



BRILL

JOURNAL OF LITERARY  
MULTILINGUALISM 1 (2023) 55–72



brill.com/jlm

# Reactionary Multilingualism: Ezra Pound's “Addendum for C”

Espen Grønlie | ORCID: 0000-0003-2872-6295

PhD, Lecturer and researcher, Oslo International School of Philosophy,  
Rome, Italy

*espen.gronlie@gmail.com*

## Abstract

This article suggests a solution to the paradox that Ezra Pound both embraced literary multilingualism and endorsed ethnic segregation. The evident multilingualism of Pound's poetry might tempt one into imagining that he was celebrating multilingualism as a societal fact. Focusing on Pound's multilingual canto fragment “Addendum for C,” the article argues that this cannot possibly have been the case, and that a similar premise is too often taken for granted in contemporary studies of literary multilingualism.

## Keywords

literary multilingualism – modernist poetry – reactionary modernism – Ezra Pound

Ezra Pound's explorations in literary multilingualism could lead us to think that he is ultimately *celebrating* multilingualism as a cultural fact. This idea seems to me highly problematic, and such a premise is too often taken for granted in present-day studies of literary multilingualism. Although literary multilingualism as a contemporary object of study is heterogenous and fragmented, we also find some relatively established points of orientation. For example, most researchers in the field will be familiar with Yasemin Yildiz's *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (2012), originally published in 2006 as *Beyond the Mother Tongue: Configurations of Multilingualism in Twentieth-Century German Literature*. The 2012 title indicates that, according to Yildiz, we are at present finding ourselves in the complex territory of “the postmonolingual condition,” presumably a play on French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's

Published with license by Koninklijke Brill NV | DOI:10.1163/2667324X-20230105

© GRÖNLIE, 2023 | ISSN: 2667-324X (online)

Downloaded from Brill.com 08/15/2024 06:07:02AM

via Open Access. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the CC BY 4.0 license.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC 4.0 license.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

concept of “the postmodern condition” (in the work bearing this title, originally published in 1979). Where Lyotard diagnosed the postmodern period as being an era when metadiscourses and metanarratives had lost their legitimacy, Yildiz’s title indicates that at present the monolingual ideology, so closely connected to the modern nation-state, is losing legitimacy in a similar way.

Rainer Guldin stresses that “not every multilingual literary text is necessarily better or more creative than its monolingual counterpart” and observes, in my opinion quite correctly, that in recent debates “the notion of multilingualism has been used in a primarily emancipative way, as a one-sided promise of unfettered, liberating and in some cases even redemptive cultural and political multiplicity and equality” (2020: 3). In their introduction to *Multilingual Literatures as World Literature* (2021), Jane Hiddleston and Wen-chin Ouyang seem largely in tune with such an attitude when they claim that multilingual literatures “resist linguistic, national or communitarian boundaries” (2) and that there is an “ethical dimension” in the difference between “a monolingual vision of the world and a multilingual one,” where the former “can be exclusive of diversity” while the latter “is by definition inclusive” (9). When we read such statements, it is tempting to claim that literary multilingualism is indeed being conceived as an emancipatory practice per se. If we are to accept such a conception, we might assume literary multilingualism to be affiliated with other *progressive* ideas. But is it all that obvious that there might not also exist a sort of *reactionary* literary multilingualism? Could even the existence of such a reactionary multilingualism be a ‘blind spot’ in some of the present-day research on literary multilingualism? In this article, I will discuss the example of Ezra Pound (1885–1972) to shed light on these questions.

## 1 Ezra Pound’s ‘Reactionary Multilingualism’

Pound evidently wrote multilingual literature, or “polyglot poetry,” to use the expression Leonard Forster put forth in his groundbreaking 1968 lectures published as *The Poet’s Tongues* (1970). Pound and his friend and colleague T. S. Eliot not only used “polyglot quotation as a stylistic device” but went further and made it “an element of their personal style,” the result being “polyglot poetry, in which several different languages are used to form the texture of the poem” (1970: 74–75).

Pound has been given due attention by Forster as well as by prominent scholars such as Lawrence Venuti (1995), Steven Yao (2002), and Jahan Ramazani (2009), in their works within the fields of translation studies, modernist translation and translational poetics respectively. However, if we conceive of literary multilingualism as a field of study in its own right, we must conclude that

Pound here tends to get no more than a cursory mention. This is surely not because his poetry is insufficiently multilingual. As every reader of Pound's magnum opus knows, *The Cantos* is a poem profoundly marked by multiple bits and pieces of Romance languages accompanying or interrupting the English-language verses; as early as in the second canto, Greek orthography shows up—not to mention Pound's more or less infamous deployment of Chinese written characters, the first instance of which, 信, transcribed as *xin*, is to be found at the end of Canto 34 (although, even if the canto in question was originally published as part of *Eleven New Cantos* in 1934, the *xin* character was not added until the 1956 edition of *The Cantos*). So why does not Pound play a greater part in discussions of literary multilingualism?

