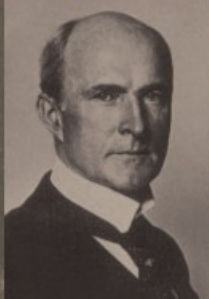


THE  
SELECTED  
LETTERS  
OF  
EZRA POUND  
TO  
JOHN QUINN,  
1915-1924

Edited by Timothy Materer



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Ezra Pound to John Quinn,  
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Timothy Materer, editor

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Literary Property Trust.

For my children

Nicholas, Andrew, Susan



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## Notes on the Editing

Sixty-seven of the approximately two hundred and thirty letters that Ezra Pound wrote to John Quinn are published in this edition. Since many of the selected letters are long, they comprise nearly half the words Pound wrote to Quinn. I have selected the letters to give a representative range of topics, such as magazine editing, the support of talented artists, the activities of mutual friends, and contemporary events. Pound would frequently write numerous letters to Quinn on the same general topic, confirming Wyndham Lewis's description of Pound as a "Rock Drill," hammering away at anything that blocked the development of modern art and culture. Thus I believe that the selection given here represents a full picture of Pound's and Quinn's relationship without the repetitiousness that wearied even Quinn. When a particularly important or interesting comment appears in a letter not included here, I quote it in the introductions or endnotes.

All letters are reproduced in their entirety. The endnotes give brief indications of the importance of an item to Pound. The Selected Bibliography contains full references to the works by and about Ezra Pound mentioned in the notes, with information about current reprints and works by other authors that were used in compiling the annotations. Quinn's letters are quoted when they help to elucidate Pound's.

The letters are either typed, signed letters (indicated by the abbreviation TLS, followed by the number of pages in the original) or autograph letters (ALS). Pound used space as lavishly in his letters as he did in his *Cantos*, even though he was thrifty enough to use the backs of Quinn's letters to draft poems. In a volume of this size, stylistic traits such as half-page indentations and double-spacing between words and between paragraphs can be reproduced only at

the expense of limiting the number of letters selected. Therefore, addresses and complimentary closes, as well as spacing and indentations, are standardized. Underlined passages (whether double or triple) are italicized, and passages typed in red appear in brace marks {thus}. Missing words and letters are bracketed within the text. Descriptions of letterheads and enclosures are given when significant, and supplied places and dates appear in brackets.

Spelling and idiosyncratic orthography are reproduced as in the original without the use of *sic*. However, simple typographical errors, such as transposed letters and missing quotation marks, have been silently corrected. Pound's capitalizations and his inconsistent use of possessives and contractions appear as in the originals. Ellipses are reproduced as in the originals. Double em-dashes have been changed to single. Typed or autograph corrections have been silently incorporated. The correct spellings of names appear in the endnotes and index. Shortened forms of proper names are identified in the index; for example, the index entry of "Old Fen" will cross-reference to "Fenollosa, Ernest."

With one exception, Pound's letters to Quinn are in the John Quinn Archive of the New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division. The exception is Letter 20, which is in the Jeanne Roberts Foster collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. Most of Quinn's letters to Pound are in the Collection of American Literature at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; and a complete file of Quinn's carbons of his letters to Pound is held by the New York Public Library Manuscripts Division.

Nine of the letters published in this edition have appeared in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige. Following in the order they appear in Paige's edition (starting with Letter 63), they correspond to the following letters in the present volume: 63 (1), 85 (13), 115 (25), 122 (29), 146 [misdated 29 January 1918] (49), 149 (44), 153 (45), 154 [misdated 15 November 1918] (41), and 164 (57). The Paige edition contains three letters not included here: 117, 130, and 162. The selection of Pound's letters to Quinn in Harriet Zinnes, ed., *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts* [pp. 229–246] contains passages that are not included in this edition.

