

Returning to “Eziversity”: Feminism and Emancipation in the Letters of Ezra Pound to Forgotten Modernist Iris Barry, 1916-1917

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, many young male and female poets attended “Eziversity,” that is, Ezra Pound’s programme through which he educated them on the art of reading and writing. This study focuses on the case of Iris Barry (1895-1969), the English poet, novelist, film critic and forgotten modernist pioneer, to whom Pound sent a series of letters at the beginning of the twentieth century encouraging her to emancipate herself and avoid marriage. It also analyses “The Ezra Pound Period,” a text written by Barry and published in the *Bookman* in 1931, which serves as a response to the poet’s letters and instruction. The aim of this article is to contribute to feminist modernist studies by rescuing Barry from oblivion and by highlighting Pound’s promotion and support of many women writers who would later play a significant role in literary modernism.

Keywords: Iris Barry; Ezra Pound; “Eziversity”; literary modernism; feminism; women’s emancipation

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Regreso a “Eziversity”: feminismo y emancipación en las cartas de Ezra Pound enviadas a la modernista olvidada Iris Barry entre 1916 y 1917

A comienzos del siglo XX, muchos y muchas poetas tuvieron la oportunidad de asistir a lo que el propio Ezra Pound denominó la “Eziversity,” un método propio de instrucción a través del cual Pound los educaba en el arte de la lectura y la escritura. El presente estudio se centra en el caso de Iris Barry (1895-1969), poeta inglesa, novelista, crítica de cine y pionera modernista olvidada, a quien Pound envió una serie de cartas donde la tuteló y animó a emanciparse y descartar la idea de casarse. Además, se analiza “The Ezra Pound Period,” un

ensayo escrito por Barry y publicado en 1931 en *The Bookman* que constituye su posterior respuesta a dichas misivas. El objetivo de este artículo es rescatar a Barry del olvido, así como señalar la labor que Pound desempeñó promocionando y liberando a muchas mujeres escritoras que más tarde contribuirían de manera significativa a la construcción del discurso modernista.

Palabras clave: Iris Barry; Ezra Pound; “Eziversity”; modernismo literario; feminismo; emancipación de la mujer

For a woman in the 1920s, putting pen to paper was,
consciously or not, a feminist act.
(Childs 2007, 92)

I. INTRODUCTION

“What did a woman expect of life in early years of the century?” asks Hugh Kenner. “We do not know,” he implies, “since we have no sense of the fine line those years were demarking between matrimony and liberty” (1973, 293). A woman’s position in society depended upon treading the right side of this line. Marrying was the only socially acceptable reason for a young girl to leave home. However, women such as Iris Barry, Mary Butts, Nancy Cunard and Hilda Doolittle did choose the bohemian option, which meant making a break from their own mothers and families and, indeed, from the very idea of family itself (Brooker 2007, 107).

Ezra Pound saw a world divided into artists and nonartists and thought that an artist should not marry: “it ought to be illegal,” he wrote to his mother, “if the artist must marry let him find someone more interested in art, or his art, or the artist part of him, than in him” (Carpenter 1988, 105). In this dictum, he included women artists too, as he demonstrates in his early letters and advice to many of them. This article focuses on the epistolary exchange he maintained with the English modernist poet, novelist and film critic Barry between April 1916 and January 1917. While Pound’s letters are included in D. D. Paige’s edition (Pound [1950] 1974), no trace of Barry’s response has been preserved, as her biographer Robert Sitton states: “Although the letters from Iris Barry to Pound appear to have been lost, and may after all have been mostly cover letters of packets of poems, many from Pound to Barry were deposited by her in the Buffalo collection in the care of her one-time brother-in-law, Charles Abbott, founder of the collection” (2014, 417).