One reason that Pound is somewhat neglected in the field of literary multilingualism may be that he is politically controversial, with his support of Mussolini and his later straying far in the direction of white supremacism. The scholarship devoted to Pound's work in general is extensive, but since he arguably represents some sort of *original alt-right* politics, it is not surprising if someone wishes to tone down his importance or simply offer him less attention. However, this is precisely what is problematic for such a field of study as that of literary multilingualism: A belated 'no platforming' is perhaps understandable when it comes to Pound, but it risks smoothing over the rougher edges of multilingual literary practice. If the studies of literary multilingualism at the very outset are limited to its assumed 'progressive' representatives, we risk missing out on important historical liaisons between such multilingual practices and reactionary politics.

In the 1980s, Jeffrey Herf wrote about "the paradox of reactionary modernism" (1984, 1). Admittedly, when using the term "modernism," Herf was primarily referring to a sort of general civilizational and technological rationalism, rather than artistic modernism. However, even modernist art often went hand in hand with reactionary politics. In and of itself this may seem somewhat paradoxical, but as a factual observation it is hardly controversial. Even if we limit ourselves to the literary domain, we realize that Pound was not alone in combining reactionary political attitudes and modernist aesthetics. So did the likes not only of his brother-in-arms Eliot, but other central modernists as well—Gottfried Benn, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Ernst Jünger, Curzio Malaparte, and Luigi Pirandello, to name but a few. Still, would not *reactionary multilingualism* count as an all-out paradox, almost an oxymoron?

I will not deny that Pound's political leanings are hard to square with his poetry's openness for a multitude of cultures and languages. How does one reconcile Pound's lifelong literary heterogeneity and what eventually became a segregationist stance on his part? Alec Marsh concludes that Pound's *Cantos* is a work

in which the poet “constantly brings together what his ideology concludes must be kept apart” (2015: 159). This may appear like an unsolvable paradox. How could Pound simultaneously embrace literary multilingualism and support ethnic segregation? In what follows, I will present a reading of Pound’s 1941 canto fragment “Addendum for C” that suggests a possible answer to these questions.

## 2 “Addendum for C” as Political Poetry

Pound originally published “Addendum for C” in 1942, in the New York–based magazine *Vice Versa*. The title Pound gave it at the time was “Canto Preceding (72 Circa)”. Pound later expressed a wish to name the fragment “From Canto C” (“C” as in the roman numeral for 100), but his editor James Laughlin ultimately persuaded him to title it “Addendum for CANTO C” when he included it as the penultimate piece in *Drafts & Fragments of Cantos CX–CXVII* (1968)—despite the title indicating that the book starts with Canto 110. In later editions, the title of the fragment has been simplified to “Addendum for C.” If we are to believe the dating given in *Drafts & Fragments*, Pound wrote the fragment in 1941.

In an article in *Paideuma*, the journal originally devoted to Pound scholarship, Ethan Lewis states that “Addendum for C” seems a “wholly arbitrary title chosen to accord with the symmetry of the *Commedia*” (1991: 65), that is, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. This might indeed be the case. Pound saw Dante’s work as a primary model for his own, letting people imagine that he, at a certain point, himself would end up with a total of a hundred cantos, as would explain his wording in a letter to Eliot of January 18, 1940: Here, Pound stated that he still had “29 canters to write” (Redman, 1991: 194). Given such a clue, one can surely argue that the title “Addendum for C” suggests that this is a fragment that Pound wanted to assign an extraordinary importance. And in fact, it does contain some crucial keys both to Pound’s politics and his poetics, and to how he conceived of these as intertwined.

As a young man, Pound was much the aesthete, but he became increasingly concerned with economic theorizing and Realpolitik. The two final stanzas of “Addendum for C” testify to this change:

*Sero, sero!* learned that Spain is mercury;  
that Finland is nickel. Late learning!  
S..... doing evil in place of the R.....  
“A pity that poets have used symbol and metaphor  
and no man learned anything from them  
for their speaking in figures.”

All other sins are open,  
 Usura alone not understood.  
 Opium Shanghai, opium Singapore  
 "with the silver spilla ...  
 amber, caught up and turned ..."

Lotophagoi.