I thank the following for assisting me in using the resources of their libraries: John D. Stinson, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, the New York Public Library; Christa Sammons, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library; Vicki Denby, Manuscript Department, the Houghton Library, Harvard

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Quotations from the correspondence of John Quinn are used with permission of the John Quinn Memorial Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. Publication of letter number 20 from the Jeanne Foster collection is by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. For permission to publish the letters of Ezra Pound, I thank the Ezra Pound Literary Property Trust.



**The Selected Letters of  
Ezra Pound to John Quinn,  
1915–1924**



# Introduction

From Henry James to Ezra Pound:

John Quinn and the Art of Patronage

*And the money was to be all for the  
most exquisite things—for all the most exquisite  
except creation, which was to be off the  
scene altogether.*

—Henry James on the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1907)

Ezra Pound met the lawyer and art patron John Quinn in New York in August 1910 when Pound had returned from England for a brief stay in America. They met at the boarding house of John Butler Yeats, where Quinn liked to join the artists and writers who would gather weekly to enjoy conversation with (as Pound called him) the “father of all the Yeatsssssss.” In inviting Quinn to meet him, Yeats warned that Pound was “young, and being a poet as well as poor is probably discontented and bad company, though he is less so than others of the genus irritable.”<sup>1</sup> As Yeats wrote to his son William Butler, Quinn liked Pound though younger men found him “supercilious and grumpy.”<sup>2</sup> According to Yeats, Pound said little that evening, but Pound formed a decided opinion of Quinn because he told Margaret Anderson that “Quinn made me mad the first time I saw him (1910).”<sup>3</sup> As his first letter to Quinn in 1915 shows, Pound was annoyed that Quinn was spending so much money collecting the manuscripts of a dated writer like William Morris, and Quinn’s generosity in taking a party that included Pound and J. B. Yeats on a Coney Island outing did not change Pound’s view of Quinn.

Pound met Quinn only on these two occasions in America, and further contacts were limited to visiting with him in Paris in 1921 and 1923. Their friendship was developed and sustained through



their correspondence, and possibly this was the only way two such strong-willed personalities could have grown so close. They were both intent on supervising the cultural life of their own milieu, and cities the size of New York and London were needed to satisfy their ambitions. J. B. Yeats called Quinn (half in admiration) a man of "Napoleonic arrogance," which is a judgment many of his contemporaries also made about Pound. But they were also deeply generous as well as ambitious men who were as willing to edit the manuscripts or buy the works of deserving artists as they were to lend them money or introduce them to prospective colleagues. J. B. Yeats feared Quinn's temper, but he considered him "a man of genius—not a touch of the commonplace or any other kind of prose in his whole composition" and a "true patron" since he gave the artist understanding as well as money.<sup>4</sup>

Quinn's relationship with the elder Yeats typifies his generosity. Judith Zilczer speculates that Quinn's sudden loss of many close family members (including the deaths of his mother and two sisters within a period of months) inspired a compensatory care for a large group of Irish artists and writers soon after he came to New York in 1895—a care which soon expanded to other and increasingly talented groups.<sup>5</sup> He felt so responsible for J. B. Yeats that he virtually took over his friend W. B. Yeats's role as a son. When J. B. Yeats settled in New York, ignoring his family's pleas to return to Dublin, Quinn supported him through commissions for paintings and payments to his boarding house; and he cared for Yeats during his final illness. Both Pound and Quinn have been criticized as domineering men, but behind their love of shaping events to their own will was a respect for the independent artist and a vision of a modern renaissance in the arts. The energy they put into their projects, such as the international journal they hoped to found in the midst of world war, demonstrated how deep their commitment was and justified their impatience.

