



VINTAGE

THE POUND ERA

HUGH KENNER

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About the Book

A critical discussion of Pound's poetry and an insightful analysis of his sources.

About the Author

Hugh Kenner is Franklin and Callaway Professor at the University of Georgia. He was previously at The Johns Hopkins University and at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Canadian born, he attended the University of Toronto, then Yale University. Since 1947 he has published more than 20 books, concentrating on the great Modernists (Pound, Joyce, Eliot, Beckett). Pound enjoined him, about 1949, that he had 'an obligation' to visit the great men of his own time; that injunction he has scrupulously fulfilled.

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IN MEMORIAM M.J.K.

In signo fidei praecedentis

THE POUND ERA

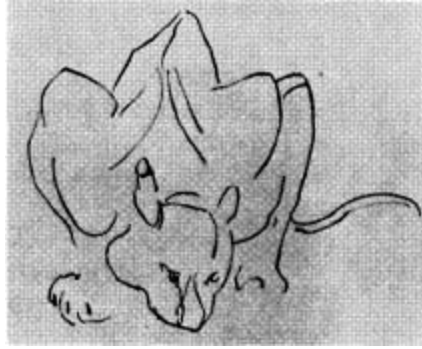
Hugh Kenner



PIMLICO

Part One

TOWARD THE VORTEX



GHOSTS AND BENEDICTIONS

Toward the evening of a gone world, the light of its last summer pouring into a Chelsea street found and suffused the red waistcoat of Henry James, lord of decorum, *en promenade*, exposing his Boston niece to the tone of things.

Miss Peg in London, he had assured her mother, “with her admirable capacity to be interested in the near and the characteristic, whatever these may be,” would have “lots of pleasant and informing experience and contact in spite of my inability to ‘take her out’.” By “out” he meant into the tabernacles of “society”: his world of discourse teems with inverted commas, the words by which life was regulated having been long adrift, and referable only, with lifted eyebrows, to usage, his knowledge of her knowledge of his knowledge of what was done. The Chelsea street that afternoon however had stranger riches to offer than had “society.” Movement, clatter of hooves, sputter of motors; light grazing housefronts, shadows moving; faces in a crowd, their apparition: two faces: Ezra Pound (quick jaunty rubicundity) with a lady. Eyes met; the couples halted; rituals were incumbent. Around them Chelsea sauntered on its leisurely business. James to play:

“Mr. Pound! . . .” in the searching voice, torch for unimagined labyrinths; and on, to the effect of presenting his niece Margaret; whereafter Mr. Pound presented to Mr.

James his wife Dorothy; and the painter's eye of Dorothy Pound, née Shakespear, "took in," as James would have phrased it, Henry James. "A fairly portly figure"—

Fifty years later, under an Italian sky, the red waistcoat seemed half chimerical—"that may be imagination!"—but let us posit it; Gautier wore such a garment to the *Hernani* première, that formal declaration (1830) of art's antipathy to the impercipient, and James would have buttoned it for this outing with didactic deliberation.

Fifty years left nothing else doubtful. The voice now given body was part of her world's tone, effusing from pages read in her mother's house: fictions wherein New World impetuosity crossed the Atlantic on journeys of sanctification. They came as pilgrims or they came as shoppers; as passionate antiquaries or as seekers-out of inconceivable sensations. Some of them amused their creator hugely: the young woman from Bangor who knew, she said, what she wanted and always went straight for it, and preferred to spend her money "for purposes of culture"; or the young man from Boston who proposed that the great thing was to *live* ("I don't want any second-hand spurious sensations; I want the knowledge that leaves a trace—that leaves strange scars and stains, ineffable reveries. . . . But I'm afraid I shock you, perhaps even frighten you"). Grotesque though might be its assertive manifestations, the allure of Europe for the American psyche was in James's awareness the dominant American fact; and "an ear for stilled voices," a responsiveness to "the scrutable, palpable past," were talents occasionally possible to American intensity, even to an intensity so inexperienced as to think the European experience a wetting of lips at the origins of romance.