POUND, *Cantos* Add/819<sup>1</sup>

Some quick exegetical remarks may be of use. The "S" and "R" followed by dots are shorthand for "Sassoon" and "Rothschild" (Terrell, 1993: 725). The final word "Lotophagoi" is a reference to the lotus-eaters in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*, whom Pound here chooses to parallel with Asian opium smokers, while quoting his own Canto 20 in the antepenultimate and penultimate lines. Even in the earlier canto, there was talk of Lotophagoi, "Lotophagoi of the suave nails, quiet, scornful" (Pound, *Cantos* 20/93). This line was later to be contrasted with the paradisiacal line from Canto 74: "The suave eyes, quiet, not scornful" (Pound, *Cantos*, 74/445). Commenting on the ending of "Addendum for C," Robert Casillo remarks that Pound here links usury to "poisonous drugs dispensed by Jewish opium racketeers, who have turned their victims into Lotophagoi, sunk in luxurious vegetable stupor" (1988: 237). Casillo also refers to "Addendum for C" as "hallucinatory" in itself (305).

What Pound does at the outset of the passage quoted is express some regretful "late learning." *Sero* is also the Latin word for "late." The expression "Sero, sero" was first used by Pound in Canto 25 (*Cantos*, 25/118). There it begins the lament of the Venetian stonecutters: These stonecutters complain about the parsimonious (and usurious) Venetian state, which owing to its greed has prevented them from continuing work on the Palazzo Ducale—as indicated in Canto 51, Pound saw Venice as having descended from its Renaissance greatness through usury. In the instance of "Addendum for C," the expression "Sero, sero!" certainly brings this earlier passage to mind, as well as connoting what is arguably the *locus classicus* for such a redoubling of this specific Latin word, namely a passage from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine (x, xxvii): "Sero te amavi"; Augustine repeats the expression later in the same syntactical period, something that Pound echoes with his own repetition of the word "sero." In Pound's canto, "sero" implies, we might suppose, not *late did I come to love you (God)*, as in Augustine, but rather something like *late did I come to recognize the*

1 I refer to Pound's *Cantos* in the way that is common in Pound scholarship, that is, first by indicating the canto number, then the page number of the edition used.



Readers of Pound will be familiar with his rant against usury in his famous "Usury Canto," Canto 45, written six years earlier, where usury was portrayed as a force destroying the foundations of all true art. Commenting on this passage from "Addendum for C," Richard Sieburth writes that it suggests that usury is in fact "the malevolent double or Other of poetry" itself (1987: 170).

*Neschek* is (Pound's spelling of) the Hebrew word for "usury." Jean-Michel Rabaté claims that in this passage Pound sets *neshekh* (Rabaté's spelling) up against τὸ καλόν to thereby dramatize the antagonism between usury and wholeness. He adds that Pound dramatizes this antagonism "not for superficial (or ideological) and racist reasons, but for a conceptual reason" (1986: 188), and that Pound's use of the Hebrew term *neschek* "goes along with a refusal to identify usurers with a given race" (189). Since Rabaté published his monograph on Pound's *Cantos* in 1986, studies have emerged that paint a clearer picture of Pound's relation to antisemitism, making it very hard to deny that he, and certainly at some points, was an outright antisemite, such as Casillo's *The Genealogy of Demons* (1988). Even so, and although he admits that Pound fell into "the trap of antisemitism" and became "more and more fanatical" in his denunciation of usury, Rabaté repeats essentially the same point he had made in 1986 in an article dating from 2010, saying that Pound "qualified" this denunciation of usury "by saying that usury came from the disregard of Jewish law by Jews themselves" (2010: 138). This must refer to a much-discussed passage in the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 23:19–21).<sup>2</sup> However, what is prescribed there is not a general law against usury, but a prohibition on taking usury from one's *brethren*—not from Gentiles. This is made explicit in interpretations made not only by the likes of Martin Luther, whose vehement anti-Judaism is well-known (and were to influence the Protestant Church under Nazi Germany; see also Probst 2012), but also by a Jewish philosopher such as Moses Maimonides, as Benjamin Nelson explains in his study *The Idea of Usury* (1969: xxi, 53–54). Pound was certainly aware that the said law in Deuteronomy did not apply to Gentiles, making it more than unlikely that he would see the later practice of usury as being dependent on any "disregard of Jewish law by Jews themselves."

