Ezra Pound's Adaptation and Translation of the Japanese Nō

Réka Mihálka

Few would ever contest the axiom that translation and adaptation are (partially overlapping) segments of the same continuum. If attempts at definitions have shown anything, it is their inseparability, even though many scholars and critics like to stress their distinctiveness (e.g. through the dichotomy of "faithfulness" vs. "innovativeness"). Among others, the subject of the present article, Ezra Pound, also insisted on the distinction between "interpretative translation" (i.e. the majority of translations) and the "other sort" (i.e. adaptation):

> In the long run the translator is in all probability impotent to do all of the work for the linguistically lazy reader. He can show where the treasure lies, he can guide the reader in choice of what tongue is to be studied, and he can very materially assist the hurried student who has a smattering of a language and the energy to read the original text alongside the metrical gloze.
>
> This refers to "interpretative translation". The "other sort", I mean in cases where the "translator" is definitely making a new poem, falls simply in the domain of original writing, or if it does not it must be censured according to equal standards (*Literary Essays* 200)

Pound's own work attracted controversy for the same reason: his 1915 collection of poems translated from the Chinese, Cathay, was regarded as too loose and "incorrect" (Fang 111-33). If the poems are viewed as adaptations or re-creations, however, their value can be evaluated differently. For example, Hugh Kenner defended *Cathay* in his monumental *The Pound Era* (1971) in the belief that "the major deviations from orthodoxy represent deliberate decisions of a man who was inventing a new kind of English poem" (218). Kenner, therefore, regarded Pound's collection in relation to the target culture ("a new kind of English poem,") rather than of the source culture.

The issue of distinction is as important as it is futile: how can we differentiate between these two, partially overlapping notions? The short answer is that no clear boundary seems to exist between the two concepts. But perhaps this is not always the case: maybe there are tendencies characteristic of "adaptation," as opposed to "translation." The following analysis will try to address this question by looking at Ezra Pound's involvement with the Japanese Nō theatre. From a Japanese Nō play by Zeami Motokiyo, Pound created two texts, the first of which ("Nishikigi") is generally acknowledged to be a translation (see Sieburth's description in Pound, *PT* 1242),[i] while the second one ("Tristan") can be labeled as an adaptation.[ii] To better understand the differences between the two versions, I will first attempt to uncover the reasons why Pound chose to create both a translation and an adaptation of the same play through the analysis of his essays written to accompany "Nishikigi" and "Tristan." I will subsequently look at his dramatic texts and identify the underlying ideological differences that shaped them.

Ghosts and poetry

In 1913, Ezra Pound was entrusted with the literary legacy of the late American professor Ernest F. Fenollosa, who had created rough translations of Nō plays with the help of Kiichi Hirata, a young Japanese colleague of Fenollosa's in Tokyo. The Fenollosa-Hirata notes included the Romanized Japanese text of the plays, provided a word-for-word translation and occasional glossary, and indicated the overall meaning of every line. From these notes, Ezra Pound wrote his own versions during the winters of 1913-16, which he spent working with William Butler Yeats at Stone Cottage in Sussex, south-east England. The collection of the Fenollosa-Hirata-Pound translations was published in the volume of *'Noh' or Accomplishment: A Study of the Classical Stage of Japan* (1916).

"Nishikigi," the first play to be published individually (in *Poetry* in 1914), was also adapted by Yeats in his *The Dreaming of the Bones* (written in 1917, and published in *Little Review* in 1919).

The two poets' close cooperation on the Fenollosa-Hirata material (Yeats also wrote an introduction to Pound's translations and proofread the younger poet's work)[iii] resulted in strong resemblances between Yeats's and Pound's writing, particularly in their meditations on occult encounters between past and present,[iv] which became a pivotal aspect of Pound's work on "Nishikigi." In the meanwhile, Pound also wrote four plays imitating the conventions of Japanese theatre, including "Tristan;" they were published posthumously by Donald C. Gallup under the title *Plays Modeled on the Noh* (1987).