In 1922 Ezra Pound wrote that artists "set the moulds" for humanity.<sup>6</sup> As Pound admitted, this idea is romantic and arrogant, but it is true in the particular sense that Pound set an ideal for the patron of art that inspired John Quinn's service to arts and letters. As Quinn's biographer puts it, borrowing a phrase from J. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound "'put style upon' Quinn's half-spoken image of himself."<sup>7</sup> In his first letter to Quinn, in 1915, Pound wrote that "if a patron buys from an artist who needs money (needs money to buy tools, time and food), the patron then makes himself equal to the artist: he is building art into the world; he creates." By 1920 Quinn had made Pound's

thought his own and wrote to the French dealer Ambroise Vollard: "To me it is more interesting to buy the work of living artists, and besides there is a satisfaction in feeling that in buying the work of living men and in helping them to live and to create one is in a sense a co-creator or a participant in the work of creation."<sup>8</sup> John Quinn ranks with only a few American collectors, such as Gertrude Whitney, Albert Barnes, or the Steins, as a patron of living art; and no one accomplished more with relatively limited resources, or was more aware, with a perception worthy of his intellectual hero Henry James, of the moral effects of wealth upon art. Aline Saarinen's book on American art collectors, which includes portraits of Isabella Gardner, Pierpont Morgan, and Charles Lang Freer, describes him as "the twentieth century's most important patron of living literature and art"; and Alfred Barr, the founding director of the New York Museum of Modern Art, called him the "greatest American collector of the art of his day."<sup>9</sup>

To Pound, Quinn was a figure of Renaissance proportions. In his portrait of Sigismondo Malatesta in *The Cantos*, Pound juxtaposes his account of the Italian condottiere and patron of Piero della Francesca (Cantos VIII–XI) to an anecdote about John Quinn amusing himself at the expense of straitlaced bankers at a board meeting (Canto XII). Pound's perception of the similarity between a Renaissance and a modern patron is the key to Quinn's character. Malatesta was no doubt a more ruthless man than Quinn, though a financial lawyer may engage in conflicts as ferocious as those between Italian city-states, and some of the settlements Quinn achieved must have been as lucrative as a Malatesta campaign. The crucial terms of comparison between the two patrons, however, are in the following sentences about Malatesta in Pound's *Guide to Kulchur*: "He registered a state of mind, of sensibility, of all-roundedness and awareness. . . . All that a single man could, Malatesta managed *against* the current of power."<sup>10</sup> Malatesta has never been disentangled (Pound did not even try) from the legends that grew up around him. Quinn is not so far removed from us in time, but I believe that his career as a patron has been misunderstood. B. L. Reid's biography of Quinn, *The Man from New York*, is an impressive documentation of Quinn's life, but his claim that Quinn was an "artist *manqué*" is a misinterpretation of a man whose passion for the law exceeded even his passion for art and who had nothing *manqué* about him.<sup>11</sup> Nor have Reid or other critics appreciated his final gesture as an art patron when he willed his collection to his remaining family with no provision for keeping it together after his death. That decision has been

generally deplored as (in Reid's words) "unimaginative" and even "crass,"<sup>12</sup> but it was a product of the same intelligence and perception that chose the paintings in the first place and was carefully made. To understand Quinn's conception of the patron, and to see him through Pound's eyes, we need to appreciate what he accomplished "against the current of power."

The Pound/Quinn correspondence began with a debate over a major problem of twentieth-century patronage: the huge sums of money that were flowing into the "art market" rather than the pockets of living artists. Quinn had read Pound's article on Jacob Epstein in *The New Age* of January 1915 in which Pound complained that Epstein's poverty forced him to pawn his great work *Sun God*, and yet "one looks out upon American collectors buying autograph mss. of William Morris, faked Rembrandts and faked Van Dykes."<sup>13</sup> Quinn was stung by the references to Morris and Epstein because Pound knew that he had been buying manuscripts from Morris's daughter and sculptures from Epstein. In his first letter to Pound of February 25, Quinn told Pound that he was selling his older manuscripts to buy art and indeed owned a half-dozen works by Epstein. He summed up the current stage of his development by listing his purchases of the past few years (since about 1912): a portrait of Madame Cézanne, a self-portrait of Van Gogh, three or four Picassos, important Matisses, and works by Rouault, Dufy, Jacques Villon, and Marcel Duchamp. Quinn was particularly stung by Pound's remark about the buying of "fake art" because one of the triumphs of his legal career occurred in 1913 when he won a fight to allow original works of art to come into America duty free. Quinn's lobbying in Washington not only ended the 15 percent tax that had been levied only on works less than twenty years old, which in effect discriminated against living art, but also discouraged the importation of fake paintings because Quinn's introduction of the word "original" into the law made the authenticity of the works an issue. Quinn's letter was indignant, but he respected Pound and had read all that he could obtain of his works. His letter therefore projects his customary persona of a no-nonsense man of affairs who is eager for frank discussion.

