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Your Anonymous Correspondent: Ezra Pound and *The Hudson Review*

Between 1949 and 1958 the American poet Ezra Pound, indicted for treason during World War II because of his propaganda broadcasts on Rome Radio and incarcerated in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. as mentally incompetent to stand trial, sent *The Hudson Review* over 200 letters and cards, with advice for the young editors Joseph Bennett, William Arrowsmith, and Frederick Morgan, but mostly for Frederick Morgan. Morgan, who had initiated the correspondence, wrote over 60 cards and letters to Ezra Pound, responding to the advice and inviting him to submit work by himself and others to the magazine. As a result of this exchange, *The Hudson Review* published much of Pound's most significant work after *The Pisan Cantos*: his translations of *The Analects* of Confucius and Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, plus new additions to his magnum opus *The Cantos*, Cantos 85–89, 96, and 97. It was during this time that, as the critic Gregory Barnhisel argues in his new book,¹ Pound underwent a public rehabilitation, from notorious anti-Semite and propagandist for the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini to preeminent Modern poet and artist. It is clear, based on the correspondence between Frederick Morgan and Ezra Pound and the record of publication in *The Hudson Review* of work by Pound and critics about Pound, that Morgan and the "Hud," as Pound called it, played an important role in rescuing the poet from himself.

It was the controversy of the 1949 Bollingen Prize that aroused Frederick Morgan's interest in Ezra Pound, as he has said in a 1998 interview with Michael Peich published on this magazine's website. Established in 1948, the Bollingen Prize, \$1,000 to be

¹ JAMES LAUGHLIN, *NEW DIRECTIONS, AND THE REMAKING OF EZRA POUND*, by Gregory Barnhisel. University of Massachusetts Press. \$34.95.

given to the best book of poetry by an American, was funded by Paul Mellon and named for Carl Jung's home in Switzerland. It was administered through the Library of Congress and judged by a committee of Library of Congress Fellows, including T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Allen Tate, and Karl Shapiro. The committee elected to give the prize to *The Pisan Cantos* by Ezra Pound, the poems he drafted while a prisoner of the U.S. Army in Pisa from May to October of 1945 and published in 1948 by New Directions. Although Karl Shapiro, who objected to Pound's anti-Semitism, did not vote for *The Pisan Cantos*, he recognized it as achieving a high level of art. When the committee made its decision early in 1949, the Librarian of Congress warned that not only would a national controversy ensue, as it did, but that it was likely that the U.S. Government would act to strip the Library of Congress of the prize, which also occurred. After 1949 the Bollingen was administered by Yale University. The attack on the committee's selection was led by the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and Harvard professor Robert Hillyer. In two diatribes published in June 1949 issues of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Hillyer decried the absurdity of giving Pound, a traitor, an award for a poem which, in part, eulogized the Fascist regime of Mussolini. Hillyer also attacked the integrity of the committee members who had voted for Pound—and Karl Shapiro, too, for admitting the poet's artistic achievement—and accused them all of being part of a conspiracy, led by T. S. Eliot and the New Critics, implying an association between them and the recently defeated enemies of America. Before *The Hudson Review* published a single work by Pound or about Pound, it responded to the controversy in its seventh issue, Autumn 1949, Vol. II, No. 3. Using language as strong as Hillyer's own, the unsigned "Comment," while not supporting the choice of *The Pisan Cantos*, characterized Hillyer's essays as smears and referred to Hillyer himself as "a failure as a poet" who was "sufficiently mean-spirited to vent his venom on the eminent and the successful." The Comment demanded that *The Saturday Review of Literature* publish the committee's response to Hillyer's charges and, if it did not, offered to print it in the next issue "regardless of other commitments, in the interests of justice." As it happened, *The Saturday Review of Literature* delayed publishing the response from the committee, so it was published, instead, in *The Nation*, signed by the committee members who

voted for *The Pisan Cantos* and more than 80 others, including Frederick Morgan. The Comment in the Autumn 1949 issue of *The Hudson Review* closed with a promise to “publish a discussion of Ezra Pound’s poetry, and of certain questions that have been legitimately raised by the award.”

