Introduction
Towards a Modernist Hellenism

In 1942's "A Visiting Card," Ezra Pound proclaims,

> In the latter half of the nineteenth century technical and metrical development was centred in France. After 1917 it was continued in the English language. It was my intention that there should have been two classes of Imagists: Hellenists and modernists. Mercantilism intervened. The development continued. Practically no one has succeeded in producing satisfactory English translations from the Greek: only a few fragments have come through successfully. (*SP* 324)

This statement is remarkable for three reasons: the categories proposed, the dates involved, and the shift to translation. First, Pound's prose on imagism[1] written in the 1910s contains no such statement of intention. While the "Hellenist" class of imagists was prominent – was in fact the only class, represented by H.D.'s "Verses, Translations, and Reflections from 'The [Greek] Anthology'" – what Pound means by "modernist" is less clear. It is possible that he is referring to his own evolution out of imagism and into vorticism but grouping both movements under one name; Pound's "and" in the "Visiting Card," then, would erase the tension between his own two contradictory positions. Yet 1917, the date Pound assigns to the beginning of "metrical and technical" experimentation in English, is after both imagism and vorticism have wound down. It marks the time when Pound, together with T. S. Eliot, turned away from the particular "experimental" form that imagism had helped usher, *vers libre*, and began writing poems in quatrains, following the French model of Théophile Gautier.[2] 1917, then, is the moment at which "the development continued." It is also the year that Pound publishes "Three Cantos" and begins receiving chapters of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Similarly striking is the date at which the

[1] Though when the term was coined Pound used the French spellings *Imagisme* and *Imagiste*, I will be using the by-now conventional Anglicized versions.

[2] *Polite Essays*, 14.

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"Visiting Card" was written. Though the rest of this early-forties manifesto is filled with Pound's economic ideas, he also seems compelled to write up his poetic origins, recalling and not quite denouncing imagism's and his own adventures in hellenism, at that time almost otherwise absent from his published writings.[3] Finally, Pound jumps from what seems to be the subject at hand – the development of English verse, according to a hellenic, "modernist," or French model – to something seemingly irrelevant: translations from Greek into English. Why and how are these two processes related? Is Pound implying that only the "modernist" development continued, but that the "hellenist" one has failed? Are the two separate or conjoined aspects of the evolution of poetry in English? Is the "hellenist" class limited to translations? Or is there a larger claim being made about the relationship between translation – and translation from Greek par excellence – and "original" poetic writing or "technical and metrical development"?

Spanning the length of Pound's, H.D.'s, and Eliot's careers, *Modernist Hellenism: Pound, Eliot, H.D., and the Translation of Greece* revisits major modernist works such as Pound's *Cantos*, T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* from the perspective of each poet's translations (or, in Eliot's case, adaptations) from Greek. For all three poets I show that engagement with Greek is not incidental but essential to their individual and at times joint understanding of the modernist project; Greek tragedy specifically – with its combination of poetic complexity and directness, its status as both high, formalist art and communal, ritual spectacle – emerges as the crucial nexus.[4] Looking at these poets through the lens of their common engagement with Greek – long considered to have been less of an important intertext for modernism than for earlier periods of literature in English – allows not only for a new interpretation of their original work but also for a way to assess all three together even when their late poems seem so significantly different. That is, I claim that modernism's serious turn to Greek was not only a brief and early flirtation of the 1910s that was then abandoned by Pound and Eliot and continued by H.D. in the margins. Rather, by arguing for a new juncture of modernist hellenism

[3] Pound considered this essay, together with *GK*, as his last word on most matters as late as 1958. The major adjustment he makes to it then is the recruitment of Sophocles (Pound and Spann, *Confucius to Cummings*, xi).

[4] Lempert, *Tragedy and the Modernist Novel*, has argued for the philosophical importance of "a Greek tragic worldview" for modernist novelists; Pound and Eliot are excluded from this non-redemptive strand of tragic modernism (3). In tracing Pound and Eliot's actual engagement with tragedy, I offer an alternative account.

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in the 1940s and 50s, when all three poets review their earlier work with Greek drama specifically and thus also re-engage with each other, I revise the standard narrative of modernism[5] and show the ways in which H.D.'s Greek-based writing not only consistently resonates with what Pound and Eliot sought, and sometimes failed, to gain from Greek tragedy and Greek translation, but often silently inspires their efforts, despite both male poets' tendency to dismiss it. Finally, I argue that in their substantive textual work on Greek materials and their privileging and theorizing of the translation process, Pound and H.D.'s hellenism is distinct from that of their contemporaries – including Eliot's – and predecessors. The use each poet makes of Greek texts is found to exceed classicizing poetics but also strictly modernist ones, and to thus establish a distinct "modernist hellenism."

Hellenism: "A nest of modified illusions"?

Greece at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

David Ferris has argued that the origin of hellenism is the moment "at which history, culture, modernity, and the political life of a nation are first articulated in relation to each other" in German art historian J. J. Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).[6] Winckelmann turns Greece into a "measure of the highest cultural achievement," setting it up as an unattainable ideal; at the same time, through his systematic treatment of its every aspect "as part of a total cultural representation," he establishes a total(izing) concept of culture "as a representation of the political existence of a nation" that "went by the name of Greece."[7] What "Greece" measures then is not the adherence to a particular artistic style or the resemblance to an actual, geographical place, but this coherence of art and nation in all of their manifestations. Greece thus conceived becomes the basis for self-identification and self-definition of modernity. In order for modernity to have its own art Winckelmann has to postulate not only that Greek art came to an end, but also that it "fail[ed] to bequeath what it is to be Greek," instead leaving us with the Grecian, the Hellenistic, what is *like* Greek – that is the essence of its inimitability.[8] There are two types

[5] Following recent calls to take a long view of modernism and consider how the "self-referential and historiographic late phase" helps (re)define what modernism might be (MacKay, *Modernism and World War II*, 14; see also Whittier-Ferguson, *Mortality and Form*, 2–6, 5n6).
[6] Ferris, *Silent Urns*, 18. Cf. Harloe, *Winckelmann and the Invention of Antiquity*, ch. 4.
[7] Ferris, *Silent Urns*, 16, 17.
[8] Ibid., 46.

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of hellenism, however. The historical Alexandrian hellenism represents for Winckelmann the stage of "decline" leading to the end of Greek art; lacking the knowledge that produced high classical art, this hellenism is condemned to fastidiously imitate its external trappings without being able to distinguish what is important from what is not.[9] The second hellenism is one for which Winckelmann's work would provide the foundation; it would arise out of the laborious reacquisition of that knowledge and, conscious of its distance from Greece and of Greece's inimitability, would nonetheless attempt to imitate the essence and substance of the hellenic.

As Eileen Gregory notes, there were "two distinct hellenisms operative" in nineteenth-century Britain, both more or less reliant on the Winckelmannian construction of Greece: on the one hand, the "revolutionary political agenda of Shelley's 'Hellas'" and, on the other, "the moral agenda of [Matthew] Arnold" – that is, the enthusiasm of Romantic hellenism and the Victorian domestication of the Greeks.[10] To these we might add the darker fin-de-siècle hellenism of Swinburne; where Arnold hoped that the revival of Greek, which he thought possible, would lead to cultural regeneration, the Decadents "sought in the Greeks a means both for celebrating the irrevocable fallenness of their own world and for challenging mid-Victorian religious and moral sensibilities."[11] Shanyn Fiske tracks a fourth current that runs counter to the mainstream Victorian humanist hellenism of Arnold but also to its more decadent version in Swinburne, who was part of the same circle of well-educated men. This "heretical Hellenism" refers to the engagement of women with a Greece that was mediated by popular culture. The Greece that appeared in contentious discussions about Homeric epic, sculpture, and tragedy in periodicals, pamphlets, novels, or on the London stage was – in contrast to the Winckelmannian model – fragmentary and not associated with the close philological linguistic study of texts.[12] It thus invited more open and imaginative approaches and "provided a means of questioning assumptions about gender, religion, and the boundaries of legitimate knowledge."[13] At the same time, as women began to be educated in Greek on both sides of

[9] Paraphrasing from Winckelmann, *Geschichte*, 326.
[10] *H.D. and Hellenism*, 39. Turner's "Why the Greeks" offers a succinct account of the switch from a Roman to a Greek cultural model in nineteenth-century Britain, while Haynes, *English Literature and Ancient Languages*, 152–60, distinguishes hellenisms not on the basis of ideological valence, but of poetic technique.
[11] Fiske, *Heretical Hellenism*, 14.
[12] Ibid., 66–68.
[13] Ibid., 22.