Pound's reply to Quinn is brilliantly tactful in the way it apologizes without groveling and establishes a sense that he and Quinn are fellow intellectuals. In referring to the "fake Rembrandt" issue, he recalls that "I carried twenty 'Rembrandts', 'VanDykes', 'Velasquez' out of Wanamakers private gallery at the time of his fire some eight years ago. . . . My god! What Velasquez!!" (Letter 1). The

burning of the Wanamaker house (which was less than a mile from Pound's home in Wyncote) occurred in 1907, and Ezra and his father helped to rescue the worldly goods of the department store magnate. Pound had recently returned from study in Europe as a graduate student in Romance languages at the University of Pennsylvania. One of the high points of his trip to Spain was his visit to the Prado to admire the Velázquez paintings. His harsh judgment on the fake masterpieces was therefore well grounded, and the general reputation of Wanamaker's collection confirms his opinion. John Wanamaker bought huge quantities of contemporary paintings, especially portraits and pictures with a "message," to exhibit in his Philadelphia and New York department stores in an effort to elevate public taste. He hung his "Old Masters" in his own houses, especially his manor outside Philadelphia; but as one expert observes, among the works by great names such as Canaletto, G. B. Tiepolo, Guardi, Murillo, and Velázquez, "a good many of these cannot be regarded as more than school-pieces."<sup>14</sup>

Quinn was right when he said that "there is more bunk and more fraud in art sales than there is in Monte Carlo."<sup>15</sup> Late-nineteenth-century millionaires like Wanamaker tried to acquire a sense of instant dignity and tradition by buying portraits of someone else's ancestors and masterpieces that had once been owned by noble families. They were thus open to manipulation by dealers. The Henry O. Havermeyers, for example, bought works by Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Titian, Veronese, and Donatello during an expedition to Italy in 1901—and none of them were authentic.<sup>16</sup> S. N. Behrman's biography of Joseph Duveen shows how this master art dealer did "a brisk market in immortality" by flattering his clients that they were worthy enough to own old masters and actually made the paintings' astronomical prices part of the attraction since only his exclusive clients could pay them. (When asked why he put a high polish on his old masters, which he often heavily and secretly restored, he replied that his clients only wanted to see themselves reflected.)<sup>17</sup> A remarkable example of a collector with this kind of weakness is Quinn's acquaintance Isabella Stewart Gardner, a friend of Henry James who is mentioned in the letters as a possible patron of T. S. Eliot. She identified herself not only with Mary Stuart but also the Renaissance art patron Isabella d'Este (1474–1539), and Bernard Berenson used this fantasy to convince her to buy a mediocre painting that was a portrait of her "precursor and patron saint."<sup>18</sup> Quinn himself had a low opinion of Duveen and in 1923 represented a rival dealer, George Demotte, when Duveen recklessly challenged

the authenticity of a work Demotte was offering. Duveen's rival, however, was perhaps as shady as Duveen himself and died—or was murdered—in a mysterious hunting accident.<sup>19</sup> Quinn was severely disappointed when the family dropped the law suit because he was sure Duveen was guilty not only of slander but also of criminal libel.