There would be plenty about Pound and by Pound published in *The Hudson Review*, but never the actual discussion mentioned in the 1949 Comment. By the time Frederick Morgan’s “A Note on Ezra Pound” appeared in the Spring 1951 issue, the magazine had already published Pound’s translation of *The Analects* of Confucius, a selection of his letters to T. S. Eliot and W. H. D. Rouse, and a seminal essay on *The Cantos*, “The Rose in the Steel Dust,” by the young Hugh Kenner. *The Hudson Review* had also published Jaime de Angulo’s “Indians in Overalls,” which Pound in his preferred role as anonymous advisor had recommended. Still, it is helpful to understand *The Hudson Review*’s and specifically Frederick Morgan’s attitude toward Pound by considering Morgan’s “A Note on Ezra Pound,” which was occasioned by Harcourt Brace’s publication of *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907–1941*, edited by D. D. Paige.

Reflecting on the Bollingen Prize controversy, Morgan in his “A Note on Ezra Pound” began by stating that the attacks by Robert Hillyer and *The Saturday Review of Literature* were “the sudden emergence, in a particularly virulent form, of a kind of putrescence that Pound, among others, has consistently opposed.” Presumably here Morgan meant the ad hominem fallacy in approaching literature and literary criticism, along with the threat of censorship. If so, then Morgan seems to be situating himself in the New Critical camp, which makes sense for this former student of Allen Tate. And yet he also considered what some believe to be the central weakness in Pound’s work, particularly the *Cantos*, Pound’s own logical fallacy and prejudice: anti-Semitism. Responding to the specific charge, Morgan answered in a measured and reasonable way that few of Pound’s supporters or detractors have ever seemed willing to do:

Pound *tends* at moments to identify the Jews with usury, which he condemns. (We know that there is historical basis for this identification; we know too that the blame chiefly attaches to the Christian society that permitted and encouraged it.) Pound’s antisemitism (and the word must be used here, as always, with caution, lest we

make unwarranted leaps) is never given thematic importance or elevated into a structural principle; rather, it takes the form of occasional slurs and contemptuous references. I find these slurs offensive, and I resent them; I should expect any civilized person today, Jew or not, to feel the same way. But whatever Pound's personal opinions may be, I do not find antisemitism central to his work. The slurs are there, real and not to be condoned, but occasional and peripheral. There is much more in the work, and more centrally located in it, that is valuable and beautiful. We read a writer, after all, for the good that is in him; no one who is willing to exert the intelligence which a careful reading of the *Cantos* requires will be taken in for a moment by the slurs, unless he be already a confirmed antisemite. Pound's work will continue to be valuable, despite this fault, just as the work of other major writers (Dostoevsky is one who comes to mind) has survived the same or similar ones.

"We read a writer, after all, for the good that is in him": this is the argument Pound's supporters, like James Laughlin, his editor at *New Directions*, tried to use with Pound himself, when refusing to publish his anti-Semitic screeds on economics and history. Morgan's aim as an editor was, as he says earlier in the essay, "to get Pound *read*." According to Barnhisel, getting Pound read required separating his politics from his art, and this was ironic since Pound's politics, ranging from Confucian pragmatism to Fascist anti-Semitism, are so deeply woven into his art, especially *The Cantos*.

Surely Pound's translations of Confucius include the good that was in him. *The Hudson Review* published the twenty books of *The Analects* in two installments in their Spring and Summer issues in 1950. Apparently, the original proposal to Pound was to publish a portion, but Pound wanted the entire work published and wrote, in his typically telegraphic, case-eccentric, and punning style, "In short, WHOLE HoG. But no desire to be swinish."² He also wanted a complete set of ideograms published with *The Analects* and went so far as to advise on the point size for the font, with a 12-point font for the translation and a 6-point for the ideograms. He admitted, "It wd / take whaLEuVA time /BUT might increase sale of the Hudn/." *The Hudson Review* did not publish the original ideograms beside Pound's text, except for two large

² The excerpts from Ezra Pound's letters to Frederick Morgan are reprinted by permission of Mary de Rachewiltz and Omar S. Pound from Archives of *The Hudson Review*, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

ideograms as a sort of frontispiece (as Pound's publisher New Directions also did). But Pound's reason for wanting the ideograms reveals the teacher's solicitude which informs so much of his work. He claimed, "mental life of some readers at least wd/ be stimulated by LOOKING at actual shape and composition of ideograms." Furthermore, he wanted "a graph of sound" published with the ideograms, "w/o which impos/ convey the melodic qualities of the orig/ Also the student loses infinite time when he is NOT given the sound at the same time he is shown the ideogram." This argument may have influenced the publication five years later in *The Hudson Review* of Canto 85, which included extensive ideograms, along with phonetic transcriptions, even though the expense to do so was steep and put the magazine in the hole for that issue.

