

## Overt Translation Strategies in the Histories of Robert Lowell and Ezra Pound

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American literary translators mostly work within an academic investigation industry impressively dedicated to the annexation of foreign cultural capital. Amongst the major products of the best graduate school literature departments are the annotated edition, the specialised biographical study and the well-explained translation, all usually presented in the clearest English available. Literary history—a narrative coordination of documents—is in this way firmly embedded in bibliographic archeology—the identification and description of the documents themselves—, inevitably relegating innovation to the footnotes of a vast information bank embracing the legacies of all past and competing civilisations. As a general rule, such cultural concentration follows the extension of economic control: the great libraries and museums of the world have always been established next to the seats of imperial power. Yet the fact that there are about 6,700 museums in the United States does not automatically mean that they all house trophies of conquest. They also correspond to a certain obsession with the relative lack of an autochthonous past, and thus with a peculiar form of immediate historicisation. Popular archeology may not only connect with history of American beer manufacturing, rock and roll, rubbish disposal or any slightly remote form of everyday life—all this mostly in the interests of promoting domestic tourism—, but also with international tourism of Americans themselves, as a means of idealising and often importing the objects of a European past. In a consumerist context where last year’s fashion is this year’s museum piece, a conflict may thus develop between autochthonous historicity—consciously or unconsciously designed to distance an object from the present—and the historicity of objects imported from more ancient cultures—in which case extreme distance is instead regarded as a potential obstacle to understanding, and thus as a factor to be reduced. Ideally, these two processes should bridge the discontinuity resulting from the discovery of a New World. In practice, their conflict remains and effectively explains many of the dominant theses on

naturalising or covert translation as an appropriate and justified way of incorporating the foreign past whilst suppressing its foreignness.

Against this background, brief consideration of several overt translation strategies—to borrow the terminology of Juliane House<sup>1</sup>—may indicate that an alternative approach to American historiography deploys at least some intelligence where, from the dominant academic point of view, there may appear to be none. As poet-translators, Robert Lowell and Ezra Pound<sup>2</sup> made no attempt to place themselves beyond the sociological location of academic research work: Lowell acknowledged the help of an impressive list of professors, experienced linguists and exacting poets—including Renato Poggioli, Hannah Arendt, I.A. Richards, T.S. Eliot, Elizabeth Bishop and Mrs Roman Jakobson—; and as for Pound, the title page of *Cathay* acknowledges the well-known debts to Professors Fenollosa, Mori and Ariga, whilst the *Cantos* systematically incorporate enough citations to fill several Ph.D theses. The poets concerned might thus be said to have had adequate if not privileged access to quite extensive accumulations of knowledge, and it would thus be difficult to treat their translational works as the results of simple ignorance or indeed as bizarre curiosities in need of correction. It would be more proper to say that both poets sought help and advice, but were then prepared openly to turn their back on criteria of correctness. Their works should thus be understood as the results of consciously overt translation, to be analysed in terms of the use of error to construe knowledge from the distance of foreign documents.

Error is by definition triadic (the supposedly ideal equivalent, the actual translation, and their difference), as opposed to the binary structure of the simple mistake (the supposedly ideal equivalent as right, the actual translation as wrong). This is not to say that Pound and Lowell did not make mistakes. When a translating poet talks about “the River Kiang” (Pound, *Cathay*), trustworthy information that /Kiang/ means “river” produces a simple opposition between a correct and an incorrect translation, the only substantial knowledge produced being an unfortunate suspicion that Pound had a very indirect understanding of Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, when Lowell translates Baudelaire’s

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<sup>1</sup> Juliane HOUSE, *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment*, TBL Verlag Gunter Narr, Tübingen, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> Robert LOWELL, *Imitations*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1958; Ezra POUND, *The Cantos: Revised Collection Edition* (Cantos 1 - 117), Faber and Faber, London, 1975.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Hugh KENNER, *The Pound Era*, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, pp. 203-206. Kenner quite fairly dismisses such mistakes as “deflections undertaken with open eyes”, and, more importantly, underlines that “there is no question of seduction by half-understood ideograms; no ideograms are in

*Le temps! Il est, hélas! des coureurs sans répit,  
Comme le Juif errant et comme les apôtres..*

