David Burliukin teoksissa. Tutkimuksessa käsitellään oppositiota 1900-luvun alun venäläisen ja eurooppalaisen avantgarde-estetiikan kulttuuri-historiallisessa kontekstissa keskittyen typologisiin yhtäläisyyksiin ja radikaaleihin eroihin kahden kirjallisuusryhmän välillä.

Tutkimuksen alkuperäislähteet ovat edellä mainittujen kirjailijoiden vähän huomiota saaneet Japania koskevat tekstit. Tutkin Poundin kahta japanilaiseen Noh-teatteriin perustavaa näytelmää, *A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel* ja *Tristan* vuodelta 1916 (julkaistu 1987), hänen kirjeenvaihtoaan Japanista (julkaistu 1987) sekä vuosina 1939-1940 japanilaisissa aikakauslehdissä ilmestyneitä esseitä. Burliukin teksteistä tutkin hänen Japanissa oleskelun aikana, vuosina 1920-1922, kirjoittamiaan proosakertomuksia ja runoja *The Ascent to Fuji-san, Oshima* ja *In the Pacific Ocean*, sekä runokokoelmia *Marusia-san* ja *½ Century* (kaikki julkaistu vuosien 1925-1932 aikana Yhdysvalloissa).

Väitöskirja pohjautuu Roman Jakobsonin kahtiajakoon, jonka hän esittää teoksessaan *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (1954) ja joka siis koskee kahta vastakkaista kielikuvaa - metaforaa ja metonymiaa. Jakobson tulkitsee näitä kielikuvia laajassa merkityksessä eli paradigmaattisina ja syntagmaattisina suhteina, jotka jäsentävät tai rakentavat minkä tahansa semioottisen systeemin. Tutkimus käsittelee Jakobsonin näkemyksen mukaisesti vorticismin ja kubo-futurismin esteettisiä periaatteita, ja erityisesti itä-länsi -opposition ilmenemistapoja, esimerkkeinä metaforisesta eli ennalta odottamattomaan analogiaan perustuvasta ja metonymisesta eli kulttuurisesti jo tunnustettuihin asiayhteyksiin perustuvasta lähestymistavasta.

Jakobsonin kahtiajaon soveltaminen tutkimuksellisenä menetelmänä Poundin ja Burliukin Japania koskevien tekstien analyysissä tuo esiin olennaisen eron kahden runoilijan suhteissa itään. Pound rakentaa itä-länsi -paradigmaa, joka perustuu ennakoimattomalle samankaltaisuudelle (metafora) ja joka näin haastaa perinteisen länsimaisen kulttuurin. Burliuk puolestaan luo Japani-kuvaa, joka perustuu ja oikeuttaa jo tunnustettuja kulttuurisia näkemyksiä (metonymia) ja joka jäsentää olennaisesti hänen vuoropuheluaan lännen kanssa.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	6
INTRODUCTION .....	7
1. Western rediscoveries of Japan .....	10
2. Russia: between East and West .....	22
3. Italian Futurism: Oriental dimension.....	38
4. Theoretical and methodological framework .....	43
5. Previous research and dissertation structure.....	50
CHAPTER 1. RUSSIAN FUTURISM BETWEEN EAST AND WEST .....	61
1.1. Russian Futurism: negotiating origins.....	61
1.2. Russian Futurism: Oriental background.....	66
1.3. Russian Futurism: facing the Occident .....	71
1.4. Russian Futurist manifestos and the East/West opposition.....	76
1.5. Theoretical background: Velimir Khlebnikov's "Asia" .....	82
CHAPTER 2. DAVID BURLIUK'S ORIENTAL QUEST .....	97
2.1. Background.....	97
2.2. Characters: an ideal combination .....	103
2.3. Imaginary Japan: literary contexts .....	108
2.4. Imaginary geography .....	115
2.5. Exotic paradise .....	122
2.6. Facing the reality.....	139
CHAPTER 3. VORTICISM, FENOLLOSA AND THE ORIENT.....	155
3.1. English Vorticism and the East/West opposition .....	156
3.1.1. Marinetti and English rebels.....	157
3.1.2. Vorticist geographical axes: the North, the South and the East .....	173
3.2. Pound: from Imagism to Vortex.....	192
3.3. Binyon, Whistler and the Japanese.....	204
3.4. Ernest Fenollosa and the ideogram .....	213
3.4.1. Intermediary between East and West.....	216
3.4.2. Orient: a diagnostic tool and a remedy .....	221
3.5. Pound/Fenollosa Noh concept.....	239
3.5.1. Noh: the ideal unity.....	240
3.5.2. Noh as esthetic program with social implications .....	247
CHAPTER 4. POUND'S REINVENTION OF JAPAN .....	259
4.1. De Musset, Racine and the Noh: <i>A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel</i> ..	259
4.1.1. Exact copy with alterations .....	260
4.1.2. Japan super-posed.....	266
4.2. "Japanese" troubadour: <i>Tristan</i> .....	270
4.2.1. French original and Japanese rearrangement.....	273
4.2.2. Image unity and super-position of voices .....	277
4.3. Triangle project: Japan, Italy, USA .....	290
4.3.1. Literary triangle .....	291
4.3.2. Importing and exporting Kulchur .....	310
4.3.3. Ultimate target and discouraging results.....	322
CONCLUSION .....	331
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	337

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To conclude with another Pound quote, “Amo ergo sum, and in just that proportion”.

Mikhail Oshukov

15 January, 2017

6

## INTRODUCTION

On 1 September, 1923, when the Great Kanto Earthquake, the deadliest in the history of Japan, hit Honshu and literally leveled the city of Yokohama, among the numerous victims of the earthquake there were two men, who, like many others, accidentally found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. One, Herbert Peacock, entered the Grand Hotel of Yokohama that morning to meet a friend, when the building collapsed. The other, Tamijuro Kume, died in the ruins of the Oriental Hotel, Yokohama, where he came to visit a friend before the planned departure for the US. A close friend of David Burliuk, Peacock was the poet's companion and guide in Japan; it was he who led the "father of Russian Futurism" to the top of Mount Fuji and to whom Burliuk's *Ascent to Fuji-san* was later dedicated. Tami Kume, Ezra Pound's good friend and assistant in deciphering and editing Fenollosa's manuscripts, was one of the first to teach Pound about Japan and to introduce the poet to the live art of Noh; before his death, Kume was making travel arrangements for Pound's visit to Japan, a visit that never happened. Two stories, two writers' Oriental quests, which otherwise proceeded along very different lines, came to a brief intersection that day. These two stories are the subject of my study.

My thesis focuses on the role the East-West opposition plays in the esthetics and politics of two Russian and European avant-garde movements, namely Vorticism, represented by one of its architects, Ezra Pound, and Russian Futurism, as exemplified by David Burliuk, one of the founders and key figures of the cubo-futurist group. There is no information on any direct literary contacts between the Vorticists and the Russian Futurists. The only minor direct link between Vorticism and Russia is Zinaida Vengerova's<sup>1</sup> short article with a somewhat confusing title "English Futurists" ("Английские футуристы"), published in the 1915 *Strelets* collection in Petrograd (Vengerova 1915). In the article, Vengerova introduces both Imagism and Vorticism to the Russian reader and even interviews Ezra Pound and quotes his poems in her own translation. Neither the article nor the two short poems translated by Vengerova seem to have had any significant effect either on David Burliuk or on his fellow cubo-futurists,

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<sup>1</sup> Zinaida Vengerova (1867 – 1941), a Russian literary critic and translator, who introduced works of Western nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature to the Russian reader and, on the other hand, popularized Russian authors in the West.

though<sup>2</sup>. However, even if direct contacts are absent, the two literary avant-garde groups, as I will argue, do have a number of typologically similar features, which provide a basis for comparison.

The two authors chosen for the comparative analysis, although probably incommensurate as poets, have many things in common, too. The lives of both, even if in quite different ways, illustrate the political engagement of the avant-garde art, and at the same time – the failure of these political aspirations, which eventually led to the political estrangement of both artists. Both being very influential figures at their time, Pound and Burliuk found themselves in a situation between cultures and shaped their cultural and political identity with reference to “the other”. In this respect, the tribute both paid to Japan becomes especially interesting.

Although Ezra Pound’s indebtedness to Oriental (primarily Japanese and Chinese) cultures sounds as a commonplace today, there are certain lacunas in the huge body of Pound-related scholarship: his Japanese correspondence, his publications in the *Japan Times*, and, most regrettably, his own plays modeled on the Noh (1916). Burliuk’s Japanese connections are substantially less studied and his Orient-inspired texts – poems written in Japan (Burliuk 1925) and several prose narratives of the Japanese period<sup>3</sup> – though very important for understanding the late stage of the futurist project in Russia, remain one of the least analyzed areas in Futurism studies. My goal is therefore to compare the two Japan-related projects with regard to the manner in which they represent the other’s culture and to reveal the implications of the East/West opposition

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<sup>2</sup> It is very unlikely that Burliuk overlooked Vengerova’s publication, as the same issue of *Strelets* also contains Burliuk’s own poems, as well as texts by other Russian futurists: V. Kamensky, V. Mayakovsky, B. Livshits, A. Kruchenyh, V. Khlebnikov. Richard Cork (Cork 1975) and Rebecca Beasley (Beasley 2013) strongly believe that the text was noticed by Russian avant-gardists, and that, in particular, K. Malevich and El Lisitsky were familiar with vorticist painting. As Tomi Huttunen writes, Vengerova’s text was also well known to Russian Imaginists (Huttunen 2014, 170). What accounts for the lack of explicit interest in the text among cubo-futurists, is probably Vengerova’s accent on the Marinettian roots of Vorticism, as well as her somewhat condescending portrait of Pound, whose poetic achievements are presented as much less impressive than his theories. Besides, Vengerova’s association with the Symbolists could have discouraged the futurists. Pound, on the other hand, favorably mentions the interview with a “Russian correspondent” in his “Vorticism” (Pound 1914).

<sup>3</sup> Burliuk, *Po Tihomu Okeanu* 1927; Burliuk, *Oshima* 1927; Burliuk, *Voshozdenije na Fuji-san* 1926.



in several undeservingly overlooked specimens of Russian and European/American avant-garde.

I will argue that though both Vorticism and Russian Futurism are remotely related to the tradition of Italian Futurism and display typological similarities in their respective programs, the two movements, nevertheless, represent two different approaches to “the other”, and to the culture of the East in particular. The hypothesis of my dissertation is that Russian and Italian Futurism, however radical their rupture with the tradition seems to be, in fact follow a very traditional (intertextual, or even “orientalist” in the Saidean terminology, or metonymical, as I will argue, in the sense of the term used by Roman Jakobson) manner of representation as regards the East. On the contrary, Vorticism, though not often considered among most radical avant-garde schools of the beginning of the twentieth century, shows a much more revolutionary turn, as it rejects the metonymic manner of representation and develops its Orient in a metaphoric construct.

The dissertation, consequently, analyzes patterns used by Russian and Western avant-gardists in their attempt to map “the other”. Close reading of Russian Futurists’ and Vorticists’ texts shows how the concepts of East and West appear as cultural constructs within a certain esthetic value paradigm and how the vision of “the other” addresses implicit cultural assumptions of the reader or challenges those assumptions.

In order to better understand Pound’s and Burliuk’s approach to Japan, it is necessary to start with a brief overview of the history of Western and Russian Oriental explorations.

## 1. Western rediscoveries of Japan

In most general terms, the history of western European treatment of the Orient as “the other” was conceptualized in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). Relying on Michel Foucault’s concept of the discourse, Said describes the Orient as a construct of the European mind, largely used to subordinate and dominate the other both ideologically and politically:

without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage— and even produce— the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. (Said 2003, 3)

The Orient as the irrational, backward and inferior other, according to Said, authorizes the construct of the dominating Western (rational, progressive and superior) culture. The concept of the other thus becomes the legitimization of the fictional Occidental self and a pretext for colonial subordination of the cultural periphery, an instrument of power.

Said’s *Orientalism* is a two-fold construct. On the one hand, it is “the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice”; on the other hand, it designates a “collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line” (Said 2003, 73). Both concepts contribute to our understanding of the discursive processes by which the idea of otherness is constructed and legitimized in the society and by which the Oriental other is presented as a weak, irrational, feminine antipode of the dominant self.

Although Said’s analysis primarily focuses on the Middle East<sup>4</sup>, his concept of ethnocentric *Orientalism* with its generalisations and its stereotypical interpretations of the essentialized Oriental other as a passive, irrational, exotic, feminine and inferior

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<sup>4</sup> Said’s conscious efforts to limit his consideration of *Orientalism* to the European experiences in the Middle East area are predicated on a political conviction formulated in a generalized statement juxtaposing two Orientals: “Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance” (Said 2003, 73). In the case of Japan, the accuracy of the generalization may be seriously questioned, though.

counterpart/antipode of the Western consciousness, may well be, even if with certain restrictions, applicable to the Western vision of the Far East and Japan in particular. Earl Miner's *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (1958), the most comprehensive historical overview of its kind, even though written two decades prior to Said's study, shows a similar concern for Orient-related "dreams, images and vocabularies" and provides evidence of extrapolating the cultural myth of Orientalism to the Far Eastern country, which was never colonized by the West.

Miner identifies "three cycles of literary or artistic interest in Japan" (Miner 1966, xi). The first one "began with the visit of St. Francis Xavier to convert the Japanese in 1549 and ended in the mid-nineteenth century" (Miner 1966, xi). However, the reader's response at that point, according to Miner, "was sporadic and light" (Miner 1966, xi). The second period of Western interest "began with the reopening of Japan in 1853-1854 and ended about the turn of the century" (Miner 1966, xi), and the third cycle started "in the first decade of the twentieth century and seems to have ended – or to be taking new directions – today", as writes Miner in the year of 1958 (Miner 1966, xi). Each cycle, according to the author, reveals the same pattern, which he defines as follows: "the pattern begins with excited and over-enthusiastic interest, goes on to fuller understanding and borrowing from Japan, and ends with consolidation and slacking of interest" (Miner 1966, xi). Miner roughly outlines the pattern as that of "exoticism, imitation, and absorption" (Miner 1966, xii).

Francis Xavier's missionary work in Japan and the subsequent flow of ecclesiastic and secular accounts from Japan to Europe had a great (even if not right away obvious) effect on the European thought, as Miner observes:

The fact that the Japanese, and later the Chinese, were found to be peaceable, intelligent, cultured, and endowed with every merit "except the advantage of religion" forced reconsideration of traditional European ideas of culture. (Miner 1966, 7)

Miner defines this revolutionary turn as a "relativistic attitude toward cultures and toward history" (Miner 1966, 7). Three images, according to him, "stirred the Renaissance imagination – the idea of the Oriental languages, the ideal of Oriental government and, for literature, the image of a sage Oriental spectator beholding the follies of Europe" (Miner 1966, 9). Speaking about the effects of developing relativism, Miner specifically emphasizes the shifts in esthetics and in artistic standards. He also

highlights the role which Orientalist motifs, including those inspired by Japan, played in the emerging Romantic and post-romantic culture of Europe and America.

Since the period discussed in my dissertation belongs to the third cycle in Miner's scheme, I now want to briefly look at some developments in the second cycle, the one associated with the emergence of the term Japonisme, and thus outline the background against which the avant-garde culture of early twentieth century, and in particular Ezra Pound and David Burliuk, developed their images of Japan.

Hartman defines Japonisme as "the study of the culture, history, and the art of Japan. It is also the incorporation of Japanese devices of structure, presentation, and/or motifs into Western art" (Hartman 1981, 141). The reopening of Japan after Commodore Perry's mission, which aimed to put an end to the country's isolation policy and establish diplomatic relations with the government of Japan, resulted in a massive growth of Japanese imports, including both pieces of art and objects of everyday life, such as ceramics, porcelain, lacquers, silk, and kimonos. Japan became a fashion both in Europe and in America. Japanese prints, first exhibited at the 1867 World's Fair in Paris, had a pronounced effect on Western arts<sup>5</sup>. Japanese motifs and artistic techniques were becoming fashionable; European Impressionism, in particular, when formulating and justifying its theories, "turns to Japanese art" (Miner 1966, 14). Among artists influenced by Japonisme one can mention James Tissot, James McNeill Whistler, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Aubrey Beardsley, Gustav Klimt, Pierre Bonnard. According to Jules de Goncourt, Japonisme becomes one of the most influential trends in the late nineteenth-century arts<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Hokenson relates a common popular version of the beginning of Japonisme: "a packet of Japanese prints arrived in Paris around 1860 and instantly created a widening wave of amazement, incredulity, and exhilaration. The shock of encounter was so great, and the moment so crucial, that fifty years later painters and writers were still disputing its lore. The most persistent legend has it that japonisme was born in a Paris engraver's studio in the spring of 1856, when Felix Bracquemond opened a crate of ceramics from the Far east, only to discover that they were wrapped in a sheaf of Hokusai prints. Astonished and exultant, he immediately showed them to his friends Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, James Whistler, Camille Pissarro, the painters who were to form the avant-garde of the next decade." (Hokenson 2004, 13)

<sup>6</sup> Cf.: "la recherche du vrai en littérature, la résurrection de l'art du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle, la victoire du japonisme: ce sont . . . les trois grands mouvements littéraires et artistiques de la seconde moitié du xix<sup>e</sup> siècle" (Goncourt 1901, xv-xvi).

Miner describes the wave of Japonisme as a gradual process. Although the effect of Japan on Western visual arts<sup>7</sup> was massive, it took a while for Japan to become a “proper literary subject”. Miner, in particular, mentions several problems that literary Japonisme had to face:

... novelists face their most difficult problems in conceiving the disposition of their plots, in devising narrative techniques, and in developing characters – problems not to be solved by pictorial methods – so that it is not surprising to discover that few novelists could find techniques which would absorb Japan into their art. (Miner 1966, 43)

The most common way of introducing Japanese motifs, according to Miner, is utilizing exotic details, or what the scholar calls “Japanese similes” (Miner 1966, 44). Miner provides numerous examples of such technique with reference to Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser and many other writers of the time. Miner traces the exotic imagery of “Old Japan” in Robert Louis Stevenson, Pierre Loti and Rudyard Kipling and sees the Japanese motif as primarily an escapist technique: “Japan takes them to another, happier world, where they may, for a time, forget their own troubles and moral conventions in an Oriental Garden of Bliss” (Miner 1966, 51). This Garden of Bliss reminds of what Said repeatedly referred to as “an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise” (Said 2003, 58).

Among American authors, one of the first to formally greet the newly discovered country was Walt Whitman, who dedicated a poem<sup>8</sup> to the Japanese ambassadors who arrived to ratify the treaty in the wake of Perry’s visit. Whitman’s text, enthusiastic as it is about the West meeting the East, shows certain tensions in the nineteenth-century Japonisme. To Whitman, the arrival of the Japanese diplomatic mission becomes primarily the celebration of America, which is evident even in the use of the first person plural pronoun:

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on European Japonisme, see, e.g.: Berger, Klaus 1992, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP; Wichmann, Siegfried 1981, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858*. London: Thames and Hudson; Gertner Zatlín, Linda 1997, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP; Ono, Ayako 2003, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and nineteenth-century Japan*. New York, London: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> “The Errand-Bearers”, originally published in the *New York Times*, June 27 1860. In later editions it appears under the title “A Broadway Pageant”.

Superb-faced Manhattan!  
Comrade Americanos! to us, then, at last, the Orient comes. (Whitman 2004,  
204)

Besides, the Japanese mission metonymically becomes the representative of the whole “antipode” world of the Orient, which is especially evident in the original text of the poem, published in the newspaper, where Japan comes to stand for the whole continent, embracing the land of Caucasus and the race of Brahma:

The land of Paradise—land of the Caucasus—  
the nest of birth,  
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems—  
The race of eld<sup>9</sup>,  
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings,  
hot with passion,  
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing  
garments,  
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and  
glittering eyes,  
The race of Brahma comes. (Whitman 1860)

Although Whitman depicts the “venerable Asia” as the “all-mother” and calls for considerate attitude towards her (“Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother”), his vocabulary reveals a certain tension in the poet’s treatment of the East-West relationship. Hence the references to America as a “new empire” and to its “greater supremacy”.

Among western scholars who contributed to the “rediscovery” of Japan, one might mention such names as Francis (also known as Frank) Brinkley<sup>10</sup>, an Irish scholar and newspaper owner and editor, who stayed in Japan for over forty years (1867-1912), Basil Hall Chamberlain<sup>11</sup>, a British scholar, who spent over thirty years in Japan (1873-

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<sup>9</sup> In further editions, the first four lines of the extract are compressed into one line of text: “The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld” (Whitman 2004, 204).

<sup>10</sup> Francis Brinkley (1841-1912) published the *Unabridged English-Japanese Dictionary* (1904), as well as a number of books on Japanese history, ethnography and culture, e.g., an edited volume of *Japan: Described and Illustrated by the Japanese* (1897), twelve volumes of *Japan and China Subtitled: Their History Arts and Literature* (1901), *A History of the Japanese People* (1915).

<sup>11</sup> Basil Hall Chamberlain’s (1850-1935) works include numerous translations from Japanese, the Japanese language study books, and guides for travelers, e.g., *A Handbook*

1911), William George Aston<sup>12</sup>, a British diplomat, translator and scholar, and Ernest Fenollosa. The latter will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of my text, as he was most influential in shaping Pound's idea of Japan. Now, I will take a brief look at the former three figures.

Although Francis Brinkley may be easily accused of what Edward Said calls the feminization of the Oriental other (not only is his Japan grammatically feminine, it is also consistently presented as a grateful recipient of what the Occidental civilization could offer), yet, the scholar is openly critical of Western exoticising stereotypes:

The most tolerant of Europeans has always regarded the Japanese, and let them see that he regarded them, merely as interesting children. Languidly curious at best about the uses to which they would put their imported toys, his curiosity was purely academical, and whenever circumstances required him to be practical, he laid aside all pretence of courtesy and let it be plainly seen that he counted himself master and intended to be so counted. (Brinkley 1901, 15)

Brinkley's defense of Japan repeatedly relies on attempts of distancing the country from the world of the Orient. Brinkley's language sometimes reveals what may be seen as a condescending attitude towards the very concept of the Orient, which is generally associated with backwardness. Thus, describing Japan, he may notice that "the taint of the Orient has not yet been removed from the nation" (Brinkley 1901, 15). His observations imply that Japan allegedly shares his value-charged opposition of "civilized standards" of the Occident and the "Oriental stigma"<sup>13</sup>. Brinkley finds support for this opposition in the confrontation of Japan and China: China, he asserts, "despised the Japanese and resented their apostasy from the Oriental tradition" (Brinkley 1901, 17). The war with China (1894-1895), in Brinkley's interpretation, was for Japan "the quickest exit from the shadow of Orientalism" (Brinkley 1901, 18). The scholar clearly approves of Japan's alleged desire to leave the Orient behind and enter the civilization of

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for *Travellers in Japan* (1891). He also authored a popular encyclopedia *Things Japanese, being notes on various subjects connected with Japan, for the use of travellers and others* (1890).

<sup>12</sup> William George Aston (1841-1911), the author of several grammar books of the Japanese language and the famous study, *A History of Japanese Literature* (1899), which influenced both Russian avant-gardists and Ezra Pound.

<sup>13</sup> The Japanese, he writes, "imagined that they might efface the Oriental stigma by living up to civilized standards" (Brinkley 1901, 16).

the Occident: “having set out to climb to the level of Occidental nations, she had to begin by emerging from the ranks of the Oriental nations” (Brinkley 1901, 18).

In Brinkley’s language, it is the West who, in a markedly masculine and generous manner, fills Japan with new life and thus saves it from the Oriental backwardness: Japan “is old in years, but the infused blood of Western civilization has renewed its youth” (Brinkley 1901, 23). However, neither Brinkley’s familiarizing rhetoric in calling Japan “England of the East” (Brinkley 1901, 23), nor his promises of a “passport to European esteem” (Brinkley 1901, 18) guaranteed to the Far-Eastern country, leave any doubts as regards the place assigned for Japan in the hierarchy of the European civilization (the place, allegedly craved for by the Japanese themselves):

Japan has risen to the leadership of the Far East. Is that the goal of her ambition? One of her favourite sayings is, “Better be the tail of an ox than the comb of a cock.” She is now the comb of the Oriental cock. That is not enough: she wants to be the tail of the Occidental ox. (Brinkley 1901, 18)

While Brinkley advocates the image of a modern, “Occidental” Japan, Aston shows a more traditional Orientalist approach and preference of the old, feudal and exotic traits in the image of the country. However, familiarization (probably, inevitable in a project aimed at familiarizing the Western reader with a newly discovered culture) may be found in Aston’s works, too. Emphasizing the originality of Japanese arts, Aston, nevertheless, finds it convenient to draw explanatory parallels with the familiar: “What Greece and Rome have been to Europe, China has been to the nations of the far East” (Aston 1899, 3). Or, “If, in regard to Japan, China takes the place of Greece and Rome, Buddhism, with its softening and humanising influences, holds a position similar to that of Christianity in the Western World” (Aston 1899, 4). These familiarizing parallels extrapolating familiar cultural paradigms to the realm of the other, as I will show in Chapter 3, will also appear in Fenollosa’s interpretation of Japan.

Explanatory parallels with English authors are plenty in Aston’s work; among the familiar authors, most often mentioned is Shakespeare. Thus, introducing *Gempei Seisuki* as Japanese twelfth-century “quasi-historical works”, Aston offers a familiar example: “a comparison with Shakespeare’s historical plays will convey some idea of the relative proportions of fact and fiction which they contain” (Aston 1899, 134). Aston sees “numerous resemblances to Shakespeare” in Bakin’s early nineteenth-century prose (Aston 1899, 364), as well as in the late nineteenth-century drama by Tsubouchi (Aston



1899, 386). Chikamatsu, a seventeenth-century dramatist, is also presented through Shakespeare parallels, even if with a reservation that such a comparison is “really idle”:

Both in Shakespeare and Chikamatsu, comedy frequently treads on the heels of tragedy; in both, prose is intermixed with poetry, and an exalted style of diction suited to monarchs and nobles alternates with the speech of the common people; both divided their attention between historical and other dramas; both possessed the fullest command of the resources of their respective languages, and both are tainted with a grosser element which is rejected by the more refined taste of later times. It may be added that neither Shakespeare nor Chikamatsu is classical in the sense in which we apply that term to Sophocles and Racine. (Aston 1899, 278)

Aston compares a 90 B.C. verse to a familiar traditional folk song (Aston 1899, 8) and explains a song reference in Motokyo's *Takasago* (fifteenth century) as an “Equivalent to our ‘God save the Queen’” (Aston 1899, 211). He draws a parallel between the use of the Chinese language by Japanese authors, who “loaded their periods with alien vocables”, and “our most Johnsonian English” (Aston 1899, 54). He interprets an extract from the twelfth-century *Tsure-dzure-gusa* (*Essays in Idleness*, by Yoshida Kenkō) by a reference to Wordsworth's familiar lines (Aston 1899, 196).

On several occasions, Aston warns the reader against preconceived stereotypes of the exotic Orient. Opposing the stereotypes, he may be quite critical of certain Oriental traditions, which becomes clear, for example, in the generalizing and condescending remarks he leaves on Taoism, “that mass of vague speculations attributed to Laotze<sup>14</sup> and his disciple Chwang-tze” (Aston 1899, 187). Not all his references to the familiar literary tradition sound complimentary, either:

A feature which strikingly distinguishes the Japanese poetic muse from that of Western nations is a certain lack of imaginative power. The Japanese are slow to endow inanimate objects with life. Shelley's ‘Cloud,’ for example, contains enough matter of this kind for many volumes of Japanese verse. (Aston 1899, 30)

Paradoxically, it appears that, despite his warnings against stereotyping, Aston clearly prefers older and more “authentic” (exotic) art to newer developments. Thus, the

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<sup>14</sup> Curiously, Pound's verdict on Lao Tzu will be very similar, though expressed in much stronger vocabulary, see, for example, Pound 1987a, 102.

later works of the Yedo period (1603-1867) of Japanese literature leave Aston much less satisfied with the quality of writing than more ancient specimens:

But while the new literature is much richer and of a more vigorous growth than the old, there is a sad falling off in point of form. With few exceptions it is disfigured by the grossest and most glaring faults. Extravagance, false sentiment; defiance of probability whether physical or moral, pedantry, pornography, puns and other meretricious ornaments of style, intolerable platitudes, impossible adventures, and weary wastes of useless detail meet us everywhere. (Aston 1899, 221-222)

Aston clearly prefers a historically distant “classical” Oriental image, which he compares to specimens of classical Greek culture:

The Japanese of the ancient classical period appeal more strongly to our sympathies. Even Herodotus and Plato far removed as they are from us in point of time, are immeasurably nearer to modern Englishmen in all their ideas, sentiments, and moral standards, than the Japanese of fifty years ago. (Aston 1899, 234)

However, Aston’s vision of the present-day situation in Japanese poetry is more optimistic: “The conditions of the present day are more favourable than those of any previous time to the production of good poetry in Japan” (Aston 1899, 393). What accounts for his optimism, is “the great stimulus which the national life has received from the introduction of European ideas, and the attention which has been recently directed to the poetry of Europe, especially of England” (Aston 1899, 393). The approach clearly reminds of Brinkley’s ideas about infusing European blood in the ageing veins of Japanese arts.

Against the background of Brinkley and Aston, Chamberlain’s works present a contrast. Chamberlain’s *Things Japanese* (1890) is remarkable in the way it not only describes the country, but also confronts typical western stereotypes associated with the Japanese. Chamberlain does not want to entertain the reader with exotic details; instead, he tries to calmly register the changes in modern Japan, where feudalism and chivalry, as he says, are dead and where a new culture is being born: “Old Japan is dead, and the only decent thing to do with a dead body is to bury it” (Chamberlain 1905, 6). Chamberlain

ridicules the stereotypical Orientalism of his compatriots and warns them against generalizations:

Europe's illusions about the Far East are truly crude. <...> persons not otherwise undiscerning continue to class, not only the Chinese, but even the Japanese, with Arabs and Persians, on the ground that all are equally "Orientals," "Asiatics," though they dwell thousands of miles apart in space, and tens of thousands of miles apart in culture. Such is the power over us of words which we have ourselves coined. (Chamberlain 1905, 9)

Curiously, Chamberlain speaks against the very things which will later constitute the body of Edward Said's accusations of the Western "Orientalism". Besides generalizing, essentializing and exoticizing the concept of the Orient, Chamberlain mentions one more evil, that of demonizing the Oriental other:

on a basis of mere words a fantastic structure is raised of mere notions, among which the "Yellow Peril" has had most vogue of late. When a new power, or an old one in a new shape, arises on soil which we have labeled "Western," - for instance Germany or Italy during the lifetime of men still living, the United States or Russia at an earlier date, - no one descries any special menace in such an event; it is recognized as one of the familiar processes of history. But let the word "Asia" be sounded, and at once a spectre is conjured up. (Chamberlain 1905, 9-10)

Chamberlain composes his *Things Japanese*, an over-five-hundred-page work, which he humbly calls an "unpretentious book" (Chamberlain 1905, 6), in the form of a dictionary or encyclopedia, where alphabetically ordered entries contain comments on all sides of life in Japan: history, geography, social institutes, arts, writing system, everyday life, to name a few. What distinguishes the book is not only the anti-exotic approach, but also the sober realizations of challenges facing the modern Japan. He neither idealizes the feudal past of the country, nor glorifies the prospects of the industrial present:

Europeanisation is not all gain. The European tourist seeks distant lands with intent to admire nature and art. But nature is laid waste for his sake and for the sake of his friends at home, while art is degraded and ultimately destroyed by the mere fact of contact with alien influences. (Chamberlain 1905, 529)

The case of Chamberlain proves the heterogeneous nature of European Orientalism, not all of which readily lends itself to Saidean logic. However, one must admit that it was not Chamberlain who shaped the mainstream of Western writings about Japan. In this context, I need to mention a less scholarly but not less influential figure in the turn-of-the-century Japonisme. One of the major authorities among those who helped popularizing the exotic Japan in the West is Lafcadio Hearn<sup>15</sup>, a journalist, teacher, writer and collector of Japanese legends, who spent fifteen years in Japan (1890-1904). As Carl Dawson argues (Dawson 1992), it was Hearn who mainly created the image of Japan for both the European and American reader of the time.

Hearn, who was a sincere admirer of Japanese culture and who himself became a Buddhist and a naturalized resident of Japan, nevertheless continues the common tradition of exoticizing and idealizing the Oriental country. On the one hand, Hearn's picture of Japan is that of total strangeness:

The whole of the Japanese mental superstructure evolves into forms having nothing in common with Western psychological development: the expression of thought becomes regulated, and the expression of emotion inhibited in ways that bewilder and astound. The ideas of these people are not our ideas; their sentiments are not our sentiments; their ethical life represents for us regions of thought and emotion yet unexplored, or perhaps long forgotten. (Hearn 1922, 11)

In fact, this distant world is so strange, claims Hearn enthusiastically enhancing all contrasts, that some things are barely understood even by the Japanese themselves. For example, the intricate Japanese literature: "it is safe to say that no Occidental can undertake to render at sight any literary text laid before him – indeed the number of native scholars able to do so is very small" (Hearn 1922, 12).

However, the country, strange as it looks, is not really seen as an equal partner or alternative of the Occidental civilization; instead, Hearn presents it as an earlier evolutionary stage of "our" world, "the outcome of an experience evolutionary younger

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<sup>15</sup> Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) published a number of books, the very titles of which suggest insights into the exotic Oriental culture, e.g. *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), *Out of the East: Reveries and Studies in New Japan* (1895), *Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* (1896), *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields: Studies of Hand and Soul in the Far East* (1897), *Exotics and Retrospectives* (1898), *In Ghostly Japan* (1899). He is especially known for adaptations of Japanese legends and ghost-stories (*kwaidan*).

than our own" (Hearn 1922, 10), a paradise long lost by the far more advanced Western society:

You have been transported out of your own century – over spaces enormous of perished age – back to something ancient as Egypt or Nineveh. That is the secret of the strangeness and beauty of things – the secret of the thrill they give – the secret of the elfish charm of the people and their ways. (Hearn 1922, 16)

Carried away, as he is, by this idealized world, Hearn, nevertheless, admits, that what he describes is not really the everyday life of modern Japan, but rather a picture of the country's past: "the conditions of which I speak are now passing away; but they are still to be found in the remoter districts" (Hearn 1922, 14-15). The ideal is thus made twice as remote: not only is Japan a distant former stage of "our" evolution, the real paradise lies even deeper, in the distant past of the Oriental history.

This fairy-tale realm of Japan appears in Hearn's account as a land of universal friendliness and social harmony, a land, where one can encounter no crime, "no harshness, no rudeness, no dishonesty, no breaking of laws" (Hearn 1922, 15). The picture of total strangeness gradually develops into a Rousseauistic vision of a primitive paradise, a world, the ideals of which are not totally strange to the Western reader: a realm of flourishing arts, discipline, cleanliness, and even – hygiene:

Here every one has been taught; every one knows how to write and speak beautifully, how to compose poetry, how to behave politely; there is everywhere cleanliness and good taste; interiors are bright and pure; the daily use of hot bath is universal. (Hearn 1922, 15)

It may be noticed here, that describing Japan as an earlier evolutionary stage of "our" familiar world and highlighting the common Western values, allegedly inherent to Japan, Hearn domesticates the image of the other and makes it synecdochally represent the best of the familiar culture. A similar strategy, as I will argue in Chapter 2, may be traced in the Japan-related writings of David Burliuk, the self-proclaimed "father of Russian Futurism".

## 2. Russia: between East and West

The interest of Russian Futurists in the Orient is rooted in an age-long on-going argument involving history, geography, psychology and religion. The East-West dimension and the identity of Russia in this frame of reference have been a topical issue for the Russian culture for ages, which is evident even in the mid-fifteenth-century Afanasy Nikitin's account of his Indian travels (*The Journey Beyond Three Seas*), with its unorthodox cultural, religious and linguistic appropriations<sup>16</sup>. The East-West opposition and the typology of Oriental and Occidental cultures informs Pyotr Chaadaev's *Philosophical Letters* (written in 1829-1931), with their bitter diagnosis of the rootlessness and isolation of the Russian society. Seeing part of the problem in the geographical in-between location of the country, belonging neither to the Orient nor to the Occident, Chaadaev passionately advocates the European development of Russian civilization. The controversy started by Chaadaev provoked heated discussions and shaped intellectual arguments of "westernizers" and "slavophiles" as early as in the 1840s. Later, writing a tribute to slavophiles, Nikolai Berdiaev acknowledged that they "raised a major problem before our self-consciousness, the issue of the East and the West. This theme informs all the spiritual life in Russia in the nineteenth century"<sup>17</sup> (Berdiaev 2007, 15).

In the late nineteenth century, the problem acquired special relevance due to the complex changes in the society, which required reconsidering basic principles of Russian cultural identity. Oriental studies emerge as an academic discipline. The development of comparative linguistics promoted studies of Oriental languages and translations of ancient Oriental texts. In the mid-nineteenth century, Sanskrit departments were opened in Russian universities – first in Kazan, then in Moscow. In 1837, the first Chinese department was established in the university of Kazan, which was in 1855 moved to St.Petersburg University. By the 1880s, there were two major centers of Japanese studies: those in St.Petersburg and in Vladivostok.

However, despite the developments in scholarly studies of the "real" Oriental lands, the Orient in Russian literary and philosophical writings largely remained as a

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<sup>16</sup> For more information on the ambiguities of Nikitin's image of India and on the creolized elements of his account, see, e.g. Anindita Banerjee's "By Caravan and Campfire: Khorasani Narratives about Hindustan and Afanasy Nikitin's *The Journey Beyond Three Seas*" (Die Welt der Slaven XLVIII, 2003, 69 – 80).

<sup>17</sup> All translations of Russian sources are mine unless otherwise mentioned.

hypothetical construct, primarily designed to justify the concept of Russianness. The East and the West proved to be helpful tools in the analysis of the current crisis in the country and in the search for solutions.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the opposition of the East and the West (or, to be more exact, the triad of East, West, and Russia) became one of the fundamental issues in Russian literary and philosophical discussions. The opposition, for example, informs the basis of Vladimir Soloviov's thought, which can no longer be unequivocally attributed to either the slavophile or the westernizer tradition. Unlike Chaadaev with his temporal view of the opposition (the Orient and the Occident as two successive principles or stages of world history<sup>18</sup>), Soloviov views the antagonism of the East and the West as a continuous conflict of two opposite cultures:

From the very first days of human history, the opposition of two cultures – Eastern and Western – was clearly marked. The basis of the Eastern culture is total subordination of man to a superhuman power; the basis of the Western culture is the independent activity of man. (Soloviov 1989, 75)

In this respect, the East (and especially, China) is seen as a major threat to the Western civilization. On the other hand, Russia (the Christian Russia) appears as a third side of the conflict.

The quoted above passage from Soloviov's "The great argument and the Christian policy" ("Великий спор и христианская политика", 1882-1883), continues his programmatic 1877 lecture "Three powers" ("Три силы"). Developing Chaadaev's thesis of the in-between status of Russia balancing between the East and the West, Soloviov formulates his general theory of three major historical powers governing human civilization. The first one is total subordination, ignoring the multiplicity, freedom and the individual value of the constituents; the second is total freedom or even anarchy, ignoring the general law and the interest of the whole; and the third is a harmonious combination of both extremes, the reconciliation of the divine law with the free multiplicity of life forms (Soloviov 1991). The philosopher illustrates the paradigm, referring to the Oriental (or, to be exact, the Oriental Islamic) civilization, the Western civilization, and the Slavic one. The scheme legitimizes the messianic vision of the Slavic world, which is allegedly destined to harmonize the global conflict and provide a

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<sup>18</sup> See "The apology of a madman" (Chaadaev 2006, 250-278).

synthesis, an alternative for both despotism and anarchy, i.e. a new type of civilization, which restores the divine order.

Without focusing on the complexities of Soloviov's vision of the Orient (or rather, the *Orients*), I can but mention the scholar's recognition of the growing role of Eastern countries (and especially, the Far Eastern ones) and cultures in the world history and his attempt to go beyond the traditional binary opposition of East/West. Marlene Laruelle in her work on the development of Russian Eurasianism, notes that the concept of the Orient is highly ambiguous in the Russian thought: "the Orient is at the same time in the 'cultural areas' surrounding Russia (Islam, India, China) and an internal entity, organic to Russia, the steppic world" (Laruelle 2007, 10). I suggest that the picture is a little more complex and there is even more ambiguity involved.

Europe essentializes and generalizes the Orient in attempts of negotiating its own identity. As James Clifford comments in "On Orientalism": "a modern culture continuously constitutes itself through its ideological constructs of the exotic. Seen in this way 'the West' itself becomes a play of projections, doublings, idealizations, and rejections of a complex, shifting otherness. 'The Orient' always plays the role of origin or alter ego" (Clifford 2001, 33). Russia, since Chaadaev, engaging in an even more complex 'game of projections', in a similar effort essentializes both the East and the West.

The negotiation of Russian identity within the frame of East/West opposition proceeds in different discourses. Chaadaev sees it as a civilizational (and evolutionary) opposition. To Soloviov, the key concept is religion, and in particular Christianity. Both, however, distinguish between the "Orient" of the Middle and Far East and that of Russia. Having defined the country as the site of the eternal battlefield between the Occident and the Orient, the Russian thought proceeds to delineate its own "cardinal points", its own westernness and easternness. Hence, the inevitable distinction between the internal and the external *Orients*. However, both *Orients* appear to be heterogeneous: the external Orient stands for both the exotic otherness and the menace; the internal Orient stands for both fascination with and the imminent threat of the "steppic world".

In this sense, Soloviov suggests the distinction between "the Orient of Xerxes" and "the Orient of Christ" (see his "Ex Oriente lux", 1890). The concepts are religion-based, as Soloviov sees the nature of the current Russian (and European) crisis in the corruption of the "true" Christian idea. The "good" Orient is thus synonymous with Christianity; it is



equally opposed to the concept of the Western (the “progressive”) and the Eastern (the “despotic”) worlds.

The East, in its ambiguity, became an integral part of Soloviov’s philosophy as well as his poetic works, which shaped the development of Russian philosophical and literary tradition and, in particular, strongly influenced the school of Russian literary Symbolism. However, in the context of the turn-of-the-century crisis, the two aspects of the Orient seem to merge in the vision of the final apocalyptic battle approaching the world, in which Russia is to play the role of the sacrificial martyr (see, e.g., Valery Briusov’s “We are Scythians” (1916) or Alexander Blok’s “Scythians”<sup>19</sup> (1918), as examples of the motif). Soloviov’s fascination with the East, as well as his fear of the threat coming from “pan-mongolism” (which he sees emerging from Japan), and even his fascination with this threat (“Pan-mongolism! Though the word is wild, / It still caresses my ear...”) – all that will obviously leave a trace on the emerging culture of the Russian “Silver age”.

In a recent study, Susanna Soojung Lim justly points at the “orientalist” aspect of the scholar’s view: “At the heart of Soloviov’s surprisingly positive view of this nation [Japan] was the hope <...> in Japan as an ideal Christian realm” (Soojung Lim 2013, 115). Nevertheless, the author does not mention the fact that by the end of his life, Soloviov comes to a much more flexible and inclusive view of the Orient. Thus, in the essay “Justification of the good: moral philosophy” (“Оправдание добра. Нравственная философия”, 1897), he even speaks about the necessity of combining Christianity and Buddhism (Soloviov 1988, 308-309). The idea of a synthesis and of overcoming the East/West dichotomy will be further developed in the works of Nikolai Berdiaev and Dmitry Merezhkovsky.

Berdiaev argues that the subject of the East/West opposition, raised by the slavophiles and westerners, remains as the most important question in the twentieth century Russia, too: “Until our days, the ongoing fight between the slavophile and western bases of Russian self-consciousness is centered around this question, the question of the East and the West” (Berdiaev 2007, 15). Berdiaev, however, believes that the ultimate answer lies not in choosing between these two extremes but in a certain synthesis. As he argues in his work on Alexei Khomyakov and Konstantin Leontiev (1912), “The time comes, when one cannot choose either the East or the West anymore,

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<sup>19</sup> For more information on the subject of Russian “scythianism”, see Feshchenko 2006.

when the very existence of Russia and its fulfilling its mission require adopting the East and the West in it, combining the East and the West" (Berdiaev 2007, 15).

The idea of importance of both the Oriental and the Occidental sides of the Russian culture appears in metaphoric disguise in Dmitry Merezhkovsky's essay "Not Sacred Russia"<sup>20</sup> ("Не святая Русь", 1916). Merezhkovsky writes about two souls of the country and the necessity of combining them without giving up either the old East-oriented Russian tradition or the new Western developments. The nature of this combination remains not quite clear though, as Merezhkovsky's approach illustrates the ambiguity of the early twentieth century Russian vision of the East-West opposition. Drawn towards the patriarchal Orient, Russia does not fully identify with the latter; however, looking westwards, it does not fully accept the new "progressive" western values either. Calling for combining the Oriental and the Occidental, Merezhkovsky is cautious: "In order to combine, one should not mix. In order not to mix, one has to separate them completely" (Merezhkovsky 1997, 862). This ambiguity of Russian Orientalism, attracted by the East but not willing to fully identify with it, becomes characteristic of the 1900s arts development.

Describing the turn of the century turmoil, which informed the symbolist movement in Russia, Avril Pyman emphasizes the desperate search for "culture", which would reconcile the contradictions formulated in the geographical terms of the Oriental and the Occidental vectors of the Russian identity:

No-one quite knew where the light lay or from whence the darkness would come. From Western 'civilization' or from the barbaric threat from the East, or simply from social disintegration, the West and the East 'within us'? The 'conspirators' of the Silver Age recalled old tales of Atlantis and Babylon; they looked back to Athens, Rome, Alexandria and the old Russian cities with their great cathedrals, dedicated, like St Sophia in the thousand-year Christian capital of Byzantium, to the Divine Wisdom – and felt something had been lost which, for want of a better word, they called 'culture': the organic connection between society and cult. (Pyman 1994, 184)

The subject of the Orient informs not only the philosophical discussions. Oriental motifs start playing a much more significant role in both visual arts (V. Borisov-Musatov, Georgy Narbut, A. Bilibin, Nikolai Roerich, Mstislav Dobuzhinsky) and in literature

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<sup>20</sup> Originally published in *Russkoe Slovo*, 1916, No 210, 11 September.

(Konstantin Balmont<sup>21</sup>, Maximilian Voloshin<sup>22</sup>, Valery Briusov<sup>23</sup>, Andrei Bely<sup>24</sup>, Nikolai Gumilev<sup>25</sup>, to name a few). Russian Futurists and their Oriental aspirations will be discussed in more detail, in Chapter 1; meanwhile, I will look at the nineteenth-twentieth century Russian representations of one particular Oriental area – that of Japan.

Among the Oriental lands, Japan, as probably the most “closed” country, always occupied a special place in Russian literature. The ambiguity of early nineteenth-century Russian Orientalism is clearly focalized in the image of Japan and in the treatment of the Japanese arts.

Ivan Goncharov’s *Frigate “Pallada”* (published in journals in 1855-1857, and as a book in 1858) is the first lengthy first-hand account of Japan in Russian literature. Goncharov wrote his notes during his two-and-a-half-year round-the-world voyage with admiral Evfimiy Putiatin. The expedition visited England, South Africa, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, and Japan. The Japanese section of the book (“Russians in Japan”), probably one of the most interesting parts of the notes, found live response among Russian readers.

Discussing the role of the book in Russian literature, Yuri Lotman sees the major achievement of Goncharov in breaking the Romantic tradition of exotic representation of the other:

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<sup>21</sup> Konstantin Balmont travels in North and South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Japan, Oceania. He writes numerous translations and adaptations of Oriental classics (Upanishads, Kalidasa’s drama, The Life of Buddha, Japanese tanka and haiku, etc.). Balmont’s Japan-related writings will be discussed below.

<sup>22</sup> Maximilian Voloshin traveled in the Pamir mountains, across Mongolia, in Northern Africa and in the Mediterranean region. He studied Oriental arts in Paris, where he collected a number of Japanese prints. The East – the Tibet and the Himalayas, China, Japan and India – occupies an important part in his writings and paintings. For more information, see, e.g.: Smirnov 1985.

<sup>23</sup> Valery Briusov translates Armenian poets and edits an anthology of Armenian poetry. One of his most ambitious projects (though, unfinished) is a lengthy collection *The Dreams of Mankind*, in which, among other parts, he included his stylizations of Australian aboriginal songs, Egyptian, Assyrian Indian, Japanese, Persian, Indo-Chinese, Armenian and Arabian poetry. Briusov’s vision of Japan will be briefly discussed below.

<sup>24</sup> Negotiating the Russian identity between the East and the West is one of the key topics of Andrey Bely’s *The Silver Dove* (1911) and *Petersburg* (1913), two parts of the unfinished trilogy *East or West*.

<sup>25</sup> Nikolai Gumilev extensively develops Oriental (including Far-Eastern) motifs as an integral part of his Acmeist program; see, e.g. “A Journey to China” (1909), “Chinese Girl” (1914), and the collection *China Pavillion* (1918).

The main idea of the spatial model of *Frigate "Pallada"* is in overthrowing the romantic exoticism. The deconstruction of clichés in the antitheses of the far/the close, the other/the self, the exotic/the everyday creates the image of a common joint movement of all culture spaces of the Earth from ignorance towards civilization. (Lotman 2002, 748)

Goncharov's view of the world is built on correlating antithetical models: wakefulness vs. sleep, infancy vs. maturity, stasis vs. kinesis, isolation vs. expansion and progress. These models inform the East /West dichotomy, both as regards the relationship between Europe and the colonies, and the notorious dualism of Russian identity. Although Goncharov explicitly advocates the awake, the mature and the progressive, his treatment of the opposition is far from straightforward: recognizing the value of the Western civilization, he is obviously nostalgic about the opposite. However, what matters for my argument now is the mapping of Japan within the frame of aforementioned antitheses.

Describing his experiences in Japan, Goncharov creates a picture of a country which is asleep (as opposed to his view of England, most active in its reforms and civilizing endeavors). His Japan is an infant, who needs to be awakened in order to start moving and developing together with the European world. What Goncharov sees in Japan is absences: no crowds of people meeting the foreigners, no familiar aspect of a big city in Nagasaki, empty spaces (a green slope by the sea looks incomplete without a mansion with marble columns on it). He sees gaps, which are to be filled. What they are to be filled with, is apparently the enlightening presence of the European civilization. This picture obviously lends itself to an interpretation in Saidean terms, like the one, provided, e.g., by Barbara Heldt: "Japan, mysterious and closed, was somehow awaiting the European presence, succumbing, if not to power of arms, then to European power of interpretation" (Heldt 1995, 172). However, one must realize that the "power of interpretation" in this case is exercised not only over Japan, but over Goncharov's own land as well. The antitheses illustrated in the writer's text make an implicit (and at times explicit) comment on Russia's own problems, complexities and choices: it is Russia who has to be awakened. In this sense, *Frigate "Pallada"* is but another side of *Oblomov*.

Paradoxically enough, the turn from the Romantic exoticism, which Lotman praises in Goncharov, will not last long; European Japonisme will soon reach Russia and the emphasis on the exotic will be back. Goncharov's boredom in the sleepy Oriental land, as notes Barbara Heldt, "is the polar opposite of the fascination with Japan of the

later symbolist age" (Heldt 1995, 173). Now, the Orient, and Japan in particular, is to be used in order to fill the gaps in Russian culture.

The Japonisme fashion, which, having spread in Europe, finally reached Russia, accounts for the "Oriental turn" in the turn-of-the-century Russian culture not to a lesser extent than the philosophical discussions on culture typologies. Japonisme (and Oriental fashion in general) spread quickly<sup>26</sup> and resulted in numerous arts exhibitions, translations, and scholarly works devoted to Japanese culture. Most oriental trends reached Russia indirectly, through the works of such artists as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Audrey Beardsley, and Gustav Klimt. Authentic Japanese paintings and engravings were displayed in Russia at exhibitions organized by Sergey Kitaev, who, having spent over three years in Japan, collected more than 250 paintings and thousands of color prints (three major exhibitions were held from 1896 till 1905 in Saint Petersburg and Moscow)<sup>27</sup>. The exhibitions aroused lively interest and were covered in numerous newspaper and magazine publications<sup>28</sup>. The most characteristic title, I think, is to be found in N. Alexandrov's text published in 1896 by *Birzhevye Vedomosti*: "Children of genius" ("Гениальные дети. Японская художественная выставка")<sup>29</sup>, which illustrates both the cult of the "natural" and the cult of youth that Japanese arts came to represent in Russian turn-of-the-century culture.

In 1903, Igor Grabar, an eminent Russian artist, collector and arts scholar, publishes a book on Japanese engravings<sup>30</sup>, which further popularizes Japanese arts in Russia. The Japanese exhibitions and European Japonisme in general had a great effect

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<sup>26</sup> For more information on Russian Japonisme, see, e.g.: Azadovskij and Djakonova 1991; Djakonova 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Thus, Barbara Heldt's observation that "Russian interest in the literature and culture of Japan awakened only after the Russo-Japanese War" (Heldt 173) seems to be not quite accurate.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g.: F.B. 1896, "K Japonskoi Vystavke", *Novoe Vremia*, No. 7457, 3; Si-v, V. 1897, "Japonskaia hudozhestvennaia vystavka v zalah istoricheskogo muzeia", *Russkie vedomosti*, No. 44, 3; R. 1897, "Japonskaia vystavka", *Moskovskii Listok*, No. 34, 3; *Niva* 1897, [anon.], "Vystavka rabot japonskih hudozhnikov", *Niva*, No. 1, 19; *Niva* 1897, [anon.], "Vystavka rabot japonskih hudozhnikov", *Niva*, No. 5, 108-111; Makovsky, S. 1906, "Na Japonskoi vystavke", *Zolotoe Runo*, No. 1, 111-118.

<sup>29</sup> Alexandrov, N. 1896, "Genialnye deti (Japonskaia hudozhestvennaia vystavka)", *Birzhevye vedomosti*, No 331.

<sup>30</sup> Grabar, Igor 1903, *Japonskaia tsvetnaia gravyura na dereve. Ocherk*, Sankt Peterburg: Izdanie kn. S.A. Scherbatova I V.V. f. Mekh. See also: Grabar, Igor 1902, "Japontsy", *Mir Iskusstva*, No. 2, 31-34.

on many Russian artists, including such renowned figures as Mstislav Dobuzhinsky and Alexander Benois. The latter (the addressee of numerous attacks by David Burliuk in later years) writes in his memoirs about purchasing in 1903 numerous paintings and color prints by Japanese artists (Hokusai, Hiroshige, Utamaro)<sup>31</sup>. Japanese arts triggered interest in Japanese customs, traditions, theater and everyday life. Vasily Nemirovich-Danchenko, who spent several months in Japan, publishes a long series of essays, which addresses this curiosity and comments on various aspects of Japanese life and culture in *Russkoe Slovo* (March-September, 1908).

Simultaneously, Japanese poetry made its way to the Russian reader and informed literary discussions and poetic experiments of major authors of the time. Like in Europe (and, in particular, in the case of the Vorticists), a significant role in promoting the Japanese tradition in Russia belongs to aforementioned William George Aston's *A History of Japanese Literature* (1899), translated into Russian in 1904<sup>32</sup>. Among literary reviews devoted to Japanese poetic technique, published in the first decade of the twentieth century, I can mention Grigory Rachinsky's essay on Japanese poetry with examples of several tanka poems (which he translates from German)<sup>33</sup>, N.I. Pozdnyakov's study of Japanese poetry (essentially, an adaptation of William Aston's work)<sup>34</sup>, and, of course, a review of the Russian translation of Aston's book, published in *Vesy* journal, edited by Valery Briusov, signed "Aurelius" (Аврелий) and apparently written by Briusov himself<sup>35</sup>.

Soon, Lafcadio Hearn's books, discussed above, appeared in Russian translation<sup>36</sup>: first in the format of newspaper and magazine publications, e.g. in *Juzhnye Zapiski*, September 1904, in *Niva*, December 1905, and in *Russkaya Mysl*, №12, 1907; and then as books, e.g., *The Soul of Japan* collection, published in Moscow in 1910; *Kwaidan: Japanese*

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<sup>31</sup> See: Benois 1990, 396.

<sup>32</sup> The Russian translation of William G. Aston's *A History of Japanese Literature* (B. Астон, *История японской литературы*) was made by an acclaimed Japanologist (in 1904 yet a student) Vasily Mendrin (1866-1920) and published in Vladivostok in 1904. Ezra Pound read Aston's book in winter of 1914, while working with W.B. Yeats at Stone Cottage on Fenollosa's manuscripts.

<sup>33</sup> Rachinsky G.A. 1908, "Japonskaia poezia", *Severnoe Sijanie*, No. 1. Reprinted as a book in 1914, see: Rachinsky 1914.

<sup>34</sup> See: Pozdnyakov 1905.

<sup>35</sup> Avreliy <Briusov V.Ja.> 1904, "W. Aston. Istorija Japonskoi Literatury. Perevod s anglijskogo V. Mendrina, pod redakciei E. Spalvina. Vladivostok, 1904", *Vesy*, No. 9, 68-70.

<sup>36</sup> Though, not in 1910-11, as Barbara Heldt claims (Heldt 1995, 178), but six years earlier.

*Fairy Tales*, published in Moscow, 1911 and reprinted in 1915; *Japanese Tales, book 1*, published in Wilna, 1911.

Russian Symbolists, inspired by western translations of Japanese poetry, start writing their own adaptations and tanka- and haiku-like poems. Thus, Briusov includes five tanka and two haiku ("Японские танки и хайкай") in his collection *The Dreams of Mankind* (*Сны человечества*, unfinished, the Japanese poems of the collection written in 1913), Andrei Bely publishes his five tanka-like poems (written in 1916-1918) in the collection *The Star* (*Звезда*, 1922). In 1916, Konstantin Balmont travels to Japan. Having spent twelve days in the country, he writes several essays on Japanese culture and Japanese poetry and publishes his tanka translations *Japanese Songs* (*Японские песни*, 1916), as well as his own Japan-inspired cycle of poems *From Japanese Impressions* (*Из японских впечатлений*, 1916), of which I will say a few words below.

The Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), although disturbing for the peaceful fascination with Japan, did not put an end to Japonisme. Instead, I will argue that it rather highlighted certain tensions within the concept itself.

In his memoirs, Alexander Benois remembers that at first, the war could not even be taken seriously:

It was the first real war Russia was dragged into since 1878, however, almost nobody first took it for a real one; almost everybody took it with surprising light-heartedness as a certain trivial reckless undertaking, in which Russia cannot but win. Just imagine, these impudent Japs, yellow-faced monkeys, suddenly meddled in the affairs of such a giant as the enormous Russian state with its population of over one hundred million. I, as well as others, even developed some sort of pity for these "reckless madmen". Indeed, they are going to be defeated at a stroke, there will be nothing left of them; and if the war spreads to their islands, farewell all their wonderful art, all their charming culture, which my friends and I came to like so much over last several years. (Benois 1990, 396)

Emotional as it sounds, Benois' comment shows the extent of the implied distance between the real world of the Japanese state and the "charming" Japanese culture. The war proved that the "outer Orient" is also split and the beautiful world of Hokusai, appropriated by Japonisme, does not really belong to the "real Japan". The split is even more evident in Briusov's correspondence at the time.

Briusov clearly sees the difference between the mythologized "charming culture", the fascinating exotic land, a far-away almost mythical terrain, and, on the other hand,

the “real” Japan, which is a menace<sup>37</sup> and an immediate threat and may consequently be sacrificed despite its artistic achievements. Briusov realizes the paradox and quite straightforwardly formulates his position in a letter during the Russo-Japanese war:

It is time to bomb Tokyo. <...> I love Japanese art. Since my childhood I have been dreaming to see these exotic temples, museums with works by Kionaga, Outomara, Toikuna, Hiroshima<sup>38</sup>, Hokusai and all, all of those whose names sound so strange for an Aryan ear... But let Russian cannonballs crash those temples, those museums and those artists themselves, if they are still there. Let Japan turn into a dead Hellada, into ruins of a better, great past; I am for the barbarians, I am for the Huns, I am for the Russians! Russia must rule in the Far East, the Great Ocean is our lake, and this “duty” outweighs all the Japans, even if there were dozens of them! The future belongs to us, and in the context of this – cosmic, not even global future, what do all the Hokusais and Outomaras mean! (Briusov 1926, 42)

To Briusov, the world of Japanese arts is an imaginary universe, and the status of a “dead Hellada” and the “ruins of a better, bigger past” is more appropriate to it than the status of a political rival. This vision of Japan, to be admired like other dead civilizations, might remind of Aston’s and Hearn’s approach.

Among the Symbolist adherents of Japonisme, Konstantin Balmont, Pound’s and Burlinuk’s contemporary, is probably one of the most interesting figures. Keeping in mind the antagonism of the Russian Futurists towards Symbolism (which I will discuss in Chapter 1), Balmont’s Japan might provide an immediate background for Burlinuk’s Oriental writings.

Like Briusov, Balmont dreams about visiting Japan after his first encounters with the culture of Japonisme, however, his first planned trip (1898) was not realized. Balmont’s reaction to the Russo-Japanese war was similar to that of Benois or Briusov. In a letter to Briusov (12 September, 1907), Balmont writes that he cannot put up with the “horrible defeat at Tsushima”, because he loves the Slavs and hates the “ugly Japanese” (Briusov 1991, 188). However, in his verse, Balmont blames the defeat of Russia not on the Japanese but on the Russian tsar (see “Our tsar”: “Our tsar is Mukden, / Our tsar is Tsushima, / Our tsar is a bloody stain...”). Nine years after these words were written, Balmont makes a trip to Japan, and in what he writes about the country, there is no trace

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<sup>37</sup> For more information on the image of the Japanese enemy, see: Molodiakov 1996.

<sup>38</sup> Briusov’s spelling preserved.



of the former hatred. The country again assumed its image of a wonderful dreamland; the menacing image is gone, as is any indication of a live, “real” Japan.

Balmont goes to Japan in April, 1916. Prior to the trip, he reads extensively about the Japanese culture and even translated several poems. During his twelve-day stay in Japan, the poet visits Yokohama, Tokyo, Kamakura and Nikko. He visits common places of tourist attraction, without stopping anywhere for long, and his previous reading obviously shows in what he writes about the country<sup>39</sup>.

It is interesting to look at what exactly Balmont sees in Japan. In his own words, Balmont immediately “fell in love” with the country, which he describes in exclusively esthetic terms and mostly in superlatives. “All Japan is a chef d’oeuvre, all of it is an embodiment of refinement, rhythm, wit...”, as he writes in a letter to E. Andreeva (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 76). He sees Japan as “a poem-country”, as a live “fairy tale of joy” (Balmont 1991a, 164), as a dream (probably, one of the most frequent words in his Japanese reflections). Everything around him is pure poetry: “The Japanese do not write poetry, they live poetry” (Balmont 1991a, 166), even the light snow-flakes on his eye-lashes turn in his description into little hokku poems (Balmont 1991a, 165). Seven years after, he still cannot forget this “dream-country”:

All Japan to me, since I came to know it, is one dear person, living in a beautiful garden, where I was also given a chance to dream, an exquisite unusual garden, created by the man near a field of labor, which he had cultivated, near a high forest of cryptomeria, which he had groomed, under a harmonious mountain, which he had deified, near a Buddhist temple, full of carven chambers, steeped in the low rumble of bells, revived by the prayer rustle and whisper and low calm booming, reminding of a hive of labor and prayer. (Balmont 1992, 249)

Here, one can find a complete paradigm of Balmont’s vision of Japan: a beautiful garden-country, cultivated and shaped by industrious natives, exotic and harmonious (which equals picture-like) natural background, quite fit for the total harmony and spirituality of the image; and a cameo of the author, who feels at home in this paradise. The impression was so strong that it stayed with Balmont for years. In a much later essay

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<sup>39</sup> A similar case is Balmont’s long essay “The land of Osiris”, which, designed as his notes inspired by the trip to Egypt, in fact contains very little of his own experiences in the country and is mostly built as a retelling of numerous Egyptology works the author became familiar with before the trip.

“Fire the savior: a Japanese tale” (“Огонь спасающий. Японский сказ”, 1934), we still can find a similar picture of total harmony and bliss:

The land of the Rising Sun is an exceptionally beautiful country of volcanoes, mountains, green fields looking like fairy tale valleys seen in dreams, an enchanted land of rare trees, which look as if they are from another planet, most rare flowers, which are pleasant to be looked at for hours, a land of industrious and talented happy people, whom, once you have discovered them, you cannot help falling in love with. Japan is an island world loved by the creative nature. (Balmont 1991b, 179)

The idyllic image of the country obviously highlights the exotic and creates an absolute distance between the reality familiar to the reader and the paradise found by the author. Japan functions as a tool for constructing an alternative world, which is essentially the realm of poetry and arts, the “true” world where the poet must live, remote from any mundane reality. This is a utopic world of total social (joyful labor, happy faces) and esthetic (perfect outlines, colors and rhythms) harmony. This constructed ideal world, however, appears as an ideal setting for the poet’s imaginary self: Balmont sees himself, too, as a character within the frame of a beautiful picture: “a few weeks of happiness, in the frame of fairy-tale beauty” (Balmont 1992, 249).

Presenting the country as a most exotic land for the reader, Balmont simultaneously claims to have found a most natural and familiar environment for his own self: the over-exoticized Japan is not “the other” for the persona of the poet, who totally appropriates this exotic realm as a part of his own world. In this fairy-tale of Japan, Balmont discovers what he found missing in his home country:

Maybe because I am sun-like, I have crossed all of Siberia with handfuls of poems and flowers, but these gloomy Siberians hardly rejoiced seeing me, and I hardly rejoiced seeing them and their severe country. Maybe because I am sun-like, I triumphed the very first moment I arrived in Japan, and I was immediately recognized as theirs, the light one, the one akin to them... (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 89).

Emphasizing his affinity to the exotic paradise, Balmont happily writes that the Japanese appeared to know him well and even to have read his poetry; he enjoys being recognized in the streets. Asking a rhetorical question, why he, a foreigner, was so close to Japan and why even children could understand him without a word, Balmont knows

the answer: "I know. The Sun has married us" (Balmont 1991a, 165). Another link between the poet and the exotic land is the allegedly keen interest of the Japanese in Russian literature in general (and literature to a great extent equals Balmont's "world") which he repeatedly highlights in his letters<sup>40</sup>.

Thus, Balmont metonymically interprets Japan as a part of his own (literary) world. It is important that he does not completely identify with Japan and occasionally reminds his readers that he belongs in a different (bigger and better) culture: "I am Russian and I am European, that is why I like our poetry better and it seems to me to be more perfect in its profundity and meaningfulness" (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 93). Approaching the Oriental land as a European, Balmont readily accepts what he perceives as the "sunny" (the exotic) side of the "external Orient" and domesticates it through references to the familiar culture.

The implicit recognition of the female nature of the Oriental country ("The Sun has married us") is also telling. Japanese women (cat-like, almost extra-terrestrial creatures) are one of his favorite subjects of reflection, and they, too, are presented in esthetic terms, those of outline, color, and proportion: "They are little fairy-tale animals. Not humans, they are some other planet dwellers, looking like little human women. A planet, where everything is different: outlines, colors, motions, proportion laws"<sup>41</sup> (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 75). The symbolic "marriage to Japan" implies a relationship which could probably be better described as that between an artist and his work. Balmont conspicuously enjoys his power of interpretation, as well as that of selecting the proper material for his piece and discarding the inappropriate.

For, it is equally interesting to notice what Balmont does not see in Japan. He refuses to see any signs of people's suffering or hardship, he does not see excruciatingly hard work, he does not see the poor and the broke. Descriptions like "they work so much, and at the same time, they work artistically... Once I was moved to tears watching the beauty of a Japanese peasant's work in a swampy rice field..." (Azadovsky and Djakonova

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<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 81-82, 94.

<sup>41</sup> A similar estheticizing description of the Japanese woman may be found in his essay "Playing of a conch shell" («Игранья раковины»): "Also enchanting in Japanese women, and extraordinary powerful in its impact, is the musical proportion of each movement, each intonation, each glance. Chaos is foreign to them and defeated by them. The measure which characterizes Japanese poetry and Japanese painting, as a divine law, shines in the harmonic beauty of the poetically tender and picturesquely enchanting Japanese woman" (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 90).

1991, 95) most probably do not tell the whole truth about Japanese peasants' life at the time. Even when, years later, he writes an essay in response to the horrible earthquake in Japan (1923), Balmont adds an esthetic touch to the title ("Fire petals") and turns his text almost exclusively into an opportunity to discuss poetry and offer his own translations of several tanka poems<sup>42</sup> (Balmont 1992, 249-253). He does not see (or does not want to see) anything rude or artistically inappropriate around him: "There are no rude scenes here, or I have not seen those"<sup>43</sup> (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 78). Needless to say, this is not the first country in Balmont's travels, which appears to be void of anything Balmont prefers not to see. Thus, in a different context, the image of France was equally idealized in his 1914 essay: "that year in Paris and in France, I did not see any rude scene, anything disproportionate" (Balmont 2010, 237).

Of course, Japan is not the first poem-country in Balmont's writings. Before, he found "people-the artist", for example, in France (Balmont 2010, 234). Japan is not the first "sun-country" in Balmont's life, either. Previously, he discovered the Sun in Egypt, in Oceania, in India, to name but a few sunny lands. Wherever he goes, Balmont unmistakably finds what he wants to find. A "sun-like poet", he is looking for and finding "the Sun" (or, one could probably say, finding himself) everywhere<sup>44</sup>. As he confesses in "The land of Osiris", "Whatever country you go to, you will hear praising of the Sun, you will notice love of the Sun in people's proverbs, in a poet's flowery word, and in the exact formulas of a philosopher" (Balmont 2010, 26). Japan presented to him the very essence of all his previous traveling and all his esthetic search: "In Japan, there is a lot of what had enchanted me in Tonga, Samoa, and Java" (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 78). As an externalization of his own "sun-like nature", Balmont's exotic Japan becomes a way to establish his own esthetics and his rejection of the ugly, the crude and the dark.

Summarizing Balmont's Japan-related oeuvre, I want to emphasize two points. First, if Goncharov's travel notes are justly seen as a step away from the romantic exoticism, Balmont seems to have made a step backwards. Not only does he indulge in

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<sup>42</sup> A similar example may be found in Balmont's 1934 essay "Fire the savior", which but briefly mentions the pretext (a disastrous typhoon in Japan) and proceeds as a retelling of a beautiful legend once narrated by Lafcadio Hearn (see Balmont 1991b).

<sup>43</sup> Similar words in the "Flying essay" (1916): "in the whole country I have not encountered a single rude episode, have not seen any threatening or abrupt movements, have not heard a single rude sound either in men's or women's voices" (Azadovsky and Djakonova 1991, 87).

<sup>44</sup> See also his anthology *Let's Be Like the Sun* (*Будем как солнце*, 1903).

most exotic and exaggerated interpretations, but he also naively presents the exotic of the Orient as a part of his own world. This metonymic appropriation seems to inform the basis of Balmont's "Orientalism" and, as I will argue in Chapter 2, a not too different approach may be found in the futurist writings of David Burliuk, an ostensible adversary of Symbolism and of Konstantin Balmont, in particular.

### 3. Italian Futurism: Oriental dimension

Having mentioned in the very beginning certain typological parallels between Burliuk and Pound, I will now take a brief look at the common ancestor of Russian Futurists and English Vorticists. A more detailed discussion of the complexities involved in both schools' relationships with Italian Futurism will follow in Chapters 1 and 3, respectively. Meanwhile, I will focus on the treatment of Oriental motifs in some of the core texts of the Italian avant-garde school.

In a recently published comprehensive anthology<sup>45</sup> of Italian Futurism, which includes a wide range of Italian Futurists' projects (manifestos, theoretical writings and creative works), the editor Lawrence Rainey thus comments on the historical significance of these texts: "the concept of the 'avant-garde' drove the history of twentieth-century art and culture. Nothing did more to shape that concept than Futurism..." (Rainey 2009, 1) Futurism, according to Rainey, "became a paradigm for countless movements that followed, some embodying the most vital currents among the twentieth-century arts (Vorticism, Dadaism, and Surrealism are only a few of them)" (Rainey 2009, 1). Noteworthy, Rainey puts Pound's Vorticism<sup>46</sup> the first in the list. If Italian Futurismo is a paradigm for further numerous movements, including Vorticism and Russian Futurism, which are of primary interest to my thesis, the more interesting it is to look into the Oriental dimension of the Italian project.

Traditionally, the birth of Futurism is associated with 20 February, 1909<sup>47</sup>, the date of publication of the first Futurism Manifesto, signed by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Emilio Angelo Carlo Marinetti) in Parisian *Le Figaro*. Approaching the international aspect of the Futurist enterprise, it is interesting to note that the Italian founder of western-European Futurism, who published his manifesto in France (and in French), was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt. In the Manifesto, Marinetti addresses all the living people in the world. The world responded in a manner most probably never anticipated by Marinetti: in the following years, numerous national futurisms, more or less loosely connected with the Italian movement, emerged all over the world. Futurism-oriented

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<sup>45</sup> *Futurism: an Anthology*, edited by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, published by Yale University Press (2009).

<sup>46</sup> Vladimir Feshchenko also defines Vorticism as a movement in the "short but turbulent history of English Futurism" (Feshchenko 2009, 327).

<sup>47</sup> Actually, the text was first published in Bologna, Italy, two weeks before the French edition, on 5 February, 1909, in *Gazzetta dell'Emilia*.

groups appeared in Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Great Britain, Russia, Japan, Chile, and Argentina. Futurism started as both a national and an international, outward-oriented movement. Culture dialogue (understood in different ways, though) was always seen as an integral aspect of the movement. "From Italy we are flinging this to the world, our manifesto..." (Rainey 2009, 52), writes Marinetti and it is not merely a figure of speech, for he does tour Europe (if not the whole world) and, which is significant for my current topic, visits both Britain and Russia, flinging around manifestos.

Defining the essential core of the Futurist project, Marjorie Perloff starts her *Futurist Moment* study with an analysis of Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay's *La Prose du Transsiberien* (1913), an account of a mysterious Eastbound quest. It is worth noting that neither Cendrars nor Delaunay identified themselves as Futurists, moreover, Cendrars explicitly opposed his art to Marinetti's "commercial agitation" (Perloff 1986, 7). However, Perloff sees Cendrars' Eastward pilgrimage text as a "hub of the Futurist wheel that spun over Europe in the years of avant guerre" (Perloff 1986, 7).

Totally agreeing with Perloff's strategy of highlighting the common in seemingly diverse literary schools of early twentieth century, I would also like to emphasize one more aspect apparent in *La Prose du Transsiberien*. Not only does it illustrate the "curious tension between nationalism and internationalism that is at the heart of avant guerre consciousness" (Perloff 1986, 6), but, with the reference to the transsiberian railway and the inclusion of its map (from Moscow to the Sea of Japan) on top of the text (with la Tour Eiffel at the bottom), it also indicates the East-West dimension in the structure of what Perloff sees as the "emblem of <...> the Futurist moment" (Perloff 1986, 3).

Continuing Perloff's argumentation and foreshadowing some aspects of my analysis, I would also like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the mysterious East-bound quest that Cendrars undertakes in the text is never completed: the character never reaches the Sea of Japan. The abrupt and unmotivated rupture in the course of the journey to the East and the sudden spatial shift to Paris is, probably, as emblematic as the eastward orientation of this proto-futurist text. Both Burliuk and Pound, as I will show in my thesis, moving Eastwards (whether literally or metaphorically), always end up in the West.

The East/West frame of reference, even if absolutely not the most essential in Italian Futurismo, is, nevertheless, declared in the very first lines of the Manifesto:

We had stayed up all night – my friends and I – beneath mosque lamps hanging from the ceiling... On the opulent oriental rugs, we had crushed our ancestral lethargy, arguing all the way to the final frontiers of logic and blackening reams of paper with delirious writings. (Rainey 2009, 49)

Interestingly, Marinetti starts his famous text in an Oriental environment, with references to “mosque lamps” and “opulent oriental rugs”, which become symbolically opposed to the Western tradition of reason and logic and “the errant mathematics of our transitory eyes” (Rainey 2009, 50). This rational tradition, the “ancestral lethargy”, according to Marinetti, is to be abandoned, and the limits of reason and logic – transcended. The picture outside the room, as described by the author, correlates with this conflict: the morning Sun, rising in the East, defeats the age-long shadows of the familiar tradition<sup>48</sup>.

The same conflict is replicated in the central episode, which constitutes the core of the Manifesto. Narrating the story of the genesis of Futurism, Marinetti refers to the famous symbolic car-crash episode. The accident, which occurred due to two bicyclists “wobbling like two lines of reasoning, equally persuasive and yet contradictory” (Rainey 2009, 50), is described in a language of corporeal imagery suggesting a metaphorical second birth<sup>49</sup>, with references to “maternal ditch” and slime, which reminded Marinetti of “the sacred black breast of <his> Sudanese nurse” (Rainey 2009, 50)<sup>50</sup>. Thus, avoiding the erroneous “lines of reasoning” (western rationality?), he happily reemerges, the umbilical cord is cut – “slashed with the red-hot iron of joy” (Rainey 2009, 50) – and the new-born is reminded of his Abyssinian roots. In the accident, the car lost its “heavy chassis of good sense” and its “soft upholstery of comfort” (Rainey 2009, 50), metonymically replicating its owner’s ‘riddance’ of the old Western heritage.

The insistence on breaking with the rationalist Western tradition, “our ancestral lethargy”, repeatedly occurs in Marinetti’s texts. For example, in *Let’s Murder the Moonlight!* (11 April, 1909), Marinetti encourages his Futurist friends to “flee the city of

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<sup>48</sup> “There, on the earth, the earliest dawn! Nothing can match the splendor of the sun’s red sword, skirmishing for the first time, our thousand-year old shadows” (Rainey 2009, 49).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Khlebnikov’s “Kurgan Svyatogora” with its physical (physiological?) description of the emergence of the spirit of Asia through the cleft in the continent. What was personal in Marinetti’s case (the realization of the Abyssinian roots at the moment of the catastrophe), in Khlebnikov is a common national mythological identification.

<sup>50</sup> “Oh! Maternal ditch, nearly full of muddy water! ... I gulped down your bracing slime, which reminded me of the sacred black breast of my Sudanese nurse... ” (Rainey 2009, 50)



Paralysis” (Rainey 2009, 54) and the “immense intoxication of the old European sun<sup>51</sup>” and establishes an imaginary alternative world: the peak of Gorisankar, “summit of the world” (Rainey 2009, 54), which is obviously supposed to sound Sanskrit-like. The narrative follows the Eastward direction: “We crossed the ruins of Europe and entered Asia” (Rainey 2009, 58); it leads to the Persian plateau, the “sublime altar of the world” (Rainey 2009, 58), and then proceeds further on, across the Ganges, to the coast of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean itself allies with the Futurists in their final battle with the “disgusting leprosy” of the cities of Gout<sup>52</sup> and Paralysis, the battle which promises a new life for the land, cleansed by the Oriental tide: “Oh, great Indian Ocean, now is the time for you to reconquer the land!” (Rainey 2009, 61). Besides, the whole story of Futurists’ murdering the moonlight and cleansing the Earth is an allusion to the Bhagavad Gita and the story of Ardjuna’s fight against the children of the moon, as Rainey writes in his comments on the text (Rainey 2009, 525).

In *Electrical War* (1911), Marinetti continues his search for an alternative to the old and outdated Western culture and finds parallels between the Futurist system of values and that typical of the Eastern, in this case Japanese, tradition. He declares the kinship of Futurist esthetics and the ethical code of Japan: “it is from the Far East that the plainest and most violent of Futurist symbols comes” (Rainey 2009, 100). Marinetti refers to an allegedly Japanese tradition of selling coal made of human bones:

The Japanese merchants who direct this absolutely Futurist commerce buy no skulls, evidently, because they lack the necessary qualities. I share their contempt for those poor caskets of traditional wisdom! (Rainey 2009, 100)

Interpreting the Japanese practice, Marinetti cannot help investing the Japanese with his own ideas and attitudes, emphasizing their rupture from the traditional Western values. He even speaks for the skeletons, claiming to know exactly what they are supposed to feel under the circumstances:

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. the wars on the Sun waged by Russian avant-gardists: Malevich’s “Black Square”, the Futurist opera “Victory over the Sun”, Ivnev’s *Sun in the coffin*, Mayakovsky’s “An extraordinary adventure...”, to name a few.

<sup>52</sup> Goût (fr.) – taste. Cf. the title of the Russian Futurist manifesto, *Slap in the Face of Public Taste*.

Instead the merchants buy great mounds of other bones to send to Japan, and from a distance the Benikou station looks to travelers on the Trans-Siberian railroad like a gigantic gray and white pyramid: skeletons of heroes who do not hesitate to be crushed in mortars by their own sons, their relatives, or their fellow citizens, to be brutally vomited out by Japanese artillery against the pale faces of hostile armies. (Rainey 2009, 100)

Metonymically Marinetti transforms the picture of the conflict into an ultimate battle waged by the Eastern heroes against the “pale faces” of European bourgeois culture. Needless to say, he is on the former’s side:

Glory to the indomitable ashes of man, that comes to life in cannons!  
My friends, let us applaud this noble example of synthetic violence.  
Let us applaud this lovely slap in the face<sup>53</sup> of all the stupid cultivators of sepulchral little kitchen gardens. (Rainey 2009, 100)

Marinetti’s references to the East do not imply any serious study or understanding of Indian, Japanese, or any other Oriental culture, though. Instead, he relies on generally familiar stereotypical assumptions of opposing the over-rational West to the irrational and spiritual East, endowing the exotic Orient with his own “Futurist” values and using it to his own ends in his own, essentially Western, battle with the inheritors of the tradition he hates, with the “stupid cultivators of sepulchral little kitchen gardens”. Domesticated Japan in this context appears not as the other, but rather as the familiar, or as an ally in a conflict within the European culture. In this respect, as I will show in the following chapters, Marinetti is not very different from the Russian Futurists or even from Pound and the Vorticists (although the respective “conflicts” will be of different kinds and will involve different means of resolution). Another important side of Marinetti’s Orientalism is that the latter does not really show any significant breaks in the “out-dated” tradition, as the Orient appears in a largely generalized and essentialized form, which is not exceptional for antebellum Europe, and which may be easily considered in Saidean terms.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. “Slap in the Face of Public Taste” of the Russian Futurists.

## 4. Theoretical and methodological framework

In my thesis, I discuss two types of Orientalism, which are characteristic of Ezra Pound's and David Burliuk's Japan-related writings respectively. On the one hand, the difference may seem obvious and accounted for by two incomparable cultural backgrounds: Pound's case may be seen as that of a Westerner confronted/fascinated by an unknown distant other (a pattern well outlined by Said), while Burliuk represents a country, which has a history of searching for self-identification between two immediately adjacent "geographical" poles (in Chaadaev terms). However, the task appears to be more complex: there is much more to Pound's enterprise than generalizing the irrational effeminate Orient and Burliuk's image of Japan reveals more than a further development of Chaadaev's or Soloviov's civilization typology. In order to better understand both projects, I suggest looking at them from within and analyzing their implicit goals and rhetoric mechanisms involved.

In most general terms, the logic of my thesis is predicated on Roman Jakobson's vision of the metaphor vs. metonymy opposition. In his famous essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" (written in 1954 and first published in the *Fundamentals of Language* in 1956), Jakobson discusses the linguistic side of aphasia; however, his argument gradually goes far beyond medical (or even purely linguistic) issues.

Jakobson describes two kinds of aphasic disturbances, which he defines as similarity and contiguity disorders. As he himself recognizes, his logic is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's dichotomy of language operations, i.e. those involving the mechanisms of concurrence and concatenation respectively. Thus, following de Saussure, Jakobson describes combination and selection as two modes of arrangement of linguistic signs: "'the former is in presentia: it is based on two or several terms jointly present in an actual series,' whereas the latter 'connects terms in absentia as members of a virtual mnemonic series'" (Jakobson 1987a, 99). Linguistic signs constituting a context are accordingly perceived "in a state of contiguity, while in a substitution set signs are linked by various degrees of similarity which fluctuate between the equivalence of synonyms and the common core of antonyms" (Jakobson 1987a, 99). Consequently, aphasic disturbances are classified "depending on whether the major deficiency lies in selection and substitution, with relative stability of combination and contexture; or conversely, in

combination and contexture, with relative retention of normal selection and substitution" (Jakobson 1987a, 100).

Jakobson subsequently associates the dichotomy of the two modes with two major tropes, metaphor and metonymy, seeing those not as merely poetic devices, but as two opposite poles of language structure, as well as of any semiotic structure in general:

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second. (Jakobson 1987a, 109-110)

Moreover, considering the opposition in terms of paradigmatic/syntagmatic relations, Jakobson starts associating different aspects of linguistic behavior and different literary traditions with either the metaphoric or metonymic kind. Thus, he notes that the former is generally characteristic of verse patterns, which "require a compulsory parallelism between adjacent lines" (Jakobson 1987a, 110-111), while the latter, for example, of the "realist" prose: "Following the path of contiguous relationships, the Realist author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time. He is fond of synecdochic details" (Jakobson 1987a, 111).

Not only does Jakobson roughly link the metonymic approach with prose and the metaphoric one with poetry, he also shows that the prevalence of either metaphor or metonymy may be traced in various literary schools, as well as in visual arts. Jakobson, for example, refers to the metonymic aspects of cubism, the metaphoric nature of surrealism, Griffith's metonymic *mise-en-scènes* and Chaplin's metaphoric montage. The dichotomy, according to the scholar, "appears to be of primal significance and consequence for all verbal behavior and for human behavior in general" (Jakobson 1987a, 112). Jakobson repeatedly insists on the universality of the opposition: "competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process, be it intrapersonal or social" (Jakobson 1987a, 113).

Jakobson's scheme with its far-reaching implications has been tested on a wide range of authors from Dickens to Hemingway and Shaw<sup>54</sup>. David Lodge argues that

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Taylor Stoehr's *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance* (1965), Richard Ohmann's *Shaw: The Style and the Man* (1962), David M. Raabe's "Hemingway's

metaphor organizes much of modernist prose, e.g., the works by Joyce, Woolf or Stein (Lodge 1977). Of special interest to my topic is, of course, the discussion of metaphor/metonymy in Pound criticism. Although many scholars recognize the essential role of metaphor in Pound's oeuvre (Hugh Kenner, Earl Miner, Ming Xie, Northrop Frye, Martin A. Kayman, Christine Brooke-Rose among them<sup>55</sup>), there is, however, a group of researchers who tend to consider Pound in the frame of metonymic writing (Herbert Schneidau, John S. Childs, Max Nänny, Line Henriksen<sup>56</sup>), of whom I will speak in the next paragraph of the Introduction.