America, here, had imaginative advantages, being unencumbered by the worldliness with which Europe had learned to inhabit the European world. It was Whistler, not anyone English, who had known how to make Turner's

heritage fructify, and crossed that heritage with what was assimilable from the vogue for Japan. It was another American settled abroad, and not some congener of Thackeray's, whose multiform consciousness of "felt life" had shaped the most intricate registrations of nuance in human history: subdued the taxonomic pretensions of epithets and vanquished the linear rigor of linked sentences: indeed composed *The Ambassadors* and *The Golden Bowl*. Now on Dorothy Pound the eyes of the author of *The Golden Bowl* were bent, intent dark eyes, as he paired off Dorothy with niece Peg and sent the two young women walking ahead; then side by side with Dorothy's husband Ezra (encountered by him at hospitable hearths just sufficiently often to ratify public rites of amiability) he fell into step a deliberate distance behind them.

The young women strolled and talked; their talk is forgotten. After 50 years, though, one scrap of the master's survived. For James's fierce need to "place" and categorize spurred root curiosities, and Dorothy heard from behind her, addressed to her husband of two months, in the slow implacable voice the great expatriate's overwhelming question, as who should ask, animal, vegetable, or mineral: "And is she a com- păt- riot?": the syllables spaced, the accented vowel short.

* * *

Which is all of the story, like a torn papyrus. That is how the past exists, phantasmagoric weskits, stray words, random things recorded. The imagination augments, metabolizes, feeding on all it has to feed on, such scraps. What Sappho conceived on one occasion on Mitylene is gone beyond reconstitution; the sole proof that she ever conceived it is a scrap from a parchment copy made thirteen centuries later; on an upper left-hand corner learning assisted by chemicals makes out a few letters; in *Berliner Klassikertexte*, V-2,

1907, pp. 14-15, type stands for those letters with perhaps misleading decisiveness:

.P'A[...
ΔHPAT {...
ΓΟΓ'ΓΥΑΑ {...

. . . plus the beginnings of a dozen more lines: very possibly, so modern editions indicate, the first aorist of the verb *to raise* (conjecturing ἦρ' ἀ), and a word unknown, and the name of a girl of Sappho's. Or you can remember from Alcaeus and Ibycus ἦρ, the contraction for *springtime*, and derive the unknown word from δηρός *too long*, and write

Spring..
Too long.
Gongula.

heading the little witticism "Papyrus" and printing it in a book of poems called *Lustra* as an exemplum for resurrection-men. And wait decades for someone to unriddle it.

* * *

To continue. "Is she a compatriot?" What part did she play—that of Innocence or Experience—in the International Theme? Her provenance, as it happened, was South Kensington, but her legal citizenship by marriage American, a distinction on which liberty would one day turn. War grinds an edge on legalities. Somewhere, as the four of them walked, picked officers were arranging the forage of British horses in France once German troops should violate Belgian neutrality, and European life was never to be tranquil again. Though not even Asquith's cabinet really knew about it, or wanted to, this staff had been at work for three years, denominating in hermetic secrecy a role for England in the first European war to be planned by typewriter. They had very little more to see to, and still a few weeks to work in, the last weeks of what was to seem in retrospect a nearly

immemorial expansiveness, bobbing parasols, barbered lawns, when one could walk through Europe without passports, tendering behind any border one's 20-franc pieces. A standing order provided for the sharpening of every British officer's sword on the third day of mobilization. It was 1914, June.

They sharpened the officers' swords on August 7, for brandishing against an avalanche. "The wind of its passage snuffed out the age of unrivalled prosperity and unlimited promise, in which even poor mediaeval Russia was beginning to take part, and Europe descended into a new Dark Age from whose shadows it has yet to emerge." Within three weeks Louvain's 15th-century Library had been rendered blackened stone and its thousand incunabula white ash, in a gesture of admonitory *Schrecklichkeit*. ("Palace in smoky light . . .", begins the fourth Canto, glimpsing such an event refracted through the smoke of Troy; ruins enter Pound's poetry with the war.) By the following summer his hundred million compatriots' obstinate neutrality, as of voyeurs, had exacerbated Henry James to his own last admonitory gesture: a change of citizenship. It was no more understood than *The Golden Bowl* had been. The next January he was dead of apoplexy, and to Ezra Pound not only a life but a tradition seemed over, that of effortless high civility. Not again . . . not again . . . , ran an insisting cadence, and he made jottings toward an elegiac poem on the endpapers of a little book of elegies called *Cathay*. "Not again, the old men with beautiful manners."