(“Le Voyage”)

as

*Time is a runner who can never stop...*

(*Imitations*)

the misreading of French syntax (“il est” = “il y a”) produces nothing but a blockage of good sense: a few lines further on in the translation, Lowell’s ever-running Time unfortunately seems able to pause at least long enough to trample on what should be the real runners:

*And even when Time’s heel is on our throat  
we can still hope, still cry, “on, on, let’s go!”*

The fault has its own linguistic logic as a mistake, and says nothing of consequence about historical distance.<sup>4</sup>

Mistake only becomes error when the difference between equivalence and mistranslation assumes a non-trivial meaning of its own. Thus when in *Imitations* Lowell renders “lice” (French for “disputes”) as “lice” (English plural of “louse”) in the first Baudelaire translation (“To the Reader”), the false friends would appear to signal a mere mistake until, further on, we come to the final Rimbaud translation “The Lice Hunters”. The mistranslation clearly functions as an intended narrative parallelism, bracketing off this Baudelaire-Rimbaud section of *Imitations* and speaking with an auctorial voice that comes not from Baudelaire, nor from the union Baudelaire-Rimbaud, but from the narrator-historian underlining this union, namely Robert Lowell.

This controlled use of error is a principle of composition underlying both *Imitations* and the later *History*. For our present purposes however, the shorter and more coherent *Imitations* provides sufficient evidence of the basic translational strategy at work. The narrative parallelism of “lice”, for example, is further reflected in the repetition uniting the first and last lines of the book as a whole, the “mania of Achilles” leading to “mania to return” in the final Rilke translation. Indeed this one word “mania” might be seen as recuperating and redistributing something of the sense of “dispute” lost

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evidence on these pages of Fenellosa’s” (p. 213). Further Pound mistakes are given by Christine BROOKE-ROSE, *A ZBC of Ezra Pound*, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, pp. 84 ff.

<sup>4</sup> For lists of Lowell’s mistakes, see the volume *Critics on Robert Lowell*, ed. J. PRICE, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1972; especially C. CHADWICK “Meaning and Tone”.

in “lice”, used as it is to render Homer’s “menin” (usually “divine wrath”), Rimbaud’s “écroulements” (breakdowns/downfalls) and then blatantly added to Rilke for the sake of rounding off a narrative. These parallelisms and cross-references between translated texts are so frequent that it quickly becomes impossible to restrict referentiality to within each individual text—the numerous rivers become one river; mythologically beautiful women become one women; multiple references to dogs refer to all dogs; all voyages are the voyage; and death is a constant throughout. There is moreover a practical difficulty with bearing in mind exactly which poet is speaking in which text: the presentation is such that the names of the authors only appear in small type at the end of each translated text, mostly not on the same page as the beginning. Source-text identification thus becomes an inessential part of the reading process: if the reader has prior knowledge of the sources, the echoes inevitably evoked are important precisely as echoes, and not as bases for correction. This is no means a simple anthology of poems selected “because nothing like them exists in English” (“Introduction”), but a carefully arranged thematic intertwining that, if read in the order of presentation, becomes a narrative in the full sense of the world, organising archeological findings in terms of history as story.<sup>5</sup> The various interwoven narrative strands effectively abstract transcendent third terms from individual source-translation relations. The result is a series of virtual characters that move through history like the Hegelian Spirit, manifesting and potentially justifying a translation strategy that, confronted by the details of philological archeology, could effectively respond: “So much the worse for the facts”.

Perception of this supra-translational discourse should call into question the methodological bases of simple comparative analyses of isolated translations, especially when they accept, as is the case in Amalia

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<sup>5</sup> To cite just one of several possible narrative readings, the basic mythos taken from the *Iliad* — “God’s will was working out, / from that time when first fell apart fighting / Atrides, king of men, and that god, Achilles...” — becomes a problematic developed through numerous references such as (in the order of presentation): “I set that man above the gods and heroes” (Sappho), “These mighty men ... / who will correct the great?...” (Der Wilde Alexander), “I see that none escape / ... These poor corpses were once / kings... Helen has paid this debt” (Villon), “in the end they are much of a pair / my twin gladiator beauties... Soon I must lose all these half-gods / that made my world so agonizingly half-joyful” (Heine), ““God of armies, is this the end?” he cried.... ‘No, Napoleon” (Hugo: *L’Expiation*), “I see the galleys bleed with dawn, / and shark with muffled rowlocks into Troy” (Valéry, *Hélène*), “there is nothing / sorrier than the marriage of two deaths” (Annensky), “le roi soleil, / hears the gods’ Homeric laughter from the dignitaries’ box” (Pasternak), “The overpaid gladiator must die in earnest” (Pasternak), “body and gravity, miraculously multiplied by its mania to return” (Rilke)...