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the Atlantic in the second half of the nineteenth century, they "cultivated a passionate reading of Greek," with an emphasis on its materiality.[14] The trend culminated in Jane Harrison, who as a scholar used her study of archaic art and religion as the foundation for institutional resistance by formulating a "science of not knowing Greek in reaction to institutionalized knowledge."[15] It is this other, "Dionysian" or primitive Greece that, bolstered by Nietzsche's work and its promulgation in England by scholars like Harrison, emerges on the English stage in the first decade of the twentieth century and begins to dominate modernist art as pre-classical Greece "became one site for the modernist rebellion against the rationalist, bourgeois nineteenth century."[16] Such rebellion is evidenced by the 1910 production of Strauss's opera *Elektra*, which orientalized and psychologized the intellectual investment in glorious Greece, while also making it more concrete by using costumes based on recent archaeological discoveries.[17] T. E. Hulme, whom Pound deemed the progenitor of imagism, also advocated a return to the pre-classical in the visual arts, equating it, under the influence of Wilhelm Wörringer's work, with abstract, non-anthropocentric forms.

Though Pound and H.D. came of literary age in London, they were also exposed to American hellenism, one prominent strand of which argued – not too far from their native Pennsylvania – that America was the true inheritor of Greece. Already the wave of tragedy productions in Greek was sweeping American colleges, Pound himself performing in the chorus of *Iphigeneia in Tauris* at the University of Pennsylvania in 1903, with H.D. in the audience.[18] In 1908, renowned classicist Basil Gildersleeve proclaimed the deep affiliation between "Americanism and Hellenism" in a University of Virginia lecture series titled *Hellas and Hesperia: The*

[14] Prins, *Ladies' Greek*, 5. See also Hardwick, "Women, Translation and Empowerment," and, on different ways of "knowing" Greek, Leontis, "Greek Tragedy and Modern Dance."

[15] Fiske, *Heretical Hellenism*, 161.

[16] Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 37. On Harrison's modernist influence, see Carpentier, *Ritual, Myth and the Modernist Text*, and Mills, *Spirit of Modernist Classicism*, esp. 1–37.

[17] Goldhill, *Who Needs Greek?*, 138. Eliot is aware of these productions, "scrupulously exact, according to the most recent breakthroughs in archeology" (*CP* 1, 500), while H.D. "was terribly over-come" by a 1933 staging of the Strauss *Elektra* in Vienna (*CP* 621). On the fate of tragedy on the British stage before and after the First World War, see Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, ch. 18.

[18] Though, to my knowledge, Pound doesn't refer to this production – despite what seems to me to be its obvious influence on his later work with Greek sound – it weighs heavily on H.D.'s imaginary (though not strictly in relation to Pound) as seen in her novel *The Sword Went Out to Sea* (written 1946–50), unpublished during her lifetime, esp. pp. 73–80, 99–100, 119. See also Pearcy, "Grecian Theater," on "Philadelphia's thriving dramatic culture" throughout the nineteenth century (55).

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Vitality of Greek Studies in America.[19] Gildersleeve deplores the pedantry exhibited in strictures against translation (such as those Eliot would call for; see below), and advocates for a "vital classicism" that can be forged if Greek is actively seen as relating to the American life and character rather than pursued solely philologically (69). Moreover, Gildersleeve connects America's receptivity to Greece to its general acceptance of foreign input – his example is the "foreign critics" who showed Americans that Whitman is the "true American poet," a fact recalled by Pound in the *Pisan Cantos* – and makes that very receptivity the mark of Greekness: "Not English but Greek is the ready receptivity of foreign ideas" in America (91, 114). He further premises the idea of Greek "universality," of Greece's "assimilative power," on a promise of cohering strands, where the distinction between "Greek and Barbarian" ceases to matter (110, 111). The final aspect of Greek art specifically that Gildersleeve highlights, and that also might align it with the American "character," is its practicality: "Every tool must follow the lines of greatest efficiency" (120). Though, unlike Pound, he ties the "work" of poetry to moral lessons, it is hard not to see in this kind of assessment Pound's ideas only three years later about the "straightness" of Greek. At the same time, H.D.'s conception of a fluid, open-bordered Greece may owe something to ideas such as these; indeed, she herself claimed late in life that her paradigmatic "Greek" landscape was based on the American river islands and coasts of her youth.[20] Both poets' turn to Greek was not figured as a turn away from American English, but as means of cross-fertilizing it.

Some Modernist Hellenisms

The nineteenth-century hellenist divide was between the rigorously textual and the freely creative; the First World War, however, forced a revaluation of an educational system that had focused on the humanities – and Greek – rendering obsolete humanistic hellenism as well as the heresies and passions it engendered.[21] The Poets' Translation Series (PTS), which was

[19] Published 1909. Pound had left the U.S. for Europe in March 1908, but returned in June 1910. I am not suggesting that he read Gildersleeve's lectures or even that he had heard of them, just that talk of them (or the academic culture that produced them) may have been circulating around Pound two hundred miles north in Philadelphia, especially since both in early 1908 and upon his return in 1910 he was seeking academic employment. Gildersleeve's essentialism and his problematic racial politics may also feed into some of Pound's rhetoric around Greek in the 1950s, though probably not directly.

[20] *HD/NHP*, 9; see also *HER*, 18–19.

[21] Fiske, *Heretical Hellenism*, 189–97.

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launched in 1915 largely at the instigation of Richard Aldington and H.D. and which would publish short volumes of translations from Greek and Latin, may be seen as hellenism's last gasp – together with, for example, Pound's contemporaneous evocations of Sappho (see Chapter 1 below). The tenor in the PTS advertisement (likely written by Aldington) is both "heretical" in Fiske's sense and programmatic:

> This literature has too long been the property of pedagogues, philologists, and professors. Its human qualities have been obscured by the wranglings of grammarians, who love it principally because to them it is so safe and so dead…. The translators will take no concern with glosses, notes, or any of the apparatus with which learning smothers beauty…. The first six pamphlets, when bound together, will form a small collection of unhackneyed poetry, too long buried under the dust of pedantic scholarship.

While I wouldn't go as far as to say that the PTS translators "valoriz[e] … their own ignorance"[22] – for what is implicit in this denunciation of philology is a different type of knowledge of the languages that they *can* all more or less read – we do see the typically modernist resistance to institutionalized traditions; hinted at is also the possibility of this not-dead literature posing a danger to the present by destabilizing its foundations.[23] Yet this alternative mode of translation and presentation fails to come about. While Eliot in his review of the series singles out H.D.'s translation of Euripides as the work of a true "poet," his pronouncement on Aldington's versions of the Hellenistic poet Anyte is especially ungenerous given the purported spirit of the enterprise: "good, but hardly ever steps aside from the path of Mackail," the classicist editor of the *Selected Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* (*CP* 1, 493). J. W. Mackail himself would largely share Eliot's assessment.[24] Unsurprisingly, Amy Lowell tried to discourage Aldington from restarting the PTS in 1919.[25] While modernists, then, were avid translators and ever more engaged with other cultures,[26] Greece decreased in importance; correspondingly, while the extent to which hellenism is a measure for "modernity" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth

[22] Yao, *Translation*, 12.
[23] See Kolocotroni, "Still Life," on this modernist dialectic between life and death and on Greece's figurative status as ghost. For an overview of the PTS, see Vandiver, ch. 1 in Hickman and Kozak, eds., *Classics in Modernist Translation*.
[24] "A Note on the Classical Revival," 205.
[25] See, for example, her letter of March 12, 1919, though by August 14 of the same year, she seems to have changed her mind (MS Lowell 19 (16), Houghton Library, Harvard University).
[26] Yao, *Translation*, 3–5.

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centuries has been extensively studied, work is only now beginning to be done on its transformation in the twentieth century.[27]

To the extent that Greece features in the postwar British modernist imaginary, it is as ghost. In Aldington's First World War poems, the mythic or Greek elements are presented in direct opposition to filthy modernity and always figured as closely aligned with nature, the guarantors of a stabilizing, ideal harmony. In "Eros and Psyche" two ancient statues are incongruous "here in Camden Town / In the midst of all this clamour and filth" (*Complete Poems*, 54). In the "Proem" to *Images of War* the speaker wishes to "gather something of repose, / Some intuition of the inalterable gods" in the midst of "this turmoil and passion, / This implacable contest" (73). "In the Trenches" appeals to Orion and the Pleiades and challenges the enemy to "crush the spring leaf with your armies"; elsewhere, the moon is daughter of Zeus, a "frail lily / Floating upon a calm pool – / Still a tall lady comforting our human despair" (83, 86). It is a similar spirit that Virginia Woolf expresses in "On Not Knowing Greek" (1925), when she writes that "it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our own age" (59). Woolf's and Aldington's nostalgic, Winckelmannian hellenisms depend on the notion of a chasm separating us moderns from Greece, "a chasm," as Woolf puts it, "which the vast tide of European chatter can never succeed in crossing," so that "the Greeks remain in a fastness of their own," and translations are "useless" for accessing it (39, 56).[28] Still, while Woolf insists on the untranslatability of Greek, she provocatively asserts its unknowability as well. Not knowing Greek is not her own predicament – the result of being deprived, for example, of a Cambridge education – but everyone's, this "subtle sideswipe … puncturing the pretensions of generations of male scholars."[29] Maintaining Greek as untranslatable is for Woolf

[27] For an overview of "modernism's turn to Greece," see Kolocotroni, "Still Life," though I disagree with some of her conclusions regarding Pound and H.D. See also Goldwyn and Nikopoulos, eds., *Reception of Classics in International Modernism*, and Hickman and Kozak, eds., *Classics in Modernist Translation*. Much recent work on Greek modernism has focused on Woolf, especially in relation to Harrison; for example, Prins, *Ladies' Greek*, chs. 1 and 5, and Mills, *Spirit of Modernist Classicism*. Alternatively, modernist hellenism is discussed in transhistorical studies of individual plays or mythical figures: Perris, *Gentle, Jealous God*; Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris*; Scott, *Electra after Freud*. There have also been reconsiderations of the modernist Homer, most notably by Flack, *Modernism and Homer*, but also in edited collections by Cox and Theodorakopoulos (*Homer's Daughters*), Goldwyn (*The Trojan Wars*), and Graziosi and Greenwood (*Homer in the Twentieth Century*).