—piling up the beautiful phrases . . .

—Gone - gone - they will
come not again The
old men with beautiful
manners

—The "Great Mary"

(Mrs. Ward—)

“Mr Pound is shocked
at my levity”

James remained thereafter his synecdoche for “custom indicating high culture,” to be distinguished from an unhabitual outlay of effort. “Men of my time” (he recalled in 1937) “have witnessed ‘parties’ in London gardens where, as I recall it, everyone else (male) wore grey ‘toppers’. As I remember it even Henry James wore one, and unless memory blends two occasions he wore also an enormous checked weskit. Men have witnessed the dinner ceremony on flagships, where the steward still tailed it ‘claret’ and a Bath Oliver appeared with the cheese. (Stilton? I suppose it must have been Stilton.)”

They had met but seldom, nowhere but in gardens and drawing rooms. “. . . have met Henry James again and like him still more on further acquaintance,” Pound wrote in March 1912 of perhaps their second encounter. Presumptuous though it seems to calibrate one’s liking for the portentous Master, even brash to allow his person and the verb “like” to coexist in one’s thoughts, the young guest may be trebly excused; he had not been bred to the constraint of Jamesian proprieties, and was 26, and writing to his mother. He liked James, he wondered at James, as at a narwhal disporting. What was to be made of his immutable disregard of Latin, of Greek, of all the distinguishings formally called thought? What of his *blague*, the shameless mischievous hyperboles, the trifling with aesthetic consecrations? The young Ezra’s perplexities were not always totally concealed:

And he said:

“Oh! Abelard!” as if the topic
Were much too abstruse for his
comprehension,

And he talked about “the great Mary,”
And said: “Mr. Pound is shocked at my
levity,”
When it turned out he meant Mrs. Ward.

There survives a photograph of little Ray Pound, bright as a pippin, peeping eagerly from among more stolid faces in a class grouping at the Cheltenham Military Academy, Pennsylvania. That alert little boy never died, but after a time coexisted with a brittler, more severe persona, whose Pentateuchal capacity for moral outrage was to bewilder acquaintances for decades (“ . . . stupidity carried beyond a certain point becomes a public menace . . .”). The fervor of the one, the other’s generous eagerness, were blended finally into a fascinating public construct called “E. P.”, who was to attempt the rectification of 20th-century letters. But in 1912 “E. P.” was barely invented, the boy and the moralist still unsynthesized, and the quick Jamesian eye may have caught the moralist’s expression slipping unbidden across the innocent’s face “when it turned out he meant Mrs. Ward”: Mary Augusta Ward, author of *Millie and Ollie* and *The Marriage of William Ashe*: niece to Matthew Arnold and once caricatured by Max Beerbohm in the act of upbraiding her grinning uncle: British so-cultured nullity. The great Mary! “Hyperbole carried beyond a certain point . . .”: but it slipped back into focus, entertaining hyperbole: “my levity.”

A world of entertainments, unbettable for displaying cosmologies in impingement; a world (pre-war London) of exiles. Thus Lydia Yavorska, whirligig of importunate energy, dabbler in anarchy, light of the non-Imperial Russian stage, wife of the indolent Prince Bariatinsky and now in England in political exile: Lydia was remembered



Little "Ray" Pound, Cheltenham Military Academy, Pennsylvania, ca. 1897.

holding dear H. J.
(Mr. James, Henry) literally by the button-
hole . . .
in those so consecrated surroundings
(a garden in the Temple, no less)
and saying, *for once*, the right thing

namely: “Cher maître”
to his chequed waistcoat, the Princess
Bariatinsky,
as the fish-tails said to Odysseus, *ἐνὶ Τροίῃ*
(79/488:520)

—playing the Siren in short (“Cher maître” for the
“renowned Odysseus,” *πολύαιν’ Ὀδυσσεύ* of *Odyssey* XII-184) and
implying that she comprehended the sentiments of exile,
knowing as she did the wearing things that happened in
such wild lands as he and she had left behind them, where
men spoke of the Town Executioner:

. . . no, your body-guard is not the
town executioner
the executioner is not here for the moment
the fellow who rides beside your coachman
is just a cossack who executes . . .
(79/488:520)

And James, as bound to a mast by his decorum. . . . Did she
suppose that such goings-on characterized Massachusetts,
of the savage name? Encounters like that, which seem as
though staged for your enlightenment, you can savor for
decades: Pound fitted to it the elucidative Homeric phrases
when he first set it down thirty years after he witnessed it,
in a compact American enclave with an executioner among
its personnel.

* * *

It was to be hard eventually for Pound to realize that he was
older than Henry James had been the day they met: in such
terms he addressed himself to the fact of being 70. The
Washington heat wilted his visitors’ stamina but not his
(“It’s the cold that agonizes grampa”) and the talk they had
come to hear between 1 and 3 coursed on, sudden *gascon*

phrases, long formally built sentences, stating and arranging elements of a civilized world (“not again . . .”) from before two wars. He was readily prompted: James’s talk had been like his writing?—“Exactly-exactly”—and hunching his shoulders forward, clasping his hands between his knees, he became for 90 seconds Henry James, eyes fixed on a point in space some yards past a ghostly auditor—some young Mr. Pound in some vanished person’s drawing room—as he mimicked what had magnetized his attention at 26:

. . . the massive head, the slow uplift of the hand, *gli occhi onesti e tardi*, the long sentences piling themselves up in elaborate phrase after phrase, the lightning incision, the pauses, the slightly shaking admonitory gesture with its “wu-a-wait a little, wait a little, something will come” . . .

He mimicked, moreover, an impish deferring and deferring of climax: the lifting, after an intent showman’s pause, of some unforeseen syntactic shell to disclose not the pea last glimpsed but (“Mr. Pound is shocked at my levity”) an auk’s egg on the point of hatching (with patience) yet further wonders. To what Keatonian risks did James not commit himself, risks of immobilization in mid-chaos, as he essayed for the thousandth time yet one more construction; and with what wit each impasse becomes a node, as the arrested line strikes out of it in an unforeseeable direction, seeking new points of suspension! Suitably paced, after such hints, with hesitations and onrushes, how alive a Jamesian text becomes. Thus the scarcity of congressmen in social Washington, James once wrote,

“kept down the political . . .	[here the savoring pause]
permeation,	[a <i>trouvaille!</i>]
and was bewildering, if one was	
able to compare, in the light of	
the different London condition,	
the fact	[what a labyrinth!]
of the social . . .	[!]
ubiquity there of the . . . accept-	
able M.P. and that of the social	

. . . frequency	[nicely nuanced]
even of his . . .	[what can conceivably emerge
	from this trembling mountain?]
more equivocal hereditary col-	
league.”	

So under the slowly raised pile driver a Peer is squashed flat (in a time of bought Peerages), by way of finishing off the didactic exercise. It was explicitly to a pile driver, slowly cranked up, with many pauses, laborings, and diversions, that Pound that day compared the Jamesian spoken sentence.

That a language functions in time, ideally in a vast leisure, disclosing sequentially its measured vistas, this was the convention Pound in turn most clearly imposed as he attended to the enlightenment of his callers in the 1950's. "So Mr. Eliot came to London, with all the disadvantages of a . . . symmetrical education . . . and dutifully joined the Aristotelian Society [*Aristotelian*—a porcupine of tongued consonants] . . . And he took me to a meeting. And a man with a beard down to here . . . spoke for twenty minutes on a point in *Aristotle*; and another with a beard down to *here* rose up and refuted him. . . . And I wanted *air*. So we were on the portico when old G. R. S. Mead came up, and catching sight of me said 'I didn't expect to see *you* here'; whereat Eliot with perfect decorum and suavity said,

'Oh, he's not here as a phil-*os*-opher;

He's here as an an-thro-pologist.'"