Rodríguez's reading of "Le Bateau ivre"/"The Drunken Boat"<sup>6</sup>, Lowell's declared aim to "do what my authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America" ("Introduction"). Although this might be read as a fairly straight-forward strategy of dynamic equivalence, it is radically contradicted by the far more interesting statement, appearing on the same page, that the translator has "hoped somehow for a whole...". It is clear that none of the parts ("my authors") could historically have had access to this whole; and equally obvious that such external vision could not be attributed to them in the America of the late 1950s unless they happened to be called Robert Lowell. One should then be not at all surprised to see critics concluding, for example, that the "detached beauty" of the last stanzas of "The Drunken Boat" is "profoundly foreign to Rimbaud's spirit and voice".<sup>7</sup> But little of real import can be said about this distancing until the translator's contradictory statements of initial intent are discounted as absolute yardsticks for the assessment of individual translations. There is instead some justification for reading the "Introduction" as merely one of a series of textual fragments<sup>8</sup> making up what is read as *Imitations*, and for seeing its contradictory statements—in sum a problematic of framing<sup>9</sup>—as manifestations of the tensions informing the work as a whole. From this point of view, the apparent evocation of dynamic equivalence becomes a co-textual instance of overt translation (the first person pronoun openly lists what it is about to "unclot", "strip", "take out of dialect", "cut in half", "add" etc.). More importantly, this pronominal presence may then be seen to intrude upon a discursive mode where, in theory, it should never be found: if translation can be defined as a mode of discourse in which the utterance "I am translating" cannot be performative,

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<sup>6</sup> Amalia RODRÍGUEZ MONROY, "An English "Imitation" of Rimbaud: An Exercise in Comparative Translation", *Quaderns de Traducció i Interpretació*, EUTI, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 3, 1983, pp. 7-22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> In certain respects, this "Introduction" is translational itself: although critical commentaries habitually make the obligatory reference to Dryden's notion of "imitation", the pertinent antecedent here is the text to which Dryden's commentary responded, namely Cowley (1656): "I have in these two odes of Pindar taken, left out, and added what I please; nor made it so much my aim to let the reader know precisely what he spoke, but what was his way and manner of speaking." (cited by E.A. NIDA, *Toward a Science of Translating*, E.A. Brill, Leiden, 1964, p. 17).

<sup>9</sup> It cannot even be said that the "Introduction" is the *first* of the work's textual fragments, since the "Table of Contents" (which lists 63 translated texts, but excludes the translation of Rilke's "Die Tauben") corresponds neither to the body of the work (where the Rilke text is indeed presented as a translation), nor to the back flap, which announces "sixty-six poems". A possible implication is that the "Table of Contents" and the "Introduction" should be regarded as poems (63+1+2=66). A less upsetting implication is that the textual thresholds betray both a falsely suppressed work-in-progress (which would in fact be continued in *History*) and a writing subjectivity constantly evoking unstable boundaries between material and process.

the narrator of *Imitations* succeeds in testing the very limits of this obligatory exclusion.

Some examples are fairly obvious. When Lowell has Pasternak say:

*The sequence of scenes was well thought out;  
the last bow is in the cards*

(“Hamlet in Russia, A Soliloquy”)

the fact that the utterance is at the end of the volume’s penultimate fragment suggests that the speaking voice comes more immediately from the narrator of *Imitations* than from any of the other possible and potentially present sources (Hamlet, Shakespeare or Pasternak). It is not necessary to have access to the Russian text to read this phrase as an overt translation that challenges the very possibility of a soliloquy in the translational mode. Several other examples are similarly playful, whimsical or merely clever. The rendering of Baudelaire’s “—Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres” as “Ah never to escape from numbers and *form* !” is intriguing as the last line of the 13-line sonnet. Similarly, when Rimbaud is made to remember:

*Tom Thumb, the dreamer, I was knocking off  
my coupled rhymes...*

(“On the Road”)

the addition of “coupled” (Rimbaud himself only mentions “rimes”) not only refers to the French poet’s early verse forms, but also and more obviously (in the eyes of the English-language reader) to Lowell’s own poetic practice, notably the coupled rhymes used in his translation of *Phèdre*. The added suggestion of a psycho-erotic copula uniting these two historically distanced first person pronouns (“knocking off”/“coupled”) is by no means gratuitous, but helps to underline the ambiguous “we” implicit in every first person from the very beginning of the translational discourse:

*Sing for me, Muse, the mania of Achilles*

(“The Killing of Lykaon”)

It is strictly impossible to equate this “me” with any one physical person. This is firstly because we know that Homer was a committee and that the formulaic evocation opened semantic space for each individual teller of the

tale, a potentially unlimited series of receiving first persons. But it is also because the translator, having identified himself and declared his intentions, begins his history in such a way as to allow his subject position to transgress the “Introduction” and enter a part of this first person of the epic mode. To translate, in this sense, is merely to become the most recent of a long line of wandering tellers of tales.

This scinded first person provides the key to many of the uneasy misgivings critics have expressed in their interpretations of *Imitations*. It is the key to what vague analyses of “tone” have intuitively located as an externalised lyricism, as an essential incompleteness of the first person speaking voice<sup>10</sup>, and as the felt “lack of a central poem”<sup>11</sup> corresponding to the clearly marked beginning and end of the narrative. That is, it is the key to a recitative conception of translation which, untroubled by the historically very recent distinctions between individual creation and plagiarism, is able to touch an “I” that may have as its counterpart not a distant or dead reader, but a “you” in the present. This does indeed happen in the fragment that, significantly located in the physical centre of *Imitations*, does far more than the “Introduction” to summarise the discursive import of Lowell’s history:

*Stunningly simple Tourists, your pursuit  
is written in the tear-drops in your eyes!  
Spread out the packing cases of your loot,  
your azure sapphires made of seas and skies!*  
.....  
*Oh trivial, childish minds!*  
.....  
*How sour the knowledge travellers bring away!  
The world’s monotonous and small; we see  
ourselves today, tomorrow, yesterday,  
an oasis of horror in sands of ennui!*

(“The Voyage”)

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Geoffrey HILL, “Contrasts and Repetition”, in *Critics on Robert Lowell, op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stephen YENSER, *Circle to Circle. The Poetry of Robert Lowell*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, London, 1975: “It looks at first as though Lowell might have allowed his general chronological arrangement to subvert his narrative pattern...” (p. 184). Having failed to perceive the central role of the “you” addressed to Tourists, Yenser goes on to conclude that *Imitations* as a whole is “an allegory of the poet’s struggle to find his proper task” (p. 191).

The poet-translator shifts from the third to first person: the speaking voice addresses a public of tourists, of which it itself then becomes a critical part. An objector of conscience in time of war, Lowell was also conscientiously perturbed and—worse—ultimately bored by his society’s annexation of cultural capital in time of peace.

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Like *Imitations*, Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* begin with a translation from Homer and develop according to principles of composition that incorporate translated fragments into an unmistakably personal work. But the 149 pages of *Imitations* are fairly light-weight when pitted against the 802 pages of the published *Cantos*. Whereas Lowell used selection and distancing to present a history as story, Pound was obsessed with the past as a collection of archeological clues to an ultimately moral truth<sup>12</sup> allowing no narrative whole. Lowell located subjectivity at the beginning of the *Iliad*, obviously a good place to start a war story; Pound embarked, without subject, from Book XI of the *Odyssey*, perpetually *in media res* :

*And so went down to the ship,  
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and  
We set up mast and sail...*

There would be no doubt as to the identity of this “we” if the text were read as a straight translation of Homer. Yet the passage is not presented as such: it is merely the first of a long series of fragments, a departure both for the subjectivity translated and the translating subjectivity. The translational status of this ambiguously shared “we” is moreover identified not through titles, but through incorporated references such as the well-known insertion in this same Canto I:

*Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is, Andreas Divus,  
In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer,  
And he sailed...*

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<sup>12</sup> The ambition of the *Cantos* was described as being “to trace the ways in which financial inequality has been a cancer in the body of civilisation”; cf. William M. CHACE, *The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1973, p. 10.