Along with negotiations about publication came advice aplenty from Pound about *The Hudson Review's* editorial policy, sales and subscriptions (Pound was very generous in his recommendations of free subscriptions), writers to publish, and, inevitably, politics. Most of his cards and letters are undated and are addressed to "F.M." One of the earliest, from August 1949, is addressed "Fk Morgan." In a note on Pound's letter, Morgan has circled this salutation and written good naturedly, "ambiguous, I'm afraid." A frequent heading or closing of Pound's letters is "Strictly anonymous communique" or "Your Anonymous Correspondent." He wanted his anonymity to extend to his translations, as well, and was unhappy when *The Analects* appeared with his name as translator.

A couple of themes running through Pound's early advice about editorial policy, from 1949 to 1951, are an insistence that criticism or reviews be brief to nonexistent—"a specimen chapter of anything is likely to be more alive than a review"—and an uncertainty about just where the magazine stood. About the former, the old literary promoter knew whereof he spoke: "Total curse in using a ESSAY, when a sentence will serve to convey all the interesting matter that the essay wd/ merely bury." And, he added, "to make criticism readable, the FIRST thing to state in a review is/ what is the dumb bastard driving AT." But his concerns about the magazine's aims seem aroused partly because little that he sent *The Hudson Review* by other writers was accepted for publication, except for the de Angulo piece "Indians in Overalls."

As early as 1949, he wrote, “All depends on whether Hud/Rev/ is clandestine publication or wants to kick s.o.b. where they live.” Later he claimed, “Hav/ no real clue as to Hud/criteria/ whether they aim at one style, and whether they want to be cawflick and print different kinds of things.” Finally, to the ominous warning, “WOT others say of HUD/IS: ‘dull,’” Morgan wrote the following response, in a letter from July 1951:

In general, what I’m after is good writing, clear and alive, and a surrounding “atmosphere” that will aid it and sustain it. We *have* published a lot of dead stuff: granted. A lot that, now, I would not accept; have learned a lot, I think, just in the process of editing. Started off with big ideas and—I think it is fair to say—a real love of literature, in so far as I had been able to bring myself into contact with it through the fog of “higher education.” A few things I really knew: that is to say, I had read them and responded to them out of my own being. But there were, and are, enormous gaps; and no formal education to-day fills them in. It substitutes air for real experience.

Have been trying to fill in the gaps myself, by reading, by trying to understand, by relating what I read to my own efforts at writing. Editing helps, by pointing up issues—clarifying what *is* or *is not*, relevant to our concerns to-day.

But I don’t think you can throw criticism out of the window. It needn’t be dead. It can *point* to what should be read, as you yourself have remarked. Can’t fill a magazine to-day, even a quarterly, with writing of *permanent* interest. A lot of it is for the day only—but as criticism, it should be clear, alert and concerned with making primary experience available to the reader.³

It is interesting in terms of Morgan’s own career as a poet who published his first collection of poetry in 1972 that he closed this letter with a request to send Pound poems he had been writing. Pound’s response to this request was characteristically generous, honest, and conspiratorial:

Yes, will be glad to see FM’s own/ but can’t promise crit/ as I HAVE said all I have to say about nearly EVERY possible angle of writing. Convinced the way to write INTERESTING poesy is to go on from the Browning stump, in ways Ez did NOT. People and yet more people. Personae. And am NOT telling that to more than six or 8.

³ The excerpts from Frederick Morgan’s letters to Ezra Pound are reprinted by permission of the Estate of Frederick Morgan from The Yale Collection of American Literature, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Two years later, in a letter commending the Autumn 1953 issue as “pleasantly livelier,” he told Morgan that his translation of Mallarmé’s “The Afternoon of a Faun” “shd/ strengthen yr/ authority with contributors.” And he added in a postscript, “Fitz [Robert Fitzgerald?] expresses approval of yr/ Mallarme, in fact a supporter.”