In my work, I will use Jakobsonian terms "metaphor" and "metonymy" in a broad sense, consistent with Jakobson's own use of the words. The applicability of the terms to a wide range of phenomena was also proved by Lakoff and Johnson. To them, these terms describe not only familiar language structures, but also the way people conceive of the world and the way they act. Thus, metaphor "is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3). Equally, "metonymic concepts (like THE PART FOR THE WHOLE) are part of the ordinary, everyday way we think and act as well as talk" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 37). My understanding of the difference between these two basic principles of language operation very much relies on the following distinction outlined by Lakoff and Johnson:

Metaphor and metonymy are different kinds of processes. Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another<sup>57</sup>. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 36)

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anatomical metonymies" (Raabe 1999). See also Jutka Dévényi's *Metonymy and Drama: Essays on Language and Dramatic Strategy* (London, 1996).

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Kenner 1985, Miner 1956, Miner 1966, Xie 1999, Kayman 1983, Brooke-Rose 1971.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Schneidau 1976, Childs 1986, Nänny 1980, Henriksen 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Murray Knowles and Rosamund Moon also provide a very similar distinction of the cognitive nature of the two figures: "Metonymy and metaphor also have fundamentally different functions. Metonymy is about referring: a method of naming or identifying something by mentioning something else which is a component part or symbolically linked. In contrast, metaphor is about understanding and interpretation: it is a means to understand or explain one phenomenon by describing it in terms of another" (Knowles and Moon 2006, 54).

More concisely the same idea is expressed by Hugh Bredin: "Metaphor creates the relation between its objects, while metonymy presupposes that relation" (Bredin 1984, 57). In a little more extended manner, the same principle underlies Ming Xie's vision of the "metaphoric mode" and the "metonymic mode":

Briefly, "metaphor" has come to stand for a poetic practice that does not implicate a prior system of figural connection or reference. As such, the metaphorical mode seeks newly discovered relations or affinities between apparently free-floating or unconnected elements to establish a new equivalence, so that separate or disparate elements (images, for example) would resemble a pattern of free-floating mosaics made coherent and meaningful, mostly through juxtaposition, within the immediate context of perception and comparison. In contrast to the metaphorical mode, "metonymy" (like "synecdoche), being only part of an implied larger whole, would entail the existence of a prior framework or repertory of rhetorical figures and implied meanings in order for both the poet and the reader to recognize and reconstruct the context, and thus the meaning, of a poem. Thus the metonymic mode as a whole would also include allusion as one of the important ways in which previously established associative contexts may support and actualize local and partial elements in current discourse which have been selected from a larger system of conventionalized formalisms and connotations. (Xie 1999, 66)

The two modes of presenting otherness that I will discuss in my thesis, i.e. Burlinuk's and Pound's image of Japan, roughly correspond, as I will argue, to these two language poles. One will mostly be about understanding and interpretation, whereas the other about reference to existing, "previously established" contexts.

Among other theoretical concepts, I will draw on Lawrence Venuti's idea of two basic kinds of translation strategies, i.e. those of foreignization and domestication<sup>58</sup>. Venuti uses the terms foreignization and domestication to define the difference between two approaches with regard to the degree of language "transparency" in translation. The former violates the conventions of the target language in order to convey the message, while the latter aims at making the language of translation as transparent and as corresponding to the language and culture of the target reader as possible (Venuti 2008). I am using the terms in a metaphoric manner and applying them not to translation of texts, but rather to the process of "cultural translation", i.e. representing the other to the

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<sup>58</sup> See Venuti's seminal study *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, initially published in 1995 and (as a substantially revised version) in 2008.

familiar target audience. As I will show, the concepts prove helpful in the analysis of mechanisms involved in constructing the image of the Oriental other: the representation may tend to either foreignize the image (e.g., exaggerate the exotic side of it) or domesticate the latter (make it familiarized or “transparent” in the target reader’s language and culture).

It is impossible today to talk about the East-West relationship in literary works without a reference to Edward Said (apropos, one of Venuti’s teachers at Columbia University) and his *Orientalism* (1978). Said’s contribution to the analysis of the Western interpretation of the Orient is unquestionable and his analysis of the Orient as a Western discourse signified a dramatic shift in the whole course of modern Oriental studies.

But, however ground-breaking and influential Said’s legacy is, there have been critical arguments as regards the universality of Said’s conclusions. One of the most insightful belongs to James Clifford and is presented in his “On Orientalism” in *The Predicament of Culture* (1988). Recognizing the significance of Said’s *Orientalism* as a “serious exercise in textual criticism and, most fundamentally, a series of important if tentative epistemological reflections on general styles and procedures of cultural discourse” (Clifford 2001, 21), Clifford, nevertheless, points at a number of inconsistencies in the scholar’s thought. Thus, Clifford argues that “Said’s humanist perspectives do not harmonize with his use of methods derived from Foucault, who is of course a radical critic of humanism” (Clifford 2001, 27). Besides, even as a “humanist”, Said overlooks “a wide range of Western humanist assumptions”, as well as the “discursive alliances of knowledge and power produced by anticolonial and particularly nationalist movements” (Clifford 2001, 29). The methodological problem of *Orientalism*, according to Clifford, lies in deriving “a ‘discourse’ directly from a ‘tradition’” (Clifford 2001, 30) and in combining “within the same analytical totality both personal statements and discursive statements even though they may be lexically identical” (Clifford 2001, 31). As a side-note, Clifford remarks that “Said’s work frequently relapses into the essentializing modes it attacks and is ambivalently enmeshed in the totalizing habits of Western humanism” (Clifford 2001, 33). Sharing the spirit of Said’s “attack on essences”, Clifford suggests questioning a much wider range of cultural and social totalities.

Similar concerns about Said’s “homogenizing view of humanity” are expressed by Anthony Milner and and Andrew Gerstle, who identify a somewhat negative effect of Said’s authority on Oriental studies:

Said's *Orientalism* has encouraged a sense of embarrassment among those scholars concerned with the investigation of culture. In drawing attention to the essentializing tendencies of some writing about Asia and to its potential political consequences, he made us wary of delineating cultural difference. (Milner and Gerstle 1994, 1)

The applicability of Said's theory to Japanese studies also raises a number of problems, some of which are identified in Jan Walsh Hokenson's *Japan, France and East-West Esthetics* (2004). Praising Said's pioneer concept of Orientalism as a "product of Western discourse", as a "created body of theory and knowledge whose effects pervade Western consciousness" (Hokenson 2004, 23), Hokenson welcomes a "new analytic method and lexicon for East-West work" in all disciplines, including that of Japonisme. According to Hokenson, the typology of Said's Orientalism is useful in Japonisme studies, as it allows "for quick, clear distinctions between such writers as Loti and Claudel: the former's novels reflect ... some of the basest aspects of "orientalist" colonial paternalism, with a contemptuous feminization of the subject, whereas the latter's poetry and prose are admiring enactments of the Japanese aesthetic in the French text." (Hokenson 2004, 23-24) Thus, an agreement with Said turns into an implicit argument, suggesting that differences and distinctions do matter.

Hokenson lists three kinds of objections commonly raised against Said. The first one concerns homogenizing both the Orient and the Occident:

Said has often been criticized for giving a monologic or unitary view of Orientalism by presenting the West and its Other as two monolithic blocks, thus failing to allow for variants in individuals, periods, milieus or other subsets of the "West" and its "Orient". (Hokenson 2004, 24)

In this context, Hokenson, in particular, mentions French avant-garde writers who "positioned themselves in opposition to the French pole, indeed to the very discursive frame they are trying to surrender with new means" (Hokenson 2004, 24), and suggests that the bi-polar Saidean opposition be replaced by a "triadic model" (Hokenson 2004, 24).

Second, continues Hokenson, "it has been objected that although Said rightly explicated the several ways in which most Western writers have represented the Orient as the inferior female, seductively exotic and submissive, in fact many other writers, fewer in number but no less significant or widely read, did not." (Hokenson 2004, 24)



Hokenson's final argument attacks the homogenizing image of the Orient and emphasizes the specificity of Japan: "although the terms of Orientalism are used today for almost any Western writing on Asia, the primary subject of Said's critique is Islamic and Hindu regions" (Hokenson 2004, 25). Certain generalizations offered by Said "apply to perhaps every area of the Far East except Japan" (Hokenson 2004, 25); Japan, which was never colonized, does not "fit into the established rubrics of the Orientalist enterprise" (Hokenson 2004, 25).

Arguing that "postcolonial theories of cultural hegemony do not serve the study of japonisme" (Hokenson 2004, 25), Hokenson observes that "one does not find a collective or consistent effort to characterize things Japanese as irrational malformations of the reasoning mind" (Hokenson 2004, 25). Unlike many other specimens of Orientalist writing, like those on French Africa or Indochina, "accounts of Japan are cautious, always surprised, often astonished at 'les merveilles' of this intricately sophisticated culture" (Hokenson 2004, 25).

Without claiming to negate Said's thesis, Hokenson still remarks that "the presence of geopolitics, however, does not diminish, indeed it can help clarify the artistic experiment that is the focus of the text. A japoniste text is many things but it is always and primarily a field of interaction between the Eastern and the Western art or poetics." (Hokenson 2004, 26)

Addressing modern comparative literary studies involving East-West relationship, Hokenson suggests considering each individual text "as a ratio between Western Orientalism and individual artistic concerns and practices" (Hokenson 2004, 26) and apprehending "literary japonisme as a creative endeavor, inflected differently by different writers" (Hokenson 2004, 26). In this vein, focusing on differences and distinctions, I will pursue my analysis of Burliuk's and Pound's Japan.

## 5. Previous research and dissertation structure

Above, I have already mentioned a trend in Pound studies which tends to consider Pound's method as that based primarily on metonymy. I will now take a brief look at the latter trend of criticism, as it presents a problem for my metaphoric vision of Pound. I will mostly focus on Herbert Schneidau's argumentation, as he was the first to apply Jakobson's dichotomy to Pound studies, the rest of the listed in the previous paragraph scholars being heavily (and openly) indebted to him.

In his highly original and innovative essay "Wisdom past Metaphor" (1976), Schneidau provocatively discusses Pound's esthetic as a typical case of Jakobsonian similarity disorder (understood, of course, metaphorically), i.e. as a strongly metonymical arrangement, "a revolutionary break-away from metaphorical habits in composing poems" (Schneidau 1976, 20). Schneidau's arguments include Pound's alleged dissatisfaction with all similarity-based structures (figures of analogy, metaphor, rhyme, regular meter), the prose orientation of his verse, the alleged juxtapository nature of the ideogrammic method, and the abundance of ellipsis in the poet's texts.

Schneidau's insightful observations are somewhat weakened by the strategy of generalizing. Thus, he equals Pound's 1910 call for the "language beyond metaphor" with a "way out of conventional notions of metaphor" in general (Schneidau 1976, 16). He equally generalizes on Pound's alleged "irritable attitude toward analogy, a similarity function" (Schneidau 1976, 19). However, what Schneidau does not mention is Pound's numerous appreciating references to metaphor or his explicit and recurrent approval of Aristotle's view of metaphor as a "hall-mark of genius"<sup>59</sup>, e.g., in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910). Nor does Schneidau mention Pound's denigrating reference to metonymy in "Vorticism" (1914). In fact, Pound's attitude toward analogy can hardly be generalized as based on the latter's similarity function. Pound denounces analogy, as well as "symbols" in their late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century semantics due to the "fixed" value they convey (when x strictly equals y). "The Imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, b, and x in algebra", writes Pound in "Vorticism" in 1914 (Pound 1970a, 84), which directly contradicts Schneidau's Jakobson-based judgment that Pound's "words have 'no capacity to assume additional, shifted meanings associated by similarity

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<sup>59</sup> Cf.: "The apt use of metaphor, arising, as it does, from a swift perception of relations, is the hall-mark of genius': thus says Aristotle" (Pound 1910, 166).

with their primary meanings” (Schneidau 1976, 19), as aphasics with a combination disorder “can grasp words only literally, not metaphorically” (Schneidau 1976, 19). Pound’s words/images are variables, as the poet proclaims in the “Vorticism” essay; interesting examples of the play of “shifted meanings” (including the ambiguity of pronouns) may be found, e.g., in Christine Brooke-Rose’s analysis of the “Usura Canto” (Brooke-Rose 1976). Pound’s vision of metaphor will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of the dissertation.

Similarly, Schneidau’s observation of Pound’s “irritability about the tendencies of rhyme and meter to degenerate into stock devices” (Schneidau 1976, 21) is absolutely justified, but, nevertheless, it can hardly be taken as evidence of a general “similarity disorder” in Pound’s esthetic or the poet’s total disapproval of all parallelism-based structures<sup>60</sup>. In fact, Pound’s “irritation” leads not to total rejection of rhyme and meter, but to a radical rethinking of both, e.g., to the so called “subject rhymes”, structuring *The Cantos*<sup>61</sup>, and to complex rhythmical patterns of free verse, as those announced in “A Few Don’ts” (1913). For a brilliant discussion of Pound’s use of various kinds of semantic, phonetic and grammar parallelism (all of them representing “similarity” figures), see, for example, Brooke-Rose’s structural analysis of the “Usura Canto” (Brooke-Rose 1976).

Thus, in the above-mentioned example Schneidau confuses Pound’s concrete disapproval of certain kinds of rhetoric (i.e. those based on analogy) with a generalized distrust of similarity. A similar generalizing pattern may be found in the scholar’s next example, where Schneidau refers to Pound’s comments on Fenollosa and, in particular, to the interpretation of the Chinese *ming* character:

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<sup>60</sup> Schneidau’s own earlier work, *Ezra Pound: the Image and the Real* (1969), demonstrates a more balanced approach to the issues of metaphor and polysemanticism in Pound’s writing. Schneidau recognizes that Pound’s interpretation of metaphor foreshadows Fenollosa: “his call for ‘language beyond metaphor’ anticipates Fenollosa’s demonstration that ‘metaphor is more than analogy’” (Schneidau 1969, 72). Here, Schneidau’s view of “Pound’s Imagist principle that a few words should be made to carry a great burden of meaning” (Schneidau 1969, 72) and his quoting Pound’s famous dictum (“Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree”, a quote from Pound’s 1929 essay “How to Read” [see Pound 1968, 23]) make the scholar’s later references to Pound’s metonymical inability to go beyond the literal meaning of the word somewhat questionable.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Hugh Kenner’s view on the abundance of rhyme in Pound: “There are subject-rhymes, two sensibilities may rhyme, there are culture-rhymes” (Kenner 1971, 92); “The *Cantos* affords a thesaurus of subject-rhymes” (Kenner 1971, 93).

I have suggested the *special* delight with which Pound would have read Fenollosa's discussion of ming: the ideograph of sun together with moon. "It serves as verb, noun, adjective. Thus you write literally, 'The sun and moon of the cup' for 'the cup's brightness.' Placed as a verb, you write 'the cup sun-and-moons'... or in a *weakened thought*, 'is like sun, i.e. shines.'" Hence, if the ideograph is thought of as basically and primarily verbal, the force is predicative. If it is merely a notation of the similarity of two forms of shining, the force is lost: it is "weakened", or merely substitutive. (Schneidau 1976, 19)

Once again, the reason for what Pound calls "weakness" in the quoted extract lies not in the general issue of similarity of forms, but rather in the concrete use of copula "is", which he, following Fenollosa, tends to see as an empty substitute for an action verb. For more discussion of the issue, see Chapter 3 of the dissertation.

I cannot agree more with Schneidau's contextualization of the issue of metaphor in Pound's cultural program:

Pound's rejection of modes of poetry too facilely constructed on metaphor is of a piece with his desire to jettison the intellectual impedimenta that have been hung around our necks by some centuries of superficial, misguided humanism and scientism and positivism. (Schneidau 1976, 20)

Especially, if we italicize "*too facilely constructed on metaphor*", so that the statement would not imply a sweeping comment on *all* metaphor-based poetry. Indeed, as Pound's famous recurrent rejection of "rhetoric" does not mean that he does not use rhetorical figures himself<sup>62</sup> but rather suggests polemics with outdated "intellectual impedimenta" of "misguided humanism and scientism and positivism", so his critique of allegory, analogy and symbol also implies a very definite historically-specific reading of these terms. Even if there is certain "contempt for equivalence-structures", it aims at the outdated conventional use of the structures, not at equivalence per se.

Schneidau's arguments for Pound's alleged "metonymic" inclination, which are based on references to Fenollosa, also leave questions. Thus, quoting Fenollosa in an attempt to prove the metonymic bias in the scholar's thought, Schneidau proceeds with a generalization on Pound's ideogrammic method:

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<sup>62</sup> For discussion of Pound's alleged "anti-rhetoric" argumentation, see, e.g., Coats 2009.

'The true formula for thought is: The cherry tree is *all that it does*. Its correlated verbs compose it.' This principle, not that of similarities among things, is at the basis of the ideogrammic method. (Schneidau 1976, 17).

However, it may be argued that Fenollosa's statement in fact points at the paradigmatic nature of the image (a tree is *all that it does*), which implies a selection of active verbs, i.e. a metaphoric structure in Jakobson's use of the terms. Not to mention the constantly recurring praising of metaphor in Fenollosa's text, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3.

Schneidau's cubism-related argument does not seem sufficiently grounded either. The fact that Jakobson associates cubism with the metonymical type of art, added to the fact that Hugh Kenner sees Pound's poems from *Lustra* as reminding of cubism esthetic, does not yet seem to be sufficient proof for the "connection between metonymic literalism and the fresh primordially Pound sought" (Schneidau 1976, 25-26). The relationship between Vorticism and cubism is a complex issue, which I cannot fully present in the current work, however, Chapter 3 will provide a brief discussion of the Vorticists' (and, in particular, Wyndham Lewis's) ambivalent attitude toward cubism and Picasso (one of the key problems being the static nature of the cubist art, as opposed to the dynamism of the Vortex). Pound's own view of Vorticism as quite distinct from cubism (in the manner the former attempts to revive "the sense of form") may be also illustrated by the poet's interview to Donald Hall in the *Paris Review* in 1962 (Hall 1962).

Schneidau's final argument in favor of the metonymic nature of Pound's "disorder" concerns the poet's use of ellipsis, which the scholar interprets as "intolerance of redundancy" (Schneidau 1976, 25). Recognizing that in the *Cantos* one may indeed find "repetition and redundancies" or "other similarity structures such as metaphor" (Schneidau 1976, 25), Schneidau, nevertheless, argues that those similarity structures are "subordinated as it were to a more powerful principle, call it what we will: contexture seems as good a name as any" (Schneidau 1976, 25). Unfortunately, he does not provide proof of this subordination. One, however, might suggest that the use of ellipsis, which Schneidau sees as an indicator of Pound's "metonymic disorder", is in fact subordinated to a more general principle, i.e. that of ideogrammic method (the method will be discussed in Chapter 3), the core of which, according to many Pound scholars<sup>63</sup>, is metaphor. Ellipsis in the *Cantos* may as well be interpreted not as an "attempt to avoid

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<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Kenner 1985, Miner 1966, Brooke-Rose 1971.

redundancy" (Schneidau 1976, 25), but as an attempt to break contiguity, set the image free of its immediate context, metaphorically link it to numerous other contexts and thus highlight the paradigmatic nature of Pound's enterprise.

John Steven Childs follows Schneidau's train of thought in his *Metonymy, Imagism, and the Foundations of Pound's Style* (Childs 1986). Like in Schneidau's case, Childs's argumentation tends to over-generalize Pound's negative statements on metaphor, rather than to embed them in a concrete historical and literary context. "The contrast between a poetic system which is animated by metaphor and one which is animated by metonymy is conveniently illustrated by the contrary projects of Symbolism and Imagism," writes Childs (Childs 1986, 36). Once again, like in Schneidau's text, Pound's opposition to the Symbolist (ab)use of metaphor is equaled to his general preference of the metonymic mode. Pound's accusation of the Symbolists for "degrading" the symbol to the status of metonymy" (in "Vorticism", 1914) is also conveniently forgotten.

Like Schneidau's emphasis on Pound's "metonymic" ellipsis (Schneidau 1976) or Childs's interpretation of Pound's "metonymic" deletion<sup>64</sup>, Line Henriksen's statement that "the general need for reduction is ... synecdochic and thus ultimately metonymic" (Henriksen 2006, 171) as an argument for the metonymic nature of Pound's epic slightly contradicts Jakobson's vision of the contiguity disorder:

The type of aphasia affecting contexture tends to give rise to infantile one-sentence utterances and one-word sentences. Only a few longer, stereotyped, ready-made sentences manage to survive. In advanced cases of this disease, each utterance is reduced to a single one-word sentence. (Jakobson 1987a, 107)

Basing his argument on Pound's "deletion" technique, Henriksen paradoxically suggests that Pound's famous call for the "apt use of metaphor" (in *The Spirit of Romance*) and for "the more compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception" is in fact a manifesto of metonymy:

the 'language beyond metaphor' is associated with ellipsis and compression... If we return to the negative imperatives of Imagism, we might now redefine these as representative of a call for ellipsis and an

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. his comment on the absence of "like" in Pound's "In a Station of the Metro": "deletion is apparent in the absence of the marker of the simile 'like'" (Childs 1986, 37).

exploitation of the pole of combination. The move beyond metaphor may thus be read as a preference for metonymy. (Henriksen 2006, 195)

This paradoxical conclusion, though very intriguing, nevertheless, leaves the reader not quite convinced, provided that we keep in mind Pound's own use of terminology and Jakobson's explanation of the contiguity disorder.

Without further discussing the "metonymical" interpretations of Pound, I want now to say a few words about the scholars whose tradition I would like to follow. One of the highest authorities in Pound studies, Hugh Kenner repeatedly refers to metaphor in his *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (1951) and *The Pound Era* (1971). Without specifically focusing on the issue of Pound's metaphor, the scholar takes for granted the poet's "metaphoric mode of perception of things" (Kenner 1985, 89) and describes the *Cantos* as a metaphoric construct: "Metaphor, conceived in Aristotle's way as a proportion among proportions, becomes in the *Cantos* the principle of major form" (Kenner 1985, 281). Kenner also describes Pound's ideogrammic method as metaphoric: "ideogram and metaphor function identically" (Kenner 1985, 206); moreover, he sees an analogy for the ideogram in the Anglo-Saxon "kenning": "the particulars by which the person or object in question is known. 'Whale-road,' 'soul-bearer,' are both ideogram and metaphor" (Kenner 1985, 89).

Christine Brooke-Rose in her *ZBC of Ezra Pound* (1971), discussing several common confusions concerning Pound's poetry, mentions the following one: "Pound seems to be against metaphor" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 93). She firmly argues that this is not the case, "he is not against metaphor" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 95), reminding the reader about Pound's own early poetry<sup>65</sup>, full of metaphor, and about Pound's approving quoting of "Aristotle's dictum that metaphor is a sign of genius"<sup>66</sup> (Brooke-Rose 1971, 95). She also notes that Pound's "use of the word 'image' for metaphor is the use of the time, as derived by both Hulme and Pound from de Gourmont" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 96). In her structural analysis of the "Usura Canto", Brooke-Rose again draws attention to the use of metaphor and, in particular, observes that "all the direct actions of Usura in II (Usura as subject) are themselves metaphoric in the sense that the "real" indirect effect of usury is changed into a direct effect" (Brooke-Rose 1976, 29). In general, defining

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<sup>65</sup> Brooke-Rose provides examples from "Ballatetta" (*Canzoni*, 1911): "Here metaphor is achieved by the normal traditional means of syntax: a metaphoric verb can change the nouns it is attached to" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 95).

<sup>66</sup> See *Poetics*, XXII.

Pound's "driving-force" as that of metamorphosis, Brooke-Rose emphasizes the poet's "fundamental insight that metaphor *changes* things, that metaphor *is* metamorphosis" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 131).

Moving closer to the topic of my dissertation, I want to reference some scholars who mention metaphor in the context of Pound's Oriental explorations. One of the major figures in this area of study, Earl Miner, like Kenner, takes the poet's metaphoric orientation for granted and, when speaking about Pound's concepts of the "haiku image" and the "Noh image", he uses the words "image" and "metaphor" as synonyms ("an image or metaphor" (Miner 1956, 577)).

A more focused approach to the issue of metaphor/metonymy in Pound's Orient-related writings may be found in Ming Xie's *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism* (1999), which discusses Fenollosa's, Pound's and Lowell's reception and (mis)interpretation of the Chinese poetic tradition. Speaking of Pound's programmatic "Vorticism" essay (1914), Xie concludes that "at a crucial stage in his poetic evolution Pound saw the example of Chinese poetry to be opposed to what he believed to be the mode of metonymy"<sup>67</sup> (Xie 1999, 64). This turn from metonymy to metaphor, according to Xie, may be accounted for by Pound's reading (even if one calls it misreading) of Chinese poetry.

Recognizing the presence of numerous metonymic figures in, e.g., Pound's book of translations from classical Chinese poetry *Cathay* (1915), Xie is nevertheless confident that Pound's development of Fenollosa's ideas runs along the lines of metaphor and that Pound's opposition to Symbolism implies the rejection of metonymy:

As is clear from Pound's account of the difference between Symbolism and Imagisme, the insistence on "absolute metaphor" entails the rejection of "metonymy": that is, the preference for a mode of presenting darting juxtapositions of autonomous intensities would entail the breaking up of those associative contexts of meaning and interpretation necessitated by a metonymic mode of poetic composition. Thus, on the threshold of his encounter with the Fenollosa materials, Pound's movement toward absolute metaphor and luminous epiphanic image prepared the way for his subsequent acceptance of Fenollosa's idea that the chief method of Chinese poetry is essentially metaphorical rather than metonymic or allusional. (Xie 1999, 66)

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<sup>67</sup> Curiously enough, Xie's conclusion coincides almost literally with that of J.H. Prynne: "Chinese poetic practice, and the Chinese language itself, became for Pound at a critically formative stage in his career a demonstration against metonymy" (Prynne 1986, 367).



Xie's conviction that metaphor informs Pound's esthetic search both before and after the "encounter" with the Fenollosa papers is especially encouraging for my further analysis of the poet's texts.

Considering the enormous body of Pound-related research, and, in particular, Pound's Orientalist work (especially on Chinese translations and motifs), there is surprisingly little scholarship on the poet's Japan. As Edan Corkill puts it in *The Japan Times* article, commemorating Pound's collaboration with the newspaper in the late 1930s, "Not a lot of research has been made into Ezra Pound's relationship with Japan, as opposed to that which is focused on his noh work" (Corkill 2010). The publication of *Ezra Pound and Japan: Letters and Essays by Ezra Pound* in 1987 (Pound 1987a), which contains Pound's Japanese correspondence and the twelve articles he published in *The Japan Times* in late 1930s, provides an opportunity to look at Pound's "Japanese quest" from within.

Among scholars, who did research the subject, my work is very much indebted to Earl Miner, who wrote the most comprehensive historical study of *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (Miner 1966). Miner also authored an insightful paper on Pound's use of the haiku tradition (Miner 1956), which discusses the effect of haiku on Pound's esthetic theory and on poetic practices, especially on the "superposition" technique, which Miner finds in both short poems and in *The Cantos*. Miner does not discuss the metaphoric nature of the technique, but occasionally alludes to metaphor in his argument.

The impact of the Noh tradition on Pound and on Anglo-American modernism is also discussed in Ronald Bush's article "The 'Rhythm of Metaphor': Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Unity of Image in Postsymbolist Poetry" (Bush 1981). Bush examines the importance of Noh in Pound's, Eliot's, and Yeats's poetics, and, recognizing that the Noh effect was much less significant in the two latter cases, nevertheless, argues that the Noh-related conversations the three poets had around 1914, did affect their further use of so-called "controlling images". In Pound's case, as Bush points out, the effect was the most extensive and consistent; Bush specifically emphasizes the Noh as a structural principle in *The Cantos*. A very valuable source of background information on Pound and Yeats's common interest in Noh I found in James Longenbach's *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (Longenbach 1988), Humphrey Carpenter's comprehensive biography of Pound *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (Carpenter 1988), and, of course, Hugh

Kenner's *The Pound Era* (Kenner 1971) and *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (Kenner 1985). Of special value to me are Kenner's occasional references to metaphor in Pound's esthetic.

There is very little scholarship devoted to Pound's own Noh-based drama, though. Among the few works discussing Pound's plays, very inspiring was Peter Nicholls's "An Experiment With Time: Ezra Pound and the Example of Japanese Noh" (Nicholls 1995), even if Nicholls's mentioning of metonymy as Pound's organizing structural principle (not elaborated or proved in the paper) contradicts my take on Pound's enterprise. Among other works which influenced my thesis, even if indirectly, I need to mention J.H. Prynne's insightful "China Figures" (Prynne 1986), which apparently also affected its successor, the already quoted Ming Xie's *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry* (Xie 1999), in the discussion of the transformation of Chinese texts in Pound's translation practices.

In the Russia-related part of my research, an invaluable source of information is Andrei Krusanov's *Russkii Avangard*, a most comprehensive three-volume history of Russian avant-garde arts, built on archive documents, newspaper and magazine reviews, and other rare authentic sources. The study provides important historical and biographical data on the development of the Futurist movement in Russia and, which is extremely helpful, on the Far-East branch of Russian Futurism and on Burliuk's Vladivostok period.

A different, compared with Krusanov's, i.e. analytical approach is manifest in the impressive over-one-thousand-page-long *Semiotika i Avangard* (2006) volume, edited by Jury Stepanov, which offers a semiotic approach to a wide range of world avant-garde (including Russian avant-garde) schools over an extensive time period. The idea of typological links between seemingly distant "national" avant-garde movements is very inspiring for my study. Of special value, among other things, is the discussion of the Oriental (the "Asian") constituent of the Futurist esthetic (Feshchenko 2006).

Henryk Baran's insightful studies<sup>68</sup> are extremely helpful in dealing with the most complex issue of Khlebnikov's esthetic. The East/West dimension in Khlebnikov's oeuvre is also discussed by Piotr Tartakovsky<sup>69</sup>, Salomon Mirsky<sup>70</sup>, Alexander Parnis<sup>71</sup>, Denis

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<sup>68</sup> See: Baran 2002, Baran 1994, Baran 2013.

<sup>69</sup> See: Tartakovsky 1987, Tartakovsky 1986.

<sup>70</sup> See: Mirsky 1975.

<sup>71</sup> See: Parnis 2003, Parnis 1996.

Ioffe<sup>72</sup>, and most recently by Vladimir Feshchenko (Feshchenko 2012), whose conclusion on the ambiguity of Khlebnikov's alleged anti-Westernism is very important for my analysis of Russian Futurism and of Burliuk's Japanese enterprise, in particular.

Unfortunately, Burliuk-related scholarship is extremely scanty, and in most cases (especially with regard to the "Japanese" period of Burliuk's life) discusses his pictures, rather than literary texts. Among the very few papers that mention the Japanese narratives, I need to pay tribute to Valery Markov's<sup>73</sup> and Chieko Ovaki's<sup>74</sup> articles, which provided valuable background biographical information for my analysis of Burliuk's Oriental writings.

The structure of my dissertation is predicated on the comparative objective of the study. The text contains four chapters. In the first chapter of my work, I will discuss the role of the East/West opposition in the culture of Russian Futurism. I will look into the ambiguity of cubo-futurists' relationship with Marinetti's Futurismo, as well as the ambiguity of their Orient concept. In more detail, I will analyze the case of Velimir Khlebnikov as one of the key theorists of the movement, whose programmatic texts, as I will show, reveal a common pattern of interpreting the familiar and the other, i.e. a pattern which may be considered in terms of metonymy, using Jakobson's terminology.

In Chapter 2, I will look at David Burliuk's Japan-related writings and analyze the realization of the metonymic pattern in the representation of the familiar and the other. Developing the argument of ambiguity of the East/West opposition in Russian Futurist enterprise, I will discuss the complex relationship between Burliuk's Japan, Russia, and the Western world. I will argue that his representation of the Oriental culture is mainly metonymic and is rooted in the nineteenth-century tradition to a much greater extent than one might expect from the "father of Russian Futurism" and the author of rebellious avant-garde manifestos.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the background of Ezra Pound's Orient-related reflections and practices. I will discuss the manifestos of English Vorticism, which throw light upon the complexities of the movement's relationship with Marinetti's Futurismo, as well as on the Vorticist vision of the Orient as a part of their esthetic program. I will argue that the Vorticists' pattern of treating the Orient is largely metaphor-oriented. A part of the chapter is devoted to Pound's Imagist and Vorticist esthetic and the development of his

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<sup>72</sup> See: Ioffe 2008, Ioffe 2003/2005.

<sup>73</sup> See: Markov 2007.

<sup>74</sup> See: Ovaki 2006, Ovaki 2007, Ovaki 2008a, Ovaki 2008b, Ovaki 2008c.

Image theory. The last section of the chapter discusses the vision of the Orient by Ernest Fenollosa, who was the major influence in Pound's "Oriental turn". Discussing Fenollosa's linguistic and cultural reflections, I will focus on the role which metaphor plays in his interpretations of the East/West opposition and in his theory of Noh.

Chapter 4 will address Pound's little-studied Japan-related writings, which include several Noh-based dramatic works, as well as essays published in the *Japan Times*, and his correspondence (mostly with Katue Kitasono, a Japanese avant-garde poet). I will analyze Pound's manner of including Japan in his paradigm of culture and will argue that the metaphoric nature of Pound's enterprise develops the ideas of Lewis's Vorticist manifestos and Fenollosa's ideas of East-West synthesis.

# CHAPTER 1. RUSSIAN FUTURISM BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

In this chapter, I will discuss the manner in which Russian Futurists identify themselves in the context of the East/West opposition, the scope and relevance of which I outlined in the Introduction. Analyzing the complexities and tensions of the East and West concepts, I will talk about the birth of the movement, the strained and ambiguous relationship with its Italian counterpart, and the rhetoric of Russian Futurist manifestos. Finally, I will discuss the case of Velimir Khlebnikov, which foreshadows the metonymic pattern of representation of the other, characteristic of Burliuk's Japanese narratives, which I will focus on in Chapter 2.

## 1.1. Russian Futurism: negotiating origins

Before looking into the Oriental side of the Russian Futurist enterprise, I need to briefly discuss the nature of the movement and the cultural context, in which it appeared and developed.

Although unquestionably related to Italian Futurismo, Russian Futurism is much more heterogeneous than its Western counterpart. In this chapter, I am not going to elaborate the differences between various Russian Futurist groups, which proliferated in the first decades of the twentieth century: cubo-futurism, ego-futurism, *Mezonin Poezii* (poetry mezzanine), to name a few. Instead, I will focus on the cubo-futurist group as a representative of certain most common characteristics of the Futurist project in Russia.

In his 1919 article "Futurism", Roman Jakobson, who closely identifies with the movement<sup>75</sup>, does not give a definition of Russian Futurism. Nor does he give it in his 1921 article "Approaches to Khlebnikov". For some reason, Futurism appears to be difficult to define from within. Jakobson sees it as "not a new school <...>, but new esthetics" (Jakobson 1987a, 30), which implies a broad and complex cultural phenomenon. Since Jakobson's time, numerous scholars of Russian Futurism underline common features of various futuristic schools, regardless of their rivalry. For example, Vladimir Markov suggests a very broad definition of Russian Futurism: "a postsymbolist movement in Russian poetry of 1910 - 1930 which, roughly, put under the same roof all

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Jakobson 1992.

avant-garde forces” (Markov 1968, 384). Thus, the term Futurism is regarded as a typological category, which unites not only various self-proclaimed Futurist groups, but all avant-garde trends in Russian letters and arts at the time. A similar approach demonstrates Marjorie Perloff, who names her book *The Futurist Moment* (1986), a tribute to Renato Poggioli’s words: “the futurist moment belongs to all the avant-gardes and not only to the one named for it <...> the so-named movement was only a significant symptom of a broader and deeper state of mind” (Perloff 1986, xvii).

I am going to focus on cubo-futurism, or the “Hylaea” group, as Burliuk and his friends preferred to identify themselves, as it is the first and the most articulate futurist group in Russia, the formation of which became paradigmatic for shaping Russian literary avant-garde. My primary interest in discussing Hylaea is unveiling the East/West tensions in Russian avant-garde’s negotiating of identity: its complex relationship with the Occident (both external and internal) and the Orient (also external and internal).

The name “Futurism” (even if substituted by Russian equivalents) unavoidably links the Hylaeans to their Italian counterparts. The link was always a sensitive issue for the Russian side and it accounted for numerous attempts of utilizing the “internal Orient” as a tool in negotiating independence from Marinetti’s movement. However, as I will argue, the battle with the “external Occident” often amounted to appropriating the enemy’s rhetoric and establishing an Occidental stronghold of their own, while the use of the Orient may be described as a metonymic (or rather synecdochic) operation of representing the familiar (in this case, Russian Futurism, and more generally, Russia itself) through references to the “Oriental part” of the alleged Russian identity.

The birth of Russian Futurism, even if assisted by the Italian experiments, resulted mainly from long-going culture clashes and artistic rebellions in Russian literature and fine arts. One can, for example, remember Russian Symbolists<sup>76</sup> in literature and *Mir Iskusstva* (World of Art), *Moskovskoe Tovarishestvo Hudozhnikov* (Moscow Partnership of Artists) and *Soyuz Russkikh Hudozhnikov* (Union of Russian Artists) artistic groups, which defined the new anti-academic and largely West-oriented trends in Russian arts in the 1900s (Krusanov 2010, 23). The dramatic changes in Russian culture during the first decade of the twentieth century were obviously equally affected by the social and

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<sup>76</sup> The Symbolist connection (Vyacheslav Ivanov in particular) is especially interesting in the case of Khlebnikov’s evolution. For more information on the Khlebnikov-Ivanov connection, see, for example, Shishkin 1996.

political contexts, including the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 – 1905 and the first Russian revolution of 1905 - 1907.

Russian cubo-futurism developed as a synthetic movement: it emerged and spread in both literature and fine arts. Many of its representatives were both poets/writers and artists (e.g., David and Vladimir Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Velimir Khlebnikov, Elena Guro, Vasily Kamensky). It is important to notice that many of them (David Burliuk, Vasily Kamensky, Natalia Goncharova, among others) had previously spent time in Western Europe and had been exposed to artistic developments in the West, including the Orientalist trends, and, in particular, Japonisme.

In 1908, Vasily Kamensky publishes Khlebnikov's "Iskusheniye greshnika" ("Sinner's Temptation") in *Vesna (Spring)* magazine (1908, No.9). The same year, the Burliuk brothers meet Mikhail Larionov and Aristarh Lentulov at the famous art exhibition *Stephanos-Venok* (Stephanos-Wreath). By the early 1910s, a group of artistic and literary innovators<sup>77</sup> was formed around Velimir Khlebnikov, who, besides his unconventional poetry, provided a certain theoretical background for the movement (his programmatic essay "Kurgan Svyatogora" ("Svyatogor's Barrow"), written in 1908, though unpublished, was well known to the members of the group and appealed to their vision of the situation in Russian arts). As I am going to show below in this chapter, Khlebnikov's text, among other matters, develops certain theoretical assumptions which negotiate the Oriental and Occidental policy of the movement.

In April 1910, the first joint publication of the group, *Sadok Sudej (Trap for Judges)*, came out, printed on wall-paper. The book was not taken seriously by the public, with a few (though famous) exceptions, like Nikolay Gumilev<sup>78</sup>. "None of the contemporaries in 1910 – 1911 saw *Sadok Sudej* as the beginning of a new movement in Russian poetry" (Krusanov 2010, 240), writes Andrei Krusanov, having scrutinized all possible reviews and references. However, according to Burliuk's memoirs (certainly, biased and requiring critical reading), the book unquestionably became the foundation of Russian Futurism. Even if an exaggeration, Burliuk's view is characteristic of the Futurists' aspirations and self-identification. *Sadok Sudej*, argues Burliuk, "sketched the maps of imagination lands" for Russian literature and set the directions, which way to

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<sup>77</sup> Among them, Mikhail Matiushin, Vasily Kamensky, the Burliuk brothers, Elena Guro. For a short period of time, S. Miasoedov, E. Nizen, A. Gorodetsky were also close to the group (Krusanov 2010, 238).

<sup>78</sup> See: Nikolai Gumilev's, "Pis'ma o russkoi poezii" in 1911 *Apollon* (No. 5, 77).

move, “which lands to conquer” (Burluk 1994, 27). The latter quote with its (even if unintended) colonialist overtones and possible East/West connotations is crucial for the current study, as what I am going to discuss is essentially one of the “imagination lands” Russian Futurism came to conquer.

From the very beginning, the group of Russian cubo-futurists, encompassing such poets as Velimir Khlebnikov, Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Burluk brothers (David and Nikolai), Vasily Kamensky, Elena Guro, Alexey Kruchenyh, painters Kazimir Malevich, Natalia Goncharova, and Olga Rozanova, and composers Mikhail Matiushin and Arthur Lurie, adopted two names, which have some bearing on the identity the group was conspicuously constructing. One of the names, *budetliane*<sup>79</sup> (people of the future), although almost an exact translation of the word “futurists”, nevertheless obviously aims at drawing a distinct line between the Russian movement and its Western counterpart. The other name, *Hylaea* (the Greek name of the Scythian<sup>80</sup> area by the Dnieper, where Burluk’s father had a job and where Mayakovsky, Khlebnikov, Larionov, Livshits and others came to visit the Burluks), suggests an Oriental, primitive and “wild” alternative both to the Italian movement and to the group’s more conventional Russian contemporaries/adversaries.

In December 1912, *Hylaea* publishes the famous and most scandalous of its manifestos in *Poshechina obschestvennomu vkusu* (*A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*), a collection of essays and poems, printed on crude gray wrapping paper, as is appropriate for the title. An important part of the book was the manifesto, written by David Burluk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Victor (Velimir) Khlebnikov, and Alexey Kruchenyh. It was the first Russian Futurist manifesto, though the word “futurist” is not to be found in the text. The *Slap*, much more radical and articulate in its revolutionary rhetoric and iconoclastic ambitions than its predecessor *Sadok Sudej*, did not come unnoticed by the critics. Mocked by some and angrily renounced by others<sup>81</sup>, it was, however, taken seriously by

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<sup>79</sup> Coined by Khlebnikov (Krusanov 2010, 238).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Vladimir Feshchenko’s discussion of “Scythianism” in early-twentieth-century Russian literature (Feshchenko 2006, 312-317). Scythianism, which celebrated the wild, the primitive, and the natural, was close to the spirit of Russian Futurism, writes Feshchenko: “For the futurists, the consonance with the rhythms of nature constituted one of the crucial distinctions of the “eastern”, or “Asian” artistic method, unknown to Europe” (Feshchenko 2006, 315).

<sup>81</sup> “The Burluks, the Khlebnikovs, the Kruchenyhs and the Mayakovskys must be immediately put in a lunatic asylum” (Profan <Mendelevich, R.A.> 1913, “Bubnovyj valet”, *Razvlechenie*, No.8, 6-7; quoted in Krusanov 2010, 523).



several (though, very few) recognized authors, some of which were quite distant from Futurist experiments (like, e.g., Alexander Blok, who was ridiculed by the authors of the manifesto<sup>82</sup>). The manifesto, though very short, nevertheless reveals, among other things, certain interesting East/West-related strains in its rhetoric and imagery, as I am going to show below.

On the whole, cubo-futurism exemplifies the most characteristic features of Russian avant-garde as such: its opposition to traditional cultural and social values (including those advocated by their contemporaries, the Symbolists), its attempts to create a “new art”, an alternative art of the future, its opposition to traditional poetic technique and literary devices and, of course, its experiments with the language, with rhythm and rhyme, with syntax and with the sound. One of the most remembered and discussed achievements of cubo-futurism was developing the most radical revolutionary poetic language of the time, “*zaum*” (the transrational language), as advocated by Kruchenyh and practiced by Khlebnikov, Kruchenyh, and Guro (the “Asian” connotations of *zaum*’ will be discussed below).

Besides, cubo-futurism perfectly illustrates the nature of Futurist art: it is a kind of art which aspires to be more than art. Roman Jakobson in his comments on the Futurist esthetic notices that “The very approach to the picture, to painting, to art changes. Futurism offers pictures-slogans<sup>83</sup>, pictorial demonstrations” (Jakobson 1987a, 30). Jakobson does not pronounce it, but the idea of a slogan-picture and a demonstration-picture implies not only the performative nature of the Futurist project, but also a new way of positioning arts in social and political contexts. Russian Futurism, like its Italian counterpart, identifies with social and political (mostly anarchic and left-radical) movements. Even most seemingly introvert and alienated from the mundane figures (like, for example, Khlebnikov), think politically<sup>84</sup>. Sometimes playfully,

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<sup>82</sup> In his article “Without a deity, without inspiration” (April, 1921; published in *Sovremennaiia literatura* 1925, Leningrad), Blok praises Russian futurism in its prophetic anticipation of the horrors of the war and the revolution. Blok contrasts futurism to acmeism and recognizes the superiority of the former: to him, it was much deeper, much more alive and much more authentically Russian than acmeism, which he sees as an “imported Western toy”.

<sup>83</sup> Extensively used by Mayakovsky in his post-revolutionary period.

<sup>84</sup> Which, as early Khlebnikov’s case shows, might often involve nationalism and even anti-semitism; the latter, with its “Orientalist” dimension, is not too uncommon in Russian literary tradition.

sometimes seriously, sometimes both<sup>85</sup>. As I am going to show, the rupture with the tradition, announced by Futurism, in fact often amounts to constructing an alternative linear tradition, a new temporal successiveness.

Before I discuss the role of the East and West concepts in these esthetic/political gestures, I will briefly outline the scope of the Russian Futurist Orient.

## 1.2. Russian Futurism: Oriental background

In the Introduction, I have discussed the development of the concept of the Orient in the context of the Russian thought in the nineteenth-century and the fin-de-siècle culture, as well as the return of the Oriental exotic manifested by the Russian Symbolists, which becomes evident in the case of Balmont. The avant-garde culture appeared equally responsive to Oriental (even if borrowed mostly from Western sources) motifs. Moreover, Krusanov argues that Russian avant-garde was significantly shaped by the Oriental influences (Krusanov 2010, 35-37).

The growing anti-eurocentric movement in Russian arts is evidenced, for example, in Vladimir Markov's (Voldemars Matvejs) programmatic article "The Principles of the New Art", published in the 1912 collection of the *Soyuz molodezhi* (*Youth Union*) artistic society, in which he calls for greater inclusiveness in modern art and draws the readers' attention to various aboriginal cultures, including those of the Orient, which should provide a more sound basis for modern arts than the traditionally accepted Western European examples:

All European academies of arts, including the St. Petersburg academy, based their teaching on the values inherited from the Greek and Roman world and from the Renaissance epoch. All the rest – Asia, Africa, America, Oceania, who have developed their own original cultures, remained beyond artists' vision. (Markov 1912, 10)

While Merezhkovsky (quoted in the Introduction) sees the Oriental soul of Russia as a "grandmother", i.e. as dear but old and unable to develop on its own, Markov

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<sup>85</sup> Khlebnikov, The Chairman of the Globe, establishes societies like the Society of Globe Chairmen and the Government of the Globe. Khlebnikov wants to unite the best young people from all over the world (with the total number of 317) in order to rule the eternal transcendental Kingdom of Time, the utopian realm of harmony.

suggests the image of the Orient as that of a naïve innocent child, unspoiled by the vices of civilization. Both, however, seem to be establishing a reference point in a successive tradition, where the Orient (in the former's case, the internal, and in the latter's, the external one) and, consequently, the essentialized primitive irrationality, appear to represent the origins of the prospective artistic developments:

The ancient peoples and the Orient did not know our scientific rationality. They were children, whose feeling and imagination dominated over logic. They were uneducated unspoiled children, who intuitively penetrated the world of beauty and who could not be bribed by either realism or scientific studies of nature. (Markov 1912, 10)

As the Eastern culture came to Russia mostly through Western painting, it is not surprising to find passionate fascination with the Orient in Mikhail Larionov and Natalja Goncharova. They also consistently defend the idea of the Oriental origin of all true modern art and, consequently, speak of the necessity for Russian artists to look Eastwards, at the wild and the primitive, rather than at the Occidental rationalist "civilization". In his letter to Iosif Shkolnik (April, 1913), Larionov writes about organizing arts exhibitions together with Oriental artists in St-Petersburg and formulates one of the basic principles of *Soyuz molodezhi*: "We denounce the West and only together with contemporary eastern artists we develop and promote our ideas" (Araskaia and Pronina 2013, 124). Similarly, Benedikt Livshits and Georgy Yakulov and Arthur Lurie, in their 1914 leaflet-manifesto "We and the West" ("Мы и Запад"), unambiguously identify with the Orient in their confrontation with the "dead" arts of Europe (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009).

The popularity of this view may be evidenced by the fact that similar preference of the primitive may be found even in Igor Severianin, despite all the usual refinement and estheticism associated with his ego-futurist name. In "Prologue" (1909), Severianin associates himself with the "savages", proclaiming that he is "inseparable from the savage... bored with the ice of reason..." (Severianin 1995, 174), and distances himself from the "culture" of the rational world, which, according to him, is "rotten like a Roquefort cheese" (the French reference is not accidental in the Futurist's writing, as I will show below). Although Severianin does not pronounce it, the opposition of "the savage" and "the ice of reason", outlined in the poem, does correlate with that of the irrational East vs. the rationalist West (which, nevertheless, does not prove that he

would prefer the former to the latter outside the “dream world” of his verse). Establishing an inseparable metonymic link with the primitive appears to be an essential part of the avant-garde rebellion against the (westernized) present.

This naïve fascination with the “original”, unspoiled Oriental artistic purity is equally traceable in Russian cubo-futurists. To them, the external Orient is not only the “wild” and savage element, but also the refinement, equally opposite to the western and West-mimicking Russian tradition. In this context, it is not surprising to see the spreading popularity of the European Japonisme among the Russian Futurists. Thus, in 1913, Sergey Tretyakov writes a number of tanka-like vers-libre poems. In 1915, Samuil Vermel publishes a book of “tanka”, illustrated by David Burliuk<sup>86</sup>. Burliuk’s own Japan-inspired poetry will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

In their theoretical reflections and endeavours to formulate an alternative esthetic, Russian cubo-futurists also often look Eastwards in search of a reference point. The idea of the Orient serves as a sufficient argument in various attempts to prove the legitimacy of new esthetic forms and devices, as well as the consistency of the new successive tradition. In *Poetic Origins (Poeticheskie nachala, 1914)*, the Burliuk brothers are developing a common futurist idea of the dependence of a word’s semantics on the external characteristics of the signifier, an idea earlier articulated in the *Trap for Judges II* manifesto (1913), in the *Declaration of the Word as Such* (1913), *Word as Such* (1913), and *Letter as Such* (1913), and later recognized by Jakobson as the poetics of “bared material”, one of the characteristic features of Russian Futurism (Jakobson 1987b, 274). Defending the esthetic role of typeface, handwriting and other “formal” sides of the poetic word, the Burliuks refer to an Oriental tradition: “In the hieroglyphs the color was as essential as the graphic aspect, i.e. the sign was a color spot” (Burliuk and Burliuk 2009, 94).

Discussing the concept of the sensory nature of a “live” word and the role of its visual side, the Burliuks do not exclude smell<sup>87</sup> from the expressive means of the word

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<sup>86</sup> Vermel, Samuil 1915, *Tanki: lirika*, Moskva: Studia.

<sup>87</sup> In an anti-Hylaeian manifesto “Throwing down the gauntlet to the cubo-futurists” (“Перчатка кубо-футуристам”, 1913), M. Rossiianky (Poetry Mezzanine group) criticizes the Hylaeans for poor understanding of what a word really is, claiming that a word is not merely a combination of sounds but a complex of numerous associations: “One may say that the word has its own unique smell. A poetic work is not a series of sounds but a series of smell-words” (Rossiianky 2009, 250). It is interesting that in this metaphorical treatment of smell, Poetry Mezzanine appears much closer to Ezra Pound’s

either. In this respect, they also remember (or seem to remember, without providing any evidence and cautiously using a hesitant construction) a certain Chinese/ Japanese tradition of using scents in books, so that “each book possesses its own language of fragrance” (Burluiuk and Burluiuk 2009, 94). In conclusion, calling for the development of “a new alphabet for the new sounds”, they once again refer to the Orient and unequivocally state: “Many ideas may be expressed by means of ideographic writing only<sup>88</sup>” (N. Burluiuk 2009, 96). The Burluiuks do not need to explain why a certain Chinese/ Japanese tradition serves as an argument: the mere reference to and identification with the East seem to be sufficient to defend the case. Similarly, Livshits, Lurie and Yakulov (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009) do not need to prove that Russian arts represent the Oriental element, or even that the Oriental arts are really superior to their Western counterparts, they simply take it for granted. The “geographical” argument appears as a natural extension of an implicit bi-polar value paradigm.

At times, the picture becomes more complex, though. Defying the tradition and despising the immediate predecessors, Russian Futurists, nevertheless, inherited the ambiguous nature of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literary Orientalism. Not only is their Orient similarly divided into the internal and the external ones, both the former and the latter are also heterogeneous within themselves. The menace of “Asia” surprisingly coexists with the fascination with Oriental exotics.

The anti-Asian sentiment was obviously (though temporarily) strengthened by the Russo-Japanese war (1904 – 1905), which inspired a few patriotic anti-Japanese texts by Khlebnikov, such as “The Things Were Too Blue” (“Byli veshi slishkom sini”)<sup>89</sup> or “The Monument” (“Pamiatnik”)<sup>90</sup>. The latter, published in the *Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, pictures, contrary to the facts of history, the victory of Russia over Japan. The menacing fear of Asia, essentialized as the realm of dark despotism, occasionally reveals itself in the writings of other Futurists, too. Thus, Nikolai Burluiuk in his open letter to

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esthetic than the cubo-futurists with their literal understanding of “scents”: Pound describes his ideogrammic method by reference to an ancient Chinese tradition of “listening to the incense”, where a range of smells triggers a complex of associations. Pound’s idea will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>88</sup> There are not many references to the ideographic system in the Russian futurists’ writing. Apparently, the pictorial and non-successive nature of the ideogram did not appeal to them as strongly as it did to Ezra Pound (his concept of the ideogram will be discussed in Chapter 3).

<sup>89</sup> See: Khlebnikov 1930, 31-33.

<sup>90</sup> See: Khlebnikov 1930, 85-88.

Lunacharsky, published in *Futurists: the First Literary Journal of Russian Futurists* (1914), suddenly uses the adjective “Asian” as a derogatory characteristic of those who oppose the new developments in Russian arts:

We are your brothers, but you insult us and humiliate us, because we are not slaves and we live in freedom. And if the youth of our land follows us, this is your fault: you have always been and still are the Asians, who destroy everything young and national. You are the face of the old Russia, which has survived the year 1905, your soul is the soul of persecutors of true art, spiritual serfdom advocates <...>.

You are worse and more dangerous than the Black Hundred<sup>91</sup>: the latter does not conceal its savagery and cruelty, while you disguise yourselves in the vests of westernness and enlightenment of fin du siècle and act indirectly and stealthily. (N. Burliuk 1914, 98-99)

Here, in Nikolai Burliuk’s language, the adjective “Asian” (as referring to a part of the internal Orient) functions as a synonym of “old”, “savage”, “oppressive”, conservative and anti-liberal, and openly relies on the essentialized concept of the despotic Orient. However, important as this anti-Asian vector of Russian Futurism is, the anti-western rhetoric is much more articulate and abundant in futurist writing. Apparently, in the 1910s, the western threat to the Futurists’ identity (both external, personalized by Marinetti, and internal, in the image of the “French-mimicking” Russia, as Burliuk puts it) appeared much more real than the mystic horror of Asian despotism.

On the whole, concluding this brief and very general overview, I can summarize that the “Orientalism” of the Russian Futurists preserves the ambiguity of their predecessors’ approach, discussed in the Introduction as a heterogeneous complex of the internal and external Orient(s) and Occident(s). Facing the West, the Futurists often identify themselves as Asians, while meeting the East face-to-face (as Burliuk’s case will show in the following Chapter) they may prefer to appear as Europeans. Suffice it to say that Burliuk, proud of the Scythian (“Hylaeon”) background, may yet positioning himself in Russian poetry as an “inarticulate foreigner” (*nevniatnyi inostranec*), wearing a top hat and a pince-nez; and Kruchenyh (in his letter to Semion Vengerov, 3 January, 1914) identifies himself as “Siberian by father, Polish by mother (Malchevsky)”, and thus combining “the fierceness of Asia and the charm of Europe” (Kruchenyh 2013, 149).

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<sup>91</sup> A reference to an ultra-right, monarchist and anti-Semitist movement in Russian society, influential in 1905-1914.

Further on in this Chapter and in the following one, I will discuss in more detail the Orient of the Russian Futurists and, later, that of David Burliuk. I will argue that what they find in their East is what they expect to find there; it is not the other per se but the familiar metonymically presented as the other. As David's brother, Nikolai Burliuk wrote in a poem published in the 1913 collection *Trebnik troih*:

The Eastern embroidery invisibly  
Outlives Polish silks  
The Aryan's voice went silent in me  
I see the minarets of Crimea.

Looking Eastwards, what Nikolaj Burliuk sees is the image of himself: he sees himself looking eastwards. However important the East seems to be for the Futurists, it appears not as a self-sufficient voice of the Other, but as a familiar background and an argument, which is necessary to highlight the real conflict, the opposition of Russia and the West, or, as more often the case is, the respective opposition within the Russian culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. In this respect, the "minarets of the Crimea" are not too different from Marinetti's imaginary Gorisankar.

### **1.3. Russian Futurism: facing the Occident**

Now, having discussed the Futurist Orient as a political and esthetic argument, I need to look at the opposite geographical pole. I will proceed with the discussion of the complex relations between Russian and Italian futurisms and the intricate entanglement of East-West-related aspects within the Hylaeian rhetoric and ideology.

Western arts are in a deep crisis, declare Livshits, Lurie and Yakulov in "We and the West". European arts are archaic and cannot produce anything new. Their crisis is manifest in their attempts to turn to the Orient, an attempt doomed to fail just because "it is beyond the powers of the West to perceive the East" (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009, 371). The anti-Western rhetoric, which seems to continue the arguments of the previous century, makes in fact certain shifts in the three-element paradigm (East/West/Russia) developed by Chaadaev and Soloviov. Not only is now Russia identified as part of the

East, it embodies the East: it IS the East<sup>92</sup>. The metonymic identification of a part with the whole is symptomatic.

The anti-Western rhetoric becomes particularly audible in the strained relations of the Hyleans with Marinetti and in the discussions around the origins of the Russian movement. The latter discussions proceeded for years long after the rebellious 1910s, so sensitive was the issue for the Futurists. Thus, in his memoirs *An Enthusiast's Way* (*Путь энтузиаста*, 1931), Vasily Kamensky again retrospectively insists on total independence of Russian Futurism from its Italian namesake, because, as he notices, Marinetti's *Manifesto* was translated into Russian by Vadim Shershenevich only in 1914 (Kamensky 1991, 532). However, this is not the whole truth.

Marinetti's *Manifesto* came to Russia almost immediately after its publication in *Le Figaro*. In 1909, *Vestnik Literary* (the *Literary Courier*) published a review of the manifesto and of Italian Futurism itself<sup>93</sup>. Later, in 1910, Russian poet Mikhail Kuzmin and Italian Futurist Paolo Buzzi continued the discussion in Russian pro-western magazine *Apollon* (*Apollo*), where Kuzmin publishes an article on Italian Futurists<sup>94</sup> and Buzzi starts a series of his regular "Letters from Italy"<sup>95</sup>. Among other sources of information were Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, two major artists associated with Hylaea, both well aware of the new trends in Paris artistic circles. There are also direct statements made by the Russian Futurists proving their acquaintance with the already famous Italian texts. Thus, in his letter to Mikhail Larionov (October, 1913), Kruchenyh mentions reading *I Poeti Futuristi*, published in Milano by Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia" in 1912<sup>96</sup> (Baran 2013, 162). Next year, Vadim Shershenevich publishes his

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<sup>92</sup> Opposing the Orient and the Occident, Livshits et al. argue that all Western arts are local, "territorial", while "the only country that still does not have the territorial art is Russia" (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009, 371). Russia, as "the only country" that provides an alternative to the Occident, becomes the Orient itself.

<sup>93</sup> See: *Vestnik literaury* 1909, No.5.

<sup>94</sup> See: Kuzmin, Mikhail 1910, "Futuristy", *Apollon*, No. 9, 20-21.

<sup>95</sup> Paolo Buzzi first appears in the *Apollon* in 1910, No.5, where he presents an overview of latest events in Italian culture. He also introduces futurism: "This liberating doctrine has already spread all over the world, every day triumphantly facing most severe polemics and fierce attacks from the coalition of professors and archeologists" (*Apollon* 1910, No. 5, 3).

<sup>96</sup> The book contains Marinetti's "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature", Buzzi's essay on verse libre and an extensive selection of poetry by Marinetti, Buzzi, Palazzeschi, among others (see: *I Poeti Futuristi* 1912. Milano: Edizioni Futuriste di "Poesia").



*Futurism Unmasked* (*Futurizm bez maski*<sup>97</sup>, where he introduces the movement to the Russian reader and presents the former as the ultimate stage in the development of the poetic language<sup>98</sup>. More articles follow soon. Mikhail Osorgin devotes a chapter of his *Sketches of Modern Italy* to Futurists<sup>99</sup>. Next year, in 1914, Genrikh Tasteven's *Futurism: On the Way to New Symbolism* (*Futurizm: na puti k novomu simvolizmu*) is published in Moscow<sup>100</sup>. The same year, numerous futurism-related essays by M. Osorgin<sup>101</sup>, M. Pervukhin<sup>102</sup> and Baudouin de Courtenay<sup>103</sup> appear in Russian magazines. Thus, the word "futurism" and the scandal around the Italian movement were apparently well known to Russian readers when the Hylaeans came to slap the face of the public taste.

Hardly anyone would argue today the relatedness of Hylaeans' theories and practices to those of Marinetti et al: "What has been clearly established is the undeniable influence of Italian Futurism on the development of Russian art" (Hunkeler 2006, 213), as Thomas Hunkeler puts it. John White, too, sees it as a proven fact (White 1990, 3). Marjorie Perloff not only accepts the connection between Russian avant-garde and its European counterpart but also suggests a hierarchy: "The Europe of the avant-guerre was a field of action whose center was Paris but whose circumference, by way of French language, took in Petersburg as well as London and New York" (Perloff 1986, xviii-xix). Vladimir Markov is more cautious, but, nevertheless, besides acknowledging numerous typological parallels, he also recognizes several possible direct Italian borrowings in the Russian Futurists' writings:

The question of direct borrowings from Marinetti remains to be explored. <...> There are too many echoes of Marinetti's ideas in the preserved outlines of Mayakovsky's lectures (as well as in his early urbanist poetry) to be dismissed as mere coincidence. <...> Use of various typefaces in the poems and prose of Ignatyev and David Burluk, and Ignatyev's attempts to introduce mathematical symbols and musical notations into poetry are likewise reminiscent of Marinetti. Marinetti's "daily spittings on the altar of

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Kruchenyh's awareness of the "Technical manifesto" might explain certain parallels between the latter and the *Trap for Judges II* manifesto, which will be discussed below.

<sup>97</sup> See: Shershenevich, Vadim 1914, *Futurizm bez maski*, Moskva.

<sup>98</sup> For more information, see: Kobrinskij 2000.

<sup>99</sup> See: Osorgin, M.A. 1913, "Futuristy", *Ocherki sovremennoi Italii*, Moskva, 221 – 230.

<sup>100</sup> See: Tasteven, G. 1914, *Futurizm. Na puti k novomu simvolizmu*, Moskva: Iris.

<sup>101</sup> See: Osorgin, M.A. 1914, "Italianskij futurizm", *Vestnik Evropy*, No. 2. 339 – 358.

<sup>102</sup> See: Pervukhin, M.K. 1914, "Psevdofuturizm", *Sovremenniy mir*, 3, 122 – 174.

<sup>103</sup> See: de Courtenay, Baudouin 1914, "Galopom vpered", *Vestnik znania*, Sankt Peterburg, No. 5.

Art” sound like Burliuk or Kruchenykh <...>. Kruchenykh’s enjoying himself in the mud next to a pig echoes Marinetti’s pleasure after being thrown from a car into a gutter. And there are other evidences of Italian influence upon Russian futurism, such as Livshits’ destruction of syntax in his prose <...>. But to prove that all these similarities are the result of direct influence is not easy. The only clear-cut examples of Marinetti’s influence on the work Russian futurists are Shershenevich’s writings of 1914 to 1916 <...> (Markov 1968, 162)

Indeed, Marinetti’s Futurism was in the air and it did stir up hot discussions in Russian literary circles. As it appears, the rhetoric and the whole message of *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* does resemble Marinetti’s *Manifestos* in many important aspects, some of the parallels being too striking to be interpreted as mere coincidences or typological similarities.

The very title of the Russian Futurist manifesto echoes the language of Marinetti, who, for example, in his 1909 *Futurist Manifesto* glorifies “the slap and the punch” (Rainey 2009, 51), and in *Electrical War* (1911) defiantly proclaims: “Let us applaud this lovely slap in the face of all the stupid cultivators of sepulchral little kitchen gardens” (Rainey 2009, 100). It is interesting to notice here that the “slap and the punch” in both Russian and Italian texts have an indirect East-West dimension: Marinetti’s “slap” refers to the Japanese practice of making gun-powder from human bones of war casualties, which is presented as an assault at the Western (French, to a great extent<sup>104</sup>) bourgeois “sepulchral” culture, while the “public taste” which the Russian Futurists revolt against primarily implies the “westernized” Russian arts serving the ruling classes (“pre-revolutionary French-mimicking Russia”, as David Burliuk put it later, retrospectively, in the early 1920-s (Burliuk, Tretjakov, et al. 1923).

The language of Russian and Italian manifestos, indeed, sounds very similar, and certain figures of speech used by the Italian and Russian Futurists seem to be almost identical. I will mention but a few examples, illustrating the parallels. Unsurprisingly similar is the individualist manner<sup>105</sup> in which both groups position themselves and the figures of speech in which they express their antagonism to the world around. Compare the Italians, proudly standing “on the last promontory of the centuries” (Rainey 2009,

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<sup>104</sup> Thomas Hunkeler argues that Italian Futurism may be seen as essentially an attempt to disrupt the cultural hegemony of France in the early twentieth century (see: Hunkeler 2006).

<sup>105</sup> Even if disguised, in both cases, by the first-person plural “we” pronoun.

51), or “standing erect on the summit of the world” and flinging their “challenge to the stars” (Rainey 2009, 53), with the Russians “standing on the rock of the word “we” amongst the sea of whistle and resentment”<sup>106</sup> (Burliuk, Kruchenyh, et al. 2009, 65). On the whole, compared with Marinetti’s manifesto, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* appears to be a similar attempt of renewing culture, burying the past and creating new arts from scratch. The call to throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and other recognized classics overboard the ship of modernity does not sound too different from the Italian endeavors to “free the nation from its fetid cancer of professors, archaeologists, tour guides, and antiquarians” (Rainey 2009, 52), both slogans metonymically substituting the old stagnant culture by its representatives.

Even more interesting I find the numerous technical similarities in the poetic principles proposed by the Italian and Russian Futurists respectively: the renunciation of grammar, syntax, and the whole of the traditional poetic language, which becomes obvious if one compares the 1912 *Technical Manifesto of Futurism* and the Manifesto from *Sadok Sudej II* (1913).

The two texts remind a dialogue, which is not totally surprising, given the fact of Kruchenyh’s being familiar with the Italian manifesto, as I mentioned above. Thus, Marinetti’s first principle, “It is imperative to destroy syntax....” (Rainey 2009, 119), is matched by the first achievement listed by the Russian Futurists: “We have shattered syntax” (Burliuk, Guro, et al. 2009, 67). Marinetti demands abolishing adjectives and modifying nouns by other nouns<sup>107</sup>. This call, too, finds a response in the Russian manifesto: “We modify nouns not only by adjectives (as it was customary before), but by other parts of speech, or even by individual letters and numerals” (Burliuk, Guro, et al. 2009, 67). “Abolish all punctuation,” writes Marinetti (Rainey 2009, 120). “We have destroyed all punctuation marks,” reply Burliuk, Khlebnikov and Kruchenyh (Burliuk, Guro, et al. 2009, 67). Marinetti speaks about the “raging need to liberate words, dragging them out from the prison of the Latin period” (Rainey 2009, 119). “We have destroyed the rhythms” (Burliuk, Guro, et al. 2009, 68), states the Russian manifesto, as if in response. Marinetti proclaims “the liberation of words, unfolding wings of

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<sup>106</sup> Abundant poetic illustrations of this program may be found in the early Russian Futurist writings, for example, in Mayakovsky’s verse.

<sup>107</sup> Cf.: “One must abolish the adjective, to allow the naked noun to preserve its essential color” (Rainey 2009, 120); “Everywhere we tend to suppress the qualifying adjective...”; “We must make use of the adjective as little as possible...” (Rainey 2009, 148).

imagination" (Rainey 2009, 124), and the Russian Futurists echo: "The riches of the poet's vocabulary are his justification" (Burluk, Guro, et al. 2009, 68).

Besides, in both Futurist movements there is a similar accent on new topics that art should focus on. And, finally, Marinetti's manifesto promises the coming of a whole new era: "behold the beginning of the reign of the machine" (Rainey 2009, 124), as well as a new kind of people: "we are preparing the creation of the mechanical man" (Rainey 2009, 125), and, ultimately, the victory over death itself: "We will liberate man from the idea of death, and hence from death itself, the supreme definition of the logical mind" (Rainey 2009, 125). Marinetti's Russian counterparts, though lacking the former's fascination with the mechanical, also proclaim the dawn of a new life and claim to be the new people themselves: "We are the new people of the new life" (Burluk, Guro, et al. 2009, 68). Whatever Marinetti formulates as demands, the Hylaeans seem to have already realized in practice.

Thus, the artistic and social aspirations of Russian Futurists, their rhetoric and the programmatic set of techniques share a lot with Italian manifestos. More than that, the *Sadok Sudej II* manifesto does suggest a concealed rivalry with Marinetti in implementing the program and even claims of superiority over the "external Occident" in the realization of the Futurist project.<sup>108</sup>

#### **1.4. Russian Futurist manifestos and the East/West opposition**

Now, I will discuss in more detail the anti-Occidental aspect of the Futurist revolt and the peculiarities of the "internal Orient", underlying the conflict.

Unlike Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto*, immediately translated from Italian into French, published in *Le Figaro* and apparently largely addressed to the French (or in a broader sense, the European) reader, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* reaches out primarily to the Russian, i.e. domestic public. However, as I will argue, the Russian Futurists, utilizing rhetoric similar to that of the Italians, appear to attack certain aspects of the "internal Occident" within the Russian culture.

Though *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* does not explicitly refer to either East or West, it does provide some indirect "geographical" references. In the major opposition

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<sup>108</sup> Which, of course, should not be taken at face value, given the absence of evidence of any real reform of versification achieved by Russian avant-garde, as Kirill Postoutenko observes (Postoutenko 2014).

the manifesto is built on, namely, “the new versus the old”, the latter primarily refers to the borrowed European clichés and attitudes, allegedly long outdated, but abundant in Russian arts. Hence the sarcasm about the “paper armor plates from the black frock coat of Briusov-the warrior”, or about “Balmont’s perfumed lechery” (Burliuk, Kruchenyh, et al. 2009, 65). The armor plates, the frock coat and the perfumery, metonymically representing the mainstream Russian culture, correlate with the westernized disguise of the Russian Symbolists, against whom the Futurists revolt<sup>109</sup>. In a more general sense, the manifesto denounces “the filthy stigmas of ... ‘common sense’<sup>110</sup> and ‘good taste’”<sup>111</sup> (Burliuk, Kruchenyh, et al. 2009, 66), generally metonymically associated with the essentialized “Western rationality”. The opposition to the common sense and rationalism of Russian Symbolism is further developed in numerous Hylaeian manifestos, e.g. in Kruchenykh’s “New ways of the word” (1913), where he contrasts the fear of the “sleek symbolists”<sup>112</sup> (Kruchenyh 2009, 84) of not being understood by the public and the audacious primitive illogicality and irrationality of the Futurists.

The conflict also proceeds on the level of poetic technique. There is a visible anti-Western strain in the linguistic experiments of the Russian Futurists, i.e. in their search for the “free transrational universal language” (Kruchenyh 2009, 82). Here, the opposition to the “internal Occident” is realized on the vocabulary and sound levels: it is manifest in developing the new (“authentically Russian”) lexemes and a whole new language of poetry, defined as transrational “*zaum*”. In “The New Ways of the Word” (“Новые пути слова”, 1913), Kruchenyh designs a number of new Slavic-rooted words as an alternative to what he considers to be expressionless borrowings from the European languages. Here, the opposition Slavic/European correlates with that of life vs. death:

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<sup>109</sup> In this sense, the famous frock coat and the top hat Burliuk used to put on in public cannot but appear as a parody.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. the declaration of the First all-Russian congress of Futurists, signed by Matiushin, Kruchenyh and Malevich: “Destroying the outdated thought development according to the laws of causality, as well as the insipid common sense, the “symmetric logic”...” (Matiushin, Kruchenyh and Malevich 2009, 354). For more information on futurist irrationalism, the theory of the transrational language and its links with the esoteric ideas of Piotr Uspensky, see: Janecek 1996.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. similar irony towards bourgeois “good taste” in Marinetti’s *Let’s Murder the Moonlight!* The text describes an imaginary apocalyptic battle between the Futurists and the inhabitants of the city of Gout (Fr., *taste*).

<sup>112</sup> “*prilizannye simvolisty*”.

gladiators – dull, grey, foreign; “mechari” – bright, colorful...  
mortuary – funny, resembles a fat German with a beer;  
“truparnia” – gives even the feel of the dead house...  
university – you can tease dogs with this; “vseuchbische” convinces us in the  
importance of the signified...  
Why borrow from the tongueless Germans if we have the magnificence of  
our own?” (Kruchenyh 2009, 83)

What Kruchenyh sees as an alternative, i.e. the Slavic-based neologisms, implicitly suggests a metonymic identification with the “wild” Oriental element of the Russian culture: “Not the voiceless languid creamy toffee of poetry (passiance...), (pastille...) but the threatful rune (*baiach*)” (Kruchenyh and Khlebnikov 2009, 77), as Kruchenyh and Khlebnikov put it in *The Word as Such* (*Слово как таковое*, 1913).

An implicit accent on metonymy adds an interesting touch to Kruchenyh’s concept of the irrational *zaum’* language. Describing the novelties introduced by Russian Futurism in “New Ways of the Word” (1913), Kruchenyh highlights two aspects of the Futurist esthetic: “We were the first to say that in order to picture the new and the future, essential are new words and a new kind of word-combination” (Kruchenyh 2009, 84). In his text, Kruchenyh repeatedly returns to the new principles of combining lexical and syntactic elements. The concept of a linear syntagmatic combination is most important here, as even the new words themselves, i.e. the Futurist neologisms, are described by Kruchenyh in linear successive terms of “strange ‘meaningless’ combinations of ... letters” (Kruchenyh 2009, 84). This essentially metonymical (in Jakobson’s terms) approach will give us a clue to the “strange combinations” of Occidental and Oriental imagery/thought in Russian Futurism.

Meanwhile, there is a certain tension (or seeming inconsistency, which needs to be addressed) in the anti-western rhetoric of the Hylaeans. Before, I have mentioned the appropriation of Marinetti’s rhetoric in the Russian Futurist manifestos. The imagery that the Russian Futurists use in their programmatic texts is equally interesting and, as I will argue, suggestive of certain heterogeneity of the “inner Orient” of the Russian Futurism.

Unlike Marinetti, Russian Futurism does not indulge in modern mechanic imagery of airplanes, racing cars and locomotives; apropos, Jakobson sees it as the major difference between the Italian and Russian futurisms: while in the case of the Italians, it is the new material which inspires new poetic forms, in Russian Futurism it is the new

form that generates the new content<sup>113</sup>. In the text of *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, one can find only two references to the modern civilization: the steamboat [“Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy overboard from the steamboat of modernity” (Burluk, Kruchenyh, et al. 2009, 65)] and the skyscraper [“From the heights of skyscrapers we look down at their insignificance!” (Burluk, Kruchenyh, et al. 2009, 65)]. As a matter of fact, both references are metonymies: as the steamboat stands for the age of modernity, so does the skyscraper<sup>114</sup>, from the top of which the Futurists contemptuously look down at the misery of contemporary literary figures (at most, it reminds a modern version of the mount of Parnassus). What these metonymies obviously have in common is that they both are based on the technological developments usually associated with the western world. Denouncing the “internal Occident” in Russian arts, the authors of *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* do not picture themselves in the steppe. Instead, they position themselves on top of a skyscraper and onboard a steamboat of modernity, both being recognizable signs of the western civilization. Thus, they appropriate certain “progressive” concepts of the “external Occident” (as they did with Marinetti’s rhetoric) and use those to shape the imaginary realm of their own.

There is an even deeper tension in the anti-Western rhetoric of the Russian Futurists, though. I am going to briefly look at one more quite recognizable (even if not conventional) image of the Western world silently present in the Russian Futurist manifestos, that of Friedrich Nietzsche. Within the scope of the current work I cannot afford elaborating on the issue, however, a few words have to be said.

Surprisingly, the links between the Russian Futurism and Nietzsche have not been studied extensively yet. Some aspects of the problem are discussed in a book by Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, devoted to Nietzsche in Russia<sup>115</sup>, besides, there are two chapters (on Mayakovsky and on Khlebnikov) in a collection edited by Rosenthal<sup>116</sup>, and a number of

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<sup>113</sup> In Jakobson’s “formalist” analysis the difference appears as follows: “Thus it appears that new material and new concepts in the poetry of the Italian futurists have led to a renewal of the devices of poetry and of artistic forms ... for Marinetti the stimulus for innovation was the need to tell of new facts in the material and psychological worlds ... But the Russian futurists advanced a totally different thesis ... it is the Russian futurists who invented a poetry of the “self-developing, self-valuing word”” (Jakobson 1992, 177).

<sup>114</sup> There were no skyscrapers in Moscow at the time when *A slap in the face of public taste* was published. The first one, the house of Nirnsee, a forty-meter high ten-floor building, was only under construction (completed in summer, 1913).

<sup>115</sup> See: Rosenthal 2002.

<sup>116</sup> See: Rosenthal 1994.

articles in other collections. Meanwhile, Krystyna Pomorska is confident that Nietzsche did influence the movement: “Even a superficial glance at the Futurist ideology immediately shows the influence of or convergence with Nietzsche, especially his persistent and renowned concept of a superman in *Also sprach Zarathustra*” (Pomorska 1985, 170). Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal observes that

futurists rarely acknowledged their debts, but we know that Mayakovsky and Kruchenykh read Nietzsche, that Mayakovsky knew *Zarathustra* well, that Khlebnikov used Nietzschean themes, and that contemporaries regarded them as a Nietzschean movement. (Rosenthal 2002, 95)<sup>117</sup>

Henryk Baran also finds Nietzschean influences in Khlebnikov (Baran 1994). Bengt Jangfeldt argues that “Nietzsche in general and *Zarathustra* in particular served as vital stimuli for Mayakovsky during his first, formative years as a poet” (Jangfeldt 1994, 54). Besides, Jangfeldt suggests that “The Futurist exclamation “We look at their nothingness from the height of skyscrapers!” <...> was no doubt perceived by this Nietzsche-oriented generation as a variation on the “mountain theme” in *Zarathustra*” (Jangfeldt 1994, 55).

I will also mention, without any claims of a comprehensive analysis, the Kruchenykh-Nietzsche connection, as it suggests a new dimension in the Russian Futurist anti-Occidentalism. In the beginning of the “New Ways of the Word” essay, Kruchenykh briefly (in parentheses) mentions the name of one of the sources of his anti-rationalist inspiration. It is Piotr Uspensky, an unconventional theorist, whose esoteric gnoseology and a multi-dimensional model of the universe<sup>118</sup> find a direct response in Kruchenykh’s manifesto<sup>119</sup>. When Kruchenykh pronounces his philosophic critique of Symbolism and argues that “Symbolism does not stand up to the arguments of contemporary gnoseology” (Kruchenykh 2009, 87), he obviously makes an implicit reference to Uspensky. However, next to Uspensky there seems to stand a larger figure, although not mentioned yet. Uspensky, an ardent disciple of Nietzsche’s teaching on the super-man<sup>120</sup>, appears to be one of the links between Kruchenykh and the German philosopher.

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<sup>117</sup> See also: Rosenthal 1991.

<sup>118</sup> See: Ouspensky, P. D. 1974, *A New Model of the Universe*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>119</sup> See Kruchenykh’s reflections on irrational and intuitive cognition and on the discovery of multiple dimensions of the world in “New ways of the word”.

<sup>120</sup> See: Ouspensky, P. D. 1974.



One year later, Kruchenyh will explicitly mention the name though, writing in his book on Mayakovsky's verse<sup>121</sup> that the Futurists, in their transrational experiments and imitations of insanity "might surpass both Dostoevsky and Nietzsche" (Kruchenyh 2006, 216). In a later text, "Kukish proshliakam"<sup>122</sup>, Kruchenyh writes a lengthy passage on Nietzsche, obviously identifying with the philosopher, at least, with the latter's "merry dance" (Kruchenyh 1992, 17). In this context, Nietzsche becomes Kruchenyh's ally in the anti-Symbolist cause, as the reference to the "eternally-feminine" obviously implies sarcastic critique of the Russian Symbolists, who, following Vladimir Soloviov, popularized Goethe's "das Ewig Weibliche".

Kruchenyh poetically pictures Nietzsche and Schopenhauer united in a single image, "a light round dance of hazy deities, and only legs are light-minded in them!" (Kruchenyh 1992, 17). Apparently, Kruchenyh, discussing Nietzsche and Schopenhauer in terms of "dance", "pictures", and "poetry", sees in them primarily esthetic inspiration rather than philosophic. This may be also proved by his speech at Baku University (9 – 11 May, 1921), where Kruchenyh polemicizes with Vyacheslav Ivanov on Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. The records of the dispute proceedings, published by Konstantin Lappo-Danilevskij, show that Kruchenyh "objects to considering N(ietzsche) and D(ostoevsky) from the philosophical perspective: they should be studied as artists" (Lappo-Danilevskij 1994, 409). His argumentation, though, is quite Nietzschean and based on the idea of relativism of moral values:

Maybe, close is the day when all the issues of morals will be dead, so they will be absolutely foreign to the future arts, whereas the artistic side of both [Nietzsche and Dostoevsky] will remain, and it is but little studied yet. (Lappo-Danilevskij 1994, 409)

Seeing Nietzsche as an artist, Kruchenykh most probably identifies with the "Dionysiac" element, which could remind him of his own live, joyful, primitive and transrational (even if incomprehensible) *zaum'* language. However, the extent of Nietzsche's influence on the Russian Futurism (even more so, on Russian Symbolism) is far beyond the scope of the current work. It is very ironic, though, that attacking the

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<sup>121</sup> See: Kruchenyh, Alexei 1914, *Stihi V. Mayakovskogo. Vpyyt*, Sankt Peterburg: EUY.

<sup>122</sup> Published in the 1923 collection: Kruchenyh, Alexei 1923, *Faktura slova*, Moskva: MAF.

Symbolists with Nietzschean references, Kruchenykh uses a weapon the symbolists are obviously more than familiar with<sup>123</sup>.

I have tried to outline the heterogeneity of the concepts of the Occident and Orient in Russian Futurism. Being obviously indebted to the Italian Futurists, it nevertheless positions itself in conflict with both the external (Marinetti's) and the internal (in particular, embodied by the Russian Symbolists) Occident, adopting the rhetoric of the internal Orient as a primitive, wild and irrational element and metonymically identifying themselves with "Asia". However, at a closer look, the irrational and supposedly "Asian" stance of the Hylaeans appears to be equally heterogeneous, for the wild and the irrational, as Kruchenykh's case showed, bear a resemblance to a well-known Occidental tradition.

### 1.5. Theoretical background: Velimir Khlebnikov's "Asia"

In order to illustrate the East/West tensions of Russian Futurism, I will look at some texts by one of the most complex figures of the movement. Undoubtedly, the main role in conceptualizing the East-West argument in Russian Futurism belongs to Viktor Vladimirovich (Velimir) Khlebnikov (1885 – 1922), one of the central figures in the Russian avant-garde culture of the early twentieth century in general and Russian cubo-futurism in particular. I will argue that Khlebnikov's early texts, such as "Svyatogor's barrow" (1908) and "The Teacher and the Student" (1912), encapsulate certain patterns which will be characteristic of the Futurist constructs of the Orient and the Occident. First, however, I am going to look at some biographical facts of Khlebnikov's life, in order to provide background to his Oriental interests and to the analysis of his East-West mythology.

Before the beginning of the "Futurist era", in early 1900s, Khlebnikov was warmly welcomed by the Russian Symbolists<sup>124</sup> (those, whom Futurism will soon come to see as the movement's direct antagonists): Vyacheslav Ivanov, Alexey Remizov and Sergey Gorodetsky<sup>125</sup> highly valued Khlebnikov's totally unconventional texts. What attracted

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<sup>123</sup> See, e.g., numerous works on Nietzsche by Vyacheslav Ivanov.

<sup>124</sup> This is by far not the only link between Symbolism and Futurism in Russia: the Centrifuge group (Boris Pasternak, Nikolai Aseev, Sergei Bobrov) also had its roots in Symbolism, and even at a later stage, according to Markov, "retained some remnants of symbolist aesthetics" (Markov 1968, 229).

<sup>125</sup> All of anti-western and neo-slavophile background.

them in the poet besides his language craftsmanship was his passionate interest in mythology, especially Slavic mythology. Khlebnikov's texts were even accepted by the *Apollon* magazine, closely associated with Vyacheslav Ivanov's circle, even though the publication was eventually canceled.

By 1910, Khlebnikov drifts away from the Symbolists and in February, 1910, thanks to Vasily Kamensky, he is introduced to an alternative movement in Russian arts, the people who will soon be known as the Futurists: the Burliuk brothers, Elena Guro and her husband, Mikhail Matiushin. The very name of the movement, "budetljane" (a Slavic version of the word "futurists"), will be coined by Khlebnikov.