This reference to the previous translator, from whom Pound was ostensibly translating, posits not only a second person (“Lie quite!”) excluded from the “we”, but also a first person (“I mean”) who, as in Lowell, almost says the unsayable “I am translating”. But it also assimilates an original first person plural (“We set up mast and sail”) that potentially includes both the present poet and the reader.<sup>13</sup> This inclusive ambiguity is not the same as that found in Lowell’s pronouns: it explicitly incorporates past experience which, introduced by “And so” with the deletion of, precisely, a pronoun (“And so went down”), is merely a fragment of a larger subjectless series.

Pound constantly deletes and multiplies pronouns. Both strategies make it habitually difficult to identify the exact subjects of individual actions and utterances, many of which are poorly referenced citations. If the characters are important, their preferred mode of presentation is the proper name (frequently without verb) and often the date of enunciation. Countless subjects are thus systematically denied expression of subjectivity. A citation may well be identified as coming from “M. Curie”, but it might as well be “some other scientist”:

... ”*J’ai*  
*Obtenu une brulure” M. Curie, or some other scientist*  
*“Qui m’a coûté six mois de guérison.”*  
*and continued his experiments.*

(Canto XXIII)

The translation appears four cantos later:

*“J’ai obtenu” said M. Curie, or some other scientist*  
*“A burn that cost me six months in curing,”*  
*And continued his experiments.*

(Canto XXVII)

These proper names are not merely arbitrary labels for historical subjectivities, but instead function as words in and of themselves: “Curie” is the reason why “in curing” is a better translation of “de guérison” than would be the more obvious “to heal”; “Homer” is also “home”; “Divus” is clearly

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<sup>13</sup> Inclusive ambiguity with respect to the first person is in fact only broken right at the apocryphal end of the published *Cantos*, where an “I” is distanced from the aesthetic of the text, as in “i.e. it coheres all right / even if my notes do not cohere.” (CXVI); or again: “I, one thing, as a relation to one thing; / Hui sees relation to ten.” (Notes for CXI). It is entirely possible to read “Hui” as “we”.

a “diversion”<sup>14</sup>, and so on. The documental value of the word counts for more than its subjective content. But this concerns far more than a series of bad puns on proper names: the strictly documental use of language is so common in the *Cantos* as to become a translational principle of composition. In no case is the context or content of an utterance explained or analysed. Instead, surface presence is maintained through fragmentation and interpreted through translation:

*to keep him —*

*Per animarla — in mood to go on with the fighting.*

(Canto XXVI)

Or again (but there are so many examples, so many foreign names and terms, that the selection cannot help but be arbitrary):

*“Leave no... omnem... as they say... volve lapidem...”*

*“Stone unturned...”*

(Canto XXVI)

The production of the *Cantos* is a constant and visible turning of stones, not especially to see what is under them, but to use to the underside to locate the next stone to be turned. This process follows to the letter Jakobson’s dictum that “the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign.”<sup>15</sup> That is, meaning is not presumed to be lodged in the person, in intention, in context, or in any material or transcendent referent of which the sign can simply be replaced. Meaning is instead revealed in the movement from sign to sign, surface to surface, in a process that never stops searching for some truth hidden in or between signs (most of the truth being the accumulation of surplus value). This is no doubt why the documental nature of textual material is repeatedly underlined by cuts and displacements, by exclusively written forms (“wd/”, “cd/”, “@”), by the modification of written form in order to translate spoken form (an English college is a “kawledg”; Spanish religion is “reliHion”) and by the constant return of phrases in different contexts, in either their original or translated mode, with scant regard for any semblance of chronological

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<sup>14</sup> “... nor do I greatly care by what name Andreas was known in the privacy of his life”, Ezra POUND, “Translators of Greek: Early Translators of Homer”, in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, Faber and Faber, London, 1954, p. 259.

<sup>15</sup> Roman JAKOBSON, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”, in R. BROWER (ed.) *On Translation*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966.

ordering. It is important to stress that this is done with all languages and within individual languages. It is difficult to accuse Pound of having misunderstood the pictorial value of Chinese ideograms when it is clear that he applied the same playful interpretation of surface levels to European proper names and indeed to utterances in general.