Malatesta's achievement in Rimini "against the current of power" was made in the face of chaotic political conditions and the church's opposition to his pagan sensibility. Quinn's achievement was made under scarcely less difficult conditions, and unfortunately one cannot say of his era, as Pound said of Malatesta's, that it was one "not YET rotted by usury."<sup>20</sup> The atmosphere of rapid and costly acquisition in the art world that began in the 1880s was thoroughly rotten and made Quinn's position as a collector with limited means extraordinarily challenging. Henry James analyzed this atmosphere in *The American Scene* through his description of the Metropolitan in the years after J. P. Morgan assumed the presidency in 1904:

. . . Acquisition—acquisition if need be on the highest terms—may, during the years to come, bask here as in a climate it has never before enjoyed. There was money in the air, ever so much money—that was, grossly expressed, the sense of the whole intimation. . . . And the money was to be all for the most exquisite things—for *all* the most exquisite except creation, which was to be off the scene altogether; for art, selection, criticism, for knowledge, piety, taste. The intimation—which was somehow, after all, so pointed—would have been detestable if interests other, and smaller, than these had been in question. . . . They would be invidious, would be cruel, if applied to personal interests.<sup>21</sup>

This last phrase, which anticipates the theme of *The Golden Bowl*, cuts through the cant about "knowledge, piety, taste" that rationalized the huge Metropolitan expenditures during the Morgan era.<sup>22</sup> James reveals a truer motive for sheer "acquisition" when, after analyzing the nature of New York society, he writes that "nowhere else does pecuniary power so beat its wings in the void, and so look round it for the charity of some hint as to the possible awkwardness or possible grace of its motion, some sign of whether it be flying, for good taste, too high or too low."<sup>23</sup> Quinn entered this void with the sensibility and the will to build something fine, not merely magnificent, within it.

Quinn's patronage of perhaps a dozen major painters, consisting of financial support and spiritual encouragement, amounted to ap-

proximately a half million dollars. The relative smallness of the sum and the extent of the good it did for the arts overshadows the value of what collectors like Mellon did with millions. When one looks at prices in today's art market, moreover, there is clearly no sane relationship between price and value. The Metropolitan Museum helped initiate the escalation in art prices in 1961 when it outbid the Cleveland Museum to purchase Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* for a record \$2.3 million, a record the museum eclipsed in 1971 when it paid \$5.5 million for Velázquez's *Juan de Pareja*.<sup>24</sup> This record was eclipsed in 1989 when Van Gogh's *Irises* was purchased for \$53.9 million in a controversial transaction in which the gallery selling the painting helped to finance the sale, and it fell in turn when \$82.5 million (including a 10 percent buyer's fee) was paid in 1990 for Van Gogh's *Portrait of Dr. Gachet*.<sup>25</sup> The benefits to museums and organizations in owning such works comes from the publicity such sales generate, which in the case of the Metropolitan translates into increased attendance and the larger budget requests attendance figures allow. (As we will see, Quinn distrusted the publicity of large public exhibitions.) One of the best contemporary art critics, Harold Rosenberg, has attacked the "bureaucratic corruption" of the museums and dealers:

The texture of collaboration between dealers, collectors, and exhibitors has become increasingly dense, to the point at which the artist is confronted by a solid wall of opinion and fashion forecasts constructed, essentially, out of the data of the art market. The presence of this potent professional establishment has radically affected the relation, once largely regulated by the taste of patrons, of the artist to society and to his own product.<sup>26</sup>

Quinn avoided the dealers as much as possible and bought from the artists themselves, often by giving them a regular subsidy. He was precisely the kind of patron whom Rosenberg laments the passing of and who is essential, as Pound saw, to a "great age."

Quinn's first major patronage was an annual subsidy of Augustus John which began in 1909, and in 1911 he wrote to John's talented sister Gwen, "I like to be a man of my own day and time," and offered to support her painting as well because he would then feel he was helping it to be born.<sup>27</sup> These acts of generosity and artistic faith were made well before Pound "put style upon" Quinn's image of the painter; and his single most important contribution to the battle to recognize modern art also preceded the first letter from Pound in 1915.