Pound the promoter and entrepreneur, full of practical advice on how to edit a journal and aware of artists and critics worldwide, appears throughout the letters to Morgan. He enunciated his view that the editor should be like a scout: “the eye of the LORD edtr / shd / be in many places (NOT the ends of the earth in one sense, but in MANY places, enough to insure inflow of information.) AT ONCE. NOT after publishers advertising.” He recommended that *The Hudson Review* take on lively correspondents from around the world, who would be like Paul Revere, and receive “5 bucks per letter, regardless of size.” He urged Morgan to publish translations of Cocteau’s “Leoun” and Zielinski’s “La Sibylle.” Pound also gave Morgan news of the illness of Juan Ramón Jiménez, in exile from Spain and living in Puerto Rico, and the death of Francis Picabia, praising the latter in unfortunate Poundian terms as “Quicker on uptake than anyone” but Mussolini. Two names he harped on repeatedly were the recently deceased German anthropologist Leo Frobenius and the nineteenth-century American monetary historian Alexander Del Mar. Their names appear in an agenda he set forth in a letter of 1950:

1. Sound films of 300 No Plays
2. Trans of Frobenius
3. All historiography of past 60 years that fails to recognize Del mar’s data is out of date and fit only for sewers (called universities)
- 4/ more states to ratify amendment to prevent recurrence of Rooseveltian corruption, i.e. no president for more than 8 years.

Morgan tended to ignore Pound’s hobbyhorses. And though Morgan had argued that anti-Semitism was “occasional and peripheral” in Pound’s work, Pound had a way in his letters of making his crude prejudice seem central to his character, complaining, for example, that the magazine *Encounter* was a “reversion to . . . the unclean mess of Freud, Marx, Kikery, squalor.” He also offered a statement, “in kase yu git drawd into a argymint”:

Naturally I do not care a damn whether a man is black, red, or yellow (so called, meaning a dark nonnubian tan or pale tea colour),

what I care for is the human quality of the individual. If a man is a dirty piece of work, being a Jew will not save him or entitle him to special consideration.

Some of the larger swine of our time have been Jews, and some (quite possibly more of them) Goyim.

A Jew criminal is more dangerous in metropolitan areas than a simple minded Afro-American . . .

Though Morgan appealed to “the good that was in” Pound, Pound constantly revealed how that good was corrupted. Or as Robert Lowell in an early version of his sonnet “T. S. Eliot” has Pound’s old friend say about him, “It’s balls to say he isn’t the way he is.”

The first controversy for *The Hudson Review* in publishing Pound came over his translation of Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis*, which appeared in the Winter 1954 issue. The controversy was within house and consisted of two bitterly worded letters from co-editor William Arrowsmith about Pound and the quality of his translation. In his first letter, among other things, Arrowsmith stated, “[T]he translation is unworthy of Sophocles. I can’t really say more than that. I am not riding Pound (for whom, I confess, I have very little liking) but am giving you my honest opinion, *both* editorially and professionally.” The second letter, more one of protest than editorial opinion, took issue with the line that Pound claimed as key to the poem:

The line upon which he rests his inane interpretation is simply mistranslated, just doesn’t mean “Splendor! It all coheres.” . . . The translation is hopelessly inaccurate . . . still, work by Pound should be interesting. I can’t see it. . . . I’m afraid this kind of thing challenges every good wish I have for the classics. It’s the simple creation of confusion by a man who is either mad or ignorant.

As for the mistranslated line, it comes at the moment when Herakles is dying from having donned the cloak poisoned by the centaur Nessus’ blood and presented to him unwittingly by his wife Deianeira, Daysair in Pound’s translation. Herakles understands that his end has been prophesied and confirmed by various oracles and tells his son, in Sir Richard C. Jebb’s translation, “Since, then, my son, those words are clearly finding their fulfillment.” In a note on his own translation, Pound refers to Jebb as a “sensitive Hellenist who has shown great care for Sophocles’ words” but has “failed to grasp the main form of the play.”