This article thus analyses the letters that Pound wrote to Barry and goes on to focus on “The Ezra Pound Period,” a text written by Barry and published in the *Bookman* in 1931, which serves as her response to the poet’s letters and instruction. The overall aim is to highlight the importance of these letters and the role that Pound played in Barry’s emancipation and life decisions. From this perspective, I will first argue that Barry’s feminist stance was based on the early advice she had received from Pound. Secondly, that not only did Pound introduce Barry to the London avantgarde, but he also shaped her evolution as a modernist writer and as a woman adopting a pioneering role.

2. WHO IS (AFRAID OF) IRIS BARRY?

With the exception of Virginia Woolf, women’s key contribution to the development of modernist art has been largely ignored (Felski 1994, 193). In fact, a number of

women well-known in the 1920s have been excluded from most canonical studies on modernism. In particular, “although scholars have shown some interest in Virginia Woolf’s 1926 essay, ‘The Cinema,’ we are just beginning to realize the vital role of Iris Barry, who was born in Birmingham and came to London to become one of the most prolific and influential figures in film forums of her day” (Hankins 2004, 491). Iris Sylvia Symes, also known as Frieda Crump (Edwards 2017, 8), was born in Birmingham in 1895, that is, at the same time as cinema was born. In 1916, she published some poems in *Poetry* and began an epistolary exchange with Pound, which marked the beginning of a life devoted to cinema and literature. Following his advice, she moved to London in 1917, where she met vorticist artist Wyndham Lewis, “the real leader of the London avant-garde,” according to his biographer, Paul Edwards (2017, 11). In 1919, they started a relationship and lived together until 1922. They had a son in 1919 and a daughter in 1920.

Barry studied cinema in a self-taught, compulsive way in London at a time when motion pictures were regarded as lower-class entertainment. Lewis also encouraged her to go to the movies so he could meet other women while she was there (Sitton 2014, 58). She spent hours and days watching the films of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, to the point that she could quote the subtitles word for word, as she would later recall. In the mid-1920s, Barry led a complete revolution in film culture in London as she became the most widely read film critic and contributed to the creation of one of the most important cultural institutions for film, the London Film Society. In her book *Let’s Go to the Pictures* (1926), which was published in the US in the same year as *Let’s Go to the Movies*, she analysed the experience of going to the cinema, both as entertainment and as art. In 1929, she published her novel *The Last Enemy*. She wrote more than forty articles for the *Spectator* (1924-1927), at least five for British *Vogue* (1924-1926) and more than sixty columns for the *Daily Mail* (1926-1930), where she also worked as a film correspondent. When she was fired by the *Daily Mail* for not promoting British films as much as Hollywood cinema, she left for America, where she became the first curator and, subsequently, the director of the Film Library at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). After the Second World War, Barry and her staff from the Film Library at MoMA were constantly under threat from right-wing detractors who saw them as Bolsheviks. These attacks damaged the careers of several members, such as the Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel, who was hired by Barry to translate propaganda films for Latin American audiences. She finally left the museum and the United States in 1951, dying of cancer in Marseilles in 1969, alone and forgotten.

As a film critic, Barry’s most important task was to legitimise film as an art form throughout the first half of the twentieth century. It is true that she was not the first writer to rise to this challenge. In 1915, Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) had published *The Art of the Moving Picture* ([1915] 2000), the first book to treat movies as art. However, while Lindsay compares cinema with other artistic expressions based on the properties

that they all share, Barry's *Let's Go to the Pictures* develops her precursory theory where she highlights and defends what makes cinema an art form that is unique and different from any other. Before Barry, another woman, Caroline Alice Lejeune (1897-1973), had written about cinema in the English press, first for the *Manchester Guardian* and then, from 1928 to 1960, for the London *Observer*, the oldest Sunday newspaper in the world. Yet, unlike Lejeune, Barry also had essays published in journals and literary magazines, such as the *Spectator* and the *Adelphi*, which were read by modernist artists and contemporary intellectuals. Likewise, Barry had a wide readership for her film reviews for the *Daily Mail*, the most widely sold British newspaper during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