In 1911 Walt Kuhn helped to found the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, and by 1912 Arthur B. Davies became its president. They chose the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory for exhibitions of contemporary American art, and informed Quinn's journalist friend Frederick James Gregg ("El Greggo") of their plans. Quinn was brought in to incorporate the society and serve as legal representative. The association of these three men, together with the painter and critic Walter Pach, was what Pound called a "vortex"—a confluence of energy that can have a revolutionary impact. The scope of the first exhibition soon became international, and Kuhn went off to Europe to arrange for entries, where he was soon joined by Davies. Quinn wrote to his contacts in England to learn about the artists in Roger Fry's *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* show of 1910 (which Virginia Woolf said marked a change in human nature) and to arrange loans from the second Post-Impressionist show of 1912. The International Exhibition of Modern Art, now famous as the Armory Show, opened in February 1913 with a speech by Quinn asserting, with no exaggeration, "the epoch making" nature of the event which showed that "American artists—young American artists, that is—do not dread . . . the ideas or the culture of Europe."<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the show, as Quinn and his friends saw it, was to do exactly what Pound was trying to do in literature: eradicate provincialism by a comparative study of American and European art. There were vicious attacks on the "pathological" and "hideous" art of the show in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, but Gregg and Quinn enjoyed the controversy; and Quinn even convinced his friend Teddy Roosevelt to be more tolerant of modern art as he showed him through the exhibits of Matisse nudes, cubist figures by Picasso, abstractions by Picabia, Kandinsky, Léger, and Braque, sculptures by Brancusi and Maillol, and the *succès du scandale* of the show, Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*.<sup>29</sup> Quinn was both the biggest single lender to the show and the biggest buyer, acquiring works by artists such as Raymond Duchamp-Villon (another artist for whom Quinn became a major patron), Derain, Segonzac, Signac, and Redon.<sup>30</sup>

Until the last years of his life Quinn's passion for literature kept pace with his passion for art. As a precocious high schooler, he was already a collector of first editions of Hardy, Pater, and Meredith. Later he collected the manuscripts of Meredith, Morris, Synge, and Yeats, and had a nearly complete collection of Conrad's manuscripts. His literary taste was as remarkably flexible and open to new influences as his artistic. Quinn received *The Waste Land* manuscript, with Pound's emendations, as a gift from Eliot; but he tried to make

up for it with generous payments for manuscripts of Eliot's earlier poems. Starting in June 1920, he bought the manuscripts of the *Ulysses* episodes as they were written, which was an important source of income for Joyce. When Pound decided to join *The Egoist* to give Eliot, Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis a literary outlet, Quinn guaranteed the journal £150 a year for two years. Not only did his subsidy continue when Pound became foreign editor for the *Little Review*, but he also raised funds from two other backers. The subsidies allowed the review to pay its contributors for the first time and helped it to become the most famous little magazine in modern literary history. Quinn was responsible for having not only Pound's books published in the United States, as the letters will show in detail, but also those of Eliot, Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis. He acted as Pound's go-between in placing *A Portrait of the Artist* with B. W. Huebsch and convinced Alfred Knopf to publish Lewis's brilliant first novel, *Tarr* (1918), and Eliot's *Poems* (1920). (He knew *The Waste Land* and many of the earlier poems by heart and enjoyed reciting them to his friends.) When Knopf declined to publish *The Waste Land*, Quinn negotiated a contract with Liveright for Eliot; and he brought Horace Liveright and the editor of the *Dial* together to work out the conditions under which the *Dial* published the poem first: an announcement of the forthcoming publication (with the famous "notes") by Boni and Liveright and the award of the \$2,000 *Dial* prize to Eliot.