Pound was obviously fascinated with the Nō genre in this period; but we need to know what sustained his interest, and what this aspiring young poet wished to achieve through his versions of the plays. In the 1910s, when japonism was already passé in the visual arts, Pound endeavored to show why the Nō plays might be interesting for English readers. On the first page of his introduction to his collection of translations, he announced that "[t]he Noh is unquestionably one of the great arts of the world, and it is quite possibly one of the most recondite" (*PT* 335). He then identified the peculiar allure of the genre:

> These plays are full of ghosts, and the ghost psychology is amazing. The parallels with Western spiritist doctrines are very curious. This is, however, an irrelevant or extraneous interest, and one might set it aside if it were not bound up with a dramatic and poetic interest of the very highest order (*PT* 343).

Although Pound tried to downplay his interest in "ghost psychology," his observations on the subject frequently recur in his commentary on the plays: "there is nothing like a ghost for holding to an idée fixe," he notes in "Kayoi Komachi," also adding, when the spirits are "arrested" by the speech of another character, that "[this turn of events] is most interesting in view of the 'new' doctrine of the suggestibility or hypnotizability of ghosts" (*PT* 351).[v] Despite his apparent fascination with supernatural encounters, Pound distanced himself from spiritualism insistently: "If the Japanese authors had not combined the psychology of such matters with what is to me a very fine sort of poetry, I would not bother about it" (*PT* 359). Rather, he believed that Nō gave him numerous opportunities to experiment with imagism:

> This intensification of the Image, this manner of construction, is very interesting to me personally, as an Imagiste, for we Imagistes knew nothing of these plays when we set out in our own manner. These plays are also an answer to a question that has several times been put to me: "Could one do a long Imagiste poem, or even a long poem in vers libre?" (*PT* 360)

In the light of this observation, we may assume that in Pound's Nō adaptations, too, this "very fine sort of poetry" would feature more dominantly than spiritualism. However, the texts reveal the exact opposite: in the four adaptations in *Plays Modeled on the Noh*, imagism is virtually non-existent, while ghosts and recurrences from the past proliferate. In "Tristan," two ghosts appear to a foreign tourist and recall their past suffering; in "De Musset's 'A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel'" (Pound's Nō-like adaptation of a French letter by Alfred de Musset), a French actress relives Phèdre's plight; even in "The Consolations of Matrimony," based on Kyōgen (a comic, farcical theatrical genre) rather than on Nō, the recollection of past love affairs leads to the re-happening of a similar story in the present. Reenactment and recurrence are, therefore, major themes at the expense of Pound's favored poetic principles.

Pound's adaptations of the Nō genre are prefaced with an introduction, which appeared with the third play of the volume *Plays Modeled on the Noh*, entitled "De Musset's 'A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel' (29 May 1839)." The following short extract will emphasize the distinctions between Pound's concept of "translation" and "adaptation:"

> You tell me you do not want Japanese things, that these new plays must be European. Still it is a Japanese play [i.e. "Nishikigi"] that gives me the closest parallel to my thought, and I will read you ten lines of it. No, I am not going to be oriental. I think you all have your heroes and heroines. You all have your periods. You all think you

> were Mary Queen of Scots, or Joan of Arc, or Charlotte Corday, or someone […] Ah, no, you would not complain about my giving you Japanese emotion, you would call it European emotion. And then the rational continent always says you English are mad about ghosts (*PMN* 23).

In this excerpt, Pound detaches himself from the source culture, and focuses his attentions on the target culture: "you would not complain about my giving you Japanese emotion, you would call it European emotion." This belief stands in stark contrast to his view of translation, where he tried to retain as much of the sense (and awareness) of the source culture as was possible – for example, by retaining several technical terms in Japanese (*ban-gumi*, *waki*, *tsure*, *shite*, *hannya*, *utai*), as well as preserving the titles (other Nō translators usually give a literal translation of the meaning (Watson)). Pound's foreignizing translations, embedded in a historical and markedly transnational canon, invite us to compare the source texts with other masterpieces of world literature (for example, Greek theatre or Dante),[vi] while his domesticating adaptations aim at the reassessment of the contemporary and national canon(s). Note, though, that Pound maintained that translation can also be an inspiration for English national literatures ("English literature lives on translation, it is fed by translation; every new exuberance, every new heave is stimulated by translation, every alleged great age is an age of translations" (*Literary Essays* 34–35)). The major distinction between adaptation and translation in Pound's writing is that while translations as representations of literary achievements in another language may happen to inspire English-language literatures, Pound's adaptations are created in order to accommodate certain foreign literary possibilities and demonstrate their applicability.