Khlebnikov participates in Futurist publications from the very first collection, *Trap for Judges I* (1910), which included three of his poems. Almost half of the 1912 collection, *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*, consisted of Khlebnikov's texts. Khlebnikov, together with David Burliuk, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Alexei Kruchenyh, was one of those who authored the famous scandalous manifesto<sup>126</sup>, which opens the collection. Khlebnikov's works constitute a major part of the *Trap for Judges II* (1913), too. In 1914, he writes the prologue for a programmatic Futurist project: the opera *Victory over the Sun*, a joint project of Mikhail Matiushin (music), Alexei Kruchenyh (lyrics) and Kazimir Malevich (stage and costume design). In 1914, Khlebnikov's collected poems are published in St. Petersburg and in Moscow. Burliuk declares him a genius, Pavel Filonov illustrates his works (*Izbornik*, 1914). Thus, by mid-1910s, Khlebnikov becomes a widely recognized poet and language innovator.

Khlebnikov was born in the Astrakhan province of the Russian empire, the territory of today's Kalmykia, a meeting place of different occidental and oriental cultures. "I was born in the camp of nomads worshipping Buddha, the name is Khanskaya Stavka (Khan's headquarters) – in the steppes, the dried out bottom of the disappearing Kaspian sea" (Khlebnikov 1986, 641), as he puts it himself in a biographical sketch (the reference to the dying sea is not accidental, as it well rhymes with the imagery and concepts of "Svyatogor's Barrow", which I will analyze below). Describing his ancestry in the same autobiographical note, Khlebnikov underlines his mixed ethnicity: his, on the one hand, Armenian and, on the other, Dnieper Cossack (*Zaporozhskaja Sech*) origins. This is not to say that the race, milieu and moment

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<sup>126</sup> Even if he was allegedly reluctant to sign it first and objected to some phrasing, especially critical remarks aimed at Mikhail Kuzmin (Krusanov 2010, 517).

determined Khlebnikov's interest in other cultures. This is rather to emphasize that Khlebnikov in his reflections wants to position himself as a person representing a combination of cultures, and that among those several cultures, Khlebnikov apparently highlights the nomadic, the wild, and the daring side, i.e. the aspects of what was traditionally pictured in Russian culture as the essentialized Orient.

Khlebnikov's education was not too systematic. However, his constant fascination with the East was mentioned by many of his friends, sometimes not without some irony. In 1909, Vasily Kamensky once sees Khlebnikov looking out the window and singing a strange song:

Persian shepherds sing so, high in the mountains, and I remembered the wonderful Persia, and I felt a desire to go there, to Teheran. I was standing in the door, listening and wondering where he learned a Persian song. And he kept singing, just like in Persia, and he couldn't stop, and the words were unintelligible. <...> I asked: "Where did you learn a Persian song?" <...> "Persian? Well... Budetljane must go East... There lies Russian future. It is absolutely clear. We need to write about it and declare it to the people. (Kamensky 1991, 533)

The interesting thing is that Kamensky, unlike Khlebnikov, had been to Teheran by that time, so most probably he must have heard those songs which he seemed to recognize in Khlebnikov's improvisation.

Another friend, Alexei Kruchenyh, thus describes his first meeting with Khlebnikov in 1912:

Burliuk introduced me to Khlebnikov at some dispute or an exhibition... I didn't know how to start a conversation yet, but Khlebnikov was already throwing enigmatic phrases at me, he overwhelmed me with his broad knowledge, talking about the influence of Mongol, Chinese, Indian and Japanese poetry on Russian verse... (Kruchenyh 1996, 49)

Khlebnikov believes that Russian culture was largely shaped by Eastern influences (as he told Kruchenyh) and that it must return to those Eastern roots (as he declared at Kamensky's place). This eastward vector shapes the spatial dimension of Khlebnikov's world. Interestingly, going East implies to him going back to the roots, thus the future which he prophesizes appears to be not too different from the past. This

substitution characterizes temporal aspects of Khlebnikov's mythological construct: the cyclic nature of time and the connection (if not tautology) of time and space.

Not unlike Ezra Pound's, Khlebnikov's world is based on mythological constructs. Khlebnikov's texts contain a wide variety of allusions and quotations from classical mythology, as well as Egyptian, Persian, Indian and Slavic mythologies, to name but a few. Some of Khlebnikov's imagery, not directly connected with familiar mythology, nevertheless, also functions as a myth in its cosmic perspective and sacral rhetoric, as notices Henryk Baran (Baran 2002, 30). Like Pound, Khlebnikov develops a whole mythological system (cultural, linguistic, historical, political), which shapes not only his literary works but also his social behavior and his politically-oriented actions. Like Pound's, his "mythology" is eclectic and comprises a mixture of elements from various national mythologies, as well as mythologemes of his own design. A comprehensive analysis of Khlebnikov's mythology is beyond the scope of the current work, though. I am only going to consider the "geographical" elements, connected with the East/West dichotomy, which, to a great extent, informed the whole of the Russian Futurist enterprise, as I will argue.

Like Pound, Khlebnikov wants to write an epic. As early as 1909, he writes to Vasily Kamensky:

I have a plan to write a complex work "Against the course of time" (*Poperek vremeni*) ... With a pauper's generosity I want to throw all my paints and discoveries on the palette... The final chapter is my prospects for the future of the humankind. (Khlebnikov 1940, 358)

Unlike Pound, though, he does not write a big epic, but he does return to the idea again and again and does leave fragments of what might be seen as a Futurist epic.

Khlebnikov's mythology, even if eclectic, is not inconsistent. Comprising elements of numerous, sometimes almost incompatible systems and sources, it has a very distinct cultural, ideological and political agenda. Initially, the latter is closely connected with the theories of the Russian Symbolists (Vyacheslav Ivanov in particular) concerning the role of myth and myth-making in culture. Some of the pan-slavic aspects of Khlebnikov's (especially early Khlebnikov's) mythology may be also attributed to the political contexts of the first decade of the twentieth century: the Bosnian crisis of 1908 and the growing

antagonism between Germany/Austro-Hungary and the Slavic states<sup>127</sup>. The pan-Slavic constituent of Khlebnikov's myth (first quite militant, but later much more moderate) was based not only on popular slavophile ideas and ideologemes, but on extensive reading about and studying of Slavic history, culture, languages, folklore and ethnography.<sup>128</sup>

In 1904, Khlebnikov writes in an auto-epitaph text: "let the tombstone read: <...> he found the true classification of sciences, he connected time and space, he created the geometry of numbers. He found the Slavic [language]..." (Khlebnikov 1986, 577). The nineteen-year old Khlebnikov, a natural sciences student at Kazan University, in the form of an epitaph sets his goals for life. The utopia he is going to build is about time, space, numbers, and languages. At some point, they all are going to come together and furnish a prophesized design: time, space, mathematics and the language<sup>129</sup>. A new dimension where time and space are one, where history is mathematics, and the language is universal<sup>130</sup>. The myth Khlebnikov is starting to shape is immortality.

Khlebnikov's life-project (similar to Pound's) was synthetic by nature: his "theoretical" constructs and his creative work are hard to separate. Theoretical reflections echo in the poetry, like "The Tables of Fate" ("Doski sud'by") in *Zangezi* (1922); poetic imagery penetrates the theory (e.g., see "Svyatogor's Barrow"). Moreover, Khlebnikov's own life itself seems to be the continuation of his mythology (one might mention, for example, the attempts to realize the utopia in the "Chairmen of the Globe" project).

In the mid 1900s, Khlebnikov takes up the Japanese language and at the same time starts seriously thinking about the "mathematics of history" (the laws and the language of history). Thus, he sets off on his quest: proceeding both eastwards and backwards in the depth of time. The starting point is characterized by more or less black-

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<sup>127</sup> Khlebnikov's response to the Balkan crisis was quite violent: on 16 October, 1908, he publishes an anonymous letter in St.Petersburg paper *Vecher* calling for armed struggle in support of the Eastern Slavic nations.

<sup>128</sup> For more on the subject, see, for example Henryk Baran's "Towards the problem of Khlebnikov's ideology: myth-making and mystification" (Baran 2002, 68-104) and Alexander Parnis's article on the South-Slavic thematic in Khlebnikov (Parnis 1978).

<sup>129</sup> On the link between the word and the number in Khlebnikov, see: Feshchenko 2009.

<sup>130</sup> Khlebnikov's, as well as Pound's dreams of a universal language are, of course, in no way unique. For the history of the humanity's search for a universal language, see, for example, Eco 1995.

and-white colors, though: initially, the East/West opposition in Khlebnikov's world is absolutely antagonistic (later he shifts towards the idea of a certain synthesis).

The opposition of the Slavic, Eastern world to the Western, in particular German, may be also found in such poems, as the 1905 "Militant" ("Boevaia") song (Khlebnikov 1930, 23), where the poet stretches his hand to the West with damnation and prophesizes the ultimate victory of united Slavs over Germany. The initial militant pan-slavic, pro-Eastern and anti-Western stance may be also traced both in his longer texts (e.g., "Svyatogor's Barrow", *Deti Vydry*) and in the poet's unequivocal political opposition to Marinetti.

"Svyatogor's Barrow" ("Kurgan Svyatogora"), one of his earliest programmatic texts written in 1908, is especially interesting in this context, as it shows the formation of Khlebnikov's mythology. The text (as it often happens with Khlebnikov, the genre is hard to define - an essay? a sermon? a poem in prose?) was never published in Khlebnikov's lifetime and appeared in print only in 1940, in a collection of unpublished texts, edited by Nikolai Hardzhiev.

In "Svyatogor's Barrow", Khlebnikov provides the background framework of his mythology. Khlebnikov explicitly sets a spatial frame of references: East, West, and Russia. He also establishes a value-charged temporal paradigm: the absolute mythological past as the starting point of the story and as the measure of all values, the corrupted present, and the prospective future as the realization of the "destiny" and a symbolic return to the standard of the absolute past, completing the mythological time cycle. In this world, the geographical axes also bear moral value: the East has strong positive connotations, while the West seems to be the source of corruption. The author appropriates the role of a prophet (as often happens in Khlebnikov's oeuvre), testifying about the past (and the East), judging the present (and the West), and urging the congregation (the reader) to fulfill the prophecy.

One of the noticeable characteristic features of the text is its making use of argumentation borrowed not only from mythological and folklore sources but from natural sciences. Khlebnikov, who aspired to find the "true classification of sciences" (*Epitaph*), from now on will keep referring to natural sciences and mathematics in his historical/ linguistic/ cultural reflections. In case of "Svyatogor's Barrow", he turns to geology.

Khlebnikov refers to the period of formation of the Eurasian plate after the glacier had left what then became the European part of Russia. In Khlebnikov's mythology, the glacier (which he calls the "Sea") represents an ancient god of the pre-historic time. The departure of the god signifies the beginning of a new era. Referring to the moment of departure, Khlebnikov asks a (rhetorical?) question, if the sea, rushing back, did not "breathe a certain mystic last will, not heard by anybody else, to the people who, at this last hour, accepted through the cleft in the casket of time the East of the live spirit of the warrior crucified in the iron age" (Khlebnikov 2005, 22).

The folklore reference in this passage alludes to the mythological plot concerning the death of a giant prehistoric warrior, Svyatogor. According to the legend (*bylina*), Svyatogor and Ilya Muromets (a junior warrior) once found a large casket (made of oak or stone in different versions of the *bylina*). Ilya Muromets lay in the casket, but it was too large for him. When Svyatogor, in his turn, lay in the casket, it was just the right size for him. But having lain in it, Svyatogor could not get out. The lid closed upon him, and whenever Ilya Muromets struck the casket with his sword, trying to free Svyatogor, a new metal ring circled the casket. Finally, Ilya gave up and that was the end of the legendary giant warrior Svyatogor. However, before the casket closed forever, Svyatogor breathed his power to Ilya. Thus, in Khlebnikov's mythology, the ancient glacier/sea<sup>131</sup> is the old god who leaves the world but, while leaving, breathes "through the cleft in the casket of time" his power ("the East of the live spirit") to his child and successor, i.e. the people who populated the area.

Another primary mythological character in Khlebnikov's tale is the land that used to be the sea bottom. After the sea leaves, this land (grammatically feminine in Russian) becomes the Widow. "We are the inheritors of the sea ", proceeds Khlebnikov. "We are the executors of the last will of the great sea. We are to dry up the tears of the ever-sad widow" (Khlebnikov 2005, 22). However, according to Khlebnikov's tale, something went wrong and the inheritors did not live up to the standards bequeathed by the ancient deity, the standards of "the East of the live spirit". The shadow of the long-gone sea does not recognize itself any more in the image of the inheritor, nor does it recognize the inheritor as its son. The Widow was sad, because she had expected the child not only to look like the father, but also to speak the father's voice. The Widow, i.e. the land (mother-

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<sup>131</sup> Khlebnikov's phrase about being born in the steppe, the former bottom of the dying Caspian Sea might be a reference to this tale. In this case, Khlebnikov appears to identify with the inheritor of the numerous cultures of the area.



land) blames the children as their mouths are "enchanted by the evil will of the neighbor islands, silent or copying the voices of the overseas birds" (Khlebnikov 2005, 24).

So, there appears one more entity in the mythological plot: the unnamed evil spirit (as opposed to the live Eastern spirit) of the foreign land (or, more accurately, "islands"), which impedes the noble mission and prevents the junior warrior from fulfilling the prophecy and becoming like his legendary father. Thus the unnamed West becomes the evil spirit of Khlebnikov's myth. Khlebnikov blames the Russian people for having lost the contact with their origins, for having lost their voice, or traded it for the other's voice. Even Pushkin, according to Khlebnikov, is guilty of having fallen under the influence of the West.

The solution, according to Khlebnikov, is in the people's ability of word-creation (*slovotvorchestvo*). He writes about the linguistic potential of common people and suggests creating a language, which will be equivalent to what Lobachevsky did in mathematics, and which will become a common Slavic language. Khlebnikov's own text with its abundance of Slavic-based neologisms looks like an illustration to this idea.

Thus, early Khlebnikov's mythology sets the background for his linguistic, historical, cultural and political experiments. "Svyatogor's Barrow" maps the space for the development of Khlebnikov's mythology and sets a paradigm of values for Russian Futurism. The opposition East/West in its context equals to the opposition of "the East of the live spirit" and the "evil will of the neighbor islands". Whereas the West, as the evil, lies beyond the territory of the mythological mother-land, the East lives within the land. The East is not a territorial alternative to the West, nor is it (like in case of the West) an influence from the outside. It is the very nature, the spirit of the land and its people. This "geographical" value-charged paradigm does not need any reasons: the West is evil just because it is the West, while the East is good just because it is the realm of the live spirit.

In this text, one can see the "sprouts" of all Khlebnikov's theories and utopias: the mathematics of history ("the great primary numbers of being"), the transrational common language ("single common Slavic word") resembling the "hyperbolic geometry" of Lobachevsky. It is interesting to mention that while Khlebnikov's ideas and values changed and developed and his political preferences shifted, the primary mythological imagery remained. Thus, references to the "continental consciousness", the heritage of an ancient sea, will survive and reoccur in different texts long after the pan-slavic anti-Western connotations will have lost edge.

Considered in Jakobson's terms, Khlebnikov's thought shows apparent preference to metonymical figures. His picture capitalizes on the whole/part relationship, his "prophecy" anticipates the restoration of the initial wholeness of the familiar unity by making fragmented parts fill in the gaps. Khlebnikov builds his discourse as a linear succession, based on cause-and-effect principle (the glacier grants his last breath to the people, who, consequently inherit the ancient wisdom; the evil influence of the Western "islanders" results in the decay of the original culture), which reminds of Jakobson's description of the "similarity disorder". Besides, Khlebnikov's assumptions are primarily based on contiguity<sup>132</sup>: the inhabitants of the mainland synecdochally substitute the great "mainland consciousness", while the mind of the enemies is shaped by the limits of their small islands. Familiar allusions (the Svyatogor *bylina*) provide a language for interpreting historical patterns, which, in their turn, become but parts of a familiar narrative. Khlebnikov's prophecy claims to be the restoration of the former unity from metonymical fragments.

The metonymy-based picture becomes a matrix for a number of following texts. The pattern may be recognized, for example, in Khlebnikov's *The Teacher and the Student*, a programmatic work, where the antagonism between life and death is explicitly translated as "Asia versus Europe". The text, published as a book<sup>133</sup> in 1912 and later included in the *Soyuz Molodezhi* collection (1913)<sup>134</sup>, not unlike *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (and even Marinetti's manifesto, to that matter), announces a new vision of life, history, and arts, denounces the "burden of books of the old humankind" and even calls for the "great destroyers of books" (Khlebnikov 2009, 58). Not only does this "Socratic dialogue" correlate the opposition life/death with the opposition of folk songs/modern writers, it also foregrounds the corresponding "geographical" conflict East/West and brings it to the ontological and epistemological level, following the tradition of the nineteenth century, which I have briefly discussed in the Introduction. The difference with the tradition is in the author's open identification with the Oriental element.

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<sup>132</sup> According to Henryk Baran, Khlebnikov's references to mythology and medieval history imply the existence of direct connections between the historical past of Eastern Slavs and the primitive life of still existing Russian peasants' communes.

<sup>133</sup> See: Khlebnikov, Velimir 1912, *Uchitel' i uchenik: razgovor*, Herson: Parovaia tipografia preemnikov O.D. Hodushinovi.

<sup>134</sup> See: Khlebnikov, Velimir 1913, "Uchitel' i uchenik", *Soyuz molodezhi*, No. 3, Sankt Peterburg: Soyuz molodezhi.

What Khlebnikov essentializes as *Asia* is, obviously, the "internal Orient" of Russia, opposed to the "external Occident" of Western Europe and the "internal Occident" of the westernized compatriots. Contrasting Asia with Europe, Khlebnikov does not see them as equal or even comparable/commensurate entities. Following the "Svyatogor's Barrow" pattern, Khlebnikov develops the opposition of the "mainland" vs. the "island" (or peninsular) consciousness. The former stands for Asia (with the implications of the size, power and unfragmented integrity), the latter refers to the European states (with the implications of fragmentation, insignificance, and limited world-view). Apparently identifying with the "mainland", Khlebnikov's character pronounces: "The son of proud Asia does not bear with the peninsular reason of the Europeans" (Khlebnikov 2009, 62). Characteristically, Khlebnikov here uses the word "reason" (*rassudok*), as opposed to the "consciousness of the mainland" (*um materika*), which suggests skepticism with regard to the limited rationalism of the "Europeans". The contiguous identification with Asia, as well as the contiguous substitution of the irrational consciousness and the rational reason by the reference to their respective geographical origins, may be seen as essentially metonymical operations, already familiar to us after reading "Svyatogor's Barrow".

This familiar pattern reemerges in the writings of other Futurists, too. Thus, for example, Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie's "We and the West" manifesto (1914) illustrates a very similar approach to the East/West opposition, which explicitly correlates with such oppositions as life/death and new arts/old arts. The title of the manifesto itself, with its metonymical substitution of the East by the first person plural pronoun, reminds of Khlebnikov's identification with the "live spirit of the Orient". The authors' treatment of the ontological difference between the Eastern and the Western arts closely reminds of Khlebnikov's "continent vs. island" argumentation, too: while the former are "based on cosmic elements", the latter ones are limited, "territorial" (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009, 371). Russia in this case, exemplifies not only the continent, but the whole cosmos. It is interesting to notice here that "We and the West", like Khlebnikov's "Svyatogor's Barrow", aims at negotiating Russia's relationship with the West, rather than with the East (the latter is largely taken for granted). It is not accidental then, that the manifesto leaflet was published in three languages (Russian, French and Italian), or that it was sent to Apollinaire and by the latter's efforts appeared in the *Mercure de France* (16 April, 1914).

The scandal provoked by Khlebnikov during Marinetti's visit to Russia in January-February, 1914, may be also read as an extension of "Svyatogor's Barrow". Marinetti came to Russia<sup>135</sup> and visited Moscow and St. Petersburg at the invitation of Nikolay Kulbin (an artist and avant-garde theorist, close to the Futurists). However, the visit was not welcomed by a group of Russian Futurists, Khlebnikov, Livshits, and Larionov being the most active among them<sup>136</sup>. In Moscow, none of the Russian cubo-futurists came to Marinetti's lecture (Livshits 1989, 471). In St. Petersburg, Kulbin wanted to make up for the scandal and asked the Hylaeans to show that they were "Europeans", unlike Moscovites. Khlebnikov and Livshits preferred to be "Asians" (Livshits 1989, 473).

Explaining their antagonism to Marinetti, Livshits makes several references to Marinetti's esthetics and concludes that most of the Italian's ideas sounded outdated to the Russian Futurists, who in many respects were already way ahead of their Italian namesakes. However, the main reason for the scandal seems to lie not in esthetics but in politics. Marinetti came to Russia "as the head of an organization visiting one of its branches" (Livshits 1989, 472), remembers Livshits, i.e. he allegedly considered Russian Futurism as a replica of his own movement. That is why the leaflet Khlebnikov and Livshits wrote on the eve of Marinetti's lecture in St. Petersburg was not about esthetic principles. The division between Russian and Italian futurism ran along the lines of East/West opposition<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> For more information on Marinetti's visit see, e.g.: Hardzhiev 1997; Markov 1968; Livshits 1989, 470-507.

<sup>136</sup> It should be noticed here that not all Russian avant-garde writers displayed equally militant attitude towards Marinetti's visit. Among those, who appreciated the visit, was, for example, Vadim Shershenevich, one of the most pro-Western poets of Russian literary avant-garde, who was close to ego-futurism and to the Poetry Mezzanine group, and later joined the Imaginists. Shershenevich translated Marinetti into Russian, wrote articles about the Italian movement in Russian media, and accompanied Marinetti during the latter's visit. For more information on Shershenevich's vision of Marinetti, see his memoirs, "Velikolepnyi ochevidets", published in the collection of memoirs: *Moi vek, moi družia i podrug: vospominaniia Mariengofa, Shershenevicha, Gruzinova*, Moskva, 1990.

<sup>137</sup> Immediately after Marinetti's second lecture in St.Petersburg, Livshits reads an alternative public lecture, which Markov describes as follows: "In the <...> half-an-hour lecture, Livshits describes the West and the East as two completely different systems of aesthetic vision. Russia was presented as an organic part of the East, and the lecturer drew parallels between Russian icons and Persian miniatures, Russian and Chinese popular lithographs, Russian chastushkas ("popular ditties") and Japanese tankas. <...> The lecture ended with appeals to wake up and recognize Russian superiority over the West" (Markov 1968, 156).

Khlebnikov attacks both Marinetti and the pro-Western groups among Russian Futurists. He obviously sees the conflict with Marinetti as a metonymic representation of a larger war. The leaflet blames those among the Russian Futurists who "kneel before Marinetti and <...> betray the first steps of Russian arts towards freedom and honor", those who "bend the noble neck of Asia, accepting the yoke of Europe" (Khlebnikov 2005, 345). If references to the renegades sound contemptuous, the lines addressed to Marinetti literally utilize the rhetoric of war:

"People of will are standing aside. They remember the laws of hospitality but their bow is spanned and their foreheads are wrathful. Stranger, remember what land you came to!" (Khlebnikov 2005, 345)

Defending freedom and honor of Russian arts, Khlebnikov and Livshits metonymically identify with the mysterious Asia, the image of which they construct as an alternative to the corrupt West and as the stronghold of the wild, the unrestricted, the powerful. The value of the concepts of East and West is taken for granted, like in Khlebnikov's "mainland consciousness" and the "reason of the islands". In this leaflet, like in "Svyatogor's Barrow", Khlebnikov treats these categories – East, West – as essentialized mythological and ontological entities, which do not need to be justified and which operate through mere contiguity.

Khlebnikov brought the leaflets to Marinetti's lecture, which provoked a well-known public scandal. However, it was obviously not enough for Khlebnikov, and he proceeded to write a furious letter addressed to Marinetti: "The East throws down a challenge to the arrogant West" (Livshits 1989, 681). Here, the focus of the attack metonymically shifts from Marinetti to the whole of the West, while Khlebnikov himself appears as a metonymical representative of the East. In this mythological (eschatological?) battle, Khlebnikov plays the role of the legendary warrior who saves his people, and, implicitly, the whole of the familiar mainland, fulfilling the prophecy (with obvious references to the legends of Ilya Muromets, which again echo of the *Kurgan Svyatogora* text).

Khlebnikov's further texts will be more complex and less straightforward; however, certain *Svyatogor* patterns will remain. In the 1913 text "O rasshirenii predelov russkoi slovesnosti" ("On Extending the Limits of Russian Literature"), Khlebnikov again indirectly refers to "Svyatogor's Barrow" and its main idea of metonymically inheriting

the “East of the live spirit”. Though the conclusion of the essay shows that Khlebnikov gives up pan-slavistic theories and starts thinking more globally, stating that “The brain of the land cannot be great-Russian only. It would be better, if it was continental [*materikovyi*]” (Khlebnikov 2005, 67), the metonymical pattern is still familiar. The adjective “continental” obviously alludes to the *Kurgan Svyatogora* logic and rhetoric.

Commenting on his *Otter's Children (Deti Vydry, 1912-1913)*, which is based on the legends of the Far-East Oroch people, Khlebnikov writes: “The legends of Orochi, the oldest tribe of the Amur river area, struck me and I decided to construct a universal Asian (*obscheazijskoe*) consciousness in songs” (Khlebnikov 1986, 36). He aims at reconstructing the whole from the parts, and the whole appears to be the realm of the familiar, while parts become familiarized by mere virtue of spatial contiguity. In a similar endeavor, Khlebnikov tries to include South-Slavic cultures into this syncretic “universal Asian” consciousness. In “Voin ne nastupivshego tzarstva” (“Warrior of the Kingdom of the Future”)<sup>138</sup>, an essay not published during Khlebnikov’s lifetime, he demands opening the way for the floods of “Montenegrin aspects” of the Russian language. Contiguity justifies cultural appropriation.

The idea of creating a common universal Asian consciousness, or later universal Slavic language, manifests the same vector of Khlebnikov’s mythology. “Asian voice of *Deti Vydry*. Slavic voice of *Devichy Bog*. African voice of *Ka. Vila I Leshy* - a union of Balkan and Sarmatian creative thought” (Khlebnikov 1986, 36) - it all sounds like filling in the lacunas in the fragmented “mainland consciousness”. This tendency will gain momentum in the late 1910s, which is obviously connected with Khlebnikov’s traumatic experience of military service during the World War.

In September, 1916, he writes *A Letter to Two Japanese (Pis'mo dvum japontsam)*, where he discusses establishing an Asian brotherhood of young people and holding an Asian congress in Tokyo (Khlebnikov 1986, 605). Although politically it signifies a serious shift in Khlebnikov’s worldview<sup>139</sup>, the utopian dream of reconstructing the Asian unity from fragments remains the same. “Asia is a scrap of manuscripts, upon which the word is to appear” (Khlebnikov 1986, 604), defines Khlebnikov his dream-land. This is the land he still metonymically identifies with: “So let us pull out a pine tree

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<sup>138</sup> See: Khlebnikov 1933.

<sup>139</sup> A similar shift is the inclusion of Herbert Wells and Marinetti (!) in the “Martian parliament” (“*duma marsian*”) in *Truba Marsian* (1916), see Khlebnikov 1986, 604. The Asian bow is not spanned any more and the wrath has subsided.

out of the wood, dip it in the ink-pot of the sea, and write a sign-banner 'I am Asia'" (Khlebnikov 1986, 604).

In May, 1919, a year before his death, Khlebnikov writes a programmatic text "Nasha osnova" ("Our Foundation"), which summarizes his theories of the mathematics of history and of the universal transrational language.

As the rays of fate become more and more apparent, the concepts of state and nation disappear, leaving a united humankind, all points of which are logically linked. (Khlebnikov 1986, 632)

He still anticipates the realization of the prophecy, the ultimate restoration of the initial Wholeness from fragments. Time, space, geometry and language came together. However, the key word is "logically": ironically, what started as a protest against (western) rationalism, ended up as a rational, "logical" utopia, a mathematical paradise.





## CHAPTER 2. DAVID BURLIUK'S ORIENTAL QUEST

In this chapter, I will discuss the East/West opposition as reflected in the Japan-related writings of David Burliuk, one of the founders of Russian Futurism. Burliuk's account is of special interest, as he had a chance to spend two years in Japan and encounter the "real" Orient face-to-face. I will look into the East/West opposition as it informs the system of characters in Burliuk's Japanese texts, the cultural and geographical dimension of his imaginary Japan, as well as his concept of the exotic. Finally, I will discuss the gap between the imaginary and the real, repeatedly occurring in the text.

### 2.1. Background

Continuing his long Far-Eastern trip, which started in 1919 (Ufa – Cheliabinsk – Ekaterinburg – Omsk – Irkutsk – Chita – Khabarovsk – Vladivostok), David Burliuk sets off to Japan on 29 September, 1920, and leaves Japan for the USA on 17 August, 1922. In Japan, Burliuk's main goal (besides earning the money necessary for moving to the USA) is obviously introducing Russian avant-garde arts to the Japanese<sup>140</sup>. Together with his companion Victor Palmov<sup>141</sup>, he organizes a series of art exhibits across the country: in October 1920, in Tokyo, in November in Osaka, in December in Kyoto, among the major ones. Besides, Burliuk actively cooperates with the Japanese Futurists<sup>142</sup> and extensively travels across the country: he climbs Fuji-san, visits Yokohama, Nagoya, Kobe, Kagoshima, as well as the island of Oshima and even the remote southern archipelago of Ogasawara.

Burliuk's Japanese quest is recorded in numerous poems, many of them published a few years later in a book dedicated to his wife (Burliuk 1925) and in his summing-up

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<sup>140</sup> Burliuk brings around 400 paintings by thirty artists to Japan (Krusanov 2003, 430).

<sup>141</sup> Victor Palmov (1888-1929), a Russian/Ukrainian avant-garde artist, member of several artistic groups, including the Far-East Futurist *Tvorchestvo* society. In 1921, married Lidyja Elinevskaja, Burliuk's wife's sister.

<sup>142</sup> Fumon Gyo (1896-1972), Togo Seiji (1897-1978), Hirato Yasukichi (1894 – 1922), and especially Kinoshita Shuichiro (1896-1991). The latter, together with Burliuk, authored a book *What is Futurism?* (published in Japan in 1923). For more detail on Burliuk's Japanese connections, see, e.g., Ovaki 2008c.

anniversary collection (Burliuk 1932), as well as three biographical prose narratives: *Oshima, or Japanese Decameron* (written in 1921, published in the US in 1927), *In the Pacific Ocean* (written in 1921, published in the US in 1927), and *The Ascent to Fuji-san* (written in 1921, published in the US in 1926). The narratives present three episodes from Burliuk's life in Japan: an account of the ten days spent in Oshima (November, 1920, together with Victor Palmov and Sergei Scherbakov<sup>143</sup>), memories about four winter months spent on the archipelago of Ogasawara (December, 1920 – April, 1921, with his wife and two sons, his sister Marjana, Václav Fiala (in the text called Vyacheslav Fiala), and Victor Palmov with the latter's wife-to-be, Burliuk's sister-in-law), and the story of climbing mount Fuji (July-August, 1921, together with Václav Fiala and Herbert Peacock<sup>144</sup>).

In the body of Burliuk-related scholarship, his Japanese years are probably least studied yet. Most works focus on biographical aspects<sup>145</sup> and on Burliuk's painting<sup>146</sup> of the period. Burliuk's literary works associated with Japan have been discussed very briefly yet, and in most cases merely descriptively<sup>147</sup>. Most scholars appreciatively write about Burliuk's efforts in establishing cultural links between Russia and Japan and about his role in the development of Japanese Futurism<sup>148</sup>. Without arguing any obvious achievements of the Russian painter and poet and without claiming of providing any comprehensive account of Burliuk's Japanese period, I will focus on the single issue of the representation of Japan in the writings of Burliuk (mostly in the prose narratives, but with occasional references to poetry as well), on the complexity of and certain contradictions in this picture, as it reveals the author's vision of the East-West opposition. I will argue that the latter involves the same metonymic patterns that I outlined in the previous chapter.

Before discussing the particulars of Burliuk's Japan, it is worthwhile mentioning certain obvious lacunas in his account. One of the striking sides of Burliuk's Japanese texts is the displacement of the war. Having arrived from Vladivostok, a territory

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<sup>143</sup> Sergei Scherbakov (1894-1967), a Russian/Ukrainian avant-garde artist, member of such groups as *Golubaja Lilija*, *Koltso*. Emigrated from Russia during the Civil war, for five years lived in Japan, then, like Burliuk, left for the US.

<sup>144</sup> Peacock and Fiala will be discussed further.

<sup>145</sup> See, e.g.: Markov 2007, Suzuki, Fujii and Kapitonenko 2005.

<sup>146</sup> See, e.g.: Ovaki 2008a, Ovaki 2007, Ovaki 2008b.

<sup>147</sup> See, e.g.: Kirillova 2014, Mankova 2013.

<sup>148</sup> See, e.g.: Markov 2007, Ovaki 2008c.

occupied by the Japanese troops some time before, Burliuk avoids making any references to the ongoing war. Nor does he ever refer to the Russian revolution or the current unrest in his home country, which was not totally irrelevant to his decision to flee Moscow and set off on a trip to the Far East (and then further on, to the US). There may be obvious pragmatic explanations of Burliuk's silences: he certainly needs to be cautious in the "enemy's" territory<sup>149</sup>. However, at the same time, these absences might also probably have something to do with the nature of his quest and with his current vision of the East and the West.

On the one hand, politics disappear as Burliuk enters a purely esthetic realm (not unlike Balmont's Japan, discussed in the Introduction), leaving all "mundane" issues aside. On the other hand, as I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, Russian Futurists, when facing the "external" Orient, tend to identify with the West. Moreover, negotiating their identity with the essentialized West becomes more important than a dialogue with the Eastern other. The opposition Russia vs. Japan is consequently displaced and substituted by a more urgent one, that of the West vs. Russia. As Fredric Jameson writes on a totally different occasion:

... from 1884 to World War I, the relationship of domination between First and Third World was masked and displaced by an overriding (and perhaps ideological) consciousness of imperialism as being essentially a relationship between First World powers or the holders of Empire, and this consciousness tended to repress the more basic axis of otherness, and to raise issues of colonial reality only incidentally. (Jameson 1990, 48)

A similar displacement process, I think, may be traced in Burliuk's texts: talking about the Orient, Burliuk looks Westwards. The accent on the exotic in Burliuk's texts, which I will discuss later in this chapter, emphasizes the implicit affinity between Russia and the West, which becomes the major implicit (and often explicit) background of his Orientalism (cf. Khlebnikov's East/West asymmetry discussed in the previous chapter

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<sup>149</sup> Japanese police surveillance of Burliuk and Palmov is mentioned, e.g., by Andrei Krusanov in his *History of Russian Avant-garde* (Krusanov 2003, 473). Chieko Ovaki (Ovaki 2008, 133) quotes a characteristic newspaper headline from *Tokyo Asahi* (18 December, 1920), referring to the Burliuks' trip to Ogasawara: "The families of Russian artists flee from police surveillance to the Southern islands. Futurists are considered extremists". Akira Suzuki publishes some of the surveillance reports with detailed accounts of Burliuk's and Palmov's activities in Japan (Suzuki, Fujii and Kapitonenko, 2005).

and the analysis of “Svyatogor’s Barrow”, which, despite being an attempt of appropriating the Asiatic, is de facto an attempt of negotiating the relationship between Russia and the West, rather than the East). Consequently, the current war conflict (or – any conflict) becomes irrelevant because East and West are not seen as equal spatial/cultural counterparts, their relationship is presented as a hierarchical one. A paradox of Burliuk’s text is that although he explicitly writes his narratives for the Russian reader, he, nevertheless, visits Japan as a Westerner and talking about Japan, often implicitly negotiates the relationship with the West. In a way, he is already beyond the Russo-Japanese hostilities.

Before analyzing Burliuk’s texts, I want to look at the writer’s own words, explaining his view of Japan and the nature of his visit. Having arrived in Japan, Burliuk readily talks to the media; one of the quotes from a text published in *Osaka Mainichi* (2 October, 1920) is worth mentioning here, as it reveals Burliuk’s strategies of constructing the Oriental other, i.e. his “Japan”:

I am not the only one interested in the Japanese culture, which contains Hokusai, Hiroshige, Toyokuni, Utamaro. Sixty years ago, a Frenchman Goncourt influenced artists by the arts of Japan; we inherited him. So, it appears now as if grandchildren have come to their ancestors’ land. (Ovaki 2007, 188)

Burliuk’s appreciating words show several characteristic features of his vision of the Orient. On the one hand, Burliuk defines his Japan as a purely esthetic realm and presents it in a synechdochic manner by the names of famous Japanese artists. On the other hand, he confesses that his interest in Japanese arts originates in the West: Japanese culture came to the new Russian arts from France. More than that, he sees himself, a representative of Russia, as a successor of Goncourt (“we inherited him”), indirectly confirming the Westernness of his approach to Japan. Japan, as I will argue below, becomes for Burliuk a tool for defining his relationship with the West.

As regards Burliuk’s technique, the quote also provides helpful insights. The contextualization of Japan in the framework of Western arts, as well as the successive chronological nature of that vision, evidence the metonymical manner of representation, which I am going to focus on in this chapter. Besides, the concept of grandchildren visiting their ancestors’ land agrees (at least rhetorically) with Khlebnikov’s vision of

Russia/Asia relationship in its both spatial and temporal<sup>150</sup> terms: going to Japan becomes for Burliuk a symbolic return to the roots, and at the same time a journey back in time. How reliable this rhetoric is, I will show below.

However, despite the certain similarity<sup>151</sup> between the general outlines of Khlebnikov's "Svyatogor's Barrow" and Burliuk's Japanese writings, Burliuk's perspective differs from that of Khlebnikov in a very significant aspect: the distance between the grandson and the ancestors is much wider than that between the "child" and the "parent" and not as immediate. Burliuk openly includes an intermediary between the "grand-parent" and the "grand-child", i.e. Goncourt (a symbolic father?), metonymically standing for the Western European arts. In Japan, Burliuk realizes that he is a European. Even if it was a grandson's visit, the distance between the narrator and the other, i.e. the land of his "spiritual ancestors", as described in Burliuk's texts, is always noticeably highlighted in the narrative.

The distance is repeatedly and consciously marked by Burliuk himself. I will argue that it is recognizable in the purpose of his writing, as stated in the texts, and, consequently, in the portrayal of the characters, in the descriptions of the setting, and in the figures of both the narrator and the implicit reader the text is addressed to. However, the distance itself, as I will argue, is ambiguous. Estranging the other, Burliuk nevertheless suggests that the latter is but a part of the familiar "our" world, not unlike Goncourt's Japan, which has become an essential part of the European arts.

Now, looking into Burliuk's texts, let us see what goals the author formulates in his Japanese narratives. In the beginning of the *Fuji-san* narrative, Burliuk explicitly defines both the purpose of his writing and the reader who might be reading it. He frankly says that he wants to share the exotic and original images of the Japanese Pacific culture, "the characteristic features specific to Japan only, with its colorfulness, fraught with the Pacific exotic and originality" ["характерн[ые] черт[ы], присущи[е] только Японии с ея колоритом полным океанских экзотики и самобытности" (Burliuk

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<sup>150</sup> The temporal aspect of the quest seems to be very important: although Burliuk comes to Japan as a Futurist ("the father of Russian futurism", as he calls himself) and does his best to promote the new art, his major concern is not the future but the past. This becomes evident both in the literary texts written in Japan, which I will discuss in this chapter, and in his Japanese pictures (much more conventional and less futuristic than his previous paintings).

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, the tectonic references of the cultural decline picture in Burliuk, 1932, 13.

1926, 4)], as he puts it, metonymically contextualizing the country as a part of the imaginary generalized exotic<sup>152</sup> “Pacific” realm. Both the reader and the narrator are confidently established in the very first lines of the introduction to the *Fuji* text as subjects belonging to the same familiar culture (see, e.g., the use of the possessive pronoun “our”), which is going to provide a solid background for the images of colorful exotics:

My notes and writings about Japan must be of lively interest to the Russian reader, as, having spent two years in the “country of chrysanthemums”, I have relatively closely studied the peculiarities of the everyday life of our Siberian neighbor, a representative of the Pacific culture.

[Мои заметки и записи о Японии должны представлять живой интерес для русского читателя, т.к. проведя в «стране хризантем» - 2 года, я сравнительно близко изучил особенности быта нашей Сибирской соседки, представительницы Тихоокеанской культуры. (Burliuk 1926, 1)]

The introductory passage is interesting in the way it establishes a pattern of Burliuk’s representation of the other. Burliuk starts his text with several metonymical figures. He identifies Japan by two references to the familiar: to “our” Siberia and to, even if much less known but still essentialized and taken for granted, the generalized “Pacific” culture. Both references – to “our” familiar land and to the generalized Oriental exotic – will be further developed throughout the narrative and will shape the writer’s vision of the other, as I will argue.

As regards the purpose of Burliuk’s writing, I need to emphasize one more introductory argument. However he claims to be well aware of the Japanese art and culture (see the interview quoted above) or to be closely familiar with the everyday life in Japan, the text evidences that it is neither the everyday life of the Japanese nor the Japanese culture per se, which is going to be of primary concern for the narrator, as I will show below.

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<sup>152</sup> The concept of the exotic in Burliuk’s text cannot but remind of Edward Said’s analysis of the role of the exotic in “Orientalist” literature (see Said 2003). For further discussion on the exoticism in imperialist culture, see, e.g., Victor Segalen, who defines the exotic in most general terms as “Everything that lies ‘outside’ the sum total of our current, conscious everyday events, everything that does not belong to our usual ‘Mental Tonality’” (Segalen 2002, 16).

The introductory passage quoted above is also significant as it reveals Burliuk's relatedness to his predecessors' tradition of approaching the other. Using the synecdochic cliché "the country of chrysanthemums"<sup>153</sup>, Burliuk obviously addresses a certain stereotypical image of Japan familiar to the Russian reader<sup>154</sup>: thus, even the representation of the exotic side of the other is going to rely on familiar stereotypes, cultural conventions and on the expectations of the familiar reader. Similarly, defining the foreign country by a geographically contextualizing and familiarizing reference (as "our Siberian neighbor"), Burliuk positions its "Pacific culture" as something close, contiguously adjacent, familiar, and almost domestic, even if exotic. The first method ("the country of chrysanthemums") may be roughly defined, tentatively using Venuti's terms (Venuti 2008), as foreignization, while the second one ("our Siberian neighbor") as domestication. As it appears, though, in both cases the narrator defines the other by means of appealing to familiar values and standards, and both strategies may be described in terms of metonymy.

## 2.2. Characters: an ideal combination

The Eurocentric nature of Burliuk's account becomes manifest in the system of characters he develops in his narratives. Surprisingly, there are no Japanese characters in the texts (if we do not consider several episodic figures who appear merely as objects of description and do not even have names); the central figure in all three narratives is obviously the narrator, who is also technically the only character, foregrounded by a few minor figures.

The narrator of Burliuk's Japanese writings appears in three different modes: first person singular (as Burliuk himself, discussing esthetic issues and presenting verbal paintings of Japanese landscapes), third person singular ("the artist in velvet pants", an estranged figure of a character as ostensibly seen by the Japanese) and first person plural (identifying with the Russian reader and with his Russian companions). Regardless of obvious differences, all three modes agree in their treatment of the Oriental other.

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<sup>153</sup> Extending his "understanding" of Japan to his everyday practices, Burliuk cannot help appearing ridiculous to the Japanese. Isii Hakutei (in *Chuo Bijutsu*, N 11, November, 1920) describes his puzzlement at seeing Burliuk and Palmov with large chrysanthemum branches in the breast pockets (Ovaki 2007, 188).

<sup>154</sup> Cf., e.g., similar imagery in Balmont's 1916 essay "Japan. A white chrysanthemum", discussed in the Introduction.

The first mode mainly amounts to pronouncing the Goncourt-related reflections, quoted above; the second one brings the narrator in focus as the main subject of the picture, leaving the other the role of a background; and the third one implies a solid familiar background in portraying the other, much weightier than the exotic appearance of the latter. All three narrators possess an authority: to pronounce personal or impersonal judgments, or even to substitute the subject of the description.

As regards Burliuk's travel companions, the author does not say a lot about them. In the *Pacific* narrative they (members of his family) are not even seen or heard at all<sup>155</sup>. In *Oshima* his two friends, artists Palmov and Scherbakov, are hidden under masks "the futurist" and "the officer". Generally speaking, the Russian companions appear as a justification for the first person plural of the narrator. Burliuk practically appears to be the only identifiable character of his own stories. There is only one exception to the rule, though, and it may be found in *The Ascent to Fuji-san*.

Burliuk dedicates the *Fuji-san* book to Herbert Peacock<sup>156</sup> and his wife Odilia, who died during the 1923 earthquake in Yokohama. For some reason, Burliuk retells in detail the earthquake episode, which he learnt third-hand (an unnamed Englishman finds Peacock's mother in Petrozavodsk and tells her what happened to the couple). Although we do not learn a lot about Peacock, still the amount of detail in his portrait is exceptional for all three of Burliuk's narratives.

Among the several facts about Peacock that Burliuk mentions, we find out that the former worked as a British consul in Krasnojarsk for many years and that he

... was characterized by distinguished accuracy and preciseness, as through his father, he was a representative of the discipline<sup>157</sup> of the British Nation.

[... отличался исключительной аккуратностью и точностью, по отцу являясь представителем дисциплин Британской Нации. (Burliuk 1926, 2)]

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<sup>155</sup> A list of family members and friends, participating in the journey, is given as an addendum after the narrative text (Burliuk 1927b, 21). The Russian artists (Scherbakov and Nedashkovsky), whom Burliuk and his companions came to visit on Ogasawara, are never mentioned in the text, though.

<sup>156</sup> Elias Herbert Peacock (1881-1923), Burliuk's friend, the son of Demetrius Rudolph Peacock and Tatiana Bakunine.

<sup>157</sup> The word "discipline" in the context of a British traveler is naturally suggestive of imperial and colonial connotations and the power of control, which anticipate Burliuk's further attempts of controlling the Japanese other by means of rhetoric.



Thus, the Japanese quest starts with a glance Westwards, with a detailed dedication to a Western friend and with metonymical references to cultural characteristics of the “British Nation” with the capital “N”. This pattern agrees with the scale of values discussed above in the context of Burliuk’s interview; the “geographical” dimension implicit in these introductory paragraphs foreshadows Burliuk’s further approach in contextualizing and interpreting his Japanese experiences. The West, as I will show, plays a major role in his portraying of the Oriental other.

Peacock and his opinions (apparently, shared by the narrator) appear in the *Fuji* text several times. However, he is not the only European character in the narrative. The group of people who participated in the Fuji trip, which Burliuk describes, presented a peculiar combination: besides Herbert Peacock, a half-Russian Englishman, and Burliuk himself, the company included the poet’s brother-in-law, a Czech artist Václav Fiala, mentioned briefly in the text (and sometimes misspelled by Burliuk as “Fialla”). Thus, the group constituted a mixture of Slavic and Western-European cultures, joined in their search of Japanese exotics. The role of the Western perspective in this combination is repeatedly recognized by the author himself. The following description of Peacock’s character may be applicable to the whole company as well:

In him, the Russian and English national characters mixed miraculously. It is an ideal mixture for any journey.

The Russians have an impulse, a flame, and in the case of our friend, it is supported by a natural share of persistence, stability, perseverance.

[В нем чудесно слились русский и английский характеры. Для всякого путешествия эта смесь идеальна.

У русских есть порыв, пламенность, а в нашем друге к сему примешана еще природная порция упорной размеренной настойчивости. (Burliuk 1926, 5)]

This Russian/European combination, with its “flame” and “stability” is a good description of Burliuk’s “we” in all three of his Japanese narratives. Characteristically, this “we” presupposes a certain union between Russia and Europe, which appears to be so important for Burliuk’s Oriental narrative and which is foregrounded even in his most exotic descriptions of Japan.

Facing the totally foreign culture of Japan, Burliuk openly identifies himself and his companions as cosmopolitan Europeans. The difference between Western and Eastern Europe is not relevant in this case of the generalized West-East opposition.

Burliuk's first person plural "we", used for creating a more solid point of view when contrasting the cultures ("us" and "them"), grammatically marks the line between the familiar and the other, the Russian/European and the Oriental exotic, in all three narratives.

Constructing the binary opposition of "us" versus "them", or the Europeans/Russians versus the Japanese, Burliuk positions his narrator and his cosmopolitan companions in the center of the picture, while the Japanese natives remain in the periphery. The center is obviously a privileged position and Burliuk's Russian/European characters seem to feel at home even in the other's land, a foreign territory. In Oshima, they are "on holiday", they came to be entertained: "The Russians feel like they are in their summer cottage, in the South; everything is amusing to them" ["Русские чувствуют себя на даче, на юге; они удивляются всему" (Burliuk 1927a, 3)]. The parallel with a summerhouse and a holiday situation suggests that they feel (or claim to feel) very secure in their encounter with the other, and the reference to the "South" obviously implies the familiar South of Russia, which certainly symbolically brings Japan much closer to Burliuk's home country, if not within the latter. Although Burliuk seems to speak playfully, rhetorically he presents the country as a metonymical part of his familiar land.

Positioning the Russian Europeans in Oshima in the center of the picture, the author repeatedly emphasizes that the Japanese recognize this configuration, too. The visitors' appearance and manners are different and consequently attract the attention of the local people and even serve as a source of entertainment for many:

The Russians are an entertainment for all hotel dwellers: they are so comic in not being able to sit <...>, and the chopsticks (hashi) are a hindrance rather than an aid to them.

[Русские доставляют развлечение всем жителям гостиницы: они так комично не умеют сидеть <...>, а палочки (хаси) больше мешают им, чем помогают. (Burliuk 1927a, 4)]

Of course, Burliuk's Russian/European characters do not mind being the subject of everyone's attention: they find it natural to be in the main focus. The narrator of *Oshima* and his companions see themselves as appropriately placed in the center in this exotic land; they enjoy being the key point of interest if not the center of life of the whole island and proudly claim to have aroused curiosity in all local population:

The Russians were the center of everyone's attention not only in the hotel: everywhere, where they appeared, curious eyes of local people followed them: when they were walking along the street, the barber left his client with soap on his cheek and jumped outside to look at the Russians, and from the balcony of the hotel by the wharf, a pretty maid always waved her hand to them...

[Русские были центром внимания, не только в своей гостинице: всюду, где бы они не появлялись, на них смотрели любопытные жители: когда они шли по улице парикмахер оставлял клиента с намыленной щекой и выскакивал взглянуть на русских, а с балкона гостиницы расположенной над пристанью им неизменно махала ручкой хорошенькая горничная... (Burluk 1927a, 10)]

This Eurocentric perspective, which Burluk wants to present as natural for the local population, is obviously a reflection of Burluk's own vision of the East-West opposition: Europe is always implicitly or even explicitly in the center of Burluk's own picture, whatever exotic places he describes. For example, when he talks about the "most original life" in the Fuji hotel, where the travelers stayed overnight, Burluk mostly focuses his description (four paragraphs out of five) on a group of European visitors and their travel arrangements (Burluk 1926, 6). Similarly, one of the very few facts that we learn about the narrator's impressions on the summit of Fuji mountain is that there were few Europeans there: "Over the twenty-four hours spent on the summit, I saw only two Europeans" ["За сутки пребывания на вершине я видел всего двух европейцев" (Burluk 1926, 11)]. Similarly, the most important thing we learn about the city of Yokohama is that there are many Europeans there: "In the streets of Yokohama, each minute one can meet a European" ["на улицах Иокогамы ежеминутно можно встретить европейцев" (Burluk 1927b, 4)]. Whatever Burluk talks about, Europe is always present in the text as a major point of reference.

The Eurocentric perspective is so naturally privileged in Burluk's vision that any aberrations in the center/periphery configuration are seen as anomalies. For example, the failure of the local population of Ogasawara to immediately focus all their attention on the Russians in the very first minutes upon the latter's arrival at the island is considered abnormal and leaves a feeling of disappointment: "Our appearance does not attract any special attention or produce any visible impression" ["Наше появление не вызывает ни особого внимания, и не производит видимого впечатления" (Burluk 1927b, 7)]. If the other does not seem to recognize the significance or the authority of the

visitors, the latter's self-identification and the "natural" hierarchy of things are put into question, which Burliuk's characters do not seem ready to accept.

Summarizing the discussion of the system of characters, I can conclude that the opposition of the East vs. the West is presented in a far from balanced manner; any possible discrepancies between Russia and the West are blurred and the Russian/European perspective appears to be much weightier than that of the Oriental counterpart. The impression is that the identification with Europe is at least as important to the narrator as the depiction of the exotic other. As regards Burliuk's rhetoric, his self-identification as a European (a part of the European culture), no matter how true or false it might be, is definitely of metonymic nature.

### 2.3. Imaginary Japan: literary contexts

Having outlined the character system, I would like to proceed with discussing the fictionalized Oriental world, which appears in the analyzed texts. I want to begin with what I believe to be the most important framework of Burliuk's Japanese quest, i.e. the literary/cultural context in which he encapsulates both his own trip and the portrait of the Oriental other. As I will argue, this context also largely agrees with the Europe-Russia-Japan configuration discussed above in the context of the character system.

Literary allusions in Burliuk's texts are one of the major tools of contextualizing the imaginary Japan. The framing role of these allusions may be evidenced by the manner they are introduced in all the three texts: in the very title of *Oshima*, and on the first pages of the *Fuji* and the *Pacific* narratives. Thus, in the introductory part of *In the Pacific Ocean*, Burliuk reflects on the exotic as such and his train of thought naturally turns to the Western (both European and American) tradition of representation of the exotic other. He remembers Robinson Crusoe, as well as novels by James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Mayne Reid, whose adventure stories he absorbed in early childhood and now imagines himself to be one of their characters (Burliuk 1927b, 4). He also remembers Western European artists, such as Paul Gauguin, with whom he obviously indirectly identifies. Thus, even before the start of the trip, the narrator establishes a definite literary perspective of presenting the other and directs the expectations of the potential reader: the island of Ogasawara is metonymically contextualized and mapped as a part of the exotic realm within the familiar Western

(even though quite heterogeneous) tradition of representation, both literary and pictorial.

These allusions, as a means of identification with the familiar, set the context not only for the representation of Japan but also for the book itself and for its author in the literary canon. Starting his Ogasawara narrative, Burliuk complains about the lack of poetry in modern travelogues: “poetry leaves the pages of today’s travelogues; they are so unlike those by Cooper and Jules Verne” [«поэзия уходит со страниц современных путешествий; они так не схожи таковыми Купера и Жюль-Верна» (Burliuk 1927b, 12)]. Apparently, he is preparing the reader for a different kind of adventure, more “poetic” and more exotic than the unnamed present-day specimens. On the other hand, promising a new, modern kind of representation to the reader, he openly identifies with the Western (nineteenth-century) tradition, sees himself as its successor and implicitly promises a return to its “poetic” exoticism. And indeed, the “simple-minded aborigines” he finds in Ogasawara [«безхитростные туземцы» (Burliuk 1927b, 8)] in his further narrative do remind of exotic tales by Cooper or Defoe. Intertextual metonymic references to the familiar tradition appear to be the key method of presenting the exotic other, as I will show below.

Burliuk does not stop at naming his literary ancestors, though. Setting his Japan in a literary context, he sometimes bares his device and explicitly refers to the literary prototypes of his characters and images. In certain scenes, in order to present an image, he does not even need to describe it in detail: a mere reference to a familiar source from the Western canon appears to be sufficient. In this manner he portrays a fisherman’s hut in Ogasawara: “often, near his hut there hang octopi, exhaustively described in *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*” [“часто у его хижины висят осминоги, исчерпывающе описанные в «Труженниках моря»” (Burliuk 1927b, 10)]. The exotic travelogue, which started with references to Cooper, Daniel Defoe and Thomas Mayne Reid, proceeds in the Western literary realm. In this world, there is no need to describe the octopi caught by the Japanese fisherman: they have already been *comprehensively* described by Victor Hugo and thus are already familiar to the potential reader. A literary reference is almost self-sufficient, which, as I will argue below, is often the case with Burliuk’s allusions.

As a “Russian European”, Burliuk inscribes his Japan not only in the Western literary tradition; quite often, he sees the Oriental country through the prism of the familiar Russian literature. Both direct and indirect references are numerous, even if not

always quite easily justifiable. For example, explaining the layout of Japanese houses in *Oshima* and commenting on the absence of locks on the doors, Burliuk suddenly makes a reference to Gogol's description of a hotel room with a door hidden by a chest of drawers and a quiet but a very curious neighbor living behind it (Burliuk 1927a, 4). This reference to *The Dead Souls*, a part of the Russian literary canon and a book undoubtedly familiar to the Russian reader of Burliuk, does not tell the reader anything about Japanese doors or houses as such. However, it shifts the focus from the subject of description to the figure of the narrator himself, ironically suggesting a parallel between the latter and Gogol's Chichikov, strange as it is. The parallel is supported by several half-mysterious self-references, describing the narrator in the third person from the natives' perspective as an obscure stranger in velvet pants ["художник в бархатных брюках"]. The motivation behind the use of these allusions is an open question. Apparently self-sufficient, they do not add anything to the image of the subject of the description, i.e. Japan as such, and may seem somewhat out of place in a text which promised to focus on the exotic side of the Pacific culture. The only possible justification for these Gogol allusions is establishing a literary context, a solid familiar frame of reference for the exotic, as well as for the "self-portrait" of the narrator.

Implicit references to Gogol's manner are also unmistakably identifiable in the grotesque<sup>158</sup> descriptions of various characters of *Oshima*. One might look, for example, at the hyper-realistic portrait of a Japanese couple visiting the island, especially at the fatigued woman with a big furuncle on her face:

... a lady of about forty years old, an extremely exhausted Japanese woman, who, apart from all troubles, is endowed with a huge furuncle on the right temple.

[... дама на возраст около сорока лет, - необычайно изможденная японка, к довершению всех бед, еще вооруженная большим чирием около правого виска. (Burliuk 1927a, 4)]

Burliuk most certainly indulges himself as he describes the grotesqueness of the enormous furuncle twice on the same page, returning to it again ten lines below:

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<sup>158</sup> For discussion of Gogol's hyperbolization and grotesque device, as well as the role of foregrounded minor descriptive details in Gogol's grotesque, see, e.g. Eichenbaum 1969.

the young man seems to be quite happy, hugging her sixty-pound carcass, endowed with a huge ripe furuncle.

[молодой человек кажется вполне счастливым, сжимая в своих объятьях ея полутора пудовый костяк, вооруженный большим созревшим чирием. (Burliuk 1927a, 4)]

It may be fair to assume that the grotesque Gogolean figure is devoid of any satirical overtones (always essential in Gogol, for example), but is, once again, an instance of a self-sufficient device, which functions rather as a mere marker of the literary context of the narrative. The constructed context itself appears to be much more important than the “material”, i.e. the image of the other.

Void of any apparent motivation and almost self-sufficient, these allusions may be considered in the framework of Jakobson’s concept of barring the device in the Futurists’ writing, i.e. freeing the device from any logical motivation, “the turning of a poetic trope into a poetic fact, into a plot element” (Jakobson 1992, 182). Besides, returning to the issue of the Orient representation, I will add that the references to Gogol (and not only him) in Burliuk’s text shape the picture of Japan without affecting the referent. Metonymic details, supposed to highlight the country’s exoticism, in reality highlight only the frame of the literary reference itself, i.e. the familiar instead of the other. The representation becomes almost self-sufficient and the real other is displaced beyond the picture frame. The fictionalized Japan synecdochically appears as a part of the familiar Russian literary terrain.

Besides Gogol allusions, noteworthy in Burliuk’s text is a reference to Ivan Goncharov, who visited Japan in 1853 with the Russian navy and whose vision of Japan I discussed earlier, in the Introduction<sup>159</sup>. In search of the exotic, Burliuk reminds the reader about the not so distant primitive and “savage” background of the natives: “the people whose grandparents were found to live in such a primitive state by our Goncharov” [“людей, прадедов которых еще наш Гончаров застал в таком первобытном состоянии” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The reference to “our Goncharov” and especially the possessive pronoun “our” confirms the established perspective from which the other culture is viewed and assessed in Burliuk’s text. What Burliuk seems to argue is that even the literary classics, which Futurism did not ever treat with excessive respect,

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<sup>159</sup> See Ivan Goncharov, *Frigate “Pallada”*, published in 1858 (discussed in the Introduction).

recognized cultural superiority over the other's "savagery". Compared with the totally foreign Japanese culture, even the hated Russian classics become more familiar ("ours") and may serve as authority<sup>160</sup>. Facing the other, the narrator consolidates the familiar cultural background, remembering even those names which he most probably would not refer to in his home country. The real other, on the one hand exoticized as a total alternative to the familiar, is on the other hand symbolically subordinated by means of rhetoric and locked within the generalized (and culturally familiar) category of "savagery" without any further elaboration.

The metonymic attempt to present the other as a part of the familiar literary/cultural space may be traced in all three of Burliuk's Japanese narratives. In a similar manner, for example, Burliuk explicitly sets his Fuji-san adventure within the frame of various literary contexts, both Russian and Western-European. The text of *The Ascent to Fuji-san* starts with a stanza from Pushkin's "Monastery on Kazbek" (the source title and the author are not mentioned, though, as the Russian reader would undoubtedly recognize the familiar lines) and a relatively lengthy literary prologue, in which Burliuk traces parallels in the verse of Pushkin, Benedikt Livshits, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Mikhail Lermontov, and Maxim Gorky. All of the five mentioned authors, according to Burliuk, shared what he defines as "the passion for esthetic alpinism" (Burliuk 1926, 3).

Interestingly, in order to strengthen the familiar cultural background, the father of Russian Futurism once again allies with the once infamous literary tradition of the classics and starts his sketch with a quotation from Pushkin, whom he previously wanted to see thrown overboard the ship of modernity. Indirectly, Burliuk suggests that the reader a) should consider the current text in the paradigm of the works written by the authors mentioned above, b) should consider the narrator of the text in the paradigm of the characters and personae of the quoted texts, i.e. as a successor, who does accomplish what Pushkin longed for but never achieved, or what Gorky glorified in the "Song of the Falcon". The Fuji quest is presented as a breakthrough to heaven ["прорыв к небу"], as a

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<sup>160</sup> As I mentioned in the Introduction, Yuri Lotman (in "Modernity between East and West") notices that Goncharov played a most significant role in deconstructing the romantic vision of the exotic East and the clichés of the "familiar versus the other" representation. According to Lotman, Goncharov's text creates a common space, which is structured by the opposition of the dynamic versus the static. In this respect, Burliuk's desperate search of the exotic (similar to Balmont's, discussed in the Introduction) may be seen as a return to the romantic stereotypes rather than a futurist move beyond the petrified cultural conventions.



further attempt of another “esthetic alpinist” to feel the “breath of eternity” (Burliuk 1926, 10). The attribute “esthetic” is quite revealing as regards the nature of Burliuk’s journey and his vision of the Oriental other.

For some inexplicable reason, preparing the reader for the ascent story, Burliuk also remembers the comic side of literary mountaineering and the story of Tartarin de Tarascon. The passage (like some of the Russian literary allusions discussed above) appears somewhat out of place in the context, as no other references to Tartarin will be found in the further text and the ascent narrative itself is not fraught with comic elements. The only justification for this reference might be a minor episode in the middle of the story (the only one with certain comic connotations) with one of the characters, Herbert Peacock, being bitten by a snake (see below). If so, and if the whole extended reference to Tartarin de Tarascon is designed to provide the optics for one minor turn of the plot, the case certainly proves how important the inclusion into the familiar European literary tradition is to Burliuk. However out of place the current literary reference sounds, it seems to follow the familiar pattern discussed above with regard to the *Oshima* narrative and the functioning of the Gogol allusions there. The point of alluding primarily seems to be in establishing a Russian/European literary context for the narrative, a framework, which appears to be at least no less important to Burliuk than the subject of the narrative itself, i.e. the exotic image of the other culture.

The pattern reveals itself in most literary references Burliuk makes. There is no need to prove that Pushkin’s “alpinism” in “Monastery on Kazbek” is of quite a different nature than that of Gorky’s in the “Song of the Falcon”, or that Gogol’s grotesque looks somewhat questionable in an ethnographic sketch, or that the reference to Goncharov slightly oversimplifies the latter’s ideas. Burliuk’s literary allusions do not aim at either a comprehensive metaphorical representation of the Japanese culture, or an in-depth analysis of a certain literary tradition the author refers to. Without any thorough consideration of differences, Burliuk merely sets common markers (in a manner which probably might be seen as somewhat superficial): his technique may be described as mere mapping of the place of his adventures as primarily a literary, and consequently familiar, terrain.

It will not be fair, though, to limit the context which Burliuk develops for his Japanese stories by exclusively literary works. A similar landmark-establishing strategy may be found in his references to the Western European painting, too. Let us, for

example, consider his explicit mentioning of Paul Gauguin in an episode from the *Pacific* narrative:

it is amazing to meet a local aborigine, undoubtedly, but this transparent warm January evening, he is looking with his open shiny eyes, as if he has stepped out of some picture by Gauguin, in the lonely wild thicket of the island hills, among the wide leaves of the tree-fern and the octopus-like Pandanus.

[поражаешься вдруг встретить местного аборигена, несомненно, но глядящего прозрачным теплым январским вечером, открытыми лучистыми глазами, как бы сошедшим с некоторых картин «Гогена», в пустынных диких зарослях возвышенностей острова, среди широких листьев древовидного папоротника, и спрутообразного Pandanus'a. (Burliuk 1927b, 14)]

The other is once again explicitly confined within the Western tradition of representation and metonymically defined by the reference to the familiar tradition. The description of Ogasawara aborigines appears very much like an ekphrastic projection of Gauguin's "I Raro Te Oviri" ("Under the Pandanus", 1891), with its Tahitians among the snake-like vegetation, obviously recognizable to the educated Russian and European reader.

Summing up the device, it is important to notice that Burliuk controls the Oriental other by two rings of familiar reference: substituting the live image by a familiar visual representation and subsequently verbally describing the latter, thus ultimately shifting the focus from the live person to a generalized construct within the familiar culture. The other is mute, his voice is lost beneath two language layers: the language of Western visual arts and that of the Russian ekphrastic description.

Similar attempts to describe Japan by means of Western European painting references may be also found in Burliuk's Japan-related poetry. For example, the poem "Morning on the Seaside" starts with the following comparison:

Clouds in the golden haze  
Like in Turner's watercolor...

[В золотом тумане облака  
Как Тернеровской акварели... (Burliuk 1932, 13)]

Here, again, Japan is presented by a familiar image of Joseph Turner's art, domesticated and symbolically included into the familiar Western frame of reference. Turner, like Gauguin in the above-mentioned example, provides a language to interpret the other's world, which, in its turn, remains mute.

Establishing the affinity with the Western cultural tradition appears to be an important part of Burliuk's familiarizing technique in presenting the Orient. In general, as I argue, in literary and painting allusions, like in many other devices of Burliuk's rhetoric, the author seems to confine himself to merely establishing a set of familiar landmarks (literary, painting-based, or generalized cultural) as a frame of reference, within which the other, deprived of their own voice, is placed and by which the latter is subsequently metonymically interpreted. As a set of tools, these Western landmarks primarily identify the author and his bias, rather than the subject of writing; framing the picture, they always provide a suitable background for the author's own "European" (even if slightly exotic) self-portrait.

## 2.4. Imaginary geography

Now, having discussed the literary and painting-related framework of the narratives, I will look into the imaginary geography of Burliuk's Japan. In this respect, I suggest that geographical landmarks in Burliuk's narrative seem to be consistent with the foreignizing and domesticating strategies discussed above. I will argue that the author's choice of geographical references shows a pattern quite similar to the one discussed above in the context of literary/cultural allusions.

Writing about the role of geography as a factor of national cultures, Yury Lotman emphasizes the constant conflict between the "real" and the "mythological" geographies and argues that "geography is most sensitive to various aspects of social and cultural history" (Lotman 2002, 744). Apparently, this clash between the "real" and the "mythological" may be traced not only in national cultures as such, but in concrete literary phenomena as well. In this respect, Burliuk's geography is not an exception.

The paradox of the situation with Burliuk's Japanese narratives (not really surprising, after looking into the pattern of his literary allusions) is that the author positions his Oriental quest in a Western system of coordinates, shaped by familiar Western references. There are numerous examples to this pattern in the text. If we start

with a most general perspective, let us consider, for example, an episode at the beginning of the *Pacific* narrative: booking his ticket to the exotic Ogasawara at a ticket office of a boat company, Burliuk, surprisingly, thinks about Britain and America. What the narrator is excited about is the mere fact that some other people come to the same office to inquire about tickets to Europe and the US; the mere mentioning of the names of the Western countries and cities excites him more than the prospective trip he is about to undertake:

...people making inquiries about tickets to London and to America!... The heart beats with sweet excitement as you imagine all the adventures of a long trip...

[люди, которые наводят справки о билетах на Лондон, в Америку!... Сердце сладостно сжимается, представляешь себе все перепитии (sic) далекого пути... (Burliuk 1927b, 5)]

Thus, in his imagination, Burliuk pictures the boat trip to Japanese Ogasawara to be as exciting as a westbound journey, or, in other words, in order to describe his emotions in anticipating the trip to the reader, the author chooses to refer to a number of familiar Western names, certainly recognizable to the latter. Ogasawara implicitly appears to be in the same geographical and value paradigm as “London and America”, or, if we remember the biographical background of Burliuk’s travelling, we can say that Japan is but a part of his westbound journey, a mere stop on the way to America. This coordinate system (America – London – Ogasawara) creates a general frame of reference, which symbolically subordinates Japan as a part of the familiar paradigm, and, like the familiarizing literary allusions discussed above, primarily characterizes not the exotic subject of the narrative but the image of the narrator and the cosmopolitan context he wants to position himself in.

The imaginary geography of Burliuk’s Japan is further developed and elaborated by the already recognizable set of tools: on the one hand, foreignizing clichés, and on the other, numerous domesticating references. The latter, like in the case with literary allusions, seem to play a much more important role in the text. Let us look at some of the familiarizing landmarks outlining this seemingly foreign exotic world.

The most common device in Burliuk’s description of Japan is comparison with a familiar counterpart. The abundance of Russian parallels among these comparisons definitely indicates the importance of the domesticating strategy in Burliuk’s account.

Thus, the mountainous landscape of the island of Oshima is familiarizingly compared to the coast of Crimea: “In the middle of the island, there rises a mountain range; it is of the same height as the Crimea coast at the Bajdarsky Gates” [“В середине острова подымаются цепью горы, они такой же величины как южный берег Крыма у Байдарских Ворот” (Burliuk 1927a, 3)]. The slope of Fuji mountain is in a similar manner compared to the Russian steppe: “the mountain resembles a red grassless steppe, only positioned at an angle” [“гора напоминает безтравную красную степь, только поставленную под углом” (Burliuk 1926, 9)]. Looking down at the sea from the mountain slope, Burliuk’s companion Herbert Peacock compares the view to that of the Yenisei river: “Reminds of ice floating on the Yenisei ... Very beautiful!” [“Напоминает ледоход на Енисее... Очень красиво!” (Burliuk 1926, 9)]. The narrator approvingly (and even proudly) explains that in this Englishman’s language, a comparison to Siberia is the top praise: “His highest praise of a certain place or a phenomenon is to say that it resembles Siberia, ‘just like in Siberia!’” [“Высшей похвалой у него какому-нибудь месту или явлению – сказать, что это похоже на Сибирь, ‘совсем как в Сибири!’” (Burliuk 1926, 9)]. These examples, among others, show how the beauty of the Japanese landscape in Burliuk’s account is repeatedly indirectly legitimized through a familiarizing comparison to its Russian counterparts.

I want to discuss in more detail the image of Mount Fuji in Burliuk’s text, as the mountain occupies an exceptional place in Burliuk’s geography, synecdochally representing the whole of Japan. As Fuji mountain signifies for Burliuk Japan itself, the act of writing about a walk up the Fuji slope metonymically becomes an attempt to “subdue” (to explain in a familiar language and thus to domesticate) the whole of Japan: “I talk so much about Fuji-san because writing about it is equal to writing about what is characteristic of Japan” [“Я так много распространяюсь о Фузи-яме, потому что писать о ней равносильно писать о характерном для Японии” (Burliuk 1926, 4)]. Burliuk claims to have the knowledge of what Japan is and what is characteristic of the Japanese, as well as the authority to define and generalize.

Even when speaking about the importance of Fuji for the Japanese culture, Burliuk relies on a domesticating geographical analogy: according to him, visiting Japan without seeing Fuji is like visiting Russia and not seeing the Volga (Burliuk 1926, 4). However, in the case of Fuji, the scope of familiarizing similes reaches far beyond the Volga banks. Fuji is consistently placed in an equally domesticating European frame of

reference. Even when Burliuk and his companions are not able to see anything around them due to the weather conditions, they conjure in their imagination a familiar image of Fuji, placing it in an imaginary Western European context: “the roaring and whispering of waterfalls, reminding us of Switzerland, tells us that we are in the mountains” (Burliuk 1926, 6). The reference to the familiar (Switzerland) provides a reality check and legitimizes the confusingly ambiguous Japan.

As Ogasawara was assessed by a reference to familiar Western lands, so Fuji is measured in familiar “units”. Burliuk defines Fuji by means of comparison, positioning it among various other well-known mountains of Europe and Asia. He starts the comparison with Mont-Blanc (“Fuji-yama is three thousand feet lower than Mont-Blanc”), Olympus (“nearly as much higher than Olympus”), Vesuvius and Etna (“more than three times as high as Vesuvius and Etna”) and finishes with familiar Russian peaks:

...Fuji is one thousand four hundred feet higher than our well-known Siberian Belukha; however, Kamchatskaja Kluchevskaja hill is as much as over three thousand feet higher than Fuji-yama...

[Фузи-яма на три тысячи фут ниже Монблана, но почти на эту же меру выше Олимпа и более чем в три раза выше Везувия и Этны <...> но на тысячу четыреста фут превышает хорошо известную нашу Сибирскую Белуху; Камчатская Ключевская сопка все же превосходит Фузи-яму на целых три тысячи слишком фут... (Burliuk 1926, 3)]

Finishing the comparative height analysis, Burliuk concludes that Fuji is two and a half times as high as the Urals or the Altai mountains. The picture looks as follows: though Fuji is not as high as European Mont-Blanc, it is still substantially higher than the mountains Russian readers are mostly familiar with, however, there are peaks in Russia which are much higher but which have not been conquered yet. Thus, Burliuk inscribes Fuji in the geographical frames his reader is most certainly aware of and defines the mountain by means of familiar geographical references. Although Burliuk talks merely about the height of Fuji, the references symbolically place the core symbol of Japan into the framework of the familiar.

Defining the other through the familiar appears to be a consistent pattern in Burliuk's account and the comparative “height analysis” is utilized more than once. In the middle of the trip up the mountain, Burliuk, in order to ascertain his position, once again

resorts to comparing heights, making references to familiar Russian and Western landmarks:

We<sup>161</sup> have reached the height of about three thousand meters, and if one remembers that Eiffel is three hundred meters, Woolworth, the highest building in the world, is 780 feet, the cathedral of Christ-the Savior is one hundred and four meters, it is evident that we have covered a long distance.

[Мы поднялись на тысячу двести пятьсот сажень, если вспомнить, что Эйфель равен высотой ста-пятидесяти саженьям, Вульворт – высочайшее здание мира – 780 фут, Храм Христа Спасителя – пятидесяти двум саженьям, то мы сделали не так уж мало. (Burluiuk 1926, 9)]

Positioning Fuji mountain in his imaginary geography, Burluiuk chooses a paradigm of symbolic heights, and, once again, as we can see, he looks in two directions and finds reference points both in the West (French Tour Eiffel, American Woolworth building) and in Russia (the Cathedral of Christ-the-Savior in Moscow). Fuji, as a metonymical image of Japan itself, becomes a part of a familiar picture encompassing not only natural, but also cultural geography. The “most characteristic” part of Japan is symbolically measured in familiar units: “Tour Eiffel’s” and “Christ-the Savior’s”.

However, Burluiuk’s imaginary geography extends even far beyond the existing lands and places. Besides these scientifically formulated comparisons abounding in definite numbers and proper names, Burluiuk also uses a more personal approach, placing Fuji within the realm of his own memories. In an extended simile in *Oshima*, mount Fuji is compared to an image from Burluiuk’s childhood memory, a sugar “head” which his father used to bring home from the store and then cut into pieces. A long passage describes the sugar, the wrapping paper, the process of cutting it, as well as bakery signboards with a sugar head reigning over the table that the narrator remembers from his early childhood. Now, mount Fuji surrounded by other mountains, becomes a representation of the sugar head with the other mountains representing the wrapping paper: “it was the same now: the sugar paper was represented by the blue mountains” [“так было и теперь: сахарную бумагу изображали голубья горы” (Burluiuk 1927a, 4)]. Not the other way round. The sugar head in Burluiuk’s rhetoric is the signified and Fuji the signifier. The Japanese landscape is familiarized and metonymically presented as

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<sup>161</sup> It is interesting to see, how Burluiuk’s grammar reveals his narrative pattern of bringing the persona (“we”), rather than the object of description, into focus.

a part of the narrator's own deeply personal world, and the imaginary context that Burliuk creates for the Japanese exotic appears to be not less important than the exotic image itself, to say the least.

Above, I have drafted the outlines of Burliuk's fictionalized Japan, as an imaginary realm placed in the context of both Russian and Western literary, cultural and geographic references. Interestingly enough, Burliuk sometimes seems to recognize the fictional nature of his quest, as he repeatedly describes it in purely esthetic terms. He refers to the first chapters of the *Pacific* narrative as if it is a painting: "everything above was painted from nature, the material abounded around" ["Предыдущее писалось непосредственно с натуры, кругом было обилие материала" (Burliuk 1927b, 12)], the Oriental other being merely the material for *his* picture. Later on, he describes his Ogasawara memories as a complete volume, a book on the memory shelf: "these recollections constitute for me a whole volume, bound and put on the shelf of my memory" ["эти впечатления составляют для меня законченный том, переплетенный и поставленный на полку моей памяти" (Burliuk 1927b, 12)]. The image of a complete, bound and put into place volume of memories accurately describes the place Japan occupies in Burliuk's account: the Oriental other is restricted, confined, shaped and contextualized in the familiar set of references.

Meanwhile, the narrator self-reflexively recognizes that the world he depicted, with time passing, more and more reveals its fictional character: "with each day, all that has been narrated here more and more turns into a dream<sup>162</sup>, a ghostly legend impossible to forget" ["с каждым днем все изложенное здесь более превращается в сновидение, призрачную легенду не забываемую" (Burliuk 1927b, 20)]. Designed and realized as fiction, the picture becomes self-contained and self-sufficient and "forgets" about the live original it represents, as the artist himself leaves Ogasawara behind.

As I observed above, both literary allusions and geographical references seem to contribute more to the image of the narrator than the subject of his account. The same motif of presenting Japan as a background of his own self-portrait repeatedly occurs in Burliuk's poems, too. Such is the confession in the "Yokohama" poem, where the city

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Burliuk's poem "All of Japan is but a dream..." ["Япония – вся сон..." (Burliuk 1925, 11)].



becomes the frame of the poet's life picture and a Hiroshige-like background for the poet's portrait:

The city is my life's frame  
Glorified by Hiroshige.

[Город моей жизни рама,  
Что прославил Хирошиге (Burliuk 1932, 13)]

Another interesting example is a poem about a little island of Awajishima, in which Burliuk once again claims to be the central figure of the landscape, which is legitimized solely by his own presence:

Awajishima, a blue island,  
Breaks the wet horizon.  
Among the toasts of roaring waves  
The Janapo-Mediterranean Pontus.  
Awajishima stood up sharply  
Rising to the vast of the sky,  
So that a new Cagliostro  
Would walk around and squint at it.

[Авадзисима – синий остров  
Ломает влажный горизонт.  
Среди волны шумящих тостов  
Японо-средиземный понт.  
Авадзисима встала остро,  
Просторы неба вознесясь,  
Затем, чтоб новый Калиостро  
Гулял в ту сторону косясь. (Burliuk 1932, 13)]

Here we can see both literary (Cagliostro<sup>163</sup>) and fictional geographical (Mediterranean Pontus) landmarks. Awajishima, representing the exotic Japan, is metonymically familiarized as a part of the Mediterranean or the Black Sea culture, a part, which, above all, exists only in order that the “European” author, this new Cagliostro, would squint at it from aside, walking leisurely by.

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<sup>163</sup> The choice of the persona character (Cagliostro), is based, most probably, on the rhyme (*ostro, Cagliostro*). However, the image perfectly correlates with the mysterious persona of an “incoherent stranger” (*nevniatnyi inostranec*) from Burliuk's early poem (See op. 19, *Sadok sudej*), already mentioned above.

Summarizing the discussion of the numerous and heterogeneous cultural and geographical references in Burliuk's Japanese texts, I suggest that these allusions clearly elucidate the nature of Burliuk's Oriental quest: the world of the other is metonymically included in the familiar Russian/Western European cultural terrain and interpreted as a part of it. Japan becomes part of a game with literary classics, a game suggested by the very subtitle of the *Oshima* text: *The Japanese Decameron*. The effect of the allusions implies the author's relatedness to what is presented as the background, i.e. to the Western culture realm. What role is assigned to Japan in this game, I will discuss in more detail below in this chapter.

## 2.5. Exotic paradise

Having analyzed Burliuk's terms of reference as the outlines of his Japan, let us now look closer at this imaginary land from within and discuss what exactly the author defines as "exotic" in his encounter with the Oriental culture and how he presents this exotic to the reader.

Describing Japan as the land of the Pacific exotic, the narrator proves it by the explicit use of appropriate "foreignizing" vocabulary, accentuating the otherness of the exotic country. Thus, among his most frequent descriptive adjectives are "original", "singular" and "peculiar" ["оригинальный", "своеобразный", "необычный"]. Here are some examples of the word use: "Life in our hotel is peculiar" ["В нашей гостинице своеобразная жизнь" (Burliuk 1926, 6)]; "The scene is full of peculiar flavor" ["Сцена полна своеобразного колорита" (Burliuk 1926, 7)]; "The bottom of the hollow is original" ["Дно котловины оригинально" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]; "All was original and unforgettable" ["Все было оригинальным и незабываемым" (Burliuk 1927b, 19)]; "The singing is original" ["Пение оригинально" (Burliuk 1927b, 20)]; "in the sky reign phenomena unfamiliar to the senses" ["В небе господствуют непривычные для чувства явления" (Burliuk 1926, 9)]; "the artist thought about this peculiar happiness of the aged Japanese woman and her young friend, about this peculiar psychology, so incomprehensible for the 'European imagination'" ["художник думал об этом своеобразном счастье пожилой японки и молодого ея друга: об этой своеобразной психологии, столь не понятной 'европейскому воображению'" (Burliuk 1927a, 10)]. The list of examples is far from exhaustive.

Similar to the manner in which he uses literary references (essentially – naming the landmarks), Burliuk often confines himself to merely declaring the “original character” of a phenomenon without any detailed elaboration:

The ascent to Fuji-san presents substantial interest <...> as it is fraught with peculiar features, characteristic of Japan only, with its colorfulness full of ocean exotics and singularity.

[Восхождение на Фузи-сан представляет большой интерес <...> будучи полно характерных черт, присущих только Японии, с ее колоритом полным океанской экзотики и самобытности. (Burliuk 1926, 4)]

Consequently, having committed himself to presenting the “singularity” of the country, Burliuk in many cases limits the description to a mere list of “original” objects: “the table on board – little bowls, chopsticks, little pieces of octopus and similar surprises, unfamiliar to a Russian” [“Стол на пароходе японский – чашечки, палочки, кусочки осьминога и тому подобные для русского неожиданности” (Burliuk 1927b, 6)]. He does not even go into details: like in a sketch of a picture, he simply names the object and plainly states the exotic aspect of their appearance. He does not try to describe the taste or the smell of the food (which possibly would have been appropriate and most probably interesting to the curious reader). Like an observer, he confines himself to merely stating the exotic look of surrounding objects, which remain external and foreign both for him and for the potential reader. The individual “odd” objects metonymically suggest the exoticism of the whole of the “Pacific culture” of Japan.

What then makes these (even trivial) objects exotic? The representation of the exotic, as I have shown above, involves both foreignizing and domesticating strategies. I will argue that foreignization goes hand-in-hand with domestication and that the key role in exoticizing belongs to the imaginary context, discussed above as the imaginary geography and the familiar literary background of Burliuk’s Japan. In the example above the key phrase is “unfamiliar to a Russian”, i.e. non-existent in Russia. The reference to a familiar background constitutes grounds for the exotic metonymy.

Consider another, more extensive episode with the narrator’s reflections on a simple rusty lamp, hanging on a piece of rusty string, which Burliuk sees on board the ship heading for Ogasawara: “I always keep thinking about this light-minded lamp, unimaginable neither in Germany nor even in Russia” [“я всегда думаю об этой

легкомысленной лампе, не мыслимой ни у немцев, ни даже у русского” (Burliuk 1927b, 7)]. Burliuk does not try analyzing or interpreting what he sees with regard to the inner logic of the object itself or with regard to the object’s “own” context. What then makes the lamp “light-minded”? The reference to Germans and Russians in Burliuk’s sentence explains it plainly. Similar to the manner in which he uses literary allusions, the narrator highlights certain visual details and declares them exotic/strange/odd from the European/Russian perspective, i.e. the object becomes exotic if hypothetically put into an imaginary Western/Russian familiar context.

These little “odd” visual details create the image of the exotic, the unfamiliar, only against the familiar background of Western (including Russian) reality. Totally alien and lifeless, these exotic objects do not have a voice of their own and remain but a framework for an elaborate self-portrait of the narrator, similar to that of Gauguin in the Tahiti paradise. Exoticizing then implies extracting an object from its own context and placing it in an imaginary familiar surrounding, establishing a new contiguity, which hereby starts to account for the “originality” of the object being described.