Robert Fitzgerald, who also reviewed the Pound translation, responded more indulgently than Arrowsmith and said, with a sort of shrug, "It's pure Pound, but Pound deep in the Greek and out the other side." Fitzgerald did note an error in phrasing that led to a small, interesting, editorial exchange between Morgan and Pound. A messenger, bringing news to Herakles' wife of his arrival, tells her he had learned of it "Down in the summer pastures." Fitzgerald told Morgan that the summer pastures would be high, while winter pastures low. Morgan suggested the line read "Up in the summer pastures." In response, the great editor Pound, showing a willingness to be edited, wrote, "'up' being a narsty snippy sound, let us compromise on 'there' 'there in the s.p.'" As for Arrowsmith, whether or not Pound got wind of his objections to *Women of Trachis*, he referred to him in letters subsequently as "Arresniff" and blamed him whenever the magazine seemed guilty of "Dialism, Criterionism, Hound and-tootleism."

Women of Trachis, recently reprinted along with *The Analects* in a Library of America edition,⁴ may have been *The Hudson Review's* most successful Pound publication. Howard Sackler directed a dramatic reading at The New School, featuring Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson, which was well received. The magazine planned to issue the play in pamphlet form. However, when Yale and Oberlin mounted productions, Pound was not enthusiastic and wrote, "EP loathes treating a serious work as mere accademic exercise" and added plaintively, "Do they ask TSE for amateur performances?" Still, he wanted no payment and preferred that more complimentary copies of the issue with the play be distributed, saying "money no use while in jug / better put SOMETHING into circulation. Same to be deducted from translator's cash recompense." Finally, he requested that any money coming to him from the play should go to Ithaca Earthquake Relief, as the appropriate benefactor of his adaptation of the Greek playwright. It took Morgan some trouble locating the agency, which turned out to be in New York City, and verifying its authenticity. In March of 1954 *The Hudson Review* duly sent Pound's charitable donation of \$120 to the Ithaca Earthquake Relief and received a grateful letter of acknowledgment.

In January of 1954, Pound wrote Morgan that he had finished

⁴ EZRA POUND: Poems and Translations, ed. by *Richard Sieburth*. The Library of America. \$45.00.

a new Canto, the first since *The Pisan Cantos*, and was thinking of sending it to him. "Canto 85," he wrote, "is a somewhat detailed confirmation of Kung's view that the basic principles of government are found in the Shu, the History Classic." Pound wanted news of Canto 85 kept quiet. Morgan responded, "I'm very set up and enthused, inwardly, at the thought that a new Canto may be coming our way. But I'll say not a word. That it's getting done is great news." The typescript for Canto 85 arrived in February. Thus began a challenging, arduous, and sometimes frustrating process of typesetting the piece with its nearly 100 Chinese ideograms. In order to be typeset, each of the ideograms had first to be cut in zinc by a specialist in California. Problems with the magazine's printer led to delays in publishing the poem, and Pound, his paranoia inflamed, suspected the worst. He told Morgan, "You are NOT easy on the nerves and thereby assist the enemy. If you are being bullied and black mailed, there is one line in 85 you may omit/." The line Pound referred to, an apparent reference to Churchill as "This 'leader,' gouged pumpkin / that they hoist on a pole" was not omitted. Still, he believed there were forces arrayed against him with "NO desire to eliminate the historic blackout." He blamed Arrowsmith as well. In response Morgan wrote, in October of 1954:

Respected E. P.:

Please calm yourself! Although I can understand your impatience, I assure you no one is sabotaging Canto 85. The printer assures me proof will be ready within the week. They *have* been confronted with a strike over there, which may have delayed things some.

Where do you get the idea Arrowsmith is the Enemy? He is as much for the Cantos as the rest of us.

Pound, justifying his own volatile state, wrote, "God damn it this is the TENTH year of incarceration / American sensibility has not developed to point of imagining a cumulative effect of bug-house."

In fact, in the spring of 1954, after paying one of some half a dozen visits Morgan made to Pound at St. Elizabeth's, he wrote to Dorothy Pound that he was exploring possibilities of having Pound released and the indictment for treason removed. Dorothy Pound frequently corresponded with Morgan, usually through handwritten notes appended to Pound's typed letters,

sometimes softening, other times emphasizing her husband's tone. Morgan's letter, which he asked Dorothy Pound to show to her husband (he did not wish to send it to St. Elizabeth's), would have assured Pound that he had his best interests at heart. Morgan had done his homework:

The best legal advice I have been able to obtain in the matter can be summed up as follows: 1) Barring a direct Presidential pardon—which we must in all realism assume to be extremely unlikely—there is no discretion over the case in the Executive branch of the government (Attorney General etc.); 2) discretion resides with the court in which the indictment was returned: i.e., the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia; 3) If the doctors will testify that E. P. has recovered sufficiently so as no longer to require hospitalization, but not sufficiently to stand trial, it then becomes a real question as to whether it is constitutional to hold him in confinement in a mental institution; a lawyer could initiate proceedings along these lines with a good chance of success. In this case it would be essential to prove that private arrangements could be made to give him whatever care he might need; 4) Even if he were found to have recovered sufficiently to stand trial, it would have to be proved *first*, that he was “sane” at the time of committing of the alleged treasonable acts, and *second*, that such acts were actually treasonable.