With the exception of a conference paper, "Iris Barry, a Forgotten Pioneer: From Modernist London to New York MoMA" (Morató Agrafojo 2008), and the PhD dissertation "*El dibujo del califa. Arquitectos, ¿dónde está vuestro vórtice?* (1919), de Wyndham Lewis. Estudio preliminar, edición y traducción," where Barry is mentioned in a chapter devoted to the role of women in the British avantgarde (Morató Agrafojo 2011, 155-74), she was unknown to most Spanish scholars until the writing of the PhD dissertation "Iris Barry: The Birth of Film Criticism within Anglo-American Modernism" (Camacho 2017). This thesis analyses a collection of her articles published in London between 1924 and 1927, arguing that they inaugurated the birth of serious film criticism within Anglo-American modernism. Apart from this, Barry briefly appears in work by Spanish scholars focusing on filmmaker Buñuel during the period in which he lived in the US. For example, "*Buñuel: novela*, de Max Aub. Un testimonio generacional y un reto literario. Los materiales preparatorios para la obra" (Antequera Berral 2014) devotes a passage to the arrival of Buñuel in New York, where he met Barry, and how subsequently, thanks to her, he was hired to work at MoMA from 1939 to 1941.

Outside Spain, a few scholars have also tried to "find" Barry. Among them it is worth mentioning Margareta Akermark, a good friend and correspondent of hers who published *Remembering Iris Barry* in 1980, and Ivor Montagu, who co-founded the London Film Society with Barry and authored the article "Birmingham Sparrow: In Memoriam, Iris Barry 1896-1969" in 1970. More recently, Columbia University Press published the first biography to date, Sitton's *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film* (2014). Other published studies include Leslie K. Hankins's comprehensive "Iris Barry, Writer and Cineaste, Forming Film Culture in London 1924-1926: the *Adelphi*, the *Spectator*, the Film Society, and the *British Vogue*" (2004) and the articles by Haidee Wasson, "Writing the Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the Emergence of British Film Criticism" (2002), "Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema" (2005) and "The Woman Film Critic: Newspapers, Cinema and Iris Barry" (2006).

Given the richness and relevance of Barry's life and work, it is surprising that the first biography of her life was only published in 2014. Such lack of academic and

biographical attention can perhaps be explained, firstly, by her being a woman and, secondly, by her having lived in three different countries: first in England, then in the US and finally in France. Furthermore, after moving away, she never returned to any of these countries. Thus, her manuscripts, letters and professional documents are distributed over different geographical locations, housed in archives and personal collections. In order to gain access to them, one must travel between Europe and the US. An added problem for researchers is that she never wrote an autobiography or left written notes of any kind, and only a few letters are available: “some of her correspondence with Ezra Pound is published in *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941* (1950) and there are unpublished letters between them in the Poetry Coll. at the State Univ. of N.Y. at Buffalo. There is also interesting correspondence with Lewis in the Cornell Univ. Library and Virgil Thomson in the Yale Univ. Music Library” (Green and Sicherman 2012, 58).

Unfortunately, Barry is omitted from most studies on English modernism. For example, in *Writing for their Lives* :

There is another “group” or, more accurately, a loose network, who are less well known but who were women living and writing between the 1890s and the Second World War. Unlike Virginia Woolf’s set, these women, who knew each other, or each other’s work, or both, were often expatriates; many were poor; all were more bohemian than bourgeois; and they were more linked by shared choices and interests than by the tighter ties of traditional background and common blood. Nor were all the women poets or novelists; some were editors and publishers, others ran bookshops, yet others provided patronage of both spiritual and material kinds. (1989, 2)

It is surprising that someone as important as Barry was to the London cultural scene during the first half of the twentieth century, and who also conforms perfectly to the above profile, is not mentioned as being part of this group of bohemian women. Other scholars, such as Tania Modleski (1986), Andreas Huyssen (1988) or Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid (1996), have emphasised the importance of evaluating modernism through its relationship with mass culture. However, Barry is not mentioned in any of these studies either, not even in “Fashioning Readers: The Avant Garde and British *Vogue*, 1920-9” (2002), in which Aurelea Mahood explores the relationship between modernist literature and *Vogue* magazine precisely during the years Barry wrote for this publication.