The foreignized exotic in the picture of Burliuk’s paradise is supported by the use of sharp contrasts and (often imaginary or exaggerated) paradoxes, which accentuate the “original” and the “peculiar” against the background of the “normal”, i.e. the familiar. Such simple and straightforward paradoxes and contrasts Burliuk keeps noticing and highlighting in the surrounding environment, like, for example, the contrast between life and death in the description of dying trees (“wood agony”) in the midst of the summer season, which, generally, is expected to be associated with life (Burliuk 1926, 9). The exotic, the unusual is presented through imagery that in some way contradicts one’s usual everyday expectations, like, for example, the description of watching the sun from above:

...the sun appears to be rising somewhere below us, and it seems to find it hard to throw its rays upwards towards the summit.

[...солнце чудится восходящим где-то внизу, кажется, что ему трудно бросать свои лучи к вершине. (Burliuk 1926, 9)]

Or like the image of a stone which, against all natural laws, rolls up the hill, pushed by the wind<sup>164</sup> (Burliuk 1926, 10). Or a butterfly, drawn by the lively clouds and

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<sup>164</sup> Possibly, an implicit polemic with Feodor Tiutchev’s “Problème”.

the sunlight, and dying in the cold wind<sup>165</sup> (Burliuk 1926, 10). In this exotic land, according to Burliuk's picture, even natural phenomena seem to behave differently. The exotic world is literally presented as an upside-down world: sun rays come not from above but from beneath (with apparent difficulty, too), stones, instead of rolling down the hill, roll upwards (and easily). Butterflies are attracted not by flowers in the field but by clouds in the sky. The narrator keeps emphasizing similar paradoxes in the behavior of the Japanese people he comes across, too, for example, in the portrait of a "healthy and pretty girl of about fourteen years old", who, instead of running on her "plump and chubby legs" (Burliuk 1926, 9), is carried down the hill by a riksha. These abnormalities, sometimes just curious, sometimes bizarre, culminate in the spatial aberrations of the Fuji summit description, when the globe shrinks and the upper and lower sides are reversed:

The Earth seems to have become small<sup>166</sup>, to have shrunken to the mountain top under our feet. The dusk of the dawn gradually gives in to the pressure of the light coming from somewhere beneath.

[Кажется, что земля стала маленькой, что она – вот эта вершина горы под ногами. Предраcсветный сумрак слабо уступает напору света, идущего откуда-то снизу. (Burliuk 1926, 11)]

The exotic world seems to be turned upside-down, compared with "ours". The implicit familiar "normality" as a background always provides a necessary framework for these metonymic manifestations of Japanese exotics.

Live imagination and exaggeration help Burliuk create a country which would match the reader's expectations. Exaggeration transforms even commonplace objects and trivial events, according to the design, into something truly exotic and mysterious.

In such a manner the narrator's imagination is ready to find and highlight hidden exotic meanings in a minor episode from the *Fuji-san* narrative, where Burliuk's

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<sup>165</sup> Possibly, a hidden allusion to Moritake's haiku "The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:/ A butterfly" (the haiku is also discussed by Ezra Pound in "Vorticism" essay).

<sup>166</sup> The unusual smallness of Japan (as implicitly opposed to the familiar Russian expanses) is also a recurring motif in Burliuk's writings. Consider the phrase "All to us is microscopic" ["Все для нас микроскопично"], literally repeated in two separate poems ("Not a country but an ant-hill..." ["Не страна, а муравейник..."] and "The First Glance" ["Первый взгляд"]) (Burliuk 1932, 13).

companion Herbert Peacock gets bitten by a harmless snake on the way up mount Fuji, in a temple alley. The narrator creates a scene obviously far more exotic than it was in reality, emphasizing (and strengthening with exclamation marks) the exaggerated “wild” and primitive aspect of the setting and turning a random old man, the temple keeper, who casually throws the snake off the road, into a mysterious sorcerer:

The scene is full of singular colorfulness: it is laid against the background of an ancient temple with a thatch roof, and the old man looks almost like a holy fool in his rejoicing. Something wild! Sorcery!

[Сцена полна своеобразного колорита: она на фоне старинного храма, покрытого соломой, в старике черты веселья полуюродивого. Что-то дикое! Колдовство! (Burliuk 1926, 7)]

As usual, the narrator does not fail to use an appropriate foreignizing marker and provide the reader with a code to interpret the scene so that the important accent on the exotic would not be overlooked: “the scene is full of *singular* colorfulness” [“сцена полна *своеобразного* колорита”] (the italics are mine – M.O.).

Imagination helps the narrator “see” (and describe) things invisible, i.e. shift focus from the subject as it is to what the narrator wants it to be. Thus, on their way up mount Fuji, Burliuk and his companions find themselves surrounded by the thick fog. However, not being able to see the mountain due to the weather conditions does not prevent the narrator from making up an imaginary description, full of exotic details, figurative language and decorated by a foreignizing (although obviously distorted) Japanese vocabulary borrowing:

Of course, if the weather had been good, one’s eyes could have absorbed the steep slopes of the magnificent cone, an earth “sunje”<sup>167</sup> which the main island of the land of the “Rising Sun” pulled on itself.

[Конечно, если бы была хорошая погода, то взор мог бы окинуть крутые склоны величественного конуса, земляной «сунье», которую напялил на себя главный остров страны «Восходящего солнца». (Burliuk 1926, 6)]

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<sup>167</sup> A type of a straw hat, as Burliuk explains. He probably meant “*suge-gasa*”.

Being committed to finding the exotic around him, the narrator will read exotic interpretations even into a seemingly trivial event and make up for the unfavorable weather conditions, which hide the “original” from his sight.

As a matter of fact, Burliuk in his *Fuji* story has to rely on his imagination quite often: apparently, the travelers on their way up the mountain were not exceptionally lucky with the weather. They managed to have a brief view of a part of Fuji-san only on the second day of their journey: “Only at eleven o’clock in the morning fortune finally smiled on us and we saw, though very briefly, the clear summit” [“Около одиннадцати часов дня нам наконец улыбнулось счастье: правда на недолго встала вдруг открытая вершина” (Burliuk 1926, 6)]. However, soon they were not able to see either the mountain ahead or anything behind them: “we keep walking and in an hour get in the rain, which hides from us the view of the all the land around” [“мы продолжаем путь, чтобы через час попасть в дождик, который скрывает от нас все проеханное и пройденное” (Burliuk 1926, 8)]. Concealed from the travelers, mysterious Fuji remains visible to the reader, yet, and the description does not fall short of the latter’s expectations.

Imagination is truly one of most useful tools in finding the exotic and seeing the primitive or the medieval through the trivial. When Burliuk looks at the pilgrims going up the hill, his imagination wants to enhance the exotic side of the picture and the “originality” of the pilgrims’ bells, straw hats and staves. He starts seeing their hats as shields, straw carpets they are carrying on their backs are compared to armor, and their staves to spears, and the pilgrims appear as medieval warriors, “as if they came from the middle ages” [“как бы пришедши[e] из средневековья” (Burliuk 1926, 10)]. Undoubtedly, the imaginary is presented as much more exaggeratedly exotic and “original” than it really was. Not quite content with what he sees, Burliuk creates a fairy tale image, supposedly consistent with the reader’s expectations of the exotic Orient.

The foreignizing strategy aims at presenting the other as a total alternative to the familiar. Exaggerating the exotic side of the other, Burliuk wants to cleanse his imaginary generalized Japan of all Western influences. Burliuk draws a line between what he believes to be the true Japanese ethos (medieval at core) and the “culture” (understood as imported Western culture), appropriated by these people “with ease, like children”. He sees the Japanese as “a people, which, according to its ethical norms, is supposed to belong to the middle ages; a people which has adopted culture with ease, like children”

[“<народ>, который весь этическими воззрениями мыслится в средне-вековьи, <народ>, который с легкостью ребенка усвоил себе культуру” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. There are two comments to be made here. On the one hand, Burliuk does not want to grant the Japanese the right to define their own vision of cultural development. On the other hand, he claims to have authority to impose his own European vision on Japan, define it as medieval and symbolically make it fit the appropriate niche in the European world vision. He claims to know better what is good for Japan and what is not. Thus the attempt for cleansing the land of Western influence deconstructs itself and appears to be an attempt of symbolically subordinating the Oriental land to the West, rather than liberating the former.

The medieval, according to Burliuk, is (and should be) the true essence of Japan. With this clear picture of what he is looking for, he does his best to find it. The “artist in velvet pants” sees the attributes of “savagery”, such as, for example, the bow and arrows, as more natural and more appropriate to the Japanese culture than any signs of modernity. Remembering a bow seen in a shop in Tokyo, he readily interprets it as a symptom, which confirms his vision of the Orient: the native, as a child, gets tired of the “culture” and seeks to return to nature and to the primitive values: “a child gets tired of culture and he walks towards the straw-mats, towards the naked sea shore, he rushes towards its arrows: past-wards, in order to get some rest” [“ребенку утомительна становится культура и он идет к циновкам, он идет к обнаженному морскому берегу, он бросается к своим стрелам – на отдых вспять” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. This passage is not accidental: the idea seems to be essential for Burliuk’s Japanese quest and the narrator returns to similar generalizations on several occasions:

The artist thought <...> about this peculiar psychology, so incomprehensible to a European’s imagination. A Japanese person is a big fan of nature: he loves to escape from the city and hide under the nature’s wing, abandoned by him not so long ago.

[Художник думал <...> об этой своеобразной психологии, столь непонятной европейскому воображению. Японец – большой любитель природы: он любит убежать из города под ея, недавно им покинутое крыло. (Burliuk 1927a, 9)]



The seemingly foreignizing phrase “incomprehensible to a European’s imagination” should not be misleading here: Burliuk makes the Japanese appear exactly the way his own European imagination dictates.

The narrator constantly keeps finding traces of what he wants to see as primitive and natural in the routine life around him. Looking at the fishermen’s boats being tugged ashore, he reconstructs the picture and adds a historical (or mythological?) perspective: “The picture is so simple and guileless, but it says a lot about the patriarchal age” [“Эта картина такая простая и безхитростная, но в ней много говорящего о патриархальных веках...” (Burliuk 1927a, 10)]. Burliuk sees what he wants to see and attributes his own values and ideals to the other. The other becomes a reflection of Burliuk himself, who is so eager to find the natural, the savage and the patriarchal in his Oriental quest and who would obviously prefer to see bows and arrows rather than Japanese skyscrapers.

Predictably enough, in his search for something more primitive and more natural than the “typical Japan” can offer, the narrator claims to have finally found it on the remote Pacific islands of Ogasawara, in the meager huts of the “aborigines”. Ogasawara is presented as the true, ultimate exotic: the core Oriental other within the otherness of Japan:

...the shaggy walls and the ceiling covered with soot immediately transport us into the world of a different life, more simple and primitive, absolutely void of the Japanese gentillesse.

[закопченные дымом мохнатые стены и потолок переносят вас сразу в мир иной жизни, более простой и примитивной, совершенно уже лишенной Японской жантильности. (Burliuk 1927b, 9)]

This is the true exotic he was looking for, or rather the true exotic he comes to construct, as it approaches the definition of primitive pre-civilized happiness. “How light the life here is!” [“Как здесь легка жизнь” (Burliuk 1927b, 10)], exclaims the narrator in appreciation of the simplicity and “abundance” of the life around (one can draw a parallel with the simplicity and abundance Gauguin claimed to have found in the poverty of Tahiti). And, like Gauguin, Burliuk finds delight in the multiplicity of colors: for example, describing with admiration the colorful fish his neighbor brings home from the ocean (Burliuk 1927b, 10). This simple and esthetically appealing “happiness” is the closest Burliuk will get to his idea of the true exotic.

... there, where dreams are so vague  
Fishermen live happily ...

[... там, где так неясны сны,  
Счастливы рыбаки живут... (Burliuk 1932, 14)]

So writes Burliuk in one of his Japanese poems. This picture does look like a dream. And this idyllic happiness is best described as “там” (“there”). The exotic must remain at a distance; and indeed, there is no reference to any close interaction between the narrator and the natives. The narrator remains an observer, he watches from aside, esthetically appreciating the fish colors and the simple happiness of the “primitive” people, who probably do not even notice the exuberant colorfulness of their unsophisticated food.

Ogasawara is appropriately foreignized as an ultimate alternative to the world of the familiar. Here, as befits the Paradise, people do not need clothes: “in the evenings, men and women walk along the streets, not ashamed of their nakedness” [“мужчины и женщины вечерами ходят по улицам, не стесняясь своей наготы” (Burliuk 1927b, 11)]. Their work is not tiring: “they do not work much, work is like sport to them” [“работают мало, к труду относятся как к спорту” (Burliuk 1927b, 11)].

However, obviously, the description of this exotic world also bears some traces of domesticating attempts, i.e. attempts of reading certain familiar values into the life of the natives. Burliuk cannot help seeing the Ogasawara natives in a mythological/literary perspective, positioning them within the realm of Western cultural traditions and expectations. Looking at the natives, what he sees is not the individual subjectivity but primarily an archetypal image imprinted in his subconsciousness and a whole paradigm of familiar texts and canvases:

In all these meetings, at the first glance, in one's soul there emerged a whole range of images, and recollections, which transport you to the subconscious, half-fantastic, half-dreamlike half scientific knowledge of lands even more extravagant, the seas even more colorful.

[Во всех этих встречах с первого взгляда в душе возникал целый ряд образов и воспоминаний, переносящих в наше подсознательное, полуфантастическое, полугрезовое, полунаучное знакомство с странами еще более экстравагантными, с морями еще более цветными. (Burliuk 1927b, 14)]

Thus, what Burliuk is looking for in Japan is not Japan per se (remember the promise to tell us about the “everyday life” of the country!) but the realization of the age-old fairy-tale of the dream-like ultimate Otherness of the Orient: the very definition of the exotic, the seas more colorful than any “real” waters, the lands most remote from the “civilization”, i.e. a familiar construct created by the civilized Europe long before 1920s. In this respect, his project does not offer a new (“futuristic”) vision of the Orient but rather promotes the “pre-Romantic and Romantic representations of the Orient as exotic locale” (Said 2003, 118).

Hence, the “savagery” which Burliuk discovers at Ogasawara bears certain unmistakable traces of the observer’s own optic and of a familiar scale of values. Despite “savageness”, for example, the islanders’ manners are described as impeccable: “people are well-mannered and courteous” [“народ воспитан, учтив” (Burliuk 1927b, 11)]. Even when someone gets drunk, there is no harm done to anyone: the less inebriate help their more drunken companions (Burliuk 1927b, 18). Their life is simple, sincere and artistically beautiful: “I recall the impressions of their simple, sincere, but decorative life” (“перебираю впечатления простой, безыскусственной, но декоративной жизни тамошней” (Burliuk 1927b, 12)]. The combination of the wild, the courteous and the beautiful strangely enough reminds of Burliuk’s description of Herbert Peacock’s Russian/European character, which I discussed above, once again reminding us that the other described by Burliuk is but a reflection of the self.

According to the tradition, the paradise that Burliuk describes seems to be the land of eternal youth (cf. Yeats’ “That is no country for old men...”). The image of the native as a child occurs repeatedly in Burliuk’s texts. In one of his poems, for example, he speaks of the Japanese as “the morning children” [“где сияют темновзоры / этих утренних детей” (Burliuk 1932, 14)]. The islands of Ogasawara, too, are presented as a realm, where even the old look young<sup>168</sup>:

... even the old age, if one has reached it living at the blessed shore of the azure bays, does not necessarily need to have a despicable look of feeble helplessness: I saw an old man in front of me, but all his body was devoid of the old age transformations: his eyes were brightly shining and his teeth were intact...

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<sup>168</sup> This observation might be considered in the context of the futurist cult of youth. Cf., for example, Burliuk’s early poem “Everyone is young young young...” (“Kazhdyi molod molod molod”), published in *Dohlaia luna* (1913).

[... и старости, раз до нее человек дожил у благословенных берегов лазурных бухт, совсем не обязателен отвратный вид хилой беспомощности: пред мной был старик, но все члены его тела были лишены старческой конфигурации: глаза бодро горели, зубы его были целы... (Burliuk 1927b, 16)]

Similarly, the *Oshima* narrator finds it difficult to imagine that these “children’s” land has a long history. Seeing numerous graveyards on Oshima, he exclaims in surprise: “How come that so many generations have already lived here on Oshima?” [“Когда успело на Ошимае пожить столько людей??” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The graveyards in this land seem inappropriate to the narrator, who apparently prefers to associate paradise with the idea of youth and vigor both in people and in natural elements: “The artist does not like grave-yards: this decrepit junk of the former life does not fit the shore of the ocean” [“Художник не любит кладбищ: этот дряхлый мусор прошлой жизни неуместен берегу океана” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The paradise is beyond death, age, or history.

Even the correction facility of Ogasawara, which the *Pacific* narrator first mistook for a school of agriculture, is depicted as a paradise corner: in this prison, there are “no bars, fences or guards” [“тюрьма, где нет решеток, оград и сторожей” (Burliuk 1927b, 16)]. The convicts appear as courteous, gentle and kind to the Russian visitors, like the rest of the aboriginal population of the island.

In this land, even plants themselves are as benevolent, as the native dwellers:

Even the agaves, which formerly spread their unfriendly thicket around the place, are now obediently growing along the banks of the roads...

[Агавы и те, ранее раскидывавшие повсюду свою недружелюбную чащу, ныне послушно растут вдоль дорог... (Burliuk 1927b, 18)]

The predictable conclusion that the narrator comes to upon his visit to the islands, states the advantages of the primitive life over that in more civilized places: “The life of solitary huts on the remote islands, far from the noise and bustle of culture, does not harm people” [“Жизнь уединенных хижин, на далеких островах, отторгнутых шума и грохота культуры не на вред человеку” (Burliuk 1927b, 16)]. The conclusion (as well as the whole description) does sound consistent with the aforementioned tradition of Defoe or Cooper, and cannot but remind of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ideas.

Summarizing the account of Burliuk's "paradise regained", I can conclude that, on the one hand, the author's major strategy in creating the picture appears to be that of foreignization and of highlighting the predictable primitive and "savage" aspects of life, which seemingly contrast with the familiar Russian/European values. Ogasawara is presented as a land which has not borrowed anything from the European culture but appropriately retained its own "natural" medieval aspect. However, on the other hand, Burliuk does not stop at this estranging stage and proceeds with an attempt at domesticizing even the ultimate exotic, applying a paradigm of familiar values to it and inscribing the intact paradise of the wild, primitive, courteous and esthetic other within a familiar Western discourse.

As I have shown above, even the foreignized exotic imagery in Burliuk's texts involves a familiar background, explicit or implicit. However important foreignization is in Burliuk's account of the other, domestication, with its direct reference to the familiar, seems nevertheless to be the most widely used device Burliuk resorts to in the Japanese narratives. The domesticating technique which I have outlined in Burliuk's geographical frame of reference is also at work in the writer's descriptions of the exotic flora of the land, as well as the people of Japan, their everyday life details, and even their language.

Describing the other, the narrator keeps using familiar (for his Russian reader) references in his similes. The sounds of waterfalls remind him of Switzerland, people of Ogasawara resemble Europeans: "noses, looking at which one remembers Spain" ["носы, глядя на которые вспоминаешь Испанию" (Burliuk 1927b, 8)], especially one child with an exceptionally white face and light-green eyes. The narrator is obviously comforted by the possibility to map the other in familiar and recognizable terms; no less is he relieved by the fact that many people around him speak English, a familiar language ["многие из них говорят по-английски" (Burliuk 1927b, 8)]. However exotic the country may appear, it is nevertheless implicitly pictured as a part of the familiar world: European and Russian.

The number of familiarizing references involving Russian realities is especially extensive. Burliuk is openly looking for something familiar in the scenery around him. As he himself confesses in the *Pacific* narrative, "the eye is looking for <...> familiar vegetation: spruce, pine..." ["взгляд ищет <...> привычной растительности елей, сосен..." (Burliuk 1927b, 7)]. Not finding the familiar, Burliuk readily invents it. The palm trees, which he sees instead of pines and spruce, are described by a simile, which

compares them to familiar brooms. Rocks are compared to familiar Russian stacks of hay: “right before us is a huge rock, absolutely like a stack of hay” [“прямо перед нами огромная скала, точь в точь огромная копна сена” (Burliuk 1927b, 7)]. The oar in the hands of an old Japanese man in the boat is pictured like a Ukrainian kitchen utensil: “in his hands he is holding a short oar, like the one women use in Ukraine to take bread out of the oven” [«в руках он держит короткое весло, каким на Украине бабы из печи вынимают хлеб» (Burliuk 1927b, 8)]. The appearance of sugar, sold by the natives, reminds him of old buckwheat honey (“looks like old buckwheat honey which has not been separated from the wax yet” [“напоминающий по внешнему виду старый гречишный мед, не отделенный еще от вошины” (Burliuk 1927b, 16)]). A Japanese saw resembles “our <Russian> axe” [“напоминающей наш топор” (Burliuk 1927b, 17)]. People’s singing, no matter how “original” it is, reminds of the familiar coarse sounds of a gramophone: “singing is original, it reminds of a coarse malfunctioning gramophone” [“пение оригинально – оно напоминает испорченный хрипящий грамфон” (Burliuk 1927b, 20)]. Looking at Japanese buildings, the narrator draws parallels with their Russian analogues, thus familiarizing Japan for the Russian reader: “We are not tired of Motomura. We are not tired of these clean sheds, just like the Little-Russian *klunjas* or barns” [“Мотомура не надоела, не надоели эти чистенькие сараи, совсем малороссийские клуни (риги)...” (Burliuk 1927a, 19)].

Describing the environment along the road up Mount Fuji, Burliuk again uses similes based on familiar Russian culture or everyday life references: “the milk of the fog makes the surroundings look like the dressing room of a bath-house” [“молоко тумана делает окрестности похожими на предбанник” (Burliuk 1926, 7)]. An old man by the temple is called by a Russian term “пономарь храма” (sexton), and further on Burliuk notices in him certain features of a merry holy-fool<sup>169</sup>, a figure obviously familiar to the Russian reader [“черты веселого полуюродивого” (Burliuk 1926, 7)].

Sometimes he does not even provide details, confining himself to a mere statement of similarity between the Japanese landscape and the Russian one: “Only later, in places, which so much resemble Russia, the rain stops” [“Только перед вечером в местах, что так напоминают русские, дождя уже нет” (Burliuk 1926, 8)]. In the same manner he describes certain types of exotic vegetation, stating their similarity with the plants which are common in Russia: “*‘tomi*”, like the spruce, *‘buna*’, looking like the

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<sup>169</sup> For discussion of holy fools in Russian culture, see, e.g., Ivanov 2006.

birch” [“‘моми’ вроде ели, ‘буна’ – схожая с березой” (Burliuk 1926, 8)]. Similarly he deals with the exotic everyday realities of Japanese life: for example, the sliding doors in a Japanese house are described by a familiar reference to the doors of a railroad boxcar [“отодвигаешь (как в товарном вагоне) дверь” (Burliuk 1926, 9)]. The list could go on and on.

Obviously familiarizing (as well as estheticizing) is Burliuk’s metonymical definition of Japan as a *lubok* (Russian cheap popular print) carved by Hokusai in one of the Japan-inspired poems: “Japan is a *lubok* / Which was carved by Hokusai” [“Япония – лубок / Что резал Гокусай” (Burliuk 1925, 11)]. On the whole, Burliuk’s method may be defined as domestication or relying on vocabulary which describe the other by references to the familiar. The effect is such that the other’s world implicitly becomes a part of “ours”.

The familiar Russian/Western background is visible and essential even when the described exotic object does not seem to have an analogue in the familiar culture. If an analogy is impossible and the narrator cannot find a Russian counterpart, the narrator still constructs a parallel and describes the Japanese phenomenon by a negative reference, as a totally non-Russian one. Emphasizing the alternative nature of the world around him, the narrator often describes the exotic of Japan by reference to the absence of familiar aspects (according to the Russian/ Western eye), rather than by attempting to look at things from the “native” perspective and understand them from “within”. Hence, the aforementioned “light-minded” lamp, which lacks the “thoroughness” or stability expected by a Western traveler. Or the food, which lacks the familiar ingredients: “no meat, sugar, butter or bread” [“в которой отсутствуют: мясо, сахар, масло и хлеб” (Burliuk 1927b, 7)]. The trees and plants, which are not to be found in the familiar Russian environment: “the thicket of mountain vegetation, clinging over a precipice tree species, unusual and uncommon in our land” [“в чаще горной растительности, цепляющейся над обрывами породы деревьев, необычной и не знакомой нашим краям...” (Burliuk 1927b, 15)], or “branches of various trees, which are not to be found in Russia” [“ветки различных деревьев, не встречающихся в России” (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. Once again, the narrator states the fact of foreignness without trying to explain what exactly those trees look like. The mere fact that these trees are absent in Russia (and thus fall into the category of the exotic) appears to be even more important than a description. The trees, like the natives, are presented not as the subject, but as a nominal

exotic background of the narrative. The other remains a mere object rather than the subject in the narrative, remote and alien in its inexplicable exoticism, and yet symbolically appropriated by the narrator and perceived in the contiguity of the familiar frame of reference.

Quite often, the domesticating analogies developed by Burliuk may be purely imaginary, as, for example, in the case of phonetic and semantic correspondences between Russian and Japanese languages. In the Oshima hotel, listening to a merry song of partying students upstairs, Burliuk and his companions hear (or rather playfully seem to hear) familiar Russian names in the foreign words (Burliuk 1927a, 4). They cannot help drawing parallels between the two languages and even hearing Russian obscenities in the sounds of the Japanese language: “many Japanese expressions sound as most vulgar and cynical obscenities to the Russian ear” [“многие японские обороты речи и слова звучат для русского уха как грубейшие циничные ругательства” (Burliuk 1927a, 4)]. No need to say that these observations do not serve to characterize Japan per se; their single purpose is familiarizing the imaginary Oriental land as a part of the familiar culture and, having placed an Oriental phenomenon in “our” context (in this case, linguistic), pin-pointing exotic incongruities.

Burliuk’s Japan-inspired poetry also provides numerous examples of playing with the Japanese language in a similar manner: appropriating the other’s word, highlighting imaginary familiar semantics in a foreign sound, and thus symbolically subordinating the other’s word to the author’s own language. For example, Burliuk may hear a familiar Russian word “гамма” (music scale) in the name of the city Yokohama: “Yokohama is a music scale of colors” [“Йокогама красок гамма” (Burliuk 1932, 13)]. Or, on the other hand, the same name might remind him of the clatter of the city (a Russian word “гам”): “... from the clatter / which bears the name of Yokohama” [“... из гама / Что носит имя Йокогама” (Burliuk 1932, 14)]. He plays with the consonance of the Japanese word “obi” (women’s waistband) and the name of a Russian Siberian river the Ob’:

Colorful obi of a girl  
The ribbon of the Lena, the obi of the Ob

[Разноцветный девы оби  
Лены – лента, оби – Оби (Burliuk 1925, 15)]



Probably the most characteristic example, though, is a playful couplet, based on wordplay, in which Burliuk dissects the word “Japan” and finds in it familiar (even if slightly ridiculous in the given context) Russian lexemes:

доволен, рад Японией  
прозванье дал я: «пони» ей!

[satisfied, happy with Japan  
I gave her a name: “pony”! (Burliuk 1932, 13)]

Considered in Jakobson’s terms, Burliuk’s device in these two lines is “laid bare of any logical motivation” (Jakobson 1992, 183). The poet by no means suggests any analogy between Japan and a pony (apart from the common reference to the tiny size of the country<sup>170</sup>), nor is Japan per se the subject of the poem. The name of the country is appropriated as a part of the Russian language and an object of word play (*Japoniej – ja poni ej*). Once again, the exotic becomes a metonymical part of the familiar world.

The accent on the familiar (Russian/European) background, which I discussed above, may be also found in Burliuk’s generalizations about the people of Japan: about the Japanese national character as such and about Japanese women, in particular. Consider the reflections of the *Oshima* narrator, presenting a seemingly foreignized image of the Oriental:

One needs to keep in mind the national character of the Japanese people: curious but moderate, prudent, economical and reasonable, the Japanese are followers of a system in everything: they love good manners, once and forever adopted tone, fine etiquette. There is no other similarly refined people in the world like the Japanese...

[Надо знать характер японского народа: любопытный, но сдержанный, расчетливо – экономный и умеренный японец поклонник системы во всем: он любит хорошие манеры, раз навсегда усвоенный тон, тонкости этикета. Нет народа в мире более тонкого, чем японцы... (Burliuk 1927a, 11)]

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. in this context Mayakovsky’s 1927 poem for children “Prochti i katai v Parizh i Kitai” (“Read and Move on to Paris and China”), which uses a very similar rhyme: “Легко представить можете /жителя Японии: /если мы — как лошади, /то они — как пони.” (Mayakovsky 1958, 260) [“you can easily imagine/ a dweller of Japan:/ if we are like horses,/ they are like ponies”].

It is interesting that these appreciating (“curiosity”, “moderation”) characteristics of the Japanese closely remind of what Burliuk writes about the lucky combination of Russian and European features in *The Ascent to Fuji* characters (“flame”, “stability”). If we add the “refinement” as an esthetic stroke, the Japanese start resembling not only a reflection of the Russian/European character, so much praised by the author, but also, most probably, a certain projection of Burliuk’s own self-portrait.

Burliuk’s familiarizing generalizations about the Japanese woman also rely on both Western values and Western vocabulary borrowings and equally echo the above quoted reflections on the ideal Russian-European combination of sensuality and stability. The other appears as a reflection of the already familiar:

... all these features are graciously borne by the Japanese woman in her appearance: even in love she combines gentillesse and refinement with reasonable and economical coldness.

[... эти черты грациозно носит облик своем японская женщина, она и в чувстве любви соединяет жантильность и изысканность с чертами рассудочно экономной холодности. (Burliuk 1927a, 11)]

This idealized portrait (gentillesse, refinement, plus reason) is not too different from the Eurocentric idealized representation of Japanese men, discussed above, or even from Balmont’s symbolist vision of Japanese women, which I have referred to in the Introduction. The choice of words in Burliuk’s text (e.g., the French borrowing “*жантильность*”) clearly identifies the narrator’s “European” optic and the implicit attempt to symbolically inscribe the exotic into the familiar cultural paradigm.

However, it is difficult to fully understand what these generalizations and reflections on Japanese women’s psychology are based on. Burliuk’s narratives do not even hint at any close contacts with the local population (with women especially<sup>171</sup>). On the whole, the other, although symbolically domesticated and presented in familiar imagery, nevertheless remains foreign and distant, as I will argue below.

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<sup>171</sup> “... in Motomura, a bachelor may get bored: it is impossible to start a more or less serious affair with a Japanese woman; a European man is always in the public eye, every single step of his is followed by hundreds of eyes; an affair in Motomura is absolutely physically impossible” [“в Мотомуре холостяк может соскучиться – с японской женщиной, или девушкой, скольнибудь серьезной интриги не завести – европеец у всех на виду, за каждым его шагом следят сотни глаз, интрига в Мотомуре физически вещь абсолютно невозможная” (Burliuk 1927a, 11)].

## 2.6. Facing the reality

Apparently, there is at times a certain conflict between the Japan Burliuk constructs (or wants to construct within a European frame of reference) and the “real” Japan he comes in touch with. From time to time, the narrator complains that some of the things he found in Japan in reality, did not quite come up to his expectations, leaving a feeling of disappointment. Consider his fears in the very beginning of the Ogasawara journey:

...sadness fills the heart: the reality destroys the image which was so readily, thoroughly and deliberately constructed by imagination... Once again, life may be destroying illusions...

[в сердце заползает грусть – действительность сокрушила тот облик, что был так угодливо, обстоятельно, продуманно изготовлен воображением... Еще раз, может быть, жизнь сокрушает иллюзии... (Burliuk 1927b, 7)]

Reality does destroy certain illusions, so conveniently prompted by imagination. Burliuk quickly gets used to the country and equally quickly learns to recognize the generalized “typical Japan”, which, in many cases, is not what the Cooper- and Defoe-inspired traveler would be looking for. Consider his unenthusiastic comment on a Japanese village in the *Pacific* narrative: “This village by the sea does not offer anything new or exceptional, though, if you look at it closely. Typical Japan!” [“Этот поселок у моря ничего все же не дает нового, особенно, когда присмотришься к нему, это – типичная Япония!” (Burliuk 1927b, 9)]. The typical is not fascinating, regardless of the fact that the author initially promised to tell the reader about the everyday life of the country.

The “typical” everyday Japan, as opposed to the “deliberately constructed” imaginary land, appears totally foreign and often far from exciting. No matter how Burliuk praises the simplicity of the Ogasawara paradise or the beauty and exoticism of Fuji, his narrative quite often evidences a condescending approach towards Japan and the Japanese. The condescending tone reminds the reader about the “westernness” of the narrator’s perspective, which is sometimes evident even in minor issues, such as the description of the typical food, which the *Oshima* narrator finds miserable:

To a European, and especially a Russian, used to bread, sweet tea, meat or a large amount of vegetables, this meal may appear to be like penal servitude, privation, or extreme misery.

[Европейцу, а особенно русскому, привыкшему к хлебу, к чаю с сахаром, к мясу, или большому количеству овощей такой стол может показаться каторгой, лишением – высшей скудностью. (Burliuk 1927a, 9)]

In the same manner, Burliuk-the-European and his Russian friends are quite skeptical about the quality of Japanese alcohol beverages, which do not come up to their “European” expectations:

... in Motomura, one cannot get anything but beer and sake. Someone spoiled by daily consumption of Benedictine would not be ecstatic about these products of the Japanese Bacchus.

[... в Мотомуре нельзя достать ничего, только пиво и сакэ: лицо избаловавшееся на ежедневном потреблении бенедиктина, не очень падко на эти произведения японского Бахуса. (Burliuk 1927a, 18)]

Obviously, the message of both above quoted statements is not only in critiquing Japanese cuisine or the “products of the Japanese Bacchus”, but rather in adding a few strokes to the self-portrait of the narrator and identifying his tastes and values as unmistakably European.

The *Pacific* narrator in a similar condescending way looks down at the whole of the city of Yokohama, which is presented as neither sufficiently exotic, nor “European” enough:

Mixed and intermingled are: a European city, an ocean port, railways, trams, a Japanese city, and all these are stuck within a Japanese village”

[Слились, смешались: европейский город, океанский порт, железные дороги, трамваи, японский город и все это окружилось и засело в японскую деревню. (Burliuk 1927b, 5)]

The narrator, who proudly identifies himself as a well-traveled man, is left unimpressed by the city architecture, which he describes as inferior, according to his “European” standards:

The city does not impress someone spoiled by Parises, Berlins and Petrograds, neither by the scale of its avenues nor by the number of pompous buildings.

[Город человеку, избалованному Парижами, Берлинами, Петроgrадами, не скажет ничего ни размахом проспектов, ни количеством помпезных зданий. (Burliuk 1927b, 5)]

Like in the quoted above culinary comments, the message of this condescending remark seems to add more to the self-portrait of the narrator than to the image of Yokohama. Looking down at Yokohama, the narrator once again just proves implicitly his own belonging to the world of Western culture.

This attitude cannot be described as a culture shock of a newcomer. Several months spent on the Ogasawara islands (as well as probably the two years spent in Japan, on the whole) do not change the narrator. On the way back from the islands, on board the ship, he still positions himself as an outsider, a “European” looking at Japan condescendingly from aside, if not from above:

... severe pitching does not allow one to notice the meager nutrition value of the “people’s cuisine”, which is totally unfit for a European” .

[... начавшаяся свирепая качка не позволяет замечать скудную питательность «народного» стола, европейцу совсем не подходящего. (Burliuk 1927b, 20)]

What is fit for Japan is totally unfit for a European. The difference between the Orient and the Occident is set as an ontological fact; meanwhile, once again, the focus of the statement slightly shifts from the observed to the observer, tentatively reminding the reader where exactly the narrator comes from.

The contrast between “us” and “them”, which appears in the encounter with the “real” other, is not confined to food tastes or architectural preferences, though. Sometimes, Burliuk’s narrator, positioning himself as a cosmopolitan European, as an “artist in velvet pants, who frequently travels abroad” [“художник в бархатных брюках, много бывающий за границей” (Burliuk 1927a, 11)], shows signs of disappointment when talking about Japanese women, who fail to live up to his idealized image. Burliuk cannot help comparing Japanese women with their Western counterparts, and this European background of the portrait, as usual, appears much weightier than the subject of the portrait, i.e. the Japanese woman herself:

As regards love, Japanese women remind me of Parisians: it is all calculation, all for money, all according to the rank and social position of the woman: the cost of love depends on all that. On the contrary, in Germany, whether it's a housemaid or housemaster, the German woman's heart is full of sentimental and indiscriminate tenderness.

[Японки напоминают мне в области любви парижанок – все из расчета, все за деньги, согласно рангу, положению занимаемому дамой: от этого зависит стоимость любви, и наоборот в Германии – немочка, служанка ли это, квартирная ли хозяйка – сердце женщины полно сентиментальной, неразборчивой нежности. (Burliuk 1927a, 11)]

It is interesting to follow how Burliuk's thought proceeds: starting the passage as an attempt of portraying the Japanese woman, he inevitably concludes it with a totally unrelated issue, an open praise of the German female. What was supposed to be the background of the portrait, explicitly turns into the subject, overshadowing the exotic Oriental.

Despite praising the esthetic taste of the idealized Japanese, Burliuk regularly accentuates the difference in his and the natives' esthetic perspective, and in these comparisons the other does not seem to have an advantage, as he/she often fails to fully appreciate certain refined esthetic values, which are essential for the narrator. According to the *Pacific* narrator, the locals are totally unable to fully understand even the exotic beauty of their own land:

... unquestionably, these paths have been trodden not for the picturesque views, which, I am afraid, leave the local hearts indifferent.

[... бесспорно, эти тропинки протоптаны не для живописных красот, которым сердца местных жителей, боюсь, равнодушны. (Burliuk 1927b, 15)]

He, as an artist and as a European, claims seeing a picture slightly larger than that conditioned by the native's narrow pragmatic vision.

The motif of being able to see things more closely and accurately than the natives reoccurs in the narratives several times. Thus, in the already mentioned episode with the snake on the way up Fuji mountain, a Japanese lady passes by looking with curiosity at the Europeans who are fussing about the snake bite (Burliuk 1926, 7). She is obviously

not aware of the mystic and exotic light they see in the scene. Or, in another *Fuji* episode, the fast-walking guides accompanying the group of travelers up the mountain keep wondering why the latter should pay so much attention to the strawberry fields around: “they find it puzzling when we, attracted by the picturesque fields, involuntarily digress from the route” [“удивляются нам, когда мы невольно уклоняемся на живописные поляны в стороне от пути” (Burliuk 1926, 8)]. Here, the European vision is again presented as capable of seeing the subtle hidden beauty overlooked by the locals.

Burliuk’s somewhat condescending judgment is not restricted to the uneducated natives of Ogasawara or hasty tour guides on Fuji: it has much more general implications, which concern even the Japanese artists, so much praised by him in the newspaper interviews. In the beginning of *The Ascent to Fuji-san*, Burliuk speaks about the absence of pictures of Fuji Mount at the exhibitions of contemporary Japanese art: what used to inspire the whole of Japanese culture, has turned, as the narrator explains, into a cliché and is therefore being ignored or avoided by local artists.

Japanese artists, continuously depicting the mountain, first turned it into a routine image, and for modern art exhibitions it ceased to exist: Japanese artists looked at the mountain so long that they stopped seeing it.

[Художник Японии бесконечно рисуя вид этой горы, в начале превратил ее в шаблон, а для современных художественных выставок она перестала существовать – художники Японии так долго смотрели на Фузи-яму, что перестали ее видеть. (Burliuk 1926, 4)]

This remark could suggest one more motif of Burliuk’s Oriental quest: not only is he going to open the exotic Japan to the Russian public, or inscribe Japan into the Russian/European frame of reference, but he is also probably aspiring to teach the Japanese to see their mountain once again, and, as the mountain metonymically represents the core characteristics of Japan itself, to teach them to understand their own culture anew<sup>172</sup>. In this respect, his role in Japan starts resembling not the role of a humble grandson visiting his ancestors, as he claimed in the interview quoted at the beginning of the chapter, but that of a wise teacher speaking to his unsophisticated students with authority.

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<sup>172</sup> As a matter of fact, Burliuk does present his own vision of mount Fuji at the second Japanese exhibition.

Even when the authorial and condescending remarks give way to the “objective” tone, Burliuk’s rhetoric nevertheless demonstrates attempts of symbolically subordinating the other. The narrator in Burliuk’s texts may present himself as an impartial observer and a scriptor, who is mostly occupied by recording and depicting life around him rather than participating in it: “One third of a year passed unnoticeably in tireless sketching of unparalleled nature” [“Треть года незаметно прошла неустанным изображении невиданной природы” (Burliuk 1927b, 19)]. The “depicting” approach does not necessarily involve personal (or dialogical) attitude towards the subject. In Burliuk’s picture, there is almost no interaction between the observer and the observed; the local subjects appear as mere objects of description. Consequently, they do not have a voice of their own, and, as objects, they are not totally different from other natural phenomena in the surroundings. As the *Pacific* narrator summarizes his impressions of Ogasawara:

Everything was peculiar and unforgettable: the half-naked youths carrying huge rocks on their muscular shoulders and fierce black bulls tamed by metal rings tearing the bull’s noses.

[Все было оригинальным и незабываемым: и полуголые парни несущие глыбы камня на своих сухих мускулистых спинах и черные свирепые быки: укрощаемые железным кольцом, разрывающим бычий нос. (Burliuk 1927b, 19)]

Syntactically, they are all parts of the same paradigm: people, rocks, bulls, rings in bulls’ nostrils. Most probably intended as an appreciative generalization about the country’s “originality”, the sentence deconstructs itself, clearly outlining the different roles assigned to the narrator and the locals.

Does this real other give in to subordination as easily as the idealized and generalized Japanese? Apparently no. The line between the East and the West, partly blurred in the familiarized language of generalizations and of Japanese environment description, clearly appears in sharp relief in the opposition of the narrator (and his companions) to the random local characters, representing Japan. The imaginary familiarized geography and metonymically familiarized otherness are challenged by “real” cultural experiences in the everyday life. Rhetorically familiarized Japan at times



defies familiarization and turns into an impenetrable and incomprehensible other at a closer contact.

There is an apparent gap between the generalized Japanese in Burliuk's account and the few live people he encounters in the course of the narrative. The narrator sometimes needs to face and recognize the depth of the gap that makes it virtually impossible to understand the other. The fear of never understanding the Japanese appears at the beginning of *Oshima*, in a brief reflection, involving an extensive biology-based comparison, in which Burliuk presents the other as a literally different species, genetically different from "us":

... but we [the Russians and Europeans, - M.O.] really know so much about each other: our tastes, interests, our environment and upbringing – all of it is like a single garden, which has generated plants of the same species; and here: the type of beauty, the level of education, the quantity and quality of knowledge, due to the absence of a bridge, the absence of some board across the gap, due to the total lack of knowledge of the language and the latter's totally different type, foreign to us...

[... мы ведь так много знаем друг о друге: наши вкусы, наши интересы, обстановка, и воспитание – все это как единая грядка, создавшая растения одной породы; а здесь: и тип красоты, и уровень образования, количество и характер знаний, вследствие отсутствия моста, какой либо жердочки через пропасть, положенную полным незнанием языка и его иным типом – нам чуждым... (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]

The two worlds are like two gardens, each with its own species; no contact seems to be possible between them and any attempt of interpreting the other appears questionable, if not totally impossible.

Indeed, Burliuk's narrator and his companions occasionally have to confess that they do not understand the Japanese people around them; the inability to understand the other often results in the grotesqueness of and absurdity of representation. Totally beyond the narrator's understanding are, for example, human relationships between the Japanese, as Burliuk has to recognize. Watching a couple in *Oshima*, the narrator admits that "This couple is incomprehensible and mysterious for the Russians" ["Эта парочка для русских непонятна, загадочна" (Burliuk 1927a, 4)]. Equally incomprehensible are other people they see around the hotel:

Around the hotel, there are many other couples walking: they came here to flirt or to have rest; however, from the Russian perspective, they all, with very few exceptions, are ridiculous and incomprehensible.

[“Вокруг гостиницы много еще бродит и других парочек, приехавших сюда для флирта или для отдыха; но с русской точки – зрения все они, за малым исключением, нелепы и малопонятны. (Burluk 1927a, 4)]

“Absurd”, “ridiculous” and “incomprehensible” are the words which describe the “real” other and indicate the narrator’s failure to familiarize the latter. The motif recurs repeatedly in all three narratives, so foreign the simple human relationships between the local people appear to the Russian visitors, who cannot relate to these people or even reconstruct their feelings/thoughts/stories:

The couples are incomprehensible for a Russian eye: not a single gesture or a hint which could reveal at least a little part of the numerous and probably interesting stories of these people.

[Парочки не понятны русскому вниманию – ни одного штриха, ни одного намека, могущего бросить хотя бы малый луч света, в уголок какой либо истории этих многочисленных и наверно интересных романов людей. (Burluk 1927a, 4-5)]

There is not a single link between the two worlds; the alleged “interesting stories” of the Japanese will remain a mystery that Burluk’s text will never disclose. The Russian visitors, positioning themselves as Europeans, will keep occasionally wondering about the inner world of the Japanese, totally hidden from them, asking themselves rhetorical questions:

Who are they? What feelings are bred in these bodies and traditions, which are so peculiar for a European, how strong are the feelings, and what are their color shades?”

[Кто оне? Какие чувства и какого напряжения, и каких оттенков могут гнездиться в этих столь своеобразных для европейца телах и привычках?? (Burluk 1927a, 5)]

The rhetorical question “Who are they?” is never answered, though. The “real” other appears to be difficult to subordinate and place within familiar references.

This failure to understand the concrete people surrounding the narrator in Japan might partly account for the ridiculing and condescending portraits of the Japanese, especially in *Oshima*, the earliest of the Japanese narratives. The appearance of the Japanese people (women especially) seems ridiculous to the narrator who speaks on behalf of the Russian visitors:

Without exception, the women are ugly: no women's beauties, chests tightly wrapped in kimonos, narrow pelves, angularity, no room for sensual seduction.

[Как на подбор все дамы уродливы – отсутствие женских прелестей, бюст обтянутый кимоно, узкий таз, худосочие – нет простора для чувственного обольщения. (Burluiuk 1927a, 4)]

The portrait clearly contradicts the generalizations Burluiuk makes about the “abstract” Japanese. Apparently, the “real” women do not comply with the familiar standards of beauty or fail to become an adequate reflection of Western esthetic standards, and are therefore ridiculed and presented grotesquely. The narrator is explicitly relying on certain Western European standards and ironically blaming Japanese women for not complying with the latter: “how far would Rubens’ imagination have to travel here in order to find the ideal within this misery of shapes” [“как далеко пришлось скакать бы здесь воображению Рубенса, чтобы от этой бедности форм добраться до своего идеала” (Burluiuk 1927a, 4)]. As a result, the Russians fail to recognize anything feminine in the women around: “The Russians do not understand the ugly woman, the only feminine things about them is the hair and affectation” [“Русским не понятны некрасивые женщины, - в которых женственны – одне прически и жеманность” (Burluiuk 1927a, 5)]. Burluiuk and his companions would obviously prefer to see Europeans in the streets of Japanese cities instead<sup>173</sup>. The rhetorical pattern in dealing with the live other in Burluiuk’s text reminds that of presenting other foreign phenomena: failing to understand and interpret an object/person within their own

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<sup>173</sup> Cf.: “Oh, those European women... Imagine walking in Yokohama and suddenly meeting, among those flat Japanese bottoms, a British woman; they are indeed also quite lean, but nevertheless real yummy” [“Эх европейки!... Идешь по Йокогаме и среди этого японского плоскозадства, вдруг англичанка, они ведь тоже сухопарыя, а всетаки пальчики оближешь”] (Burluiuk 1927a, 4). Regarded condescendingly, Europeans nevertheless appear much more familiar and appealing to the Russian eye than the totally foreign Japanese.

context, Burliuk places them in a familiar Russian/Western European paradigm of values and indulges in the strangeness/absurdity of the resulting image.

Not only human faces, but inanimate objects of Japanese everyday life, too, resist domestication and appear mute and expressionless to the visitors, as opposed to the more familiar objects of the Western culture: "in a different country, even things could say something about the character, the class status and life perspectives of their owners" ["в другой стране, даже вещи могли бы сказать про особенности, класс и жизненные горизонты их владельцев" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The narrator in these comments does not blame his own inability to understand the language of clothes and cultural differences associated with them, but speaks about the total voicelessness of all objects, which could reveal so much in a different, familiar European world.

Thus, traditional Japanese footwear is described as indifferently blank and lifeless ["безразлично делового вида" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The narrator does not recognize his own inability to understand the "language" of clothes and see the gender specifics of Japanese garments; he would rather complain about men's clothes being the same as women's, or even more feminine: "what can the clothes of these couples say, if men are clothed like women or even in a more feminine way" ["а что скажут костюмы этих парочек, где мужчины одеты также, как женщины, даже еще более по женски" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. Even the Japanese manner of writing and reading (right to left) is seen through European optics: "incomprehensible books, always light-mindedly read from the end" ["непонятные книги, легкомысленно читаемые всегда с конца" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)], which appears absurdly meaningless and ridiculous.

The adjective "light-minded" with regard to something the narrator fails to understand is not accidental. Not knowing the language, the "European" narrator still passes judgments on Japanese media, blaming them for being over-superficial: "newspapers and all the press seem (or smell) too nosy in a tabloid manner, too chatty, light and superficial to a European" ["газеты и вся эта пресса европейцу (по нюху), кажущаяся через чур бульварно любопытной, болтливой и поверхностно несерьезной" (Burliuk 1927a, 5)]. The other is mute and blank, moreover, the other is passive: in Burliuk's text there is no discussion of the extent to which the Japanese understand the visitors.

Despite all attempts of familiarization and domestication, the two worlds remain apart. The distance between the Europeans and the Japanese is described as an abyss, especially in *Oshima*:

All these things do not say anything to a European's imagination, which sometimes can use one detail or a slightest stroke to complete the picture hidden by the drawn curtain<sup>174</sup>.

[Все описанные вещи ничего не говорят европейскому воображению, которое по одной детали, по, иногда, еле уловимому штриху успеет дорисовать полную картину, над которой спущена занавеска. (Burluk 1927a, 5)]

Burluk will frequently need to make up for the missing parts of the picture, developing the "little strokes" into whole patterns in his imagination, as I have shown above, discussing his imaginary Japan.

The Russian visitors at Oshima live in their own small world, telling each other stories (hence the subtitle, *The Japanese Decameron*), without making attempts to leave this safe space, shaped by their discourse, without trying to see Japan from within – not as mere observers standing aloof or painters in search of a subject for their picture. One of Burluk's companions does not even leave the room, preferring to draw from imagination rather than from the original: "The Futurist sat in the hotel room and painted geishas, his model being his own imagination" ["Футурист сидел в номере гостиницы и писал гейш, причем моделью их ему служило собственное воображение" (Burluk 1927a, 6)]. An unintended metaphor of their whole quest appears in one of the "Decameron" stories, which the Officer tells in *Oshima*, remembering his first ("truly remarkable in a singular way") trip to Japan:

We drank so much that hardly recognized each other, not to mention Japan. <...> Here you go, a trip to Japan... When we returned home, everyone asks, how it was... What did we see? And what did I see – bottles, glasses, and even those I could hardly make out. Drinking all the week, non-stop..."

[Допились до того, что не только Японии, друг друга не узнавали. <...> Вот вам и поездка в Японию... Приехали все спрашивают, ну

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<sup>174</sup> Probably, an allusion to Pushkin's *Stone Guest* (*Kamennyi gost'*, 1830). Cf. Leporello's words: "У вас воображенье/ В минуту дорисует остальное" (Pushkin 1960, 342) ["Your imagination will draw the rest in a minute"].

расскажите как... Что видели? – А что видел бутылки, рюмки, да и теле различал, всю неделю без просыпу пили... (Burliuk 1927a, 19)]

Coming into close contact with the other, Burliuk becomes aware of a barrier, which he cannot overcome. Leaving Ogasawara, the narrator recognizes his not being able to fully understand certain aspects of the natives' life. The aspects, which he, probably, should have considered as essential, as they are really important at least in his own world-view:

... incomplete language competence deprived me of an opportunity to look deeper into the life of island-dwellers. What remained a mystery are the legends and stories from fishermen's and farmers' lives, songs and tales, which speak of the past, of the ancient, of the other...

[... не полное знание языка лишило меня возможности глубже вникнуть оригинальную жизнь островитян. Остались для меня тайной легенды и случаи из жизни рыбаков и горных земледельцев, песни и сказания, в которых говорится о прошлом, бывшем, ином... (Burliuk 1927b, 17)]

However, having said that, the narrator does not grieve long and immediately proceeds with a description of magnificent tree stumps. The tales and legends of the natives are not really essential for his narrative. The island dwellers do not need to have tales of their own, they are already inscribed into the tale written by David Burliuk, and consequently into the wide web of tales comprising Russian and Western-European culture. Even the "natural" (as opposed to westernized "cultural") way of life of the aborigines has found its place in the Rousseauistic value paradigm of the civilized Europe. As an object, though, not as a subject.

There is something in common in the finales of Burliuk's Japanese narratives; they all have a certain anti-climactic effect, which may probably be accounted for by the subconscious realization of a failure to construct a convincing picture of a paradise. Leaving Ogasawara, the narrator experiences a feeling of joy, not nostalgia: "One leaves with a feeling of joy" ["Уезжаешь чувством радости" (Burliuk 1927b, 20)], as he states without any further explanations. The descriptive detail of the stormy night on board on his way back from the island – the sounds of the songs of drunk local travelers: "an endless song, a throat song, a hoarse one, drills the air" ["бесконечная песня, горловая,

надсадистая сверлит воздух”], the smell, or rather the stench from the WC: “the horrible stench from the “benjo”, its door being flung wide open due to the boat pitching” [“ужасн<ый> смрад, идущ<ий> от ‘бенджо’, дверь в который вследствие качки открыта настежь” (Burluiuk 1927b, 20)], all this imagery does not suggest any nostalgic feelings about the paradise left behind.

The description of the departure from Oshima is even more telling. When on board and looking back at the island left behind, the narrator finds somewhat strange comparisons to describe the view. The island reminds him of a dead body and the respective extended comparison is quite graphic:

Dead sinister line of a corpse, and if one looks at the strings of white vapor, aren't they the currents of stench reeking from the corpse?!!”

[Мертвая зловещая линия трупа, если вспомнить нити белого пара, то не струи ли зловония от трупа?!! (Burluiuk 1927a, 19)]

In the following paragraph, another strange simile occurs, as the island is suddenly compared to a spittoon:

Oshima is getting farther and farther, the misty island now looks like a huge spittoon put in the middle of the ocean.

[Ошима все дальше и дальше, туманный остров теперь похож на большую плевательницу, поставленную посреди океана. (Burluiuk 1927a, 19)]

It sounds like quite an expressive image to conclude an account of a trip to Paradise. Most probably, Burluiuk did not mean anything insulting by utilizing these figures of speech. However, the choice of imagery is characteristic: Oshima, indeed, appears as a dead place, which the narrator and his companions used for their own purposes (whether as an object for painting or as a setting for their “Decameron” storytelling). The island and its inhabitants remained mere objects (of painting, of description, of narration). The only live characters in the book, besides the Russian visitors themselves, are those in the stories, which they entertain each other with in order to fight boredom. Japan remains but a background setting for those narratives, which actually constitute the core of the *Oshima* text.

An involuntary contrast appears between the culmination of the *Fuji* narrative and its denouement, too. The description of the summit leaves a definite anti-climactic impression. Apart from the obvious – “the sizes, the volumes, the space – everything is preterhuman” [“размеры, объемы, пространство, все нечеловеческое” (Burliuk 1926, 11)] – the atmosphere on the summit is far from exhilarating:

Last steps, and we reach the summit. Besides a policeman, a newspaper correspondent, a buzzing telephone, a post-office over a pile of lava, and “Hotel” signboards, we are met by joyless rough purple-bluish hillocks...

[Последние шаги, мы достигаем вершины – кроме полицейского, корреспондента газеты, трещащего телефона, почтового отделения над кучей лавы, вывесок: “Отель”, нас встречают безрадостные, шероховатые, синебагровые бугры... (Burliuk 1926, 11)]

The description of the scene sounds anything but exotic. Even the next morning the atmosphere does not become any more exciting. Conventional similes – “a star hanging like a wax drop from the firmament” [“звезд<a>, каплей воска повисш<ая> на тверди” (Burliuk 1926, 11)] – do not brighten the picture. The description of the mountain top does not remind of the “breakthrough to the heavens”, promised in the beginning of the quest:

Hoarfrost lies on the stones, the stench of dozens of thousands people who have come here reeks from the earth. They make columns of lava stones; these columns and footwear remains is all that is left after people’s visits of the mountain. Over the twenty-four hours spent on the summit, I saw only two Europeans.

[На камнях лежит иней, от земли подымается смрад десятков тысяч людей, перебивавших здесь, они складывают столбики из лавы, они и обрывки обуви, вот все что остается от посещения горы людьми. За сутки пребывания на вершине я видел всего двух европейцев. (Burliuk 1926, 11)]

The destination of the quest involuntarily leaves a feeling of disappointment. All the inspiring tropes born on the way up the mountain, which sounded like a promise of a miracle, led to a less than exciting climactic point of the narrative:



Having made a couple of sketches and having become material for newspaper correspondents' records, my friends and I leave the empyreal heights...

[Сделав несколько этюдов на вершине и попав в качестве матерьяла на пластинку корреспондентов газет, я, с моими друзьями, покидаю заоблачные выси..." (Burliuk 1926, 11)]

The way down from the mountain top is depicted as hasty and confused, and, considering the fact that the travelers got lost in the heavy rain and in total darkness, such descriptive figures as the "soft velvet of the dark" (Burliuk 1926, 12) do not sound very convincing. Equally doubtful sound the narrator's claims of feeling certain "inexplicable sweetness" ["неизъяснимая сладость"] in the singular experience of such confusing "peculiar rambling" ["в этом <...> своеобразном блуждании" (Burliuk 1926, 12)].

The more surprising is the narrator's attempt to return to the exotic atmosphere in the final paragraph of the *Fuji* story, which describes a graveyard by the temple the travelers were walking through when they finally found their way in the dark. By that moment Burliuk and his friends, as the narrator himself acknowledges, have been totally exhausted and indifferent to the surroundings: "having lost all hope, wet through, indifferent and falling in the gutters" ["потеряв надежду, измокшие, безучастные, падающие в канавы" (Burliuk 1926, 12)]. Therefore, the romantic description of the graveyard, which suddenly follows, is hard to believe to be an authentic picture and not a subsequent exoticized reconstruction of the scene:

... we find ourselves first in a long alley of a temple, where graves breathe with peace and darkness, where stone lanterns line along the path, with a ray of light falling at times down, misty and wet, lighting the strings of grey cob-webs, the immeasurable trunk of a thousand-year old tree, which spreads its branches into the darkness.

[... мы попадаем сначала в длинную аллею храма, где дышат покоем и мраком могилы, где каменные фонари вытянулись по сторонам, оттуда упадет иногда луч света, туманный и мокрый, осветит нити седой паутины, ствол многообхватный тысячетлетнего дерева, уходящий своими ветвями в темноту. (Burliuk 1926, 12)]

The picture is so dissonant with the state of mind (and body) of the narrator in the preceding paragraph that one cannot help suspecting that it most probably must

have been sketched by Burliuk at a different moment and inserted here in the text for the sake of recreating an appropriately exotic atmosphere when the whole quest started to look anything but romantic. The unfinished passage ends as abruptly as it starts, with an incomplete sentence and two rows of dots. Thus, the most exotic parts of the *Fuji* narrative appear not in the description of the trip itself, but rather in the prefatory reflections of anticipating the trip and in the post-hoc attempts to edit the real experience of the country.

The end of the story, so hasty and quite unexpected, might probably reveal the narrator's confusion and inability to articulate the experience in the key, which he initially promised to the reader. It was certainly much easier to anticipate the excitement of the trip and speculate on its cultural importance ("literary mountaineering"), than to realize why those hundreds of thousands of the Japanese keep going up the hill and to relate to their feelings. What Burliuk found on top of Fuji-san – a policeman, a newspaper correspondent, a buzzing phone, hotel signs, joyless hillocks, the stench of dozens of thousands visitors, footwear remains, and only two Europeans– is most probably not what those dozens of thousands of the Japanese were looking for when they climbed the mountain. Burliuk promised his Russian readers to tell them about the exotic. Paradoxically, his story told them about the trivial. The mountain "was a total secret" (Burliuk 1932, 14), writes Burliuk in one of his poems. A total secret it remained, as he confesses in another one:

Not having taken off its high mask  
Remained a total secret  
The brilliant Fuji-yama

[Не снявшая высокой маски  
Осталась сплошным секретом  
Блистательная Фудзи-яма] (Burliuk 1932, 11)

### CHAPTER 3. VORTICISM, FENOLLOSA AND THE ORIENT

In this chapter, I will discuss the background of Ezra Pound's version of Orientalism, namely certain theoretical assumptions developed by the English Vorticists and the Oriental reflections of Ernest Fenollosa.

Pound's interest in Japan and Japanese art was shaped in 1900s, the time which, as I showed in the Introduction, bore traces of the nineteenth-century Japonisme. Mostly attributed to visual arts, Japonisme found its way to literary works as well, as I showed in the Introduction. Though Pound was not primarily interested in painting, he was well aware of the influence of Japanese arts (e.g. Hokusai) on James Abbott Whistler<sup>175</sup>, whose influence on Pound I will discuss below.

Another influence was the "Poet's Club" in London, which Pound joins in April, 1909. In the club, he meets T.E. Hulme, F.S. Flint, Edward Storer, F. W. Tancred, Joseph Campbell and Florence Farr. The club, which produced several anthologies and anticipated the development of the Imagist movement, met on a monthly basis in Soho and discussed poems and poetry-related papers written by its members. As Flint later remembered:

what brought the real nucleus of this group together was a dissatisfaction with English poetry as it was then <...> being written. We proposed at various times to replace it by pure *vers libre*; by the Japanese *tanka* and *haikai*; we all wrote dozens of the latter as an amusement. (Flint 1915, 71)

Among those poems written for amusement, there were some Oriental translations, too (for example, Flint translated some haiku<sup>176</sup> from French translations into English)<sup>177</sup>. Pound's other sources of Japan-related information include Frank Brinkley's eight-volume survey of the Japanese culture and history<sup>178</sup>, Marie Stopes' Noh

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<sup>175</sup> James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834 - 1903), an American artist influenced by a wide range of traditions, including Japanese (e.g. Hiroshige), one of the key figures in establishing the Anglo-Japanese style in arts and design.

<sup>176</sup> It was around 1912, according to Miner, that Pound became interested in the genre of haiku (Miner 1956, 573).

<sup>177</sup> For more information on the interest of American authors (including the Imagists) in Asian literatures in the first decades of the twentieth century, see Huang 2002.

<sup>178</sup> Brinkley, Frank. *Japan: Its History, Arts, and Literature*. 8 vols. Boston: Millet, 1901-1902. Brinkley and his study are discussed in the Introduction.

studies and translations<sup>179</sup>, and possibly W.G. Aston's history of Japanese literature<sup>180</sup> and F.V. Dickins' translations<sup>181</sup>, as well as Laurence Binyon's studies of Oriental arts (of which I will speak below). By 1913, as Pound wrote to Dorothy Shakespear (October, 1913), he was "getting the orient from all quarters" (Pound and Litz 1984, 264). However, before I pass to Pound's Orient and in particular Japan, I need to make some comments on the Vorticist manifestos and Fenollosa's papers in order to provide certain clues to his Oriental quest.

### 3.1. English Vorticism and the East/West opposition

Vorticism, the first articulate British avant-garde group, founded in 1914 and strongly affected by Italian Futurism and by Cubism, had a relatively short history and produced only one art exhibition (1915) and two issues of *Blast* magazine (1914, 1915). However, the movement signified an important shift in the esthetic paradigm of the 1910-s and had a great impact on Pound, who kept relating to Vortex for decades after the group as such had ceased to exist. Recognizing the "youthful exuberance" of *Blast* and its "visual tour de force", Milton A. Cohen admits a certain vagueness of the group's esthetic program, though: "Precisely what the Vorticists stood for and what their manifestos assert (besides their appearance) are far less certain" (Cohen 2004, 121). Indeed, the provocative paradoxes and consistent contradictions, which fill the pages of *Blast*, pose a challenge for scholars. Without making an attempt of providing a comprehensive analysis of the Vorticist program, I will confine myself to one issue, which is directly related to my research, i.e. the "geographical axes" of the Vorticist esthetic and the role of the Oriental other in the Vorticist manifestos. In order to explain some of the "geographical" strains involved, I will start with the origins of the movement.

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<sup>179</sup> Marie Stopes and Jôji Sakurai, *Plays of Old Japan: The 'Nô'*, London: Heinemann, 1913.

<sup>180</sup> W.G. Aston, *History of Japanese Literature*, London: Heinemann, 1899. Aston's book is discussed in the Introduction.

<sup>181</sup> F.V. Dickins, *Hyak nin is'shiu, or, Stanzas by a Century of Poets, Being Japanese Lyrical Odes*, London: Smith, Elder, 1866.

### 3.1.1. Marinetti and English rebels

Like in the case of the Russian Futurists, the debate about Marinetti's role in shaping English Vorticism is a sensitive issue and has a long history. As early as 1917, T.S. Eliot describes Pound's role in English literature as that of an opponent of Futurism: "Pound has perhaps done more than anyone to keep futurism out of England" (Eliot 1965, 175). This stance is supported by such scholars as Noel Stock, who argues that "Pound was never a futurist <...> [he remained] indifferent or opposed to most of their principles" (Stock 1974, 144), or James Wilhelm, who asserts that "Pound was strongly opposed <...> to the gimmick-ridden futurists" (Wilhelm 1990a, 93).

On the other hand, Lawrence S. Rainey speaks about certain practical and theoretical effects that Marinetti's visits had on English avant-garde, e.g., provoking "a reconfiguration of the relations among the institutions in which the discourse of art and poetry had been produced until now" (Rainey 1994, 210). Marjorie Perloff, borrowing Renato Poggioli's term the "Futurist moment" as a common denominator in various European avant-garde schools, discusses common aspects in a number of early twentieth century avant-garde movements, including Futurism per se and cases of much more general "rapprochement between avant-garde aesthetics, radical politics, and popular culture" (Perloff 1986, xvii), like those of Blaise Cendrars and Ezra Pound. Perloff sees common features ("ruptures") not only between Pound and Marinetti, but also between Vorticism and Russian Futurism. Thus, she characterizes the vorticist *Blast* folio as "the London counterpart of such Russian Futurist assemblages as *Dokhlaya Luna*, (The Crooked Moon) *Vzorval* (Explodity), and *Troe* (The Three)" (Perloff 1986, 163).

Typological parallels between Vorticism and Marinetti's Futurism, taken for granted by some scholars<sup>182</sup>, are recognized even by those who exclude the Vorticists from the list of direct descendants of Italian Futurism. Thus, John White, who in his typological study of the Futurist movements refrains (though not too confidently) from considering Vorticism among the latter<sup>183</sup>, nevertheless notices a similar influence of Chinese tradition on Marinetti's and Pound's technique:

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<sup>182</sup> See, for example, Cianci 1981.

<sup>183</sup> Cf.: "... although I have occasionally glanced across the Channel at the activities of the English Vorticists, I am far from convinced that they belong within the framework of a study of this kind. But these remain issues for debate..." (White 1990, 7).

Much Futurist theory would appear to be above all targeted upon the reform of inflecting languages. Indeed, it might well be argued that some of the movement's main manifesto-proposals, such as putting verbs in the infinitive or dropping redundant affixes, were really attempting to shift naturally inflecting and segmentable languages in the direction of isolating ones. (It has even been suggested that a familiarity with Chinese may have influenced Marinetti in this respect, as it most certainly influenced Ezra Pound.) (White 1990, 231)

Keeping these parallels in mind, let us look at the complicated relationship between the Italian and English avant-gardes.

The story of the Vorticists' rivalry with Marinetti closely resembles the anti-Marinetti war waged by the Russian Futurists. The story develops along similar lines and involves the same stages: interest in the new vital artistic developments of the Italians, antagonism against the role of a disciple, a culmination scandal during Marinetti's performance, violent polemic, but ultimate tacit appropriation of certain ideas associated with Italian Futurism.

Marinetti first appeared in London in December 1910, when he spoke in French at the Lyceum Club. It was his first Futurist performance outside Italy (the text of the speech was published in *Le Futurisme* as "Un Discours Futuriste aux Anglais" in 1911; in later editions it was supplemented by the essay "Ce déplorable Ruskin"). However, the British public became more closely acquainted with Italian Futurism only two years later, in March 1912, when Marinetti comes to London again. At the Sackville Gallery, he presents the "Exhibition of Works by the Italian Futurist Painters", which in 1912 was touring around Europe. The exhibition introduced the artistic practices and theories of Italian avant-garde to Londoners, who, however, did not show excessive interest in the Italian novelties and experiments.

One of the first English artists to become really enthusiastic about the exhibition and about futurism in general was C.R.W. Nevinson<sup>184</sup>, who came to become an intermediary between the Italian and English avant-gardes. In 1913, Nevinson became acquainted with one of the leading figures of Italian Futurism Gino Severini, who together with Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà and Luigi Russolo had signed "Manifesto dei pittori futuristi" and the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting" in 1910. The meeting was of great importance for new English arts and for Nevinson

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<sup>184</sup> Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson (1889 - 1946), a British painter, etcher, lithographer. For more information on Nevinson, see, e.g., Walsh 2002.

himself. As Michael Walsh observes, “Nevinson and a disparate band of rebel English artists began to think and work in the mode of the radical Italians” (Walsh 2005). It is interesting to note, that the “disparate band” defined itself as Cubo-futurists, i.e. exactly the same way as their Russian counterparts.

The influence of the Futurist ideas on English art became obvious at the exhibition at the Doré Gallery, called “The Post-Impressionist and Futurist Exhibition” (October, 1913), where, according to Michael Walsh, “Walter Sickert, Percy Wyndham Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, Frederick Etchells and Nevinson, representing the ill-defined Cubo-Futurist 'school', proposed a new enlightened future for English art” (Walsh 2005). Most of the participants (with the exception of Nevinson) will be subsequently associated with Vorticism.

Describing the links between Severini and Nevinson, Walsh highlights esthetic similarities, particularly the emphasis on the kinetic aspect of visual arts and on simultaneity of representation (both trends also characteristic of the Russian Futurist program):

both artists attempted to capture the sensation of motion in an urban context, and thus introduced a kinetic element to the painting. They both included truncated words and interlocking planes in a search for simultaneity which was enhanced further by the superimposition of multiple viewpoints of the same objects on an incoherent, shattered, picture plane. In short, it was a modern interpretation of a modern subject, and a celebration of the 'here and now' that the conservative Royal Academy seemed to be ignoring. (Walsh 2005)

However, the impact of Italian Futurism on new English arts was not merely of esthetic nature. The exposure to the developments in Italian Futurism also resulted in the attempts of new English artists to get formally organized. Nevinson becomes one of the founders of a committee of “rebel artists”<sup>185</sup>, the Rebel Art Center, which also included Percy Wyndham Lewis, Frederick Etchells, and William Roberts, who will soon be associated with Vorticism. In November 1913, the group organized a dinner in Marinetti's honor at the Florence Restaurant in London. At the time, Wyndham Lewis

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<sup>185</sup> In October, 1913, Lewis, Etchells, Roberts, Hamilton and Wadsworth left Roger Fry's Omega Workshop, which had attempted uniting British avant-garde artist. In March, 1914, they established the Rebel Art Center in Great Ormond Street, London. The Center was designed to promote new art and existed till summer, 1914. Among other events, the Center hosted an exhibition by Gaudier-Brzeska and a lecture by Ezra Pound.

shows active interest in the Italians and invites Marinetti to perform at the Rebel Art Center on May 6, 1914. Although not as vehement in his support of Futurism as Nevinson, Lewis nevertheless sounds appreciative of Marinetti's movement and even calls the Italian "the intellectual Cromwell of our time" in an article "Marinetti. Man of the Week", published in the *New Weekly* on May 14, 1914. Though articulately rejecting the possibility of subordinating English arts to the Italian movement, Lewis does recognize the role of Marinetti in shaping British avant-garde and helping it organize itself (or "restore order", as Lewis puts it):

Futurism is largely Anglo-Saxon civilization. It should not rest with others to be the Artists of this revolution and new possibilities in life <...>. But England had needed these foreign auxiliaries to put her energies to right and restore order. Marinetti's services, in this home of estheticism, crass snobbery, and languors of distinguished phlegm, are great. (Walsh 2002, 88)

Lewis sounds appreciative after the next Futurist exhibition, too. The show was held at the Doré Gallery in April, 1914, and included eighty works by Boccioni, Severini, Balla, Carra, Soffici and Russolo.

The inevitable break-up of English avant-garde with Futurism occurred after Marinetti and Nevinson produced their English Futurism manifesto, published in *The Observer* on June 7, 1914, under the title "Futurism and English Art" (later republished as a leaflet under the name of "A Futurist Manifesto: Vital English Art"). The manifesto is openly addressed to "rich and powerful <...> England" with a demand to "support, defend and glorify its advance guard of artists", and, in particular, include Epstein, Etchells, Hamilton, Wadsworth and Wyndham Lewis into the glorious list of "pioneers and advance forces of the vital English Art" (Rainey 2009, 198). The whole message of the manifesto and the list of names show that Marinetti is looking for allies and readily relates to the English "rebels" artistic endeavors.

However, Marinetti's ostensibly patronizing attitude and an attempt of playing the leader of the English "advance guard" failed to find understanding among the avant-gardists, who did not welcome the idea of being generously honored as "the great Futurist painters". As Michael Walsh observes, the "manifesto, which had been designed to unite the avant-garde artists of the day, was to have precisely the opposite effect" (Walsh 2005). Most scholars agree that the reasons for the split were not of purely esthetic nature. What mostly infuriated Lewis and others was the fact that Nevinson



signed the manifesto as a representative of the Rebel Art Center, without being authorized to do so<sup>186</sup> by others. Besides, the manifesto mentioned the names of Epstein, Etchells, Hamilton, Wadsworth and Wyndham Lewis, which implicitly suggested the Rebel Artists' participation in the project and their acceptance of the role of a group patronized by Italian Futurism.

The rebel artists reacted promptly. Less than a week after the English Futurist manifesto appeared in the *Observer*, the *Daily Mail* (June 11) wrote about a letter signed on June 8 by Lewis and other artists mentioned in Marinetti and Nevinson's text (the letter was printed in full by the *New Weekly* (June 13), the *Observer* (June 14) and the *Egoist* (June 15). The rebels' letter was also signed by those not mentioned in the Marinetti-Nevinson manifesto, namely Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington. Unlike the militant outbursts published by Khlebnikov in the wake of Marinetti's performance in St. Petersburg, the letter of the English rebels sounds very courteous, though resolute:

To read or hear the praises of oneself or one's friends is always pleasant. There are forms of praise, however, which are so compounded with innuendo as to be most embarrassing. One may find oneself, for instance, so praised as to make it appear that one's opinions coincide with those of the person who praises, in which case one finds oneself in the difficult position of disclaiming the laudation or of even slightly resenting it.

There are certain artists in England who do not belong to the Royal Academy nor to any of the passeist groups, and who do not on that account agree with the futurism of Sig. Marinetti.

An assumption of such agreement either by Sig. Marinetti or by his followers is an impertinence.

We, the undersigned, whose ideals were mentioned or implied, or who might by the opinion of others be implicated, beg' to dissociate ourselves from the "futurist " manifesto which appeared in the pages of the "*Observer*" of Sunday, June 7. (Aldington, Bomberg, et al. 1914)

The footnote to the letter straightforwardly adds: "The direction of the Rebel Art Centre wishes to state that the use of their address by Sig. Marinetti and Mr. Nevinson was unauthorized - Rebel Art Centre" (Aldington, Bomberg, et al. 1914).

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<sup>186</sup> As Johann Pillai and Anber Onar summarize the case, "It is this list of names, coupled with Nevinson's signature that will lead to a split between <...> Futurism and Vorticism in England" (Pillai and Onar 2007, 59).

This formal split with Futurism was followed by a scandal at the Doré Galleries on June 12, where Marinetti and Nevinson presented their manifesto. The incident, which reminds of Marinetti's scandalous performance in St. Petersburg, which I discussed in Chapter 1, is described by Michael Walsh as follows:

Lewis and the artists whose names had been used in the manifesto, with Hulme and Gaudier-Brzeska in addition, heckled Nevinson, let off fireworks and generally disrupted the evening. Nevinson particularly recalled the heckling by Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein, which acted only as a prelude to violence that finally erupted when Marinetti attacked Gaudier-Brzeska, and Nevinson lunged for Ezra Pound <...>. (Walsh 2005)

Lewis remembers the day as a battle and a subsequent victory over Futurism and over the "Italian intruder":

Marinetti had entrenched himself upon a high lecture platform and he put down a tremendous barrage in French as we entered. Gaudier went into action at once. He was very good at the *parlez-vous* ... He was snipping him without intermission, standing up in his place in the audience all the while. The remainder of our party maintained a confused uproar. The Italian intruder was worsted. (Cork 1975, 232)

Among other things, Gaudier pointed at Nevinson's mispronunciation of "Vortickists", which was noticed by the media and the new name received popularity. The very next day, the *Manchester Guardian* described the rebels as "the new Seceders from the Marinetti group, Messrs Wyndham Lewis, and Co., who now call themselves the Vorticists" (Cork 1975, 232). Thus, unwillingly, Marinetti helped the new group to become organized (even if loosely) and start articulating its own esthetic and otherwise platform with more precision. As Johann Pillai and Anber Onar put it, "the split between Nevinson and Lewis's cohort is generally understood to have resulted in the 'death' of Futurism in England and stimulated the development of the Vorticist movement that found its expression in Lewis's journal, *Blast*" (Pillai and Onar 2007, 65).

It is certainly understandable (and not surprising, considering the case of the Russian Futurists) that the Vorticists resented the idea of being colonized and being considered as a branch of Italian Futurism. They equally could not accept Nevinson-the-Futurist's speaking on their behalf without their consent. Thus, the political and

psychological reasons for the split are quite obvious. However, the esthetic reasons are more complex and need to be analyzed more closely.

At the first glance at the Futurist and the Vorticist manifestos, paradoxically, it appears that the schools have quite a lot in common (not unlike the case with Marinetti and the Russian cubo-futurists, which I discussed in Chapter 1). The similarity is especially obvious in the manner they both describe the current literary and cultural context in England.

Most of what Marinetti says or writes about England is devoted to the analysis of the current situation in Britain and establishing a common frame of reference. In his Futurist speech to the English, given at the Lyceum club of London (December, 1910), Marinetti chooses to define Futurism through an analysis of the English character and English arts: "I couldn't imagine a better way of giving you an exact idea of what we are than to tell you what we think of you" (Rainey 2009, 70). Even though Marinetti's rhetoric is reminiscent of colonizing attempts to define the other with authority or even to deprive the other of their own voice ("I will tell you what you really are"), Marinetti is consciously trying to find supportive allies among the British. Consequently, he starts his first address to the English audience not with "blasts" but with "blesses".

Most things that Marinetti praises in the English are resonant with the Vorticist manifestos, which are to appear shortly. Thus, looking for some links between the Italian Futurism and its potential allies in Britain, Marinetti starts with the concept of individualism: "...we love the generous and intelligent individualism that enables you to open your arms to individuals of every land" (Rainey 2009, 71). This appeal in the first lines of Marinetti's speech accurately describes the manner in which the Vorticists will identify themselves and the basis of their esthetic platform in their first short manifesto text ("Long Live the Vortex!", 1914), opening the first issue of *Blast*, a text where "individual" is one of the key words and occurs five times (once even capitalized):

Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way. <...> It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL. <...>

Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals.

<...>

It is a mere accident that that is the most favourable time for the individual to appear.

<...>

We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals, wherever found.

<...>

Blast presents an art of Individuals. (Lewis 1914d, 7-8)

Further on, Marinetti praises the vitality and the rebellious spirit of the British: "What most sets you apart is that <...> you cherish an unbridled passion for struggle in all its forms" (Rainey 2009, 71). This, too, must have found response in the English rebels, who will identify the national character of the British in their Manifesto in similar terms: revolt in England, as they proclaim, "is a normal state" (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 42).

On the other hand, the "blast" part of Marinetti's speech also seems to agree with the English rebels' ideas: Marinetti blames the things which the Vorticists will denounce themselves. He, for example, criticizes the rigid class structure of the British society as the remains of the medieval times:

To a certain degree you are the victims of your traditionalism and its medieval trappings, in which there persists a whiff of archives and a rattling of chains that hinder your precise and carefree forward march. <...> Most of all I reproach you for your maddening cult of aristocracy. (Rainey 2009, 71)

The Vorticists, in their first Manifesto, will accordingly curse aristocracy along with other traditional class divisions: "Curse abysmal inexcusable middle-class (also Aristocracy and Proletariat)" (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 18).

The cult of class, according to Marinetti, is aggravated by the "greatest defect" of the English, their snobbery, which, among all other things, makes the English "the most contradictory people on the planet" (Rainey 2009, 73). The Vorticist manifesto echoes the curse:

Luxury, sport, the famous English "Humour", the thrilling ascendancy and idee fixe of Class, produce the most intense snobbery in the World; heavy stagnant pools of Saxon blood, incapable of anything but the song of a frog in home-counties: – these phenomena give England a peculiar distinction in the wrong sense, among the nations. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 32)

Marinetti “blasts” the English for their artificial existence, for “scorning ideas”, for caring “seriously only for physical pleasure”, for “intellectual laziness”, for being “horribly custom-bound”, for “a fussy mania for etiquette” and for “conventional morality”, and, in general, for preserving “every last debris from the past” (Rainey 2009, 73). He scornfully ridicules the “lymphatic ideology of that deplorable Ruskin”, who reminds him of a grown up man who “after having reached his physical maturity, still wants to sleep in his cradle and feed himself on the breast of his decrepit old nurse in order to recover his thoughtless infancy” (Rainey 2009, 74). Similar accusations are scattered across all vorticist manifestos.

What Marinetti and Nevinson say three and a half years later in their English Futurist manifesto is mostly the development of the same ideas with one exception. Now, they identify possible allies and try placing them firmly in the hierarchy of Futurism. In “Futurism and English Art”, Marinetti’s focus shifts from the general analysis of the cultural context to concrete tasks of changing the situation. He becomes much more articulate in stating his goals and claiming his own role in the development of English arts. Again identifying himself as a “passionate admirer of England”, he describes his objective as an attempt “to cure English Art”. Now, he found an accurate word, which diagnoses the state of affairs he described in 1910. What he blames England for, is “that most grave of all maladies – passéism” (Rainey 2009, 196). Once again, most of his accusations and instigations do not contradict what the Vorticists felt about the arts’ status quo in Britain.

It is interesting, that Marinetti and Nevinson’s text of “Futurism and English Art” (published in the *Observer* on 7 June, 1914, almost simultaneously with the first issue of *Blast*, dated 20 June, 1914) is structured in a manner similar to Vortex manifestos, which appeared in *Blast*<sup>187</sup>. If Vortex manifestos are characteristically divided into “BLAST” and “BLESS” sections, Marinetti and Nevinson divide their programmatic text into “AGAINST” and “WE WANT” parts<sup>188</sup>.

It is equally interesting that many ideas in both pro and contra parts of Marinetti-Nevinson article “Futurism and English Art” once again literally coincide with those of

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<sup>187</sup> The first *Blast* is dated 20 June, 1914, but published 2 July, 1914; the second *Blast* is published 15 July, 1915.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Guillaume Apollinaire’s playful “Futurist Antitradition” manifesto (29 June 1913), in which he includes two lists: those who receive a “ROSE” and those who deserve “MERDE”. The text is reprinted in Rainey 2009, 154.

their Vorticist counterparts, a fact that has been mentioned by scholars like Michael Walsh and Johann Pillai<sup>189</sup> (without a detailed comparative analysis of the texts, though). Indeed, at the first glance at the texts, one may see ostensibly common values and a common rhetoric.

Both Marinetti and the Vorticists seem to obviously agree on a number of “AGAINST”/“BLAST” issues, implying both social and esthetic criticism. The texts agree in their critique of British rigid conservatism. The Marinetti-Nevinson text denounces the “worship of tradition and conservatism of Academies” (Rainey 2009, 196), while the the Vorticists accordingly define their goals as follows: “To make the rich of the community shed their education skin, to destroy politeness standardization and academic, that is civilized, vision, is the task we have set ourselves” (Lewis 1914d, 7).

Similar attacks are waged by the Italians and by the British on snobbery. Marinetti once again curses the “perverted snob who ignores or despises all English daring, originality and invention” (Rainey 2009, 196); *BLAST* echoes approvingly: “we are against snobbery” (Lewis 1914d, 8), “CURSE SNOBBERY” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 15).

Similar is the diagnosis of the cultural consequences of social conservatism. Marinetti warns about the “arrested development” of English arts (Rainey 2009, 197); the Vorticists express identical concerns: “busy with this LIFE-EFFORT, she <England> has been the last to become conscious of the Art” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 39). Marinetti reminds the English about the “indifference of the King, the State, and politicians towards all arts” (Rainey 2009, 196) and blames the “English notion that Art is a useless pastime”; the Vorticists do not argue: “We hear from America and the Continent all sorts of disagreeable things about England: ‘the unmusical, anti-artistic, unphilosophic country’. We quite agree” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 32). Marinetti’s suggestion that ruling authorities should be more strongly involved in promoting revolutionary arts is answered by the *BLAST* manifesto’s claim: “We will convert the King if possible. A VORTICIST KING ! WHY NOT?” (Lewis 1914d, 8), even if what their view playfully suggests is not a monarch patronizing arts, but rather artists controlling the monarch.

Similar are the esthetic reproaches to British arts. Marinetti blames the English for the “effeminacy of their art” (Rainey 2009, 196); the *Blast* manifesto equally curses

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<sup>189</sup> See, e.g., Pillai and Onar 2007, 65.

the “effeminate lout inside” English arts and denounces snobbery, which it defines as the “disease of femininity” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 15). Marinetti criticizes the English arts’ “absorption towards a purely decorative sense” (Rainey 2009, 196); the Vorticists respond with approval: “To believe that it is necessary for or conducive to art, to ‘improve’ life, for instance - make architecture, dress, ornament, in ‘better taste’, is absurd” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 33). Marinetti hates the sentimentality with which English artists “load” their pictures (Rainey 2009, 197); the Vorticists share his attitude, speaking with despise of the “SENTIMENTAL GALLIC GUSH” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 13) and “Cosmopolitan sentimentality which prevails in so many quarters” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 34).