More significantly, Pound's adaptations made a major contribution to the modernist cause. The radically modern, experimental poetics of imagism could gain aesthetical justification if they were associated with a long-established nonwestern literary tradition. (Pound made sure that his readership would notice the link between the two: "These plays are also an answer to a question that has several times been put to me: 'Could one do a long Imagiste poem, or even a long poem in vers libre?'" (*PT* 360)). At the same time, Pound remembered that originality needed to be foregrounded in order to avoid the accusation of mere imitation ("You tell me you do not want Japanese things" (*PMN* 23)). Pound's beliefs were echoed by W. B. Yeats, who also emphasized his own contribution to the "invention" of nonrepresentational lyric drama when he remarked "with the help of these plays 'translated by Ernest Fenollosa and finished by Ezra Pound' I have invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect and symbolic, and having no need of mob or press to pay its way—an aristocratic form" (Yeats, "Introduction.") Both Pound's imagism and Yeats's symbolic theatre were greatly reinforced by their encounters with Japanese literature; but, as it happens with adaptations, their approach struck a balance between invention and imitation, or experimentalism and traditionalism.

However, while Pound's translations are characterized by a transnational and traditional approach, and while his adaptations are best described as national- and invention-oriented, the opposition is by no means systematic. Some of the most imagistic parts of Pound's translation, for instance, often turn out to be genuinely Nō-like, reminding one of Eliot's contemporary remark that "not only the best, but the most individual parts of [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" (Eliot). In "Nishikigi," for example, the ghosts of a suitor and his beloved remember the man's vain offering of love-charms. Pound's translation associates the pattern of a local cloth with their fate's entanglement in a characteristically imagist manner:

> SHITE AND TSURE: Times out of mind am I here setting up this bright branch, this silky wood with the charms painted in it as fine as the web you'd get in the grass-cloth of Shinobu, that they'd be selling you in this mountain.
> SHITE (to TSURE): Tangled, we are entangled. Whose fault is it, dear? (*PT* 406).

Scott Johnson's annotations explain the imagistic interference in the above passage: "'Web' suggests weaving which leads to the 'tangled' in the speech. […] The way images build from 'web' to 'tangled' is typical of Noh literary techniques, although here it is Pound's invention" (Miyake et al.

89). Even though there were "imagistic" trends in the texts Pound was translating, his innovations tried to reinforce the English recognition of the Nō style as traditionally "imagistic," thus strengthening the favorable association between his own movement and the historical excellence of Nō.

The speculative opposition of Pound's translations and adaptations is transgressed in another respect, too. The stylistic elements Pound identified as the essence of Nō in his translations (spiritualism, imagistic traits, traditionalism, etc.), were deconstructed in his adaptations. Imagism vanished almost entirely, and the traditions of the source-texts (legend, characters, surroundings etc.) were culturally appropriated. Christopher Bush's observation that "the trajectory of japonisme […] implies the constitutive erasure of the transnational in the production of the national as culture" (63), illuminates Pound's adaptive strategy of the Japanese Nō, and shows how Pound's approach challenges the notion of the modernist author as an intercultural interpreter.