[28] Junyk, "Modernist Classicism," 274–76, makes a similar case for Rilke. On Woolf, see, however, Fernald, "Sister Swallow," 35.

[29] Kolocotroni, "Still Life," 9. For the valences of knowing Greek in Woolf's novels, see Dalgarno, "Translation and 'Iterability,'" 147–48, Kolocotroni, "Greek Lessons," Lamos, "Woolf's Greek

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a means of valuing and safeguarding "the encounter with its unspoken otherness."[30] So, even though she is deeply preoccupied with Greek privately, in her published work Woolf alludes to the plots and structures of Greek plays without engaging with their language, displacing Greek onto the birds Septimus hears in the throes of his madness in *Mrs Dalloway*.[31]

Greece acquires more overtly political and radical resonances in Irish modernism, as a crucial tool in the writer's arsenal for resisting British appropriations. Woolf (and Eliot – see below) decided that Greek translation couldn't, shouldn't be done except as the transposition of a conceit to a modern setting; Joyce may similarly transpose the structure of the *Odyssey* onto modern-day Dublin in *Ulysses*, but also "puts Homeric language at the center of a symbolic conflict between competing classical ideologies and an actual political conflict between colonizer and colonized."[32] W. B. Yeats repeatedly turns to Greek tragedy as a means of bolstering Irish national culture.[33] For example, after *Oedipus Rex* is banned in England in 1903, he hopes to stage it in Dublin, so that "Ireland would liberate the classics from English tyranny."[34] He returns to Sophocles some twenty-five years later, but compiles his own versions of *Oedipus* on the basis of previous translations, precluding any engagement with Greek as a language.[35]

Pace Gildersleeve, Pound and H.D.'s modernist U.S.-based compatriots, including to some extent Eliot, were much less sympathetic to any kind of Greek project, feeling a sharp divide between Americanism and hellenism.[36] So, Marianne Moore refers to "Greece with its goats and its gourds / the nest of modified illusions" in "England" (1920), relegating Greece, along with England, France, and the "far East," to a quaint false temptation that lures us away from "plain American which cats and dogs can read!" (*Poems*, 141). Moore suggests that what is sought elsewhere may

Lessons," Worman, *Woolf's Greek Tragedy*, and Fernald, "Sister Swallow," 19, who distinguishes Woolf's engagement from H.D.'s.

[30] Prins, *Ladies' Greek*, 45.

[31] On specific plays, see Mills, *Spirit of Modernist Classicism*, ch. 2, and Gourd, "Whose Idea of Tragedy?." See Dalgarno, *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World*, 33–50, for the Greek-speaking birds and the impact of tragedy on Woolf's narrative technique.

[32] Flack, *James Joyce and Classical Modernism*, 19. Joyce, as presented in Flack's incisive reading, would actually fit very well within the modernist hellenism paradigm I explore in the book.

[33] Wiles, "Sophoclean Diptychs," 13, and Yao, *Translation*, 3. For an overview of Yeats and the classics, see Liebregts, "W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot.," 226–44.

[34] Macintosh, "Tragedy in Performance," 296. On Yeats and Gilbert Murray, see Hall and Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre*, 535–36.

[35] See Baker, ch. 12 in Hickman and Kozak, eds., *Classics in Modernist Translation*.

[36] See, however, Rosenblitt, *E. E. Cummings' Modernism*, 32–39, who makes a case for Greek having influenced Cummings's idiosyncratic syntax. Cummings and Pound were lifelong friends and correspondents.

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well be found in America; the very less-ness of this "links-less, language-less country" is its greatest promise for future discoveries (ibid.). William Carlos Williams, also present at Pound's *Iphigeneia in Tauris* performance in 1903,[37] would initially write some hellenic-themed poems, but by the time he finds his own voice in *Kora in Hell* (1920), he too proclaims that "Hellenism, especially the modern sort, is too staid, too chilly, too little fecundative to impregnate my world" and, by implication, the world of American poetry (*Imaginations* 12). He would continue to defend American poetry from Greece thirty years later, closing Book 4 of his epic poem *Paterson* with a definitive rejection of Pound's injunction to "'re read all the Gk tragedies in / Loeb'" quoted earlier in the poem (138):

> I say to you, Put wax rather in your
> ears against the hungry sea
> it is not our home!
>
> . draws us in to drown, of losses
> and regrets .
> . . . . . .
> Thalassa! Thalassa!
> Drink of it, be drunk!
> Thalassa
> immaculata: our home, our nostalgic
> mother in whom the dead, enwombed again
> cry out to us to return .
> the blood dark sea!
> . . . . . .
> . . not our home! It is NOT
> our home. (*Paterson* 200–01, longer ellipses mine)

Like Moore, Williams is adamant that "we" ought not go overseas to find a home. *Paterson* makes the case that the American should not be a wanderer in the sea of the world, or of the past, or of books, but should instead be rooted in a particular locale. Here Williams is also more specifically suggesting that this particular mode of quotation ("thalassa" 'sea' as shorthand for Xenophon, used, e.g., by Joyce in the first chapter of *Ulysses*), and the, for him, backward-looking enticements of the Greek language itself are not "our" home or model.[38] For American-based poetry, Greece is definitely passé, if not pernicious.

[37] Carr, *Verse Revolutionaries*, 56.
[38] Seven years later, though, Williams opens *Paterson* Book 5 with a translation of Sappho 1.

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The Case of Eliot

Eliot embodies both the modernist and the hellenist paradigms. In his savage 1920 review of Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides he expresses a view of Greek that is fairly typical of modernism:

> The Greek is no longer the awe-inspiring Belvedere of Winckelmann, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, the figure of which Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde offered us a slightly debased re-edition. And we realize better how different – not how much more Olympian – were the conditions of Greek civilization from ours; and … how the Greek dealt with analogous problems. (*CP* 2, 198)

Such a de-idealizing lens seems to make Greek available for less fraught use, inviting "the creative eye," which, according to Eliot, "can see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present" (198). But even if the creative eye makes the past seem present, the gap between the two times is taken for granted; hence Murray, lacking creativity, can be said to "leav[e] Euripides quite dead," as dead as he always is unless someone revives him (198).[39]

In his review of the PTS four years earlier, Eliot is pessimistic about that possibility, expressing a more conventional hellenist perspective when he insists that "there is no substitute, no *adequate* translation" (italics in original, *CP* 1, 493). For Eliot, Greek is dead – a "monument" of tradition, which may be altered by individual talent but never fully revived. Going even further, and in contrast to Pound, who would clamor for them in the 1950s, Eliot laments the excess of "cheap" translations that can only result in "still greater neglect of Greek in our schools" (493). In a contemporaneous unpublished review written in French and again focused on Euripidean translation, Eliot argues that unlike translations from Chinese, Greek translations are not fruitful for English; yet "Greek literature, Greek language can inarguably bring us the most benefits" (*CP* 1, 501–2). Though he admits that "Greek poetry hardly moves me," and that "the Athenian edifice bores me stiff," he doesn't advocate for the abandonment of Greek as Williams or Moore do (502). Like the poet who has to learn how to write dramatic verse in Eliot's essays of the 1920s and 30s, the intellectual has to take his Greek as a bitter but necessary pill: "Every cultivated man ought to be able … to reconnect with this

[39] Carne-Ross, "T. S. Eliot: Tropheia," 8–11, discusses Eliot's essay on Murray. It is worth noting in the context of the PTS that Murray himself self-presented as a poet, scholar, and political actor (Perris, *Gentle, Jealous God*, 75).