A bird-boned Hindu, in America on a Fulbright ("that is spelled with an *l*, not an *r*," was the Poundian gloss) smiled throughout the recital; across the lawn drifted blank figures; Pound from the depths of his deck chair dosed the air with an aerosol insecticide. A black-robed Minerva smiled from an adjacent chair: Dorothy Shakespear Pound, so little a compatriot that on disembarking she had felt dissolve beneath her feet (she later said) the shores of Muzak, Howard Johnson, and Jefferson; and, yes, Henry James, whom she read intermittently with Voltaire. On a park bench ten yards away a man reclined rigid as though spitted from skull to ankles, his entire weight supported on one elbow and on his heels, his body a taut hypotenuse: catatonic: the place was a mad-house.

"What Confucius has to say about style is contained in two characters. The first says 'Get the meaning across,' and the second says 'Stop'." And on being asked what was in the character "Get the meaning across," "Well, some people say I see too much in these characters"—here a good-natured glance at ambient lunatics—"but I think it means"—the Jamesian pause—"Lead the sheep out to pasture."

For one visitor a detail of the *Pisan Cantos* was suddenly clarified; he exclaimed as much; Mrs. Pound was amused; Ezra took no notice. Let the green grass nourish, with transmuted solar energies, whoso would browse.

* * *

The pause in time resembles a disjunction in space: a line having been arrested before its direction grows obvious, the intent eye is confronted by a sudden node, unforeseeable, a new structure, new directions. Frank Lloyd Wright placed concentrations and epitomes so, to terminate a cumbrous line that repeated the massy low line of the earth, and would not hear them called ornament. In a sentence some

four words can impart a direction—"kept down the political"—; a fifth word, "permeation," resolves what we might not have known was suspense did not the voice linger: completes the syntax with the noun it requires, and designates a way to imagine the subject, a witty way, a judgment of the subject. (The political permeates the social, an unbidden damp.) By contrast copybook sentences, a fly's crawl over the obvious, appease the drowsing mind with redundancies. And "kept down" is colloquial, indeed American colloquial; "permeation" nearly scholastic. There is social comedy, as well as intellectual energy, in such transitions from diction to diction.

. . .

Celebrities from the Trans-Caucasus will
belaud Roman celebrities
And expound the distentions of Empire

. . .

For the nobleness of the populace brooks
nothing below its own altitude.
One must have resonance, resonance and
sonority . . . like a goose.

. . .

My little mouth shall gobble in such great
fountains

. . .

Such lines, applying devices learned from James, locate their subject in a mode of thought habitual with him: the steady generosity of response to things happening, alert with its epithet when the happening veers toward unsatisfactoriness. The *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1917) was achieved by a mind filled with James's prose, the entire canon of which Pound reread between the Master's death

(January 1916) and *The Little Review* memorial issue (August 1918). Not only the ghost of the Latin elegiac couplet presides over its way of dividing discourse, but the great ghost also, “phantom with weighted motion,” that drank (he wrote thenabouts) “the tone of things,” and spaced its discourse with suspenseful deliberateness.

* * *

They say, among the many things they say, that some thousand years before Trojans founded Rome a scholar named Tsang-kié was commanded by his emperor to invent Writing, and took his inspiration from bird tracks in the fluvial sand, by whose print we know what songs were heard here. Whence men write today as birds’ feet do, in little clustered lines. And a man may write **I** which means *doing things properly* and looks as if it ought to, and may draw the sleeves **ㄣ** of the shamaness dancing in a ritual to summon the spirits to descend, and combine the two signs **巫** to mean *ritual* or *witchcraft*, as you will, though the sign of propriety ensures that it will be acceptable witchcraft. This is called *wu*. And we may draw the rain falling from clouds, **雨** the top horizontal stroke being heaven from which the clouds hang, and set underneath three rain-drops **ooo**, thus denoting the word *ling* **靈** which means *fall* as the big drops fall on a parched day. Then set *wu* under *ling*, **巫** and out of all the *lings* that chime through Chinese speech, and mean in different tones and contexts a multitude of unrelated things, you have designated the *ling* which means the spirit or energy of a being, in harmony with the invisible and by ritual drawing down benefice: we may say, *sensibility*. It is used of the work of poets, denoting their reach into the realm of the natural (and the drops look like mouths; hence Pound’s “under the cloud / the three voices” 104/740:766);