Although there *is* a slight element of risk involved—and it would be dishonest to attempt to conceal it—I believe the chances are very good that the case could be fought through to a successful conclusion. And I further believe that the time has come to start fighting, unless you & E. P. are prepared to have him spend the rest of his days at St. Eliz. At the very least, a good lawyer could be consulted, and the possibilities explored in detail.

When Pound was set free from St. Elizabeth's three years later, partly through the efforts of Archibald MacLeish and Robert Frost, and allowed to return to Italy, it was because the U.S. government recognized that he was, in the words of his doctor, “incurably insane” and saw no reason to keep him confined at taxpayer expense. The indictment for treason was dismissed, and he was released to the custody of his wife.

The delay in printing Canto 85, the first of The Rock-Drill Cantos, which appeared in the Winter 1955 issue, made it hard for Morgan to negotiate more Cantos from Pound, although he succeeded in obtaining four more of The Rock-Drill series, and two of the subsequent Thrones series, and published them over the next two years. Delay of publication always irritated Pound,

who seemed pressed for time in seeing work by himself and those he promoted appear in print. He complained, “Sense of TIME lacking in this defiled ½sphere.” Yet Morgan’s invitations to Pound to write on other subjects—for example, to review—were always declined, with the claim either that Pound was not interested in doing “odd jobs” or that in the matter of opinion, which he was constantly sharing with Morgan in his letters anyway, he wished to remain anonymous, a condition he seemed to think was merited by being incarcerated at St. Elizabeth’s. But when Morgan suggested a special feature on the centenary of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, Pound expressed interest. Morgan asked, “Would you care to write us some statement . . . ? (Any length you like.) It would be interesting to know just what your present position is on Whitman—and whether it has changed or developed any since your earlier pronouncement.” Pound gave Morgan permission to reprint everything he had written about Whitman with the following note:

These are EP homages to Whitman as expressed at various times. We understand there has been no change in his critical estimates save in readjustment of relative value of roman authors, in respect of Sophokles, and that would be unlikely to alter anything he had to say about this american author.

Otherwise, Pound added, “I don’t want to emit ANY opinion from bughouse.” As it happened, *The Hudson Review*’s feature on the 100th anniversary of *Leaves of Grass* failed to materialize, because there was, as Morgan wrote Pound, “not enough response to it.” It is interesting to consider this historical moment in 1955. The next year Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl*, a poem that could not exist without *Leaves of Grass*, would be published. Perhaps if Morgan had waited a couple of years, he would have garnered sufficient response to Whitman’s great work.

The fact is that Pound, for all his crackpot theories and vicious prejudices, saw the poet as necessarily involved in politics in ways that Ginsberg and Whitman, too, would have recognized. In a letter from 1953, in which he encourages Morgan to contact T. S. Eliot about doing an essay on “Blackstone as stylist,” he expressed an opinion that might not be regarded as reactionary, even with its dismissal of Mauve decade preciousness:

incidentally the idea that woman’s place is the night club and the

poet's the art shoppe. putt tail between legs and run like hell from all
 pubk/ affairs / wd / hv / seemed incredible to Whittier, Emerson,
 Longfellow and that gang /
 lavender tied perversions post '90s

Pound wanted to see *The Hudson Review* expand beyond what he inferred was an overly refined readership and wrote around 1955, “Can’t make out if F. M. EVER meets anyone, or only receives letter[s] from a damn dull bunch of dessicated highbrows . . . he aint, as they say in Liguria: ‘espansivo.’” We could infer that Pound was calling *The Hudson Review* square, if we didn’t remember that Pound’s idea of being expansive was to publish those with views like his own.