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ancient world. The pleasure one finds there is not a simple pleasure, it is a historical pleasure, which is far more valuable" (502). This "historical pleasure" does not depend on "inspiration" or on felt affinity but on duty: "Greece is there. It is the dead who speak," and we have to "try to uphold and reestablish each day the communal life we share with our ancestors" (502). "In my beginning is my end," then, already in 1916. In "East Coker," the connection would again be paradoxically premised on distance: "if *you do not come too close* / … you can hear the music / of the weak pipe and the little drum / And see them dancing around the bonfire / … / lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes" (*P* 185–86, my emphasis). But distance also risks facilitating what Marina MacKay calls a "trite and comforting" relationship to the past.[40]

Eliot thus somewhat provocatively articulates the most conservative position for the study of Greek, one that both H.D. and Pound try throughout their careers to demolish in their work – where they do precisely "come too close" – if not in their rhetoric: Greek not even for its own sake, but as historical pleasure of knowledge without living contemporary use except as an element for the establishment of a solid "foundation of culture" (*CP* 1, 502). Knowing Greek is for Eliot one of "the means by which we know ourselves," a knowledge exhausted in the understanding of how Greek has shaped English in the past (ibid.).[41] Given also his proscription on translation articulated in the published PTS review, there is no sense for Eliot that there can be now, still, a two-way relationship between Greek and English. Thus in Eliot's work Greek is either not translated at all – functioning as a talismanic epigraph – or fully consumed and transformed. Taking for granted that, as Woolf suggests, no one can really know or translate Greek, Eliot dismisses the language in favor of what can be discerned *despite* it: initially the structure patterned, per his readings of Harrison and Frances Cornford, on archaic rituals, and later the affinities of such a structure with his version of the Anglican faith (ironically, parallels that Gilbert Murray had consistently drawn on in his translations). Characters or events in Eliot's plays may be dissimilar, inverted, or mixed with respect to their Greek prototypes, but the "essential action" is similar.[42] Eliot reincarnates elements of Greek drama, manipulating them into his own conception without being stopped short

[40] *Modernism and World War II*, 82.

[41] He returns to this idea in 1925 (*CP* 2, 576). By the 1930s, Eliot's view on the importance of studying Greek has become even narrower: It can only be defended because of its association with "the historical Christian Faith" (*CP* 5, 342).

[42] As Leach writes about *Murder in the Cathedral*'s relation to *Agamemnon* ("*Agamemnon* as a Source," 14).

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by the text or texture of his original. There is no resistance to his appropriation, except for his own skepticism regarding the very procedure. That is, Eliot is in his approach much closer to "heretical hellenism" even if in practice he uses Greek for anti-heretical purposes.

Viewing Greek plays as formal arrangements or patterns and locating the question or image that brings all the pieces together in order to transmute it into the visual and auditory language of modernity, Eliot in many ways actually does what Pound envisions when he thinks more abstractly of the transposition of Greek tragedy. But Pound cannot practice what he preaches when faced with a linguistically complex text, and he, like H.D. (who is, however, less conflicted about it), becomes compelled to register the many ways in which the pieces chart their own course, resisting totalization. While Eliot integrates and transforms, putting Greek ideas, themes, or images in their (new) place, H.D. and Pound are less sure about what the "proper place" might be, and their writing, especially their translations, can be understood as a constant implicit or explicit attempt to figure it out. However, in this context of hellenisms that I have outlined, where Greece is to some extent passé, it is easy to see why despite the success of "H.D., imagiste" in the 1910s, H.D.'s continued Greek work was met with skepticism, including by Pound, and why Pound himself relegated *his* continuing preoccupations with Greek poetics to the margins. *Modernist Hellenism* focuses on Pound and H.D. precisely because their treatment of Greek and the role it plays in their work is different from that of any of their contemporaries and fits only uneasily into any of the previously identified and defined hellenisms. For Pound and H.D. especially, "Greece" becomes not, or not only, the name for modernism's lost origin but a way to question the very idea of origins and originals – not only an exemplary ever-present and ever-receding ghost[43] but a collection of concrete sounds, words, meters. Eliot is nonetheless a fundamental part of this story, especially for Pound since he ostensibly replaces H.D. as collaborator in both modernism and hellenism after 1917.[44] Eliot's own engagement with Greek – and especially tragedy in his plays and more subtly in his poems as well – reveals continuing correspondences between all three poets' Greek-inspired writings and at the same time provides a useful foil for highlighting the distinctness of H.D.'s and Pound's work.

[43] Paraphrasing Kolocotroni, "Still Life," 15.
[44] Using Collecott's formulation; *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 126–27.

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The Translation of Greece

In his massive, unfinished, and only recently published *H.D. Book*, poet and critic Robert Duncan suggests that after the Second World War Pound and H.D.'s poetry "belonged to a common movement" for the first time "since the Imagist years"; he argues that the "first phase of certain generative ideas in poetry" seen in imagism only achieved "fruition … three decades later … with the great poems of Pound's, Williams's, and H.D.'s old age" (212, 319). Indeed, H.D. herself would seem to agree. Praising her *Selected Poems* in 1957, Richard Aldington writes to her that "Eliot is a pedant and a plagiarist, and so is Ezra, compared with this entirely pure and lovely work of yours" (*HD/RA* 385). Yet H.D. aligns herself with Pound; they had both "come from a different vibration" than other modern writers, she had told Aldington (*HD/RA* 303). Pound and H.D. scholarship – especially when focusing on their late work – tends to be rigidly separated, however.[45] *Modernist Hellenism* bridges that gap not only incidentally (in tackling both of their work), but also substantially: in arguing that, as Duncan suggests, their work continues to correspond to and reflect on their earliest common preoccupations in their late years.

The most significant way in which this correspondence is seen is through Pound and H.D.'s common and similar emphasis on translation as a rigorous textual pursuit – for which Eliot has little interest and considerable skepticism, at least as far as Greek is concerned. For both Pound and H.D., though, translation and original work are always conjoined, and this, I claim, is what distinguishes their "hellenism" from that of their contemporaries. My account sidesteps Pound's well-studied preoccupation with Homer – about whose value Pound never wavered – in order to uncover his concurrent yet less salient and more ambivalent engagement with Greek lyric and drama, and to probe the neglected connection between the two in Pound's initial conception of the long poem.[46] This is the meeting point with H.D., whose own thinking about Homer seems always mediated through Greek tragedy. Though the surface of H.D.'s texts (whether clearly translations or not) tends to be smoother, the procedure that leads to their production is no less rigorous and "philological" than Pound's, and thus a Greek work or word can resonate well beyond

[45] Korg's *Winter Love*, a relatively brief intellectual biography of the two poets, is an exception.

[46] I return to Homer in my discussion of *Thrones* in Chapter 7, discussing the new perspective in which the *Odyssey* is placed after *Women of Trachis*.

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the initial context of its translation. H.D., that is, turns out to be much more of "a pedant and a plagiarist" than meets the eye, while in many ways Eliot is not.

Pound's and H.D.'s translations from Greek have historically been dismissed as incomplete or uneven by some surveying them from a classicist point of view;[47] treated as "original" poems and neatly fitted into the canon of the poets' work, ignoring the fact that there is another text behind them (Pound's *Women of Trachis* and H.D.'s imagist poems are most often treated this way);[48] or simply ignored (as with Pound's *Elektra* and H.D.'s *Ion*). Even Aldington, himself a prolific translator from Greek and other languages, claimed that translation "can hardly be taken into account when estimating a poet's contribution to *original* poetry."[49] While translation is increasingly recognized as a crucial site for "disorient[ing] and defamiliariz[ing]" modernist studies, the focus has generally not been on translations from Western classical languages; indeed, Hayot and Walkowitz identify "classic, tradition, and antiquity" as words that "had currency once and lost it."[50] It is only very recently that studies of Pound and H.D.'s *Greek* translations as translations have begun to appear, and, as Leah Flack puts it, "the moment is ripe for renewed conversation between classicists and modernists."[51] *Modernist Hellenism* both insists on viewing Pound's and H.D.'s work with Greek through the lens of translation – understood as encompassing "multifarious practices,"[52] but always involving close textual engagement – and traces the many ways in which it definitively shapes their other writing. I argue that the either/or approach that is usually taken – classicist *or* heretical, translation *or* adaptation, scholarly *or* creative, old *or* new – doesn't hold for Pound and H.D.'s work with Greek, and it is this intermediary

[47] See, for example, the nonetheless sympathetic Carne-Ross, "Greek Tragedy in Modernist Translation," 241, and *Instaurations*, 86n36; Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition*, 498–505; Lattimore, "Review of H.D."; and Burian, "Tragedy Adapted," 275.

[48] On this problem see Katz, *Labour of Translation*, 71–72.

[49] *Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot*, 4.

[50] Rogers, "Translation," 259; Hayot and Walkowitz, "Introduction," 5, but cf. Damrosch, "Antiquity"; see also Yao, *Translation*, 10, and *passim*, as well as Beasley, "Modernism's Translations."

[51] Flack, *James Joyce and Classical Modernism*, 15. For Pound, see pre-eminently Liebregts's *Translations*; see also part 1 in Hickman and Kozak, eds., *Classics in Modernist Translation*, and the older Syros, "Beyond Language." For H.D., see Prins, *Ladies' Greek*, 180–201, Hickman and Kozak, "Reinventing *Eros*," in their *Classics in Modernist Translation*, and the older Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*. H.D.'s originals have otherwise been neglected even though their importance is noted (e.g., Yao, *Translation*, 90, Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 3, and Flack, *Modernism and Homer*, 166–67).