Simultaneously, there seems to be a lot in common in what Marinetti and Nevinson’s text and, on the other hand, the Vorticist manifestos advocate for, both in the rhetoric and in the esthetic and ideological content. The “BLESS” parts of the Vorticist texts apparently agree with the Futurist idea of strong, optimistic and violent arts, recognizable since the 1909 *Futurist Manifesto*. Marinetti again calls for “strong, virile and anti-sentimental” (Rainey 2009, 197) English arts, which totally corresponds to the spirit of *Blast*: “Our Vortex is fed up with your dispersals, reasonable chicken-men” (Lewis 1914f, 149), “VORTEX IS ENERGY!” (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 156). Marinetti speaks about “recuperative optimism” (Rainey 2009, 197), while the Vorticists with equal passion denounce pessimism, which “is the triumphant note in modern art” (Lewis 1914h, 145). Marinetti looks forward to seeing a “powerful advance guard” of English artists (Rainey 2009, 197), while the Vorticists identify themselves as such an advance guard: “Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the centre of this town” (Lewis 1914d, 7), “Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way” (Lewis 1914d, 7). Finally, Marinetti’s exclamation “HURRAH for lightning!” (Rainey 2009, 197) does not sound too different from “Long Live the Vortex!” (Lewis 1914d, 7).

Thus, there seems to be little difference between Futurism and Vorticism in the most general frame of reference as regards their social and esthetic agendas. However, at a closer look, one can identify clear differences in the approach. First, the Vorticists do not claim to be as serious as Marinetti: their “Blasts” and “Blesses” are fraught with irony. Besides, even when the Vorticists do seem to agree with Marinetti, they make certain reservations, which significantly shift the emphasis of the statement.

Outlining the difference between Italian Futurism and English Vorticism, Johann Pillai and Anber Onar emphasize the political constituent of the respective programs:

The alternative offered by Marinetti is the logic of Fascism, which Benjamin describes as “the introduction of aesthetics into political life... All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war.” Lewis’s reaction to Futurism should therefore perhaps be seen as a mode of escape – through a retreat into a “higher” aesthetic plane of a literary journal – from the confluence of social, cultural and political factors giving shape to the crisis that he will later call “the Great Bloodletting”. (Pillai and Onar 2007, 66)

Among the most important issues of disagreement with “the logic of Fascism”, as I am going to show below, are the strong nationalist aspects of the Marinetti program, which are rejected by the inclusive logic of *Blast* and, in particular, by the “Oriental policy” of Pound and the Vorticists.

Futurist nationalism, so essential for Marinetti’s project, becomes a crucial part of the Italian’s rhetoric in his addresses to England. The first thing Marinetti praises in the English in his 1910 Lyceum Club speech is their militant patriotism: “we love the indomitable and bellicose patriotism that sets you apart; we love the national pride that prompts your great muscularly courageous race” (Rainey 2009, 71). He wants to see this bellicose patriotism grow even stronger. Later, in “Futurism and English Art”, cursing English snobbery, he associates the latter with the neglect of the national and absorption of foreign traditions: “The perverted snob who ignores or despises all English daring, originality and invention, but welcomes eagerly all foreign originality and daring” (Rainey 2009, 196). With all their contempt towards snobbery, the Vorticists refuse to consider the glorification of the national as a fair alternative: “We are against the glorification of ‘the People’, as we are against snobbery” (Lewis 1914d, 8). In general, the Vorticists refuse to accept one side when two alternatives seem to exclude each other. The “BLAST” and “BLESS” sections of their manifestos are in this respect but reflections of each other.

The Vorticist manifesto both curses and blesses England. Equally, it curses and blesses France. France is one of the most sensitive issues for the English rebels: on the one hand, most art innovations come to England from France and inspire numerous imitations, on the other hand, France is inevitably associated with Futurism not less than



Italy (characteristically, Marinetti addresses the English in French). With all the “blasts” addressed to French arts scattered across the Vorticist manifestos, it nevertheless becomes clear that what the Vorticists mostly object to is not France per se but the English imitators of French artists and writers: “there is violent boredom with that feeble European abasement of the miserable ‘intellectual’ before anything coming from Paris, Cosmopolitan sentimentality which prevails in so many quarters” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 34). The situation cannot but remind of what the Russian Futurists complained about in their anti-western texts<sup>190</sup>.

No “bellicose patriotism” could prevent the Vorticists from recognizing their own indebtedness to other cultures. They even seem to be ready to recognize kinship between at least some French artists and their English counterparts:

At the freest and most vigorous period of ENGLAND’S history, her literature, then chief Art, was in many ways identical with that of France. Chaucer was very much cousin of Villon as an artist. Shakespeare and Montaigne formed one literature. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 37)

The manifesto does not deny any country the right to artistic glory, France being no exception: “No great ENGLISH Art need be ashamed to share some glory with France; to-morrow it may be with Germany, where the Elizabethans did before it” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 38). Thus, regardless of the numerous attacks on the French, the manifesto at least attempts at an impassionate and unbiased view.

The Vorticist vision of the former British colonies is equally more complex than that suggested by Futurism. In his speech at the Lyceum Club in London, Marinetti reminds the English about their glorious colonial acquisitions, praising “a people of explorers and colonizers whose enormous ocean liners have obviously shrunk the world” (Rainey 2009, 71). On the one hand, the Vorticists seem to share the proud colonial vision of their country cherished by Marinetti: “By mechanical inventiveness, too, just as Englishmen have spread themselves all over the Earth, they have brought all the hemispheres about them in their original island” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 39-40). However, their point is different and what they are proud of is not colonial territorial acquisitions: “We have made it quite clear that there is nothing Chauvinistic or

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<sup>190</sup> Cf. Burliuk’s and Russian futurists’ criticism of Russian “imitators” of the French tradition (*frantsuzivshaia Rus*’).

picturesquely patriotic about our contentions” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 34). What they are talking about is the enrichment of British culture by new experiences, views and practices borrowed from far away lands:

It cannot be said that the complication of the Jungle, dramatic tropic growths, the vastness of American trees, is not for US.  
For, in the forms of machinery, Factories, new and vaster buildings, bridges and works, we have all that, naturally, around US. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 40)

Blessing, like Marinetti, the ships and the pioneers of England, the Vorticists nevertheless emphasize that their seafarer metaphor refers not to the conquest of new territories but rather to the development of the English consciousness and English arts:

BLESS ALL SEAFARERS.  
THEY exchange not one LAND for another, but one ELEMENT for ANOTHER. The MORE against the LESS ABSTRACT. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 22)

Even if the Vorticists want to believe that England is going to be the pivotal point of a new artistic Vortex and claim that “a movement towards art and imagination could burst up here <...> with more force than anywhere else” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 32), their assertion is based not on the idea of English supremacy on the globe scale, but, on the contrary, on the recognition of the fact that England has not been a favorable land for arts for too long, having suppressed all artistic endeavors, and that it is “from this lump of compressed life” that the new art will burst:

Luxury, sport, the famous English “Humour,” the thrilling ascendancy and idee fixe of Class, producing the most intense snobbery in the World; heavy stagnant pools of Saxon blood, incapable of anything but the song of a frog in home-counties: – these phenomena give England a peculiar distinction in the wrong sense, among the nations.  
This is why England produces such good artists from time to time. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 32)

That is why the Vorticists, as opposed to Marinetti, identify themselves not as colonizing troops of the empire, but rather as “mercenaries”. They refuse to metonymically identify with the state but insist on the individual nature of their quest:

We fight first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause,  
which is neither side or both sides and ours.  
Mercenaries were always the best troops.  
We are Primitive Mercenaries in the Modern World. (Aldington, Arbuthnot,  
et al. 1914b, 30)

The idea seems to be quite important to Lewis and his followers, as the image occurs several times in the manifesto and, among other things, enlightens the humorous hairdresser metaphor in the “BLESS” section of the text:

BLESS the HAIRDRESSER  
He attacks Mother Nature for a small fee.  
Hourly he ploughs heads for sixpence,  
Scours chins and lips for threepence.  
He makes systematic mercenary war on this  
WILDNESS. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 25)

This ironic metaphor clearly outlines the difference between Marinetti’s and Lewis’ rhetorical identities. Marinetti speaks to the English on behalf of Futurist Italy, which he metonymically substitutes. He addresses Britain as a nation, and does it condescendingly: “all your intellectual maturity cannot save you from sometimes seeming a people in the process of formation” (Rainey 2009, 73). At times he speaks on behalf of the whole of hypothetical Futurist Europe, obviously identifying with the latter: “Do you remember the dismal, ridiculous condemnation of Oscar Wilde, which Europe has never forgiven you for?” (Rainey 2009, 72) He speaks like a preacher, who is endowed with the authority to damn and to absolve: “I know that you nurse a deep hatred for German clumsiness, and this is enough to absolve you completely” (Rainey 2009, 73). While Marinetti’s rhetoric is that of metonymical substitutions, the Vorticists respond as Individuals, who do not identify with any political or national entities: “The moment a man feels or realizes himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 12). It is more natural for Lewis to identify with a hairdresser than a nation.

On the whole, the seemingly common frame of reference and the structural similarity of Marinetti’s and the Vorticists’ manifestos rather highlight the gaping differences in their respective cultural programs. Whereas Marinetti’s picture is purely black and white, the Vorticists’ “BLAST” and “BLESS” sections of the manifesto clearly reflect each other (“Blast England...”, “Bless England...”) and suggest ambiguity. The

Vorticist program is that of an Individual, the one who is always in between or beyond: “Beyond Action and Reaction we would establish ourselves” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 30), the one who constructs his identity with reference to both sides of the conflict, not as a partisan of an exclusively correct set of norms and rules:

We start from opposite statements of a chosen world. Set up violent structure of adolescent clearness between two extremes.  
We discharge ourselves on both sides. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 30)

In the Vorticist program, extremes meet and different cultures merge, which, among other things, provides a clue for the interpretation of the East-West opposition in their writings.

Similar ambiguity may be found in the Vorticists’ treatment of the Futurist binary opposition of the old vs. the new. Thus, Marinetti unconditionally blames the British for their “passeism” and glorifies the “future”. The Vorticists refuse to accept the one-dimensional alternative and argue that the glorification of the future is as sentimental as the nostalgic sighs about the past; they want to go beyond the limited fragmented vision of the two:

Our vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten it’s (sic) existence.  
Our vortex regards the Future as sentimental as the Past.  
The Future is distant, like the Past, and therefore sentimental. (Lewis 1914f, 147)

Only the present moment, the one in between the Past and the Future, is alive for the Vorticists, as it merges the opposites.

Consequently, what the Vorticists bless in their countrymen is this “cold” northern nature, which combines seemingly exclusive extremes:

BLESS cold  
magnanimous  
delicate  
gauche  
fanciful  
stupid  
ENGLISHMEN. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 24)

Glorifying England as the birthplace of the new art (almost like Marinetti presented Italy, or the Russian Futurists praised Russia, for that matter), the Vorticists, nevertheless, once again make a shift from the Futurist program. Militant patriotism of the Futurists is substituted with a much more flexible vision of the relationship between English and non-English arts, the exclusiveness of Futurism gives way to a much more inclusive cultural policy.

### 3.1.2. Vorticist geographical axes: the North, the South and the East

Certain aspects of the fictional geography created by the Vorticists may probably be accounted for by the antagonism towards the Futurists. In a more general sense, the situation lends itself to Fredric Jameson's analysis in "Modernism and Imperialism", already quoted by me, where the scholar argues that before World War I, the major axis of otherness lies not between Europe and colonies, but rather between imperial states themselves (Jameson 1990, 48). In this respect, a parallel may be drawn with the Russian Futurists, who, as I showed above, even when speaking about the Orient, look Westwards.

The consciously constructed other in the Vorticist manifestos is not the Orient, but rather southern Europe. The consistently highlighted geographical opposition is that of the North vs. the South: England is seen as representing the North and the new English art is consequently presented as a Northern art, as opposed to the Southern (Italian and French) Futurist developments. The West-East opposition is not foregrounded, but rather displaced, in Jameson's terms. However, if we look closely at the two issues of *Blast*, it will become evident that the displaced thus Orient is nevertheless essential for the Vorticist movement.

The opposition North-South is openly articulated in the very first pages of the Vortex manifesto, published in the first issue of *Blast*, where Lewis and his fellow-Vorticists metaphorically (and humorously) link the current cultural situation in Britain with the climactic conditions. The very first paragraph of the first manifesto curses the climate of England. The idea is further developed throughout the manifesto:

CURSE

the flabby sky that can manufacture no snow, but can only drop the sea on us in a drizzle like a poem by Mr. Robert Bridges.

<...>

But ten years ago we saw distinctly both snow and ice here.  
May some vulgarly inventive, but useful person arise and restore to us the  
necessary BLIZZARDS.  
LET US ONCE MORE WEAR THE ERMINE OF THE NORTH. (Aldington,  
Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 12)

To some extent, the picture reminds of Khlebnikov's logic in "Svyatogor's Barrow", discussed in Chapter 1 (though, here it is of course, much less serious), which blamed "Western" influences for the weakening of the "Asian" heritage of the land. The Vorticist motif of the "return to the ermine of the North" and of the "restoration of the blizzards" clearly suggests similar corruption and deterioration of the initial purity and power of the culture: as the climate in England has become more "southern", so did the British arts, affected by southern European "flabbiness".

The manifesto consistently proceeds developing the geographical metaphor and defining arts within the North-South paradigm. The obvious purpose is distancing from the so-called Southern tradition: "We assert that the art for these climates, then, must be a northern flower" (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 35). Like Khlebnikov, who finds proof for his anti-Western stance in the "mainland consciousness" of Russia, Lewis refers to the "northern" geographical specificity, inherent to the country and its culture:

Just as we believe that an Art must be organic with its Time,  
So we insist that what is actual and vital for the South, is ineffectual and  
unactual in the North. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 34)

Apparently pointing at Marinetti, the Vorticists draw the line between Futurism and new English arts as a frontier between the South and the North, which is supposed to mark the ontological difference between the two traditions: "So often rebels of the North and the South are diametrically opposed species" (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 42).

The resurrection of English arts is metaphorically connected with the return of the northern climate. The opposition of "the flabby sky", the "lazy air that cannot stiffen the back of the SERPENTINE" and, on the other hand, snow, ice and the "necessary blizzards" correlates with the contrast of contemporary impotent art/life and the "crude energy flowing through us". The utopic dream of the "northern ermine" suggests a vision of an old paradise lost, an uncorrupted and unfragmented reality that once did allegedly exist.

Consequently, the best specimens of old English art are presented as “northern”: for example, the manifesto blesses “SHAKESPEARE for his bitter Northern Rhetoric of humour” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914a, 26). Just like the Vorticists themselves claim to have established themselves “Beyond Action and Reaction” and to be fighting “first on one side, then on the other” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 30), Shakespeare (and the Northern art, accordingly) appears to have synthesized the seemingly opposite extremes in his talent: “Shakespeare reflected in his imagination a mysticism, madness and delicacy peculiar to the North, and brought equal quantities of Comic and Tragic together” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 37). The lost natural harmony between the opposites is haunting the Vorticists and urging them to overcome the modern fragmentation and reinstall the former unity.

Sharing with Marinetti the ideal of a wild, unrestrained art, the Vorticists, nevertheless, suggest a different vision of the wild. Marinetti’s binary oppositions are always black and white: calling for optimism he condemns pessimism, and proclaiming “strong, virile” art, he despises the feminine in arts. In the Vorticist manifesto, the linear concept of brutal progress and “powerful advance” is replaced by the circular spinning of a vortex. The Vorticist idea of chaos implies a synthesis of the extremes, where left and right keep changing places and are inseparable. According to them, there is always something tragic in the Northern comedy, as well as something comic in the tragedy born in this ideal mythical realm of the North:

Tragic Humour is the birthright of the North.  
Any great Northern Art will partake of this insidious and volcanic chaos.  
(Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 38)

Seeing the major artistic conflict developing along the North-South axis, the Vorticists eagerly identify not only with their English predecessors, but also with different cultures of northern Europe and even with those lying further towards the East. Their North is open Eastwards. Hence, Vorticists emphasize parallels in cultural development and do not claim uniqueness: “In Northern Europe (Germany<sup>191</sup>, Scandinavia and Russia) for the last half century, the intellectual world has developed

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<sup>191</sup> The role of Germany in the world arts will be reconsidered by the Vorticists in the second issue of *Blast* (the war issue), published on July 15, 1915, as World War I will be presented as a war on arts: “the Kaiser, long before he entered into war with Great Britain, had declared merciless war on Cubism and Expressionism” (Lewis 1915f, 9).

savagely in one direction - that of Life," (Lewis 1914c, 132) writes Wyndham Lewis in "Vortices and Notes".

It is interesting to note that the parallel between England and Russia occurs several times. This parallel (like the opposition with Italy) in the Vorticist rhetoric is grounded in the natural or ontological reasons. The northern climate allegedly breeds genius, and England in this respect is no more an exception than Russia, as the manifesto states:

As the steppes and the rigours of the Russian winter, when the peasant has to lie for weeks in his hut, produces that extraordinary acuity of feeling and intelligence we associate with the Slav; so England is Just now the most favourable country for the appearance of a great art. (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 33)

It is not accidental that in "Vortices and Notes" Lewis returns to the idea and restates the parallel: "Adverse climatic conditions – drastic Russian winters, for example – account for much thought and profundity" (Lewis 1914i, 146). Russia becomes a metaphor of true life and art being born only where least expected, where death seems to rule. The British analogue of the drastic Russian winter is the cultural wasteland and general ignorance of the population as regards arts:

England which stands for anti-Art, mediocrity and brainliness among the nations of Europe, should be the most likely place for great Art to spring up.  
England is just as unkind and inimical to Art as the Arctic zone is to Life.  
This is the Siberia of the mind. (Lewis 1914i, 146)

Seemingly agreeing with Marinetti's thesis on the "arrested development" of English arts, Lewis, nevertheless, sees the situation as a clear sign of rebirth. Extremes meet in the Vorticist thought. Death is fraught with life and the "Siberia of the mind" blooms ahead.

As one may see, on the whole, the "geography" of the Vorticists might remind of Khlebnikov's vision of the Russia vs. the West (i.e. Asia versus Europe) opposition, discussed in Chapter 1. Like Khlebnikov, the Vorticists build their world view along a geographical axis (North-South), their geographical poles are similarly value-charged, and their interpretation of the difference between the two poles is predicated on the



alleged effect of purely natural elements. Like in Khlebnikov's case, the Vorticists' vision equally implies similar developmental stages of initial unity, further fragmentation/deterioration and, ultimately, prospective restoration of the whole. However, there is a substantial difference (not to mention the fact that Lewis is far less serious in his geographical speculations than Khlebnikov). The important thing is that while Khlebnikov's identification with Asia is largely contiguous, as I showed in Chapter 1, the Vorticists tend to employ metaphoric figures based on similarity (e.g. the aforementioned "Siberia of the mind" and other Russia-related parallels). They build their English "North" as an analogy, a figure which is not to be found in Khlebnikov's "Svyatogor".

The Orient becomes one of the sources of these analogies. The Oriental axis, though somewhat blurred by the North-South opposition, is still discernible in the Vorticist thought from the early stages of the movement. Even in the first issue of *Blast*, constructing their art concept along the North-South line as a "Siberia of the mind", the Vorticists occasionally keep making references to the East. Arguing with the South, they design their North with the help of the Orient. In this manner, for example, Pound's poems published in *Blast* I, on the one hand, restate to the North-South opposition in arts (see: "Certain poets here and in France..."), however, right beside the quoted poem appear two Chinese epitaphs, Fu I and Li Po (Pound 1914b, 48), as a vivid alternative to the aforementioned tradition of "certain poets".

In *Blast* II, the geographical layout slightly changes, which is obviously accounted for by the World War situation. The North-South axis almost disappears<sup>192</sup>: even France starts to look more like an ally, rather than an adversary<sup>193</sup>, and the most "Romance" nation is now Germany<sup>194</sup>. Meanwhile, the Eastern dimension becomes much more distinct, as I will show below.

The increasing relevance of the Orient in the Vorticist thought in the second issue of the journal, the "war issue", becomes evident in the direct identification of the Vorticists with Japanese artists. In one of Lewis's programmatic texts, familiarly entitled

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<sup>192</sup> The only exception is the ironic reference to cubism, "too inactive and uninventive for our northern climates" (Lewis 1915a, 41).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Lewis: "Under these circumstances, apart from national partisanship, it appears to us humanly desirable that Germany should win no war against France or England", states the Editorial (Lewis 1915e, 5).

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Lewis: "Germany has stood for the old Poetry, for Romance, more steadfastly and profoundly than any other nation in Europe" (Lewis 1915e, 5).

“Blasts and Blesses”, the “BLESS” section deliberately starts with three names representing Japanese arts:

BLESS  
Koyetzu  
Rotatzu  
Korin (Lewis 1915c, 93)<sup>195</sup>

Although Lewis does not elaborate on the inclusion of these names into the manifesto, the mere fact of the inclusion is symptomatic, even if it is “a truly eclectic combination”, as Jonathan Black argues (Black 2010, 190). Although the Orient is by no means the issue of major focus in *Blast*, Oriental references start appearing repeatedly in the manifestos, critical and theoretical articles, poetry pages, and art exhibition reviews.

If we analyze the use of Oriental motifs in *Blast*, it becomes evident that the East appears in different aspects. The Orient may appear as a mere background detail, something exotic and opposed to the everyday experience. This Orient is not defined or analyzed; its image relies on traditional cultural assumptions and stereotypes, and in this sense is not too different from the images typical of the mainstream nineteenth-century Orientalism. However, these cases are few in *Blast* and may be found only in the first issue. Examples of this traditional exotic-oriented approach may be found in Lewis’s “Enemy of the Stars” and Rebecca West’s “Indissoluble Matrimony”.

In Lewis’s “Enemy of the Stars”, the Orient tentatively appears in the protagonist’s reflections on his companion Hank and on his own self; in this context the conventional exotic Orientalist imagery is (traditionally<sup>196</sup>) associated with femininity:

Harsh bayadere-shepherdess of Pamir, with her Chinese beauty: living on  
from month to month in utmost tent with wastrel, lean as mandrake root,  
red and precocious: with heavy black odour of vast Manchurian garden -

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<sup>195</sup> Honami Koetsu (1558 – 1637), a Japanese artist, calligrapher, lacquerer and potter, praised by Fenollosa. Ogata Korin (1658 – 1716), a Japanese painter and lacquerer, a follower of Honami Koetsu. Rotatsu (aka Kaosho Rochishin), a subject character of Utagawa Kuniyoshi’s (1797 – 1861) print, belonging in a series *One Hundred and Eight Heroes of the Popular Shuihuzhuan* (Lewis must have confused the name of the artist and the name of the picture).

<sup>196</sup> Cf., e.g., Edward Said’s analysis of the European concepts of “the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability” (Said 2003, 206).

deserts, and the disreputable muddy gold squandered by the unknown sun of the Amur. (Lewis 1914a, 65)

Rebecca West's "Indissoluble Matrimony" also associates the Oriental with the feminine: "In the jaundiced recesses of his mind he took it for granted that her work would have the lax fibre of her character: that it would be infected with her Oriental crudities" (West 1914, 102). Recognizable as these references are, it is nevertheless interesting to note that in both texts, the "Oriental" antagonists gain the upper hand over the protagonists, and the joy of their symbolic victory is obviously shared by the authors.

Much more frequently the Orient occurs in the writings of the Vorticists as a theoretical argument, providing an analogy. In this case, the Orient is not about exotic mysteries; it is rather a reference point used for self-identification, for positioning the authors in relation to European arts and for justifying their own esthetic program, not unlike in the Burliuk brothers' essays quoted in Chapter 1.

Most Oriental references in *Blast* may be seen as means of dialogue with Western modernity; they use the East as an authority in negotiating the new esthetic program with the West (which the Russian Futurists practiced, too). In this dialogue, the Orient provides both historical and theoretical foundations to the Vorticist argumentation.

In the rhetoric of the Vorticists, the Orient clearly appears as the privileged term in the East/West opposition. As such, the Orient may function as a global esthetic reference point (even if not too clearly defined) and an unquestionable criterion of authentic art. Setting criteria for artistic quality in his "Review of Contemporary Art" in *Blast* II, Lewis uses Japanese art as a standard against which he measures both the traditional English painting and that of "South-inspired" English avant-garde: "The least and most vulgar Japanese print or Island-carving is a masterpiece compared to a Brangwyn<sup>197</sup>, a Nicholson<sup>198</sup>, or a Poynter<sup>199</sup>" (Lewis 1915a, 46).

Having set this standard, the Vorticists consequently use the East as an argument in both the justification of the synthetic nature of modern art and in contextualizing the

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<sup>197</sup> Sir Frank William Brangwyn (1867 – 1956), a British artist, often associated with the late Victorian tradition.

<sup>198</sup> Benjamin Lauder Nicholson (1894 – 1982), a British artist, influenced by Picasso's cubism.

<sup>199</sup> Sir Edward John Poynter (1836 – 1919 London), a British painter, the President of the Royal Academy.

latter in the art history as a legitimate heir (and an integrator) of Oriental traditions. Such argumentation, for example, may be found in Gaudier-Brzeska's "Vortex", published in *Blast I* (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914). Defining the living energy of plastic arts, Gaudier finds it necessary to refer to numerous traditions around the globe. Gaudier explains the rise and fall of different cultures by their understanding of the art energy, predicated on their different conditions in the fight for survival. In this context, the Orient appears to occupy a special place. Speaking about the "intensity of existence", which "revealed to man a truth of form", Gaudier notices that the "acute fight <...> always retained more intensity East" (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 155). The modern Western concept of sculpture, in his view, is rooted in a variety of cultures. It appears as a synthesis of developments/achievements of various concepts of the "vortex", each having contributed something essential to the modern understanding of artistic driving forces and goals.

Gaudier provides a brief overview of "the history of form value in the West until the FALL OF IMPRESSIONISM" (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 156), in which the modern Vorticist art appears as the top of a huge vortex of ideas and a synthesis of various cultures (the "Hamite vortex", the "Indian vortex", the "Semitic vortex", the "Shang and Chow dynasties", the Mongol "vortex of destruction", the "vortex of fecundity" of "races inhabiting Africa and the Ocean islands"). The conclusion made by Gaudier draws a parallel between ancient Oriental cultures and modern Vorticists:

And WE the moderns: Epstein, Brancusi, Archipenko, Dunilkowski, Modigliani, and myself, through the incessant struggle in the complex city, have likewise to spend much energy. (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 158).

Modern Vorticism appears as a symbolic heir of the ancient traditions and a successor of their achievements: "The knowledge of our civilisation embraces the world, we have mastered the elements" (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 158). The difference, distinguishing the modern vortex among all those ancient vortices, as Gaudier sees it, lies in the power of conscious analysis and reflection:

We have been influenced by what we liked most, each according to his own individuality, we have crystallized the sphere into the cube, we have made a combination of all the possible shaped masses - concentrating them to express our abstract thoughts of conscious superiority.  
Will and consciousness are our

VORTEX. (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 158)

In Gaudier's rhetoric, modern Vorticism becomes the ultimate point of global artistic development and accumulates the achievements of all its Oriental predecessors. Thus, in Gaudier's metaphoric language, if the Hamitic vortex introduced the vertical and the Semitic vortex created the horizontal, the modern vortex consciously embraced them all. Even if Gaudier's reasoning is not free from Euro-centrism, his emphasis on analogy, synthesis and inclusiveness is very characteristic of the Vorticists' program.

In similar disguise the Orient appears in *Blast* I in the commented publication of Wassily Kandinsky's (another nod to the "mental Siberia", sought by the Vorticists) "Inner Necessity", extracts from Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, translated by Edward Wadsworth. Kandinsky's defense of the new art as an heir of the Oriental "polyphonic" tradition becomes, even if unintended, a symbolic link between Vorticism and the Russian Futurist thought.

The introduction of the Kandinsky text makes a reference to the Orient in the very first lines, contrasting Eastern and Western views on art, and, in particular, on the latter's "cosmic organization"<sup>200</sup>. The new Western art in this respect is presented as a successor of the Eastern tradition:

The art of the East has always consciously and passionately expressed this point of view, which, if it has been perceived dimly in Western art, has been only half-heartedly expressed. European artists of the past have treated art almost entirely from a too obviously and externally human outlook. Europe to-day which is laying the solid foundations of the Western art of tomorrow, approaches this task from the deeper and more spiritual standpoint of the soul. (Kandinsky 1914, 119)

To Kandinsky, whom Pound sees as a parent of Vorticism<sup>201</sup>, the typological links between ancient Oriental arts and modern painting are evident: "One sees then that a coarsely carved Indian Temple pillar is animated with exactly the same spirit as even the most modern vivacious work" (Kandinsky 1914, 119-120). The idea of live ancient Oriental art, taken for granted by Kandinsky (as well as by many other Russian artists of

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. the "We and the West" manifesto by Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie, discussed in Chapter 1, with its emphasis on the "cosmic" nature of modern (and of Oriental) art, which the Western art cannot master (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009).

<sup>201</sup> Cf.: "Picasso, Kandinski, father and mother, classicism and romanticism of the movement" (Pound 1914c, 154).

the time, which I discussed in Chapter 1) and associated with modern “polyphonic” forms, seems to appeal to the Vorticists in their search for cultural roots.

However, the Orient is not only a tool to assess the past and the present of European arts, it also provides a landmark for the future progression of world art. Imagining the prospective development of arts, Lewis tries to distance it from the European tradition. Doing that, he optimistically looks at America, which, paradoxically, becomes linked in his thought with the Oriental untamed “wildness”: “American art, when it comes, will be Mongol, inhuman, optimistic, and very much on the precious side, as opposed to European pathos and solidity” (Lewis 1915b, 82). According to this analogy-based logic, the Orient defines the future of arts. Lewis finds evidence of this trend, for example, in Ezra Pound’s works, deeply rooted in Chinese poetics. This is how Lewis introduces Pound to the reader of *Blast*:

Ezra Pound

Demon pantehnicon driver, busy with removal of old world into new quarters. In his steel net of impeccable technique he has lately caught Li Po. Energy of a discriminating Element. (Lewis 1915b, 82)

While Pound’s “discriminating element” revives ancient Chinese traditions, the present-day Orient, in Lewis’s thought, also has the capacity to revitalize European arts. The Orient appears as a reference point, legitimizing the outlines of the imaginary prospective union of arts and the state. *Blast* II presents a small piece of Lewis’ writing which obviously reveals elements of a Futurist utopia (reminiscent of the Italian Futurists’ writings, though, of course, incommensurate in scale with the latter) of life as art. In Lewis’ case, the utopia has a definite Oriental flavor.

Describing the World War as a war on arts, Lewis sees both causes and possible consequences of the war as connected with arts. Fighting against Germany is presented as saving the live art from the attacks of old Romance influences, while the future victory is seen as a certain synthesis of new English arts and the Oriental traditions. Lewis, for example, speaks about “mingling” of Slavic and English cultures in Constantinople and presenting the new English art to the “amazed” East:

That Russia will get Constantinople should be the prayer of every good artist In Europe. And, more immediately, if the Turks succeeded in beating

off the Allies' attack, it would be a personal calamity to those interested in Art. (Lewis 1915d, 11)

Lewis makes a list of benefits the seizure of Constantinople will result in, indulging in dreams of religious, political and artistic convergence of East and West:

A Russian Constantinople. I need only enumerate: 1 – Slav Christianity mingling with young catholic converts from England round St. Sophia. 2 — Probably the best Shakespeare Theatre in the world at this gate of the East. An entirely new type of Englishman, in the person of our poet, would be introduced to the amazed Oriental. 3 — Real efforts In Sciences and Arts more intelligently encouraged than in Germany, and on an equal scale. 4— The traditional amenity and good manners of the Turk helping to make the Southern Russian Capital the most brilliant city poor suffering humanity has ever beheld, not excepting Paris and Vienna... (Lewis 1915d, 11)

However helpful the war might seem in waking the English from their “lethargy”, Lewis does not hope on a prompt revival: “We cannot hope that after the War England will change her skin so much that she will become a wise and kind protector of the Arts” (Lewis 1915d, 11). In this context, he prefers to believe in an Oriental fairy tale of a new Constantinople: “But as we are not sure it will be within any calculable time, let us keep our eyes fixed on Constantinople” (Lewis 1915d, 11)<sup>202</sup>. Utopian political and cultural implications of the Orient will be even more articulate in Pound’s writings, which I will discuss later.

Even more often than contextualizing Vorticism in the history of world’s arts, the Orient functions as a justification for the Vorticist practices, which becomes especially evident in Lewis’s and Pound’s *Blast* publications. While the historical reflections of the Vorticists on inheriting the East often demonstrate attempts of what Said would call

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<sup>202</sup> Lewis’ utopia strangely rhymes with what was about to happen in 1919 in Fiume, when armed men led by Gabriele D’Annunzio seized the city and held it for sixteen months in an alleged attempt to realize the “Futurist idea of Life as Art and Art as Life” (Berghaus 1995, 139). The difference between the two utopias, one realized and the other never realized, is that Lewis does not speak about political or administrative power and prefers to remain in the realm of arts. Cf. his exclamation in “The Melodrama of Modernity”: “Cannot Marinetti, sensible and energetic man that he is, be induced to throw over this sentimental rubbish about Automobiles and Aeroplanes, and follow his friend Balla into a purer region of art?” (Lewis 1914j, 144). Nor is Lewis willing to take arms and fight for his fairy tale. And, finally, while the Italian Futurist utopia of Fiume became the continuation of the militant nationalist spirit of Futurism, Lewis’ utopic fantasy of “the most brilliant city” is a cosmopolitan project of culture synthesis.

“essentializing the Orient”, the discourse of justifying the Vorticist esthetic practices by Oriental references evidences a much less generalized approach and an awareness of particular Eastern traditions.

Publishing Kandinsky's extracts in *Blast*, Lewis must have found appealing Kandinsky's division of artists into two groups: melodic and symphonic, a typology which correlates with the Occident/Orient opposition. Defining the former, “melodic” tradition as a typical Western approach, Kandinsky apparently shows his preference for the latter one, the “complicated rhythmic composition which he calls ‘symphonic’ and which is the characteristic medium of oriental art and of Kandinsky himself” (Kandinsky 1914, 125). In this context, references to the ancient Oriental tradition obviously appear as a means of the artist's self-identification. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that what united the Vorticists with the Russian avant-garde is the opposition of the linear and the complex, which may be also seen as the opposition of the metonymical and metaphoric modes. While the former represents the West, the latter, both for Kandinsky and for the Vorticists, is associated with the Orient, which thus becomes a tool for the justification of modern esthetics. As Kandinsky identifies with the Oriental “symphonic” tradition, so, apparently, do the Vorticists identify with Kandinsky's polyphonism.

Kandinsky's frame of reference and manner of argumentation find further development in Wyndham Lewis's own reflections. In his “Vortices and Notes” (*Blast* I), Lewis proceeds developing his idea of the necessary synthesis in arts, using a Buddhist story as an example:

Buddha found that his disciples, good average disciples, required a severe discipline of expansion; he made them practice every day torpedoing East and West, to inhabit other men, and become wise and gentle. (Lewis 1914c, 134)

The idea of “torpedoing” East and West as a means of art expansion rhymes well with Lewis' concept of the Vorticist artists as mercenaries, fighting “first on one side, then on the other, but always for the SAME cause, which is neither side or both sides and ours” (Aldington, Arbuthnot, et al. 1914b, 30), and suggests positioning modern art between the Occident and the Orient and drawing on both traditions. The Buddhist parable in Lewis' rhetoric becomes an argument in his polemic with modernity and a metaphor of the necessary “course of egotistic hardening”, which he prescribes to modern artists while negotiating the terms of Art/Life correlation.



Lewis's "Feng Shui and Contemporary Art Form" (*Blast* I), further continues Kandinsky's reflections on the typological kinship between ancient Oriental traditions and modern art and creates a new Chinese metaphor for justifying Vorticism. Lewis's concept of color in ancient China and of the universality of certain colors in Eastern and Western cultures is very close to what Kandinsky wrote on the subject: "white the mourning colour of China: white flowers, in the West, signifying death - white, the radium among colours, and the colour that comes from farthest off" (Lewis 1914b, 138). However, Lewis's text focuses on a more relevant to the Vorticist program issue, that of standardization and individuality. In this respect, the tradition of *feng shui* becomes an analogy figure, a metaphor in support of the Vorticist values.

Lewis argues that the westernizing influence of contemporary European civilization on China is disastrous as it ruins the very basis the Chinese view of the world is built on: "Telegraph poles were the gloomiest of all Western innovations for China: their height disturbed definitely the delicate equilibrium of lives" (Lewis 1914b, 138).

He writes about complete misunderstanding among the Europeans of the "inner necessity" of the Chinese everyday culture and suggests that modern art must learn a lesson from the Chinese instead of imposing European standards on the latter:

Any text-book on China becomes really eloquent in it's (sic) scorn when it arrives at the ascendancy of the Geomancers.

Geomancy is the art by which the favourable influence of the shape of trees, weight of neighbouring water and it's (sic) colour, height of surrounding houses, is determined.

"No Chinese street is built to form a line of uniform height" (H. A. Giles), the houses are of unequal heights to fit the destinies of the inhabitants.

I do not suppose that good Geomancers are more frequent than good artists.

But their functions and intellectual equipment should be very alike. (Lewis 1914b, 138)

The parallel between good artists and geomancers illuminates Lewis' idea of artistic flexibility and the necessity of synthesis in arts. As opposed to Marinetti, he does not want to build a "line of uniform height". The *feng shui* concept appeals to Lewis's belief in the individuality of artists<sup>203</sup> and in the necessary individuality of different art

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<sup>203</sup> Cf.: "We want to make in England ... individuals, wherever found" (Lewis 1914d, 8).

forms<sup>204</sup>. *Feng shui* becomes for him a metaphor of the individual defying any generalization<sup>205</sup>.

On the other hand, in the practical sense, *feng shui* in Lewis's text is a metaphor of what Kandinsky called "the inner necessity" in art, i.e. of some "cosmic order" which governs lines, spaces and colors:

In a painting certain forms MUST be SO; in the same meticulous, profound manner that your pen or a book must lie on the table at a certain angle, your clothes at night be arranged in a set personal symmetry, certain birds be avoided, a set of railings tapped with your hand as you pass, without missing one. (Lewis 1914b, 138)

In Lewis's rhetoric, the reference to a Chinese tradition confirms the Vorticists' view of modern esthetic and, in particular, the analogy-based technical concept of "arrangement"<sup>206</sup>, which I will discuss below.

What Oriental references correlate with in most Vorticist writings, is the concept of synthesis. The mechanisms underlying the Vorticist idea of synthesis are laid bare in Wyndham Lewis's reflections on the Vorticist sensibility in *Blast* II. The basic theoretical foundations for what is going to develop into Pound's East-West dialogism may be identified in Lewis's "VORTEX No.1 Art Vortex. Be Thyself" manifesto (*Blast* II), in which Lewis elaborates the concept of dual vision ("sane duality"), previously proclaimed in numerous metaphors of the Vortex manifesto in the first issue of *Blast*, discussed above.

In *Blast* II, Lewis is even more articulate in defending his program of establishing artistic identity "between two extremes". However, now, that the World War is in progress, Lewis refrains from utilizing the "mercenaries" metaphor and from the rhetoric of fighting "first on one side, then on the other". Now, he talks in linguistic metaphors, substantiated by references to the art of Asian horsemanship:

You must talk with two tongues, if you do not wish to cause confusion.

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<sup>204</sup> Cf.: "we insist that what is actual and vital for the South, is ineffectual and unactual in the North" (Aldington, Arbutnot, et al. 1914b, 34).

<sup>205</sup> Cf.: "Blast <...> will not appeal to any particular class, but <...> TO THE INDIVIDUAL" (Lewis 1914d, 7).

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Pound's definition of painting as "an arrangement of lines and colours" (Pound 1914c, 154) and Gaudier Brzeska's definition of sculpture as "masses in relation" (Gaudier-Brzeska, Vortex 1914, 155).

You must also learn, like a Circassian horseman, to change tongues in midcareer, without falling to Earth.

<...>

There is nothing so impressive as the number TWO.

You must be a duet in everything.

For, the Individual, the single object, and the isolated, is, you will admit, an absurdity.

Why try and give the impression of a consistent and indivisible personality? (Lewis 1915h, 91)

Thus, Lewis's call "Be thyself" implies multiplicity and heterogeneity and allows the other into one's own familiar world. This vision openly opposes Marinetti's nationalist plans for the future of English arts. To Lewis, harmony is not consistent indivisibility but rather duality, a "Machine of two similar fraternal surfaces overlapping" (a metaphor, probably referring to and defying Marinetti's simplifying one-track "automobilism"):

Hurry up and get unto this harmonious and sane duality.

<...>

No clear cut lines, except on condition of being dual and prolonged.

You must catch the clearness and logic in the midst of contradictions: not settle down and snooze on an acquired, easily possessed and mastered, satisfying shape. (Lewis 1915h, 91)

Lewis's concept of the "sane duality" of vision appears logical in the context of his polemic with Marinetti's straightforward and deprived of half-tones militant program, and well describes the core of the Vorticist esthetic. Lewis is even ready to admit that Vorticism in this respect is a successor of Futurism, as the latter at an early stage proclaimed the concept of "simultaneous vision" but never consistently implemented it. According to Lewis, only Vorticism became the true realization of the concept: "the natural culmination of "simultaneity" is the reformed and imaginatively coordinated impression that is seen in a Vorticist picture" (Lewis 1915g, 78).

Lewis apparently likes defining Vorticism through the concept of synthesis. He argues that the work of the Vorticists is to "synthesize this quality of LIFE with the significance or spiritual weight that is the mark of all the greatest art" (Lewis 1915g, 77). In Vorticism, he adds, "the direct and hot impressions of life are mated with Abstraction, or the combinations of the Will" (Lewis 1915g, 78). Vorticism appears, according to him, to be the terrain where contradictions meet, where immediate impressions meet

abstractions, where opposite surfaces overlap. It is a territory of dialogue, including that between the East and the West.

The rhetoric of the Vorticist manifestos (including the rhetoric of negotiating the Orient vs. the Occident opposition) often relies on this idea of the multi-sided nature of an artistic representation. Thus, even if on a more technical level, Gaudier-Brzeska pronounces his credo as a sculptor, emphasizing the multiplicity of sides (planes, surfaces) constituting a piece of art:

“I SHALL DERIVE MY EMOTIONS SOLELY FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF SURFACES, I shall present my emotions by the ARRANGEMENT OF MY SURFACES, THE PLANES AND LINES BY WHICH THEY ARE DEFINED”  
(Gaudier-Brzeska 1915, 34)<sup>207</sup>

The complex arrangement of surfaces and planes obviously correlates with the Vorticist vision of the complexities of modern life. Like Kandinsky in his melodic/symphonic opposition, the Vorticists repeatedly emphasize the complexity of their art, in comparison with the works of the past and even the works of their Futurist/cubist contemporaries-rivals: “Painting, with the Venetians, was like pianoforte playing as compared to the extended complicated orchestra aspired to by the Artist today” (Lewis 1914e, 142). Defining the vision of a modern man, Lewis compares it with that of a “civilized savage in a desert-city”, surrounded by “very simple objects and a restricted number of beings”, whose world is limited and art is restricted. On the other hand, the modern man faces multiplicity and intersections of cultures:

the modern town-dweller of our civilization sees everywhere fraternal moulds for his spirit, and interstices of a human world.  
He also sees multitude, and infinite variety of means of life <...> (Lewis 1914k, 141)

The world of the modern man, as Lewis argues, is not self-sufficient but rather open to other “worlds”:

Society is sufficiently organized for his ego to walk abroad.  
<...> the frontier’s interpenetrate, individual demarcations are confused and interests dispersed. (Lewis 1914k, 141)

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<sup>207</sup> The declaration is an extension of what Gaudier wrote earlier, in *Blast* I: “Sculptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation” (Gaudier-Brzeska 1914, 155).

In the Vorticist rhetoric, the modern world is characterized by confused demarcations, interstices, interpenetration, intersection, and overlapping. This worldview not only shapes a new concept of ego and a new perception of the other; it also requires a new mode of artistic representation, an artistic image which defies isolation:

We all to-day <...> are in each other's vitals – overlap, intersect and are Siamese to any extent.  
<...> just as the old form of egotism is no longer fit for such conditions as now prevail, so the isolated human figure of most ancient Art is an anachronism. (Lewis 1914k, 141)

To Lewis, this new form of egotism implies the destruction of all “conventional limitations”, and, as a result, the loss of all “clear cut emotions”: “Dehumanization is the chief diagnostic of the Modern World” (Lewis 1914k, 141). This reality, void of all former frontiers and limitations, becomes for Lewis a measure of adequacy of modern art, which he describes in figures of analogy:

This superceding of specific passions and easily determinable emotions by such uniform more animal instinctively logical Passion of Life, of different temperatures, but similar in kind, is then, the phenomenon to which we would relate the most fundamental tendencies in present art, and by which we would gage it's temper. (Lewis 1914k, 141)

This complexity of vision and of representation, as opposed to traditional concept of harmony, is characterized by dissonance; it is not accidental that the word “discord” becomes a common Vorticist concept: according to Lewis, modern painting has become “much more supple and extended, containing all the elements of discord and ‘ugliness’ consequent on the attack against traditional harmony” (Lewis 1914e, 142). Multiple sides/surfaces of the Vorticist image, like multiple languages of the Vorticist poetry, like the East and the West of the Vorticist world, meet each other but do not blend, retaining their conflicting nature. Vorticism aims at juxtaposing the multiple, accentuating “the possibilities of colour, exploitation of discords, odious combinations, etc” (Lewis 1914e, 142).

The tension between the concepts of fragmentation and synthesis in the vorticist theory may be conveniently considered in the light of Fredric Jameson's approach to

modernism. Jameson explains the emergence of modernist esthetic with its emphasis on fragmentation due to serious structural shifts in the “basis” of the imperialist society. To him, “realism” naturally correlates with a certain “intelligible”, transparent social and economic unity in the society. According to Jameson’s argument, this unity is disrupted when

the life of the metropolis comes to be increasingly and structurally dependent on a network of domination and a colonial base (raw materials, markets, intensified and brutal surplus extraction) outside its own national borders and in the field of the cultural Other, which we have come to term the Third World <...> (Jameson 2007, 240)

This crisis is defined by Jameson as “a gap between individual and phenomenological experience and structural intelligibility”. What the crisis results in, is the loss of social transparency, and consequently the manifold fragmentation of what used to be united and hence intelligibly presented, i.e. in “the mental analogue to the taylorization of the labor process during this same period. (Jameson 2007, 241).

Modernist fragmentation, as well as the desperate attempts to overcome the latter, are the result, according to this large-scale scheme, of subjectivity alienated from “dead and inert objectivity”:

<...> the various aesthetic and philosophical movements which aim at a return to wholeness, or, as with Bergson or the phenomenologists, posit some original wholeness which the fallen human beings of daily life misrecognize—all of these are surely also to be understood as so many desperate, second-degree attempts to deal with the crisis of fragmentation itself. Among them, one would surely want to accord some supremely privileged place to modernism itself, an artistic language which both registers and replicates the reification. (Jameson 2007, 241)

In this respect, the vorticist reflections on global fragmentation, as well as the utopia of the return to the initial “Northern” unity or the East/West synthesis, are good examples of a modernist response to the crisis.

However, there is another important motif in the vorticist defense of complexity. In “Relativism and Picasso’s Latest Work”, Lewis offers his critique of Picasso’s miniatures (“Small structures in cardboard, wood, zinc, glass string , etc., tacked, sown or stuck together”) based on the vorticist concept of representation in arts. Lewis’ objection

is predicated on the assumption of Picasso's alleged adherence to mimesis, to imitating reality in miniatures, i.e. ultimately to a metonymical strategy:

Picasso has become a miniature naturalistic sculptor of the vast *natures-morte* of modern life.

Picasso has come out of the canvas and has commenced to build up his shadows against reality. (Lewis 1914g, 139)

Picasso's models imitate reality, they "imitate like children the large, unconscious, serious machines and contrivancies of modern life" (Lewis 1914g, 139), however, to Lewis, they lack something essential: "they lack the one purpose, or even necessity, of a work of Art: namely Life" (Lewis 1914g, 140). These objects are dead, they are essentially "NATURES-MORTES, the enamel of a kettle, wall-paper, a canary-cage, handle of a mandolin or telephone" (Lewis 1914g, 139). These isolated metonymical objects, according to Lewis, "attach themselves too coldly to OTHER machines of daily use and inferior significance" (Lewis 1914g, 140). These little models "reproduce the surface and texture of objects", but to Lewis, they are empty and surrounded by emptiness. Picasso's small sculptures, void of any use, purpose, or connections, contradict Lewis' vision of modern reality as a world of intersection, interpenetration, overlapping, and confused demarcation. To Lewis, cubist works are merely "tours-de-force of taste, and DEAD ARRANGEMENTS BY THE TASTEFUL HAND WITHOUT, not instinctive organisations by the living will within" (Lewis 1915a, 41).

Consequently, the Vorticist technique implies something opposite. It is not so much a metonymic imitation of isolated phenomena ("imitation, and inherently unselective registering of impressions"), but rather a metaphoric creation of a whole new world, a new nature, in its intricate complexity. The work of an artist, as Lewis describes it, is equivalent to the work of Nature itself, and the works of art are not less alive than organic phenomena: "Beauty of workmanship in painting and sculpture is the appearance of Accident<sup>208</sup>, in the sense of Nature's work, or rather of Growth, the best paintings being in the same category as flowers, insects and animals" (Lewis 1915a, 46). Hence comes Lewis's alternative to imitation and unselective registering: "The best creation, further, is only the most highly developed selection and criticism" (Lewis

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<sup>208</sup> The appearance of the Accident, as well as the "ACCIDENTAL RIGHTNESS" of the artist Lewis refers to, sounds very close to Kandinsky's ideas (see, e.g. "The Inner Necessity").

1915a, 46). Selection, which, according to Jakobson, is an indicator of the metaphoric mode, is a key word here.

This new art, no matter how abstract or representative it is, is a metaphor of the “reality”. What justifies such a work of art is not its mimetic quality but the selection<sup>209</sup>, organization, grouping of multiple discorded imagery (or the arrangement of surfaces, as Gaudier-Brzeska would put it) in such an accidentally meaningful way, as Nature would do it: “You must be able to organize the cups, saucers and people, or their abstract plastic equivalent, as naturally as Nature, only with the added personal logic of Art, that gives the grouping significance” (Lewis 1915a, 46). The idea of careful selection and of the governing role of the paradigm that makes individual items meaningful, will inform Pound’s experiments with the Noh genre and all his enterprise of “correlating” cultures, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

### 3.2. Pound: from Imagism to Vortex

Among the Vorticists, Pound is probably the most articulate in justifying the new esthetics by means of Oriental references. Indeed, Pound’s “discriminating element”, highlighted by Lewis, is quite visible in the journal. Among *Blast* authors, Pound is the one who makes most audible the voice of the East and problematizes the need to reconsider the Orientalist practices of the past. The second issue of *Blast* publishes Pound’s “Gnomic Verses” and “Ancient Wisdom” with their Chinese references (Li Po and So-Shu), as well as his short review of Laurence Binyon’s *Flight of the Dragon*<sup>210</sup>. Pound’s discovery of Vortex and of the Orient, as I will argue, looks like a logical result of his early esthetic search for the new poetic language and for the Image. Japan and China will become a significant step in Pound’s search for a culture paradigm, a search that started in the early 1900s. At this pre-Imagist time, in an article on Whitman (1909), he defines his enterprise as a “strife for a renaissance in America of all the lost or temporarily mislaid beauty, truth, valor, glory of Greece, Italy, England and all the rest of it” (Pound 1973b, 146).

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<sup>209</sup> Cf. Lewis’ vision of Pound as a “discriminating element”, quoted above.

<sup>210</sup> Laurence Binyon, *The Flight of the Dragon: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Art in China and Japan, Based on Original Sources*. Wisdom of the East Series. London: Murray, 1911. Among other things, Binyon writes about certain parallels between Oriental painting practices and English romanticist poetry.



Later, in his "Vorticism" (1914), Pound will remember his first steps towards that goal. He "began this search for the real in a book called *Personae*, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem" and then continued "in long series of translations, which were but more elaborate masks" (Pound 1970a, 85). Putting on a mask is a metaphoric gesture, involving selection and implying a certain degree of typological similarity; metaphor is "a mask that disguises", as Ricoeur puts it (Ricoeur 2003, 298). The "complete masks of the self", found in Pound's *Personae* and *Exultations* (1909), include those of Villon, Browning, and the troubadours (Cino da Pistoia, Arnaut de Mareuil, Piere Vidal, Bertrands de Born). Pound "digs up" (quoting his own word from "Sestina: Altaforte"<sup>211</sup>) almost forgotten names and identifies with them.

Sometimes the metaphoric identification is implicit, like in the Provencal translations, while sometimes Pound bares the device and explicitly emphasizes the paradigmatic nature of his persona, as it happens, e.g., in "What I Feel about Walt Whitman"<sup>212</sup> (1909) or in "Redondillas, or Something of That Sort" (a 1910 credo-like poem<sup>213</sup>, which Pound eventually excludes from the 1911 *Canzoni*). The latter poem, offering a paradigm of esthetic values, is an attempt of constructing a modern persona by means of identification with "the other", in this case with the names of European composers and painters:

I'm more or less Europe itself,  
More or less Strauss and De Bussy.  
I even admire and am  
Klimt and that horrible Zwintscher.  
Shall I write it: Admiror, sum ergo?  
Deeds are not always first proof,  
Write it thus: By their Gods ye shall know them. (Pound 1982, 220)

"I admire, therefore I am" (an ironic paraphrase of the Cartesian "cogito ergo sum"), "by their gods ye shall know them" (ironically paraphrasing "by their deeds shall

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<sup>211</sup> "Sestina: Altaforte" (1909), a mask of Bertrands de Born (1140-1209), starts with an epigraph, which, after alluding to Dante, addresses the reader of the poem: "Judge ye! Have I dug him up again?" (Pound, 1982, 108).

<sup>212</sup> "Mentally I am a Walt Whitman who has learnt to wear a collar and a dress shirt <....>. Personally I might be very glad to conceal my relationship to my spiritual father and brag about my more congenial ancestry - Dante, Shakespeare, Theocritus, Villon" (Pound 1973, 145-146).

<sup>213</sup> The subtitle of the poem, "Locksley Hall, forty years further", suggests a parody of Alfred Tennyson. "Locksley Hall" is a poem written by Tennyson in 1835 and published in his *Poems* (1842).

you know them”, *Matthew* 7:16) – these statements are not only parodies, they foreshadow a long tradition of Pound’s own masks, identifications, and personae, as well as the paradigms of names (“gods”) to be found in Pound’s attempts of defining culture.

One might be tempted to see these identifications as a synecdochic device (as Strauss, De Bussy, Klimt and Zwintscher here obviously stand for works by Strauss et al.), however, if we keep in mind that the “I” of the poem stands for the esthetic persona of the poet, not his totality as a human being, the relationship between the two synecdochic figures appears as a metaphor, defined by Ricoeur as “the product of two synecdoches” (Ricoeur 2003, 192). From the start, metaphor seems to be the key mechanism involved in the construction of Pound’s literary world. As he confesses in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910),

‘The apt use of metaphor, arising, as it does, from a swift perception of relations, is the hall-mark of genius’: thus says Aristotle. I use the term ‘comparison’ to include metaphor, simile (which is a more leisurely expression of a kindred variety of thought), and the ‘language beyond metaphor,’ that is, the more compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception. (Pound 2005, 158)

“Digging up” poets from the past does not equal meticulous reconstruction of historical identities, though. As Gary Grieve-Carlson notices with reference to “Sestina: Altaforte”, “the reader’s judgment must be largely a matter of the aesthetic vitality of the poem, rather than a historical consideration of evidence” (Grieve-Carlson 2014, 139). Pound’s paradigms, anachronistic and not necessarily historically-correct, resist linearity and favor atemporal analogies and parallels. Later, in *Guide to Kulchhur* (1938), Pound will justify his approach:

We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates posted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time. (Pound 1970b, 60)

Pound did not arrive at this idea in 1938, as similar reflections may be found, e.g., as early as in 1910, in *The Spirit of Romance*, where he suggests a similarly anachronistic method in literary studies (“What we need is a literary scholarship, which will weigh Theocritus and Yeats with one balance”) and refutes linear temporality:

All ages are contemporaneous. It is B.C., let us say, in Morocco. The Middle Ages in Russia. The future stirs already in the minds of the few. This is especially true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent, and where many dead men are our grandchildren's contemporaries, while many of our contemporaries have been already gathered into Abraham's bosom, or some more fitting receptacle. (Pound 2005, 6)

Even when Pound seems to be thinking historically, what he actually produces does not resemble chronologically linear constructs. Thus, commenting on his *Canzoni* (1911), Pound outlines their arrangement in the following scheme: "chronological table of emotions: Provence, Tuscany, Renaissance, the 18, the 19 centuries, external modernity (cut out), subjective modernity. Finis" (Pound and Litz 1984, 37). The cycle appears to be designed as a history of European verse leading to "modernity": both external and subjective<sup>214</sup>. However, although Pound seems to be constructing his scheme chronologically, the pattern is far from linear contiguity: e.g., "Rome" and "The Golden Sestina" are placed in the nineteenth century, because, as James Longenbach argues, Pound "felt that these poems express emotions that are far ahead of their time" (Longenbach 1987, 68). The arrangement of masks reveals a logical pattern<sup>215</sup>, which compromises the declared chronological approach.

In "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" (published in *The New Age*, 11 December 1911 – 15 February 1912), Pound explains his method as that of "luminous details", i.e. the details/facts that "govern knowledge as the switchboard governs an electric circuit" (Pound 1973b, 23), which in the study of arts stand for "particular works or works of particular authors" (Pound 1973b, 24). Pound distinguishes between two types of works: the "symptomatic" and the "donative" ones, obviously favoring the latter:

Interesting works are of two sorts, the 'symptomatic' and the 'donative'; thus a sestina of Pico della Mirandola, concerned for the most part with Jove and Phoebus, shows us a Provençal form stuffed with revived classicism. Camoens' 'Os Lusíadas' has a similar value. In them we find a reflection of tendencies and modes of a time. They mirror obvious and apparent thought

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<sup>214</sup> Mary Ellis Gibson suggests that "Pound's phrases "external modernity" and "subjective modernity" may originate in Browning's opposition in his "Essay on Shelley" between subjective and objective poets. <...> Pound opposes Yeats's subjectivity to Ford Madox Ford's (and Flaubert's) "objectivity"" (Gibson 1995, 70).

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Wyndham Lewis's view on the "logic of Art, that gives the grouping significance" (Lewis 1915a, 46), quoted above.

movements. They are what one might have expected in such and such a year and place. They register.

But the 'donative' author seems to draw down into the art something which was not in the art of his predecessors. If he also draw from the air about him, he draws latent forces, or things present but unnoticed, or things perhaps taken for granted but never examined. (Pound 1973b, 25)

The opposition may be interpreted in Jakobson's terms of metonymy vs. metaphor, as the "symptomatic" works draw from their immediate context and are thus based on contiguity (the name "symptomatic" itself implies a metonymic/synecdochic relation of a text to its epoch), while "donative" art builds paradigmatic constructs drawing on non-contiguous typological parallels, which do not depend on linear chronology. Pound pictures the realm of literature as "lamps <...> flashing back and forth upon each other" (Pound 1973b, 30), which implies an anachronistic pattern, simultaneity and intertextual connections, which cannot be confined to mere "influences". Meanwhile, each individual work (or "luminous detail") represents an infinite paradigm of intertextual and intermedial links:

The picture that suggests indefinite poems, the line of verse that means a gallery of paintings, the modulation that suggests a score of metaphors and is contained in none: it is these things that touch us nearly that 'matter'. (Pound 1973b, 33)

Analyzing Arnaut Daniel as one of the "luminous details", Pound describes the poet's sense of beauty as that primarily dependent upon "the manner of sequence and combination" (Pound 1973b, 26), as well as "the virtue of precision" (Pound 1973b, 31). The idea of combination, which might remind one of the metonymic principle, in Pound's text does not have any reference to the contiguity of images. Pound speaks about the juxtaposition of "details", which are not immediately (contiguously) connected with each other in the contexts they are borrowed from, but, nevertheless, "rhyme" with each other due to some "inner necessity", as Kandinsky would have put it, i.e. details belonging to the same paradigm or the same metaphoric structure.

Pound develops the idea of precise juxtaposition of meticulously selected details in his famous extended "scientific" metaphor ("I Gather the Limbs of Osiris", 1912), illustrating the effect of the right selection and arrangement of heterogeneous elements in verse. Pound does not talk about the image yet; he talks about words charged with energy:

Let us imagine that words are like great hollow cones of steel of different dullness and acuteness; I say great because I want them not too easy to move; they must be of different sizes. Let us imagine them charged with a force like electricity, or, rather, radiating a force from their apexes — some radiating, some sucking in. We must have a greater variety of activity than with electricity — not merely positive and negative; but let us say +, -, x, ÷, +a, -a, xa, ÷a, etc. Some of these kinds of force neutralise each other, some augment; but the only way any two cones can be got to act without waste is for them to be so placed that their apexes and a line of surface meet exactly. When this conjunction occurs let us say their force is not added one's to the other's, but multiplied the one's by the other's; thus three or four words in exact juxtaposition are capable of radiating this energy at a very high potentiality; mind you, the juxtaposition of their vertices must be exact and the angles or 'signs' of discharge must augment and not neutralise each other. (Pound 1973b, 34)

Selection and juxtaposition, the principle of the metaphor, appears to be the core of Pound's early esthetic explorations. The "great hollow cones" foreshadow the image of the vortex, which will appear in two and a half years as a metaphor of the new art (and as a symbolic pictorial image) in the Vorticist *Blast*.

Imagism (or Imagisme, as Pound spelled it with a French touch) is Pound's first, even if not a long-lasting<sup>216</sup> attempt at shaping a new school of poetry. In many respects the movement continues Pound's previous manipulations with masks. Now, launching his Imagism project, Pound puts masks on his friends. Thus Aldington appears in *Poetry* as "one of the Imagistes, a group of ardent Hellenists"<sup>217</sup> (s.n. 1912, 65) and H.D.'s verse is characterized as "straight talk, straight as the Greek!"<sup>218</sup> (Paige 1951, 45).

Having "created" some Imagist poets, Pound starts promoting the project. In his essay *Status Rerum* (a survey of current literature, written in December 1912 and

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<sup>216</sup> Started in the fall of 1912 with the publication of Aldington's poems in *Poetry*, the movement proceeded to its climax, the *Des Imagistes* anthology (including works by Pound, Aldington, H.D., Amy Lowell, F.S. Flint, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, among others) in 1914. The next anthology, *Some Imagist Poets*, appeared as a series of three volumes from 1915 to 1917 without Pound's contributions, as the movement was largely taken over by Amy Lowell.

<sup>217</sup> This is how Aldington himself comments on his Imagism membership: "My own belief is that the name took Ezra's fancy, and that he kept it *in petto* for the right occasion. If there were no Imagists, obviously they would have to be invented. Whenever Ezra has launched a new movement ... he has never had any difficulty about finding members. He has just called on his friends" (Aldington 1941, 135).

<sup>218</sup> H.D. thus recollects how she became an Imagist: Pound "slashed" her poem "with a pencil. 'Cut this out, shorten this line.' ... And he scrawled 'H.D. Imagiste' at the bottom of the page" (H.D. 1979, 18).

published in January 1913, in the same issue of *Poetry*, where appeared “H.D. Imagiste”) he raises the issue of Imagism but seems unwilling to pursue the analysis of the school in detail yet:

Space forbids me to set forth the program of the Imagistes at length, but one of their Watchwords is Precision, and they are in opposition to the numerous and unassembled writers who busy themselves with dull and interminable effusions... (Pound 1913b, 126)

A more articulate attempt of defining the new esthetic appears a few months later. *Poetry* (March 1913) publishes several materials on Imagism, in response, as Flint puts it, to the curiosity of readers. Flint’s article “Imagisme” (allegedly drafted by Pound himself<sup>219</sup>) proclaims that the Imagists “were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found it in the best writers of all time, - in Sappho, Catullus, Villon” (Flint 1913, 199). Thus, defining the historical context of Imagism, Flint (or, rather, Pound) contrasts the school to post-impressionists and the Futurists and places it in the atemporal classical paradigm of “the best” culture specimens of all ages. It is in Flint’s little essay that the famous three rules of Imagism appear in print for the first time:

1. Direct treatment of the “thing”, whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regards rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. (Flint 1913, 199)

Apparently, the program focuses mostly on the technical side of Imagism. However, besides these purely technical issues, Flint also mentions a certain new concept of the image, although the concept still remains somewhat vague and enigmatic:

They held also a certain ‘Doctrine of the Image,’ which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and would provoke useless discussion. (Flint 1913, 199)

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<sup>219</sup> Humphrey Carpenter refers to Flint’s own account of how the text appeared: “Flint describes how Ezra arrived one day with an ‘interview with himself’ already written” (Carpenter 1988, 196).

Pound's "A Few Don't's by an Imagiste", published in the same issue of *Poetry* right after Flint's text, provides a little further elaboration and finally addresses the mysterious "Doctrine of the Image", offering the now famous definition: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pound 1913a, 200). "That which presents an intellectual and emotional complex" clearly reminds of the idea of the "luminous detail", the "switchboard" that governs electrical circuits. The difference lies in the word "presents", though. The switchboard does not present, while the Image as the presentation of the intellectual and emotional complex is a structure which may be analyzed as a sign, with its signifier and the signified. In a way, this Image may be interpreted as a representation of the "switchboard".

Pound specifically emphasizes the instantaneous nature of the image:

It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. (Pound 1913a, 200-201)

The instantaneous nature of artistic representation, as well as freedom from time limits, will characterize Pound's further search for the new poetic language. Vague as his definitions are at this stage, there are two aspects of Pound's reflections that I want to emphasize. One foreshadows the metaphoric development of Pound's idea of the poetic Image; the other shows consistent metaphoric construction of Pound's idea of art in general.

Among Pound's recommendations to poetry writers, one is especially relevant to my topic. Pound warns against mixing the abstract and the concrete, as in the phrase "dim lands of peace", which may be seen as a metonymical substitution of a concrete visual image for an abstract concept<sup>220</sup>. "Go in fear of abstraction" (Pound 1913a, 201), writes Pound, as "the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol" (Pound 1913a, 201). The natural object as *the* adequate symbol definitely indicates Pound's preference of the metaphorical principle in arts, the one akin to what Eliot will later formulate as the "objective correlative".

Another important issue that Pound keeps returning to in "A Few Don't's", also connected with the "selection", or the metaphor principle in Jakobson's terms, is that of

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<sup>220</sup> Cf., e.g., Radden and Kövecses's analysis of "concrete over abstract" in their typology of the cognitive principles of metonymy (Radden and Kövecses 1999, 45).

“influences”. Pound teaches poetry-writers: “Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but have the decency either to acknowledge the debt outright, or to try to conceal it” (Pound 1913a, 202). The second clause with its two alternatives sounds somewhat strange, as if there is any other option besides acknowledging or concealing the influence (direct plagiarism?). Most probably, the emphasis in Pound’s thesis lies on the first clause, on the necessity of letting in the other’s voice (voices) into new poetry.

The importance of selecting and incorporating the others’ voices also appears in Pound’s technical recommendations to young poets. Note the emphasis on the “cadence”, rather than on the “meaning of words”, i.e. on the “inner rhymes” as opposed to contiguous links to the context:

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; e.g., Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare... (Pound 1913a, 202-203)

As his emphasis is on selection, Pound keeps thinking in paradigms. In the same essay, he offers another list of authors, which, he insists, each new poet should consider: “If you want the gist of the matter go to Sapho, Catullus, Villon, Heine when he is in the vein, Gautier when he is not too frigid; or, if you have not the tongues, seek out the leisurely Chaucer” (Pound 1913a, 205). No wonder, the list largely repeats the paradigm quoted in Flint’s text, to say nothing of Pound’s own early writings. The Orient has not entered the list yet, but it will, very soon.

The ambiguity of the Imagist program will be partly resolved in Pound’s next attempt at creating a truly modern school of art, i.e. in the project of Vorticism. The line between Imagism and Vorticism in Pound’s esthetic is a very fine one, as he does not define Vorticism (especially its historical aspect and its relation to other literary movements, including Imagism) very clearly. Sometimes, he joins the two concepts with a conjunction as two equal and comparable phenomena: “imagisme and vorticism”, “a vorticist or imagist writer” an “imagiste or vorticist poem”. He can define Imagism by reference to vortex and call the Imagist poetry a particular case of Vorticism: “Vorticism has been announced as including such and such painting and sculpture and “Imagisme” in verse” (Pound 1970a, 82) Sometimes the paradigm is even longer: “now you have



vorticism, which is, roughly speaking, expressionism, neo-cubism, and imagism gathered together in one camp" (Pound 1970a, 90).

However, what Pound is mostly focusing on is not the chronology or genealogy of the movement. Pound is building another paradigm and keeps emphasizing the atemporal nature of Vorticism, the typological side rather than the chronological one. Among the Vorticists, besides Wyndham Lewis and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, he casually mentions Bach and Mozart. Point-counter-point in music is a manifestation of the Vortex. Italian Renaissance is also vortacist. Vorticism in Pound's criticism becomes a synonym of "true", "genuine" art, or rather the pure nature of art itself: "Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity, into elaboration and secondary applications" (Pound 1970a, 88), reads one of his most anachronistic definitions.

Writing to John Quinn on 10 March, 1916, Pound gives an even wider definition of Vortex: "It is not merely knowledge of technique, or skill, it is intelligence and knowledge of life, of the whole of it, beauty, heaven, hell, sarcasm, every kind of whirl-wind of force, an emotion. Vortex. That is the right word..." (Pound 1991, 66). Apparently, Vortex in Pound's thought is not confined to the realm of pure esthetic. The kind of art that Pound (re)creates claims to be of global scale. This attempt to combine the most versatile human experience (arts, sciences, economics, and history) in a single "vortex" is going to be a characteristic feature of all Pound's further enterprise, including his Oriental explorations.

To Pound, Vortex represents the ultimate synthesis: "All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energized past, all the past that is living and worthy to live", as he writes in his *Blast* manifesto, "Vortex" (Pound 1914c, 153). His definition of the "primary pigment" of art in "Vorticism" (*Fortnightly Review*, 1914) proceeds along similar lines and highlights the synthetic complexity and paradigmatic depth: "the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred pictures" (Pound 1914c, 153). Lewis's and Pound's vision of the Orient/Occident opposition is an example of this sensibility. If all demarcations are conventional, there is no clear-cut frontier between the East and the West either. Both poles rush into the Vortex, where a hundred poems become one picture.

Analyzing in "Vorticism" the new school and contrasting it to Symbolism, Impressionism, and Futurism, Pound bases his argument on two major oppositions: inward versus outward and temporal versus spatial. Opposing Vorticism to

Impressionism, he calls the former intensive and the latter extensive. Thus, Impressionism is seen as a more superficial and temporal approach as opposed to Vorticism, which appears inwardly oriented and atemporal. Futurism is characterized as “accelerated Impressionism”, with reference to “outward” movement and to the temporal, and as a “spreading or surface art”, which is an even more articulate accusation of the school as temporally-developing, outwardly-oriented and superficial. Pound, apropos, sees cinematography as the ultimate development of Impressionism, implicitly referring to the linear or temporal development of the image in cinema.

Unlike Impressionism, which destroys “past glories” (reference to its temporal development), Vorticism, according to Pound, has a more complex view of the cultural context. Vorticist idea of the past, according to Pound, is not confined to four or five centuries and one continent (a hint at the superficiality of Futurism). It is interesting that discussing the seemingly temporal issue, Pound brings up a spatial reference to “continents” and a dialogue with other cultures, which makes his concept of tradition more complex than that of his opponents.

Thus, the temporal aspect does not seem to attract Pound – whether in the concept of arts history or in the (linear) structure of a particular piece of art. True art overcomes the temporal, as it is beyond the past (“over race-long recurrent moods”) and beyond the future (“over to-morrow”), as he claims (Pound 1970a, 92). Pound’s anachronistic view of tradition (close to what T.S. Eliot will develop in his famous article “Tradition and the Individual Talent” in 1919) as a simultaneity suggests a metaphorical “spatial” arrangement of art works. As it turns out, a similar “spatial” arrangement is what he seems to advocate in particular pieces of art.

Vorticism, argues Pound, is about “the organization of forms” (Pound 1970a, 92), i.e. the arrangement of spatial elements. Pound quotes Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who defines art in similar “spatial” terms and discusses sculpture as “the appreciation of masses in relation” and sculptor’s work as “the defining of these masses by planes” (Pound 1970a, 93). Obviously preferring the paradigmatic axis to the syntagmatic one, Pound praises “mathematics of harmony” over “mimetic representation”. In a similar manner, favoring paradigmatic harmony over syntagmatic mimesis, he discusses the future of music: “A new vorticist music would come from a new computation of the mathematics of harmony, not from a mimetic representation of dead cats in a fog-horn, alias noise-tuners” (Pound 1970a, 93).

“The organization of forms is a much more energetic and creative action than the copying or imitating of light on a haystack,” believes Pound (Pound 1970a, 92). Thus, Pound organizes forms: juxtaposes “chunks” and “slabs”, voices and images, cutting linear narratives and arranging fragments in the simultaneity of what he would soon define as an ideogram. This favoring of the spatial, paradigmatic, or metaphorical over the temporal, syntagmatic or metonymic in Jakobson’s terms, describes the manner in which Pound treats the other in his dialogical text.

Vorticism further develops Pound’s idea of modernity as a simultaneity of classical tradition rather than superficial mimetic efforts of contemporary “revolutionary” schools. Pound’s new definition of the Image in “Vorticism” (1914) evidences important developments in his esthetic. The Image now is interpreted as an equation, similar to those in “analytical geometry”<sup>221</sup>, or, in other words, as a Vortex:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. (Pound 1970a, 92)

The switchboard, through which electrical circuits run, remains passive and unaffected by those circuits. The Image as “that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex” implies the arbitrary relation of the signified and the signifier and tends to favor the latter over the former. The Image as an equation is essentially the relation itself. Unlike the “switchboard”, it does not merely “govern” the circuits running through it. The Vortex, according to Pound, is a “radiant” node, i.e. it “radiates”; its role in the circulation of ideas is apparently active, as Pound first talks about the ideas that rush “from it”, and only after about those rushing “into” and “through” it.

The statements of “analytics” are “lords” over fact. They are the thrones and dominations that rule over form and recurrence. And in like manner are great works of art lords over fact, over race-long recurrent moods, and over to-morrow. (Pound 1970a, 91-92)

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<sup>221</sup> Cf. typologically similar argumentation of the Russian Futurists. Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie (“We and the West”, 1914) define Western art as “an embodiment of the geometric perception” and Oriental art as “an embodiment of the algebraic perception” (Livshits, Yakulov and Lurie 2009, 371). Khlebnikov’s vision of the new art (and the concept of the universal transrational language) in terms of “hyperbolic geometry” of Lobachevsky was discussed in Chapter 1.

Highlighting the idea of the equation (the relation), Pound makes the gap between the signifier and the signified become meaningful. Pound's new language will emphasize the gap and the pause.

The definition of Vortex allows us clarify the difference in approach between Pound and the Russian Futurists. Like Khlebnikov, Pound is looking for patterns in the "recurrence" of history. However, while Khlebnikov's search proceeds in temporal linear sequences (see, e.g., the *Tables of Fate*), Pound's interest is in the pattern itself. In this respect, Khlebnikov illustrates the syntagmatic strategy, whereas Pound's vision is obviously paradigmatic: the former is mostly interested in the regularity of reoccurrences in history (the formula of periodicity, the temporal intervals and the possibility of predicting future occurrences), while the latter is looking for the paradigm of reoccurrences, i.e. the formula and the pattern of the phenomenon, the "lords over fact".

### 3.3. Binyon, Whistler and the Japanese

Among the people who are partially responsible for the Oriental turn in Pound's esthetic, two names need to be mentioned here: those of Laurence Binyon and James Whistler. Pound's Binyon book review in *Blast* II (1915) is especially important for shaping the Vorticist Oriental policy. Six years before, in early 1909, Pound visits Binyon<sup>222</sup> in British Museum, the department of Prints and Drawings, where Binyon was first Assistant Keeper, and later the Keeper of the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings. Pound attends Binyon's lecture on Oriental and European art and shows live interest in Binyon's work with Japanese art in particular. Apparently, Laurence Binyon had a strong influence on Pound's further work: thus, for example, Carroll Terrell writes about the *Flight of the Dragon* trace in Pisan Cantos (Terrell 1974), and Woon-Ping Chin Holaday finds Binyon's influence in Canto XLIX (Holaday 1977).

However influential Binyon was for Pound, the *Flight of the Dragon* review text in *Blast* II offers a critique of the scholar. Pound tentatively looks for a new approach to the

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<sup>222</sup> Laurence Binyon (1869 -1943), an English writer and art scholar, known, among other things, for his Oriental studies: *Painting in the Far East* (1908), *Japanese Art* (1909), *Flight of the Dragon* (1911), *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls* (1921), *Japanese Colour Prints* (1923), *The Spirit of Man in Asian Art* (1936). Binyon is credited for introducing Pound and the Imagists to Oriental visual arts. For more information on Binyon and his studies of Japanese art, see, e.g., Hatcher 1995.

Orient. He defines it by stating the inadequacies of the “traditional” Orientalism, against which Binyon “has not sufficiently rebelled”:

Mr. Binyon has thought he has plunged into the knowledge of the East and extended the borders of occidental knowledge, and yet his mind constantly harks back to some folly of nineteenth century Europe. We can see him as it were constantly restraining his inventiveness, constantly trying to conform to an orthodox view against which his thought and emotions rebel, constantly trying to justify Chinese intelligence by dragging it a little nearer to some Western precedent. (Pound 1915, 86)

Objecting to what may be called a synecdochic representation of the East as a replica of Western achievements, Pound defends instead the self-sufficient image of the Orient, which does not need to be justified by Western analogies.

The extension of the “borders of occidental knowledge” in Pound’s vision appears to signify something very close to the Vorticist program. In his review, Pound chooses a selection of quotes from Binyon, which very much resemble what Wyndham Lewis formulates in his manifestos. What Binyon writes about the organic nature of Oriental art, on the imitation of nature, on the “rhythmic vitality” of Oriental patterns (as opposed to the western mechanical conception of pattern, “a form without life”), as well as Binyon’s definition of a picture as “a series of ordered relations” (Pound 1915, 86), sounds very much like a justification of the Vorticist esthetic. In this sense, Pound is doing something opposite to what he accused Binyon of: instead of using old western precedents to justify Chinese intelligence, he uses the Orient to justify Vorticism, baring the device repeatedly implemented by Kandinsky and Lewis before and thus explicating the novelty of the Vorticist approach.

Another name essential for the formation of Pound’s concept of Vorticism and its Oriental dimension is that of James Abbott McNeill Whistler<sup>223</sup>. Whistler becomes

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<sup>223</sup> James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834 – 1903), an American artist, educated in Paris and a proponent of art for art’s sake. Some of Whistler’s works contain Oriental motifs. Among the things that typologically link Whistler with the Vorticists, is his manner of naming his works as “Arrangements”. What might have attracted Pound in Whistler (besides artistic techniques, of which I will talk), was probably the artists rebellious and quite independent character.

another link between Vorticism and “the Japanese” and a major influence on early Pound<sup>224</sup>.

In the first issue of *Poetry* (October, 1912), Pound publishes a poem “To Whistler, American”, which praises Whistler’s continuous artistic search of style and experimenting with manners characteristic of different foreign cultures. Here, Pound probably justifies his own artistic experiments by reference to the example of Whistler, who “tried all ways” and “worked in many fashions”:

You also, our first great,  
Had tried all ways;  
Tested and pried and worked in many fashions,  
And this much gives me heart to play the game. (Pound 1912, 7)

Pound most certainly identifies with Whistler’s search. However, Whistler appears not only as a precursor of Pound’s own “Oriental quest”; Pound believes that Whistler’s way is an example for all the avant-garde of American arts. In the poem, Pound moves on from “me” to “us” and attempts to shape, even if in very general terms, a program of new arts:

You had your searches, your uncertainties,  
And this is good to know—for us, I mean,  
Who bear the brunt of our America  
And try to wrench her impulse into art. (Pound 1912, 7)

To Pound, Whistler, who “Had not one style from birth, but tried and pried/ And stretched and tampered with the media”, is as an important figure in arts, as Lincoln was in shaping American political identity:

You and Abe Lincoln from that mass of dolts  
Show us there's chance at least of winning through. (Pound 1912, 7)

Later, in his “Vortex” (*Blast* I), Pound, justifying Vorticism, again refers to Whistler, a symbolic “ancestor” of the movement. Now, he is more specific and the reference to Whistler serves to imply a certain view of a work of art and a technique

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<sup>224</sup> Whistler’s influence on Pound goes beyond Oriental issues. For other aspects of Pound’s enthusiasm about Whistler’s art, see, e.g. Beasley 2002.

described as an “arrangement”: “You are interested in a certain painting because it is an arrangement of lines and colours” (Pound 1914c, 154). Thus, Whistler, with his “prying” into and incorporating elements of other cultures becomes a precursor of the Vorticist metaphoric approach.

In “Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist” (*The Egoist*, 1, August 15, 1914), Pound is even more articulate in defining the relevance of Whistler, his relatedness to Vorticism, and the method Vorticism is indebted to Whistler for. Here, Pound combines the two previously mentioned ideas (going beyond narrow national borders and rejecting mimetic art in favor of paradigmatic arrangement of images) and directly links his own and Whistler’s method with Japan:

I trust the gentle reader is accustomed to take pleasure in “Whistler and the Japanese”. Otherwise he had better stop reading my article until he has treated himself to some further draughts of education. From Whistler and the Japanese . . . the “world,” that is to say, the fragment of the English-speaking world that spreads itself into print, learned to enjoy “arrangements” of colours and masses. (Pound 1914a, 306)

Here, Pound openly associates (or even equates) the Vorticist esthetic of “arrangement” with the Japanese tradition. He will further elaborate the idea in his programmatic text “Vorticism”, published in *Fortnightly Review* (Pound 1914d). Pound starts his manifesto as a commentary on (or a restatement of) Whistler: “I suppose this proposition is self-evident. Whistler said as much, some years ago...” (Pound 1970a, 82). Now, Pound consistently draws parallels between the Vorticist art and the art of Japan and China: “Mr. Wadsworth’s work gives me pleasure, sometimes like the pleasure I have received from Chinese and Japanese prints and painting” (Pound 1970a, 93). Explaining to the reader the concept of the Imagist/Vorticist art, Pound refers to the legacy of Whistler and Kandinsky, and then again illustrates his idea of the image with references to Japanese and Chinese arts:

All poetic language is the language of exploration. Since the beginning of bad writing, writers have used images as ornaments. The point of Imagisme is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.

<...>

THE JAPANESE HAVE HAD the sense of exploration. They have understood the beauty of this sort of knowing. A Chinaman said long ago that if a man can’t say what he has to say in twelve lines he had

better keep quiet. The Japanese have evolved the still shorter form of the hokku. (Pound 1970a, 88)

The word “exploration”, describing Japanese artists, rhymes with the search motif of “To Whistler, American” and points at the terrain Pound is about to explore. “Whistler and the Japanese” become the essential landmarks in the quest. Here, the word “hokku” first appears in Pound’s writings as a justification of his own method.

This metaphoric vision of the Vorticist enterprise illuminates Pound’s attempts of bringing together the Orient and the Occident in a paradigm of his own. It appears that what Pound appreciates in “Whistler and the Japanese”, is not something new that he discovered in them, but rather a confirmation of his own beliefs, which the “Japanese” help him articulate and defend. In this respect, Earl Miner’s observation stating that “Pound <...> used ‘Japanese art and poetry’ as starting points of reference in developing his theories of the image” (Miner 1956, 574) would probably be more accurate if we remove the attribute “starting”. Japanese references, set on top of the Imagist theories, function in this context as a metaphor, or a “means to understand or explain one phenomenon by describing it in terms of another” (Knowles and Moon 2006, 54). The key concept which helped Pound understand his own esthetic explorations, as it is evident from the quote above, is haiku (hokku).

Pound’s famous “haiku-like poem”, a programmatic text of Pound’s Imagist period (and simultaneously the first text characterized by Pound as a specimen of the Vorticist sensibility and the one he chooses to illustrate the movement in his essay “Vorticism”) appeared in *Poetry* in April, 1913. The poem clearly indicates an Oriental turn in Pound’s thought:

IN A STATION OF THE METRO  
The apparition of these faces in the crowd :  
Petals on a wet, black bough .<sup>225</sup>

Pound tells a biographical story of seeing beautiful faces, one after another, after getting off the train at La Concorde in Paris, and of not being able to find the words for his emotion. Finally, later he finds an expression for it, or rather an “equation... not in

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<sup>225</sup> This is the original way (regarding the spacing and punctuation) the poem was published in *Poetry* (April 1913, vol. I, no.2, 12). For further development of the poem’s appearance, see, e.g., Chilton and Gilbertson 1990.



speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that – a ‘pattern’” (Pound 1970a, 87). It took Pound at least eighteen months to find the appropriate verbal form for his experience. What helps him is the Japanese genre of haiku, or hokku, as Pound calls it.

The “one image poem” is a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. (Pound 1970a, 89)

Pound finds in haiku the justification of his earlier attempts of building paradigms, juxtaposing images, ideas, names. Characteristically, this juxtaposition of two ideas (or, to be exact, two different images) is a “one image poem” to him. It is not about faces, nor is it about petals. It is rather about the pause or the gap between the superposed ideas, which might also account for the exaggerated spacing<sup>226</sup> in the original version of the poem. What abides in the in-between spacing is the “radiant node”, from which, through which and into which ideas rush. In Pound’s own comments, the hokku-like poem records “the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective” (Pound 1970a, 89). Or, as Kenner puts it, the “plot” of the poem is that mind’s activity, fetching some new thing into the field of consciousness” (Kenner 1971, 186).