Many of the letters between 1954 and 1956 concerning the publication of the Cantos are detailed exchanges between an editor and his author. After Morgan persuaded him to let *The Hudson Review* publish more Cantos, Pound warned about Cantos 86 and 87 of the Rock-Drill sequence and others: “NO, this pair AIN’T vurry Poetik / they can’t all be in flowery langwidg / the next four will CONTain some narrative sequence. And after that yu will git some Poetik rpressionz.” Both Morgan and Pound shared a strong visual sense of how these remarkable poems were going to appear on the page. A typical letter from Pound, explaining the typescript of the next Canto, mentioned number of pages, line spacing, number of lines on the page, and number of ideograms. A typical response from Morgan requested an exact placement of ideograms on the page plus the amount of space between and around the ideograms. After the publication of Canto 85, Morgan had to remind Pound that the reproduction of the ideograms was costly, and Pound assured him that many zinc blocks that had already been made could be reused. When Pound sent the typescript for Canto 88, which concludes with a vertical row of the playing card suits—heart, diamond, club, and spade—Morgan noticed that Pound had cut the suit icons from actual playing cards and taped them to the page. He had to inform him that the cost of reproducing the color was prohibitive, in fact, impossible. Pound agreed to white space for the red and black for black, a scheme closely followed in the New Directions version of the poem.

Otherwise the correspondence from Pound continued to be a mixture of useful insights on how *The Hudson Review* might go

about its business, sharp comments about fellow contributors, and crazed minatory statements of alarm. He suggested that there was “simply NO critique of the novel / i.e. AS *histoire morale* / none from angle of governing class or society strata” and urged Morgan to find someone to provide one. About the poetry of Wallace Stevens, he told Morgan to ask his co-editor Joseph Bennett “whether Stevens’ writing isn’t rather brilliantly coloured fungi.” Offended that yet another academic had claimed ignorance of Alexander Del Mar, he railed, “ARE you at all interested in cleaning communist agents out of faculties, either at Princeton, or at other large univs?” One of his last letters noted that a package containing lead blocks of ideograms (he frequently preferred these as payment for publication of the *Cantos*) had aroused suspicion at St. Elizabeth’s because of its weight. Finally, recognizing that he had actually been able to influence Morgan very little, as far as he could see, he wrote, “I have never been able to persuade Mr. Morgan to print anything of interest to ME, except de Angulo.” *The Hudson Review* had published both “Indians in Overalls” and “Seven Indian Tales” by Jaime de Angulo. The manuscripts for them had, in fact, come from Dorothy Pound. But Pound was right. Except when the work was Pound’s own, Morgan returned everything Pound sent him.

In his interview with Michael Peich in 1998, in answer to a question about Pound’s influence on *The Hudson Review*, Morgan responded:

Did Pound influence our editorial directions? It’s fair to say that he opened my eyes to additional possibilities. For example, to the possibilities of publishing translations from foreign literatures. . . . On the other hand, I disregarded almost all the specific advice he favored me with over the next several years. Unlike Allen Tate, Ezra Pound was a hectoring kind of would-be mentor. He wanted to tell me exactly what to do issue by issue. For quite a while after [our] first meeting he wrote me two or three letters a week, giving me instructions: do this, don’t do that. Some writers whom we thought were important, he didn’t like at all—Thomas Mann, for example. At the same time he’d be promoting some crackpot monetary theorist. Frankly, I let it all go in one ear and out the other, and kept on doing what I wanted. Pound’s letters ultimately became a bore, but I enjoyed my visits to Saint Elizabeth’s—that is, at first—because I liked the man personally and found him fascinating. I also liked Mrs. Pound, who was almost always present, and found the whole experi-

ence unusual and rather fun. . . . The final visit was unpleasant. He had with him, for the first time in my presence, a small group of little-known, sleazy, fascist-minded admirers—including a man named John Kasper, who was later arrested and imprisoned for anti-black rabble rousing. These people were serving up various anti-Semitic and anti-black innuendoes and Pound was snapping at the bait. I was disgusted and paid no further visits. In fact, I only saw Pound once again, when he was a free man once more, but much older, and greatly humbled and chastened.

On April 18, 1958, the District Court of Washington, D.C. lifted Pound's indictment for treason and gave him his freedom. Morgan's last letter to Ezra Pound, dated three days later, read simply:

Dear E. P.

Congratulations! I'm very happy for you. And I wish you and D. P. all the best.

My warmest regards to you both.

Sincerely,
F. M.