[52] Rogers, *Incomparable Empires*, 2.

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status that makes these two poets' writing both modernist and hellenist, transforming the two categories in the process.[53]

Pound and H.D.'s Greek: An Overview

In *HER*, her lightly fictionalized account of her early life written in 1927 and unpublished during her lifetime, H.D. astutely captures the hellenist poses or approaches to which she and Pound would consistently return: his bravado that belies underlying uncertainty and her cannier manipulation of both materials and subject positions. It was the strand of Swinburnian hellenism that H.D. and Pound primarily shared in their American youth.[54] Their combative courtship in 1910 seems to have been almost entirely mediated by Greek – at least in H.D.'s retelling. Their relationship in *HER* moves between two poles: away from the conventional American hellenism signified by Longfellow's *Evangeline*, a long poem in dactylic hexameter, and towards Swinburne's Greek-based drama *Atalanta in Calydon*. When the protagonist and H.D. alter ego Hermione/Her announces to her mother that she will marry George Lowndes, the Pound stand-in, she does so explicitly in George's voice, and quotes Longfellow's poem to signify what she will finally be free of if she follows George to Europe: "I am going to whirl out of *this the forest primeval*" (98; my italics for Longfellow's opening phrase). After making Hermione see that Longfellow "was not their primeval Father, he was not their authentic intellectual progenitor," George offers her Swinburne: "'*The hounds of spring are on winter's traces*,'" he declaims, literally chasing her through the woods (67, 72). As he continues reciting this first chorus from Swinburne's *Atalanta*, however, he provides her with "a way out" that he hadn't envisioned: "*the brown bright nightingale amorous … is half assuaged for … for …* her name is *Itylus*" (75, 73; ellipses in original). In Swinburne's line Hermione finds space to insert "her name," a way to turn his poetics into hers, and to imagine, by moving to new Swinburne poems (in particular "Itylus," "Faustine," and "Before the Mirror"), other possibilities for love

[53] Cf. Beasley, "Modernism's Translations," 558, who, however maintains, that "modernism's foreignizing is firmly oriented toward the target culture." I argue instead that though of course Pound and H.D.'s translation practices "serve[d] modernist cultural agendas" (ibid.) – at bare minimum since they gave shape to their own "original" modernist work – they also aim to "serve" the texts they are translating from, as well as reflect the multiple pathways through which they have come to be known and interpreted in the present. Katz, *Labour of Translation*, 89–90, makes a similar point regarding Pound.

[54] See Gregory, *H.D. and Hellenism*, ch. 3; Carr, *Verse Revolutionaries*, 59; Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism*, 110; and Laity, "H.D. and A. C. Swinburne."

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than the heterosexual affair George offers, just as Swinburne himself had used Sappho to do the same.[55]

H.D. contrasts her protagonist's nascent understanding of both Greek and hellenizing poetics with George's only pretended, superficial, or imitative knowledge, in the end using Swinburne to shift her affections away from his increasingly oppressive Tereus to the "sister swallow" Fayne Rabb. George is depicted as an actor trying on different hellenic masks without really knowing what each one means – it is a fairly accurate characterization of his early engagement with Greek, as we will see in Chapter 1. There is his "turned-back Byronic collar" (64); his too-forceful, too mocking "inton[ing]" of Longfellow that leads Hermione to "kn[ow] she didn't love him" (65); his proclaiming her a "Greek … goddess" (67) but really unable to see her except "at best as some Florentine page or some Florentine girl dressed for a pageant as the Queen Diana" (172); his failed attempt to remember what his mother's Hellenic statuette was an imitation of despite his bluster (105); and, finally, his fumbling efforts to find an appropriate Greek parallel for Hermione's poems:

> 'I tell you *this is writing*.' … 'It's like – like – Theocritus.' 'Yes.' 'It's like an epilogue, you know.' 'Bucolic?' [Hermione has presumably understood he meant to say *eclogue*] 'No. The other things. *Not* Tityrus tu titulae … it's like the choriambics of a forgotten Melic.' (149)

Unsurprisingly, George fails Hermione's final test:

> 'George you've been everywhere.' He mustn't see what Hermione was thinking … 'George, I am so unlettered.' She used the word advisedly wondering if he could possibly not know she was thinking of the lettered hyacinth. 'You are simply witchcraft.' (172)

Not recognizing Hermione's allusion to "the lettered hyacinth" (ἁ γραπτὰ ὑάκινθος) in Theocritus 10,[56] George turns on her instead, converting her classical knowledge into magic. The vignette perfectly encapsulates both H.D.'s default position of feigned ignorance despite actual knowledge and Pound's (but also other later critics') inability to see, after the early imagist years, that her work with Greek is more than "sham Greek 'Hellas'" (*L* 107).

H.D. and Pound never fully abandon Swinburne, and the specifically metrical promise that his work with Greek embodied. This is clear for

[55] On the latter, see Laity, *H.D. and the Victorian Fin-de-Siècle*, 89.

[56] Similar phrasing occurs in another poem Pound would have known, Moschus's "Lament for Bion," line 6. Glaser, *Modernism's Metronome*, 102–05, highlights a different error by George here, as well as H.D./Hermione's own subtle display of metrical capabilities in the novel.

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H.D. (as we see in *HER*), but even after the beginning of his retrospectively proclaimed "modernist" period, Pound is at pains to defend Swinburne in a 1918 review.[57] As late as April 1938 he writes to an unidentified correspondent that "Swinburne's metrical renaissane [*sic*] due to greek, a good begining [*sic*] but no reason to regard it as a termination." He connects the fact that it has come to seem so to the failed promise of the hellenists of 1912: "Years ago there were some hellenists. Too lazy to gain mastery of rhythm by WORK on quantitative greek metres … hence their decline."[58] Publicly, however, Pound undervalues these quantitative experiments and erases his own involvement, suggesting, for instance, in 1939 that Ford Madox Ford's emphasis on "the prose value of verse-writing" was more useful to his generation than "all the groping (most worthily) after 'quantity'" (*SP* 461). Still, Swinburne, recorded in the *Pisan Cantos* as "my only miss," is consistently evoked when Pound recalls the abandoned hellenist project and is tied to its revival; in December 1951 he praises the very line about Itylus from *Atalanta* to Richard Aldington just as he is discussing the potential publication of a new series of translations of Greek classics.

Both poets turn to Greek at every juncture of their writing careers, H.D. more overtly than Pound: from her first poems "from the Anthology" in the early 1910s and her early lyric meditations on Sappho fragments (late 1910s/early 1920s), through translations of Euripidean choruses (*Iphigeneia in Aulis*, *Hippolytus*, *Bacchae*, *Hecuba*), personae poems for Eurydice, Phaedra, Penelope, and Calypso among others, and Hellenistic-era novellas ("Hipparchia," *Hedylus*) spanning the period between 1915 and 1938, to her full translation-cum-commentary of the *Ion* (1937) and her similarly mixed-genre long poem *Helen in Egypt* (1961). "Original" poems and translations become intertwined as she finds in translation the impetus for a verse drama (*Hippolytus Temporizes* [1927]), a long poem (*Trilogy* [1944–46]), and an epic of sorts (*Helen in Egypt*). H.D. turns "Greece" into a space for thinking about the ethics of poetry, especially in times of war, questioning and theorizing both her own attraction to Greek antiquity and the broader cultural fascination it provokes. In deconstructing the primacy of the Greek (and showing it more nuanced, more foreign to itself, more unstable than previously thought), she also deconstructs a heightened, idealized view of art; she wants to convince herself of art's necessity in the world, rather than beginning from this as fact in the manner of Pound.

[57] See, for example, *LE* 294; *pace* Laity, "H.D. and A. C. Swinburne," 469.
[58] EPP 58/2634.

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Pound's Greek work is less focused and less visible, though no less consistent. In 1916, after experimenting himself with Greek lyric early and late, he suggests that a long imagist poem might be similar to a Noh play, which, in turn, bears resemblances to Greek tragedy. For Pound, tragedy uniquely combines the sense of living, direct speech (seen, for example, in tragic dialogue) and metrical/aural complexity, while subjugating both under what in the 1910s he called the "one image" or "moral conviction" (and in the 1940s "the key phrase"), which guarantees the coherence of the whole, "how snugly each segment of the work fits into its box" (*P&T* 108). In 1918, despite his apparent "modernist" turn, he stresses the benefits of experimenting with Greek (quantitative) meters for a poet writing in English, and by early 1919 he has published a six-part "Hellenist Series" of essays in the *Egoist*. In 1921–22, in the very same letters that led to the finalization of *The Waste Land*, Pound and Eliot discuss translating Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. In 1923 Pound laments his failed attempt to do so, and by the end of the decade he attempts to obscure the indebtedness of his poetic thinking to Greek; the drafts for his seminal 1929 essay "How to Read" are filled with Greek references cut from the final version.[59] Throughout the 1930s he advises scholars and poets like W. H. D. Rouse and Mary Barnard on how to translate Greek texts, while continuing to talk about the possibilities of (Greek) drama with Eliot. In the *Pisan Cantos* (wr. 1945, pub. 1948) Pound once again connects the *Agamemnon* to the possibilities of new poetry in English, and shortly after his confinement in St. Elizabeths, he begins agitating for the publication of bilingual editions of Greek works (as recorded by Williams in *Paterson* above), and resumes his study of Greek metrics. Finally, in 1949 Pound translates Sophocles' *Elektra* but does not publish it, and then in 1954 he publishes his version of Sophocles' *Trachiniai* as a Noh play, a translation whose particular emphases account for the way Greek materials, including Homer, appear in the later cantos (*Rock-Drill* [1955] and *Thrones* [1959]). Throughout, Pound treats Greek as something that he cannot quite assimilate or totalize, that his poem(s) cannot quite digest, that he cannot quite translate[60] – without, at least, the mediating screen of Andreas Divus's Latin *Odyssey* in Canto 1[61] or of Noh conventions in *Women of Trachis* – and for this reason he keeps returning

[59] EPP 106/4464.