The poem has received due attention in Pound studies and scholars, naturally, are far from being unanimous in treating the nature of the image juxtaposition. According to John Steven Childs, e.g., “In A Station of the Metro’ illustrates the linguistic character and the metonymic articulation of Imagist verse” (Childs 1986, 37). Although Childs convincingly proves that the linkages between the components are “in line one, syntagmatically related in the poet’s mind, and, in line two, related contiguously in space” (Childs 1986, 40), his argumentation concerning the metonymic relationship between the two lines seems questionable. Childs builds his argument on the concepts of “deletion” and “spatial juxtaposition”:

On one level, “Metro” seems to operate through a substitution relation; the “apparition of these faces” is *like* “petals”. But even on this level, deletion is

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Pound’s words in 1937: “<hokku> May seem to the careless peruser to be only bilateral, two visual images; but they are so placed as to contain wide space and a stretch of colour between them. The third element is there, its dimension from the fruit to the shadow in the foot-prints. No moral but a mood caught in its pincers” (Pound 1973, 452-453).

apparent in the absence of the marker of the simile “like”. Are we meant to “recover” this deletion of similitude, a substitution relation, or, rather, are we meant to perceive the two lines in a spatial juxtaposition? (Childs 1986, 37)

Arguing for the metonymic nature of the Imagist esthetic, Childs states that “the central issue here is that of referentiality” (Childs 1986, 36), as metonymy, unlike metaphor, “does refer to ‘real’ elements in its designations” (Childs 1986, 37). According to Childs’s comments on Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro”, the two lines of the poem operate through the “spatial juxtaposition” rather than through the substitution relation: “Pound does not merely intend us to conceive that ‘faces’ *are like* ‘petals,’ but that, through contiguity of ‘a thing outward and objective’ and ‘a thing inward and subjective,’ the two elements are spatially juxtaposed” (Childs 1986, 37). In accordance with Michael Le Guern’s understanding of metonymy, quoted by Childs, the referential meaning of line two is not “destroyed”, as it would have been in the case of metaphor. However, if we return to Jakobson’s logic (on which Childs, like Schneidau, bases his argumentation), the key question should be: how does the text proceed from line one to line two? Is it through similarity or through contiguity? Even though “like ‘real’ petals on a ‘real’ bough, the poetic ‘petals’ and ‘bough’ exist contiguously, not sequentially” (Childs 1986, 40), it will be difficult to prove that the poet’s discourse proceeds from “faces” to “petals” along the axis of contextual reference and spatial or temporal contiguity, rather than the axis of analogy-based paradigmatic selection. Image referentiality as such does not play a significant role in Jakobson’s distinction between the two modes<sup>227</sup>. The very presence of deletion of the simile marker “like” between the two juxtaposed images evidences a classical metaphoric construct.

Childs illustrates Pound’s alleged shift from metaphor to metonymy as a consequence of Imagism’s opposition to Symbolism, with the latter’s “excess of associations”. He quotes Pound saying that in the latter school, the symbol “was degraded to the status of a word” (Childs 1986, 38). However, if we look at Pound’s statement without cuts, we will see that it is not metaphor he is opposed to but, on the contrary, metonymy:

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<sup>227</sup> When Jakobson’s aphasic with the contiguity disorder says “*Spyglass for microscope or fire for gaslight*”, referentiality in these “quasi-metaphoric expressions” is not “destroyed”: “in contradistinction to poetic or rhetoric metaphors, they present no deliberate transfer of meaning” (Jakobson 1987a, 107).

Imagisme is not symbolism. The symbolists dealt in “association,” that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. They degraded the symbol to the status of a word. They made it a form of metonymy (sic). (Pound 1970a, 84)

It appears that what Pound rejects is not metaphor per se, but a certain manner of using the device, or, as he puts it, “a belief in a sort of permanent metaphor” (Pound 1970a, 84). Pound criticizes the Symbolists not for their use of metaphor but rather for their abuse of the device. In a similar manner, Pound’s rejection of “rhetoric” in favor of the “image”<sup>228</sup> is in fact an opposition to a certain type of rhetoric, or the preference of the “vague and suggestive and profuse over the precise and concise” (Coats 2009, 93) as Jason M. Coats convincingly argues, highlighting both esthetic and political connotations of Pound’s “anti-rhetorical” bias<sup>229</sup>. Indeed, seemingly denouncing “rhetoric” as such, Pound consistently relies on a number of purely rhetorical figures, as one may notice reading his essays. The same seems to be fair as regards his “rejection” of metaphor in poetry. He disapproves of the fixed equation, the one without a gap in it. Allegory, which, according to Brenda Machosky, is a metonymical figure (Machosky 2013), “association” and “allusion” – all these words rather testify for Pound’s metaphoric than metonymic preference.

Far more plausible in this context sounds Northrop Frye’s reading of Pound’s haiku-like poem, which presents the latter as a very definition of metaphor:

On the literal level of meaning, metaphor appears in its literal shape, which is simple juxtaposition. Ezra Pound, in explaining this aspect of metaphor, uses the illustrative figure of the Chinese ideogram, which expresses a complex image by throwing a group of elements together without predication. In Pound’s famous blackboard example of such a metaphor, the two-line poem “In a Station of the Metro” the images of the faces in the crowd and the petals on the black bough are juxtaposed with no predicate of any kind connecting them. (Frye 1973, 123)

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. *A memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*: “The ‘image’ is the furthest possible remove from rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of dressing up some unimportant matter so as to fool the audience for the time being” (Pound 1970a, 83).

<sup>229</sup> “Pound’s argument against symbolist rhetoric was not against its spirituality but against its complacency in wielding the tools of Liberal rationalization and thus its complicity in the government’s profound deceit” (Coats 2009, 93).

In this respect, my reading of the haiku-like poem largely agrees with Frye's, as well as Hugh Kenner's<sup>230</sup>, Christine Brook Rose's<sup>231</sup> and Earl Miner's<sup>232</sup>, who also interpret the text along similar lines.

"Don't allow 'influence' to mean merely that you mop up the particular decorative vocabulary of some one or two poets whom you happen to admire", warned Pound in "A Few Don'ts" (Pound 1913a, 202). What Pound himself borrows is not words, but the pattern, which he starts using extensively. Japanese poetry helps Pound clearly articulate and explain his idea of the image as an arrangement/paradigm: his definition of haiku in "Vorticism" is essentially a definition of metaphor.

It is in the "Vorticism" essay that Pound discovers the word, hokku, or haiku, for his idea of an "arrangement" in poetry. In its brevity and its metaphoric nature, the haiku pattern rhymed with Pound's old concept of the image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" and with his thoughts on modern French poetry and on the poetry of medieval Provence. The "emotional complex" acquired shape and cultural precedents. The Japanese form crystallized the reflections of Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska on metaphoric arrangement in art. Fellow-Imagists started using the concept, even if understood somewhat vaguely<sup>233</sup> at times.

The influence of the haiku technique on Pound's poetics has been recognized by a number of scholars<sup>234</sup>. Besides the classical example of the famous "haiku-like sentence" poem "In a Station of the Metro", numerous other examples in Pound's longer pieces have been noticed, as well. As Earl Roy Miner shows, the super-posing technique is obvious in *Lustra* (1916), in poems directly referring to the Oriental tradition ("April", "Gentildonna", "Liu Ch'e", "Fan-Piece, For Her Imperial Lord", "Ts'ai Chih") and in many

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<sup>230</sup> The famous "Metro" poem, according to Kenner, is a metaphor, or "a simile with 'like' suppressed" (Kenner 1971, 185).

<sup>231</sup> Unlike Schneidau or Childs, she has no doubts about the metaphoric nature of Fenollosa's project and defines Pound's "Metro" haiku-like poem as "a double metaphor: faces=petals, crowd=black bough" (Brooke-Rose 1971, 100).

<sup>232</sup> Discussing the "Metro" poem, Miner sees "a sharply defined, metaphorical image" in the second line of the text: "There is a discordia concors, a metaphor which is all the more pleasurable because of the gap which must be imaginatively leaped between the statement and the vivid metaphor" (Miner 1966, 115).

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Flint's confession in "History of Imagism": "I had been advocating in the course of a series of articles on recent books of verse a poetry in vers libre, akin in spirit to the Japanese" (Flint 1915, 70).

<sup>234</sup> See, e.g.: Kenner 1985, 62-70; Miner 1956; Dasenbrock 1985; Kanaseki 1967; Yip 1969.

others (e.g., “Women Before A Shop”, “L’Art”, “A Song Of The Degrees”, “Coitus”, “Shop Girl”, “Fish And Shadow”), as well as in *The Cantos* (Miner 1966, 112-123). According to Miner, the super-posing technique, outlined by Pound, subsequently turned quite productive in both British and American poetry and may be traced in the verse of Aiken, Aldington, Bynner, Flint, Fletcher, Lowell, Archibald MacLeish, and Stevens, to name a few.

In 1937, Pound will write in “D’Artagnan Twenty Years After” (published in *Criterion* 16, July 1937): “From dead thesis, metaphor is distinct. Any thesis is dead in itself. Life comes in metaphor and metaphor starts TOWARD ideogram” (Pound 1973a, 453). The concept of ideogram, the next stage in Pound’s Image theory development, requires a look into Pound’s reading of Fenollosa’s papers, which I will discuss below.

### 3.4. Ernest Fenollosa and the ideogram

As I have shown above, in the context of Pound’s review of Binyon’s book, Pound, according to his “metaphor approach”, tends not to describe the Orient by Occidental analogies but rather uses the Orient as a tool in order to interpret and reshape the familiar Western culture. However important Binyon and Whistler were for the formation of Pound’s method, the most crucial turn in Pound’s Oriental endeavors happened in 1913, when Pound met Mary McNeil Fenollosa, late Ernest Fenollosa’s wife, who chose Pound to be the editor of her husband’s manuscripts<sup>235</sup>.

Ernest Fenollosa<sup>236</sup> (1853 – 1908), an American professor of philosophy and political economy and an Oriental art scholar, spent about fifteen years of his life in Japan. He was a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, a founder and the manager of Tokyo Imperial museum, and an ardent collector of Japanese and Chinese art. As Pound said (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 3), Fenollosa’s achievement is finding and saving for Japan numerous paintings, manuscripts and historical artifacts, for which he was awarded by the Emperor Meiji. Upon return to the United States, Fenollosa became the

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<sup>235</sup> For detailed discussion of the role of Fenollosa’s notebooks in Pound’s work, see Kodama 1982, 213; Chapple 1988, 11.

<sup>236</sup> For more information on Fenollosa, see, e.g., Brooks 1962, Chisolm 1963.

curator of the department of Oriental art at Boston museum of fine arts. After his death in 1908, Fenollosa's ashes were buried in the Miidera temple near Kyoto, by lake Biwa<sup>237</sup>.

Several drafts of the essay on the Chinese written character were written in the early 1900s, when Fenollosa was lecturing in the United States. However, Fenollosa never completed the programmatic work and Pound received the draft texts among other Fenollosa's manuscripts from Mary McNeil Fenollosa after their meeting in 1913. In 1916-1918, Pound tried to publish the edited essay in several journals (*Seven Arts, The Monist*), however, the text was accepted only by *The Little Review* (published in parts in September – December, 1919) and in its full form first appeared only in 1920, included in Pound's *Instigations*. "The Classical Drama of Japan", based on Fenollosa's manuscripts, appeared in the October issue of the *Quarterly Review*. The influence of Fenollosa on Pound's writing revealed itself immediately: as I have shown above, several programmatic publications by Pound after 1914 (e.g., "Vortex" and "Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist", published in 1914 in *Blast* I and in *Egoist*, respectively) openly connect the esthetic of Vorticism with the Japanese artistic tradition.

Mary Fenollosa thus explains her understanding of Pound's role in completing her late husband's lifework in her letter to Pound dated 25 November, 1913: "What I am hoping is that you will become really interested in the material, absorb it in your own way, and then make practically new translations from the Japanese text as rendered into Romaji" (Pound 1987a, 8). Pound did, indeed, absorb the material.

Pound's work on Fenollosa's notebooks and on the "practically new translations" of the Noh drama inevitably changed his perspective on the Orient, on China and on Japan. What Steven G. Yao wrote with regard to Pound's *Cathay* (1915), may be attributed to all of Pound's "Oriental projects":

Initially, the text had its roots in the tradition of late-nineteenth-century eastern U.S. and British late imperial "Orientalism" as both a cultural taste and an academic practice. Upon publication of the collection, first in Britain in 1915 and later in the United States in 1917, however, the unique representation of Chinese culture and identity in *Cathay* offered a subtle critique of, and alternative to, the terms underwriting the particularly American cultural and political discourse of Asian (and specifically Chinese) exclusionism that operated throughout the country from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries. (Yao 2007, 136-137)

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<sup>237</sup> Cf. Canto LXXXIX: "I want Fremont looking at mountains  
or, if you like, Reck at Lake Biwa."

Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" has been discussed by scholars (and not infrequently ridiculed) in its relation to linguistics<sup>238</sup>, modernist poetics<sup>239</sup>, the heritage of American transcendentalists' philosophizing<sup>240</sup>, Saidean Orientalism<sup>241</sup>, and even Buddhist practices<sup>242</sup>. I am not going to critically assess the validity of Fenollosa's linguistic theories (most of what he writes about the nature of the language would probably but raise a smile<sup>243</sup> today). I am primarily interested in Fenollosa's rhetoric, argumentation and the hierarchy of values (especially in what concern the East-West opposition) underlying his reflections.

I am currently not addressing the issue of Pound's massive editorial work on the essay's text (probably commensurate with his "corrections" of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*). Even if "Pound's reading of the essay <...> lies in stark contrast with Fenollosa's original essay both aesthetically and philosophically", as Stalling claims (Stalling 2006, 5), I am now more interested in what Pound found in and appropriated from the essay than in defining the value of the original Fenollosa's intent<sup>244</sup>.

As Pound was later credited to have "invented Japanese poetry" (T.S. Eliot), so Fenollosa, in Pound's own words, appeared to have recreated the art of Japan, which the latter itself was largely unaware of. As Pound writes in his preface to *Noh, Or, Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan*:

He had unearthed treasure that no Japanese had heard of. It may be an exaggeration to say that he had saved Japanese art for Japan, but it is certain that he had done as much as any one man could have to set the native art in its rightful pre-eminence and to stop the apeing of Europe, (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 3)

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<sup>238</sup> See, e.g. George A. Kennedy's judgment: "a mass of confusion" based on a "complete misunderstanding" (Kennedy 1964).

<sup>239</sup> See, e.g. Andrew Welsh: "When the aim of the essay is understood, it can still generate suspicion or worse in literary critics" (Welsh 1987, 101).

<sup>240</sup> See Kenner 1971 or Xie 1999.

<sup>241</sup> See, e.g. Robert Kern's verdict on Fenollosa characterizing the latter as one "motivated by a concept of linguistic possibility that is entirely Western" (Kern 1996, 7).

<sup>242</sup> See, e.g., Jonathan Stalling, who finds in the text a "startlingly rich heterocultural poetics characterized by a complex weave of a Western philosophy and a Buddhist epistemology" (Stalling 2010, 37).

<sup>243</sup> Thus, James J. Wilhelm plainly asserts that "Fenollosa made certain claims about the Chinese written system that almost every Sinologist denies" (Wilhelm 1990, 130).

<sup>244</sup> For more information on the original text of the manuscript and on Pound's editing work, see Fenollosa and Pound 2008, containing Fenollosa's drafts and Pound's marginalia.

Attempts of defining and saving the Oriental heritage, keeping it supposedly intact from the “corrupt” Western influences, and further using it to impact the familiar Western culture, shaped the lifework of both Fenollosa and Pound, two Westerners on an Oriental quest. The “Chinese Written Character”, however imperfect linguistically, historically, and philosophically it might be, may be read as a manifesto of the project, revealing the latter’s theoretical foundations, implicit goals, and indispensable contradictions. Even though the motif of “saving” the native art and not letting the latter “ape” Europe does resemble Burliuk’s rhetoric (see Chapter 2), I will argue that Fenollosa’s and Pound’s enterprise goes far beyond attempts of enhancing the exotic side of the other.

Haun Saussy believes that the “essay must have struck Pound as an otherworldly confirmation of things he had been saying for years” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 9). Indeed, the notes Pound left in Fenollosa’s text draw numerous parallels between Fenollosa’s ideas and those of Pound himself and his contemporaries<sup>245</sup>. Besides, the essay gave Pound clear guidelines for his further work. As Saussy notes, “Pound took from the *Chinese Written Character* the idea of an ‘ideogrammic’ way of writing and thinking: a logic of juxtaposed particulars, ‘luminous details’ that speak for themselves when revealed by the poet” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 4). Saussy argues that the essay “pointed forward to everything in Pound’s subsequent career – notably the *Cantos*, but also *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* and the radio broadcasts” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 8). To further extend the idea, I want to suggest that Fenollosa’s essay not only helped Pound develop the artistic technique, but, which is more important, to a large extent shaped the poet’s vision of the East-West opposition and significantly extended his “culture paradigm”. In this context, of special interest to my work is Fenollosa’s correlation of Orient/Occident and metaphor/metonymy oppositions, which, as I will argue, implicitly structures his text, and which I will focus on below.

### 3.4.1. Intermediary between East and West

In his brief foreword to the “Chinese Written Character” essay published in *Instigations* (1920), Pound highlights several topical issues, which illuminate his vision of

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<sup>245</sup> E.g., Pound quotes Gaudier-Brzeska and Edmond Dulac, who, unaware of Fenollosa’s theory, expressed similar ideas on the concept of ideogram and on the verbal nature of the language (see, e.g., Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 59).



Fenollosa in the context of the East/West opposition. Defining Fenollosa's role in the contemporary culture situation, Pound describes the scholar in terms, reminiscent of the "Whistler" poem:

In his search through unknown art Fenollosa, coming upon unknown motives and principles unrecognized in the West, was already led into many modes of thought since fruitful in "new" western painting and poetry. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 41)

Apart from the recognition of Fenollosa as the forerunner of the Imagist and Vorticist aesthetics, Pound speaks about a new "mode of thought". This mode of thought, among other things, reflects a new vision of the East-West dialogue. While Burliuk's vision, as I showed in Chapter 2, suggests a fundamentally passive role of the other and the latter's silent compliance with the imposed Western frame of reference, which in its turn is taken for granted and is left unaffected by the encounter with the other, Fenollosa's Orient receives a much more active role in the culture dialogue; Fenollosa's West is not supposed to remain unchanged, either.

Pound describes Fenollosa as an intermediary between cultures, whose role cannot be confined to mere appropriation of Oriental "exotic" artifacts and importing them to the West. In Pound's view, Fenollosa appears to be, on the one hand, an active figure, who helps the Orient shape its identity, and, on the other hand, a reformer of the Western mentality with the help of Oriental ideas:

In Japan he restored, or greatly helped to restore, a respect for the native art. In America and Europe he cannot be looked upon as a mere searcher after exotics. His mind was constantly filled with parallels and comparisons between Eastern and Western art. To him the exotic was always a means of fructification. He looked to an American renaissance. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 41)

Pound's portrait of Fenollosa might remind of Lewis's rhetoric in the Vorticist manifestos. The rejection of the concept of the exotic, as well as the focus on the East-West typological parallels and on the prospective Western renaissance as a result of the culture dialogue, evidence a definite shift in the reception of the other and in the practices of what used to be termed as the turn-of-the-century Japonisme and Orientalism. Meanwhile, the figure of an active intermediary between cultures, who

transforms the familiar with the help of the other, undoubtedly reflects not only the features of the essay author, but also those of the not less active editor.

As a matter of fact, the essay on the Chinese written character reveals aims far beyond linguistics. Fenollosa attempts reconsidering the relations with the other, as well as the image of the other in the familiar culture. In order to convince his Western reader/listener, Fenollosa, in a somewhat domesticating manner, highlights typological parallels between the two cultures rather than the other's exotic mysteries and creates an idealized image of the Orient, whose achievements should be understandable to the West and thus appropriate to "supplement our own". Domesticating as these parallels sound, they do not aim at legitimizing the familiar culture and symbolically inscribing the other in a familiar frame of reference, as was the case with Lafcadio Hearn (and to a great extent with Burliuk), but instead suggest changing the familiar by borrowing certain aspects of the other's culture:

The duty that faces us is not to batter down their forts or to exploit their markets, but to study and to come to sympathize with their humanity and their generous aspirations. Their type of cultivation has been high. Their harvest of recorded experience doubles our own. The Chinese have been idealists, and experimenters in the making of great principles; their history opens a world of lofty aim and achievement, parallel to that of the ancient Mediterranean peoples. We need their best ideals to supplement our own — ideals enshrined in their art, in their literature and in the tragedies of their lives. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 42)

Apparently, Fenollosa does not contrast the Orient and the Occident as two opposite poles, but deliberately focuses on the qualities ("the best, the most hopeful and the most human elements") of the other, which must find response in his reader. The image of an Oriental idealist inspired by lofty aims and promoting humanity and generous aspirations, looks anything but foreign and exotic.

Fenollosa familiarizes the other by refuting common misconceptions, the refutation of which is supposed to ascertain a common ground between the seemingly different cultures. Ex adverso, Fenollosa constructs the social and political identity of the other, defining the latter by what "we" fail to see in them:

It is unfortunate that England and America have so long ignored or mistaken the deeper problems of Oriental culture. We have misconceived the Chinese for a materialistic people, for a debased and worn-out race. We

have belittled the Japanese as a nation of copyists. We have stupidly assumed that Chinese history affords no glimpse of change in social evolution, no salient epoch of moral and spiritual crisis. We have denied the essential humanity of these peoples; and we have toyed with their ideals as if they were no better than comic songs in an 'opera bouffe'. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 42)

In the same manner Fenollosa opposes common esthetic prejudices and alleges that the other's achievements in arts are in no way inferior to our own:

An unfortunate belief has spread both in England and in America that Chinese and Japanese poetry are hardly more than an amusement, trivial, childish, and not to be reckoned in the world's serious literary performance. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 42-43)

Defending his vision of the live Chinese tradition, Fenollosa constructs an ideal image of the Oriental, which is supposed to match the loftiest aspirations of the Western society: "We have been told that these people are cold, practical, mechanical, literal, and without a trace of imaginative genius. That is nonsense" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55). The implication is that the Chinese are not unlike "us" and share our values of humanity, creativity, and open-mindedness, even if in their own manner.

However, even though Fenollosa obviously opposes the tradition of turning the Orient into a set of amusing artifacts used to decorate Western parlors, his image of the idealized Oriental does not really remind a live subject that one could relate to. Another peculiar feature of Fenollosa's familiarizing picture of the Orient is that, although the scholar openly rejects any generalizing, he nevertheless tends not to accentuate the differences between Japan and China<sup>246</sup> (of which he must have been well aware):

Several centuries ago China lost much of her creative self, and of her insight into the causes of her own life, but her original spirit still lives, grows, interprets, transferred to Japan<sup>247</sup> in all its original freshness. The Japanese today represent a stage of culture roughly corresponding to that of China under the Sung dynasty. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 43)

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<sup>246</sup> A similar generalizing view on the issue of China-Japan relatedness may be at times found in Pound's correspondence with Katue Kitasono (see: Pound 1987a), which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

<sup>247</sup> In this respect, Fenollosa's thought is totally opposed to Brinkley's, but, as I will show below, is very close to Pound's.

As a result, despite the author's sincere intent, the other appears as a relatively general image, void of particular specificity. Besides, having counted the use of the first person plural pronoun in these passages, one can already notice that the real focus of the author seems to be not so much on the other, but rather on "us" and the vices of "our" – familiar – culture.

However, Fenollosa's familiarizing strategy is most articulate in his linguistic reflections. Even in the language issue, where differences between the East and the West might seem obvious, Fenollosa, comparing English and "a language so alien in form to ours as is Chinese in its written character" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 43), keeps implying the existence of a solid common ground for mutual understanding. What he mostly notices, is syntactic similarities<sup>248</sup> between the two "uninflected languages, like English and Chinese"<sup>249</sup> (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 48).

The striking difference between present European and Oriental language systems, Fenollosa seems to argue, does not spring from a fundamental ontological discrepancy between the East and the West. Like in the case of his interpretation of the general East-West dialogue, where the problem of misunderstanding, according to Fenollosa, lies not in the fundamental differences of the parties but rather in our own inability to recognize the common (i.e. the source of the problem lies in "us"), so in the case of language difference, the problem is in *our* language, not in Chinese. The problem, according to Fenollosa, is that our language – through history – has lost something which it used to have and which Chinese still possesses. This results in a somewhat unbalanced comparison: the East-West opposition shifts to the contrast of something culturally general and something historically specific: an opposition of contemporary Occidental linguistic or philosophical inadequacy and the atemporal sanity of the Orient. Simultaneously, this disbalance once again evidences an already recognizable shift in focus: the comparison obviously shows more attention towards the problems of the familiar than the live subjectivity of the other, which establishes a fundamental

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<sup>248</sup> Cf.: "It seems to me that the normal and typical sentence in English as well as in Chinese expresses just this unit of natural process. It consists of three necessary words: the first denoting the agent or subject from which the act starts, the second embodying the very stroke of the act, the third pointing to the object, the receiver of the impact" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 48).

<sup>249</sup> Pound presents a similar argument when defending the choice of English (among other European languages) as the best language for translation from Chinese.

difference between Fenollosa's domesticating strategy and that of Burliuk's Japanese narratives.

### 3.4.2. Orient: a diagnostic tool and a remedy

Fenollosa discusses Chinese against the background of modern European languages. Considering the difference between English and Chinese, he builds his argument on the idea of the original "naturalness" of all languages, which, in his perspective, implies the fundamental role of the verb (to be more precise, the transitive verb) in the language system, as the verb reflects the concept of an act, primary for nature itself: "The verb must be the primary fact of nature, since motion and change are all that we can recognize in her" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 91). Syntax, believes Fenollosa, is a reflection of a natural process rooted in the act of transferring power:

The sentence form was forced upon primitive men by nature itself. It was not we who made it; it was a reflection of the temporal order in causation. All truth has to be expressed in sentences because all truth is the transference of power. The type of sentence in nature is a flash of lightning. It passes between two terms, a cloud and the earth. No unit of natural process can be less than this. All natural processes are, in their units, as much as this. Light, heat, gravity, chemical affinity, human will, have this in common, that they redistribute force. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 47)

According to Fenollosa, the Occidental languages have lost this verbal foundation and, consequently, lost their direct link with natural processes, and, as a result, have become inflated and generally unpoetic.

Fenollosa's first use of Chinese and Japanese is in revealing the "universal truths" about the nature of language. The Oriental language system still provides evidence of the basics of human linguistic links to the world of nature, long lost in the Western languages. Chinese examples given by Fenollosa are designed to prove the fundamental role of transitive verbs in any language system:

It is true that there are, in language, intransitive and passive forms, sentences built out of the verb 'to be', and, finally, negative forms. To grammarians and logicians these have seemed more primitive than the transitive, or at least exceptions to the transitive. I had long suspected that these apparently exceptional forms had grown from the transitive or worn away from it by alteration, or modification. This view is confirmed by

Chinese examples, wherein it is still possible to watch the transformation going on. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 48)

However, Fenollosa's analysis does not stop at language universalities but consistently shifts to English, as his primary concern. He uses Chinese as a model "natural" language to prove that even the passive verb forms in modern English originate initially from simple transitive verbs. The connection dimmed by the historical development (or the deterioration) of the English language, becomes obvious to Fenollosa after comparing English and Chinese:

The English passive voice with 'is' seemed at first an obstacle to this hypothesis, but one suspected that the true form was a generalized transitive verb meaning something like 'receive', which had degenerated into an auxiliary. It was a delight to find this the case in Chinese. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 49)

Thus, Chinese in Fenollosa's thought becomes a tool of interpreting Occidental languages. It becomes a source of evidence providing proof of what the author had long suspected to be the truth about the nature of the language in general and about English in particular.

The same pattern we find in Fenollosa's reflections on negation in nature and in language. Chinese, once again, supplements what is missing in the Occidental languages: the "verbal" etymology of negative particles, long forgotten in English, according to Fenollosa, is still transparent in the Orient:

In nature there are no negations, no possible transfers of negative force. <...> ... we should suspect that, if we could follow back the history of all negative particles, we should find that they also are sprung from transitive verbs. It is too late to demonstrate such derivations in the Aryan languages, the clue has been lost; but in Chinese we can still watch positive verbal conceptions passing over into so-called negatives. Thus in Chinese the sign meaning "to be lost in the forest" relates to a state of non-existence. English 'not' = the Sanskrit 'na', which may come from the root na, to be lost, to perish. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 49)

A similar explanation is given to the phenomenon of copula words in English, which, according to Fenollosa, show "an ultimate weakness of language", as they "come from generalising all intransitive words into one" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 49). A

Chinese parallel (the concreteness of what Fenollosa sees as the etymology of a Chinese ideogram) helps him prove the former “natural” transitive roots of English copula words:

There is in reality no such verb as a pure copula, no such original conception: our very word exist means 'to stand forth', to show oneself by a definite act. 'Is' comes from the Aryan root 'as', to breathe. 'Be' is from 'bhu', to grow.

In Chinese the chief verb for 'is' not only means actively 'to have', but shows by its derivation that it expresses something even more concrete, namely 'to snatch from the moon with the hand'. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 49-50)

Using Chinese as a tool for highlighting the “weaknesses” of modern Occidental languages (and, consequently, of Western poetry), Fenollosa, argues that the latter weakness results from “abstraction”, while the strength lies in closeness to some fundamental “natural” reality. Compared with the Chinese verse, Occidental poetry, close as it is in reflecting the “fundamental reality” in its temporal aspect, still sacrifices the concreteness of the visual image (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 45).

Although initially Occidental languages, proceeds Fenollosa, did possess the same natural beauty, which Chinese still retains, their subsequent history presents a process of gradual decay to the scholar. Fenollosa’s depiction of the deterioration of the European languages and, consequently, European poetry, is that of a “paradise is lost”, or, in other words, a “metaphor lost”:

Our ancestors built the accumulations of metaphor into structures of language and into systems of thought. Languages today are thin and cold because we think less and less into them. We are forced, for the sake of quickness and sharpness, to file down each word to its narrowest edge of meaning. Nature would seem to have become less like a paradise and more and more like a factory. We are content to accept the vulgar misuse of the moment. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55)

Fenollosa sees the weakness of Occidental languages in the dominating role abstract grammar<sup>250</sup> rules play in the modern language use. These abstractions, argues

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<sup>250</sup> Tomi Huttunen describes a similar attitude in Vadim Shershenevich, a Russian Imaginist, who found the linguistic system of the Chinese language much more poetry-friendly than the rigid grammar of Russian (Huttunen 2007, 74). Besides, Huttunen draws a parallel between Shershenevich’s and Pound’s Chinese studies and considers

Fenollosa, stand between the live referent and the linguistic sign, which gradually loses the vitalizing sap and becomes dead (“embalmed”). One of these abstractions, in Fenollosa’s view, is Occidental morphology. Speaking about the morphology of modern European languages, Fenollosa insistently points at the latter’s inadequacy, predicated on the artificial division of parts of speech. According to him, the very idea of parts of speech contradicts the nature of things (and, consequently, the nature of the language):

Are some of them < words, - M.O.> nouns by nature, some verbs and some adjectives? Are there pronouns and prepositions and conjunctions in Chinese as in good Christian languages?

One is led to suspect from an analysis of the Aryan languages that such differences are not natural, and that they have been unfortunately invented by grammarians to confuse the simple poetic outlook on life. All nations have written their strongest and most vivid literature before they invented a grammar. Moreover, all Aryan etymology points back to roots which are the equivalents of simple Sanskrit verbs <...>. Nature herself has no grammar. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50)

Another weakness of European languages, or an indicator of their loss of “verbal power”, Fenollosa sees in the use of prepositions, equally empty and abstract to him:

Prepositions are so important, so pivotal in European speech only because we have weakly yielded up the force of our intransitive verbs. We have to add small supernumerary words to bring back the original power. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52)

What, according to Fenollosa, accounts for that language/poetry decay in the West, is largely efforts of “scholars” and “the tyranny of mediaeval logic” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56). As a result of abstraction, Western phonetic languages lost their roots and have become unable to further grow and carry the “live” message, which Fenollosa links with the idea of metaphor:

This anaemia of modern speech is only too well encouraged by the feeble cohesive force of our phonetic symbols. There is little or nothing in a phonetic word to exhibit the embryonic stages of its growth. It does not bear its metaphor on its face. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55).

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both authors in the context of Eisenstein’s montage technique. Apropos, the latter, according to Jakobson, represents the “metaphoric mode” of discourse.



The Occidental thought, responsible for the decline of the West, is represented in Fenollosa's text in a very graphical image of Western syntax as construction work resulting in fundamentally meaningless linear chains of abstractions:

According to this European logic thought is a kind of brickyard. It is baked into little hard units or concepts. These are piled in rows according to size and then labeled with words for future use. This use consists in picking out a few bricks, each by its convenient label, and sticking them together into a sort of wall called a sentence by the use either of white mortar for the positive copula 'is', or of black mortar for the negative copula 'is not'. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56)

It may be noticed that what Fenollosa describes as Occidental thinking may be actually defined as a metonymical approach. The "baked" units "piled in rows according to size" are pyramids of classes or different levels of abstractions, replacing original images. The linguistic process he refers to, is in core a synecdochal substitution of a "live" phenomenon by an abstract "class" it belongs to: any "practiced logician finds it convenient to store his mind with long lists of nouns and adjectives, for these are naturally the names of classes" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56-57). Fenollosa illustrates the resulting process with the following example, often quoted in Fenollosa/Pound studies:

At the base of the pyramid lie things, but stunned, as it were. They can never know themselves for things until they pass up and down among the layers of the pyramids. The way of passing up and down the pyramid may be exemplified as follows : We take a concept of lower attenuation, such as 'cherry'; we see that it is contained under one higher, such as 'redness'. Then we are permitted to say in sentence form, 'Cherryiness is contained under redness', or for short, '(The) cherry is red'. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56)

The situation when an individual thing is contained under a curtained class and may be described likewise, is inherently metonymical. The problem of this approach, according to Fenollosa, is its hierarchical rigidity. It does not allow connections between things or concepts which do not belong to the same hierarchy:

The sheer loss and weakness of this method are apparent and flagrant. Even in its own sphere it can not think half of what it wants to think. It has no way of bringing together any two concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other and in the same pyramid.

It is impossible to represent change in this system or any kind of growth.  
(Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57)

The links that bring together “concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other”, which Occidental thought allegedly lacks, are those that may be defined as metaphoric connections, i.e. the ones based on analogy, according to Jakobson’s dichotomy.

It is interesting, that the infamous “logical” European approach in Fenollosa’s text is seen as an opposite to both the scientific thought and poetry:

Primitive men who created language agreed with science and not with logic. Logic has abused the language which they left to her mercy.  
Poetry agrees with science and not with logic. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57)

What Fenollosa means by “scientific” becomes clear from his example, where he sees a “scientific” work as essentially a paradigm (“grouped sentences”) transitive verbs:

<science> expresses her results in grouped sentences which embody no nouns or adjectives but verbs of special character. The true formula for thought is: The cherry tree is all that it does. Its correlated verbs compose it. At bottom these verbs are transitive. Such verbs may be almost infinite in number. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57)

In Fenollosa’s example, a tree may be understood as a paradigm of verbal images. The concept of “correlated” images, i.e. those connected in a paradigmatic manner rather than by metonymical generalizing, provides a key to understanding Fenollosa’s Orientalism and anti-Occidentalism. Thus, Western language, poetry, and the mode of thinking itself are all flawed, as they mainly rely on the metonymical type of representation and on abstract generalizing, generalizes Fenollosa. The rescue comes from the East.

Chinese, which has allegedly preserved what European languages have lost over history in Fenollosa’s picture represents an idealized “other” for Occidental languages and the Occidental mode of thinking. The scholar claims to have found pure “naturalness” in Chinese ideogram, Chinese syntax, morphology, and consequently poetics. The analysis of the Chinese language, which Fenollosa offers, aims at illustrating “how poetical is the Chinese form and how close to nature” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50).

This “naturalness”, in Fenollosa’s view, is constituted by several aspects of language functioning. First of all, it implies transparency. Chinese, as Fenollosa sees it, even in its modern form has not erased its links to the world of nature and to the original proto-language.

Ideogrammic writing, according to Fenollosa, represents a much more “natural”, immediate (and thus less arbitrary) relation between the signifier and the signified, than Western phonetic languages may offer. This immediacy, argues Fenollosa, is evident in the transparent etymological links, characteristic of Chinese written characters:

Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 45)

As opposed to the case of modern English, the “natural” verbal origins of the Chinese language appear to Fenollosa still visible in the ideogram, too: “the great number of these ideographic roots carry in them a verbal idea of action” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 45). The Chinese language has preserved its own past almost intact, as the Chinese character transparently allows tracing back the verbal nature of all language elements. For example, the verbal origins are still discernible in Chinese nouns:

In the derivation of nouns from verbs, the Chinese language is forestalled by the Aryan. Almost all the Sanskrit roots, which seem to underlie European languages, are primitive verbs, which express characteristic actions of visible nature. <...> This is indicated in the Chinese characters. And this probably exemplifies the ordinary derivation of nouns from verbs. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 51-52)

The same, believes Fenollosa, is true about the derivation of the adjective from the verb, which, too, still remains visible in modern Chinese ideograms: “In Chinese the adjective always retains a substratum of verbal meaning” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52). In this respect, too, Chinese and Japanese as Oriental languages are much closer to the “origins” and to nature itself than their Western counterparts:

In Japanese the adjective is frankly part of the inflection of the verb, a special mood, so that every verb is also an adjective. This brings us close to

nature, because everywhere the quality is only a power of action regarded as having an abstract inherence. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52)

Fenollosa's thought follows the same pattern in dealing with other parts of speech, too. In Chinese, he writes, "the preposition is frankly a verb, specially used in a generalized<sup>251</sup> sense" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52). He also finds visible verbal characteristics (no longer traceable in Occidental languages) in Chinese conjunctions:

Conjunctions are similarly derivative; they usually serve to mediate actions between verbs, and therefore they are necessarily themselves actions. Thus in Chinese, because = to use; and = to be included under one; another form of 'and' = to be parallel; or = to partake; if = to let one do, to permit. The same is true of a host of other particles, no longer traceable in the Aryan tongues. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52-53)

The pronoun system in Chinese also appears more natural than in the Occidental languages, as it reveals direct links to the verbal origins of the language and to "verbal metaphor":

Pronouns appear a thorn in our evolution theory, since they have been taken as unanalysable expressions of personality. In Chinese, even they yield up their striking secrets of verbal metaphor. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53)

Transparency, thus, reveals the multi-layer structure of Chinese derivatives, or their "verbal metaphor", unfortunately lacking in modern Western languages.

Another characteristic of the natural, in Fenollosa's view, is the synthetic manner of functioning. A natural language does not rely on artificial division and discrimination. Chinese morphology, according to Fenollosa, is natural in the manner it combines an object and an action in a single sign without separating those:

A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snapshots. Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion,

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<sup>251</sup> An unusual praise to generalization in Fenollosa, contradictory to what he usually says about generalizing strategies. However, it is evident from the context, that what he means here is a metaphoric shift.

motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 46)

Equally synthetic, according to Fenollosa, is the Chinese verb, which does not discriminate between transitive and intransitive counterparts, and thus behaves in a free natural way rather than obeys imposed abstract restrictions: “The beauty of Chinese verbs is that they are all transitive or intransitive at pleasure. There is no such thing as a naturally intransitive verb” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 49). Fenollosa praises the synthetic, non-differentiating nature of Chinese, which, according to him, illustrates the natural, uncorrupted by rational reason fundamental beauty of the language.

Naïve as this analysis may sound, it clearly shows Fenollosa’s frame of reference and the system of values with logical rigidity and rational restrictions on one pole and spontaneity, inclusiveness and flexibility on the other. The truly poetic, in Fenollosa’s view, equals natural, primitive, unaffected by logic/reason.

The fact is that almost every written Chinese word is properly just such an underlying word, and yet it is not abstract. It is not exclusive of parts of speech, but comprehensive; not something which is neither a noun, verb, nor adjective, but something which is all of them at once and at all times. Usage may incline the full meaning now a little more to one side, now to another, according to the point of view, but through all cases the poet is free to deal with it richly and concretely, as does nature. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 51)

The synthetic mode, characteristic of the Chinese language, represents something contrary to the abstraction pyramids, which Fenollosa finds in the West: in Chinese, according to the scholar, each word is a paradigm of meanings rather than a part of a rigid hierarchy, which once again illustrates the author’s preference of metaphorical figures to metonymical ones.

Synthetic inclusiveness of Chinese, according to Fenollosa, allows for free natural development of the language. As opposed to the case of modern European languages, the functioning of Chinese, Fenollosa argues, is a purely natural process, as it proceeds freely, unrestricted by logicians’ and grammarians’ schemes. Fenollosa metaphorically describes syntactic and morphological processes of the Chinese language as the growth of a plant:

One of the most interesting facts about the Chinese language is that in it we can see, not only the forms of sentences, but literally the parts of speech growing up, budding forth one from another. Like nature, the Chinese words are alive and plastic, because thing and action are not formally separated. The Chinese language naturally knows no grammar. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50-51)

One may notice that Fenollosa's thought strongly favors metaphor. First, the transparent form of Chinese manifests the metaphoric nature of the language. Next, Chinese morphology reveals the "secrets of verbal metaphor" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53). And finally, the synthetic mode of composing imagery by selection of "correlated verbs" equally suggests a paradigmatic or metaphoric process, in Jakobson's terms. Ultimately, the defense of metaphor and of "naturalness" proceeds as the defense of poetry, which, according to Fenollosa, is designed "to keep words as flexible as possible, as full of the sap of nature" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 51).

Thus, the analysis of Chinese in Fenollosa's case gradually reveals its implicit goal as that related to poetry. The name of the essay implies an instrumental function of the language (a "medium"). On the whole, Chinese for Fenollosa is "natural", and being so it is the language of poetry by definition, asserts Fenollosa: if the Chinese characters and the Chinese sentence are "as vivid shorthand pictures of actions and processes in nature", they "embody true poetry as far as they go" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53). The metaphoric nature of Chinese ensures it the role of a medium for true poetry. Not only is metaphor recognized as the essence of the language, in Fenollosa's text it is clearly seen as the basic poetic function: "Metaphor, the revealer of nature, is the very substance of poetry" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 54).

Poetry, according to Fenollosa, works in a manner similar to that of "true" science, i.e. a manner opposed to the metonymical approach of "scholastics" and "logicians". It does not claim to classify phenomena or metonymically define them by the class they belong to. Poetry combines paradigms of correlated meanings in their multiplicity and in doing so it overcomes the logicians' reasoning:

The moment we use the copula, the moment we express subjective inclusions, poetry evaporates. The more concretely and vividly we express the interactions of things the better the poetry. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57)

What Fenollosa calls the “interactions of things” here, clearly correlates with the quoted above words about “bringing together <...> concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57). Poetry does not build a hierarchical scheme of synecdochal representation; it does the opposite. “Poetic thought works by suggestion, crowding maximum meaning into the single phrase pregnant, charged, and luminous from within” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58). Such condensed correlated meaningfulness Fenollosa sees in Chinese ideograms: “In Chinese character each word accumulated this sort of energy in itself” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58) Thus, poetic (and, equally, scientific) approach in Fenollosa’s thought, as opposed to the “logical” one, closely reminds a mode which might be termed metaphorical.

Condemning Western “logical” and rational approach, Fenollosa defends an alternative poetics and an alternative manner of reasoning, an example of which he finds in China. Defining this kind of poetics, however, Fenollosa emphasizes its universality and its dominance in all ancient cultures; like Chinese poetics, this universal poetics is also inherently metaphorical, i.e. based on the substitution of a “material image” for “immaterial relations”:

You will ask, how could the Chinese have built up a great intellectual fabric from mere picture writing? To the ordinary Western mind, which believes that thought is concerned with logical categories and which rather condemns the faculty of direct imagination, this feat seems quite impossible. Yet the Chinese language with its peculiar materials has passed over from the seen to the unseen by exactly the same process which all ancient races employed. This process is metaphor, the use of material images to suggest immaterial relations. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53-54)

The word “metaphor” here, as the key word of Fenollosa’s argument, predictably catches the eye of Ezra Pound, who promptly adds an Aristotelian reference on the margins of Fenollosa’s passage. On the whole, Fenollosa’s defense of what might be called a metaphoric poetics and his attacks on the “medieval logic” of Occidental scholars are commensurate in zeal with Pound’s own advocacy of super-position technique and his condemnation of scholastics. Pound himself acknowledges a kindred spirit and in his parenthetical notes provides parallel references to his own “Vorticism” and “The Language of Exploration” essays, as sources for further reading on the subject.

Metaphor is clearly an essential part of Fenollosa’s argumentation. The origins of metaphor, as the origins of the language itself, he sees in the very nature of things.

Metaphor to Fenollosa is a replication of natural processes and relations between natural phenomena:

Abstract terms, pressed by etymology, reveal their ancient roots still embedded in direct action. But the primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary subjective processes. They are possible only because they follow objective lines of relations in nature herself<sup>252</sup>. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 54)

In this respect, poetry, to Fenollosa, is a metaphorical return to the natural and the primitive:

Poetry only does consciously what the primitive races did unconsciously. The chief work of literary men in dealing with language, and of poets especially, lies in feeling back along the ancient lines of advance. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 54)

It is a return to the “pure” nature itself: “The original metaphors stand as a kind of luminous<sup>253</sup> background, giving color and vitality, forcing them closer to the concreteness of natural processes” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 54-55). China, in Fenollosa’s view, represents a model culture, which, unlike its Occidental counterparts, proved able to preserve the “naturalness”, the purity, metaphor, and concreteness of its language and poetry:

the Chinese written language has not only absorbed the poetic substance of nature and built with it a second work of metaphor, but has, through its very pictorial visibility, been able to retain its original creative poetry with far more vigor and vividness than any phonetic tongue. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55)

Unlike the modern Occident, China with its culture, built on metaphor, still “retains the primitive sap, it is not cut and dried like a walking-stick” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55).

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<sup>252</sup> Apropos, the idea foreshadows the approach suggested by Lackoff and Johnson.

<sup>253</sup> The word “luminous” here (twice used on the page), as well as well as later in Fenollosa’s text (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58), must have been noticed by Pound. Pound’s Vorticist passages on “luminous details”, discussed above, echo Fenollosa’s reflections.



This China has not lost its paradise. Not only is this China an ideal alternative to the West, in Fenollosa's vision, the literally atemporal Chinese ideogrammic culture becomes a metaphor of poetry itself, with numerous layers of meanings still visible and still relevant in its image.

In this Chinese shows its advantage. Its etymology is constantly visible. It retains the creative impulse and process, visible and at work. After thousands of years the lines of metaphoric advance are still shown, and in many cases actually retained in the meaning. Thus a word, instead of growing gradually poorer and poorer as with us, becomes richer and still more rich from age to age, almost consciously luminous. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55)

The pictorial, graphic nature of Chinese guarantees the retaining of numerous layers of meanings, and ultimately, the original, "natural" meaning of the word: "The very soil of Chinese life seems entangled in the roots of its speech" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 55). Pictorial Oriental languages appear superior to the modern Occidental phonetic ones, as the former provide direct and visible connections between the layers of meanings, as well as between the signifier and the signified. These meanings, as Fenollosa puts it, "are flashed at once on the mind as reinforcing values with accumulation of meaning which a phonetic language can hardly hope to attain" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56). Graphically, Fenollosa describes the idea of a Chinese written character with a military-based image: "Their ideographs are like bloodstained battle-flags to an old campaigner" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 56) The image of the ideogram as a battle flag must have appealed to Pound in his militant campaign of rectifying the West with an Oriental weapon.

In general, China, in its transparent multi-layer meaningfulness, appears in the essay as a metaphor of poetry itself, and it becomes clear why Pound repeatedly refers to Fenollosa's "linguistic" essay as a modern analogue of Aristotelian Poetics. Meanwhile, Fenollosa's essay seems to agree with the basic principles of the Imagist art. Fenollosa's emphasis on the transitive verb, directly connecting the subject and the object, on the direct natural link between the language and the world, between an ideogram and its referent, cannot but remind of the Imagist principle of "direct treatment of the 'thing'" (Flint 1913, 199) or Pound's assertion that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol" (Pound 1913a, 201). Fenollosa's fear of abstractions reminds of Pound's arguments against mixing "the abstract and the concrete" (Pound 1913a, 201) and

warnings like “Go in fear of abstractions” (Pound 1913a, 201). Fenollosa’s idea of the synthetic metaphoric nature of the ideogram (and of poetry) brings to mind Pound’s definition of the image as a synthetic instantaneous paradigmatic structure, “which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Pound 1913a, 200), as well as his insistence on “the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously” (Pound 1913a, 200) in a poetic text.

Fenollosa must have seen himself as a mediator between the Orient and the Occident. The title of his essay, too, highlights the concept of a medium. Fenollosa discusses the role of mediation in the functioning of a linguistic sign, the role of the ideogram as a medium for poetry, the role of the Orient as a medium of improving the language and poetry status quo in the Occident.

Although the major part of the text seems to be devoted to linguistic characteristics of the Chinese language, the target reader of the essay is obviously a Westerner, and the main focus is actually on the situation in the Occident. In this respect, one more mediating aspect (though, probably, the most important one) Fenollosa keeps tentatively returning to is the role of English as a medium for supplementing the Occident with the best sides of the Orient. Fenollosa’s practical interest in the essay lies in the field of translation and its possible effect on the mediating language.

Fenollosa realizes that the key to common misunderstanding of the Oriental poetry is in the medium, i.e. in the language of translation. “Failure or success in presenting any alien poetry in English must depend largely upon poetic workmanship in the chosen medium” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 43). This places the responsibility for the East-West dialogue with the mediating language, i.e. with English. Implicitly, all Fenollosa’s reflections on the other’s language are ultimately aimed at improving the familiar medium: an essay on Chinese implicitly turns into an essay on modern English.

However different Chinese and modern English appear in the essay, Fenollosa, as I have shown, repeatedly tries to highlight certain links between the languages. These similarities must ensure that English does have the capacity to reform itself and act as an adequate medium for translation of Chinese poetry (and hereby possibly for producing its own poetry of equal power). Whenever possible, Fenollosa digresses from the main subject of the essay, i.e. the Chinese written character, and highlights certain strengths of the English language (those still reminiscent of Chinese and of the “original” language, despite the general decay).

“Weak” as it is, English is still, according to Fenollosa, an adequate means of translation: “we notice that the likeness of form between Chinese and English sentences renders translation from one to the other exceptionally easy. The genius of the two is much the same” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50). What he says about Chinese-English translations perfectly foreshadows Pound’s translation practice: “Frequently it is possible by omitting English particles to make a literal word-for-word translation which will be not only intelligible in English, but even the strongest and most poetical English” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50). The recommendation to “follow closely what is said, not merely what is abstractly meant” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50) cannot but remind of Pound’s fear of abstractions and insistence on the “exact word” (Pound 1913a, 201, 206).

Fenollosa’s translation recommendations closely follow his concept of Chinese as a “natural” language. If the essence of Chinese language and poetry is verbal, translators must modify the medium language likewise:

In translating Chinese, verse especially, we must hold as closely as possible to the concrete force of the original, eschewing adjectives, nouns and intransitive forms wherever we can, and seeking instead strong and individual verbs. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 50)

Similar advice applies to the use of English adjectives, especially in syntactic constructions with the verb “to be”: retain the verbal “substratum” of Chinese adjectives rather than “be content with some bloodless adjectival abstraction plus ‘is’” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52).

Fenollosa wants translators not to abuse English pronouns, which lack the wide range of meanings and connotations, as well as the “verbal metaphor”, still visible in their Chinese counterparts, and may become “a constant source of weakness if colorlessly translated” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53). The translator, according to Fenollosa, should also be cautious in using prepositions, which in the English language have lost their verbal flavor. In this respect, Chinese both raises the problem of an adequate translation and, simultaneously, provides a chance of improving the current non-poetic language situation in the West: as Chinese prepositions allegedly have a verbal nature, “it greatly weakens an English translation if they are systematically rendered by colorless prepositions” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 52).

Fenollosa talks about the importance of being aware of weaknesses of modern English and about trying to avoid those in translation, however difficult the task is. In this context, the “empty” copula words present a special danger:

We should beware of English grammar, its hard parts of speech, and its lazy satisfaction with nouns and adjectives. We should seek and at least bear in mind the verbal undertone of each noun. We should avoid 'is' and bring in a wealth of neglected English verbs. Most of the existing translations violate all of these rules. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58)

On the whole, Fenollosa argues that “The dominance of the verb and its power to obliterate all other parts of speech give us the model of terse fine style” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58). This “verbal” emphasis sums up his program for the development of the English language.

As Chinese is free from the domination of abstract rules and categories, English translations must match this “naturalness”: “Chinese poetry demands that we abandon our narrow grammatical categories, that we follow the original text with a wealth of concrete verbs” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 53). Such a translation not only gives the Occident a “true” picture of the Oriental original, but also promises a subsequent improvement of the Occidental language and poetry.

If metaphor is at the heart of Chinese language and poetry, Fenollosa insists on the necessity of preserving the metaphoric nature of Chinese in translation and retaining of the whole paradigms of meanings and connotations contained in Chinese verbs:

Should we pass formally to the study of Chinese poetry, we should warn ourselves against logicianised pitfalls. We should beware of modern narrow utilitarian meanings ascribed to the words in commercial dictionaries. We should try to preserve the metaphoric overtones. (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 58)

Fenollosa returns to the idea several times. Seeing Chinese as a language of nature and Chinese poetry as a metaphoric return to nature, he insists that English translations must eventually attempt a similar return in the Occident:

Still, is it not enough to show that Chinese poetry gets back near to the processes of nature by means of its vivid figure, its wealth of such figure? If we attempt to follow it in English we must use words highly charged,

words whose vital suggestion shall interplay as nature interplays.  
(Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 59)

The practical conclusions about translation methods, perfectly reflecting the “esthetic program” discussed above, imply a clear pragmatic agenda: a purifying effect of Chinese upon English. Like in Pound’s project, the Orient in Fenollosa’s essay becomes a tool to rectify the ills of the Occidental culture<sup>254</sup>.

However, Fenollosa’s project reveals an even deeper practical objective, obviously topical for Pound<sup>255</sup>. What the scholar is ultimately looking for, is not merely an Oriental ideal, nor is it only a new poetics, or even a reform of the English language as a medium for translation. Fenollosa is in search of a universal world language, based on natural ideogrammic principles: “Such a pictorial method, whether the Chinese exemplified it or not, would be the ideal language of the world” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 59). Thus, Fenollosa’s world acquires completeness: if in the beginning all languages were equally verbally natural and presented an adequate poetic reflection of things around, the future global language, designed as English supplemented by best Oriental linguistic and poetic practices, will help regain the lost paradise.

In Fenollosa, Pound finds justification for further developments in his method<sup>256</sup>. The principle of “haiku” juxtaposition extends to the multi-faceted ideogram with the latter’s analogy-based structure and alleged direct rootedness in the “concrete fact”.

Retrospectively, in *Guide to Kulchur* (1938), Pound will give a concise description of the ideogrammic method:

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<sup>254</sup> However important this idea proved to be to Pound (as I will show in the analysis of Pound’s Japan-related writing in Chapter 4), Pound chose to soften some of Fenollosa’s most ethnocentric reflections on the “Anglo Saxon supremacy in the world”. See, e.g., Huang 2002, 18-20.

<sup>255</sup> As Saussy ironically observes, “Pound’s 1936 preface to the *Chinese Written Character* declares ideogram to be the basis of a new universal language, more basic than Ogden’s Basic English and more reliable. It multiplies no fictional entities (to mention a problem that ... for Pound was synonymous with usury)” (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 7). Pound’s concept of the world language will be discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>256</sup> It is interesting, that Sergei Eisenstein comes to his idea of montage (which was defined by Jakobson as a metaphoric device) also due to the Chinese ideogram. For more information on Eisenstein’s interest in Japanese and Chinese languages and culture, see Ivanov 1988. For information on the influence of Eisenstein’s montage ideas on Russian Imaginism, see Huttunen 2007.

I mean to say the purpose of the writing is to reveal the subject. The ideogrammic method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register. (Pound 1970b, 51)

The Ideogram becomes the basis of Pound's method in both poetry writing (cf. *The Cantos*) and in culture criticism. As Ronald Bush observes, "Around 1929<sup>257</sup>, the ideogrammic method became one of the most frequently used phrases in Pound's critical repertory" (Bush 1976, 12). For example, in *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound develops numerous paradigmatic images based on his interpretations of Fenollosa's ideas: the "ideogram of philosophers", the "ideogram of architecture and painting", the "ideogram of culture", the "ideogram of civilization", the "ideogram of Europe".

In his essay "How to Read" (1931), Pound uses the term to define a paradigm of values:

The first credential we should demand of a critic is his ideograph of the good; of what he considers valid writing, and indeed of all his general terms. ... He must begin by stating that such and such particular works seem to him 'good', 'best', 'indifferent', 'valid', 'non-valid'. (Pound 1968, 37)

The relation between the numerous "facets" in these ideograms is that of paradigmatic nature and of implicit comparison. "I need more than one string for a fabric" (Pound 1970b, 29), as he bares his device to the reader. The facets correlate, like the correlating "verbal metaphors" in Fenollosa's "cherry tree", and their correlation is the key aspect of the ideogram. Economics, philosophy, poetry and politics have a common denominator. The Chinese, writes Pound, invented a "five pointed compass": "North, East, South, West, AND THE MIDDLE" (Pound 1970b, 78). However different the "facets" are, they point in one direction.

Although *The Cantos* is not the subject of my current study, I want to illustrate how the ideogrammic method structures Pound's long poem, using Hugh Kenner's quote, who sees ideogram as an essentially metaphoric device:

Thus an entire Canto may consist of fragmentary actions set side by side in continuous proportion:

$$\frac{A}{B} : \frac{C}{D} : \frac{E}{F} : \frac{G}{H} : \frac{I}{J} : \frac{K}{L}$$

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<sup>257</sup> Pound, however, claims to have been using the ideogrammic method even "in *The Serious Artist* in 1913 before having access to the Fenollosa papers" (Pound 1961, 96).

the archetypal action emerging more and more clearly, and the Canto consisting, as Mr. Eliot says of Dante's *Commedia*, of an extended metaphor with no room for metaphoric expressions in the details. It will be recalled that metaphor takes the form

$$\frac{A}{B} : \frac{C}{D} ; \quad \frac{\text{ship}}{\text{waves}} : \frac{\text{plough}}{\text{ground}} .$$

It is convenient to use the term 'ideogram' to describe this means of definition by way of juxtaposed but unaltered facts; and it is convenient to recall that ideogram and metaphor function identically, so that there is nothing 'unpoetic' about this reliance on anecdotes and history-books. (Kenner 1985, 206)

The relevance of Pound's ideogram technique to his Japan-related works will be discussed below, in Chapter 4.

### 3.5. Pound/Fenollosa Noh concept

However important the haiku-like superposition is in shaping Pound's poetics, even more important is his discovery of Noh. Pound's work on Fenollosa's manuscripts while staying at W.B. Yeats's Stone Cottage<sup>258</sup>, proved to be inspiring for both poets. At that time, Yeats becomes closely familiar with Pound's enterprise and especially interested in the Noh tradition, which he, like Pound, also discovers for himself. Noh had a significant influence on Yeats's own writing, even if it was not as long-lasting as in Pound's case, and promptly inspired him to produce his own Noh-based Irish drama<sup>259</sup>. Besides, Yeats writes a foreword to Pound's collection of Noh translations, *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* (1916); Yeats's comments on the Noh tradition generally support Pound's view and often use the same arguments, which may be traced back to Fenollosa. The only major differences appear in Yeats's insistence on the value of the aristocratic nature of Noh and in his more national approach to the genre with a repeated emphasis on the latter's significance for Irish arts. The similarities in the poets' argumentation, however, testify to the relevance of Pound's work for his time. I will now discuss Pound's view of Noh, its esthetic and ethical connotations, in the context of Fenollosa's and Yeats's

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<sup>258</sup> For more discussion of Pound and Yeats's relationship and collaboration during the three winters at Stone Cottage, Sussex, see: Longenbach 1988.

<sup>259</sup> Yeats's Noh-inspired *At the Hawk's Well*, unlike Pound's plays modeled on the Noh, was actually staged in 1916.

reflections on the subject. I will argue that Pound's interpretation of Noh (including its dramatic structure, its functioning in the Japanese culture, and its possible role in the culture of the Western world) is inherently metaphoric.

### 3.5.1. Noh: the ideal unity

Pound's view of the metaphoric nature of Noh may be illustrated by his reflections on the ancient Japanese ritual of "listening to incense"<sup>260</sup> and on the latter's literary connotations in *Noh or Accomplishment* (1916):

In the eighth century of our era the dilettante of the Japanese court established the tea cult and the play of "listening to incense."

In the fourteenth century the priests and the court and the players all together produced a drama scarcely less subtle.

For "listening to incense" the company was divided into two parties, and some arbiter burnt many kinds and many blended sorts of perfume, and the game was not merely to know which was which, but to give to each one of them a beautiful and allusive name, to recall by the title some strange event of history or some passage of romance or legend. It was a refinement in barbarous times, comparable to the art of polyphonic rhyme, developed in feudal Provence four centuries later, and now almost wholly forgotten. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 4)

This early text not only describes Noh as an endless paradigm of associations. One can notice that Pound, defining Noh, suddenly draws a parallel between the practices of Japanese culture and the poetry of Provence. This Provençal association is far from accidental: Pound's remark foreshadows his further super-position of Noh on top of medieval troubadour culture of Europe. The kind of tradition Pound is going to recreate is, consequently, a subtle art based on "polyphonic rhyme" of strange events in history, passages of literary texts, and allusive names: a multi-faceted art, reminiscent of the ideogrammic method, "the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that means a hundred pictures" (Pound 1914c, 153).

This view did not change substantially with time. In a much later article "Study of Noh Continues in West" (10 December, 1939, the *Japan Times*), Pound, implicitly

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. *Guide to Kulchur* (1938): "to define civilization we may start with the 'Listening to Incense'" (Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* 1970).



justifying his own Noh translations and defending them from criticism<sup>261</sup>, again describes Noh as an essentially paradigmatic structure. Pound's definition of Noh, "one set of acts in relation to a whole other set of acts", reminiscent as it is of the "Metro" haiku, sounds like a definition of the metaphor:

It is that continual assertion of one set of acts in relation to a whole other set of acts, a whole series of backgrounds and memories, that enriches the Noh. The poetic translator must break his back to attain an English version that will keep at least part of this air and color. He must be allowed adequate, but not boundless, freedom toward this end, and only the finest critics and judges will be able to say when he reached it or how nearly he attains, or when he has sinned against the spirit of the original. (Pound 1987a, 157)

The following lines might also be read as self-defense; however, at the same time, they throw light upon Pound's manner of reading Noh and of including the Japanese texts in the Western cultural paradigm:

By all means let us have a prose translation, but where Umewaka Minoru or his friends have left a haze over the almond blossoms or the reflection of the moon in two buckets, let us be very much on our guard against any rumor that such and such a meaning is not in, or associated with, or associable with the Noh text. (Pound 1987a, 156)

Pound seems to defend his right, on the one hand, to include the "haze over the almond blossoms or the reflection of the moon in two buckets" into a paradigm of his own, and, on the other hand, augment the meaningfulness of Japanese imagery with "associable" meanings coming from other traditions.

The idea of super-posing the Noh tradition on top of the Imagist esthetics is first announced by Pound in a brief addendum note at the end of his "Vorticism" essay (1914), where Pound unexpectedly turns to Noh in order to defend a possible development of his own writing method:

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<sup>261</sup> Cf. Pound's explicit references to criticism: "Dr. Sakanishi caused me a good deal of anguish by insisting that something I had found in Fenollosa did not exist in the original. I am puzzled as to how it got into my text. Did it spring from Umewaka Minoru, or from Professors Mori and Ariga or did Fenollosa or I catch it out of thin air?" (Pound 1987a, 156)

I am often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the hokku, evolved also the Noh plays. In the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image, enforced by movement and music. I see nothing against a long vorticist poem. (Pound 1970a, 94)

Not only does Noh provide justification for the genre of a "long vorticist poem", it also provides the method, the "one image" technique, which Pound will develop not only in his Cantos, but also in the far less remembered Noh-based plays of his own, which I will discuss in the next Chapter.

Soon, after completing his translations of the Fenollosa papers, Pound once again returns to the idea of Noh relevance for the "Imagist or Vorticist" practices in the foreword to *Noh, Or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* (1916), a collection of his translations from Fenollosa's manuscripts. Once again, this, obviously important for Pound idea appears as a marginal comment, in a footnote:

This intensification of the Image, this manner of construction, is very interesting to me personally, as an Imagiste, for we Imagistes knew nothing of these plays when we set out in our own manner. These plays are also an answer to a question that has several times been put to me: "Could one do a long Imagiste poem, or even a long poem in vers libre? (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 45)

Thus, if haiku became a justification of the Vorticist image theory, Noh comes to justify the form of arranging the imagery within the Vorticist genres. What started as a marginal note, will develop in a concept that informs his life-long project and goes far beyond the limits of my current study. I will merely focus on Pound's vision of the Noh tradition in its relation to his own Japan-related works, aimed at constructing an alternative paradigm of Western culture.

Pound's preface to his translations from Fenollosa's manuscripts provides a set of criteria he uses when promoting the Japanese dramatic tradition in the West. Systematizing Pound's views on Japanese drama, one could reconstruct not only his picture of a Noh play or a "long Imagiste poem", but also his general approach to developing a paradigm of culture. In the extensive introduction and intermissions in *Noh, Or Accomplishment* (1916), Pound leaves his own comments on Noh plays and provides a selection of Fenollosa's, as well as quotes from the conversations with Umewaka Minoru on the issue. These Fenollosa's and Pound's quotes, together with Yeats's comments to

*Certain Noble plays of Japan*, reveal a consistent picture of an “ideal” Noh play as a guideline for modern Western arts.

The key word in Pound’s (as well as Fenollosa’s and Yeats’s) Noh criticism appears to be Unity. Individual Noh plays themselves, points out Pound, are organized musically; their seeming dissonances hide a unity (like the “Middle” in the aforementioned Chinese five-pointed compass). The pieces are subtly built upon unifying imagery which holds them together: “the plays have, however, a very severe construction of their own, a sort of musical construction” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 45). Pound repeatedly insists on the music analogy in the plays’ structure: “One must read or ‘examine’ these texts ‘as if one were listening to music.’ One must build out of their indefiniteness a definite image” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 63). This “definiteness” of the image concealed by the haze of the Japanese text obviously suggests a link to Pound’s own Vorticist/Imagist reflections on poetic imagery<sup>262</sup>, a link, which he does not even try to hide, confessing that “This intensification of the Image <...> is very interesting to me personally, as an Imagiste” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 45).

Thus, talking about the musical construction of the plays, Pound-the-Imagist leads us to the concept of the Image as a unifying dominant tone of each play: “The plays are at their best, I think, an image; that is to say, their unity lies in the image” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 63). This image, unifying the musical structure of a play, is often described by Pound in pictorial terms, with reference to color and design details, as was also the case in his Imagist poetry reflections:

When a text seems to “go off into nothing” at the end, the reader must remember that the vagueness or paleness of words is made good by the emotion of the final dance, for the Noh has its unity in emotion. It has also what we may call Unity of Image. At least, the better plays are all built into the intensification of a single Image: the red maple leaves and the snow flurry in Nishikigi, the pines in Takasago, the blue-grey waves and wave pattern in Suma Genji, the mantle of feathers in the play of that name, Hagoromo. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 45-46)

The single image concept, crucial for Pound’s justification of a long Imagist poem, obviously relies on Fenollosa’s comments, which present Noh as an ideal combination of visual, rhetorical and audial imagery building up to a single impression: “The beauty and

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<sup>262</sup> See, e.g., Pound, “Vorticism” 1914; Pound, “Vortex” 1914; Pound, “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” 1913.

power of Noh lie in the concentration. All elements — costume, motion, verse, and music — unite to produce a single clarified impression” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 120).

Like Pound, Yeats (most probably referring to the same comment by Fenollosa) in the foreword to *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* (1916), also accentuates the concept of a single image a Noh play is primarily built upon. Like Pound, he also describes this image in musical and pictorial terms. Moreover, defining this image, Yeats does pronounce the word “metaphor”:

I wonder am I fanciful in discovering in the plays themselves (few examples have as yet been translated and I may be misled by accident or the idiosyncrasy of some poet) a playing upon a single metaphor, as deliberate as the echoing rhythm of line in Chinese and Japanese painting. (Yeats 1916, xvi)

Thus, Fenollosa’s idea of a unified impression of Noh develops into Pound’s one-image theory and finds support in Yeats’s single metaphor concept, which clearly suggests not only the unity of imagery but also the paradigmatic structure of such an image, based on associations and allusions.

However, Pound’s comments show that he does not stop at the level of an individual play and its unity. Besides the unity of image of a particular Noh play, Pound emphasizes the importance of a higher level of unity. Thus, according to Pound, Noh is a synthetic form of art which unites seemingly fragmented components within a complete Noh performance, which, in its turn, appears to be a well-structured arrangement of a number of individual plays, even if the latter seem unrelated to each other:

Some scholars seem to have added another confusion. They have not understood the function of the individual plays in the performance, and have thought them fragmentary, or have complained of imperfect structure. The Noh plays are often quite complete in themselves; certain plays are detachable units, comprehensible as single performances, and without annotation or comment. Yet even these can be used as part of the Ban-gumi, the full Noh programme. Certain other plays are only “formed” and intelligible when considered as part of such a series of plays. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 9)

The complete Noh program appears as a paradigm, an “arrangement” of pieces, and it is this unity that justifies each piece’s individual significance: “The arrangement of five or six Noh into one performance explains, in part, what may seem like a lack of

construction in some of the pieces” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 45). It is the paradigm itself that ultimately makes the individual items meaningful. Noh, according to Pound, appears to be a metaphoric representation of the whole world, as it focuses not on the particular (as the Western drama allegedly would) but on the completeness of the design, on the whole “service of life”. The full Noh program, Pound argues, provides a complete picture of the world in its complexities and controversies:

The Noh holds up a mirror to nature in a manner very different from the Western convention of plot. I mean the No performance of the five or six plays in order presents a complete service of life. We do not find, as we find in Hamlet, a certain situation or problem set out and analysed. The Noh service presents, or symbolizes, a complete diagram of life and recurrence. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 17)

Pound’s rhetoric, as one may see, emphasizes the metaphoric nature of Japanese classical drama, which, instead of presenting a contiguous narrative, “symbolizes” a “diagram”, or a paradigm of typologically connected events in their atemporal meaningfulness of “recurrence”.

This vision appears to be equally close to Yeats’s. What Yeats praises in the Japanese esthetic is its static and atemporal nature, which defies the very “illusion of change and progress”, as he puts it:

the painting of Japan, not having our European Moon to churn the wits, has understood that no styles that ever delighted noble imaginations have lost their importance, and chooses the style according to the subject. (Yeats 1916, vi)

Like Pound and Fenollosa, Yeats sees the art of Japan as a paradigmatic, rather than a syntagmatic construct, i.e. as a form in which styles do not succeed each other in a linear contiguity but rather coexist simultaneously, never losing their relevance.

However, although Noh in its unity of image and structure provides a “complete diagram of life”, it is not, as Pound repeatedly accentuates, a mimetic art by nature. Noh to Pound is primarily an art based on literary and cultural allusion, i.e. an analogy device:

The art of allusion, or this love of allusion in art, is at the root of the Noh. These plays, or eclogues, were made only for the few; for the nobles; for those trained to catch the allusion. In the Noh we find an art built upon the god-dance, or upon some local legend of spiritual apparition, or, later, on

gestes of war and feats of history; an art of splendid posture, of dancing and chanting, and of acting that is not mimetic. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 5)

“Mimesis” is clearly seen by both Pound and Fenollosa as a division line between the “high” and “low” arts: “There has been in Japan from the beginning a clear distinction between serious and popular drama. The merely mimetic stage has been despised” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 17). This non-mimetic, primarily literary essence of Noh is obviously very important to Pound, as he keeps returning to the issue, contrasting the traditional noble Noh and the despised mimetic arts of the present day:

Note that the common theatre, the place of mimicry and direct imitation of life, has always been looked down upon in Japan. The Noh, the symbolic and ritual stage, is a place of honour to actor and audience alike. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 13)

Pound’s criticism of modern Japanese drama copying Western patterns<sup>263</sup> echoes Fenollosa’s negative reaction to the modern Japanese dramatic developments, i.e. to the vulgar “realistic drama” and its mimetic nature, similar to that of modern European theater:

This vulgar drama is quite like ours, with an elaborate stage and scenery, with little music or chorus, and no masks; with nothing, in short, but realism and mimetics of action. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 104)

Noh, according to Fenollosa, as quoted by Pound, presents an ideal alternative to what the scholar calls “realism”, as it carefully excludes “all such obtrusive elements as a mimetic realism or vulgar sensation might demand. The emotion is always fixed upon idea, not upon personality” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 120). Noh, as Pound and Fenollosa believe, is based not on the outward semblance or veracity but on the inner integrity and the feeling of rhymes and consonances. Or, as Pound puts it, quoting Fenollosa’s words, “It is a Noh saying that “The heart is the form” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 52).

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<sup>263</sup> Cf., e.g., his comment on the significance of Fenollosa’s studies for the Japanese: “it is certain that he had done as much as any one man could have to set the native art in its rightful pre-eminence and to stop the apeing of Europe” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 3).

Yeats shares Pound and Fenollosa's vision of the non-mimetic nature of Noh: what Yeats appreciates in the Japanese drama is its opposition to what he calls "naturalism" or "realism" in arts. This is how he describes the Japanese genre:

No 'naturalistic' effect is sought. The players wear masks and found their movements upon those of puppets: the most famous of all Japanese dramatists composed entirely for puppets. (Yeats 1916, xii)

Yeats praises the elite nature of Noh as an aristocratic art form, which, to Yeats, primarily implies the audience's literacy and capacity to understand all the complex strata of allusions the play is built on:

'Accomplishment' the word Noh means, and it is their accomplishment and that of a few cultured people who understand the literary and mythological allusions and the ancient lyrics quoted in speech or chorus, their discipline, a part of their breeding. (Yeats 1916, xi)

Although Pound does not insist on the aristocratic nature of the Japanese genre or on its accessibility to "a few cultured people" as strongly as Yeats does, he certainly also agrees with the requirement of cultural literacy necessary for appreciating a Noh play. Moreover, he sees Noh as a means of raising the level of such literacy among his compatriots, as his consistent efforts to bring Noh to Western universities, libraries and cinema theaters evidence.

### 3.5.2. Noh as esthetic program with social implications

Defining Noh, Pound consistently draws typological parallels between Japan and Europe, some of which I have already quoted. Thus, for example, the Japanese art of what he translates as "listening to incense" is presented as "a refinement in barbarous times, comparable to the art of polyphonic rhyme, developed in feudal Provence four centuries later, and now almost wholly forgotten" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 4). Individual Noh pieces, according to Pound, "treat for the most part known situations, in a manner analogous to that of the Greek plays, in which we find, for instance, a known Oedipus in a known predicament" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 17-18). He finds parallels in the religious and moral sentiment of the Occident and the Orient: "The moralities are on a par with Western moralities, for ascetic Buddhism and ascetic Christianity have about the same set of preachments" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 18). He also acknowledges

that the Japanese (Shintoist, as he believes) “parallels with Western spiritist doctrines are very curious” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 18) and is excited about the musical similarities, suggesting unexpected kinship between the tradition of Noh and that of troubadours: “most interesting parallels, or if not parallels, suggestions for comparison with sapphics and with some of the troubadour measures (notably those of Arnaut Daniel)” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 56).

Similarly, in *Tsunemasa*, Pound sees lines which are “as clear as Dante's” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 92) and in a footnote comment on *Awoi no Uye*, he draws a parallel in the spirit behavior in the Western and Eastern folklore texts: “As in Western folk-lore, demons often appear first in some splendid disguise” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 199). The spirit characters of the play, which are “not unlike the Irish ‘Sidhe’” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 199), specifically remind him of the familiar Irish tradition. Although these comments aim at defining Noh for the Western reader, in fact, they also implicitly serve to justify the esthetic tradition which Pound finds viable in the West.

These “affirmative” parallels are also an important part of Fenollosa’s concept of the Orient. Thus, Fenollosa accentuates the typological similarities between Noh and the ancient Greek drama, which become manifest in the “sacred dance” origins of both, in the role chorus plays in them, in the correlations between the dialogue and the chorus parts, in the scene sequence, and in the use of masks and music. Fenollosa finds even technical poetic similarities between the two traditions: “It is curious to note that the structure of the texts is always double, like the Greek strophe and antistrophe” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 114). Parallels between Noh and Shakespeare’s drama are equally valuable for Fenollosa: “There is, however, beside the deeper analogy of the Japanese Noh with Greek plays, an interesting secondary analogy with the origin of Shakespeare's art” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 103).

Pound definitely likes Fenollosa’s parallels between the Japanese and European arts. Moreover, in a footnote, he even confesses having slightly edited Fenollosa’s original text and having excluded a passage which would have somewhat weakened the typological parallel:

Professor Fenollosa, in an earlier half-sentence which I have omitted, would seem to underestimate the effect of the dance on European art forms. It was from the May-day dance and dance-songs that the Provençal poetry probably arose. By stages came strophe and antistrophe tenzone, the Spanish loa and entremes. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 112)



Like Pound and Fenollosa, Yeats also uses Noh as a means of justification of his own esthetic in both negative and affirmative parallels with Western arts. There is, for example, an implicit parallel with Shakespeare: “When for the first time Hamlet was being played in London Noh was made a necessary part of official ceremonies at Kioto” (Yeats 1916, x). There is also a more explicit parallel with English estheticism, as well as with recent French visual arts and poetry:

when I remember that curious game which the Japanese called, with a confusion of the senses that had seemed typical of our own age, 'listening to incense,' I know that some among them would have understood the prose of Walter Pater, the painting of Puvis de Chavannes, the poetry of Mallarmé and Verlaine. (Yeats 1916, xix)

As one can see, typologically contextualizing the Noh tradition alongside with Verlaine and Mallarmé, Yeats even uses Pound’s metaphor of “listening to incense”, discussed above. The parallel, which he draws, rhetorically places certain familiar names within the culture of the other (claiming that those who wrote Noh would have understood Verlaine), not vice versa: Yeats presents Noh as a certain absolute standard, which but a few familiar authors can live up to.

Like Pound, Yeats eagerly seeks to establish typological links between Noh and his familiar culture, which explains Yeats’s several attempts of contextualizing the Japanese drama against the background of the familiar Irish tradition. He, for example, highlights numerous parallels between the legends of the two cultures:

The adventure itself is often the meeting with ghost, god or goddess at some holy place or much-legended tomb; and god, goddess or ghost reminds me at times of our own Irish legends and beliefs, which once it may be differed little from those of the Shinto worshipper. The feather-mantle, for whose lack the moon goddess, (or should we call her fairy?) cannot return to the sky, is the red cap whose theft can keep our fairies of the sea upon dry land; and the ghost-lovers in 'Nishikigi' remind me of the Aran boy and girl who in Lady Gregory's story come to the priest after death to be married. These Japanese poets too feel for tomb and wood the emotion, the sense of awe that our Gaelic speaking country people will some times show when you speak to them of Castle Hackett or of some Holy Well... (Yeats 1916, xiv)

As one may notice, Pound’s (as well as Fenollosa’s and Yeats’s) use of allusion differs from what we saw in the case of Burliuk’s Japan. These parallels with the Greeks,

with Provence and with Irish folklore do not aim at an interpretation of the Orient by means of a familiar language (and thus depriving the other of a language of their own), but rather suggest typological links between cultures, which would legitimate the modification of the familiar paradigm and the inclusion of the other's voice in the latter.

However, drawing the parallels and typologically linking Japanese texts with a certain paradigm of Western sources, Pound and Fenollosa never fail to underline differences between the tradition of Noh and the mainstream European literary and cultural trends. In this respect, Noh becomes a tool of critiquing and reforming Western arts and culture. Noh often becomes associated with certain lacunas in the Western culture, something lost and long forgotten, i.e. something which needs to be reestablished.

Thus, for example, in Pound's Noh comments, the tradition of Noh becomes instrumental in pointing out the lack of "fineness", subtlety and real poetry in modern Western drama:

It is not, like our theatre, a place where every fineness and subtlety must give way; where every fineness of word or of word-cadence is sacrificed to the "broad effect"; where the paint must be put on with a broom. It is a stage where every subsidiary art is bent precisely upon holding the faintest shade of a difference; where the poet may even be silent while the gestures consecrated by four centuries of usage show meaning. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 6)

Pound returns to the idea repeatedly, and the idealized Noh proves to be a handy tool to accentuate the unrefined and unsophisticated aspect of mainstream European theater, so different from Japanese esthetic subtlety:

Our own art is so much an art of emphasis, and even of overemphasis, that it is difficult to consider the possibilities of an absolutely unemphasized art, an art where the author trusts so implicitly that his auditor will know what things are profound and important. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 220)

The Noh plays, which Pounds offers to the Western reader, thus appear to be not only a typological specimen of "fineness", but also a practical remedy for the popular taste.

In Fenollosa's text quoted by Pound, there is an equal emphasis on the revitalizing energy of the Orient in reshaping the outdated rigid conventions of Western arts.

Fenollosa believes that the Oriental influence has been beneficial for the West at all times. He claims that the Elizabethan artistic developments to a large extent are an “aftermath of Oriental contacts — in the Crusades, in an intimacy with the Mongols such as Marco Polo's, in the discovery of a double sea-passage to Persia and India, and in the first gleanings of the Jesuit missions to Asia” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 100). Fenollosa also writes about the enrichment of the European romantic poetry by the Oriental contacts and reminds the reader about Bishop Percy's<sup>264</sup> account of Chinese poetry and of Bishop Hood's essay on Chinese theater, with the latter's parallels between the Chinese and the Greek traditions. He remembers Voltair's “Chinese tragedy”, the influence of Persian translations on Byron, Shelley, and Coleridge and the Hindu doctrines on Wordsworth. Speaking about the future of Western arts, Fenollosa optimistically sees their revival due to new Oriental influences:

We cannot escape, in the coming centuries, even if we would, a stronger and stronger modification of our established standards by the pungent subtlety of Oriental thought, and the power of the condensed Oriental forms. The value will lie partly in relief from the deadening boundaries of our own conventions. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 100)

Yeats also proves the necessity to “copy the East” by the exhaustion of the European tradition, in which only “lyric poetry has kept its Asiatic habit and renewed itself at its own youth, putting off perpetually what has been called its progress in a series of violent revolutions” (Yeats 1916, vii). In the context of the artistic decadence, which Yeats sees in the West, the Orient appears to be the only salvation for the weary Europe:

Europe is very old and has seen many arts run through the circle and has learned the fruit of every flower and known what this fruit sends up, and it is now time to copy the East and live deliberately. (Yeats 1916, ix)

Defending Noh, Yeats attacks traditional European dramatic conventions. What he finds faulty in the Western drama, is not only the lack of esthetic refinement. Yeats talks

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<sup>264</sup> Thomas Percy (1729-1811), bishop of Dromore, Ireland. In 1761, Percy published *Hao Kiou Chooan, or The Pleasing History*, a translation of a Chinese novel by Haoqiu Zhuan, and in 1762, a collection of *Miscellaneous Pieces Relating to the Chinese*.

about the existing distance between the audience and the players, which once again, cannot but remind us of Pound's cultural critique:

The stage-opening, the powerful light and shade, the number of feet between myself and the players have destroyed intimacy. I have found myself thinking of players who needed perhaps but to unroll a mat in some Eastern garden.

<...> But movement also has grown less expressive, more declamatory, less intimate. <...> It is well to be close enough to an artist to feel for him a personal liking, close enough perhaps to feel that our liking is returned.

<...> the measure of all arts' greatness can be but in their intimacy. (Yeats 1916, iii-v)

Yeats is not talking about the elimination of distance between art and the real world: the world of art is always separate, according to him. What he insists on is getting rid of the distance between this imaginary world and the audience, which may be only possible if this intimate contact is offered with the "Japanese" subtlety:

the arts which interest me, while seeming to separate from the world and us a group of figures, images, symbols, enable us to pass for a few moments into a deep of the mind that had hitherto been too subtle for our habitation. As a deep of the mind can only be approached through what is most human, most delicate, we should distrust bodily distance, mechanism and loud noise. (Yeats 1916, v)

Like Pound and Fenollosa, Yeats also recognizes the instrumental significance of Noh<sup>265</sup>, which, according to him, is supposed to inform the further developments in the Irish theater:

In the series of books I edit for my sister I confine myself to those that have I believe some special value to Ireland, now or in the future. I have asked Mr. Pound for these beautiful plays because I think they will help me to explain a certain possibility of the Irish dramatic movement. (Yeats 1916, i)

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<sup>265</sup> A similar idea will be expressed by T.S. Eliot in 1917. Eliot writes about the value of translation in general and the Pound-Fenollosa project in particular, recognizing the "double power" of translation in "fertilizing a literature: by importing new elements which may be assimilated, and by restoring the essentials which have been forgotten in traditional literary method" (Eliot 1917, 102).

Yeats writes about the “super-position” of Oriental imagery on top of traditional dramatic conventions, which also agrees with Pound’s theories. He sees the opportunities for Irish theater in appropriating elements of other cultures, including those of the Orient, and delights in adding an Oriental dimension to the traditional Irish narratives:

I am writing these words with my imagination stirred by a visit to the studio of Mr. Dulac, the distinguished illustrator of the Arabian Nights. I saw there the mask and head-dress to be worn in a play of mine by the player who will speak the part of Cuchulain, and who wearing this noble half-Greek half-Asiatic face will appear perhaps like an image seen in reverie by some Orphic worshipper. (Yeats 1916, i)

In this context, Yeats describes his own play and its dramatic conventions with implicit references to the tradition of Noh, which may remind of Pound’s description of “In a Station of the Metro” as an example of utilizing a Japanese technique:

I have written a little play that can be played in a room for so little money that forty or fifty readers of poetry can pay the price. There will be no scenery, for three musicians<sup>266</sup>, whose seeming sun-burned faces will I hope suggest that they have wandered from village to village in some country of our dreams, can describe place and weather, and at moments action, and accompany it all by drum and gong or flute and dulcimer. Instead of the players working themselves into a violence of passion indecorous in our sitting-room, the music, the beauty of form and voice all come to climax in pantomimic dance. (Yeats 1916, i-ii)

The synthetic and minimalist art of Noh, with its subtle music, voice, gesture and pantomime dance, appears to suggest an alternative to the “violence of passion” of the popular theater.