Pound's project to situate imagism as a movement related to yet distinct from the Japanese Nō was enabled by his translations and his adaptations. His translations, which were embedded in a transnational canon, applied a foreignizing strategy to strengthen the ties to the source culture, while his adaptations, aiming at the reconsideration of the national canon, chose a domesticating strategy to foreground the target culture and stress the self-sufficiency of the modernist text. This twofold engagement with Nō, then, accounts for Pound's seemingly self-contradictory remarks on the nature of Japanese theatre; and it shows the emerging modernist school of imagism balancing ostensibly between the literary and the supernatural, while it is, in fact, maneuvering between experimentation and traditionalism and also between the national and the transnational.

"Blood Brought to Ghosts:" An ancient-modern story[vii]

To understand what exactly Pound is doing in his adaptations, we can look at his version of "Nishikigi," entitled "Tristan," which portrays the relationship of past and present in a substantially different way, when compared to Pound's translation of the same text. The translation recounts the story of a pair of ghosts who are tied to the vicinity of Kefu, their former home, through the memory of their misery in life. The man used to offer love charms (*nishikigi*) to the girl, but her offerings were rejected. He placed a thousand nights' offerings in vain; the ghost of the cold-hearted girl and her suitor now wander near the burial place of the man, still separated. A traveling priest encounters the man and woman, but fails to recognize them as supernatural beings. After hearing their story, his prayers finally help them gain absolution; the ghosts are eventually united in death, and disappear. Pound's "Tristan" is a relatively close adaptation of "Nishikigi," where a thinly disguised sculptor friend of Pound's, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, takes the place of the wandering priest of "Nishikigi," and meets the apparitions of Tristan and Yseult.[viii] Tristan and Yseult are the *genii loci* – they haunt the surroundings of the ruins of a castle, bound to this location just like the ghosts of "Nishikigi" are tied to the suitor's burial cave. The spirits of Tristan and Yseult reminisce about their memories in front of and through the apparently unconscious sculptor, until they leave the stage, and the Sculptor awakes, wondering what happened.

The beginning establishes a strong division between Pound's adaptation and the translation. The translation starts *in medias res*: the priest appears and explains his circumstances and intentions. The scene of "Tristan," on the other hand, is evoked by a Prologue: "Think you will see a castle of great stones / Such as Etruscan builders might have used…" (*PMN* 33). The Prologue is not a convention of Nō; in terms of tone it is strongly reminiscent of William Butler Yeats's musicians in *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), a play also based on a Nō play from the Fenollosa-Hirata notes, entitled Yōrō (Taylor 128-31). In Yeats' adaptation, the First Musician creates the setting:

> I call to the eye of the mind
> A well long choked up and dry
> And boughs long stripped by the wind,
> And I call to the mind's eye
> Pallor of an ivory face,

Its lofty dissolute air,
A man climbing up to a place
The salt sea wind has swept bare (*Collected Plays* 136)

Both Pound's and Yeats's introductions show awareness of the transience and functionality of their existence (as narrative setters of the scene). Notably, both define their being as mere sound: "Someone alive is coming, I am but rumour / And I must away" (*PMN* 33) and "Being but a mouthful of air, / I am content to perish; / I am but a mouthful of sweet air" (Yeats, *Collected Plays* 144). The Prologue and the First Musician thus foreground the notions of self-consciousness, knowledge and illusion.

The endings of Pound's translation and adaptation of "Nishikigi" are also substantially different. In the translation the ghosts of a common couple are luckily united ("Happy at last and well-starred, / Now comes the eve of betrothal: / We meet for the wine cup." (*PT* 416)); they dance and fade away to the soothing words of the chorus sung to the sleeping priest, who will wake with a mere dream-like impression of the night's events in a now forlorn place:

… all this will wither away.
There is nothing here but this cave in the field's midst.
To-day's wind moves in the pines;
A wild place, unlit, unfilled (*PT* 417).

In "Tristan," however, the legendary ghosts disappear without resolving their destiny: "Oh, there is too much between us, / We are neither alone, nor together" (*PMN* 37). Even though they leave the scene at the end, they remain bound to the location of their resentments. While "Nishikigi" can be described as a comedy in the Aristotelian sense with a linear plot, "Tristan" is a tragedy with a circular structure.