As easy as it may be to make Pound appear fashionably deconstructive, it should be stressed that, as in Laforgue, his work on the surface level of utterances remains a process for the production of critical knowledge. A brief example may illustrate the importance of this process for translation:

*OY TIS*

*“I am noman, my name is noman”  
but Wanjina is, shall we say, Ouan Jin  
or the man with an education  
and whose mouth was removed by his father  
because he made too many things  
whereby cluttering the bushman’s baggage  
vide the expedition of Frobenius’ pupils about 1938  
to Auss’ralia  
Ouan Jin spoke and thereby created the names  
thereby making clutter  
the bane of men moving  
and so his mouth was removed  
as you will find it removed in his pictures*

(Canto LXXIV, first of the Pisian Cantos)

The conflation of contexts is motivated by surface-level resemblance between “Wen Jen” (a Chinese figure of silent wisdom) and “Wanjina” (painted Aboriginal figures found in caves in the North-West of Australia, usually transcribed as “Wondjina”).<sup>16</sup> But this conflation on the level of signifiers (“shall we say”) serves to bring together several related principles: Odysseus’s denial of the proper name, the educated man whose mouth was removed, and the Aboriginal figure, painted without a mouth. In the context of the Pisian Cantos, written in an American Army prison, the motif of suppressed speech is used as a protest against arms sales, the economic promotion of war, a market in which “there is no clutter, no saturation”. But the elaboration of this complex statement also provides a

<sup>16</sup> Cf. BROOKE-ROSE, *op cit.*, p. 4.

powerful translation of an element that, according to other procedures, would remain untranslatable.

Ethnologists have been singularly unable to say why the Wondjina has no mouth; they have been unable to translate this significant absence into at least a hypothesis of available knowledge. When A.P. Elkin asked his native informants, “they simply replied that one could not draw a mouth; apparently, the effectiveness of the painting [to provoke rain] depends on this absence.”<sup>17</sup> Comparative approaches have similarly been blocked by replies that are neither assent nor dissent. Lévy-Bruhl, for example, compared the Wondjina to the *gâri* head-dress found in New Guinea and depicted without a mouth, as reported by Wirz. But what then does *gâri* mean? Wirz could only make conjectures, since “the Marind-Anim answer ‘yes’ to every question”.<sup>18</sup>

The interest of this example lies in the fact that a translation process such as that elaborated by Quine cannot even get started in situations where the subject’s reply is neither assent nor dissent.<sup>19</sup> Yet Pound needed no consenting native in order to understand that the mouth was removed so that knowledge could be restricted. A certain truth could be construed from the signifiers themselves.

Pound’s historiography is of the letter as revelation, and not of any dynamic spirit that might provide narrative relations between dispersed elements. Since moral principles exist independently of time and space, isolated manifestations of the same truth may enter into mutual interpretation. Despite all that has been said about Pound’s translational strategies<sup>20</sup>, the manifestations ultimately translate themselves; they do not require organisation around a central subjectivity or nation; the translator is thus always already a “we” actively engaged in the archeology of texts, in participative protest against falsely passive cultural absorption.

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<sup>17</sup> A. P. ELKIN, “Rock-paintings of N.W. Australia, *Oceania*, 1 (1930).

<sup>18</sup> P. WIRZ, *Die Marind-anim von holländisch Süd-Neu-Guinea*, II, p. 124; cited by Lucien LÉVY-BRUHL, *La Mythologie primitive*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1935, p. 138.

<sup>19</sup> W.V.O. QUINE, “Translation and Meaning”, in *Word and Object*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1960.

<sup>20</sup> Kenner sees Pound’s “mimetic homage” as a reaction against nineteenth-century strategies based on poetic inspiration (*op. cit.*), for Borges, Pound was going back to the literalist strategies used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (in “Note sur Ezra Pound, traducteur”, in *L’Herne: Ezra Pound*, 2, Paris, 1965, p. 233); Jean-Pierre Attal seeks to generalise such “translational homage” as a return to a Latin mode of composition (“Commentaire sur *Homage to Sextus Propertius*”, *ibid.*, p. 547); whereas Nida mistakes the dictum “Make it new” as a precept of dynamic equivalence (*op. cit.*).

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*Imitations* and the *Cantos* are both war poems; both are marked by historical pessimism; both translate from European culture in order to express this pessimism. But whereas Lowell's history comprises forces bent on working themselves out in the time and place of their American translator and as a critical part of American society, Pound's archeology rejects the standpoint of the ultimately academic reader or critic, becoming the work of a translator who, in the name of what was perceived as moral truth, was also a traitor.