3. EZRA POUND’S LETTERS TO BARRY, 1916-1917

On April 2, 1916, Pound reads some of the poems that Barry has published in the British magazine *Poetry and Drama* and writes to her asking if she could send him some more as yet unpublished poems: “It is one of my functions to gather up verses

for an American publication [...]. I should be glad to see some of your stuff" ([1950] 1974, 124). Barry's biographer, Sitton, mentions that she responds to Pound's first letter with a suitcase full of poems and with the wish to receive constructive criticism from Pound (2014, 26). However, Pound confesses that he is disappointed with what he has received, despite the fact that the poems are in line with the imagist aesthetic: "I am not satisfied with the things you have sent in, still many of them seem to have been done in accordance with the general suggestions of imagisme" ([1950] 1974, 124). In Pound's eyes, Barry does not seem to know what she wants to do and how she wants to do it, so he asks her questions like, "Have you very much intention of 'going on with it,' mastering the medium? Or are you doing *vers libre* because it is a new and attractive fashion and anyone can write a few things in *vers libre*?" ([1950] 1974, 124; italics in the original).

Through such comments and observations, in this letter, numbered 89 in Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974), Pound invites Barry to reflect on her writing and the responsibility that she must assume as a writer if she finally chooses to lead a literary life. She must understand writing as a constant learning process. This letter, in which the teacher gives long explanations and offers detailed suggestions for each of the poems, reflects the essence on which the entirety of Pound's advice to Barry is based, that is, simplicity and sobriety. He also attempts to instruct her on expression and metrics. A good example of this is when he describes Barry's style as monotonous due to her abuse of the iambic pentameter: "you fall too flatly into the 'whaty whaty whaty what' of the old pentameter. Pentameter OK if it is interesting, but a lot of lines with no variety won't do" ([1950] 1974, 125).

He complains that the poems published in December 1914 in *Poetry and Drama* that so drew his attention "have more passion and individuality than anything you [Barry] have felt in this sheaf" and goes on to suggest that Barry "send on [her] stuff to Chicago as it is, if you like," although he adds that he would prefer "to see more of it first, if that is convenient" ([1950] 1974, 125). A couple of years later, in the July 1916 issue of *Poetry*, a magazine founded in 1912 in Chicago and edited by another woman, Harriet Monroe, Barry, encouraged by Pound, publishes a series of poems. In relation to Pound's view of Barry's poetry, it is very interesting to note how the latter's poems ended up being published in *Poetry*. Bruce Fogelman, the author of *Shapes of Power: The Development of Ezra Pound's Poetic Sequences* (1988), found an unpublished letter from Pound to Monroe in the University of Chicago library in which he expresses his very favourable impression of Barry's talent and style. Surprisingly, Barry's biographer offers such important information only in a note at the end of the biography, along with the following fragment from Pound's letter, sent sometime after April 1916:

I enclose 14 brief poems by Iris Barry. I want you to print the lot, and as soon as possible [...]. She certainly has something in her. More grip and sense of inner form than the generality of late-imagists. I can't see that anything in this group can be omitted. I have

had a bunch of about forty poems to go over and have arranged this group out of it with a good deal of care. (Quoted in Sitton 2014, 417)

This letter conveys Pound's admiration for Barry's talent, which contradicts what he led her to believe most of the time in his personal feedback to her.

In a subsequent letter to Barry, dated April 24 and numbered 91 in Paige's edition, Pound refers to "Impression," a poem included in the selection he made for *Poetry*:

The orchids are white again . . .
There was one I knew
Whose body was white as they: fairer.