Not only Rabaté but also Carroll F. Terrell goes out of his way to defend Pound's deployment of the Hebrew *neschek* in "Addendum for C," partly with reference to what must be the same passage in Deuteronomy: "At the time this

2 In *Guide to Kulchur* Pound peaks of *neschek* as "corrosive usury" (1970: 42) and opposes it to *marbit* or *marbis*, which is the Hebrew word for "usury" used in Leviticus (25:35–37). The term *neshekh* also figures in Exodus (22:25–27), but it is the Deuteronomy passage that is the broadest condemnation of usurious practice in the Pentateuch.

was written Pound was aware that he was being attacked for anti-Semitism, which he vigorously denied. Thus, he uses the Hebrew word to show that the Jews from the time of Moses had rules against usury” (1993: 724). How convincing is such an interpretation? Both Terrell and Rabaté give a clear answer—and more or less the same answer—to the question of why the poet chose to use a foreign-language term in the instance of *neschek*. They argue that it has to do with a simultaneous respect for ethnicity and a denial of the relevance of ethnicity—both a denial of any importance of the all-too-infamous connection between Jews and usury, and at same time a claim that an ancient Jewish prohibition on usury is somehow still relevant. But this is saying too little. If we look at the way the term works in the text, it seems much more double-edged than what Terrell and Rabaté account for. Theirs seem to me to be very sympathetic readings, as they avoid positing any essentialist belief on Pound’s part between usury as a practice and the Jews as a “race.” More sharply put, Terrell and Rabaté are unduly apologetic.

There is something striking about the use of *neschek* in the “Addendum.” It is not at all obvious that what the inclusion of the Hebrew term does is to invalidate any necessary link between Jews and usury. The passage bears witness to a sort of rage, and the use of the term *neschek* has among its functions to render all things “Hebrew” suspect. Read with specific attention to its sounds (most of all the alliterations, such as “canker corrupting,” “Darkness the defiler,” and, not least, the first line’s respectively voiced and unvoiced fricatives in “Usury” and *neschek*), “Addendum for C” can be labeled an *exorcism*, that is, a spell, a poetic attempt to get rid of evil by naming it. The idea of the passage being a spell is only enhanced by the following three lines, which appear shortly after the ‘exorcist’ passage:

pure light, we beseech thee  
 Crystal, we beseech thee  
 Clarity, we beseech thee  
 POUND, *Cantos* Add/819

While the naming of *neschek* should be interpreted as a way of confronting usury head on, by naming it in all the names and guises, including foreign words, that it supposedly hides under, these three lines are striking in their traditional way of expressing sincerity, like a prayer, a litany.

Established as an opposition to *neschek* in “Addendum for C,” we find the Greek expression “Τὸ καλόν.” Where *neschek* is said to be neither *formosus* nor *decens*, i.e., neither “shapely” nor “decent,” this contrasts with “Τὸ καλόν.” The latter takes on a moral dimension that is not so obviously present in the Eng-



lish word "beauty." Pound seemingly preferred the translation "order" (suggested in *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* as well as in Cantos 58 and 59). In his *Guide to Kulchur* (1938) he also describes H. Rackham's translation of the term as "nobility" in the Loeb library edition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as "a brilliant translation" (1970: 316). In "Addendum for C," the Greek concept is presented as endowed with an almost *innate* 'decency.' One should also note, when comparing the Hebrew and Greek used in "Addendum for C," that the Greek term is rendered in Greek letters, the Hebrew one in Latin letters. Why? Is it because the reader is supposed to be able to sound out the Greek ones, but not the Hebrew ones? Or has it got to do with the poet's own competence? Whatever the motivation Pound may have had for latinizing the orthography of the Hebrew word for "usury" but not of the Greek for "beauty," using the original letters of the source language seems a sign of respect, a respect that consequently is denied the Hebrew language. It is even possible to interpret Pound using *neschek* transliterated into Roman script as in itself a form of 'contamination,' as if the concept has already 'infiltrated' the English language.

I stress that *neschek* is Pound's spelling, in contrast to *neshekh* as employed by for example Rabaté. This is worth remarking on, since Rabaté's spelling seems more accurate (not that this is the only case where Pound's philological exactitude in *The Cantos* may be questioned). In Hebrew, the word is written נֶשֶׁךְ, something that indicates a soft, guttural sound at the end. This word is derived from a root meaning "to bite" or "a bite," as Rabaté also notes (1986: 189). Pound's *neschek*, while undoubtedly intended to represent the same word, would seem to indicate a pronunciation with a hard *k* and the end, thus changing the meaning of the word, inadvertently referring to a different root. Pound's *neschek* seems not to refer to "usury" but to the Hebrew word נֶשֶׁבֶת, which has an entirely different meaning, namely, "a weapon."