[60] As Beasley has shown, albeit in a different context, translation and non-translation for Pound are "points on a continuum of foreignization" ("The Direct Method," 69).

[61] For an excellent close reading of Canto 1 as a translation of Divus's Latin, see Cé, ch. 3 in Hickman and Kozak, eds., *Classics in Modernist Translation*.

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to it, with an ever-expanding purview, which by *Thrones* extends from Homer to the medieval Greek epic *Digenis Akritis*.

Though I make a case for Pound and H.D.'s distinctive modernist hellenism, they do also express some of the ideas of their time. Occasionally, they flirt with more conventional hellenisms, falling prey to Winckelmannian rhetoric: Pound always critical of an imitative hellenism and increasingly attracted to totalizing cultural images, H.D. often laudatory of the "Athenian" ideal.[62] Still, they never admit the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between modernity and Greece, insisting that "all ages are contemporaneous" (Pound, *SR* 8), or palimpsestic (H.D.). Pound often chooses to tackle and implicitly advocate for the use (and usefulness) of Greek through third languages and, in so doing, he reveals the necessity – and fruitfulness – of a mediated or comparative relation to Greek. Treating Greek as one potential tool in the modern poet's toolbox, placed, for example, alongside Provençal and Chinese, Pound navigates a passage between hellenism and anti-hellenism, both of whose points of reference are established on the basis of an absolute divorce of the present from a past seen as either inimitable or irrelevant.[63] In the case of the first canto, for example, Pound's admiration for Book 11 as, supposedly, the oldest part of the *Odyssey* is not enough to recommend it for poetic use. It must be placed in relation to other texts and in a cultural context of transmission. To the extent, moreover, that Pound is initially skeptical of Greek drama, it is because he fears it obscures what makes Greek interesting: "The triumph of total meaning over detail is nowhere so demonstrable as in the common phrases 'greek tragedy' or 'greek drama,'" about which everyone opines without first engaging in close reading (*GK* 92). H.D., interested precisely in the "derivative" Alexandrian hellenism, explicitly sets out to dismantle the Winckelmannian totalization – and for this she was much derided by some of her contemporaries, including Pound and Eliot.[64] Unlike Pound in Canto 1 or even in his translations of Sophocles, it is not an earlier, archaic Greece that she most frequently evokes and whose affinity to modernity she seeks to bring out, but a later one: a Greece that is not an origin but exactly what Winckelmann called a "decline." Viewing Greece and Greeks as resolutely historical and not as timeless ideals of perfection, H.D. shows in her translations of Euripides

[62] See Milicia, "H.D.'s 'Athenians.'"

[63] Here I am echoing Ferris, *Silent Urns*, 8.

[64] Pound scorns her "Alexandrine Greek bunk" (*L* 157), while Eliot proclaims that her "Hellenism lacks vitality" and that she has done "no more than pick up some of the more romantic crumbs of Greek literature" (*L/TSE* 1, 488; *CP* 2, 198).

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that the daunting "classical" Greeks were already self-conscious and past-weary, engaged in such a process of self-recovery, just as Pound is avidly tracing the mediations that have made Greek available since the early Renaissance and seeking to replicate them through, say, an Anglo-Saxon Homer or a Noh Sophocles.

More often, though, Pound and H.D. follow in the steps of a kind of heretical hellenism that is, as already suggested, interested in ritual and disdainful of philology, and that performs or seeks out the relevance of Greece rather than taking it for granted. Especially by virtue of being American, they feel themselves part of the lineage of outsiders to the "classics,"[65] and they both make anti-philological pronouncements. Pound rails that "the whole aim … of modern philology is … to turn [man's] mind from the fire of genius and smother him with things inessential,"[66] and H.D. more gently dismisses contextual criticism: "There are enormous volumes written on Euripides, on his plays, his political opinions, …, his literary innovation and his mother's parentage. Pages and pages and volumes that no one ever reads or wants to."[67] At the same time, both Pound and H.D. undeniably use what could be called scholarly or philological procedures: looking at primary sources, analyzing lexical meaning and metrical or rhythmic structure, negotiating with secondary criticism, etc. To note in Pound's case his "philological" intentions as well as his attack on traditional scholarly methods and then to nonetheless judge him as an insufficient scholar by the very same measures that he was trying to move away from is to argue in circles;[68] similarly, to take H.D.'s claims of being "unlettered" at face value is to fall into her trap. Calling H.D. "the mystic against the scholars"[69] or emphasizing her "practice of revelation rather than of study"[70] risks overlooking her actual intense engagement with Greek texts, words, and sounds, and repeating George's turn to "witchcraft" in *HER*. Pound and H.D. attempt to re-conceptualize "knowledge," our understanding of the ways in which words mean; that discovery happens through translation conceived still as a linguistic and not only as a

[65] See, for example, Douglas Bush's assessment of H.D. in *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition*, 502.
[66] "An Anachronism at Chinon," 17–18. Pound's tortured relationship with philology has been compellingly traced by Kindellan, *Late Cantos* (see ch. 1 for an overview).
[67] "Euripides," 7 (HDP 43/1115).
[68] As, for example, Kindellan does (*Late Cantos*, 51). Cf. Dowthwaite, *Theories of Language*, ch. 1, who highlights Pound's "immense debt" to the discipline of philology and his "critical" repurposing of its tools (28, 47).
[69] DuPlessis, *Career*, 17, who does nonetheless acknowledge that "H.D., quite able to negotiate in classical Greek, assumed its cultural authority in a critical way."
[70] Burnett, *H.D. between Image and Epic*, 28.

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cultural enterprise. Yao insists on the distinction between modernist translation as "an expressly generative and literary mode of writing" and previous translation practices as "a principally linguistic operation limited in scope to reproducing the 'meaning' of a foreign text."[71] What the following chapters show is that the greater innovation is in the conjunction of the two, which results in the exploration and expansion both of "meaning" and of what a "linguistic operation" might entail. It is this conjunction that allows us to distinguish between Pound and H.D.'s Greek translation work and that of other modernists in their circle.

Despite appearances, then, and in contrast to their contemporaries, H.D. and Pound consistently and more (H.D.) or less (Pound) intrepidly engage with Greek texts, testing out their possibilities for English. They are interested not only in the potential uses of Greek now, but also in the history of such uses, recording them in their own texts; they show, as Charles Martindale would much later argue, that "the interpretation of texts is inseparable from the history of their reception."[72] Despite their sometimes idealizing rhetoric, the two poets' actual practice both in what is customarily classified as translation and in their "original" writing focuses on the smallest details of sound, image, and texture. They use Greek to think with, rather than take its inherited meanings for granted; early on, this is especially true for H.D. since Pound is more susceptible to parroting other opinions, as *HER* suggests. While they appropriate the texts they intimately work with – stamping them with their own characteristic voices – they do so self-consciously, without pretense of privileged familiarity and without losing sight of the foreignness and idiosyncrasy of their originals.[73]

Charging and Hatching: Pound and H.D. on Translation

Pound was perhaps the first poet to make translation so fundamental to his work.[74] He defines the "art of writing" as "the art of 'charging' language with meaning" and then appeals to translation as a mode of charging, or electrifying, one language by means of another: "No one language is complete. A master may be continually expanding his own tongue, rendering

[71] *Translation*, 13.
[72] *Redeeming the Text*, xiii.
[73] See Güthenke, "Nostalgia and Neutrality," 242, for the resonances of this opposition between familiarity and foreignness in Reception Studies.
[74] For an overview of Pound's translation practice, see Xie, *Appropriation of Chinese Poetry*, ch. 8, and Apter, *Digging for the Treasure*, esp. 72–75 on Pound's translation theory. See also *LE* 191–200, and my "Between the Lines," 381.