Quinn considered his fellow Irishman Joyce to be as great a writer as Swift and responded patiently to his rather frequent and arrogant requests for cash. Joyce's work gave Quinn his most difficult time as a patron when the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice brought the *Little Review* into court for publishing the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses* in the July-August 1920 number. He had often warned the editors of the danger because the *Little Review* had been suppressed by the U.S. Post Office several times before this incident. Quinn had even defended it in court over a Wyndham Lewis story in 1917, and so by 1920 he had lost patience with the *Review* and its two impractical editors, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap. He agreed with Pound and the editors that Joyce's *Ulysses* was the finest work they had discovered and published, but he was more concerned with publishing the complete novel and earning some royalties for Joyce than in the campaign for artistic liberty. The danger was that if the episode were judged obscene Quinn would not be able to arrange for a privately printed edition. This is just what happened, and it is distressing to think how much better the first



*Ulysses* edition might have been if Quinn, whose editing of Pound's *Lustra* demonstrated his passion for accuracy and good design, had helped in its production.

The *Little Review* case marks the decline of the Pound/Quinn collaboration. Quinn was disgusted with the *Little Review* editors for ignoring his advice in publishing the obscene Joyce issues and then failing to cooperate with him in saving Joyce and themselves from prosecution; and his friendship with Pound was put to the test when Pound sent him what he considered inflated and naive attacks on the obscenity law. Strains were no doubt natural in their friendship, since patronage is a failure if it merely encourages dependency. Quinn was beginning to weary of Pound's repeated requests for favors, and his personal worries increased when he underwent an operation for abdominal cancer in 1918. Under the strain of hard work and the fear of a recurrence of cancer, he would occasionally rage at Pound and call him the worst of his trials.<sup>31</sup> But Pound did not mind what he called a "dose of QUINNine" now and then. They had less in common now that they were not working on a magazine together and as Quinn became less interested in avant-garde art, but their friendship weathered its strains and was fortified during Quinn's visits to Paris in 1921 and 1923.

When Quinn visited Paris in 1921, he was there principally to collect French art, but he saw both Pound and Joyce several times during July and helped Pound with a generous "loan." Despite his experience with the *Little Review*, he met with Pound, Joyce, and Ford Madox Ford in 1923 to discuss the launching of Ford's *transatlantic review*, on which Quinn's companion Jeanne Foster would serve as New York editor. (Ford believed that no American could be a gentleman, but he was willing to admit to Hemingway that Quinn was.)<sup>32</sup> But again Quinn was mostly interested in art, and his major interest as a patron was in artists such as Rouault, Braque, Picasso, Brancusi, Segonzac, and Derain—all of whom he visited in their studios. He bought no fewer than four works from his friend Brancusi and played bizarre games of golf with him and Erik Satie—Brancusi in a sombrero-brimmed hat, Satie in bowler carrying a rolled umbrella, and Quinn in shirt sleeves enjoying the fresh air and the company rather than the game. The trip was a success, but Quinn's health was poor during it, and one can see the illness in his face in the photographs of Quinn with Pound, Joyce, and Ford.

The final stage in Quinn's career as a patron guided by the precepts of Ezra occurred in 1922–23 when Pound hatched his *Bel Esprit* scheme to rescue T. S. Eliot from the uncreative drudgery of his