Even more striking is that the Hebrew language is used when the point is to name "usury," which must be said to be somewhat of the ultimate 'sin' in Pound's thinking about morality, while the Greek and Latin words come in to designate "the beautiful" (or "order") and "the decent." This risks being a bit unfair—for the poet does also include the Greek term for "usury," Τόκος. Still, there is no instance of any positive Hebrew word to be pointed out in "Addendum for C." Even if one can conceivably posit that Pound had a pious intention when using the Hebrew term *neschek*, is it not likely that the reader will associate some sort of disgust with it, compared with the use of Greek and Latin in the same fragment? This is possibly how Pound's editor interpreted Pound's Canto 52, the one other canto where the term *neschek* appears. Here it appears numerous times, but one passage is of special interest, since Pound's publishers, New Directions in the United States and Faber in the United Kingdom,

managed to have some of the lines crossed out in the published editions of *The Cantos*.<sup>3</sup> Laughlin had originally suggested Pound remove the lines completely, but Pound insisted on them being printed in a crossed-out version (up to 1986—the later editions have removed the crossing out; see Barnhisel, 2005: 83). This is the passage in question:

Remarked Ben: better keep out the jews  
 or yr/ grand children will curse you  
 jews, real jews, chazims, and *neschek*  
 also super-neschek or the international racket  
 spécialité of the Stinkschuld  
 bomb-proof under their house in Paris  
 where they cd/ store aht voiks  
 fat slug with three body-guards  
 soiling our sea front with a pot bellied yacht in the offing,  
 government full of their gun-swine, bankbuzzards, poppinjays.

POUND, *Cantos*, 52/257–8

Ben is Benjamin Franklin, while “chazims” is a version of the Yiddish word for “pigs.” Earlier in the same canto, a passage, also crossed out by Laughlin, goes on about “poor yitts paying for Stinkschuld / paying for a few big jews’ vendetta on goyim,” that is, poor Jews paying the price for rich Jews’ ‘revenge’ on the ‘Gentiles.’ “Stinkschuld” is again a codeword for Rothschild. The transliteration “aht voiks” for “art works” is Pound imitating supposedly ‘Jewish’ pronunciation. According to Hugh Kenner, Pound’s fury stems in part from a “pot bellied” Rothschild yacht anchored in the harbor of Rapallo, where Pound was living at the time (Casillo 1988: 260).

Once again Terrell is highly apologetic when commenting on this canto: He says that “Pound’s apparent intent is to deplore the way anti-Semites in the 1930s blamed all Jews, including poor ones, for the destructive financial practices of a very few” (1993: 200). This is quite a stretch. Even if one accepts this highly dubious explanation of Pound’s intention, seeing the way the poem actually stands on the page, one realizes that the Yiddish and Hebrew terms hardly function to give any positive connotation to anything Jewish whatsoever—on the contrary, it is as though they are linked to something sinful and unclean. Any attempt at denying that Pound was thinking along these lines is easily disproven. Let us

3 The lines crossed out were the sixth- to second-to-last lines in the quotation given here.

for example look at a passage from Pound's article "Race or Illness" (originally titled "Razza o malattia"), printed on March 12, 1944, in *Il Popolo di Alessandria*, one of the most important newspapers of the Salò Republic:

It is time to make an analysis. Hebrewism isn't race, it's illness. When a nation dies, Jews multiply like bacilli in carrion. Like an illness, there can be severe cases and lesser cases. The same Jews suffer from it in differing intensities, almost measles or smallpox. When aryanans or half-aryans like Roosevelt and Churchill or Eden are stricken, they are real lepers. Analysis of blood can demonstrate the results.

Quoted from REDMAN, 1991: 243<sup>4</sup>

Rather incredibly, and although he considers this the "worst example of Pound's anti-Semitism," Tim Redman still claims that if "judged within the context of his time," Pound was "not a racist" (1991: 158). Casillo strikes me as closer to the mark when he says that even if racism and antisemitism "were far less significant in Italian Fascism than in Nazism," from the later 1930s on "Pound stands closer to the Nazi than to the Italian Fascist position on the issue of race," that is, in seeing race as "a biological fact of paramount importance" (1988: 136–7). Redman's point must be that Pound was not actively racist in the sense that he deemed people with colored skin to be less worth, or that he was not a proponent of "race hatred," as Burton Hatlen says, in his article on "Racism and Anti-Semitism" in *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia*, that he was not:

Although blacks are the principal object of racism in America, Pound never displayed animus against blacks, seeing them rather as simple, happy, natural folk, with a heightened mythic consciousness. We now regard such stereotyping as racist; but if racism implies race hatred, Pound's attitude toward blacks is not racist. In fact, Pound's views on blacks were relatively progressive: He denounced lynching and contributed money to a defense fund for the Scottsboro boys, the most famous victims of American racism during the 1930s.

2005: 252

Reading a passage such as this, one may wonder when merely denouncing lynching made someone "relatively progressive." The fact is that, although

4 Redman's translation.

perhaps not under the spell of “race hatred,” Pound held strictly segregationist views. This is evident in a letter he wrote on January 18, 1940, also quoted by Redman. In this letter it says:

By RACE I do not mean what's printed on a passport. The melting pot has been tried and FAILED. Some blends are O.K. but the others rot in three generations even when the mulatto happens to be good. [...] We want our Italians Italian; french french; ang/sax ang/sax; Dutch dutch. That is enough for any man, with a very occasional hybrid.