and is used in the History Classic of the Emperors of Chou, whose virtue, an attunement with the invisible, won them their commission to execute heaven's decree. "Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility" (85/543:579) ran Pound's gloss on this context, meditating the History Classic in the Chestnut Ward of St. Elizabeths Hospital. China had lost hold of *ling* and fallen to barbarian ideologies, Chiang's western or Mao's Stalinist, according to your system of disapprovals. The military governor of Sinkiang province had (1949) jumped to the winning side; such things had happened before; one lives through them. At first he thought the poet Mao possessed *ling*, but before long Mao's men were harassing Confucians. In the State Department a few miles from the poet's cell the winning side had persuasive American spokesmen. Like the I Ching's divining sticks, the ideogram, being part of a system of archetypes, should govern such bewildering facts had we but the wit to apply it. For 30 years it had been Pound's Sisyphean lot to read and misread newspaper facts in the light of the archetypes with which his mind vibrated, never willing to concede a shift of dimension between crystalline myth and the polymorphous immediate. In St. Elizabeths he continued this habit.

Meanwhile another part of his mind ran back on James, whose effort to constate, in every nuance, the present ("... where we have, in a manner of speaking, got to") is juxtaposed on the last page of Canto 87 with the sign for the Point of Rest: 止, but thence (by association) with the great *ling*, its propriety, its spirits, its clouds and celestial voices. James knew much of spirits, James celebrated rituals, James's great sensibility brought in a generation.

* * *

But for that sensibility *Prufrock* is unthinkable, *Mauberley* and the *Cantos* are unthinkable: not that one can imagine James reading any of these. The *Prufrock* situation is stated in a story James published just before the poem was begun: "Crapey Cornelia." A decade later *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* was "an attempt to condense the James novel." There are unlikelier derivations: what William Carlos Williams says when he opens one of the best-known poems in *Spring and All*—"The pure products of America / go crazy"—is like a Wittgensteinian extrapolation from "The Jolly Corner." The poem called "Poetry" about "hands that can grasp, hair that can dilate," the long poem called *Paterson* and the short one in which

the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees

connotes energies and eschews verbs—they all carry his genetic material inseparable from that of their identified authors, Miss Moore and Dr. Williams. His geomancer's response to impalpabilities—tones and airs, surfaces and absences—inaugurated a poetic of the mute ("And sawdust restaurants with oystershells"), a poetic of eschewals and refrainings, working round the margins of a voiceless theme, a theme voiceless because not yet public, not yet specified, not resolved by its apperceivers to agent, action, acted-upon. That one cannot say, or else may not blatantly say, just who did what to whom, is the premise of the kind of situation that fascinates him. A writer with a different temperament need not share the fascination to find the procedures useful ("Blocked. Make a song out of that concretely," wrote Williams). James's effort to articulate such matters within the shape of the formal English sentence yielded the famous late style, where subject and verb are "there" but don't carry the burden of what is said.

Other syntactic structures do that. And subject and verb, in a poem, need not always even be stated.

. . . To lead you to an overwhelming
question. . . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

Behind such lines, as behind

Drifted . . . drifted precipitate,
Asking time to be rid of . . .
Of his bewilderment; to designate
His new found orchid. . . .

persists the voice that pursued so intently so many refusals and eschewals, and built so magisterially suspensions and resolutions out of things only half-named, only present by way of analogy.

* * *

Henry James too had known the Washington heat. He had visited all the America Pound had known, all but Idaho. *The American Scene*, a book of eloquent absences, ghosts unfulfilled, where buildings and landscapes have long speaking parts and people are rarely more than apparitions, recounts his last survey, 1904-5, of "a society trying to build itself, with every elaboration, into some coherent sense of itself, and literally putting forth interrogative feelers, as it goes, into the ambient air." The hero of *The American Scene* is the scene, inhabited space dwelling on its long tale of frustrations, while persons whose lungs fill and bodies clash disqualify themselves from participating in this most prolonged, most intimate of séances. James attended (he did!) a Harvard intercollegiate football game, and derived