This divergence can be attributed to disparate interpretations of the relation of past and present. In "Nishikigi" past and present support one another: the ghosts explain local art and legends (to bestow knowledge on the present), and the chorus, which often speaks on behalf of the ghosts, helps the priest understand the situation. There is no clash between different time planes. The priest (living in the present) evaluates the situation and has the power to determine the course of events; hence reinforcing a belief in the power of redemption and the present's capacity to alter the outcome of a past event. By contrast the plot of "Tristan" depicts the plight of Tristan and Yseult in a world riddled with anxiety, uncertainty and impotence. After the Prologue, the Sculptor meets a woman near the ruins of a castle.[ix] Yseult tries to persuade the sculptor to leave, but he ignores the foreboding warning and insists on finding the tree he came to see bloom.[x] Tristan's voice can be heard from the castle tower; in response the Sculptor "*suddenly sinks and remains crouched on his heels*" (*PMN* 35). In a last effort, the Sculptor asks for the name of the place, but his question remains unanswered. Tristan's apparition occupies the stage; with an act of vocal vampirism, when he finds his voice too faint, he starts using the Sculptor's voice instead. While the two ghosts converse and reminisce, Yseult, in a momentary slip of judgment, addresses the "*half-dazed*" (36) Sculptor directly, but the Sculptor just "*grunts uncomprehendingly*" (37). The experience is beyond his control or comprehension; it is the consequence of the competition between past and present for survival. In the power game of "Tristan," the past is at an advantage also because it has a firmer grasp of reality and existence than the present. "A sword, a ring, or red wine / All these set me in vision," (37) confides Yseult to Tristan, seemingly describing her unsurpassable and long-enduring passion; but her remark can also be interpreted as referring to her existence, where she appears by means of certain objects: "All these set me in vision." In another instance, when Tristan is fighting his way into the present,[xi] involving acquiring a voice and reclaiming his mind and memory, his description suggests that he is aware of what the transition from past to present involves: "*Tristan makes a gesture as if trying to brush away a cloud from his eyes or memory and come at the present*" (36). In contrast, the Sculptor simply "rubs his forehead – not his eyes – [and] goes over toward the tree…" (35). The stage-direction indicates that events are evidently beyond the Sculptor's comprehension.

That the present is not in control is also shown by the Sculptor's search for a tree: while he comes to see the first blooms in the region, he encounters a quite different apparition. While the Sculptor is confident about his knowledge ("I came to see a quince tree. I read about it in a book. It comes out in March before the other trees." (*PMN* 33)), Yseult does not trouble herself to correct the apparently false information but merely mocks his ignorance and bookish assurance: "SCULPTOR: But tell me about it [the tree]. WOMAN: Oh but you know so much. You think it is the Gulf Stream" (PMN 34). She is in a position of power: "[*mocking*] The Gulf Stream, oh, oh, oh, the Gulf Stream" (35). Although the past bestows precious, visionary knowledge on the Sculptor, he neither gets to know the truth about the tree nor recalls the fantastic events associated with it:

> I came to look at a tree, and I have seen a strange blossom [*He looks at the tower, and says*] It was like a high tower with banners. There are but a few clumsy stones [*He goes toward the tree, looks at it, says*]:
> The leaf has come out,
> The green leaves have surrounded the flowers.
> I have not known how it happened.
> (He picks up his sack and goes off.)
> Knowing you and not knowing you,
> There is too much between us.
> Three years' craft in the cup (*PMN* 38).

The Sculptor mysteriously acquired a sense of the past: "It [the tree] was like a high tower with banners," although he does not understand his experience. Even though he may appear to have internalized Tristan and Yseult's agony and yearning, he cannot quite grasp the underlying meaning of their sentiments – he repeats them absent-mindedly. He cannot comprehend the impossibility of communication and communion between past and present: "Knowing you and not knowing you, / There is too much between us" (*PMN* 38).