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it fit to bear some charge hitherto borne only by some other alien tongue" (*LE* 29, 36). This is why, as he famously proclaimed, "a great age of literature is perhaps always a great age of translations; or follows it" (*LE* 232). His *Cantos* is consequently an "epic of translation," where what matters "is not so much translation from one language or culture into another as the metamorphic passage or intertraffic *between* them."[75] The metaphor of "charging" is already present in the early *Spirit of Romance*, where the poet himself is "charged," and like a "wireless telegraph receiver" becomes attuned to the spirit of his time (or of the past), "attracting" to himself "movements in the invisible ether" (93).[76] Such "electrification" becomes especially relevant rhetorically in his Sophocles translations; Pound conceived of both *Elektra* and *Women of Trachis*, and to some extent the cantos that followed them, exactly as such writing/translation that consists in the compounding of meaning, the work gathering to itself all relevant strands.

In a July 7, 1955, letter to Olivia Rossetti Agresti, Pound explicitly praises the Polish scholar Stanislas Yankowski as "the only person who has satisfactorily criticised E.P.'s TRAXINIAI *as a translation*, that is to say showing some sense of proportion" (197).[77] He demands such study more broadly: "The literature of ANY language shd/ be studied in its relation to the classics of OTHER languages, NOT in quest of influences and derivations, but as to the proportion between the final results" (197).[78] "The expansions of the total concept of literature" should be assessed; Dante is the supreme example, "having ADDED … more actual subject matter" (197). If we apply this second idea about criticism in general to the first idea about translation criticism which occasioned it, we come to a strange conclusion. The examination of translations as much as of original works shouldn't dwell much on "fidelity" or "accuracy" (or correspondingly on influence or derivation) but rather on what they *add* to the original – not in terms of words, but of the perspective in which they put it. In short, we should focus on their own critical work, critical work which any literary text, whether a translation or not, performs (as Eliot had suggested in different terms in "Tradition and the Individual Talent"). This is why in a second letter to Agresti a few weeks later, Pound clarifies that the success of Yankowski's "critique" is that it "shows any perception of its [i.e., of Pound's *Women of Trachis*] relation to

[75] Xie, *Appropriation of Chinese Poetry*, 242, 243.
[76] See Kenner, *Poetry of Ezra Pound*, ch. 25, on Pound's use of "electromagnetic imagery."
[77] On the significance of the Agresti letters, see Marsh, "Pound/Agresti Correspondence," 90–91.
[78] A theory borne out by Pound's practice at least with respect to Chinese; see Xie, *Appropriation of Chinese Poetry*, 238.

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the greek text/. i.e. WHY some expressions ARE correct {as Translation.}" (199). The distinction, then, between Pound's work and the so-called "free" translation which it is often taken to be, is that for Pound the original isn't superseded by the act of translation but must be equally present for the proportions to be assessed.[79] The original must keep the measure, so that each active departure or addition has to be not fanciful or ideological but precise and textually arguable. The translation is philological work that could be performed without end. It is this understanding and practice of translation that Pound's late, "Washington" cantos in the end suppress in the service of a forced monosemic vision of Greek that would accord with his unrepentant fascist politics.

H.D. also understands the process of poetic composition – and a fortiori that of tragic poetic composition – as a two-way process of translation. In an unpublished essay on Euripides' *Helen*, she writes,

> The poet [i.e., Euripides] saw pictures from this beautiful eternal Homeric world. He also heard no doubt voices and songs. But there were times when he dreamed he could transmute those sounds, those pictures…. [H]e dared to imagine that he could translate his world into this world. ("Helen in Egypt," 11)

H.D. reverses the expected directionality of this translation. The poet does not seek to bring the Homeric world, the world of his inspiration, to his own world, to realize it for the present; rather he wants to transpose the present into that world, to translate or re-write, as it were, back into the original language. At the same time as arguing for poetry as active translation, H.D. here also transforms the early Poundian critique of tragedy as a fall from Homer into an asset. The process she describes is of course very similar to what she herself does in her Greek Anthology poems, as well as in her later mythically themed sequences: a kind of masking and refraction, a defamiliarization of the present through the past. The poet, H.D. continues in the *Helen* essay, speaking perhaps of herself as much as of Euripides, "succeeded (when he became most impassioned) by ceasing to become personal. He was content to use the old symbols, the old ideas" (11).[80] To Amy Lowell she would complain that "Everyone seems somehow tainted with the desire for originality and cleverness…. I confess to being 'old-fashioned,'"[81] wearing her lateness on her sleeve.

[79] *Pace* Xie, ibid., 241, and Liebregts, *Translations*, 205, 229, 241.

[80] Echoing Eliot's "extinction of personality" (*CP* 2, 108), but she had such ideas already in 1916, before Eliot's essay (see Chapter 1 below).

[81] July 19, 1919. MS Lowell 19 (8), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

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H.D.'s organizing metaphor for the process of writing-as-translation – the counterpart to Pound's "charging" – is hatching. It is explicitly developed in *Bid Me to Live*, the autobiographical novel that she worked on for thirty years before it was finally published in 1960. The novel's protagonist (and H.D. alter ego) Julia leaves London for Cornwall, where her sense of the past and history and therefore also her belief in the future are restored. In her description of the countryside H.D. suppresses the similes, almost as if she were writing an imagist poem; the landscape does not resemble but "was illustration in a book" (146). Because of the traces of history left on it, the landscape is there to be read:

> She felt that every casual stone was laid here, there, for a reason. Phoenicians, Rico had written, made this track, and in making the track, they had trod into the soil more than the countless imprints of ancient sandals. (146–47)

The literal marks, the Phoenician footprints, turn the "actual," the "real" into literature.[82] That the traces are specifically Phoenician is significant; it is a moment of rebirth for Julia because in discovering their survival she gets as close to the origin of "culture" (and of course the sense of its destruction) as she possibly could.[83] As French philologist Jacques Bérard had argued not long before in two massive tomes that Joyce relied on for *Ulysses*, the Phoenicians may well have been the originators of the *Odyssey*: "The poet … was Greek; the navigator … was Phoenician."[84] Meticulously documenting patterns of onomastic exchange between Greeks and Phoenicians in his monumental effort to link linguistic formations to landscape and translation, Bérard insisted that Homeric names, arising out of Phoenician words, are rooted in a particular place and reveal the productivity of "error" or of less-than-perfect transmissions – namely, the mythopoetic potential of any common noun. In so doing, Bérard outlined a process very similar to that which H.D. will show Julia as undertaking in these pages, and which she herself would undertake on a large scale in *Helen in Egypt*.

The Phoenicians allow Julia, the American expatriate, to draw a link between England, her Medea's landscape of exile, and Greece. What is particularly Greek about this landscape is that there are no words to

[82] Flack, *Modernism and Homer*, 168, offers a reading of this passage similar to my own, but emphasizing the "intimacy" between past and present.

[83] On the nationalist and modernist investments in the "Phoenicians," see Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians*, ch. 1, ch. 9, and pp. 205–08.

[84] *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée* II, 557; my translation.

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describe it in English – yet: "The stones, the sun setting, rising, the ruin of the tin mine shaft, the trunk of the solid ivy, all these would have words to describe them exactly in that Greek dictionary spread open on the low chair at her elbow" (161). In effect, then, the landscape reveals an unspoken demand for a Greek-based poetics made by her immediate present. As the Mediterranean locales navigated and named by the Phoenicians provoked, according to Bérard, the logopoetic and mythopoetic activity of the Greeks, so now this Phoenician/English landscape gives rise to an impetus to translate or "invent" into, and out of Greek. What links landscape to word, texture to text is precisely their need for Medea, for a seer, who will be blind to the external or superficial (just an English landscape, just a Greek word) and alert to what it promises. As the stones reveal a hieroglyph of migration and translation, of eradication and survival, and intimate the Greek words that would correspond to them, so now, "[t]he words themselves held inner words" (162). "If you look at the word long enough," Julia continues, "this peculiar twist, its magic angle, would lead somewhere, like that Phoenician track, trod by the old traders" (162). Locating the Phoenician track again in the Greek word, H.D. may be signaling her awareness of Bérard's discoveries; more importantly, however, she suggests that Greek is constituted by a foreignness, is itself always in some kind of relation, be it with the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, its own past, or the scholars and poets who have used and examined its words. Translating a chorus sequence, Julia casts herself in the role of the Phoenician merchant, "a trader in the gold, the old gold, the myrrh of the dead spirit. She was bargaining with each word" (161, 162). In a striking twist of the clichéd economic metaphor for translation[85] the words are not her wares but her customers, who have to be convinced – by her offered rendering – to give up their gold. Her use of the word "trader" in this context, where she is instructing us to follow each word's twists and turns, is telling. "Trade" is etymologically related to "tread" and comes from the Middle Low German *trade*, which means "track." That is, a trader is literally what Julia describes here: one who walks and in walking leaves behind his tracks, or one who tracks the traces of others – tracks that then form the basis of a "trade" over time.

After Julia lays out her method of translation, she decides to give up on it and to write instead a somewhat aggressive letter to her almost-lover Rico (standing in for D. H. Lawrence), in which she articulates and defends her

[85] Originally Ciceronian, but also elaborated by Dryden; see Robinson, ed., *Western Translation Theory*, 9, 173.