REDMAN, 1991: 196

In his study *John Kasper and Ezra Pound* (2015), Marsh quite simply treats Pound as a racist. One could of course argue that he thereby uses the term in a present-day sense, but this is contentious, since Marsh quotes Pound to the effect that “each race has its qualities,” that “no race can fully perform the function of another,” and that “any attempt to obscure racial character is anti-scientific” (2015: 10). Admittedly, such views do not necessarily constitute race hatred as such. But they certainly show how important the question of race was for Pound.

#### 4 Ethnic and Eugenic Racism

In his aborted, half-page long essay “For the African=American Language” [*sic*], probably written in the 1940s, Pound wrote the following: “One race and one race only has fostered in America a speech softer mellow and fuller than the South midland and having a charm not inferior to the 18th cent[ury] phonetics preserved and tempered in our land, and that is the Negro race” (Marsh, 2005: 21). This statement is as such positive to the language of African Americans. The argument may be linked to Pound’s earlier admiration for the language of traditional societies, as evidenced for example in his 1930 essay “How to Write” (1996: 87–109). In both instances, the admiration seemingly implies that the languages in question *sound* beautiful. But as in the 1930 essay, this evidently does not mean that its practitioners are endowed with the ability to generalize, for example.

Marsh says that “Pound always sees African Americans as the truest Americans, that is to say as American as himself” (2005: 22). In short, according to Marsh, Pound had a “paternalistic fondness for black people” (154). Still, he must count as a supporter of “ethnic racism,” that is, the “belief that a race has certain distinguishing features and in-bred cultural practices” (73). Pound did

not accept Darwin's theory of evolution, and instead became influenced by Louis Agassiz, whom Marsh calls "the most influential scientific racist of the nineteenth century" (64) and whose views he compares to Hitler's. Under the influence of Agassiz, Pound believed that "dark skin and joyful physicality go together," that "Aryans" have "an innate sense of justice," while "Jews have big noses and [...] specialize in usury" (73). Subscribing to this line of thinking, Pound was, according to Marsh, of the opinion that people of African descent "were predestined to be farmers, not legislators," and that they were subservient to the "master races," namely, the Greeks (and their European descendants) and the Chinese (64). What singles Pound out from simply being an all-out white supremacist, Marsh argues, is that he saw not only "Aryans" but even the Chinese as a "culture-bearing race" (151).

As a contrast to ethnic racism, Marsh introduces a second form of racism, namely, "eugenic racism." He concludes that Pound's early antisemitism "is above all ethnic and cultural, not primarily prejudice on eugenic grounds" (75), and that this remains the case up through the 1930s. But by 1942, after having read the second volume of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in Italian, Pound was, says Marsh, "converted [...] to eugenics" (85). Marsh maintains that Pound's "main objection to Jews was cultural," at the same time admitting that "'culture' easily slides over to 'racial'" (86). The way I read "Addendum for C," it is a locus for precisely such a sliding, from the denunciation of usury as a cultural practice to a demonization of Jews as spreaders of illness. This illness *could* be read metaphorically, but Pound himself goes a long way to prevent such an interpretation by, in the "Addendum" itself, pointing to the need for poets to speak without using symbols or metaphors. All in all, "Addendum for C" seems much in line with the antisemitism present in Pound's wartime radio broadcasts from Rome, contemporary with the composition of the fragment.

Even in later cantos, Pound would seem to advocate "antiseptis," that is, racial segregation, and avoidance of race-mixing, for example in Canto 94: "maintain antiseptis, / let the light pour" (Pound, *Cantos*, 94/635). When Pound in a letter to William Cookson, possibly from 1959, makes a remark on UNESCO, we can observe a similar idea on what is arguably a more 'cultural' level:

Even the Victorian era with its formula: Greece for the arts, Rome for law, the Hebrews for religion was trying to preserve elements, the main elements of different cultures, not à la UNESCO, trying to melt out all distinctions and reduce the whole to a dull paste of common inhumanity (? and/or nucleosity?).

1991: 232

Importantly, Pound seems to be indicating that segregation is not solely important when it comes to race, but in all matters, as when he states that “nothing is more damnably harmful to everyone, black and white than misceg[e]nation, bastardization and mongrelization of EVERYthing” (quoted from Marsh, 2005: xi–xii). This *denial* of the value of *hybridity* is what is of special interest here. My claim is that this denial is operative not only at a political level but in Pound’s poetry as well.