Unlike "Nishikigi," "Tristan" shows how the past exhibits a parasitic attitude towards the present. The critically tuned modern vision depicts events as necessary: if the past wants to happen again, it must literally seize the day and drive the present out of time. However, all this strife is eventually in vain; even if the past may be present, it is not accessible to the living any longer. The modern adaptation has no illusions about the mingling of past and present: there is no interaction, just a desperate struggle for survival.

Conclusion

In an essay on translation and modernist transnationalism, Roland Végső remarks that "high modernism was 'international in form but national […] in content'" (Végső 28). This article has tried to redefine that concept by identifying two partially different methods of modernist rewriting: literal translation and liberal adaptation. Pound's content-oriented adaptations are motivated by the desire to enrich English national literatures, while his form-oriented translations are transnationally conceived, and try to observe the conventions of the source-texts. Pound's dual involvement with the Japanese Nō (through translation and adaptation) sustains (but, occasionally, also challenges) these dichotomies, and thereby investigates the nature of tradition and experimentalism. Yet, Végső also argues that "Taken to its extreme, […] Tradition is simultaneously a national tradition and the *lingua franca* of modernity" (28). The convergence of the diachronic ("national tradition") and synchronic aspects of tradition ("*lingua franca*") shows that these distinctions (tradition/ experimentation, transnational/ national, form/ content) never occur in texts in full purity, but in amalgamated forms. Still, their proportions are apt indicators of individual authors, movements and epoch's approaches to translation and adaptation.

Particularly, Pound's translation and adaptation from the same Nō text, "Nishikigi," vary significantly in their emphasis on the synchronic aspect of tradition. While the translation is restricted to include only a few footnotes in the text explaining the contemporary relevance of poetic drama, the

adaptation relies heavily but implicitly on concepts of modernity, for example, on the bizarre infusion of the Darwinian idea of struggle for survival into spiritualism. Such cultural and temporal appropriations help redefine the boundaries of translation and adaptation.

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Réka Mihálka got her PhD in English at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary in 2011. Her dissertation focused on japonism in Anglo-American Literature in 1910-20, especially in Ezra Pound's works. She is a former Fulbright scholar (New York University, 2009-10), and was also affiliated with Birkbeck College, University of London, the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, and Kyoto University, Japan. She currently resides in Switzerland.

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[i] However, some expressed reservations about the status of this text, too. Calvin French, another translator of this play, wrote that "Ezra Pound's version of *The Brocade Tree* [i.e. "Nishikigi"], based on an unpublished translation by Ernest Fenollosa, is too far from the original to qualify as a translation" (French 83). The close comparison of Fenollosa's notes and Pound's translation in *A Guide to Ezra Pound* and Ernest Fenollosa's *Classic Noh Theatre of Japan* shows, on the other hand, that Pound attempted to follow the text as closely as he could (Miyake et al. 87-94). The notes he relied on, nevertheless, were less than polished; therefore, a great portion of Pound's departures from the original are due to the insufficient amount of information at Pound's disposal rather than to libertine translational principles. His deliberate alterations on the text include some omissions of obscure cultural (including Buddhist) references, dramaturgical changes, shifts in form (verse vs. prose), and leaving some terms untranslated to preserve the sense of the foreign (e.g. mushi ['insect'], Butsu ['Buddha'] or nishikigi ['brocade wood,' i.e. love charms]) (Miyake et al. 87-94). For ease of reference, two frequently used books by Pound will be referred with an abbreviation in this chapter: *PT* stands for *Poems and Translations*, while *PMN* refers to his *Plays Modeled on the Noh*.

[ii] The term is merely implied in the few critical studies that tackle "Tristan." Longenbach calls the play "[Pound's] own version of [Yeats's] *The Dreaming of the Bones*" (233), which is, in turn, based on "Nishikigi"; while Miyake et al. refer to the text as an "imitation of Noh" (Miyake et al. xvii). Yet, since Pound's text is evidently derived from "Nishikigi," but is in no sense a translation, the terminology should be intuitively accepted.

[iii] For details on Yeats's edition of Pound's translations, see Chiba 121-44.