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poetics. Yet this turn is not as unexpected as it seems. It is implied in her view of translation as hatching:

> She brooded over each word, as if to hatch it. Then she tried to forget each word, for "translations" enough existed and she was no scholar. She did not want to "know" Greek in that sense. She was like one blind, reading the texture of incised letters, rejoicing like one blind who knows an inner light, a reality that the outer eye cannot grasp …
>
> Anyone can translate the meaning of the word. She wanted the shape, the feel of it, the character of it, as if it had been freshly minted. She felt that the old manner of approach was as toward hoarded treasure, but treasure that had passed through too many hands, had been too carefully assessed by grammarians. She wanted to coin new words.
>
> She pushed aside her typewriter and let her pencil and her notebook take her elsewhere. (163)

Turning away from philology proper, H.D. does not look for the meanings of words in order to exchange a Greek for an English one, but seeks the exactness of their sense, which for her means their hidden paths. H.D. answers Pound's emphasis on the musical aspect of Greek with a corresponding insistence on its texture. This allows her, on the one hand, to move more easily from world to word – the word is a thing in the same way that the thing or the landscape is, or hides, a word – and on the other, to justify her usually expansive mode of translation since tracking the hidden treasure of a single word might produce an entire poem.[86] If, moreover, as she implied earlier, English is lacking in such textural words, they have to be invented, hatched. So, for example, her imagist poems arise as translations out of the Greek texts and go beyond them but in the direction towards which the original poems point. They cannot be called "free" translations or adaptations, because they are, in this sense, as faithful as possible. It is realizing through the turns of the Greek words what English is missing that prompts Julia to finally define herself and her passionate engagement with Greece against Rico, who insists on viewing it as an obsession with "frozen altars" (163). Moreover, in a marked departure from Pound's concerns about the continuity of lineages and the handing down of traditions, which surface intensely in the *Pisan Cantos* and which he channels into his Sophocles translations, H.D.'s metaphor is non-genealogical: Hatching requires only the hatcher's desire for and attentiveness to a world that is already there, rather than particular kinds of knowledge limited to particular groups.

[86] Cf. Whittier-Ferguson, *Mortality and Form*, 43, 69–70, who tracks the "paths" in Eliot's words in his Christian poetry.

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Modernist Hellenism is organized into four parts, the first two addressing the period from the First World War to the Second, the last two picking up in 1939 with Eliot's *Family Reunion* and reaching 1961 with H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt*. Parts I and II follow Pound's creative partnerships forged through Greek, first with H.D. and then with Eliot, as well as H.D.'s independent development as translator of Greek. Parts III and IV explore what I argue is a new juncture of modernist hellenism in the 1940s and 50s, when the paths of the three writers meaningfully cross again. Eliot, Pound, and H.D. each recognize the importance of and substantially engage with the others' Greek work, albeit less overtly than in the 1910s, and it is that unrecognized story, and especially Pound and H.D.'s competing returns to notions of the image, that these chapters tell. I outline the continuing parallels in Pound and H.D.'s writing, which is thought to have diverged already after 1914, and argue that Pound owes more to H.D.'s work than has been previously assumed; at the same time, I track Pound's gradual distancing from Eliot by comparing their evolving treatment of the same Greek tragedies and tragic figures, as well as some surprising rapprochements between Eliot and H.D.'s late work.

I read Pound, Eliot, and H.D. closely and in detailed relation to the Greek texts they each reworked, while also relying on unpublished archival materials (or, in the case of Eliot, the trove of recent publications, including the Emily Hale letters) in order to contextualize, clarify, or indeed recover their Greek work as well as to paint a livelier and more complete picture of the resonances of Greek in the modernist period.[87] Yet my specific arguments about each of the three poets unfold differently. Pound's case calls for the recovery of non-Homeric Greek in his vast published and unpublished oeuvre, H.D.'s for a new textual and contextual approach, Eliot's for an intellectual reorientation.

So, for Pound I trace the contours of his engagement with both hellenism and Greek texts as it is revealed occasionally in essays, but mostly in unpublished correspondence, drafts, and notebooks.[88] I show the development of Pound's early views on Greek prosody and drama, consistently latent throughout the 1920s and 30s, into his late translations of Sophocles, and the pivotal and specifically textual role of the latter in his resumption of the writing of the *Cantos* at St. Elizabeths in the 1950s. Pound's reading

[87] On the "archival turn" in modernist studies, see, for example, Feldman, "Introduction."

[88] Some of this terrain has been recently traced by Liebregts, *Translations*. His indispensable study offers a close, almost line-by-line commentary on Pound's Sophocles translations and some of the context of their production, but doesn't attempt to fully situate them in the context of Pound's oeuvre and modernist hellenism more broadly, as I do here.

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and translation of Greek tragedy in the 1940s and 50s becomes (as Flack has shown with respect to Pound's use of Homer) equally "inseparable" from his "changing politics."[89] His political and economic beliefs eventually dictate his approach to Greek (in a way reminiscent of the effect of Eliot's religious beliefs); the late cantos consistently and programmatically select one meaning and one emphasis from their Greek intertexts, belying Pound's own discoveries and practices in his actual translations.

While the use, value, and relevance of Greek poetics is from the beginning fraught for Pound, it is less so for Eliot. Nonetheless, discussions of Greek drama especially dominate Pound and Eliot's early conversations and importantly determine the trajectory of each of their careers. Martindale has already acknowledged the theoretical usefulness of Eliot's *Four Quartets* for our thinking about classical reception.[90] I will be showing here how this usefulness arises from Eliot's own specific engagement (and disengagement) with Greek tragedy and from his thinking about translation and translatability more broadly. My interest lies less in tracing the parallels between Eliot's plays and their Greek antecedents, since these have been adequately examined, than in the theoretical and philosophical insights elicited through his work with Greek and then applied to his own original writing. Eliot's treatment of Greek, I claim, is structurally and philosophically fundamental to the development of his mature poetics.

H.D.'s Greek commitments are much more visible than either Pound or Eliot's, yet not necessarily better understood, Eileen Gregory's foundational *H.D. and Hellenism* (1997) notwithstanding.[91] Her uneasy position as both a female modernist among "the men of 1914" and as a woman constantly attempting to claim (or undercut) the authority of the "classics" has been fruitfully discussed. But, partly as a result of H.D.'s own feints of ignorance, partly because her work is so clearly in conversation with the currents of heretical hellenism, and partly because its textural surface appears smoother and more consistently lyrical than, say, Pound's

[89] *Modernism and Homer*, 4. Marsh, *Washington Cantos*, 3, reads Pound's turn to Greek in terms of his "Aryanism"; given that Pound's preoccupation with Greek spans his entire career and is consistently multivalent, I don't think that this explanation exhausts the reasons for Pound's return, but Marsh is certainly correct if one looks at, for example, Pound's rhetoric around Greek to some correspondents, or the racist overtones of the contexts in which he places *Antigone* and the *Eumenides* in *Rock-Drill* (see Chapter 7 below).

[90] *Redeeming the Text*, xiv, 26–27, 34. But see Hiscock, "Reception Theory," 324–27, 335–36, for a nuanced reassessment of Eliot's place in these discussions, with which I agree.

[91] Indeed, Gregory herself has recently called for "more detailed and nuanced engagement with H.D.'s classical writing, but with an increased respect for her deliberateness and self-consciousness" ("H.D. and Euripides," 123).

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Cantos with its consistent display of foreign languages, her "revisionary writing" has been mostly seen as "not dominated by the Greek text,"[92] and her Greek-based works have been studied primarily as adaptations or thematic/imagistic engagements with Greek materials. Through examinations of her early poems, her translations of Euripidean choruses in the 1910s, her *Hippolytus Temporizes* and *Ion*, and finally *Helen in Egypt*, in conjunction with their Greek originals as well as H.D.'s own marginal notes in her Greek books, I show that she is much more closely engaged with Greek *texts*, as well as with the particular histories of their reception, while at the same time subtly intervening in them in ways that accord with her particular ethical and political concerns. Her translations are more deeply theorized than Pound and Eliot's work; in H.D.'s case, though, that theorization is mostly performed within the confines of the literary text itself rather than in critical prose.[93] As Pound's professed disengagement from hellenism is deceptive given his actual persistent interest and involvement in Greek matters, so, correspondingly, H.D.'s often proclaimed ignorance and self-identification as "not a scholar" belies the intensity and detail of her work not only with Greek ideas, myths, and structures, but with Greek words, sounds, and meters. Moreover, H.D. is consistently ahead of Pound (and Eliot) in her thinking about Greek, already specifically practicing what he is only fumbling towards articulating in the 1910s and 20s (even if he fails to recognize it); this culminates in her *Helen in Egypt*, which is, I argue, what Pound had once imagined the *Cantos* might be.

[92] Bryant and Eaverly, "Egypto-Modernism," 450, referring the claim to Chisholm.
[93] I extend here a similar claim made by Burnett, *H.D. between Image and Epic*, 3, which he limits to H.D.'s prose work.

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