Gregory Barnhisel argues throughout his book on the remaking of Ezra Pound that the separation of the artistic Pound from the political Pound was a "New Criticism-inspired, aestheticist stance . . . relentlessly promoted in the 1940s" by James Laughlin, which "made Pound's rehabilitation possible." *The Hudson Review's* statements about Pound, particularly about the Bollingen controversy, and its publication of his translations and poems played a part in that rehabilitation. Pound attempted to play some role, too, especially with regards to the persistent accusation of anti-Semitism, which his letters to Morgan do little or nothing to dispel, though in *The Cantos* after *The Pisan Cantos*, including the ones published by *The Hudson Review*, Pound's anti-Semitic language recedes. Among the correspondence from Pound in the archives of *The Hudson Review* is a page entitled "ANTI-SEMITE?" and signed "J. T." The two paragraphs, while not in Pound's typical epistolary style, contain enough familiar language and eccentric spelling to be attributable to Pound himself. It is worth quoting in full, if only because it echoes in part what Morgan himself said about Pound's anti-Semitism in his "A Note on Ezra Pound":

one may categorically and authoritatively deny that Pound is an anti-semitite. What Pound is, and has been, against is a disease of thought which has afflicted various races. Even when we come to the conflict of ideas, it is idiotic to treat all jews as if they all agreed with each other. And no one above the mental level of a communist, Marxist, american bureaucrat, columnist, vice president of a holding company, in England, France or the U.S. or the general run of college presidents and the choosers of beneficiaries for "Foundations", (Footnote. Tax exempt Foundations played no small role in the decay of the Byszatine empire.) can suppose Pound to have made either of these confusions, after having, that is, made anything vaguely approaching a serious reading of his texts.

It has also been privately alledged that some of our most nearly honest radio and TV speakers would simply be put off the air if they attempted to eliminate the blackout of real history, especially in its most vital parts.

It would not be until his famous meeting with Allen Ginsberg in 1967 that anyone really bought Pound's apology, and only then because he confessed to his "stupid, suburban prejudice of anti-Semitism." Ginsberg, giving him his blessing as a "Buddhist Jew," dismissed Pound's incorrigible prejudice simply as his "fuck-up."

In his conclusion, Barnhisel also credits Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era*, published in 1971, with creating a way to read and think of Pound that transcended the New Critical approach and "ironically struck a blow against aesthetic formalism." Barnhisel argues that, as a result:

Pound's work in general, and the *Cantos* in particular, profoundly resists a simple aestheticist reading; aesthetic formalism, at least as it was used to rehabilitate Pound, is a self-consuming artifact whose short-term benefits ensured that it would be superseded.

And the reason for this was that in *The Pound Era* Kenner made clear that one could not read Pound without considering his theories of history and economics and his politics.

It was *The Hudson Review* that published Kenner's first essay on Pound, "The Rose in the Steel Dust," in the same issue, Spring 1950, that it published the first installment of *The Analects*. The essay led to Kenner's first book about Pound, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*, published in 1951. The first paragraph of *The Hudson Review* essay shows the holistic approach Kenner would take in explicating Pound's work, especially *The Cantos*:

Pound the technician stripping the fat from an image and the slither from a rhythm is coterminous with Pound the Confucian intent on defining a moral principle so sharply that it can be seized in the fist and used. This concern for exact definition (“Orthography is a discipline of morale and of morals”) is the whole key to Pound, his *Cantos*, his music, his economics, and everything else. The “Ching Ming” ideograph of precise verbal definition makes its first appearance in the *Cantos* at the end of Canto LI and recurs through the following nineteen cantos, whose orientation is explicitly political. . . . It registers a scale of exactitude extending from philology to government and ultimately to that extension of enlightenment which may be taken as convertible with “civilization” (“The men of old wanting to clarify and diffuse throughout the empire that light which comes from looking straight into the heart and then acting . . .”) and which is both the major principle of unity in the *Cantos* and in Pound’s career of usefulness to letters. To say that the unity of the *Cantos* is Pound is not as limiting a judgment as might at first appear.

In its critical guise this paragraph is not unlike the statement of Robert Lowell’s T. S. Eliot: “It’s balls to say he isn’t the way he is.” Pound’s response to the essay, in a letter to Frederick Morgan, read: “Kenner much better than I hd/ expected.”