These comments on Noh, which are essentially critical judgments on Western arts, point at the things “missing” in the Western culture and thus allow reconstructing

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<sup>266</sup> Yeats’s minimalism and the focus on the internal rather than external development of the play obviously rhyme with Fenollosa, who, remembering his conversations with Minoru Umewaka, quotes the famous Noh actor: “He said the excellence of Noh lay in emotion, not in action or externals. Therefore there were no accessories, as in the theatres” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 47).

Pound's own concept of an ideal art form, the one he himself is pursuing. However, Pound's (as well as Yeats's and Fenollosa's) Noh-based criticism has another side to it, too.

Both Pound and Fenollosa point out not only the esthetic (the refined language and subtleties of meaning and expression) but also moral and social implications of the Japanese art. Describing the idea of the single-image, which Noh plays are based on, Pound, for example, concludes that "they are built up about it as the Greek plays are built up about a single moral conviction" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 63). Not only does he implicitly suggest a parallel between Noh and the Imagist esthetic, he also draws a typological parallel between the Japanese "image" and the Greek "moral conviction", a link which goes beyond formal similarities, as Pound's further attempts of promoting Noh in the West (and especially in the US<sup>267</sup>) will prove.

Pound's critique of Noh is largely focused on the communicative side of the Japanese drama. In his idealized vision of a Noh play, the audience should be able to grasp every single allusion and every shade of meaning, even if unpronounced but just hinted at by an actor's gesture. It is an example of perfect understanding not only between the audience and the author/actor, but also between the audience and what stands behind the show, i.e. the whole cultural tradition, the very truth of life, all things "profound and important". Which leads us to the kind of Pound's critique that proceeds on the social, rather than purely esthetic, level.

According to Fenollosa, quoted by Pound, the impersonal and non-mimetic nature of Noh accounts for the role the latter played and still plays in the Japanese society. Fenollosa describes Noh in terms, in which later Pound would refer to his own *Cantos*, emphasizing that this "poem with history" contains a strong moral force for the social order:

Some one of these intense emotions is chosen for a piece, and, in it, elevated to the plane of universality by the intensity and purity of treatment. Thus the drama became a storehouse of history, and a great moral force for the whole social order of the Samurai. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 120-121)

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<sup>267</sup> See, e.g., Pellicchia 2013 for the discussion of the importance of the ethical dimension in Pound's plans of importing Noh films to the US.

Fenollosa describes an unquestionably utopic, but nevertheless meaningful to Pound, picture of an ideal relationship between arts and life in Japan, a picture of beauty and harmony: “The Japanese people have loved nature so passionately that they have interwoven her life and their own into one continuous drama of the art of pure living” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 99). Fenollosa believes in the “universal value of this special art-life” and argues that the latter may be instrumental in the West as well. He insists on its “practical significance and even inspiration for us in this weak, transitional period of our Western poetic life” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 100). The Orient, writes Fenollosa, may be used to address both esthetic and social problems of the West, as it is able not only to revitalize Western arts, but also, among other things, “to assist in the solution of our practical educational problems” (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 99).

Discussing values implicit in the ethical code of Noh, Pound repeatedly emphasizes consistency and loyalty to an unbroken tradition:

You see how far this is from the conditions of the Occidental stage. Pride of descent, pride in having served dynasties now extinct, fragments of ceremony and religious ritual, all serve at first to confuse the modern person, and to draw his mind from the sheer dramatic value of Noh. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 8-9)

The ideal Noh, as opposed to the allegedly erratic development of the Western drama, represents to Pound a unity (not unlike the image unity in individual pieces) and social harmony, i.e. something that the fragmented Western civilizations has long lost. Noh, in its unity, combines everything Japan could be justifiably proud of: noble artistic tradition, noble politics, and even religious ceremonies (no matter how skeptical Pound himself is about the latter). What makes Noh exceptionally valuable, according to Pound, is the fact that the Japanese genre presents an uninterrupted cultural tradition:

As the tradition of Noh is unbroken, we find in the complete performance numerous elements which have disappeared from our Western stage; that is, morality plays, religious mysteries, and even dances — like those of the mass — which have lost what we might call their dramatic significance. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 18)

What is left as mere fragments in the Western culture, remains in the Orient as a complete live paradigm. This belief in an unbroken unity and in the uninterrupted Noh

tradition is something both Pound and Fenollosa find socially significant. The concept of a live tradition is, for example, consistently manifest in Fenollosa's interpretation of the differences between the Oriental and the Occidental drama. In this comparison, which might be considered in Jakobson's terms of metonymy/metaphor opposition, the Occident appears as a broken linear contiguity, whereas the Orient presents an atemporal paradigm:

The form and tradition of the Athenian drama passed over into the tradition of the ancient Roman stage, and died away, in the early middle ages fourteen centuries ago. It is dead, and we can study it from scant records only. But the Japanese poetic drama is alive to-day, having been transmitted almost unchanged from one perfected form reached in Kioto in the fifteenth century. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 102)

The so-called breaks in the Western tradition repeatedly occur in Fenollosa's comments on Noh. As, for example, the ancient Greek drama was forgotten by the early middle ages, so was Shakespeare's later on:

the actual modus of the Shakespearean drama is practically dead for us. Occasional revivals have to borrow scenery and other contrivances unknown to the Elizabethan stage, and the continuity of professional tradition has certainly been broken. But in the Japanese Noh, though it arose one hundred years before Shakespeare, this continuity has never been broken. The same plays are to-day enacted in the same manner as then; even the leading actors of to-day are blood descendants of the very men who created this drama 450 years ago. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 104)

The ideal Noh play, instead, according to both Pound and Fenollosa, appears as a complete paradigmatic arrangement of individual pieces and stands for the completeness of the atemporal "unbroken tradition", which deals with the essential truths about life and guarantees the consistency of social values.

Thus Noh, metaphorical (paradigmatic) in its nature, becomes itself a metaphor of Pound's esthetic and social program, in both its negative and affirmative parts, and logically summarizes the developments we've traced in Fenollosa's papers, as well as in the Vorticist manifestos of *Blast*. Pound's theory of Noh appears as an extension of the haiku principle, previously found by him, or super-position brought to a new level.

Not quite surprisingly, Pound's vision of Noh echoes his Imagist and Vorticist manifestos. Noh reaches the status of music (as "All arts approach the conditions of



music”, according to “Vorticism”). Noh is essentially an “arrangement” of components (cf. Vorticist definitions of art as “an arrangement of lines and colours”, “arrangements of colours and masses”, discussed earlier in this Chapter). This arrangement is not linear or contiguous; the pieces follow each other not in a temporal order but rather present elements of a larger paradigm, which, in its turn, mirrors the structure of the world at large. The arrangement of elements in a Noh piece is not mimetic either, but largely based on allusion. The core of the paradigmatic arrangement is a unifying Image, presented visually or pictorially<sup>268</sup>. These are the principles Pound keeps in mind when venturing to write his own Noh-based pieces, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

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<sup>268</sup> T.S. Eliot, commenting on Pound-Fenollosa translations, writes with approval of that visual aspect of the Noh, drawing a parallel with Dante: “In general, we may say that the less “realistic” literature is, the more visual it must be. In reading *Pride and Prejudice* or *The Wings of a Dove* we hardly need to visualize at all; in reading Dante we need to visualize all the time. Dreams, to be real, must be seen” (Eliot 1917, 103).



## CHAPTER 4. POUND'S REINVENTION OF JAPAN

In this chapter, I will talk about Pound's immediate experiences with building a culture dialogue with Japan. I will discuss Pound's attempts of incorporating the Noh tradition in dramatic works of his own (*Plays Modelled on the Noh*), as well as his Japanese correspondence and the essays he published in *the Japan Times*. I will argue that Pound's method may be described in terms of metaphor or superposing texts belonging to different traditions in a paradigmatic construct.

### 4.1. De Musset, Racine and the Noh: *A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel*

In February, 1916, Pound wrote to his father about his plans to write a play, or rather to participate in a

new dramatic movement, plays which wont need a stage, and which wont need a thousand people for 150 nights to pay the expenses of production. [Yeats's] play ["At the Hawk's Well"] and a brief skit<sup>269</sup> of mine will be done in Lady Cunard's big room, in, I suppose, April. (Pound 1987b, i)

He describes his work as a project, reminiscent of Yeats's Noh-inspired dramatic minimalism:

Yeats seems to expect the new drama to do something, at least there will be no compromise, actors will wear masks, scenery will be mostly imagined, at most a cloth or a screen, and the dominion of Belasco ... will no longer be coterminous with the known and inhabitable world. (Pound 1987b, i)

In April, Pound mentions in a letter to his mother "doing some 'Noh' of my own: don't know that they'll ever get finished" (Pound 1987b, i). There are not too many other references to the dramatic project in his correspondence or publications. Donald C. Gallup, in the introduction to *Plays Modelled on the Noh* (1987), writes that "there is no completely final version of any of the plays written on the Noh model in the Pound Archive in the Collection of American Literature in Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and

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<sup>269</sup> Pound refers to *The Protagonist*.

Manuscript Library, and none of them seems ever to have been performed" (Pound 1987b, ii).

Pound's Noh genre experiments include four pieces: "The Protagonist", "The Consolations of Matrimony", "De Musset's 'A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel'", and "Tristan". The first two plays among the four are comic farces, supposedly related to the Japanese *kyogen* tradition. The connection with the Japanese culture is not very explicit, though. The plays seem mostly to focus on comic situations involving provincial Irish characters and show Pound's fascination with the latter's language (the thing Eliot strongly disapproved of in his review of Pound's Noh translations). The two plays are apparently not even finalized by Pound, so my analysis will focus not on the farce pieces but on the two last plays, the plays where the Noh tradition appears in a much more recognizable and significant aspect.

The first piece directly related to the Noh genre is "A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel".

#### 4.1.1. Exact copy with alterations

The paradox of this play is that, technically speaking, it does not even belong to Pound. The text of *A Supper* is written by Alfred de Musset, and not even for the stage; it appears in de Musset's letters as an account of a certain evening at the house of an actress, Mademoiselle Rachel. Pound reads the text from the perspective of his Noh theories and presents it as a self-sufficient European Noh drama.

Being aware of the difficulties his Noh-ignorant contemporaries might encounter while reading or watching the play, Pound starts the dramatic piece with an introduction, where he warns the reader (or the audience) about the novelty of the genre and somewhat playfully justifies this novelty:

If any of you have come for "drama," as you may have been taught to consider it, you will be, I think, disappointed. We are not "marching on the hills of Thrasymene,"<sup>270</sup> nor will you be treated to your accustomed stage

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<sup>270</sup> Pound's slightly erroneous quotation refers to Christopher Marlow's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, which begins with a monologue of the Chorus, who also promises not to deal with conventional and familiar matters:

Not marching now in fields of Thrasymene,  
Where Mars did mate the Carthaginians;

emotions. And if you want these things you had better go before you are bored<sup>271</sup>. There are other emotions which we have not had on the stage, emotions perhaps as real, no, certainly as real as the eternal triangular problem, or as the discussion of ethics. (Pound 1987b, 23)

Pound speaks ironically, teasing the reader who is allegedly accustomed to a certain type of stock emotions being displayed on stage. Pound boldly promises to show something different, and yet, he finds it necessary to justify his technique and his choice of story. Defending his Japanese piece (the “Japanese thing”) before the Western reader, Pound tries to prove that it does not speak of things foreign to the European mind. Anticipating the readers’ reaction, he, on the one hand, makes explicit his metaphoric design of super-posing the two cultures and establishes a parallel with a famous traditional Japanese Noh play:

You tell me you do not want Japanese things, that these new plays must be European. Still it is a Japanese play (*Nishikigi*) that gives me the closest parallel to my thought... (Pound 1987b, 23)

However, before quoting *Nishikigi*, he tries to convince the reader that the resulting text, though drawing on Japanese models, does not present a Japanese emotion per se, but rather a European one. Pound keeps playfully teasing the reader, who is allegedly accustomed to dramatic characters of a different kind and who would not, for example, suspect a re-enactment of those character’s stories of being non-European:

No, I am not going to be oriental. ....  
... if you went to the Tuilleries and really saw Marie Antoinette? If suddenly by the Tiber you saw re-acted, re-arranged, re-presented the events and heard the exact speeches on the morning after the Duke of Candia was murdered?  
Ah no, you would not complain about my giving you Japanese emotion, you would call it European. (Pound 1987b, 23)

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Nor sporting in the dalliance of love,  
In courts of kings where state is overturn’d;  
Nor in the pomp of proud audacious deeds,  
Intends our Muse to vaunt her heavenly verse... (Marlowe 2000, 161)

<sup>271</sup> Cf. the beginning of “Edward Wadsworth, Vorticist”: “I trust the gentle reader is accustomed to take pleasure in ‘Whistler and the Japanese’. Otherwise he had better stop reading my article until he has treated himself to some further draughts of education” (Pound 1914a, 306).

Pound intentionally underplays the Japanese constituent of the project, accentuating the relevance of the plot of the play to the European culture, even if not to the mainstream of the latter. The key argument in Pound's rhetoric is the veracity of the story. Pound emphasizes the idea of a true, "exact"<sup>272</sup> re-arrangement as regards the subject matter of the play. The logic is, that if a Japanese-like arrangement of imagery focuses on a European plot (even if taken from an "unpopular period", like eighteenth-thirties) and remains true to it in re-presentation, it does belong in the realm of the European culture. So, Pound's major claim in the defense of his Japanese mode of re-arrangement is that the picture is exact, it does not distort the (de Musset's) original: "Now, in my little 'play,' if we must call it a play, there is very little drama, there is only a reconstruction" (Pound 1987b, 23).

Making an implicit reference to his own comments on the audience involvement in the Noh tradition (in *Noh, or Accomplishment*), Pound also defines the role the audience is supposed to play during the current performance:

You will all have to be pilgrims, or something of that sort. These scenes can only be real for those who desire to see them. (Pound 1987b, 23)

Apparently, Pound advocates a more intimate relationship between the audience and the actors than traditional drama implies, the kind of relationship he (along with Yeats, as I have shown in the previous Chapter) believed he had found in the Noh tradition. The audience he wants to see at his play is not disinterested onlookers, but a group of "pilgrims" who deliberately came to witness what they will witness (not unlike the typical pilgrim character of traditional Noh).

Finally, Pound finishes his introduction with a promised quote from *Nishikigi*. Quoting a Japanese priest from the Japanese play, who is trying to find out whether what he sees is real or whether it is an illusion, Pound again addresses the reader, building a parallel between the latter and the priest, and thus implicitly defending the kinship between the Oriental and the Occidental cultures:

You see he has your passion for realism, he is anxious about the facts. The ghosts say they know no more than he does. And then he loses his scientific detachment, and only wants to see how the things happened:

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<sup>272</sup> Cf. his emphasis on the "direct treatment of the 'thing'" in "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" (1913).

Let it be a dream, or a vision,  
Or what you will, I care not.  
Only show me the old times over-past and snowed under;  
Now, soon, while the night lasts. (Pound 1987b, 23-24)

This *Nishikigi* metaphor explains Pound's vision of "exactness", which is far from "scientific detachment". The reader/audience is invited to witness the past, whether it is real or just an illusion<sup>273</sup>. Seeing, i.e. experiencing it, is what makes it real for the reader, as well as for the participants.

Thus Pound defines his Oriental tale of the Occident as an "exact" story, a story familiar to the Western reader, but seen through "Japanese" eyes.<sup>274</sup> Once again, Pound uses the common Vorticist word "arrangement" to define his project, a word that reminds one of all the emphases on arrangement in Pound's (as well as Lewis's and Gaudier-Brzeska's) numerous definitions of arts ("arrangements of colours and masses", "arrangement of lines and colours"). The word also hints at the metaphoric form, of the piece, which is essentially a "form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another" (Pound 1970a, 89), and alludes to Pound's vision of the Noh genre.

To prove the exactness of the representation of the original story, Pounds openly acknowledges that the text is taken from a letter by Alfred de Musset (the letter was published in volume X of *The Complete Writings of Alfred de Musset* in 10 vol., 1905; rev. ed. 1907, as "A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel"). It is, indeed, an exact copy of the de Musset letter, however, with a couple of minor exclusions. For more verity, Pound provides a reference to the publication, too ("It is in his 'Oeuvres posthumes'"). He repeatedly insists on no alterations having been made (not only to the text of de Musset, but to the *event* itself):

You have it, an overheard confidence. It is just the night as it happened,  
there is no dramatic construction, there is nothing warped on the stage.  
(Pound 1987b, 30)

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<sup>273</sup> Cf. Yeats's "some country of our dream" (Pound 1916, i) or Eliot's "Dreams, to be real, must be seen" (Eliot 1917, 103).

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Zinaida Vengerova's comment on Pound's approach, cited in Pound's "Vorticism": "A Russian correspondent, after having called it a symbolist poem, and having been convinced that it was not symbolism, said slowly: 'I see, you wish to give people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing'" (Pound 1970a, 85).

Summarizing Pound's comments, I want to emphasize several key ideas he uses to justify his project. Pound takes a text, which he claims not to have altered, and inserts it into his own, allegedly Noh-like paradigm. This pattern, involving a most careful treatment of the other's word but contextualizing the word in a construct of his own, will reoccur not only in Pound's literary texts, but also in his letters and essays, which I will discuss below, and in the whole of his Japan-related culture enterprise.

De Musset's letter narrates (supposedly, also without alterations, being written immediately after the night, described in the text) a supper at Mademoiselle Rachel's the night after her performance at the Théâtre-Français, in *Tancred*. The events took place, as the comments in *The Complete Writings of Alfred de Musset* suggest, on May 29, 1839, and the account was written the same day or the day after (de Musset 1905, 131). The narrative spans a little more than two hours: it begins at around 10 p.m., when the narrator meets Rachel after the performance at the Théâtre-Français, and ends at 12.30 a.m., when Rachel's father comes home. It describes a supper at the actress's home, which starts as a mere social event, proceeds with Rachel's recollections of her past (the time when she was serving as a maid and later, when she was beginning her career as an actress), and then, after some reflections on French dramatists, the narrator and the actress read Racine's *Phedre* together, until they are interrupted by the father who returns home from the opera.

To better understand Pound's intent, it might be, first of all, interesting to look at the passages, which he did exclude from the de Musset's original. There seems to be a certain pattern to the exclusions. The first one is the description of Rachel's jewelry lying on the table:

They were placed on the table; the two bracelets are exceedingly beautiful: they are at least worth four or five thousand francs. With them was a priceless gold crown. They were all on the table with the salad, the spinach, and the tin spoons. During this conversation I had been thinking of how she kept house, and made the beds, and of the wear and tear of a life on small means, and I looked at Rachel's hands fearing that they might be ugly or out of shape. They were small, white, plump, and tapered like a bobbin. They were the hands of a princess. (de Musset 1905, 123-124)

The "exceedingly shining" riches on the table most probably looked excessive to Pound. Pound suppresses the attributes which are over-expressive and shift our focus to the personal attitude of the narrator. With his pictorial approach to imagery, Pound must



have also been cautious about the color palette of the scene: the shining gold distorts the perception of the “arrangement of colors” in the scene and distracts the reader from the most important light in the scene, that of the candles. Besides, Pound must have tried to avoid accentuating the obvious contrast between the “priceless” jewelry and the modest supper, or between the “maid” and the “princess”, as well as the sentimentalism of the “life on small means” reflections. Pound shifts the accent from the social issues to esthetics. He deletes personal emotions of the narrator (except those directed at the main focus of the scene, i.e. the arts) in a manner similar to that, in which he will cross out the extra and the personal from Eliot’s *The Waste Land* a few years later.

The second excluded paragraph contains Rachel’s irritated words addressed to the narrator:

Yes! I have read certain articles candidly and conscientiously written, and nothing has been better for me or more useful to me; but there are some people who use their pen to write lies, to destroy! those people are worse than robbers or assassins. They kill the mind with pin-pricks! Oh! I feel that I would like to poison them! (de Musset 1905, 128)

Most probably, this over-passionate remark on drama critics was sacrificed by Pound because it distracts the reader or the audience from the main passion (or emotion) of the extract, i.e. passion for art. Once again, Pound seems to control the image structure and reduces the personal component of the scene, not allowing the personality of the characters dominate the play.

One more minor omission is the narrator’s comments related to Sarah’s (Rachel’s sister’s) character:

Let me say, that that morning she had done something, I do not know what, that did not meet her mother’s approval, and that it was due to the repeated petitions of her sister that she owed her pardon and her place at table. (de Musset 1905, 124)

Pound, as it seems, gets rid of the side conflicts, which might affect the unity of the play (the unity of the image) and distract the audience from the figure of the main character, i.e. Rachel. He obviously does not want the banality of little family conflicts compromise the artistic atmosphere of the evening.

These little alterations suggest that Pound is moving towards his and Fenollosa's ideal of Noh as, on the one hand, an "unemphasized art", and on the other hand, an art form based on the "intensification of the Image" and the unity of the Image. Apart from that, there must be something in the de Musset extract itself that reminds Pound of the Japanese genre. What might it be? At a closer look, as I will show, the text does seem to comply with Pound's (and Fenollosa's) "Japanese" criteria of a work of art.

#### 4.1.2. Japan super-posed

In Owada's classification<sup>275</sup>, *A Supper* obviously belongs to the fourth type, to "the pieces which have a very quiet and deep interest, to touch the audience to their very hearts" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 16). This is the type which Pound himself describes as probably the most interesting one.

The unity of the image, which Fenollosa, Pound and Yeats consistently present as the basic characteristic of the Noh, seems to be essential in *A Supper*, too. Foreshadowing the effect (and possibly guiding the reader?) in the introduction, Pound remembers a scene from *Nishikigi*, a play he calls "a closest parallel" to his thought:

Listen to my Japanese priest. He has come upon two ghosts in a field.  
Suddenly a grey cave shows a light. He sees bright figures within it. He sees  
there is a flicker of fire. (Pound 1987b, 23)

The image of gleaming light permeates the whole Pound's play, creating the atmosphere, highlighting the main character and establishing the "quiet and deep interest, to touch the audience to their very hearts". The image appears in the text in different disguises.

In the beginning of the conversation at the table, Rachel remembers the poverty she used to live in, the times when she used simple tin knives and forks. Here the candlelight appears first:

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<sup>275</sup> In *Noh, or Accomplishment*, Pound, explaining the sequence of Noh plays in a complete performance (Ban-Gumi) first quotes Ka-Gen-Sho, a "secret book of Noh" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 14-16), and then Owada's interpretation of the order of plays (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 16-17).

I remember one day I wanted to make some punch in one of these tin spoons. I put my spoon over the candle, and it melted in my hand. (Pound 1987b, 26)

Next, Rachel makes punch for the visitors, and the light of the burning punch fills the room:

A silver bowl was brought her into which she put some sugar and kirsch; then she set her punch afire. (Pound 1987b, 27)

Later on, the subject of light and darkness develops in the further conversation; the “twilight effect” provides a setting for the discussion of arts, which is to follow:

Rachel. I love this blue flame.

Myself. It is much prettier when there are no lights in the room.

Rachel. Sophie, take out the candles.

The Mother. Never, never. What an idea!

Rachel. They are intolerable! ... Pardon, mamma, you are good, you are charming (she embraces her); but I want Sophie to remove the candles.

(One of the gentlemen took the two candles and put them under the table. - Twilight effect. - The mother, by turns green and blue by the light from the blazing punch, turned her eyes on me and observed my every movement. The candles reappeared.) (Pound 1987b, 27)

Describing Phedre, the role she dreams of playing, Rachel characterizes her as “a woman who was consumed by fire and tears” (Pound 1987b, 29). Thus, the subject of inner light is introduced.

Returning to the room with a volume of Racine, Rachel “sat down by my side, and snuffed the candle” (Pound 1987b, 29), as the narrator remarks. The candle snuffed, the inner light becomes foregrounded, and we see the light of Rachel’s eyes. Reading *Phedre*, Rachel becomes transformed, as if by some inner light: “All at once her eyes glistened – the genius of Racine lighted her face – she turned pale, she blushed” (Pound 1987b, 30).

And finally, in the narrator’s concluding description of the whole scene, the inner light (the glow of Rachel’s cheeks, her brilliant eyes) and the flickering candle light both contribute to a Rembrandt-like effect:

Fatigue, a little hoarseness, the punch, and the lateness of the hour, an almost feverish glow in her little cheeks framed in a nightcap, and an indescribable charm surrounding her whole being, her brilliant eyes asking

my opinion, her childish smile, lastly even the disarranged table, the candle with its flickering flame, the sleepy mother by our side, all these things made a picture worthy of Rembrandt... (Pound 1987b, 30)

When the atmosphere is ruined by Rachel's father returning home, she leaves the room, and the light follows her: "It is revolting! I will get a light and read by myself in bed" (Pound 1987b, 30).

"Light" is also the final word in the dramatic extract, as the narrator concludes the story:

Returning home, I hasten to write to you, with the fidelity of a stenographer, all the details of this strange evening, thinking that you will keep them, and that some day they will come to light. (Pound 1987b, 30)

Thus, the light image develops in the text from the symbol of poverty through the "twilight effect" to the inner light illuminating the actress; and finally, the image is metaphorized in the narrator's final remark. The image is obviously associated with arts throughout the play: the light of the candle, the burning eyes of the heroine reciting Racine, and the whole scene becoming a piece of art ("worthy of Rembrandt"), too, thus becoming "light". And it is Pound who does help it finally "come to light".

There is some other imagery contributing to the unified effect in the play, too. There is a motif of tears: Rachel wept on stage at the beginning of the extract, then she speaks about Phedre, "consumed by fire and tears", and, finally, in the last scene, "great tears filled her eyes" (Pound 1987b, 30). Besides, there is the image of the silver bowl with punch she sets afire, which finds a parallel in the Racine volume, which she carries like a "sacred vessel":

<...> in a moment she returned, holding the volume of Racine; her bearing and her step expressed an indefinable something solemn and religious, like that of a priest officiating at the altar, carrying the sacred vessels. (Pound 1987b, 29)

Thus, the unifying motif in the de Musset/Pound text appears to be that of art: the sacred vessel of art, in its pain and in its beauty.

The super-position principle in the case of *A Supper* may be traced in the paradigm of allusions, which Pound obviously admires in the de Musset text, and which he augments with some of his own. Unlike the already discussed haiku-like poem “In a Station of the Metro” (1913), what *A Supper* presents is not that much the super-position of images (although, the final passage of the narrator, literally a list of images, quoted above, does comply with Pound’s “Japanese” image juxtaposition concept) but mostly the superposition of texts and cultures. Pound rewrites (almost literally) a text of De Musset (which in its turn claims to be a literal recording of a conversation), in which the latter makes his characters read another text, that of Racine’s *Phedre*, and the reading scene points at Rembrandt. Pound wraps up this multi-layer text within the Noh genre conventions and provides explicit parallels from *Nishikigi*, thus offering his reader or audience a “Japanese” reading of De Musset’s reading of Racine<sup>276</sup>. It reminds Pound’s own definition of Noh as “one set of acts in relation to a whole other set of acts, a whole series of backgrounds and memories” (Pound 1987a, 157).

In his minor omissions, Pound, getting rid of the superfluous details and side-conflicts, seems to follow the tradition of Racine<sup>277</sup> himself. There is not a lot<sup>278</sup> that Pound wrote on Racine<sup>279</sup>, but the two key words which characterize Racine to him seem to be “propriety” and “restraint”. In an unrelated essay, a review of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Duke of Plaza Toro*, published in *The Outlook*, October 18, 1919, Pound, speaking of

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<sup>276</sup> “Rachel cannot read you all of the *Phedre*, but that is all I have altered,” apologetically confesses Pound at the very end of the text (Pound 1987b, 30).

<sup>277</sup> In a letter to Robert Lowell (25 December, 1950), George Santayana compares Pound to Racine. Having praised Racine’s “delicacy of the sentiments and the music of the verse” and having quoted *Phedre*, Santayana continues: “So his excellence as a poet comes like <...> Ezra Pound’s according to Eliot, in being an ‘ottimo fabbro’” (Santayana 2008, 313). Eliot’s exact quote in the dedication to *The Waste Land*, which Santayana slightly modifies, reads “il miglior fabbro”, which is Dante’s description of Arnault Daniel, a Provençal poet.

<sup>278</sup> Stephen J. Adams notes: “Pound’s ambiguities about the stage appear as well in certain omissions: His writings seem virtually silent, for example, on Racine or Molière, Schiller or Victor Hugo” (Tryphonopoulos and Adams 2005, 286).

<sup>279</sup> In the 1910 edition of *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound mentions Racine with a clear negative characteristic: “The perverted asceticism which is called ‘classic’ in drama like Racine’s, or verse like Pope’s, never existed in the Greek” (Pound 1910, 4). In the revised edition of 1952, however, his wording slightly changes and becomes much milder: “The sort of vestal asceticism which is called ‘classic’ in drama like Racine’s, or verse like Pope’s, was certainly not ubiquitous in Greek” (Pound 2005, 13).

the “perfect propriety of the performance”, makes a reference to this restraint of Racine’s:

This propriety is so inoffensive that one does not perceive its existence; yet by the whole tone of moderation it attains the dignity not only of a social but also of an artistic convention, as defensible in its way as is the alleged restraint of Corneille or Racine... (Pound 2008, 51)

The concept of Racinean artistic “restraint” must have been close to Pound, as in a letter to Joyce (10 June, 1919), it reoccurs again, now as a recommendation regarding changes (deletions) in the two last (un)ambiguous lines of the “Sirens” episode of *Ulysses*, which Pound suggests cutting: “Classic detachment wd. suggest Racinian off stage, suppression of last two lines, & simple constatation...” (Read 1967, 159).

## 4.2. “Japanese” troubadour: *Tristan*

*Tristan* is the most developed Noh-like piece in Pound’s manuscript and obviously the most interesting one, as it most clearly shows the nature of Pound’s “Japanese” quest.

In an article on ‘Le Mariage de Figaro’, published in *The New Age* (December 6, 1917), Pound briefly talks about Wagner’s *Tristan*, which he watched and found inadequate:

Mullings, despite his unwieldy appearance, was impressive in “Tristan,” and his very hugeness and the shortness of his arms and his stillness helped in the effect. One felt the man, the fictitious man of the play, the victim of fate, the immobile mass of humanity, beaten by blow after blow, unable to shield himself.

<...> In the “Tristan,” whatever one had felt in the first act was a little worn away in the last act; the Jaeger of Tristan’s dressing gown distressed the eye; and then the opera is not built right. However, I cannot at present go into the whole problem of virtues and defects of Wagner as a musician. (Pound 2008, 64)

Dissatisfaction with the opera’s being “not built right” must have contributed to Pound’s decision to offer his own version of the legend, which meant a lot to him. As a matter of fact, this was not his first attempt to approach the story; Pound’s *Tristan* has a long history.

There are numerous references to the legend in Pound's early poetry, even in its pre-Imagist period<sup>280</sup>. To name a few, there is "Praise of Ysolt" (*Personae*, 1909), "To Ysolt, for Pardon" (*A Lume Spento*, 1908), "Sestina for Ysolt" (*Exultations*, 1909), "For Ysolt. The Triad of Dawn" (*San Trovaso Notebook*). The fact that Ysolt appears to be the most frequently remembered character of the legend in Pound's verse (Tristan and the castle of Tintagoel are mentioned much less frequently) has a possible biographical explanation.

In this context, Pound scholars unanimously point at Hilda Doolittle, who, according to K.K. Ruthven,

renamed as a romance heroine 'Is-hilda', or 'Ysolt', had been the recipient of a number of love-poems, written by Pound and collected as 'Hilda's Book' in the period when he was a postgraduate at Penn and she a drop-out from Bryn Mawr... (Ruthven 2013, 50)

Thus, looking at the aforementioned texts, it is not easy to say whether they could be read as a commentary on the legend or whether they are merely dedications to Pound's Is-hilda. However, the important thing is that Pound obviously relates to the myth, even when speaking about his own personal love story, and places his own image and that of Hilda within the context of the legend. In this respect, the early poems foreshadow many characteristic aspects of *Tristan*.

Pound's early *Tristan*-related poems present Ysolt as a romantic character<sup>281</sup> who provides inspiration for the author's poetry, not unlike the heroines of the Troubadours. Ysolt is the one who makes the poet keep writing in his search of beauty, despite the fact that he feels the inadequacy of his own writings compared with those of great masters: "There be many singers greater than thou", as he confesses in "Praise of Ysolt" (Pound 1982, 79). She inspires him to write, even if he fears that his own verse is inferior to the source of inspiration: "Freighted with fragrance of thyself and furred/ In stumbling words", as he describes his poems in "To Ysolt. For Pardon" (Pound 1982, 235). In a

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<sup>280</sup> References to Ysolt appear in Pound's *Cantos*, too. Cf. Canto XCIII (written during his incarceration in St. Elizabeths Hospital), where Pound twice remembers "Iseutz la bionda" (Pound 1996, 624). Ysolt in this Canto is also one of those whom Pound begs for compassion ("Ysolt, Ydone, have compassion" (Pound 1996, 628).

<sup>281</sup> For further discussion of Pound's early image of the character and of related color imagery, see, e.g., de Nagy 1960.

sense, most of the Ysolt-related verse turn out to be not poems of love per se, but poems about the birth of poetry.

The color palette in these early poems is quite similar and, as a matter of fact, reminiscent of that of the Noh-modeled *Tristan*. There is a common opposition of the dark and the bright in the poems. The opposition is visible in the images of brown leaves and green leaves, night and morn, the twilight and a “woman as fire upon the pine woods” in “The Praise of Ysolt”, or in the “dust-grey ways” and the “green bough-banners” in “To Ysolt, for Pardon”. The night “spirit of the gloom”, the “black gloom”, and “o’er-clouded days” are opposed to the “Thru foliate sunlight madrigal of bees” at dawn, as well as to the flame of “my heart a-burning” and the expectation that “all things be bright” in “For Ysolt. The Triad of Dawn” (Pound 1982, 236). The images of a “cloak of greyness”, the “twilight greyness”, and the “evening’s greyness” are juxtaposed with the stars and flowers in “Sestina for Ysolt”. Unsurprisingly, grey and green will also be the colors of *Tristan*.

Even closer to Pound’s Noh-shaped *Tristan* is his “Threnos”<sup>282</sup> (Pound 1982, 30) and “Li Bel Chasteus”<sup>283</sup> (Pound 1982, 28), two poems included in *Canzoni* (1911), which are also directly related to the legend. Like *Tristan*, “Threnos” and “Li Bel Chasteus” present a retrospective view of the story. In “Li Bel Chasteus”, Tintagoel appears as a miraculous shelter “bove the ways of men”, where Tristan and Ysolt lived beyond all the worries of the world:

But circle-arched above the hum of life  
We dwelt amid the ancient boulders... (Pound 1982, 28)

The characters appear as exiles, and there is happiness in their seclusion. *Tristan* will also present exiles (though, not in the castle, but in the forest of Morrois) and that time appears to have been the happiest for them both. The color choice in “Li Bel Chasteus” is already familiar: the grey stones and shadows versus the “great green waves”. And there is a reference to art, too: a song that only the two characters seem to be able to hear. Living in this “hold” as happy exiles and not noticing the world around them, Tristan and Ysolt could still hear a “faint murmuring as undersong”, a “faint wind melody”, that died beneath their gates.

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<sup>282</sup> Greek, “dirge”.

<sup>283</sup> Initially included in the unpublished *Hilda Book*, and in 1908, in *A Lume Spento*.



In "Threnos", their story is already over:

No more for us the little sighing,  
No more the winds at twilight trouble us. (Pound 1982, 30)

The picture is close to that of *Tristan*, where pieces of the story are recalled and re-enacted by the ghosts of Tristan and Ysolt. The colors in the poem present a contrast between the dark (twilight) and the "fair"<sup>284</sup>, although the latter is now appropriated by death: "Lo the fair dead!", repeated five times in the poem. Everything is in the past; Tintagoel, "the meeting place," too, but the song (even if it's a dirge, as the title implies) remains.

Thus, there seems to be a certain pattern about the Tristan/Ysolt motif in Pound's early poetry. Pound undoubtedly identifies with Tristan (the exile, the poet, the troubadour) and the pain and drama of the story become associated with the emergence of beauty, a song, which outlives the pain. The color contrast also seems to be consistent with the idea. The pattern, further elaborated, remains in the Noh version of *Tristan*.

#### 4.2.1. French original and Japanese rearrangement

Among several existing versions of the legend, Pound most probably relies on those of Beroul<sup>285</sup> and Thomas<sup>286</sup>, which he also mentions in *The Spirit of Romance* (1910): "the one immortal tale, the 'Tristan,' comes down to us in the versions of Thomas and of Beroul" (Pound 1910, 78). Among these two, Pound seems to be primarily following Beroul's version, as only Beroul's story suggests a three-year potency of the love potion (cf. Pound's "Three years' craft in the cup" in *Tristan*). Besides, there are several direct references to Beroul's version in Pound's text, as I will show later.

Pound sees the story not as a mere legend, one among numerous others; he definitely sees something exceptional in its beauty:

The Tristan and Ysolt legend stands apart from the other romances. The original energy and beauty of its motif have survived even the ignoble later

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<sup>284</sup> The phrase "fair dead" from the poem is used by Pound in another related text, in the poem "Satiemus" (*Canzoni*). "Satiemus" also speaks about "her fair bright head", which links it with *Tristan* and its Yseult "of fare face".

<sup>285</sup> Bérout, a French poet of the twelfth century, author of the "vulgar" version of *Tristan*.

<sup>286</sup> Thomas of Britain, a twelfth century poet, author of the "courtly" version of *Tristan*.

versions, and have drawn to them beautiful words and beautiful minor incidents. (Pound 1910, 82)

So writes Pound in *The Spirit of Romance*, using the root “beauty” three times within one sentence. In accordance with his “restraint” strategy, which we saw at work in *A Supper*, he will, however, try to get rid of all the “beautiful words and beautiful minor incidents”. Thus, considering the plot, Pound believes that originally the story was substantially shorter and the characters must have died some time after their exile in the forest of Morrois:

There is discovery; exile; life together in the forest of Marrois. Presumably, in some lost version, their tragic death occurs about this time; but later interest demands that their adventures be prolonged. (Pound 1910, 82)

Pound's version of *Tristan* seems to follow this vision; the ghosts of Tristan and Yseult speak about “many a time, many a time in the forest” and about the “three years” of their story; and the ghost of Yseult warns Tristan about the dangers of his appearing in Cornwall<sup>287</sup>:

Oh why are you here? You were gone out of Cornwall. You have given your word to the King. <...> You are dead if the court come upon you. (Pound 1987b, 37)

Their story seems to have ended after their exile, as there is no reference to further reconciliations with the king or of Tristan's several returns to Cornwall.

Pound uses a number of details which directly point at Berouls's version of the story. Yseult's eyes are “like malachite gone transparent” (Pound 1987b, 36); in Beroul, she has “les eulz out vers, les cheveus sors” (Lacy 1998, 132) [“her eyes were green, her hair golden” (Lacy 1998, 133)]. Pound's Yseult wears “a large emerald ring” (Pound 1987b, 36); Beroul's Yseult wears an emerald ring too large for her thin finger:

La roi'ne avoit en son doi  
L'anel d'or des noces de roi,  
O esmeraudes planteiz  
Mervelles fu li doiz greliz  
A poi que li aneaus n'en chiet. (Lacy 1998, 86)

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<sup>287</sup> Tristan left Cornwall after their exile and the reconciliation of Yseult with King Mark.

[The queen had on her finger a wedding ring, set with emeralds, that the king had given her. Her finger was now so very thin that the ring almost fell off. (Lacy 1998, 87)]

Pound's Tristan wears an "opaque green stone, supposedly green jasper" (Pound 1987b, 36). In Beroul, Yseult gives a green jasper ring to Tristan as a sign of her love:

Amis Tristran, j'ai un anel  
Un jasse vert a un seel.  
Beau sire, por l'amor de moi  
Portez l'anel en vostre doi (Lacy 1998, 124)

[Dear Tristran, I have a ring, a green jasper with a seal. Good sir, for love of me, wear the ring on your finger. (Lacy 1998, 125)]

The dog mentioned in Pound's text several times cannot be the "fairy dog"<sup>288</sup> found in some later versions of the legend (e.g., in *The Romance of Tristan & Iseult Drawn from the Best French Sources*, retold by J. Bédier and translated into English by H. Belloc<sup>289</sup>), but rather the hunting dog of Tristan, Husdent, mentioned in Beroul's text<sup>290</sup>. Yseult indirectly proves that by her question: "Could you teach a dog to hunt without baying?" (Pound 1987b, 37).

Pound's Yseult uses old French words describing her former clothes: "bliaut of scarlet or of white chainsil" (tunic, linen). Both words, as well as their attributes, come from Beroul's text, see, for example:

En un bilaut de paile bis  
Estoit la dame estroit vestue  
E d'un fil d'or menu cosue<sup>291</sup> (Lacy 1998, 58)

[The lady was dressed in a fitted tunic of dark silk, finely stitched with gold thread. (Lacy 1998, 59)]

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<sup>288</sup> Cf. Pound's words: "The incandescent fairy dog Pticru creeps into the tale from some quaint Celtic source" (Pound 1910, 83).

<sup>289</sup> *The Romance of Tristan & Iseult Drawn from the Best French Sources*, published by George Allen, London, 1903.

<sup>290</sup> Tristan's dog, which finds the characters in the Morrois forest, and which Tristan has to teach hunting without barking, in order not to betray their hiding place: "Se il criout, feroit nos prendre,/ Or vuel peine metre et entendre/ A beste prendre sanz cri'er" (Lacy 1998, 78).

<sup>291</sup> "Blanc chainsil" and "porpre bis" are also mentioned in the early French text, see, for example, Lacy 1998, 124.

Pound's Japanese reading of the story of Tristan and Yseult, besides being the most finished among his plays modeled on the Noh tradition, is also closest to the Noh concept as it is understood by Pound.

In *Noh, or Accomplishment*, Pound describes a typical exposition of a Noh play in the following way:

A play very often represents some one going a journey. The character walks along the bridge or about the stage, announces where he is and where he is going, and often explains the meaning of his symbolic gestures, or tells what the dance means, or why one is dancing. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 19)

Accordingly, Pound's *Tristan* starts with an introductory monologue of the Prologue, which defines the setting. There is also a traveling character, the Sculptor, who is on his way to find a mysterious tree; there is a Man and a Woman, who will appear as the ghosts of Tristan and Yseult; there is a dance of the ghosts and, in the end, their final disappearance. Like in a typical Noh play, the traveling Sculptor meets a common woman and starts a conversation with her; in the second half of the play, she reappears as a ghost, together with the ghost of Tristan, and the ghosts relate their story (or at least try to do so) to the Sculptor, who, having witnessed the ghosts and heard their tale, is deeply moved by the latter and seems to be transformed by the experience.

It is not by accident that Pound's traveling character is not a priest but a Sculptor. Pound's Noh play is cleansed of any religious connotations, common in the traditional Noh genre, but what substitutes religion appears to be art. The Sculptor, having experienced the encounter with the legendary ghosts, is expected not only to be transformed himself, but also to produce something, a piece of art.

Nor is it an accident that the Sculptor confesses that he is French: "besides I am French" (Pound 1987b, 33). At this point, one cannot help remembering Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, another French sculptor and a member of the Vorticist group, who also once made a trip from France to Britain. "I walked all over South Europe," says Pound's Sculptor. "Born in the South<sup>292</sup> of France, Gaudier <...> found himself in England" (Pound 1970a, 18), writes Pound in his *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir* (1916).

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<sup>292</sup> Henri Gaudier was actually born in central France, in Saint-Jean-de-Braye near Orléans.

As it is common for Noh plays, the action is laid in a sacred place. The castle, set in Cornwall, is accordingly described as related to an ancient classical tradition:

Think you will see a castle of great stones  
Such as Etruscan builders might have used  
Ere Pericles made Athens... (Pound 1987b, 33)

The description adds another layer to Pound's super-position of imagery and widens the cultural perspective. The Japanese version of the story of Tristan and Yseult is set in modern Cornwall, by an "Etruscan" castle.

#### 4.2.2. Image unity and super-position of voices

The unifying image in Pound's play is that of a tree. In the beginning, the Sculptor is looking for a mysterious tree: "There is a tree here. At least, I think it is here" (Pound 1987b, 33). In his conversation with the Woman, who comes out of the castle, he explains the nature of his quest and describes the mysterious tree in quite ordinary and rational terms:

I came to see a quince tree. I read about it in a book. It comes out in March before the other trees. No, there are not a number, there is one tree, set on a cape in Cornwall, and the Gulf Stream brings it out before any other tree has budded. (Pound 1987b, 33)

Thus, at the beginning of the play the tree, even if unusual, appears as a purely natural phenomenon, and even if it is the first one to bud in spring, its budding is deliberately accounted for by the natural impact of the Gulf Stream warmth.

This unique tree, though, is totally unknown to the locals the Sculptor has talked to: "No Englishman ever heard of the tree" (Pound 1987b, 34). The Sculptor, however, is quite determined to see the tree blossoming, which he announces several times: "I have told you it blossoms in March, always on a certain day. I have come to watch the blossom. I shall see it tomorrow" (Pound 1987b, 34).

The Sculptor in his quest for a "strange tree" reminds of many typical Noh characters. Compare, for example, the beginning of *Suma Genji*, where the Waki introduces himself and his goal, also mentioning a certain legendary tree:

I, Fujiwara no Okinori,  
Am come over the sea from Hiuga;  
I am a priest from the shinto temple at Miyazaki.  
And, as I lived far afield,  
I could not see the temple of the great god at Ise;  
And now I am a-mind to go thither,  
And am come to Suma, the sea-board.  
Here Genji lived, and here I shall see the young cherry.  
The tree that is so set in the tales... (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 37)

Besides *Suma Genji*, a certain “unusual tree” of the Noh tradition also appears, for example, at the beginning of *Tamura*:

The Waki comes on and says that he is going to Kyoto to see the sights. It is spring, and he comes from Kiyomidzu. Sakura are blooming. He wants to ask questions about the place. The boy comes on, describes the flowers, and says that the light of the goddess Kwannon has made them brighter than usual. The Waki asks him who he is " to be standing there in the shade and sweeping up the fallen petals". (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 83-84)

A priest coming to see certain unusually beautiful blossoms is also to be found in *Kakitsubata*, which starts with the following introduction of the character:

I am a priest who travels to see the sights in many provinces; I have been to Miyako city and seen all the ward shrines and places of interest; I will now push on to the east country. Every night it is a new bed and the old urge of sorrow within me. I have gone by Mino and Owari without stopping, and I am come to Mikawa province to see the flowers of Kakitsubata in the height of their full season. Now the low land is before me, I must go down and peer closely upon them. Time does not stop and spring passes.  
The lightfoot summer comes nigh us  
The branching trees and the bright unmindful grass  
Do not forget their time.  
They take no thought, yet remember  
To show forth their colour in season. (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 280)

Like in many Noh plays, a local Woman in Pound's *Tristan* appears to know something about the tree and its blossoms and directs the traveler to where he can find it. But, unlike in the Noh tradition, where the mystery of the blossoms is taken for granted by both the traveler and the locals, the Woman in Pound's play obviously

ridicules the Sculptor's "French"<sup>293</sup> confidence and his rationalist explanation of the tree's early blossoming. The irony she speaks with distinguishes her among her traditional Japanese counterparts:

Sculptor: What do you know of "my" tree? I thought no one else new it.  
Woman: Even we English read French.  
Sculptor: But tell me about it.  
Woman: Oh but you know so much. You think it is the Gulf Stream. (Pound 1987b, 34)

Even after the Woman disappears (as numerous traditional Noh "locals" do before they are transformed into their "real" ghost forms), her ironic voice keeps sounding:

[Female] Voice: (mocking) The Gulf Stream, oh, oh, oh, the Gulf Stream.  
(Pound 1987b, 35)

When the Sculptor finds the tree, he is puzzled: "He rubs his forehead – not his eyes – goes over toward the tree, looks carefully at it" (Pound 1987b, 35), writes Pound. The little detail about rubbing the forehead, "not the eyes", suggests that the character starts doubting his ideas, not his vision<sup>294</sup>. The tree appears to him as an ordinary one, there seems to be no mystery about it: "This is a quince, no sign of hip or haw, let alone blossom" (Pound 1987b, 35).

After Yseult touches the tree and after Yseult and Tristan's ghosts perform their symbolic dance, the Sculptor suddenly sees the transformation of the tree:

The leaf has come out,  
The green leaves have surrounded the flowers. (Pound 1987b, 38)

However, the metaphor of the tree and its flowers is revealed in the words of the Sculptor even earlier, right after his encounter with the ghosts, i.e. even before he sees the actual flowers, as he refers to the beautiful ghost dance as if it was a blossom: "I came to look at a tree, and I have seen a strange blossom" (Pound 1987b, 38).

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<sup>293</sup> Cf. the image of the rational France as the "South" in the Vorticist manifestos, discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Pound's quoted above comment on the priest from *Nishikigi* in the foreword to *A Supper*: "he loses his scientific detachment, and only wants to see how the things happened".

The story of Tristan and Yseult, unfolded before his eyes, is the real blossom<sup>295</sup>, the blooming tree just testifies to the miracle. The tragic story has become a beautiful piece of art and the blossoming tree, like the trees grown over the characters' graves in the legend, confirms the transformation. There is no talk of the Gulf Stream any more, the Sculptor just acknowledges the miracle, without questioning it: "I have not known how it happened" (Pound 1987b, 38).

Pound's use of color intensifies the "unity of the Image", as was the case in *A Supper*. The stage directions before the play describe the scene in the following manner: "A doorway of three long stones in a ruin, supposedly on a cliff; to the left a gleam of blue feldspar colour" (Pound 1987b, 31). The Prologue develops the image of the scenery, establishing two major colors of the picture, the blue-green of feldspar<sup>296</sup> and grey, both already familiar from Pound's early Tristan and Yseult poems:

And a sea  
Harsh, grey as granite, stretches out beneath us,  
Shot, to the south, with waves like microcline  
Giving a bluish light between the grey. (Pound 1987b, 33)

When Yseult's ghost first appears ("There is a flash of sleeve in the doorway"), the Sculptor describes the apparition as a blue wave: "The blue wave flashed in the light, but how odd the light is" (Pound 1987b, 35). Tristan will also describe himself as a wave: "I was as a wave in the rock" (Pound 1987b, 37), i.e. with an image combining the grey of the rock and the green-blue of the sea<sup>297</sup>. Similar imagery and a similar color palette may be found, for example, in *Suma Genji*, where the character is presented in the following manner:

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. *Suma Genji*, where the wondering priest comes to Suma to see "the tree, the young cherry", and Shite, an apparition of Genji, promises the blossom to be metaphorical: "That blossom will flare in a moment", and Pound confirms his words in a footnote: "The blossom will really come out: it is a day of anniversary or something of that kind; also Genji will appear in his proper glory" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 38).

<sup>296</sup> The color image is consistent throughout Pound's entire oeuvre. Cf. "That azure feldspar hight the microcline" in "Canzone: of Angels" in *Canzoni* (Pound 1982, 140), "Wing like feldspar/ and the foot-grip to hold balance/ Green-yellow the sunlight" (Pound 1996, 793) in one of the last Cantos (Canto CIX), or "the rain beat as with colour of feldspar/ blue as the flying fish off Zoagli" in Canto LXXXIII (Pound 1996, 549).

<sup>297</sup> In Canto CXIII, Iseutz's name appears in association with the colors of "turquoise and gold" (Pound, *The Cantos* 1996, 624).



He flashed with the honoured colours.  
He the true-gleaming.  
Blue-grey is the garb they wear here.  
Blue-grey he fluttered in Suma  
His sleeves were like the grey sea-waves;  
They moved with curious rustling.  
Like the noise of the restless waves <...> (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 43-44)

Yseult's shoes are also green: "She has on very quiet, soft shoes of green suede" (Pound 1987b, 35). Tristan and Yseult's rings are green, too: "Yseult wears a large emerald ring, Tristan a like opaque green stone, supposedly green jasper" (Pound 1987b, 36). Tristan speaks of Yseult's eyes, which are "like malachite gone transparent". Yseult nostalgically remembers the forests of Morrois, "the high green of the forest" (Pound 1987b, 36).

The duality of color, accentuating the ambiguity of the characters living simultaneously in the past and present time, is also manifest in Tristan and Yseult's clothes:

Both he and Yseult are in costumes gilt and brilliant on one side only, or else one side is covered by a grey cloak of the same colour as the background. <...> They are almost invisible when their grey side is toward the audience. (Pound 1987b, 35-36)

In the end, Tristan and Yseult both fade in the grey of the background, but green leaves appear on the tree. Intensifying the image, according to his understanding of the Noh technique, Pound does it even more insistently than his Japanese counterparts.

Like Pound's *A Supper*, his Japanese version of *Tristan* is void of all side-conflicts and plot digressions, numerous in all known versions of the legend. Pound focuses on one main image, that involving tragic love and beauty. Like in many Noh plays, the plot is presented by the ghosts of the characters, recollecting their life-story. Pound obviously relies on such plays as *Kayoi Komachi* or *Nishikigi*, where the ghosts of lovers are kept apart. However, Pound's *Tristan* lacks the religious connotations, essential in both *Kayoi Komachi*<sup>298</sup> and *Nishikigi*<sup>299</sup>. There is no religious constituent to *Tristan* and Yseult's

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<sup>298</sup> Cf. Pound's comments in a footnote to *Kayoi Komachi* : "The crux of the play is that Shosho would not accept Buddhism, and thus his spirit and Ono's are kept apart" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 27).

drama. Nor is there any priest who will come and resolve the drama, the latter is to remain unresolved: "We are neither alone nor together" (Pound 1987b, 37). Instead, there is an artist (the already mentioned Sculptor) to testify to the tragedy, and the unresolved drama itself becomes the source of beauty.

Compressing the story of Tristan and Yseult, Pound, contrary to the Noh tradition, does not provide any narrative account of the relationship. He lets the reader/audience reconstruct the story by several details, hints, or unfinished phrases scattered through the characters' speech. The details of the story are not presented in their chronological order, instead, they seem to come at random and in a manner consistent with the image super-position technique.

Thus, the name of the castle where the drama took place is the last thing we learn in the play: "Tintagoel" is the last word the ghost of Yseult says before disappearing<sup>300</sup>. The "exposition" of the story, an episode from Tristan's youth, comes in the second half of the play:

A boy stolen by merchants,  
Standing among strange wares... (Pound 1987b, 36)

An interesting detail about this "exposition" is that Yseult here cannot be referring to her own memories, as the boy was stolen by merchants long before she met Tristan for the first time. Yseult here is speaking not of her own experiences but rather quoting a later narrative built on hers and Tristan's drama.

The beginning of Tristan and Yseult's relationship appears twice in the play. First, in an unfinished phrase "When first you came..." (Pound 1987b, 36), pronounced by Yseult in the middle of the text, and then in the very last words of Yseult's final monologue: "A man came out of Lyonesse, a tall man, a good archer..." (Pound 1987b, 37). As a result, the story appears to be static and "out of time". The drama develops not as a linear narrative, but rather as super-position of numerous anachronistic images.

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<sup>299</sup> Cf. the same footnote: "In *Nishikigi*, the ghosts of the two lovers are kept apart because the woman had steadily refused the hero's offering of charm sticks. The two ghosts are brought together by the piety of a wandering priest" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 27). Similarly, in *Kayoi Komachi* the priest prays for the ghost lovers, and as a result, "Both their sins vanished. They both became pupils of Buddha, both Komachi and Shosho" (Fenollosa and Pound 1916, 36).

<sup>300</sup> Similarly, the name of the castle appears but in the very last lines in "Threnos" and "Li Bel Chasteus", revealing the legend allusions of the texts only in the very end.

Most of the phrases of the ghost-characters are left unfinished, which adds to the dream-like effect of the play. There are only two subjects the characters' monologues have in common: both Tristan and Yseult keep returning to the issue of the cup (the one with the love potion in it, though the latter is never named) and the forest, where they lived as exiles. The part of the story the characters refer to most often is obviously their exile in Morrois:

Many a time in Marrois, in the high green of forest,  
Hid in a light lodge of boughs... (Pound 1987b, 36)

Their words about the forest almost literally echo each other. It is especially telling, as both characters for the most part are not even able to see each other, nor do they seem to remember the same things of their past (Tristan, for example questions Yseult about the ring she has on her finger<sup>301</sup>; he does not seem to recognize the stick she has in her hand, the one "to keep a young dog from running"). The green forest, however, appears to be the culmination of their common story; and the colors ("green of forest", "light lodge") suggest that this is their happiest time together.

Yseult is the one who speaks most in Pound's text; Tristan pronounces but a few words. However, as the title suggests, it is he who is the key figure in the play. Indeed, there are several hints in the play that suggest his special role; these hints are presented by means of literary allusion, which Pound believes to be the key instrument in *Noh*.

Pound's Tristan, although his words are few, uses different languages in his speech. Thus, he, for example, addresses Yseult in old French:

Tristan:        Yseutz, cler vis.... (Pound 1987b, 37)

Tristan uses an expression borrowed from Beroul's poem, where it is used in the narrator's words, describing the thoughts of King Mark about his wife, "beautiful fair Yseult", "Yseult la bele o le cler vis" (Lacy 1998, 92). However, the expression occurs in Beroul's text once again, in the words of Tristan himself, as he addressed the King:

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<sup>301</sup> This might refer to the episode, when King Mark finds Tristan and Yseult asleep in their shelter, and, having convinced himself of their innocence, takes off the emerald ring from Yseult's finger and replaces it with his own (Lacy 1998, 96).

Mais, s'or estoit vostre plesir  
 A prendre Iseut o le cler vis,  
 N'avroit baron en cest pai's  
 Plus vos servist que je feroie. (Lacy 1998, 120)

[But if it should now be your wish to take back the fair Iseut, you would have no baron in the country who would serve you better than I. (Lacy 1998, 121)]

Here, Beroul's Tristan, trying to convince the King of his innocence, most probably describes Yseult the way the king wants to hear. In both cases, the expression presents a conventional vision of Yseult's beauty and not the way Tristan would address her. So, when Pound's ghost of Tristan uses the words, he is not only quoting other people's vision of Yseult, he is quoting a literary text about Yseult and Tristan. He is quoting his own author, i.e. Beroul. In this context, Yseult's ironic remark "Even we English read French" (Pound 1987b, 34) acquires a deeper meaning.

There are other examples of Tristan's familiarity with French texts, too. Thus, the ghost of Tristan twice describes himself as ashes in the wind: "My dust is a veil in the wind/ So frail a thing..." (Pound 1987b, 36), "My dust is upon the wind" (Pound 1987b, 37). However, if one looks at Beroul's text, it is Yseult who uses the expression:

Mex vouldroie que je fuse arse,  
 Aval le vent la poudre esparsse,  
 Jor que je vive que amor  
 Aie o home qu'o mon signer (Lacy 1998, 12)

[I would rather be buried alive/ And have my ashes scattered in the wind/  
 Than ever in my life to love/ Any man except my lord. (Lacy 1998, 13)]

Apart from Tristan's quoting Yseult or King Mark, there are some other seeming inconsistencies with Beroul in Pound's text. Not only do Pound's characters seem to confuse each other's remarks, there is also some confusion in the characters' actions, too. There is an interesting episode when Tristan addresses Yseult, giving her directions:

Gather your mantle,  
                     Wait! look in the fountain,  
 No! (Pound 1987b, 37)

Tristan is obviously remembering the day when King Mark, in order to prove his wife's and nephew's infidelity, climbs upon a tree by which Tristan and Yseult were supposed to meet. However, in Beroul's text it is Yseult who sees the king's reflection in the fountain water and, realizing the danger, starts speaking to Tristan in such a way that he would understand it, too. In Beroul, the lovers, aware of the king's presence, managed to build their conversation so artfully that it convinced the king of their innocence (Lacy 1998, 12). The strange thing in Pound's text is that it is Tristan who tells Yseult to "look in the fountain" and does it in such a direct and straightforward manner that, were King Mark really nearby, both Tristan and Yseult would be immediately dead. It looks as if in this scene, for a moment, Tristan behaves not as a character of the story, but as the author or a stage director, giving directions to Yseult-the-character and reminding her about her role.

Similarly, in the previous scene, when Tristan shows dissatisfaction with Yseult's speech ("Tristan again seems unsatisfied with the speech" (Pound 1987b, 36), writes Pound), can we tell with confidence if it is the attitude of Tristan-the-lover, or rather that of the director of the performance? Quoting Beroul's narrator, King Mark, as well as Yseult, and interfering in the action in an author-like manner, Pound's Tristan obviously appears to be something more than merely "a good archer", as Yseult calls him.

Even more interesting and self-revealing is another exclamation of Tristan's ghost, the very first words he pronounces in the play. In this scene, even before we see Tristan appear, we hear his voice from the backstage:

... pena d'amor  
Per Yseutz la blonda. (Pound 1987b, 35)

These words are not Pound's, nor do they occur in Beroul's text. Here, Pound makes his character speak Provençal and quote two lines from Bernart de Ventadorn's "Tant ai mo cor ple de joya":

Plus trac pena d'amor  
de Tristan l'amador  
que-n sofri manhta dolor  
per Izeut la blonda<sup>302</sup>. (Lommatzsch 1917, 45)

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<sup>302</sup> Pound also quotes the quatrain in his Canto CXIII, though in a slightly modified spelling:

Peitz trai pena d'amor

[I suffer greater torment in love/ Than that archlover Tristan,/ Who underwent so many pains/ to gain Isolde the Blonde. (Wilhelm 1990b, 72)]

Pound makes Tristan quote a text belonging to one of Pound's favorite literary traditions, that of the troubadours. Indeed, Pound's characters seem not only to be able to "read French", but to be versed in Provençal, too. His Tristan quotes a text, which is allegedly even older than Beroul's or Thomas's. More than that, the twist is that Pound's Tristan speaks of his pain, quoting Bernart de Ventadorn's poem, in which the troubadour, in his turn, writing about his own love torments, compares himself to Tristan. The paradigm of allusions defies the linearity of history, confirming Pound's belief that "All ages are contemporaneous" (Pound 1910, vi), and the resulting multi-layer metaphoric structure complies with Pound's and Fenollosa's understanding of the Japanese tradition of Noh as an art of allusion, not of "realism".

Pound's Tristan and Yseult live in two times simultaneously, time past and time present, and both character recognize that. Yseult is "torn between two lives/ Knowing neither" (Pound 1987b, 37), while Tristan, "trying to brush away a cloud from his eyes or memory and come at the present" (Pound 1987b, 36), is not fully able to do it and instead further complicates the temporal paradigm with literary allusions. The story of Pound's play is not a story of Tristan and Yseult per se; the characters re-enact not so much their experiences but rather stories about their story, and in this sense, *Tristan* is quite close to *A Supper*, where the heroine re-enacts the story of Racine's *Phedre*, clearly identifying with the latter.

The link between Tristan and the persona of an exile, a poet, and a troubadour of Pound's early poems is quite explicit. Tristan, who quotes Beroul and de Ventadorn, is a poet, and his use of image super-position ("Many a time in the forest.../ There was three years' craft in the cup" (Pound 1987b, 37), almost a haiku-like sentence), as well as his super-posing of literary allusions, suggests his familiarity with the Vorticist esthetic.

What further strengthens this assumption is the fact that there seems to be an implicit link between Tristan-the-poet and the wandering Sculptor in Pound's play, an invisible connection, which even Yseult is confused by, as she, on several occasions, speaking to Tristan actually addresses the Sculptor: Tristan notices that "she is not

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Que Tristans l'amador  
Qu'a suffri mainta dolor  
Per Iseutz la bionda (Pound 1996, 624)

attending to him but to the half-dazed Sculptor" (Pound 1987b, 36). Not only the voices of the time past and time present are mixed, the characters themselves appear not as distinct entities but as ethereal mediums, which at some points identify with each other<sup>303</sup>.

In the traditional Noh, the Chorus may speak for the characters, or even reveal their thoughts. Pound's arrangement of voices in the play is even more complex. Throughout the play, he makes both Tristan and Yseult sometimes speak with the Sculptor's voice/words. Thus, Yseult (even if mockingly) echoes the Sculptor's words about the house, where no one has lived for ages, and about the Golf Stream. The case of Tristan is even more interesting. Tristan for some reason tends to stand near the Sculptor; and at a certain point he suddenly starts speaking with the Sculptor's voice. The Sculptor, though apparently unaware of what is going on, seems to give power to Tristan's ghost:

Tristan: (faint) your eyes...  
(forte, making the use of the Sculptor's voice) like malachite gone  
transparent. (Pound 1987b, 36)

Even when addressing Yseult directly and asking her questions, Tristan, strange as it is, again speaks with the voice of the Sculptor:

Tristan: (standing near the Sculptor and using his voice) Whose ring  
is that green on your hand?  
<...>  
Tristan: (using the Sculptor's voice, the Sculptor moving a little) What's the  
stick for? (Pound 1987b, 36)

Clearly, there is something in common between them: Tristan, who is between the past and the present, and the "present day" Sculptor. The link is most probably about art, if we remember that Tristan's arrangement of literary allusions does seem to remind what Gaudier-Brzeska in *Blast II* sees as the essence of Vorticist sculpture, "the arrangement of surfaces" (Gaudier-Brzeska 1915, 34). Which brings us to the image of the Sculptor and to the final scene of Pound's play.

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. T.S. Eliot's notes on *The Waste Land*: "Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias" (Eliot 1922, 57).

While in the course of the whole play, it is Yseult and Tristan who use the Sculptor's words/voice, in the final passage, however, it is the Sculptor who brings together in his last speech (not unlike Eliot's Tiresias) both Tristan's and Yseult's voices, taking their exact words and super-posing them in an almost haiku-like finale:

Knowing and not knowing you,  
There is too much between us.  
Three years' craft in the cup. (Pound 1987b, 38)

Like Pound's famous haiku-like sentence ("In a Station of the Metro") compresses and metaphorically summarizes the initial long poem in super-position of imagery, the Sculptor's words present the very gist of the re-enacted drama as an arrangement of voices (or planes and surfaces in the sculpture idiom). If the image of the Sculptor has something to do with Gaudier-Brzeska, it is not a matter of chance that Pound concludes his Noh-based play with the "haiku" finale. The emergence of art from pain and drama (as the plot of his early Tristan-related poetry) appears now as the work of a Vorticist sculptor and perfectly complies with the Vorticist esthetic principles of paradigmatic image super-position.

Both plays, discussed above, clearly represent Pound's preference of the metaphoric axis to the metonymical one. How does Japan enter this structure? Japanese allusions, like all other literary allusions, become parts of the same paradigm. In this sense, the role of Japan is similar to that of Provence, as the key method is that of analogy. Besides, Japan provides a model for Pound's formal and structural analogies. However, unlike the case of his early identifications in *Personae*, now Pound does not pretend to dissolve in the Japanese genre. These are not Noh plays, these are plays modeled on the Noh tradition. In this respect, the unmistakably Vorticist "signature" he consciously leaves in *Tristan*, is especially significant.

A common feature of these two plays is the idea of transformation. Racine, re-enacted in *A Supper*, transforms the room, the light (as the major unifying image), and the main character. Tristan and Yseult's story, re-enacted by their own ghosts, transforms the place, the tree (as the central unifying image), and the characters. This reminds the already quoted several times Pound's haiku-like "Metro" poem, in which the super-position of two images (the faces in the crowd at a Metro station and the flower



petals on a tree branch) evidences the metaphorical transformation of an everyday experience into something bigger. As a result, the word "apparition" in the first line acquires new ghostly connotations, and the whole underground setting suddenly receives a new meaning, reminding of the Underworld. The gap between the lines, which makes the juxtaposition meaningful, becomes the space, where Pound stages his Noh-like pieces.

The gap becomes dramatized, as the darkness in *A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel*, which separates and unites the table conversation and the "apparition" of Phedre. The gap is the invisible wall between the characters in *Tristan*, who cannot see each other, living between the past and the present. This gap tangibly appears in the grey cloaks, hiding the characters, in the grey background, which finally consumes both of them. What remains implicit in the gap in Pound's haiku, becomes dramatized in the plays, the whole process of transformation becomes visible (dynamic, in the Vorticist terms). The static image of "petals on the wet black bough" becomes replaced by the transformation of the barren tree, which breaks into bloom before the eyes of the Sculptor and the audience.

The plays modeled on the Noh genre are Pound's only dramatic works. He did not consider his experiment successful in any way, as he never again turned to drama, nor did he try publishing the plays, or even completing some of the texts. However, Pound's experiment is interesting, because it provides evidence about the highly important "transition" period in Pound's esthetic<sup>304</sup>. In a way, the plays show Pound's attempts of utilizing the newly discovered "Japanese" manner of arranging imagery and implementing the "dynamic" concept of the Vortex.

The Noh-modeled plays, even if marginal in Pound's oeuvre, to a great extent shaped his idea of "correlation", and in this sense were anything but a dead-end in his further poetic quest. If Pound did not proceed with his dramatic experiments, it does not mean that he gave up the Noh-based concept of poetic structure. After the first attempts to realize the concept in drama, he finds a more adequate form to handle the immense historical, economic and cultural material, or, in J. Alfred Prufrock's words, to squeeze "the universe into a ball". Pound proceeds with his life-long project of *The Cantos*.

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<sup>304</sup> Peter Nichols sees Pound's plays as an indicator of a move "from the momentary intuitions of Imagism to the complex and extended structures of *The Cantos*" (Nicholls 1995, 2).

However, the organizing principle of the epic, as Pound defines it himself in a letter to his father in 1927, remains familiarly "Japanese":

- A. A. Live man goes down into world of dead.
- C. B. 'The repeat in history.'
- B. C. The 'magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, bust through from quotidian into 'divine or permanent world.' Gods, etc. (Pound 1971, 210)

Thus, Pound's drama, with its character wandering in the world of the dead (whether symbolically or literally), its paradigmatic structure based on historical analogy, and its transformation motif, becomes a link between the poet's early lyric and his major epic oeuvre.

### 4.3. Triangle project: Japan, Italy, USA

Within the scope of the current work I cannot even touch the issue of the further development of the ideogrammic esthetic in *The Cantos*, the task being too ambitious. I will, however, talk about Pound's further relationship with Japan, as it is reflected in his correspondence and in his collaboration with the Japanese media. I will argue that though Pound's mode of representing the other remains largely metaphoric and bears the trace of both the Imagist and the Vorticist esthetic, the development of the Japanese subject in Pound's writings proceeds along the same lines as do his well-know and much discussed political and economic theories of the 1930s and early 1940s, which eventually resulted in his infamous radio speeches on Radio Rome<sup>305</sup> in 1941-1943, and subsequently in the arrest for treason, three weeks in the "death cell" at the Pisa camp, deportation to the USA, the trial, and the twelve years at St. Elizabeths hospital<sup>306</sup>. I will not discuss the validity of Pound's political and economic theories, which has already been done by numerous scholars<sup>307</sup>. I will merely look at his Japan-related rhetoric, which, despite the ever-growing political bias, retained a very human touch to it.

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<sup>305</sup> See: *Ezra Pound Speaking: Radio Speeches of World War II* (1978).

<sup>306</sup> For more information on the case-related issues, see, for example: Feldman 2013, Redman 1991, Surette 1999, Torrey 1984, Carpenter 1988, 583-840.

<sup>307</sup> See, for example: Morrison 1996, Nicholls 1984, North 1991, Rabate 1986.

### 4.3.1. Literary triangle

In summer 1911, even before Pound met any of his Japanese friends in person, he received the first letter from a Japanese correspondent, Yonejiro Noguchi<sup>308</sup>, which started a life-long correspondence with Japan. Later, while working with W.B. Yeats<sup>309</sup> on Fenollosa's papers and on Yeats' own Noh-inspired *At the Hawk's Well* in winter 1915, Pound got acquainted with Michio Ito<sup>310</sup>, Tami Kume<sup>311</sup> and Jisoichi Kayano<sup>312</sup>, who considerably expanded his knowledge of Japanese culture. Although Pound's friend Michio Ito, a famous Japanese dancer, who came to London in 1914, knew initially very little about the traditional Japanese drama<sup>313</sup>, Ito began studying Noh in London, with the assistance of Tami Kume, and became one of Pound's major inspirations in the Noh studies.

Among other Japanese correspondents, besides Tami Kume and Michio Ito, an exceptional role belongs to Katue Kitasono<sup>314</sup>, whom I will discuss at length in this chapter. It is ironic, though, that in most cases Pound's correspondents and advisors are substantially less interested in traditional culture than he is: like Michio, who was mostly interested in modern European arts when Pound and Yeats started working with him, Katue Kitasono, a well-known Japanese avant-garde poet, was not in the least enthusiastic about Noh (and tradition in general)<sup>315</sup> either. However, this did not affect Pound's enthusiasm about Noh or about Japan in general.

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<sup>308</sup> Japanese poet, fiction writer, essayist and literary critic (1875-1947).

<sup>309</sup> For more on Pound and Yeats collaboration at Stone Cottage, Sussex, see Longenbach 1988.

<sup>310</sup> Japanese dancer (1893-1961). Played the Hawk in Yeats' *At the Hawk's Well* (1916).

<sup>311</sup> Japanese painter (1893-1923), who played a critical role in the production of Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well*. Kume is known, in particular, to have sung *utai*, the vocal pieces of Noh plays, at Pound's apartment in London.

<sup>312</sup> Also known as Takahama Kori (1890-1924), Japanese dramatist.

<sup>313</sup> Ito started studying dance after watching Nijinsky and the Ballet Russe in Paris in 1911. Longenbach thus describes the irony of Pound's encounter with the Japanese dancer: "When Pound and Yeats met him in 1915, they thought they had discovered the living tradition of Noh dancing. But in their ignorance they had really discovered something better: a dancer trained in the same aesthetic tradition that produced Yeats's 'The Symbolism of Poetry' and Pound's Imagist poems" (Longenbach 1988, 198).

<sup>314</sup> Japanese avant-garde poet (1902-1978), founder of VOU club.

<sup>315</sup> Kitasono admits that and apologetically supposes (17 July, 1936) that Pound knows more about the traditional drama than he does: "It is a great regret that I have no more

Pound never visited Japan. However, his correspondence shows that he did have such plans and did discuss the idea with his Japanese friends. The first reference to the traveling plans appears in Tami Kume's early letter to Pound (21 January, 1921), which opens the discussion:

And if you should manage I hope you will come to Japan with us. For the travelling in peace, I think either Itow's company or myself could do it for you. Simply I want to know if you have the idea of going to Japan or not. (Pound 1987a, 19)

On 23 March, 1923, Tami Kume, presumably having received a response and learnt about Pound's readiness to visit the country, writes about further arrangements: "I will [talk to] some people of Gakushuin or University for to find you [a] situation. I hope I could do something for you. Anyway I will try my best" (Pound 1987a, 23). Due to Kume's death in the Yokohama earthquake of 1923, these plans never realized. "Had Tami lived, I might have come to Tokyo", writes Pound to Katue Kitasono on 24 May, 1936 (Pound 1987a, 28).

However, in 1937, Pound seems to be again discussing the possibility of visiting Japan, this time with Katue Kitasono. Pound's letter to Kitasono (possibly 21 October, 1937) evidences an ongoing discussion underway, as the letter explains conditions, under which Pound could travel:

I can't get to Japan unless I get a JOB presumably as professor there  
OR unless I make a great deal of money SOON, that is a great deal more  
than I have ever made yet. (Pound 1987a, 46)

The discussion of the possible visit and of the universities which could possibly offer employment seems to go on for months. Kitasono finally (23 July, 1938) finds the best climate for Pound and suggests Tokyo or Kyoto Imperial University, promising to assist Pound in getting employment there:

I think Tokyo Imperial university or Kyoto Imperial University is most  
suitable to you.  
I will watch to obtain such an opportunity, if you wish. (Pound 1987a, 67)

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knowledge of Noh than an ordinary Japanese. I think you have a better appreciation of it than I" (Pound 1987a, 29).

For some reasons (among which the war cannot be excluded), the discussion does not seem to have moved much further from that point, though.

Pound does not abuse the generalized terms like the “Orient” or the “Occident”. When he does use the words, he seems to be resorting to the vocabulary familiar to his Japanese readers, as, e.g., in a *Japan Times* article (“From Rapallo: an Ezra Pound letter”, 4 March, 1940), where he offers assistance to the Japanese in “establishing a better communication between the Orient and the Occident” (Pound 1987, 162). Indeed, while his friend Kitasono may use the generalization “Oriental” as a term of self-identification<sup>316</sup>, Pound, in his turn, agrees to identify with the Occident mostly in a humorous way<sup>317</sup>. However, even avoiding the stereotypical generalizations, Pound, as I will show, sees his own role as that of an intermediary between the cultures. In the language of the Vorticist manifestos, he is a “mercenary”, fighting in an age-long conflict on both sides and for his own cause.

An articulate adversary of debased and decadent values of Western culture, Pound is not a proponent of everything Oriental either. Looking Eastward, he is as selective and as particular, as when he discusses European or American history, politics, or literature. Apart from Japan and China, he is not much interested in other Oriental cultures. As he confesses to Kitasono (25 August, 1940), his Orient is Japan and China:

Wish someone wd. get on with bilingual edition of the INTERESTING books of the orient/ meaning Japan and China. The bloomink hindooos and mohammeds don't ring my bloomink bell. Oh well, THAT is a bit exaggerated/ there once was a bloke called Avicenna. (Pound 1987a, 93-94)

Similarly, he is equally not interested in *everything* that comes from China: “As far as I can make out all Chinese philosophy (apart from Kung and Mencius) is bunk plus opium/ but my means of knowledge are limited”, as he writes in the same letter to

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<sup>316</sup> Cf.: “It is delightful to us Orientals that such splendid books like *The Chinese Written Character* and *Ta Hio* were brought out to the world”, as Kitasono writes to Pound on 30 January, 1937 (Pound 1987a, 36).

<sup>317</sup> E.g., in a letter to Kitasono (18 January, 1938) Pound apologizes for his handwriting: “you will see that the occidental hand is rather like a Japanese FOOT. Neatness we have not” (Pound 1987a, 53). In a similar manner he writes about patience, “an oriental virtue”, which he himself lacks (Pound 1987a, 46).

Kitasono (Pound 1987a, 93). In a letter addresses to Maraini Fosco<sup>318</sup> (11 November, 1940), Pound defines his Orient in a similar highly discriminating manner:

Would be most useful if you cd/ do article saying DAMN Lao-Tsze. Attack idea of studying "chinese philosophy" as if ALL Chinese philosophy had merit/ whereas some is no better than the shitten old testament/ which is crap, immoral, barbarous/ poison injected into Europe. (Pound 1987a, 102)

Thus, in his Oriental explorations, Pound is always selective and specific in his choices and never takes the concept of the Orient for granted. As opposed to David Burluk and Velimir Khlebnikov, he does not seem to be interested in any reflections or generalizations on the ontological "nature of the Orient" (or the "nature of the Occident", for that matter). Confucius to him has value not because he might synecdochically represent the Orient or even China; Confucius is important because he embodies a mode of thinking (and acting) which may metaphorically (by analogy) represent what Pound considers valuable in "wise men" and wise politics, whether Oriental or Occidental. Noh and haiku are important to him not because they are different and exotic but because their mode of representation is surprisingly close, typologically analogous to his own Imagist and Vorticist esthetic.

When Pound starts his Oriental explorations, he clearly realizes how little he knows about Japan or China and never fails to admit it to his correspondents. In an early letter to Yonejiro Noguchi (2 September, 1911), Pound regretfully confesses that his knowledge of Japan is very limited: "Of your country I know almost nothing" (Pound 1987a, 4). A quarter of a century later, on 24 April, 1936, Pound again writes about his insufficient knowledge of the Japanese language, now to Katue Kitasono: "You must not run away with the idea that I really know enough to read Japanese, or that I could do more than spell out ideograms VERY SLOWLY with a dictionary" (Pound 1987a, 27). Praising Kitasono's poetry for its simplicity, Pound never forgets to acknowledge how little he can actually understand in the original:

The poems LOOK as if you were going in for some extreme form of simplification, at greatest possible remove from Chinese elaboration. NOT that I have been able to read even a single sentence at sight. I take it no one has tried to make poems containing quite so many simple radicals.

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<sup>318</sup> Italian anthropologist, art historian.

BUT my ignorance is appalling  
and my memory beneath contempt. (Pound 1987a, 48)

Although he puts a lot of effort to learn ideograms, “spending 4 or 5 hours a day on Kung” (Pound 1987a, 42), his rhetoric remains apologetic. In his 1937 letters to Kitasono, he assesses his own rate of reading the original of Confucius’s *Book of Odes* as that of “a five year old infant in Japan or China” (Pound 1987a, 42) and has enough irony to confess that with his rate, he “MAY be able to read in time, at the rate of three lines a day” (Pound 1987a, 45). Later, in 1940, in a letter to Kitasono (10 July, 1940), Pound still complains that his ideogram reading skills are quite low yet, though he claims to be able to browse *VOU*<sup>319</sup> and “make out what some article is talking about” (Pound 1987a, 89).

Indeed, Pound’s correspondence with his Japanese friends does show evidence of certain inevitable instances of misunderstanding, not only linguistic ones but also those which are due to limited cultural awareness, sometimes curious ones. Thus, it took Pound over a year of correspondence with Katue Kitasono to realize which was his correspondent’s given name and which the family name. In a letter written on 11 March, 1937, he ironically confesses of his “Occidental” ignorance: “All right! Kitasono is your family name. We occidentals are very ignorant. You must tell us patiently, even these details” (Pound 1987a, 40). Or, having exchanged letters with Japanese friends for years, in 1940 Pound suddenly wonders in a letter to Kitasono (17 July, 1940) how much the Japanese like being called “Japs”: “Is the term JAP disliked? I mean do Japs prefer to be called Japanese?” (Pound 1987a, 92) He apologetically explains his own use of the word by purely linguistic reasons: “I personally prefer the monosyllable and consider it honorific” (Pound 1987a, 92). Apparently, the monosyllabic<sup>320</sup> term sounds more “Japanese” to him, and on the other hand, is consonant with his emphasis on simplicity in defining terms<sup>321</sup>. When Kitasono, obviously not too supportive of the naming, politely replies that “We Japanese don’t like to be called Jap, because Jap has been used more often with contempt than with friendliness” (Pound 1987a, 92), Pound assures his friend

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<sup>319</sup> Japanese modernist journal, published by Katue Kitasono. *VOU* is also the name of a Japanese avant-garde poetry club, largely influenced by European surrealism and DADA.

<sup>320</sup> “The -anese makes very bad sound, and movement of word very difficult to get into elegant sentence. However let manners be manners”, concedes Pound later (2 October, 1940) in a letter to Kitasono (Pound 1987a, 97).

<sup>321</sup> Hence come other monosyllabic nicknames: Kit-Kat for Katue Kitasono and Ez” Po” for Pound himself (a “debased form of Rihaku” (Pound 1987a, 34), as Pound explains, alluding to Li Po).

that he has “never used (or heard used) the term Jap as derogative” (Pound 1987a, 97), however, no doubt about it, he continued using the word anyway.

Nevertheless, being aware of his own “galling ignorance”, Pound does his best to learn. He learns from his Japanese correspondents, asking them dozens of questions. After one of his first teachers, Tami Kume, who helped Pound understand a lot about Noh and Japanese arts, suddenly passes away (“since Tami Kume was killed in that earthquake I have had no one to explain the obscure sages or fill up the enormous gaps of my IGNORANCE” (Pound 1987a, 28), as Pound complains in 1936), it is Kitasono who becomes his next primary link with Japan, especially with the Japanese modern culture of the 1930s.

Pound's correspondence shows that he is eager to find out first-hand information on Japan. His questions are not confined to numerous linguistic issues, abundant as they are in the correspondence, but cover a wide range of literary and historical questions. Pound needs to know how the Japanese see their own history and literature and how they contextualize themselves in the Far-Eastern and world culture. He asks Kitasono's advice (2 June, 1938) on a good authentic book of Japanese history: “Do you know of any <good> History of Japan, translated into any european language FROM original sources?” (Pound 1987a, 65) He is curious to know what historical education people receive in Japan: “What sort of Japanese history do you people get in schools?” (Pound 1987a, 65) Once again complaining about his own ignorance, Pound asks Kitasono (2 June, 1938) about old Japanese poetry, as Fenollosa's chronology proved to be not “very clear”: “Also Japanese poetry before the Noh? Another awful blank in my acquaintance” (Pound 1987a, 66). Kitasono does help, as much as he can, sending Pound books, magazines, newspapers, answering innumerable questions about culture and language (both Japanese and Chinese). Pound patiently works on filling the gaps of ignorance, however, never overestimating his own progress (at least, when addressing the Japanese reader).

Having never been to Japan, Pound inevitably constructs the country in his own mind. Sanehide Kodama argues that Pound's Japan was and had always been a myth:

Pound in 1911 was still looking at Japan through the back end of a pair of opera glasses. Pound viewed Japan as a far-away, beautiful country, inhabited by people with a delicate and subtle sensibility, by women pretty, gentle, obedient, and lovable, and by men courageous enough to defeat Imperial Russia. (Kodama 1987, xv)



According to Kodama, this myth never gave way to “reality”: “The image of a dream-like Japan had been so strongly imprinted on his young mind that it could not easily be changed or removed” (Kodama 1987, xv). Kodama justly suggests that Pound’s myth is rooted in the long-established tradition of European and American Japonisme: “We cannot neglect the basic fact that Pound grew up in the era of Japonisme, and the image of Japan registered in his mind in his early youth as a land of lotus and butterfly was not to be erased from his mind throughout his life” (Kodama 1987, xvi). Nevertheless, even if Pound’s Japan is “a far-off, dreamlike country <...>; a treasure land for the aesthete, a country entangled with pleasant memories of youth” (Kodama 1987, xvi), Kodama has to admit that Pound’s approach is highly selective and his judgment is perspicacious: “Pound had the intuitive critical sensibility to sift ‘to kalon’ from the chaff, and he did discover authentic treasures in his study of Far Eastern cultures” (Kodama 1987, xvi).

The same sensibility in sifting “to kalon” from the “chaff” may be also traced, however, in Pound’s treatment of Western cultures. It is true that Pound “rarefied and mythologized Japan by translating the No plays and the Chinese classics into beautiful English poetry” (Kodama 1987, xv). However, if he did mythologize the land of Noh, he did it in a similar manner and extent in which he treated the land of troubadours, or the land of John Adams, for that matter. The issue then is not that much in Pound’s Japonisme (or Orientalism), as in the general outlines of the construct of his literary world.