Linguistic hybridity is a central characteristic of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939), a work Pound expressed deep reservations about—referring to it as “unimportant” on account of it being “an aimless search for exaggeration” (1978: 129)—after having been an important ally of Joyce’s when it came to agitating for *Ulysses* (1922) and getting the latter novel published. In *The Poet’s Tongues*, Forster makes the important observation that keeping the different languages distinct was more pressing for Pound than for Joyce. This I interpret as meaning that the language of Joyce’s late work seems to be some sort of *hybrid* on the morphological microlevel, while the languages used in *The Cantos* largely remain *combined in unaltered form*. It is as if Joyce created his poetic prose in any possible language, while Pound created his poetry in English, equipping it with borrowings from foreign languages, making *The Cantos*, as Michael Lee Warner suggests, “a work which does not seek a utopian reunification of language, but leaves languages as they are” (1986: xiv). We do not need to go to the lengths Warner does when he describes *Finnegans Wake* as a work where Joyce was “merely pasting together morphemes and phonemes in multilingual clusters, a cute, but extravagant relative of *chinoiserie*” (57) to see that where Joyce for example would construct words such as “mammamuscles” (2012: 15) or “meandertale” (18), to give but two example from the work’s first section, Pound on his part would let Greek and Chinese scripts stand there by themselves in his texts alongside his (admittedly often ‘slangy’) English.

Pound tended to splice together already existing text from various sources, where Joyce on his part *kneaded* each morpheme into new, composite words. In contrast to the multilingualism of *Finnegans Wake*, the multilingualism of *The Cantos* is in most cases better described as examples of Pound *juxtaposing* different languages in what is arguably a collage-like manner or having a sort of mosaic effect. The ‘Universal Language’ or inverted Esperanto of Joyce is fundamentally different from Pound’s multilingual work. While the multilingualism of *Finnegans Wake* is essentially *hybrid*, the languages in *The Cantos* remain in an important manner *unmixed*: The elements retain their independence even when put together.

## 5 Segregation in Theory and Practice

I do not agree with Marsh when he claims that Pound's "eclectic *Cantos*" is a poem where Pound "constantly brings together what his ideology concludes must be kept apart" (2005: 159). It is of course true in one sense that Pound "brings together" a variety of different languages and cultural expressions in *The Cantos*. But it seems to me that he does this precisely in order *not* to mix them. Even in his poetry, at least his mature poetry, he avoids hybridity. In other words, Pound's poetry is segregationist not only in its statements but also at the morphological microlevel.<sup>5</sup>

In her study *Learning to Be Modern* (1993), Gail McDonald sees Pound's youthful embracement of linguistic, literary, and cultural difference as a strategic maneuver: "As Pound gained confidence, he chose the strategy of celebrating difference. Having committed himself to study of foreign language and to the cosmopolitanism they reinforced, Pound felt superior to classmates content to live in only one culture" (2003: 14). Pound might have chosen to "celebrate difference" to enhance his career at a certain point. In fact, we may ask: Did he ever cease celebrating difference? Perhaps not. What is striking is that this celebration at a later stage went hand in hand with segregationist attitudes. Even Casillo, who generally pulls no punches in his analysis of Pound's antisemitism, grants that antisemitism was not important in Pound's thought before the late 1920s (1988: 5). When we come to the early 1940s, however, Pound's use of the Hebrew term *neschek* in "Addendum for C" is clearly testimony to an ethnic racism, and even arguably sliding over into a eugenic one.

There is a striking co-presence of segregationist theory and practice in Pound's work: In his prose he sees cultures as something that needs to be *kept apart* to be preserved; in his poetry he moves away from experimenting with a linguistic "melting pot" instead stressing the need to "leave languages as they are," as Warner puts it in his study of Pound's multilingualism (1986: xiv). Whereas the previous inclusions of foreign languages in *The Cantos* could convincingly have been interpreted as signifying appreciation for Otherness, in "Addendum for C" they now serve as emblems or icons for cultural and racial 'purity.'

5 One could perhaps argue that the very transliteration of *neschek* into Latin letters constitutes a sort of hybridity, but as I have suggested, it seems more fitting to see it as Pound's view of a form of contamination. The very parasitical quality attached to the Hebrew word for "usury" in "Addendum for C" shows how Pound saw the intermingling of cultures as contaminating 'pure' traditions. As such "Addendum for C" *mimes* the said contamination, only to function as a sort of exorcism.

“Addendum for C” represents what is probably the clearest expression of a shift in Pound’s poetics, introducing a phase where his poetry has clear affiliations with a segregationist idea of avoiding hybridity. One may ask whether there is not a danger that I am projecting Pound’s ideas about a segregationist political culture onto a text that continues to be a celebration of literary and cultural difference. I think not. This does not mean that I consider a defense of the value of reading Pound’s poetry to be impossible. But such a defense is dependent on an admission that Pound was a segregationist. Given such an admission, a defense could focus on what should be an obvious fact: Segregation in poetry and in society are two entirely different things.