[iv] What would be called "retrocognition" today was thrilling news in occult circles in the 1910s. Anne Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain's *An Adventure*, the account of a psychic experience at Versailles during which they allegedly encountered the court of Marie Antoinette, was published in 1911. Pound referred to this event in his introduction to one of the plays in *Plays Modeled on the Noh*, "A Supper at the House of Mademoiselle Rachel;" and it was central to Yeats' *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918) and *The Dreaming of the Bones* as well (Longenbach 224-27). The Yeatsian concept of "dreaming back" has remarkable affinities with mugen Nō ('fantasy' or 'dream' Nō, i.e. the group of Nō that is not realistic), as David Ewick notes (Ewick).

[v] For further instances, see "Suma Genji," (*PT* 359), "Kayoi Komachi," (*PT* 349 and 351), "Tsunemasa" (*PT* 384) and "Kakitsubata" (*PT* 458).

[vi] Fenollosa and Hirata wrote an essay devoted in part to parallels between Greek and Japanese theatre (*PT* 389-96); Dante surfaces in scattered remarks by Pound, e.g. "As to the quality of poetry in ["Tsunemasa"]: there is the favoured youth, soon slain; the uneasy blood-stained and thoughtless spirit; there are the lines about the caged stork crying at sunset, and they are as clear as Dante's" (*PT* 384).

[vii] Hugh Kenner uses this phrase to describe the relation of Pound's poetry and his translations in *The Pound Era*: "Pound came to think of translation as a model for the poetic act: blood brought to ghosts" (150).

[viii] Donald Gallup's introduction to *Plays Modeled on the Noh* calls attention to a possible source of inspiration for the adaptation of this particular story. "On June 19, 1916, Ezra and Dorothy Pound heard Sir Thomas Beecham conduct Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the Aldwych Theatre, and this may well have been the initial impulse behind Pound's more substantial experiment with illusion, 'Tristan'" (Gallup ii). However, Pound, as a medieval scholar, knew many versions of the Tristan and Iseult story; his *Spirit of Romance* offers ample evidence. There, Pound singles out the Old French rendering of *Thomas of Britain and the Norman*, the so-called "vulgar" version by Béroul (translated into English by Hilaire Belloc in 1915 from the 1900 text of

Joseph Bédier) as his sources, but his summary of the story makes it evident he also read Ovid; and he was convinced of its Celtic origin (*Spirit of Romance* 82-83). Of course, Pound would have been aware of the Victorian revival of the legend, too (Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*, Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*, to mention just the major literary works). Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* is mentioned only briefly and dismissively in *The Spirit of Romance*, yet Pound seems to have known that version, too (82). In Pound's poetry, there are three earlier versions of the Tristan and Iseult story: "Shalott," (*Collected Early Poems* 252; for this poem, a longer manuscript version also exists, entitled "The Lord of Shalott"), "The Cup. Tristram" and "Tristram 2;" the latter two preserved only in manuscript form (Folder 3824, Box 89 of the Ezra Pound Papers at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University).

[ix] The scene is described as a "doorway of three long stones in a ruin, supposedly on a cliff; to the left a gleam of blue feldspar colour" (*PMN* 31). The doorway suggests a sense of transience, and the encounter of the two time planes the visitor will experience, while the three long stones in a ruin can be symbolic remnants of the three pine trees that ornament the Japanese Nō stage.

[x] While the Sculptor is a mask for Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Yseult may be connected in Pound's personal mythology with both Yseult Gonne, Maud Gonne's daughter (and, rumor had it, Pound's lover) and Hilda Doolittle, who recalled in *End to Torment* that Pound "brought me the Portland, Maine, Thomas Mosher reprint of the Iseult and Tristan story. He called me Is-hilda and wrote a sonnet a day; he bound them in a parchment folder" (13).

[xi] This element may have its origin in "Tsunemasa," where a priest performs a service to the spirit of Tsunemasa and when he appears, both parties are uncertain concerning the success of the conjuring: "SPIRIT: Are you sure that you see it [i.e. his form], really? PRIEST: O, do I, or do I not see you?" (*PT* 385).