Of course, one might wish, together with Kodama, “that Pound could have written more objectively of the realities of Japan, whether approvingly or not” (Kodama 1987, xvi), however, looking at Pound’s correspondence with his Japanese fiends, it is hard to agree that “Japan remained for him the distant, mythic country of Hagoromo, Aoi, and Komachi” (Kodama 1987, xvi). Besides the mythic “unworldly lyrical world of ‘stillness’ suggestive of the *paradiso terrestre*” (Kodama 1987, xvi), there was always a live country of live Tami Kume, Michio Ito, and Katue Kitasono. And there was often a certain tension between the two. I will argue that Pound’s Japan, as opposed to the Japan of Burliuk, is far from a mythical “*paradiso terrestre*” of a Western poet in search of exotics, and that it constitutes a legitimate part of a metaphorical construct, being super-posed on top of Pound’s paradigm of Western “Kulchur”, a construct playing a crucial role in the poet’s critique of the familiar Western civilization.

Horace Gregory named Pound a “minister without portfolio of the arts” (Read 1967, 3). There is always, indeed, a certain (often quite explicit) agenda in his correspondence, as well as in the Japan-addressed texts he published both in Europe and in Japan. This agenda may be seen as the development of both Lewis’s “sane duality” strategy and Fenollosa’s dreams of “supplementing” the Occident with Oriental culture.

Pound repeatedly writes about his commitment to promoting understanding between the East and the West. He talks about it when addressing both the Japanese authorities<sup>322</sup> and friends<sup>323</sup>. In a letter to Yonejiro Noguchi (as early as on 2 September, 1911), Pound explains how he sees his enterprise: “surely if the east & the west are ever to understand each other that understanding must come slowly & come first through the arts” (Pound 1987a, 5). Apparently, Pound discusses the issue with many of his friends. No wonder, Michio Ito in a letter of 19 December, 1920, starts talking in Poundian language and describes his own goal as a synthesis of cultures which will constitute a new culture of a higher order: “we are going to produce modern drama, on the same foundations as the Greek drama and Noh drama, our production will belong to the universe” (Pound 1987a, 18). This idea of synthesis articulated by Ito, which he undoubtedly borrowed from Pound, may be actually found in Fenollosa in a very similar formula: “Fusion of East and West”<sup>324</sup>. Fenollosa’s project, too, as I showed in the previous Chapter, was a synthesis of the best aspects of the Oriental and Occidental cultures, a synthesis which would result in a new kind of civilization, a “world” civilization.

However, Pound’s idea of synthesis can hardly be described as “fusion”. He describes it as a culture dialogue which does not eliminate the otherness of the opposite side but rather foregrounds those differences. In a letter to Kitasono (17 July, 1940), he outlines his vision of East-West understanding as a “merry” dialogue:

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<sup>322</sup> See, e.g., a letter (26 December, 1936) Pound writes to the ambassador of Japan in Italy: “I should nevertheless be very glad to meet any member of the Embassy who recollects Umewaka Minoru or Ernest Fenollosa (whose papers and studies of the Noh I have done my best to edit) or anyone who is interested in improving the understanding of Japanese culture in Europe and America and arranging better methods for mutual cultural comprehension” (Pound 1987a, 34-35).

<sup>323</sup> See, e.g., Pound’s letter to Kitasono (24 May, 1936), where he describes establishing a better understanding between Japan and the Western world as something he hopes to do before he dies (Pound 1987a, 28).

<sup>324</sup> See Ernest F. Fenollosa, “The Coming Fusion of East and West”, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, December 1898, p. 115-122.

Have already said in *J.T.*<sup>325</sup> that the 君子<sup>326</sup> intensifies racial characteristics the more he knows of these of other races.

The more 君子 the merrier the contacts between antipodally different individuals. (Pound 1987a, 92)

In the letter Pound literally quotes his own essay in the *Japan Times* (4 March, 1940), where he addresses the same issue of synthesis without blending in the same Confucian terms and presumes naturalness of a dialogue between “antipodally different” parties:

I believe that the 君子 of one nation finds it quite easy to converse with the 君子 of another. <...> He converses with the 君子 of another nation not by effacing his racial characteristics but by intensification of them. (Pound 1987a, 162)

Although Pound’s words highlight the concept of difference, they also imply certain fundamental connections between “antipodal” parties. When Pound describes synthesis as intensification and maintaining the best aspects of both sides, he apparently assumes the existence of typological similarities between the 君子 (as well as the “best” texts) of different cultures. “Wise men”, like “wise texts” may correlate like the different images or narratives constituting the unity of a Noh play, or like the different “facets” of an ideogram (whether linguistic or “cultural”) contribute to a single image. Pound’s synthesis is thus a construct built primarily upon analogy, selection and paradigmatic relations rather than upon syntagmatic contiguity, if one uses Jakobson’s terms. Designing this metaphoric structure, Pound faces a double task: “The important thing is to keep the BEST of both cultures and NOT CLUTTER” (Pound 1987a, 91). His enterprise, consequently, may be described as two-fold: on the one hand, it involves most careful treatment of texts, so that the “racial characteristics” of the other’s voice are not effaced, and, on the other hand, most elaborate selection of the “best” specimens, i.e. constructing the paradigm<sup>327</sup>.

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<sup>325</sup> The *Japan Times*.

<sup>326</sup> Chun tzu (Chinese), the wise man.

<sup>327</sup> Pound’s “energy of a discriminating element” (Lewis 1915, 82) is evident throughout his oeuvre: cf. his *ABC of Reading* (1934), *ABC of Economics* (1933), *How to Read* (1931), *Guide to Kulchur* (1938).

The outlines and structure of Pound's "synthesis" become apparent in the geographical references of his world. While Burliuk's fictional geography provides familiar landmarks for metonymical interpretation of the Orient, Pound's "geographical" framework appears to be a metaphor-like multi-layer structure, which is organized by three thoroughly selected "geographical" nodes, all of which in their turn, as I will show, unfold into typologically similar paradigms.

Fenollosa's idea of fusion of the East and the West (probably a little bit too abstract for Pound) narrows down in Pound's letters and essays to something slightly more tangible: a triangle of Japan, Italy and the USA. Pound formulates his tri-lateral project in one of his first letters to Kitasono (24 May, 1936): "Two things I should do before I die, and they are to contrive a better understanding between the U.S.A. and Japan, and between Italy and Japan<sup>328</sup>" (Pound 1987a, 28). While Burliuk's Japan is inscribed into a triangle of Japan-Russia-Europe, where the two latter elements represent the familiar background, which provides the language to interpret the Oriental other, in Pound's case we also have a triangular structure (Japan-Italy-USA), however, designed differently. In Pound's triangle, as I will argue, it is the Oriental other who is expected to provide a new language to the world of the familiar (in a manner similar to the way in which Noh provided the form for Pound's drama, discussed above).

Pound's tri-lateral "geographical" terrain, as I have said, represents a multi-layer metaphor. Pound is interested in typological links, that is why he tries to find traces of China (particularly Confucius and Mencius) in Japan, or why his Italy is often linked with the medieval troubadour culture. America occupies a special place in the structure, of which I will talk below.

In the context of Pound's Japanese correspondence and essays, it is especially interesting to see how the names of Japan and China constantly go together. Japan and China are frequently linked syntactically in Pound's reflections: "in Japan or China" (Pound 1987a, 42), "all Japan and China" (Pound 1987a, 151), "the 100 best ideogramic and Japanese texts" (Pound 1987a, 63), which means Chinese and Japanese texts. Links between Japan and China may be tentatively offered in the format of a question, as it

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<sup>328</sup> Kitasono (17 July, 1936) supports Pound's tri-lateral project, accepts the role of a loyal student, and expresses willingness to cooperate: "I express my respect and gratitude for your great idea to establish a better understanding between Japan and the U.S.A., and between Japan and Italy. Please let me know any proper method about it if you have" (Pound 1987a, 29).

constantly happens in Pound-Kitasono correspondence. In a letter dated 2 March, 1937, Pound, for example, wants to know how the Japanese avant-garde poets contextualize themselves in the history of Japanese and Chinese literature:

Does VOU<sup>329</sup> include a critique of Japanese past poetry as a whole? A position from which you look at Chinese poetry, Japanese poetry gradually freeing itself from (? Or continuing) Chinese, as we continually sprout from or try to cut away from, or reabsorb, resynthesize, greek, latin? (Pound 1987a, 39)

Formulated as a question, Pound's enquiry clearly privileges the latter option, the "reabsorbing" and "resynthesizing" one, which would confirm both the Japan/China paradigmatic node of his geography and the Orient/Occident typological similarities<sup>330</sup>.

Japan-China links and the idea of "resynthesizing" may appear (especially in the later correspondence and essays) in a much more straight-forward manner, like in his letter to Kitasono three years later (14 January, 1940), where Pound confidently asserts "the two-fold influx of chinese poetry in Japan /i/e/ imitations of chinese poetry" (Pound 1987a, 83), or in an article, published in the *Japan Times* on 4 March, 1940, where Pound plainly states it as a fact: "As regards the Chinese elements in Japanese art and culture, Japan continued to preserve some of the best Chinese skills and customs when China had fallen into her decadence" (Pound 1987a, 162).

The Japan/China link is not only implicitly (or explicitly) present in Pound's triangle interpretations, it is consistently strengthened by Pound's conscious efforts to promote "China" in Japan. Pound repeatedly urges Kitasono to read "Kung and Mencius", asks Kitasono to send him a copy of Confucian *Odes* (Pound 1987a, 39) and involves Kitasono in the project of a bi-lingual publication of the book in the West, discusses Kitasono's own poetry in the context of the Chinese tradition (23 October, 1937), even if contrasting the two (Pound 1987a, 48), writes to Fosco Maraini<sup>331</sup> (11 November, 1940)

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<sup>329</sup> A Japanese avant-garde group, founded in 1935 by Katue Kitasono.

<sup>330</sup> Kitasono (6 September, 1937) confirms Pound's parallel, even if very briefly and without going into detail, as he does not seem to be that much interested in the past in general. A characteristic detail is that, accepting Pound's parallel, he, however, accentuates the difference between the Japanese and the Chinese poetry, and not similarity, as Pound's question implied: "Japanese poetry to Chinese can be said just the same with English poetry to Latin or Greek. We are now far apart from Chinese poetry" (Pound 1987a, 43).

<sup>331</sup> Italian writer, ethnologist and academic, who taught in 1938-1943 at the universities of Hokkaido and Kyoto.

about the necessity of “inboosting Confucian revival” in Japan (Pound 1987a, 101). All these efforts, among other things, seem to aim at reinforcing the Japan/China part of Pound’s paradigm. The link, though, is not that of contiguous combination. Pound is certainly aware of the difference between the two countries and the two cultures. The analogy between the writing systems of the two countries (much overestimated by Pound) makes him search for cultural connections.

Pound constructs his Japan in a manner which cannot be interpreted in terms of traditional Japonisme practices. Interested as he is in Noh and traditional Japanese values, Pound does not fall victim to the popular Zen infatuation brought to America and Europe by Japonisme<sup>332</sup>; the Japanese node of his triangle reinforced by Chinese references suggests a metaphor which is supposed to provide a firm non-religious ethical, political, and cultural basis for Pound’s utopia. In a letter to Kitasono (13 August, 1936), he explains his view of the core of the triangle:

you will not think me unappreciative of Zen if you see my edition of Noh plays & Tami Koume in 1922 was already dreaming of the incidence of Zen in abstract art.

But neither Zen nor Christianity<sup>333</sup> can serve toward international understanding in practical action in the way the *Ta Hio*<sup>334</sup> of Kung fu Tseu can.

I mean that gives us a basis of ethics & national action, (patriotic) which does not produce international discord. (Pound 1987a, 31)

Looking at Japan, Pound wants to see the live tradition of Confucius, as “The root of sane government is Confucius and Mencius” (Pound 1987a, 179). That is why the war<sup>335</sup> between Japan and China is very painful for him; this war does not fit his scheme in the same manner as the approaching war between Japan and the USA. “I wish you

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<sup>332</sup> There is evidence that Kitasono initially is much more enthusiastic about Zen than Pound. In a letter (17 July, 1936) he thus describes his “poetic work Kon”: “I intend, in each poem, to express the classical atmosphere of Tea Ceremony and Zen, the ‘L’ESPRIT DU JAPON” (Pound 1987a, 29).

<sup>333</sup> The basis for the East-West understanding, according to Pound, cannot be built on religion. Confucian ethics, according to him, is a much firmer foundation. Pound argues that “the ethic of Confucius and Mencius not only inspires respect but it serves as a road map through the forests of Christian theology” (Pound 1987a, 163).

<sup>334</sup> *The Great Learning*, one of four classic texts of Confucianism.

<sup>335</sup> “Chinese diplomat said to me lately/ two peoples ought to be brothers/ they read the same books” (Pound 1987a, 105), writes Pound to Kitasono (5 December, 1940).

folks cd/ make a peace in China. <...> If you can manage it we might get on and have a little civilization once again”, as he writes to Kitasono on 29 October, 1940 (Pound 1987a, 100).

While Confucius largely comes to shape Pound’s picture of Japan, behind the European node of the triangle we recognize the troubadour tradition of Sordello and Provence poetry. In an early letter to Yonejiro Noguchi (2 September, 1911), Pound identifies himself and his own cultural project, which, as he states, proceeds along the same lines as Noguchi’s. Here, Japan and Provence are for the first time openly put together in a parallel construction. “You are giving us the spirit of Japan, is it not? very much as I am trying to deliver from obscurity certain forgotten odours of Provence and Tuscany” (Pound 1987a, 4). Writing about his translations of Chinese poetry to Kitasono (2 March, 1937), Pound again builds a typological parallel with the poetry of Provence:

With Sordello the fusion of word, sound, movement is so simple one only understands his superiority to other troubadours after having studied Provençal and half forgotten it, and come back to twenty years later. When I did “Cathay” I had no inkling of the technique of sound which I am now convinced MUST EXIST or have existed in Chinese poetry. (Pound 1987a, 39)

What legitimizes Pound’s “geography” is typological parallels. In a letter to Kitasono (13 August, 1936), Pound defends the logic of his triangle by a reference to an even older cultural tradition:

The reasons for Italo-Japanese understanding lie deep, (notice even the postage stamp which commemorates the 2000th anniversary of the roman poet Horace.) – (Orazio). The span to America may be longer. But Italy can serve as a middle. (Pound 1987a, 32)

Looking for a basis for cooperation, Pound sees it in the commensurate “wise men” of the past: Confucius, Horace, Sordello. The view of Italy as an intermediary and of the US as an implicit ultimate beneficiary of the plan is essential for Pound’s project and I will return to it below.

The American node of the triangle, the American founders, and John Adams in particular, become most visible in later correspondence with Kitasono and in the *Japan Times* essays. In a manner, similar to that of constructing the “Confucian Japan”, Pound keeps promoting his paradigm of the US, insistently recommending American history books with the “right” interpretation of events to Kitasono. “Not only for

Kulturmorphologie, but for history, do get yr/ Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai to start with Brooks Adams' synthesis" (Pound 1987a, 91), as he writes to Kitasono on 17 July, 1940. I will discuss the importance of the American constituent of the triangle in more detail below, as it appears to be of special significance to the whole tri-lateral construct.

Thus, the "geographical" triangle appears to be not a two-dimensional figure but rather a cultural three-dimensional construct. Each node unfolds back in history, representing a paradigm of traditions and names and suggesting typological parallels. The position of Italy as a middle ground obviously indicates the intermediary role of the constructor of the paradigm, writing his texts from Rapallo.

As one can see, Pound's fictional geography is largely literary and the geographical nodes unfold into cultural paradigms. An extreme example of mixing literature and geography may be found in Pound's famous proposal of exchanging Guam for three hundred Noh plays and thus settling the Pacific crisis. On 25 March, 1941, Pound shares his "peace plan" with Kitasono:

Note for you and VOU club/ that I sent yesterday to United Press a statement of plan for Pacific Peace//  
 We shd/ give you Guam but INSIST on getting Kumasaka and Kagekiyo in return.  
 <...> Of course I don't know that the U.P. will print the proposal. If they don't and if I am asked to broadcast again, I shall probably put it on the air<sup>336</sup>. (Pound 1987a, 112)

Pound seems to be taking the idea very seriously<sup>337</sup>. Not only does he write to the United Press and speak on the Roman radio about it, he also sends an official letter to Yosuke Matsuoka, Japanese Ambassador to Rome. In this letter (29 March, 1941), Pound assures the Ambassador that

no occidental decently aware of the qualities of your Noh drama can be infected with anti-japanese propaganda, especially of the beastly sort I found two years ago in the U.S. <...> Men like myself would cheerfully give you Guam for a few sound films such as that of *Awoi no ue* <...> I regret deeply there are not more of us. (Pound 1987a, 249)

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<sup>336</sup> See #112, "March Arrivals" (1941) in Pound 1978.

<sup>337</sup> On 28 May, 1941, Kitasono tells Pound that the peace plan was promptly published by the *Japan Times*. "Your original plan for Pacific peace was quickly printed in J.T. May it be realized like a miracle of 20th century!" (Pound 1987a, 114), writes Kitasono, most probably not as optimistic about the prospects of such a miracle.



It does not even matter, whether the proposal was a sincere peace plan or a friendly anti-war gesture addressed to Japan. The idea shows that when the world of Pacific Crisis interfered with the world of Noh, Pound remained in the latter terrain.

As opposed to Burlinuk, who uses literary allusions to familiarize and metonymically interpret the other to the familiar reader, Pound's allusions (not too numerous) are largely designed to provide a language to the Orient to deal with the Occident, rather than vice versa.

Literary allusions in Pound's Japanese correspondence and in the articles published in Japanese media aim at strengthening typological parallels between the nodes of Pound's triangle. Pound highlights similar imagery, similar poetics and similar general development patterns in Occidental and Oriental cultures. The common patterns seem to be of special significance to him, as they reinforce the typological basis of his construct. The allusions are addressed to the Japanese reader and are designed to provide a language of common references.

In a letter to Kitasono (14 January, 1940), Pound offers a parallel between the influence of Chinese poetry in Japan and Latin poetry in Europe: "jap attempts to write in chinese parallel to latin influence in Europe and men who wrote in latin, down even to 1800" (Pound 1987a, 83). A pattern from the Japanese literary history put on top of a similar development in Europe, signifies to Pound the existence of certain cultural universalities, which provide a sound basis for his triangle. In Fenollosa's terms, what Pound is doing is "bringing together ... two concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other and in the same pyramid" (Fenollosa and Pound 2008, 57), which, according to Fenollosa, describes the essence of ideogram.

There are several allusions suggesting Japanese/European parallels in literary motifs and in the ethical code, which underlies those. Thus, for example, Pound writes in the *Japan Times* ("From Rapallo: an Ezra Pound Letter", 4 March, 1940) that the ghost in *Kumasaka*<sup>338</sup> "carries admiration to every western romantic. The gist of what three or more races have meant by chivalry, Ritterschaft and bushido finds concentrated expression in that Noh drama" (Pound 1987, 162). Again, building a parallel, Pound prefers focusing on typological similarities rather than on historical contextualization and due differences between the plots and their ethical implications. What this parallel offers, is not an interpretation of Japan through familiar patterns, but rather an attempt

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<sup>338</sup> A Noh play by Ujinojibu, translated by Pound from the Fenollosa manuscripts.

to prove to the Japanese reader that the Western culture may be understood by the language of Noh.

Similarly functions another allusion in the same article in the *Japan Times*, where Pound mentions a “Homeric passage” in *Kagekiyo*<sup>339</sup>, which is “akin to our classic epos, whether of Greece or the Nordics” (Pound 1987, 162) and which also “binds in” with an episode of Confucius<sup>340</sup>. “These things are the universals of heroism” (Pound 1987, 162), concludes Pound, having allegedly found a universal typological model in texts which are quite remote from each other. The general structure of the allusion is very characteristic of Pound’s method and of the whole triangle construct he is designing: a Japanese Noh play is super-posed on the European epic tradition, with a Chinese text binding the metaphoric structure. Once again, the allusion is not designed to interpret Japan by familiar literary references, as was the case in Aston’s or Burliuk’s writings, but rather to offer a language of interpreting the West to the Japanese.

Pound’s fictional “geography” and its literary background may account for the concept of the universal language, which he offers to the world at large. The universal language, which combines all the three nodes of the geographical triangle, is designed by Pound not only as a means of global communication and of bringing together the Orient and the Occident, but also, apparently, as a tool to affect the Western hemisphere, i.e. the familiar culture. Pound’s idea of an intermediary language is at core metaphorical, as it is predicated on super-posing different language systems. The linguistic synthesis, like the whole of Pound’s triangle project, presumes using “the best” in all the three languages involved. The idea, which started as that of a translation tool, later develops into a concept of a global communication medium.

Pound always insists that a conventional translation is not sufficient. His idea of a good translation is a bilingual or trilingual edition, which ensures a more immediate presence of the original voice in the translated text. In a number of letters to Kitasono (e.g., 25 August, 1940), he discusses the publication of bilingual editions of Japanese and Chinese classics (Pound 1987a, 93-94). In the very first article Pound publishes in the *Japan Times*, he speaks about the necessity of publishing a “bilingual or trilingual edition

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<sup>339</sup> A Noh play by Motokiyo, translated by Pound from the Fenollosa manuscripts.

<sup>340</sup> Similar parallels are frequent in Fenollosa’s papers. Marry Fenollosa, too, highlights plot parallels in a letter to Pound: “‘Hagoromo’ is perhaps the favorite of all, with the average Japanese Noh lover, and is a legend strangely like the old Celtic one of the mermaid who had her magic sea-garments stolen by a mortal” (Pound 1987a, 8).

of the hundred best books of Japanese and ideogramic literature” (Pound 1987a, 150). Even later, incarcerated in St. Elizabeths Hospital, he proceeds planning a bi-lingual publication of the Confucian Anthology, as becomes clear from Dorothy Pound’s letter to Kitasono (4 May, 1947), which discusses the possible layout and costs of the book, as well as the format of the ideogram characters (Pound 1987a, 115).

Pound introduces his plan of a “Tri-lingual system proposed for world communication” in his first essay published in the *Japan Times* on 15 May, 1939. Pound suggests that English, Italian<sup>341</sup> and Ideogram should be recognized as a world communication language combination:

English has attained a syntactical plainness that is nowhere exceeded save in ideogram. <...> Ideogram as a written communication touches all Japan and China. Italian is the simplest of the Latin tongues. Its spelling is the clearest. (Pound 1987a, 151)

Clarity and simplicity are proclaimed as criteria, which might remind of Fenollosa’s linguistic criteria in the *Chinese Written Character*, discussed in the previous Chapter. However, there seem to be other reasons behind the selection of the three languages, too. Defending the use of ideogram in the world language, Pound writes to Kitasono on 15 November, 1940:

IDEOGRAM is essential to <the exposition of> certain kinds of thought. Greek philosophy was mostly a mere splitting, an impoverishment of understanding, though it ultimately led to development of particular sciences. Socrates a distinguished gas-bag in comparison with Confucius and Mencius. (Pound 1987a, 103)

Here, insisting on ideogram as on a representation of a “certain kind of thought”, Pound recognizes that behind the choice of the ideogram, the major argument is Confucius. In his 1943 broadcast on Radio Rome, Pound explains the reasons of choosing all the three languages:

My proposal was, as I say, tri-lingual. Italian, English, and ideogram. That is, Chinese ideogram used as a written tongue, but with Japanese pronunciation.

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<sup>341</sup> Cf. in this context Khlebnikov’s universal language project, based on a common set of familiar phonemes, see Khlebnikov 2005.

That gives you the languages of Confucius, Shakespeare, and Dante. (Pound 1978, 20 June, 1943)

It appears that Pound's linguistic triangle, like the geographical one, is but an extension of a literary paradigm.

In this linguistic triangle, English occupies a special place as a "middle ground". Pound suggests that English is the best language to translate from Japanese and Chinese. His argumentation is based on the implicit idea of a certain degree of typological similarity between English and the ideogram-based languages, as the former is "richest in monosyllables", is "least cluttered with syntax and does not therefore put IN such a lot which isn't ideogram", and as "a literal translation without inflection shocks us less than it wd/ French and Italians", writes Pound on 2 November, 1937 (Pound 1987a, 49). The argumentation cannot but remind of Fenollosa's vision of English as an adequate means of translation and mediation, discussed in Chapter 3.

The idea is very important to Pound, as he keeps returning to it on several occasions. "English is middle ground/ impossible to translate ideogramic thought into a language inflected as the latin languages are", as he writes to Kitasono on 9 February, 1938 (Pound 1987a, 56). Why does he insist on it, defending the triangle, and especially the third side of the latter, when no one seems to argue yet? If the Orient provides Confucianism, and Italy provides Sordello, what role does the USA have? The answer is – the mediating language, best fit for translating the Chinese originals and synthesizing them with the European tradition<sup>342</sup>.

The whole triangle appears to be a curious figure, then: with English being the middle ground between Ideogram and Italian, and Italy serving as a mediator between Japan and America. In both cases, Pound is primarily looking for an intermediary, which would facilitate the possible impact of the Orient on the Occident. The ease of "transmitting from the East to the West" is his major argument against using the Chinese phonetics in the global language:

When it comes to the question of transmitting from the East to the West, a great part of the chinese sound is no use at all. We don't hear parts of it, <much of> the rest is a hiss, or a mumble. Fenollosa wrote, I think justly, that Japan had kept the old sounds for the Odes long after the various

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<sup>342</sup> Pound's view on English as the most adequate translation language for ideogram-based texts, as well as on the benefits of these translations on English verse, echoes Fenollosa's ideas discussed in the previous chapter.

invasions from the north had ruined them in China. Tones can not be learnt at three thousand miles distance any how. (Pound 1987a, 103)

Pound's next improvement of the world language (also implicitly strengthening the English component of the universal language and aimed at better understanding of the voice of the Orient in the West) concerns using Romaji, Latin characters, rather than the Japanese kana for phonetic purposes:

I still think, as I wrote last year, that with Italian, Ideogram and English (American brand) you can have a tri-lingual system for world use. But <...> I wd/ amend my suggestion of using the kana writing with the ideograms and say use the latin letters. (Pound 1987a, 103)

He decides that the "Kana syllabic writing is clumsy and cumbersome" and suggests replacing it by the Latin alphabet ("the latin alphabet with 26 or even 24 signs will do all the work of the syllable signs and is immeasurably easier to remember" (Pound 1987a, 102). Again, the facilitation of the impact of the East upon the West becomes a primary argument for substituting Japanese kana-writing with the Latin alphabet:

The national defence of Basho and Chikamatsu can be maintained by use of the latin alphabet. If any young Tanakas want to set out for world conquest, on the lines *Ubi cumque lingua Romana ibi Roma* (wherever the latin tongue, there Rome) you will invade much better by giving us the sound of yr/ verse in these latin signs that are understood from the Volga to the West coast of Canada, in Australia, and from Finland to the Capes of Good Hope and Horn. (Pound 1987a, 103)

Defending his language project, Pound convinces his Japanese readers that Japan will be the beneficiary and Japanese culture will be able to spread around the globe. Addressing the Japanese in his letter to Kitasono, Pound calls for linguistic flexibility: "Throughout all history and despite all academies, living language has always been inclusive and not exclusive" (Pound 1987a, 104). Flexibility, in his argumentation, will guarantee that Japan will "conquer vast territories" of the world:

English has conquered vast territories by absorbing other tongues, that is to say it has pouched most latin roots and has variants on them handy for use where French and even Italian have shown less flexibility; it has taken in lashin's of greek, swallowed mediaeval French, while keeping its solid anglo-saxon basis. It then petrified in the tight little island, but American

seems to be getting into Tokyo. Question of whether want to “preserve” Japanese in test tubes or swallow the American vocabulary is for you to decide. (Pound 1987a, 103)

Pound urges Kitasono to start using the Latin transliteration immediately: “I suggest that in each issue of VOUE you print at least one poem, preferably the best poem WITH a transliteration into Roman alphabet” (Pound 1987a, 102-103). He is confident that the new writing system would further promote the best specimens of Japanese literature and even coins a name for the new language: Japerican (Japanese and American). “Japerican may well replace pidgin even in our time but Japanese will never become lingua franca until its sound is printed in the simplest possible manner” (Pound 1987a, 104). However, no matter how insistently Pound highlights the benefits of Japan from introducing Japerican, he is not less concerned about the benefits of the Western hemisphere, as I will argue below.

#### 4.3.2. Importing and exporting Kulchur

Unlike Burlinuk's representation, where interaction between Japan and the familiar (Western European and Russian) culture is unidirectional and amounts to mere interpretation of the preconceived Orient according to familiar standards, in Pound's case the picture is more complex. The interaction is bi-directional, and the act of interpretation is aimed not at Japan but rather at the familiar West, which is to be analyzed (and consequently changed) by means of the language and culture of the Orient.

Pound's project, as becomes evident from his correspondence and the *Japan Times* articles, is two-fold and involves introducing both Japan to the West and the West to Japan. I will analyze Pound's strategy of East-West interaction in the case of his correspondence with Katue Kitasono and the VOUE poets, as well as his essays published in the *Japan Times*.

Pound puts a lot of effort in exposing the West to the developments of modern Japanese poetry. He introduces the VOUE club texts in the *Townsmen* and connects Katue Kitasono with James Laughlin<sup>343</sup> and Alberto Carocci<sup>344</sup>. The Japanese avant-garde poetry

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<sup>343</sup> American poet and publisher, founder of the New Directions Publishing.

<sup>344</sup> Italian poet, novelist, journalist. Founder of several literary journals, including *Solaria*.

club, which, according to Kitasono, was first influenced by European DADA and later by surrealism, appeared to be very much interested in the opportunities Pound could provide in promoting their art in the West. Katue Kitasono is enthusiastic about the plan: "A great excitement and encouragement to us that the English translations of our poems may be printed by your kindness", as he writes to Pound on 30 January, 1937 (Pound 1987a, 37).

Pound's strategy in dealing with the Japanese texts is two-fold. On the one hand, introducing VOU to the Western reader, Pound wants to keep the accuracy of the original voice and makes sure the Japanese texts are rendered without any distortions. Pound wants to expose the Western reader to the authentic voice of modern Japan, so he asks the Japanese poets to make their own translations of some of their pieces into English. Pound's letters of the period show that he wants to be sure he understands each word correctly and asks Kitasono numerous questions about the texts and possible grammatical and lexical errors in them (Pound 1987a, 41). As usual, he is interested not only in the translations but also in the originals; he also wants the Japanese poets to identify themselves in their own words for the European reader:

Could you send me a short article in English, giving a paragraph to each of the poets who signed that group letter to me. Saying plainly who they are, one by one, and whether they have common aim, or have signed any very brief manifesto, <also paragraph or so about chief writers not in VOU group>.

And then the individual differences.

I should also like a couple of poems from each with an english translation, but send also the ideograms of the original, with a comment on the important ones, so that I could emend or intensify the translation if I saw a way of doing so.

I think I could print such an article and that Laughlin could probably reprint it in his next year's collection.

We could call it Tokyo 1937. (Pound 1987a, 33-34)

Pound's treatment of the texts, which he receives, is surprisingly tactful<sup>345</sup>. "And in any case I should not touch the translations", as he promises to Kitasono (Pound 1987a, 41) and adds: "I shall correct only a few typing errors, or what seems such" (Pound 1987a, 41). Pound keeps his word; his editorial corrections in the texts Kitasono

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<sup>345</sup> Cf., e.g., Pound's editorship in the case of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

sends him are minimal and exclusively spelling-related (e.g., he corrects “Alceuil” for Arceuil, “vonarates” for “venerates”, “seorn” for “scorn”, and similar typos).

The same tactful approach remains in further publications of VOU in the West. After the first poems finally appeared in *Townsmen* and *Broletto*, Pound asks Kitasono for new texts (9 February, 1938), those that would be identified as a conscious message of the Japanese poets to the people of Italy: “Send something in VERY SIMPLE english prose that you, the VOU club might like Italians to know” (Pound 1987a, 55). Again, cautious to keep the other’s authentic voice intact, Pound is trying not to push his correspondent in any particular direction and gives him maximum freedom: “You can choose a Japanese poem; or have the whole club choose the poem of the season which they think would be most comprehensible in the occident” (Pound 1987a, 56). Accuracy and authenticity of the other’s voice seem to be essential for Pound’s project and agree with his quoted above vision of conversing with the other “not by effacing his racial characteristics but by intensification of them” (Pound 1987a, 162).

However, there is another side to Pound’s treatment of the Japanese texts. Without interfering into the texts of the VOU poets or into the contextualization of the movement in modern Japanese culture, Pound is very assertive when he is, even if indirectly, addressing the familiar Western reader. Pound presents the movement to the Western reader in a manner, which is similar to that of Lewis’s manifestos introducing the Great English Vortex. Pound presents the VOU club as an alternative to degrading European arts and obviously sees the movement as an extension of Vorticism<sup>346</sup>: “I know that nowhere in Europe is there any such vortex of poetic alertness. Tokyo takes over, where Paris stopped” (Pound 1987a, 201), writes Pound in his essay “VOU Club”, published in *Townsmen*, January 1938, introducing the new Japanese poetry to the Western reader. The essay does not say anything about the Japanese context of the club; the young Japanese poets are immediately super-posed on the Western poetic tradition and presented as a live continuation of the latter:

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<sup>346</sup> There is no evidence that the Japanese poets objected to Pound’s assertive (and, of course, domesticating by nature) contextualization of VOU as an essentially Vorticist project. On the contrary, Kitasono thanks Pound in the “Vou Club” essay for giving the club “as many opportunities of touching the avant-garde of England and America as he could. If VOU still keeps the youth of twenty-one (as I am sure of it), it is much indebted to his sensible suggestions” (Pound 1987a, 209).



It is a case of saying that for half a century after Papa Flaubert started writing, any man who wanted to write English prose had to start by reading French prose. And it may be that from now on any man who wants to write English poetry will have to start reading Japanese. I mean modern Japanese, not merely studying Chinese ideogram, as I have been advocating for the past twenty years. (Pound 1987a, 201)

Placing the VOU club in the Western literary paradigm, Pound sees this superpositioning as a new start of English poetry as well. Modern Japanese poetry appears as a catalyst and as a new reference point, which the Western tradition will need to live up to. This is a very characteristic turn in Pound's thought, which I will return to below. Like Fenollosa, who writes his *Chinese Written Character* as essentially a project of improving English poetry, Pound in his Japanese reflections, as I will further argue below, cannot help looking back at the development of English verse, which appears to be his major preoccupation.

Pound describes the Japanese modernists to the Western reader in a quite familiar language, in which we can recognize the tone of *Blast*. "All the moss and fuzz that we have been trying to scrape off our language – these young men start without it" (Pound 1987a, 201). Japan is presented to the English-speaking reader as a fresh start that leaves behind all the confusion and misunderstanding accumulated through centuries, which might resemble the manner in which Pound and Lewis once introduced Vorticism to England. What exactly attracts Pound in the VOU poets also appears to be familiar. As he admits in his essay, it is their clarity of vision: "They see the crystal set, the chemical laboratory and the pine tree with untrammelled clearness" (Pound 1987a, 201), which obviously reminds of Pound's own reflections on the poetic image. James Laughlin (in "Modern Poets of Japan") accentuates the same clarity and immediacy in their writing: "there is more verbal reality, a closer relationship between the thing and its name, some of the essence of the thing in its name" (Pound 1987a, 207). The fresh start that modern Japanese poetry promises to the culture of the West appears to rhyme well with Pound's own Imagist and Vorticist manifestos.

Contextualizing VOU as a "vortex of poetic alertness", Pound also wants to distance the movement from certain undesirable (specifically, French, as was also the case with the *Blast* manifestos) contexts. Thus, he, for example, is not very excited by the surrealism allusions in VOU manifestos. Bringing VOU to Europe, Pound builds his own paradigm for the movement and tentatively but consistently shifts the unwanted allusions. Responding to Kitasono's words on the relatedness of the Japanese modernists

to French surrealism, Pound suggests widening the subject of the discussion and hints at deeper connections between Japanese and European arts, which go far beyond French surrealism:

Surrealism existed in Italy (though I think the young Frenchmen do not in the least know it) in <a.d.> 1290, and Cavalcanti was certainly a surrealist. And if <some of> the Noh plays are not surrealist in the best sense, I shd. welcome a statement as to what they shd. be called. (Pound 1987a, 28)

This is the “surrealist” context Pound would like to place VOU in: Cavalcanti, Provence, Noh. Modernity is not a temporal concept for Pound: “Mencius continues to be the most MODERN oriental author in spite imported surrealism” (Pound 1987a, 93), as he writes to Kitasono (25 August, 1940), in an attempt of further questioning the concept of Japanese surrealism and offering a Chinese framework instead. The Provence and Mencius allusions obviously link the VOU case with Pound’s metaphoric geography, discussed above.

Objecting to surrealism, Pound sounds unusually cautious, though. In his dialogue with Kitasono about VOU, he may even agree to accept the term “surrealism”, if it is stripped of undesirable French connotations:

The poems are splendid, and the first clear lightning for me of what is going on in Japan.  
The NEW Japan. Surrealism without the half-baked ignorance of the French young. (Pound 1987a, 40)

Insistent as he is on considering VOU in the context of the Cavalcanti-like surrealism and highlighting a possible link between Japan and Italy, with China firmly positioned in the background, Pound finds the American node of the triangle equally essential for contextualizing VOU. The modern Japanese poets are put in the context of “best” specimens of modern English language poetry, side by side with E.E. Cummings, rather than with the infamous French surrealists: “These are very nice poems. I am delighted with the lot of them. <At first reading they seem better written than anyone’s except some of Cummings>” (Pound 1987a, 42), as Pound writes to Kitasono. In the *Townsmen* essay, presenting the movement to the Western reader, Pound again returns to the Cummings parallel: “Not as translations but as actual writing, these poems are better work than any save those of E.E. Cummings at his happiest” (Pound 1987a, 201).

The paradigm Pound is building, super-posing Japanese arts on top of the Western tradition, resembles his understanding of Noh. In one of his first essays published in the *Japan Times* (“A study of Noh Continues in West”, 10 December, 1939), Pound thus explains the essence of Japanese theater: “It is that continual assertion of one set of acts in relation to a whole other set of acts, a whole series of backgrounds and memories, that enriches the Noh” (Pound 1987a, 157). It is a similar metaphoric construct of one set of texts in relation to a whole other set of texts that he develops in his three-lateral project.

Having discussed Pound’s vision of cultural “imports”, I want to take a brief look at what he has to offer to Japan in exchange. I will argue that the main motif of cultural “exports” amounts to reinforcing the idea of the Japan-Italy-US triangle and the key beneficiary of it is, paradoxically, again the West, and the US in particular.

Indeed, Pound’s correspondence and newspaper essays show that he (sometimes tentatively, sometimes more aggressively) tries transplanting his paradigm of values and his vision of world culture and history to Japan. Establishing the Japan-Italy-US triangle, Pound wants to share the significant (in his understanding) values of the Western world with his Japanese correspondents. The result is not always very inspiring for him, though. Apparently, Pound writes to Tami Kume about the art of Vasily Kandinsky, whom he sees as a parent of vorticism (the letter did not survive), as one can infer from Kume’s apologetic and brief reply (11 April, 1921): “I do not know about Kandinsky...” (Pound 1987a, 20), which does not show any excessive interest in further discussion. Apparently, Pound also wants to share his music preferences, though Kitasono’s response (18 March, 1938) evidences just polite acceptance and trust in Pound’s taste: “I don’t know at all about the sonatas of Henry Purcell<sup>347</sup> but I can guess the publication of his music will be of deep significance” (Pound 1987a, 55), without any indication of wanting to further pursue the subject.

In late 1930s, Pound’s correspondence (like all his oeuvre) becomes significantly more focused on political and economic issues. Reinforcing his cultural triangle, Pound repeatedly promotes the works of John Adams and certain contemporary studies in American history, mostly those coinciding with his own vision of the corrupting role

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<sup>347</sup> Cf. Pound’s contextualizing the Noh music along with Purcell and Dowland in an article in the *Japan Times* (14 May, 1938): “You have there a treasure like nothing we have in the Occident. We have our masterwork: Mozart, Purcell, Janequin, Dowland, but it is a different masterwork and one is not a substitute for the other” (Pound 1987a, 150).

European banking allegedly played in the history of the US. Thus, on 1 January, 1937, he enthusiastically writes about one such book to Kitasono:

Will you please call Mr. Yanagisawa's attention to  
A New American History  
By W.E. Woodward<sup>348</sup>.  
pub/ Farrar and Rinehart. New York.  
This is the first general history <of the U.S.A.> with the new historic  
consciousness. (Pound 1987a, 35)

Apparently having received no response, he repeats the recommendation the following year (14 May, 1938): "We have a couple of good historians. W.E. Woodward, *New American History*/ and Claude Bowers'<sup>349</sup> *Tragic Era*" (Pound 1987a, 64). There is still no response from Kitasono, though. Kitasono's reply (5 December, 1939) to Pound's passionate historical/ economic reflections on the nature of World War II is quite telling, though: "It's interesting to know your opinion on modern war" (Pound 1987a, 81). Period and paragraph, without any further elaboration or even a polite question.

The most difficult task that Pound faces, however, is promoting economics<sup>350</sup>. In a letter to Kitasono (24 May, 1936), he tentatively asks: "I believe C.H. Douglas'<sup>351</sup> writings are known in Tokyo. I wonder whether Gesell<sup>352</sup> is yet known there?" (Pound 1987a, 28) Kitasono does not seem to be willing to focus on economic issues as much as Pound does and answers the questions (17 July, 1936) very briefly: "In Japan, there are very few who know about Mr. C.H. Douglas' writings, and Mr. Gesell is not known here" (Pound 1987a,

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<sup>348</sup> William E. Woodward (1874-1950), an American historian, whose economic views Pound shared. Pound corresponds with Woodward in the 1930-s. He also recommends Woodward to Cummings, see Ahearn 1996, 30, 209.

<sup>349</sup> Claude Gernade Bowers (1878-1958), an American historian. *Tragic Era* attacks the Republican party of the US in the Reconstruction era.

<sup>350</sup> The necessary link between morality with economics (and consequently between "good" economics and "good" arts), with all Confucian implications, becomes one of Pound's major concerns in the 1930-s. Cf., e.g., his letter to Kitasono (17 July, 1940): "I assure you that there is a connection between the state of mind that makes good art <...> and the state of mind that makes clean economics. I dare say BOTH start with Ta Hio (or however you spell it)" (Pound 1987a, 91).

<sup>351</sup> Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952), a British engineer famous for his "social credit" economic reform idea.

<sup>352</sup> Silvio Gesell (1862-1930), a German economist, proponent of the "natural economic order" and a radical money reform, highly praised by Pound.

29). He does not ask any further questions and is obviously not interested in further discussion.

However, Pound does not give up easily and keeps promoting the ideas of social credit to Kitasono and VOU (15 January, 1940): “The *Social Creditor* has been doing valuable historical work. You shd/ read Overholser’s *History of Money in the U.S.A.*<sup>353</sup>” (Pound 1987a, 84). He sends his own textbook of economics to Kitasono for reviewing and translating. He sends a copy of his pamphlet *What is Money For?* to Tamotu Iwado, the editor in chief of the *Japan Times* (10 July, 1940). He obviously understand how little<sup>354</sup> Kitasono is interested in economic issues (“It is probably not your “pigeon” but still” (Pound 1987a, 89), as he apologetically writes) but, nevertheless, keeps making attempts to convert the Japanese avant-gardists: “I wish I could convince VOU club that economics, and in particular the preoccupation with the nature of money and the effects of usury are not a bee in my sole and personal bonnet” (Pound 1987a, 107).

Pound uses, quite manipulatively, three literary arguments in his attempts to convince VOU. First, he makes a diplomatic reference to the surrealists, whom VOU members, despite Pound’s skepticism, like to see as a major influence in the early years of the club: “A surrealist treatment of money would be contemporary, today, 1940” (Pound 1987a, 108). The second argument is a reference to a wide range of modern Western poets and journal editors (including those who published VOU poets on their pages) who allegedly recognize the significance of economics:

This awareness is not a mere idiosyncrasy of mine. The most vital poets in the West, Bunting, Cummings, Angold are all awake to it. So is W.C. Williams, so is Ron Duncan, editor of *Townsmen*, who preceded Laughlin in printing VOU poems, so is and has been T.S. Eliot. (Pound 1987a, 108)

Pound’s final argument is the concept of poetic maturity. It is interesting, that while in 1936 Pound greeted VOU and wished them to enjoy eternal youth (“May the club, whatever the number of its members, stay 21 years young” (Pound 1987a, 28), as he writes to Kitasono), now, in 1940, he speaks of the need to finally grow up:

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<sup>353</sup> Willis A. Overholser’s *A Short Review of the History of Money in the United States* (1936), according to Pound, provided evidence of the European bankers’ conspiracy to take control of the American economy and politics.

<sup>354</sup> “I’m sorry, but I must confess I think economics is, too, one of such uncertain sciences as medical science, psychology, etc”, writes Kitasono (Pound 1987a, 81).

It is proper that up to the age of crucifixion (32) the poet be lyric. After that he withers, I think, if he does not feel some curiosity as to the LOCUS of his own perceptions and passions. By LOCUS I mean their movement in relation to the humanity about him. (Pound 1987a, 108)

Kitasono confessed later to Michael Reck that he could not even understand much of what Pound was writing to him (Pound 1987a, 212).

Pound gets more lucky with the Japanese modernists when he starts talking about literature, though. Kitasono appreciates all the “brilliant books” Pound sends to him. All Pound’s literary recommendations, including Confucius<sup>355</sup>, Cavalcanti<sup>356</sup>, Provence, seem to have been welcomed by his correspondents. Pound’s own scholarship works, which he sends to Japan, e.g., *The ABC of Reading*<sup>357</sup> (1934), *Make It New* (1934), and *Guide to Kulchur*<sup>358</sup> (1938), find warm response, too. So does his modern poetry anthology, *Active Anthology*<sup>359</sup> (1933), which includes such names as Louis Zukofsky, E.E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot and Marianne Moore. Pound repeatedly tries promoting W.C. Williams, whose *Life on the Passaic River* he believes to be one of the “best American books of the season”, as he writes to Kitasono on 14 May, 1938 (Pound 1987a, 64). Pound recommends the

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<sup>355</sup> Kitasono, who initially did not show excessive enthusiasm about Pound’s interest in China and in Confucius, accepts the role of an “oriental” and even identifies with the Chinese tradition, as Pound repeatedly suggested: “It is delightful to us Orientals that such splendid books like *The Chinese Written Character* and *Ta Hio* were brought out to the world. I am going to write an introduction essay on these books” (Pound 1987a, 36).

<sup>356</sup> Kitasono is quite eloquent and appreciative of the numerous books Pound sends to him. He thanks Pound for Cavalcanti and positions VOU club as Pound’s true disciples: “Cavalcanti is known very little in Japan. But through your translation and your interesting essays I could have some idea about this great poet. Your Cavalcanti will lead me to understand the strange and wonderful Mediaevalism in Italy” (Pound 1987a, 29).

<sup>357</sup> Kitasono writes on 17 July, 1936: “I have already read your *ABC of Reading*, and a poetess of our club is now reading it, very interested. Surely it is the best pioneer to show young poets their right course to follow” (Pound 1987a, 29).

<sup>358</sup> Kitasono highly praises Pound’s programmatic *Guide to Kulchur*: “Thank you very much for your *Guide to Kulchur*, a very pleasant book, which will make the world march at double-quick for half a century” (Pound 1987a, 67). He reviews the book in a Japanese literary magazine: “I wrote of your *Guide to Kulchur* in Sept. issue of *Mita Bungaku*” (Pound 1987a, 69).

<sup>359</sup> The responses Pound receives are probably the ones he would like to be receiving, as Kitasono seems to accept the paradigm Pound is building and the values Pound is consistently promoting. Cf. Kitasono’s letter of 30 January, 1937: “By the *Active Anthology* I can know accurately about the contemporary poets of an activity and further development. I find them also writing actively in the *New Directions* which Mr. James Laughlin <...> sent me by your request. The critical essays *Make It New* promise to make me aware of the essential values of European literature” (Pound 1987a, 36).

writings of W.B. Yeats to Kitasono (22 January, 1940), especially the Noh-inspired works by the poet: “Did you see the *Hawk’s Well* – is it any use in Japan?” (Pound 1987a, 85). Pound puts Kitasono in touch with E.E. Cummings<sup>360</sup>: “He is a better bet than C.H. Ford, though not a voluminous correspondent. In fact, he is the best poet in America”, as Pound introduces the writer in his letter on 10 July, 1940 (Pound 1987a, 89). Pound recommends the *Little Review* to Kitasono: “I wonder if a file on *The Little Review* exists in Japan?” (Pound 1987a, 89). In this context, it is interesting to see how Pound, promoting his system of values, sometimes uses what may be seen as manipulative rhetoric. Having stated that Cummings and Eliot are the best achievement of the *Little Review*, Pound tries to get Kitasono interested in the journal by also mentioning the publication of Kitasono’s favorite surrealists (“Crevel etc”) in it.

Pound’s efforts of inviting the Japanese into his own cultural circle<sup>361</sup> seem to have had some success. Thanks to Pound, Kitasono not only begins correspondence with Cummings, but also starts receiving books from Douglas Fox, an assistant to Leo Frobenius, as it becomes evident from Kitasono’s letter to Pound (30 January, 1937):

The other day I received from Mr. D.C. Fox *Das Urbild, Die Umschau* and a pamphlet on Frobenius’ Paideuma, the last of them, one of the members of our club is now very interested translating to print in VOU no.16. (Pound 1987a, 37)

On the whole, as it may be seen, the cultural paradigm Pound offers to his Japanese audience mirrors the picture he presents to the Western reader. The only substantial difference lies in the modality: what appears as a straightforward statement of facts in the discourse addressed to the West, usually sounds like a more or less tentative offer in the texts targeted at the Japanese.

Pound’s growing (and substantially biased) assertiveness of late 1930s and his vision of a dialogue, within which he is most considerate of the other’s word but

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<sup>360</sup> After that, Kitasono starts sending copies of *VOU* to Cummings, too.

<sup>361</sup> What Pound offers to Japan is not only literary, economic, and historical essays and news items. An interesting example of promoting mutual understanding between the West and the East is his idea of sending his twelve-year-old daughter Maria’s text to be published in Japan. Maria’s essay “Gais or the Beauties of the Tyrol” was translated by Kitasono and published in *Reijokai*, see Kitasono’s letter of 25 December, 1938 (Pound 1987a, 70).

simultaneously most confident in providing his own context for the word, become equally evident in the texts he publishes in the *Japan Times*<sup>362</sup>. Pound's correspondence related to the newspaper reveals his eagerness to promote his "interpretations of Europe" in Japan, as well as his diplomatic strategies in realizing the project. Like in the case of his private correspondence (e.g., seemingly accepting Kitasono's passion for surrealism but de facto insisting on his own vision of VOU contextualization, unrelated to the French experiments), Pound seems to accept the format suggested by the *Japan Times* but in fact, without any open disagreement, manages to promote his own vision and framework of cooperation with the newspaper.

When in March, 1939, Kitasono arranges for Pound's writing for the *Japan Times* on culture issues, Pound promptly sends two articles for the newspaper. He sounds very cooperative and ready to adjust to the suggested format. Pound asks Kitasono numerous questions in order to understand in what capacity he might be helpful for the newspaper. He wants to know how often and how long he might write. He wonders whether his status of "poeta economist" is acceptable for the newspaper. He asks what kind of news and what extent of criticism the newspaper might accept. Pound wants to be cooperative and agrees to be very flexible. He does not seem to mind if the newspaper editor modifies or cuts his reports: "He can cut whatever he thinks is of no interest to his readers, and I will not take offence" (Pound 1987a, 75). Obviously, Pound sees the newspaper work as a tool to realize his tri-lateral project. As his first topic for writing, he suggested the USA (the situation with arts and "the state of the general mind"), as he was planning to visit the country: "I have been out of that country for 28 years and don't know what I can effect. I should like my trip to result in better triple understanding (Japan/America/Italy)" (Pound 1987a, 75).

Yasotaro Morri from the *Japan Times* asks Pound (15 May, 1939) specifically to send "something of literary nature dealing with the general literary trend, or with some big giants in the literary world" (Pound 1987a, 78). Morri is quite insistent on the literary nature of the project and obviously does not want Pound to discuss politics or economics: "we have enough of "dopes" dealing with crises, war threats and general

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<sup>362</sup> From June, 1939, to September, 1940, Pound published twelve articles in the *Japan Times* newspaper. He first starts thinking about writing for the newspaper in 1937: "I also wonder if they wd. print my news or interpretations of Europe. Might be a first step of getting to Tokyo" (Pound 1987a, 47). In 1940, he becomes an official Italian correspondent of the newspaper.



unrest" (Pound 1987a, 78), as he puts it. Least of all he wants something "which will provoke Americans in political issues": "Kindly stick to literary subjects", repeats Morri quite unambiguously (Pound 1987a, 78).

However, Pound seems to just ignore the suggested format. What he writes back to Morri and Kitasono (28 October, 1939) sounds anything but sticking to literary subjects. In fact, Pound does not explicitly argue with his correspondents and never says he disagrees with anything they suggested. Nevertheless, one can see an implicit argument in the way Pound structures his letter to the editor. He starts with the financial arrangements with the *Japan Times*, connecting the issue of payment with the issue of war: "As you can imagine, the war interferes with one's income. It doesn't matter how much I am paid, but I shall have to be paid something" (Pound 1987a, 79). Having thus brought up the issues of war and money, Pound proceeds with his understanding of the nature of that war and consequently with economics: "We are having a LOAN-Capital war. <...> At any rate there is no understanding of the present wars without understanding of war loans/ loans by the SAME MEN to the Same men" (Pound 1987a, 79). Pound's next statement reveals his purpose and implicitly refers to Morri's recommendations of focusing on literary matters: "and all this is subject matter for literature," writes Pound and mentions his own Cantos as an example: "My Cantos 52/71 are in the press/ Chinese dynasties and John Adams" (Pound 1987a, 79). This triggers a brief reference to American history after Adams, and finally lets Pound make a conclusion, which sounds like a remark made in passing but in fact seems to be the central message of the whole long letter: "And I wd. prefer to write about history for the moment, including current history" (Pound 1987a, 79). Thus, without directly questioning Morri's insistence on literary matters, Pound manages to defend his own agenda. He is going to write about history, economics, and war, as all these things are the subject of literature. Having established thus his position as a contributor to the *Japan Times*, Pound finishes the letter in such a manner as not to sound too categorical: "I will, however, during the coming week try to send you an article on the Vivaldi week in Siena" (Pound 1987a, 79), which would sound almost ironic if Pound's interest in music was not so genuine.

De facto ignoring the requests of the *Japan Times* editors to “stick to literary matters”<sup>363</sup>, Pound nevertheless from time to time keeps asking Kitasono, what the Japanese would like to hear about. Finally (26 September, 1940) Kitasono must have found the compromise: “I think the *J.T.* and their readers would be very glad to know your opinion like what is to be the cultural policy in such a country like Japan” (Pound 1987a, 96). If Pound cannot help being political, let him stick to culture policy, must have been the reasoning. Pound is surprised, though: “Cultural policy of Japan??” What is most probably implicit in these two question marks is amazement: how little of what he has been talking about all these years (hasn’t it been culture policy?), has been understood. However, he answers. Short as the answer is, it follows a familiar pattern: a question about culture is answered by a statement on economics mixed with politics. “Vide Ez’ *Guide to Kulchur*, facilitated by Ez system of Economics, now the program of Ministers Funk and Riccardi<sup>364</sup>, tho I don’t spose they know it was mine” (Pound 1987a, 101). Pound seems to believe in his ability to indirectly influence political and economic decision-making. If he believed that he had succeeded in Italy and Germany, it would be natural to assume that he expected to be able to route the political, economic and cultural situation in Japan in the “right” direction as well.

#### 4.3.3. Ultimate target and discouraging results

Pound’s texts in the *Japan Times* inevitably raise a question of the target reader. How does Pound see the reader of his Japanese newspaper articles? Pound confesses that he feels “a little lost writing for an unknown public” (Pound 1987a, 166). However, he hopes that “the Japanese reader must be friendly or he wouldn’t be finding me in print at all” (Pound 1987a, 166). Sometimes he addresses “the Japanese intellectuals” (Pound 1987a, 162), sometimes Japanese scholars or students (Pound 1987a, 164-165, 187). In general, he wishes to see his readers as “the Orientals wanting a clear view of the west” (Pound 1987a, 154). But this is not all. When he writes “Jefferson warned us” (Pound 1987a, 170), or “we should keep OUT of Europe”, “It is time we dug up the creed of the

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<sup>363</sup> Cf. Pound’s promise in his letter (13 January, 1940) to Kitasono: “The *Jap Times* don’t appear to have an Italian correspondent. If they wd. confer this honour on me I will faithfully promise not to send them any news, or will comply with any other measures they like” (Pound 1987a, 82).

<sup>364</sup> Walter Funk, German Minister of Economy; Raffaello Riccardi, Italian Minister of Finance.

American founders”, “It is time we knocked the dust off a few perfectly valid ideas” (Pound 1987a, 173), or “until the reader has patience to read at least the few phrases of J. Adams” (Pound 1987a, 175), there is a feeling that he talks to the Americans, even if indirectly. Some rhetorical questions also seem to address the American reader rather than the Japanese: “What have we in our recent American record that might serve to enlighten them?” (Pound 1987a, 174) Sometimes he starts talking directly to the American reader: “The American reader on his part might <...> start looking for the American representatives of these forces” (Pound 1987a, 175). But even without these direct references, the numerous “we” and “us” in Pound’s essays do imply a familiar reader he is addressing while talking to the Japanese. The ultimate target was most probably not Japan, but the U.S. via Japan.

It reveals another aspect of Pound’s triangle. We have already seen that Italy is an intermediary between Japan and the US, and that the English language is a middle ground between Japanese and Italian. Now, it appears that Japan is an intermediary in Pound’s talk from Italy to the US.

The West (and the US in particular) as the ultimate beneficiary of the collaboration with Japan is always visible in Pound’s discourse, whether in personal letters or essays. The benefits include the spheres of culture, economics and politics. Thus, suggesting the parallel between VOU and E.E. Cummings in the *Townsmen* essay, Pound (like in the case of the “Papa Flaubert” parallel, discussed above) reveals a glimpse of a pragmatic agenda in the publication of the Japanese poets: “<the VOU poems> may even serve to introduce Cummings and Peret to readers who have thought my more obscure younger contemporaries merely eccentric” (Pound 1987a, 201). His contextualization of the VOU poets appears to aim at reinforcing his own paradigm of modern Western tradition and consequently facilitating the reception of the Western “obscure eccentrics”. Apparently, Pound’s agenda of “importing” the Orient aims at the effect of the publication on the Western reader. He sees it as an educational process on several levels, including the very basic one: “if we give a BRIEF lesson in ideogram in every number of *Townsmen*, perhaps a few readers will start learning to read” (Pound 1987a, 56), as he writes to Kitasono (9 February, 1938). Important as Japan is to Pound, his true objective lies in the Western hemisphere.

Talking about the potential Noh has to promote better understanding between the East and the West, Pound again reveals a familiar agenda and appears to be primarily

targeting the West. In a letter to Kitasono (3 March, 1939), he expresses hope that the Japanese example will have a beneficent effect on the situation in western arts and, in particular, will put an end to the “unbounded cheapness” of Hollywood:

I have <had strong> nostalgia for Japan, induced by the fragment of Noh in *Mitsuco*. If you can continue such films nothing in the West can resist. We shall expect you AT LAST to deliver us from Hollywood and unbounded cheapness.

ALL the Noh plays ought to be filmed/ or at any rate ALL the music shd/ be recorded on the sound track. (Pound 1987a, 72)

He returns to the educational effect of Noh in his third publication in the *Japan Times* again (10 December, 1939), referring to Noh drama as a priceless treasure: “Any western university should have the COMPLETE SET of Noh plays on sound-film for study in its dramatic and literary courses” (Pound 1987a, 155). Japan, according to Pound, is to play a major role in rectifying the “old half-witted system of Western teaching” (Pound 1987a, 155) and guiding the “simple-minded student” of Western universities. The same educational motivation underlies the famous “peace plan” of Pound’s, i.e. the proposal of exchanging Noh plays for the island of Guam:

<I> INSIST on having 300 Noh plays done properly and recorded on sound film so as to be available to educate such amerikn stewdent as are capable of being cultur’d. (Pound 1987a, 112)

The motif of educating the West by means of the Oriental culture repeatedly occurs in Pound’s correspondence. The rhetorical pattern, already familiar from his “universal language” reflections, remains the same: convincing the Japanese reader in the profitability of cultural exchange, Pound, nevertheless, keeps seeing the West as the ultimate beneficiary. For example, in a letter to Kitasono (2 November, 1937), Pound addresses the country of Japan, arguing for the profitability of exporting books to Europe rather than cheap mass-production merchandise:

The question to Japan is: instead of dumping cheap products which we already have too much of, in the occidnt, why not send us some cheap books which we NEED.

at least a few of us need them very badly and if they were on the market more of us would wake up to the fact that we need them. (Pound 1987a, 49)

“Waking up” the West appears to be the major motif of importing the Japanese culture. Simultaneously, Japan is viewed by Pound as instrumental in sifting out ashes from cinders in the familiar Western culture and thus assisting the West in its own self-identification, as Pound sees it. In this process, Japan starts functioning as a link between Pound and the Western world to be awoken: “But couldn’t Japan print a series of books in English and/or other languages at a reasonable price? A Jap publisher could even sell copies in EUROPE” (Pound 1987a, 108), writes Pound to Kitasono, emphasizing the possible profits of the enterprise. His question, however, implies concern about the absence of “good books” in the West, a problem which Japanese cheap publishers could allegedly help solving. Pound, obviously, offers his services in consulting the Japanese publishers as to what is worth printing: “Naturally I wd/ be only too glad to tell the publisher what is, and has for the past 50 years been worth reading” (Pound 1987a, 108). He promptly suggests a list of books/authors (such as H. James, F.M. Ford, Frobenius, Th. Hardy, Rimbaud), including “eight volumes of my own essays to the Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai<sup>365</sup> as a starting point” (Pound 1987a, 181). The role of Japan thus implies providing not only Noh and VOU, but the whole list of authors underlying the tri-lateral paradigm.

Pound’s efforts to offer the “right” history books to Japan apparently have the same pragmatic side. Promoting the history of the USA in Japan, Pound apparently addresses not only the Japanese reader but sees Americans as his ultimate target audience: “If my god damned compatriots cant or WONT print decent American history, that is no reason why Tokyo shouldn’t”, as he writes to Kitasono on 17 July, 1940 (Pound 1987a, 92). Same sentiment sounds in the *Japan Times*: “As no American seems to know whom Mr. Morgenthau bought the ten billion of gold from, perhaps some Oriental will have the ingenuity and patience to start finding out” (Pound 1987a, 180). Pound’s vehement rhetoric obviously implies rancor against the familiar American media and academic system and aims at finding allies in the Orient, if not in the Occident. Japan is to teach Americans what the latter, according to Pound, fail to find out themselves. Recommending Woodward’s history of America to Kitasono, Pound ironically remarks:

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<sup>365</sup> International Organization for the Promotion of Culture, established by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 1934 for international cultural exchange.

It wd. be a great joke if you started using it in your schools and giving a better teaching of U.S. history than is given in American schools. (Pound 1987a, 35)

The emotional motif of stinging the pride of compatriots is no less visible in the quote than general educational concerns.

In this context, Pound's efforts of facilitating the cultural imports from Japan look quite logical. Using microfilm technology ("That ought to accelerate the availability of the 100 best ideogramic and Japanese texts IN THE ORIGINAL" (Pound 1987a, 63), as he writes to Kitasono) and the idea of filming all Noh plays, discussed in his essay in the *Japan Times*, 15 May, 1939 (Pound 1987a, 150) equally aim at enhancing the Japanese impact on the West. The proposal of "Japerican", which involves the use of Latin characters in order to have Japanese texts "printed in the simplest possible manner" (Pound 1987a, 104), similarly caters for the Western reader and the latter's ease of access to the Japanese product.

Why does Pound choose Japan as an intermediary between himself and the US? A simple answer could be that he has no means of directly addressing Americans after World War II started. The essays in the *Japan Times* played the role similar to his radio broadcasts on the Roman Radio (it is not accidental that many of the subjects in the essays and the broadcasts overlap). However, Japan appears to be a much longer shot and its role as an intermediary is predicated on a certain picture Pound has of the country, which may be traced in his writings even before the war.

Pound tentatively supposes that Japan has avoided the vices he sees in Europe. "All this may seem to be nothing but very plain common sense. Japan may have arrived at this state of sanity and progressed beyond it, for all I know" (Pound 1987a, 189), writes Pound in the *Japan Times*. The same idea occurs repeatedly in his essays: "You may have a more immediate contact with the reality", as he addresses the Japanese in another essay in the *Japan Times* (Pound 1987a, 180). He wants to see Japan (wishful thinking, perhaps) as a more economically sane state and a more moral state, which probably evidences his willingness to see Confucius behind the image of Japan:

Every now and again we get a gleam, that is, three or four lines of print, showing a very acute sense of money, both in Japan and China. Perhaps your records have not been so often and so successfully destroyed as have those of the Occident. (Pound 1987a, 180)

Pound's view of Japan in the late 1930s and early 1940s is a strange construct, which in certain respects starts reminding of nineteenth-century imperialist Orientalism, no matter how supportive of Japan he is. He sees some facts of the country's past (including Noh and the Chinese influence), he sees certain aspects of the present (mostly arts, including VOU), but the future of the country remains blank to him. Pound's metaphoric approach does not allow seeing the contiguity of the country's history. Current Japan appears as a country at a crossroads, and Pound wants to direct its further development. He addresses Japan as a country which faces a choice: whether to follow the worst examples of the West or take a fresh start, accepting the triangle paradigm of Confucius-Cavalcanti-Adams (sane government, sane arts and sane economics) and providing an example for the rest of the world: "I see no reason for Japan's taking over the stupidities and flat failures of American scholarship", warns Pound in the *Japan Times*. Accepting the "proper" list of books, the country allegedly has an opportunity to skip the errors of the West and advance both economically and culturally: "Here your universities can save their students a great deal of time by importing Brooks Adams' *The Law of Civilization and Decay* and *The New Empire*" (Pound 1987a, 181). In this respect, Pound's dialogue with Japan closely reminds his attempts of addressing or consulting Mussolini and presenting Italy as the realization of Jefferson's dreams<sup>366</sup>.

Pound implicitly presents modern Japan as a tabula rasa, an empty vessel, which may be filled with the "right" content in order to avoid all the errors of the European/American modern history. He sees the country as a chance to start from scratch, leaving behind the burden of "superstitions" that are menacing the West:

It is extremely difficult to make a thorough reform of studies that have become fixed or waterlogged through a century or more of university habit. There is, on the other hand, a grand chance of effecting an up-to-date system, if you deliberately set out to present a relatively unexplored foreign culture, and can do so without superstitions, at any rate looking clearly at definite facts either established or provable <...>. (Pound 1987a, 184)

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<sup>366</sup> Cf. Pound's essay in the *Japan Times* (12 August, 1940): "You find Hitler almost quoting Confucius; you find Mussolini almost citing Jefferson" (Pound 1987a, 179). See also his book *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (1935).

The “clarity of vision” in Pound’s praise of VOU poets thus appears to be also instrumental in reforming the rigid structures of Western culture. The “impartial and alien eye” of Japan promises an adequate assessment of the Western heritage:

If Japan can produce a better, that is clearer and more incisive, set of brochures showing the real thought of the founders of America’s social form, so much the greater your glory. The best and most revolutionary book on Botticelli was brought out by one of your citizens. It was <...> extremely original in its treatment of Botticelli’s details as comparable with Oriental treatments. The impartial and alien eye really saw what the familiar native eye had taken for granted. (Pound 1987a, 185)

Although Pound keeps reminding the Japanese about their own benefits (“If you do this, the Occident will come to sit at your feet” (Pound 1987a, 187), as he promises in the *Japan Times*), he, apparently, is primarily concerned with the condition of the familiar culture. His Japan is to play the role of an enlightener to the West, a mirror in which the latter will finally recognize its own image, its problems and errors. One of the most revealing statements in Pound’s last essay in the *Japan Times* leaves no doubt as regards Pound’s ultimate target audience and the role of Japan in the culture dialogue:

You Japanese are said to be very ingenious. Go on. Invent something. Find me a mental gimlet that will let a squirt of light into the indubitably active “minds” of America. “Listen-in to Tokyo!” Yes, brother. And the sooner Tokyo starts TELLING the American people its own history, i.e. the history of the U.S.A., the sooner the American people will find out. For, of their own motion and initiative, they are NOT finding out. (Pound 1987a, 190-191)

It is hard to say what these calls for enlightening amount to: whether they are designed to inspire the Japanese or awaken the sense of shame in the familiar Western reader. Perhaps both. I would suggest that in both cases, the American is seen as the ultimate target of Pound’s speech. Whether it is a sincere utopic vision or a rhetoric figure of implicitly addressing the West, the image of Japan in Pound’s discourse implies a very definite role for Japan in the “triangle”: Japan is not an exotic ornament to decorate the existing Western landscape but a sharp tool to reform the latter.

There is, of course, a legitimate question as regards the fruitfulness of the project. On the one hand, Pound started the process of a dialogue between the Japanese, European and American avant-garde. He connected Oriental and Occidental writers and



scholars, who began exchanging letters and books. Japanese VOU poets appeared in Western media, the Japanese reader received an opportunity to familiarize themselves with modern Western poetry and cultural news (book reviews, essays) published with the assistance of Kitasono.

However, despite Kitasono's enthusiastic replies, Pound has a feeling that something is going wrong. By the end of 1940, Pound starts wondering why his project is not gaining popularity in Japan. He repeatedly asks Kitasono why he remains little known in Japan: "Why am I not translated?<sup>367</sup> Any one outside VOU club ever read a book by E.P.?" (Pound 1987a, 107). The question worries him and he asks Kitasono to give him an honest answer. "You would help me considerably if you can find time to say why my books are not translated into Japanese" (Pound 1987a, 108). The question is not only in his own popularity. The question is about the success of his whole East-West enterprise. Apart from VOU members, Pound does not seem to see any substantial interest among the Japanese in Western literature or culture.

Pound's noble plan of using Noh films to disseminate samurai ethic code in the US did not prove to be fruitful, either, as Diego Pellecchia observes (Pellecchia 2013). The results of his dialogues with the Japanese embassy authorities<sup>368</sup> also seem to have been somewhat discouraging. Not only were they uninterested in discussing Noh, but they also failed to recognize the names of modern Japanese poets. In a letter to Kitasono (25 August, 1940), Pound thus describes his visit to the Japanese cultural bureau in Rome in August, 1940:

They said ALL you young poets were incomprehensible. <...> Fenollosa meant nothing to 'em. <They> thought I ought to get wise to MODERN Japan and not bother with (or stick to) Noh. Well, they gave me a damn good cup of COFFEE. So I kidded 'em about disappearance of tea ceremony. (Pound 1987a, 93)

Apparently, the idea of East-West understanding of the Japanese diplomatic authorities was not that much rooted in the concept of cultural tradition.

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<sup>367</sup> Katue Kitasono will politely explain that by the apparent difficulty of Pound's texts.

<sup>368</sup> In 1937, having had "a three hour talk" with Hajime Matsumiya, embassy councilor, Pound was optimistic and even planned offering his own *ABC of Reading* "as a text book to introduce Japanese students to western literature" (Pound 1987a, 35).

On the one hand, both Pound's and Burliuk's Japanese quests might look similarly discouraging. There is a big difference, though. While in Burliuk's case, Japan, indeed, does not leave any lasting trace in the writer's further works or theories, Pound's Japan remains in both the structural principles of his *Cantos* and in the paradigmatic "Kulchur" construct. No need to say that Pound was not a person to be easily discouraged. Even in St. Elizabeths Hospital, he keeps discussing in scanty letters to Kitasono the possibility of publishing a Confucian anthology in Japan. In 1958, having been released from St. Elizabeths and having returned to Italy, seventy-three-year-old Pound resumes his correspondence with the Japanese friends and even finds new<sup>369</sup> ones. Once again, he promotes Japanese authors in the West (for example, recommending Junzaburo Nishiwaki<sup>370</sup> for the Nobel Prize), and, in general, proceeds, as he writes in a letter to Iwasaki (6 December, 1958), working "for correlation of the better thought of Europe with the Japanese heritage" (Pound 1987a, 146). The metaphor abides.

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<sup>369</sup> Including Ryozo Iwasaki, a scholar and translator, and another scholar, Shiro Tsunoda.

<sup>370</sup> Junzaburo Nishiwaki was four times nominated for the Nobel Prize.

## CONCLUSION

The dissertation discusses the East-West opposition in the works of David Burliuk and Ezra Pound, the key figures of European Vorticism and Russian cubo-futurism respectively. The opposition is analyzed within the framework of Roman Jakobson's dichotomy of two language poles, i.e. the metonymical and the metaphorical modes of arrangement, which, according to Jakobson, may be instrumental in the analysis of any semiotic structure. The method, already applied by a number of scholars to the study of characteristic features of the individual style of an author, in my work is utilized in order to find patterns in the mode of representation of the familiar and the other in the works of two typologically close literary figures.

The primary material in my dissertation consists of little-studied texts in the history of Vorticism and Russian Futurism. In Pound's case, the sources include a range of Japan-related texts, such as the poet's plays modeled on the Noh tradition, written in 1916 but first published only in 1987, his Japanese correspondence, also published only in 1987, and Pound's essays which appeared in the *Japan Times* in 1939-1940. In the case of Burliuk, I discuss the texts inspired by the two years he spent in Japan (both poetry and three prose narratives, which have never been reprinted since the late 1920s). The analysis allows me to prove my initial hypotheses that Russian Futurism, and Burliuk in particular, despite all radical attempts of breaking free from the tradition of the nineteenth century, in fact displays a very traditional "metonymical" manner as regards the representation of the East, i.e. the manner which closely reminds of what Edward Said defined as characteristic of the European "Orientalism" discourse, whereas Pound's Vorticism, even if not often considered among most radical avant-garde schools of the early twentieth century, shows a dramatic turn in its treatment of the Oriental other in a metaphorical construct.

Discussing the typological links between Vorticism and Russian Futurism, I put a special emphasis on the indebtedness of both schools to Italian Futurism. Close reading of the Vorticist and cubo-futurist manifestos allows tracing the respective strained and ambiguous relations of both schools with the Italian movement. On the one hand, the rhetoric of both the Vorticists and the Hylaeans closely reminds of Marinetti's; on the other hand, both schools identify themselves in strong opposition to the Italian movement, which results in similar scandals and public quarrels during Marinetti's visits to England and to Russia respectively. This opposition in both cases assumes the form of

“geographical” dichotomies: North vs. South in the case of Vorticism and East vs. West in Russian cubo-futurism. Thus, Marinetti involuntarily helps both schools organize and identify themselves with regard to the familiar and the other.

Analyzing the Vorticist manifestos published in the two issues of *Blast* (1914, 1915), I show how the concept of their “Northern” art becomes increasingly linked with various Oriental traditions, as Wyndham Lewis’s, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska’s, as well as numerous collective texts prove. It appears that the Oriental references in *Blast* primarily serve as an authority in the theoretical, historical and political justification of a new modern esthetic. On the other hand, the representation of the East-West relationship in the Vorticist writings complies with a more general concept, which Lewis proclaims as “sane duality”. As opposed to Marinetti’s monologic discourse, the Vorticists insist on the duality of vision and on dialogism. Their concept of art as an “arrangement” of images implies the multiplicity of correlated voices and reminds of metaphor in the manner the non-contiguous elements are selected and put together according to the principle of analogy. A similar approach and a similar emphasis on metaphor may be found in Pound’s own writings and in Ernest Fenollosa’s reflections on the Chinese written character and on the Noh theater, which shaped to a great extent Pound’s concept of image super-position in Japanese haiku and Noh, a concept which informed his “ideogrammic” method and ultimately became one of his basic structural principles both in poetry (cf. *The Cantos*) and in prose works (e.g., *Guide to Kulchur*).

The analysis of Russian Futurist manifestos reveals an equally complex but fundamentally different picture. The concept of the Orient in Russian Futurism remains as ambiguous as it was in the writings of the nineteenth-century debates of the “westernizers” and “slavophiles”. The essentialized in Saidean terms Orient remains as both a dream and a menace. However, most characteristic of cubo-futurism is probably the approach, which is manifest in early Velimir Khlebnikov’s rigid anti-Western stance, evident in Khlebnikov’s public gestures (like the scandal he provoked at Marinetti’s lecture in St-Petersburg in 1914) and in his manifesto-like early prose texts. In his anti-Western rhetoric, Khlebnikov identifies as an “Asian”, and this unequivocal metonymic association is something absolutely opposite to the “sane duality” of the Vorticists. What defines Khlebnikov’s vision is contiguity, a very graphic illustration of which he presents in “Svyatogor’s Barrow”, according to which, it is the vast mainland itself that breathes the “live spirit of the East” into the Russian people. In a similarly contiguous manner, Khlebnikov describes the enemy, the essentialized West, whose inferiority is also

predicated on the direct contiguous connection with the land, but a much more limited land, which accordingly accounts for the West's allegedly rationalist and limited "reason of the island", as opposed to the Eastern "consciousness of the mainland". It may be noticed, that Khlebnikov's identification with the East is largely addressed to the implicit Western "enemy", with whom he is actually negotiating. With time, Khlebnikov's rhetoric becomes much less militant, however the utopic dream of reconstructing the former unity of the great Asian consciousness will not leave him.

Burliuk was not among those who signed Khlebnikov's defiant letters to Marinetti; however, his symbolic identification with the Scythian culture (evidenced by the very name, chosen for the cubo-futurist group, *Hylaea*) might remind of Khlebnikov's pride in his "Asian" origins. However, Burliuk's Japanese narratives show an interesting turn, which might be symptomatic for the late stage of the Futurist project: on the one hand, it is hard to find the former Futurist rebel in the texts, which are highly reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Japonisme prose, and, on the other hand, Khlebnikov's thesis that Russia belongs to Asia is implicitly replaced by a similarly metonymical assumption that Asia belongs to Russia, even if symbolically.

Like Khlebnikov, who encapsulates his search for Asia in the framework of a familiar Russian legend in "Svyatogor's Barrow", Burliuk defines his Japan through familiar literary and cultural references in a manner which may also be defined as metonymical. Like in Khlebnikov's case, where the search for Asia ultimately amounts to negotiating relations with the West, rather than with the East, Burliuk's Japanese narratives and poetry to a great extent focus not on the Orient, which remains subordinated by the discourse, but on legitimizing the relations with the Occident (even if they differ from those proclaimed in early Khlebnikov).

Describing Japan, Burliuk uses two seemingly opposite strategies, which I define in Venuti's terms as foreignization and domestication. The former aims at exoticizing the other and presenting it as a complete alternative to the familiar (in a manner similar to that of Balmont's Japanese essays); the latter tends to interpret the other in familiar terms. However, the strategies appear to be not that different: even most foreignizing characteristics rely on familiar concepts, values and expectations of the familiar reader, and in that sense are also familiarizing. As a result, the texts, even if accentuating the exotic, suggest a familiar and a metonymical, or rather synecdochic, view of the other, who is presented as a part of the author's and the reader's common frame of reference.

The East/West opposition in Burliuk's texts is far from balanced, as the Western perspective is clearly privileged, which becomes manifest in the character system, in the persona of the narrator, and in the representation of the other as an object, rather than subject of the narrative. The other is static and mute; the interaction between the East and the West is possible in only one direction: Japan's attempts to borrow Western "culture" are disapproved of, while the West's right to interpret, appropriate, and subordinate (even if symbolically) Japan is not questioned.

Structurally, there seems to be a common pattern in the organization of all three of Burliuk's Japanese narratives. Starting a trip, Burliuk establishes a system of coordinates or a frame of familiar references or markers, developing an imaginary geographical context, while the whole trip is inscribed into a literary perspective, in the context of Russian and Western texts, which also suggest a familiar scale of values for the reader's encounter with the other. Both devices may be described in terms of metonymy, as they both primarily rely on contiguity and context. Familiarized in both literary and everyday culture aspects, the other in Burliuk's texts, nevertheless, fails to yield to total familiarization at a closer contact, retaining its otherness and challenging the narrator's domesticating efforts, which, probably, accounts for the anti-climactic finales of all three Japanese narratives. Suffice it to say that the two years in Japan do not seem to have left any deep trace on Burliuk's further writing, whether thematically, technically or structurally.

In Pound's case, on the other hand, the impact of the Japanese culture is unquestionable and long lasting. While Burliuk's Japan is constructed as a contiguous part of the familiar cultural background, which frames his dialogue with the West, Pound's Japan enters a new culture paradigm, largely designed to challenge the familiar. Pound's Noh-related plays, based on a complex allusion scheme and structured according to what he understood as the Noh principles of "the unity of the image" and image superposition, may be called essentially metaphorical in the manner they favor simultaneity, analogy, and parallelism. What *A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel* presents is literally a paradigm of texts. Pound rewrites a text of de Musset, in which de Musset makes his characters read another text, i.e. that of Racine's *Phedre*, and the reading scene becomes an allusion to a picture by Rembrandt. Pound wraps up this multi-layer text within Noh genre conventions, offering his reader or audience a "Japanese" reading of de Musset's reading of Racine. It reminds Pound's own definition of a Noh play as "one set of acts in relation to a whole other set of acts, a whole series of backgrounds and memories", which, in its turn, closely reminds a definition of metaphor.

Unlike the case of *Burliuk*, where Japan remains an object of interpretation by means of familiar references, in Pound's text Japan plays the role of an organizing structural principle. As the above-mentioned text of *A Supper* itself literally belongs to de Musset, Pound cannot really affect the selection operation, as metaphor would require. However, he uses another tool, all too familiar to him (cf. his editorship of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*). Pound slightly shortens the original, and the selection of omissions, as I argue, is very consistent and shows a clear pattern: Pound underlines the unity of color and the unity of the image, necessary for a Noh play. He also adds paratext (the introduction) with its quotes from a Japanese Noh play *Nishikigi* and with Pound's own hints and allusions to Noh, which functions as a "threshold" (in Gerard Genette's terms) and guides the reader in the search of the Japanese path through the strange maze of the play.

*Tristan*, another Noh-based dramatic work by Pound, is the most finished among his plays; besides, it is closest to the Noh concept as Pound (and Fenollosa) understood it. It is an even more complex paradigm of voices, images and associations, than *A Supper*. The play gives a "Japanese" version of the Tristan and Ysolt legend through the reconstruction of Beroul and de Ventadorn, re-enacted by the characters. The setting and the whole plot structure are reminiscent of several Noh plays which Pound translated from Fenollosa's manuscripts. Like in *A Supper*, Japan is present as an organizing principle, in the careful selection of colors, allusions, and movements, and in the arrangement of voices. The very choice of the legend may be self-referential and allude to Pound's earlier poetry, where the motif of Ysolt, connected with the image of H.D., has a special biographical meaning. The choice of the main character also seems to have very personal reasons and to suggest a link with the Vorticist enterprise: the traveling Sculptor in *Tristan* is reminiscent of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who was killed in the Great War not long before. The non-linear and anachronistic structure of the plot, as well as the emphasis on analogy and on selection, testify for the metaphorical nature of the text, which correlates (or super-poses) the medieval legends, troubadour poetry, Japanese drama and Vorticist experiments.

Both plays highlight the motif of transformation, which links the dramatic oeuvre of Pound with his famous experiment in haiku, the two-line "In a Station of the Metro", a poem that showed the transformation of an every-day experience into something unexpectedly beautiful. The plays, likewise, dramatize the very moment of transformation, which is implicit and hidden in the gap between the lines in the haiku. This shift of the accent on the dynamic process is consistent with Pound's own turn from the esthetic of Imagism to Vortex. In both plays, "Japan", super-posed on the Western

tradition, provides a framework, a set of tools, and a certain optic, which is essentially Vorticist, and which logically develops the ideas proclaimed in the *Blast* manifestos. On the other hand, the motifs of talking to the dead, of literary/historical analogies, and of metamorphosis, link the dramatic experiments with the world of *The Cantos*.

Pound's Japanese correspondence and the essays published in the *Japan Times* also lend themselves to an interpretation based on the "Japanese" superposition technique. Unlike Burliuk, who develops a linear "geographical" model with essentialized Oriental and Occidental poles taken for granted, Pound creates a culture paradigm, which he defines as a triangle project, aimed at correlating Japan, Italy, and the USA and promoting a tri-lateral world language. The project, which superposes modern Japanese poetry on top of European modernism, may be also discussed as essentially metaphorical. Pound promotes Japanese avant-garde poetry in Europe and puts the Oriental avant-gardists in contact with key figures of European and American contemporary culture. Pound's method of dealing with the Orient may be described as two-fold: on the one hand, he carefully selects and presents original texts, on the other hand, inscribes the texts into a paradigmatic construct of his own. The ultimate target reader of Pound's essays published in the *Japan Times*, and the beneficiary of the whole project, as the poet's rhetoric suggests, is the USA, whose allegedly degraded culture (as well as economy and politics) Pound desperately aims to recover. This ambition, even if doomed from the start, links Pound's project with Fenollosa, who equally believed in the beneficial effect of the Oriental art on the Western hemisphere. Pound's concept of a universal language as a tri-lateral combination of English, Italian and ideogram, naïve as it may sound, is also an extension of the "triangular" project and of Fenollosa's linguistic ideas, and, on the other hand, a distinct alternative to the linguistic utopias of the Russian Futurists, who (cf. Khlebnikov) see a universal language as one based on a common set of familiar (essentially Russian) phonemes.

On the whole, the two images of Japan, discussed in the dissertation, i.e. the culturally appropriated familiarized exotic background in one case and a superposed element in a culture paradigm in the other, represent two opposite strategies, which may be defined as a metonymical and a metaphorical respectively. In the former case, Burliuk relies on the contiguity of familiar contexts and describes Japan in order to negotiate his relations with the Occident, while in the latter, Pound positions himself beyond the familiar, challenges the familiar and establishes a new paradigm, which is to include elements of both Oriental and Occidental heritage and which is to shape the matrix of a new "Kulchur".



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