### Conclusion

This article suggests a solution to the paradox that Pound simultaneously embraced literary multilingualism and endorsed ethnic segregation. I have argued that even if the early Pound may have experimented with linguistic hybridity, the later Pound actively did not want to mix languages. “Addendum for C” marks a development in Pound’s multilingual poetry, approaching the antisemitic propaganda of his infamous radio broadcasts. This is not so much a question of how Pound’s poetry presents a stated opinion, but of how it presents the Hebrew term for “usury” as a parasitical term that has infiltrated the English language and needs to be exorcised. What this suggests is that multilingual poetry need not be only a cosmopolitan celebration of cultural and linguistic difference but may just as well be intimately linked to racist ideas.

When L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet Charles Bernstein said that “Pound’s work contradicts his fascism” (1999: 158), what he was referring to was not the multilingual character of Pound’s poetry but its paratactic and fragmentary character. In Bernstein’s opinion, this ‘un-fascist’ way of composing poetry stands in stark contradiction to Pound’s explicitly stated political opinions. One could easily imagine a similar defense of Pound’s poetry on account of its many multilingual aspects. Yet my analysis shows that Pound’s use of multilingual terms in a poem such as “Addendum for C” must count as instances of ethnic racism, if not also of eugenic racism.

Was Pound *celebrating* multilingualism as a cultural fact? No. A premise that multilingual literature represents such a celebration is, in my view, too often presupposed in present-day studies of literary multilingualism. The literary multilingualism often celebrated today might need to be regarded more critically than is sometimes done. Even as much as we may appreciate multi-



lingualism as a sign of an ethnically diverse society, a multilingual poem is not necessarily a celebration of such a society.

## References

- Augustine. *Confessions*. Vol. 2, *Books 9–13*, trans. Caroline J.-B. Hammond (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- Barnhisel, Gregory. *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).
- Bernstein, Charles. *My Way: Speeches and Poems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
- Casillo, Robert. *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).
- Forster, Leonard. *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970).
- Guldin, Rainer. *Metaphors of Multilingualism: Changing Attitudes towards Language Diversity in Literature, Linguistics and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2020).
- Hatlen, Burton. "Racism and Anti-Semitism." In *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia*, eds. Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos and Stephen J. Adams (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 51–54.
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Hiddleston, Jane, and Wen-chin Ouyang. "Introduction: Multilingual Literature as World Literature." In *Multilingual Literatures as World Literature*, eds. Hiddleston and Ouyang (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 1–10.
- Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*, eds. Robbert-Jan Henkes, Erik Bindervoet, and Finn Fordham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Lewis, Ethan. "The ABC of Ending: Ezra Pound's 'Addendum for C.'" *Paideuma* 20 (3) (1991), 63–66.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- Marsh, ]Alec. *John Kasper and Ezra Pound: Saving the Republic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
- McDonald, Gail. *Learning to Be Modern: Pound, Eliot, and the American University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
- Nelson, Benjamin N. *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).
- Pound, Ezra. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 14th printing (New York: New Directions, 1998).

- Pound, Ezra. *Ezra Pound Papers at the Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscript Library, Yale University*. YCAL MSS 43.
- Pound, Ezra. *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose, Contributions to Periodicals*, vol. 10, eds. Lea Baechler, A. Walton Litz, and James Longenbach (New York: Garland, 1991).
- Pound, Ezra. *Ezra Pound Speaking*, ed. Leonard W. Doob (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1978).
- Pound, Ezra. *Guide to Kulchur* (New York: New Directions, 1970).
- Pound, Ezra. *Jefferson and/or Mussolini: L'Idée Statale, Fascism as I Have Seen It* (London: Stanley Nott, 1935).
- Pound, Ezra. *Machine Art and Other Writings: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
- Pound, Ezra. *Selected Prose, 1909–1956*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973).
- Probst, Christopher J. *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).
- Rabaté, Jean-Michel. *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986).
- Rabaté, Jean-Michel. "Sagetrieb: The Forgetting of Ezra Pound." *South Central Review* 27 (3) (2010), 133–44.
- Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- Redman, Tim. *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- Sieburth, Richard. "In Pound We Trust: The Economy of Poetry/The Poetry of Economics." *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1) (1987), 142–72.
- Terrell, Carroll F. *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- Warner, Michael Lee. *Cantomorphosis: Multilingualism in the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Dissertation (University of Tulsa, 1986).
- Yao, Steven G. *Translation and the Languages of Modernism: Gender, Politics, Language* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
- Yildiz, Yasemin. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).