job at Lloyd's bank and support him (as Malatesta pledges to support Piero della Francesca in Canto VIII) free of any conditions. Henry James, who seems to have reflected on every ramification of modern patronage, provided an epigram for this crucial phase of Pound's service to culture when he wrote of a similar plan in his story "The Coxon Fund": "The Endowment is a conception superficially sublime, but fundamentally ridiculous."<sup>33</sup> The sublimity was not only in Pound's wish to help his friend, who was once again ill and overwrought despite a recent leave from his bank, but in his understanding that Eliot had deserved help because he had written a masterpiece of English poetry. In February 1921 he wrote to Jeanne Foster: "Eliot produced a fine poem (19 pages) during his enforced vacation, but has since relapsed. I wish something could be found for him, to get him out of Lloyds Bank."<sup>34</sup> By March he was lining up some thirty patrons to give an average of ten pounds per year to support Eliot for a guaranteed five years. His letter to Quinn of 4 and 5 July 1922 shows that Pound had already secured twenty-one pledges for the scheme and reveals the insight he had into Eliot's domestic problems. By that time, however, Pound had shocked Quinn by going public about the plan in a *New Age* article in March 1922. Worse still, Eliot was shocked by this article because it referred to him personally in one of Pound's challenges to the status quo: "It now remains to be seen whether Mr. Eliot's English admirers will subscribe heavily enough to leave him with any feeling that his continued residence in that island is morally or sentimentally incumbent upon him."<sup>35</sup> The publicity was deeply embarrassing to Eliot and to his family in America; and Pound made the situation still more difficult by publicizing *Bel Esprit* in his "Paris Letter" in the November 1922 *Dial*. He did not mention Eliot by name, at least, but he did claim that *Bel Esprit* was needed because "the individual patron is nearly extinct."<sup>36</sup> The remark did not offend Quinn, who understood that Pound considered him the exception to the rule concerning patronage, but it was an insult to Scofield Thayer, the backer of the *Dial*. Thayer had published *The Waste Land* on generous terms and saw that Eliot received the \$2,000 *Dial* Award in 1922; yet Pound implied that he alone was concerned with encouraging great literature.

The scheme might have worked if the charity had been limited to Eliot, but Pound's mistake was to link the endowment to his developing economic theories (as he did in the *New Age* article) and hope to make it a model for the support of a whole series of artists. In James's "The Coxon Fund," the endowment is also meant to set a pattern for patronage, but its outcome is even less satisfactory than

Bel Esprit's. When the group of naive Americans finally endow their English artist for life, the result is that "the very day he found himself able to publish he wholly ceased to produce."<sup>37</sup> One suspects that Eliot was better served by his regular work in a bank and a publishing house than he would have been by leisure.

Even Pound admitted that Bel Esprit had been a "dismal nerve-racking failure for everyone concerned."<sup>38</sup> But the failure of the scheme was not merely the result of Pound's tactlessness; it was the result of a fundamental change in Pound's thinking about art that reversed his original conception of patronage to which Quinn, fortunately, remained faithful. During his London years Pound was content for the artist to battle against the entrenched dealers and publishers and win patrons and an audience in an artistic open market. His work for other artists was based on his faith that, once they got a hearing, their genius would guarantee them an audience—even though it might be a small one. In an essay on "The Renaissance" in 1914, for example, Pound saw an advantage in the loose political structure that produced "the numerous vortices of the Italian cities, striving against each other not only in commerce but in the arts as well."<sup>39</sup> However, in this essay he is already dreaming about official support for young artists; and by 1919 Pound's articles in the Social Credit journal, *The New Age*, advocate a fundamental reorganization of society which would provide official support for the arts. Bel Esprit was in effect a step toward state patronage, which Pound's experience with the fund convinced him was the only viable kind. Reviewing the development of his conception of the artist and society in Eliot's *Criterion* in 1933, Pound said that "one intelligent millionaire *might* have done a good deal—several people of moderate means have done 'something'; i.e., a poultice or two and bit of plaster hither or yon." But he added that even these minimal efforts are impossible under capitalism because patronage is in the hands of "an enormous and horrible bureaucracy of letters."<sup>40</sup>

His new conception of patronage is full of ironies. In the first place, the artistic movement he and Quinn fought for was in fact successful—as indeed he acknowledged in the 1933 *Criterion* article: "'My' programme in art and letters has gradually been forced through, has, to some extent, grabbed its place in the sun." This was no longer enough for him, however; for now he wants not merely to revolutionize art and poetry but society as well. He wants to proceed at the same impossible pace that Quinn found so alarming when Pound not only wanted to publish Joyce but also change the obscenity laws. The *Criterion* article reveals the sinister direction of