“an impression . . . so documentary, as to the capacity of the American public for momentary gregarious emphasis, that I regret having to omit here all the reflections it prompted.” To so abstract a psychic knot—“momentary gregarious emphasis”—were some two tons of milling players and the exertions of all the spectators reducible. But a landscape of failed farms in New Hampshire, ravished and discarded by the success that on the other side of the continent goes “insolently” forward, can speak at such length as might Desdemona’s shade:

The touching appeal of nature, as I have called it therefore, the “Do something kind for me,” is not so much a “Live upon me and thrive by me” as a “Live *with* me somehow, and let us make out together what we may do for each other—something that is not merely estimable in more or less greasy greenbacks. See how ‘sympathetic’ I am,” the still voice seemed everywhere to proceed, “and how I am therefore better than my fate; see how I lend myself to poetry and sociability—positively to aesthetic use: give me that consolation.”

And under the cone of Chocorua, in which he saw a minor Matterhorn (and Pound—in memory: Pisa—an American Taishan thronged with gods), he found that autumn many thousand little apples:

They have “run down” from neglect and shrunken from cheapness—you pick them up from under your feet but to bite into them, for fellowship, and throw them away. . . .

“Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility”: for fellowship!

When Eliot characterized (in *The Egoist*, Jan. 1918) James's "mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas" ("... a mind so fine that no idea could violate it") he was employing a criterion refined by long study of Bradleyan Idealism, for which the Idea, subject-verb-predicate, is always the tempting shortcut: is the aphorism which the imagined case sharply illustrates, or the topic sentence from which the paragraph derives. The mind unviolated by an idea holds converse with particulars (bites them "for fellowship"): mute particulars, mute mental particulars, the act of perception and the act of articulation inextricably one. ("Say it, no ideas but in things," we read in *Paterson*.) The perceiving mind of *The American Scene* unites itself with that eloquent space around objects which impressionist painters have taught us to think inseparable from the objects. (In *La Grande Jatte* Seurat expended one unifying technique on the figures, the trees, the shadows, and the air.)

So James rode, like a new Magellan, the Jersey ferry, his fierce dark eyes distended. "It was an adventure, unmistakably, . . . to be learning at last, in the maturity of one's powers, what New Jersey might 'connote'," and to his mature powers the New Jersey shore houses answered:

"Oh, yes; we were awfully dear, for what we are and for what we do"—it was proud, but it was rather rueful; with the odd appearance everywhere as of fligid creations waiting, a little bewilderingly, for their justification, waiting for the next clause in the sequence, waiting in short for life, for time, for interest, for character, for identity itself to come to them, quite as large spread tables or superfluous shops may wait for guests and customers.

But

. . . the most as yet accomplished at such a cost was the air of unmitigated publicity, publicity as a condition, as a doom; . . . nothing, accordingly, no image, no presumption of constituted relations, possibilities, amenities, in the social, the domestic order, was inwardly projected.

Hence

The pure products of America
go crazy,

as a man was to write who at the moment of James's visit to his Jersey was away studying medicine at Penn, and the day James visited the Penn campus, to spend an hour in the "clustered palaestra" and wonder whether the aesthetic note sounded muffled or shrill ("I scarce know what fine emphasis of modernism hung about it too") was perhaps somewhere in a dissecting room. If by any chance he did glimpse the great *revenant*, W. C. Williams had no reason to know him. And Williams' intuition of "the basis of privacy" was anyhow not Jamesian; in 1958 he asked whether it were possible to talk to Mr. Eliot "animal to animal."

James missed him, missed intuiting his proximity; missed or rather was missed by Ezra Pound, who had left the University of Pennsylvania for Hamilton College 12 months before James sailed from England, and would return to Penn two months after James sailed home. Anglo-Saxon and Provençal were engrossing him. Marianne Moore did not hear him lecture at Bryn Mawr on "The Lesson of Balzac" in January 1905; she was not to arrive on campus till that fall. Anyhow her chief passion was biology. Nor was there a grazing encounter with Tom Eliot. Turning, in the company of ghosts, Lowell's and Longfellow's, from the Stadium's "more *roaring*, more reported and excursionized scene," James meditated in Harvard Yard on Lowell's fancy that Harvard