Alas! That we drifted apart
Faster than pear-petals fall to the ground! ([1950] 1974, 128)

Pound criticises the expression "friendship was dissolved," which was originally used by Barry in this poem instead of "we drifted apart," because he sees it as "newspaperish," probably implying that it sounds overly stereotypical, even mechanical, rather than poetic: "dissolve is bad not only because it is, as I think, out of key with what goes before but because it really means a solid going into liquid, and when you compare that to pear-petals falling, you blur your image" ([1950] 1974, 128). He offers Barry the following advice: "It is not so much 'getting a better word' very often as doing a new line" ([1950] 1974, 128). In addition, he suggests avoiding the passive voice and using the active instead, which led Barry, once again following Pound's advice, to replace "friendship was dissolved" with "we drifted apart" in the final version.

The American poet appreciates Barry's metric sense, even though, in his view, she should only practice regular metres for the purpose of improving her use of free verse, which Pound himself pioneered: "Your practice with regular metres is a good thing; better keep in mind that [it] is practice, and that it will probably serve to get your medium pliable. No one can do good free verse who hasn't struggled with the regular; at least I don't know anyone who has" ([1950] 1974, 128). In the same letter, Pound also refers to "The Fledgling," another published poem where Barry's style already shows his influence in that it is characterised by the aforementioned parameters of simplicity and sobriety:

The fire is nearly out,
The lamp is nearly out,
The room is untidy after the long day.
I am here, unhappy,
Longing to leave the hearth,

Longing to escape from the home,
 The others are asleep,
 but I am here, unhappy.
 The fire is nearly out,
 The lamp is nearly out.

Pound first notices the phrase “emancipated from home,” used in the original unpublished version of “The Fledging,” and describes it as a “cliché” ([1950] 1974, 128). Nevertheless, he tells Barry that he likes the serious tone of the poem as a whole and praises the effectiveness of her reiterative style at the beginning and the end. Pound suggests simply replacing the abovementioned phrase with “escape,” which is what finally appears in the published version.

This is the beginning of what Pound calls Barry’s “Ezuversity” phase, during which he guides and advises her on the philosophy of writing. His method and teachings were later to be included in his *ABC of Reading* ([1934] 2010) and *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). Above all, in letter 103, sent to Barry on 27 July 1916, Pound insists on the need for simplicity and brevity in writing, as reflected in the following excerpt: “The whole art is divided into: (a) concision, or style, or saying what you mean in the fewest and clearest words; (b) the actual necessity for creating or constructing something; of presenting an image, or enough images of concrete things arranged to stir the reader” ([1950] 1974, 141). Letter 103 is indeed an excellent example of the method used by Pound in his “Ezuversity.” It begins with a list of French poets the reading of whose work he considers mandatory, including Charles D’Orleans (1394-1465), Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) or the sixteenth-century group La Pléiade. However, he advises Barry not to spend too much time with French poetry and says that she would do better to devote herself to French prose. He compares Flaubert with Stendhal and states that the former’s *Trois Contes*, especially “Coeur Simple,” contains everything there is to know about writing:

I think however you’d do yourself more good reading French prose. How much have you read? How much have you read as a reader reading the story? How much as artist analysing the method? As I said Sunday, I suppose Flaubert’s *Trois Contes*, especially ‘Coeur Simple,’ contain all that anyone knows about writing. Certainly one ought to read the opening of the *Chartreuse de Parme*, and the first half of the *Rouge et Noir*. Shifting from Stendhal to Flaubert suddenly you will see how much better Flaubert writes. And yet there is a lot in Stendhal, a sort of solidity which Flaubert hasn’t. A trust in the thing more than the word. Which is the solid basis, i.e. the thing is the basis. ([1950] 1974, 140)

He then goes on to suggest that Barry should also read Voltaire’s *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, arguing that she will be the first woman to do so and that she must always strive to do things that nobody has ever done before:

Presumably no other living woman will have done so. One should always find a few things which 'no other living person' has done, a few vast territories of print that you can have to yourself and a few friends. They are a great defence against fools and against the half-educated, and against dons of all sorts (open and disguised). [...] Your first job is to get the tools for your work. Later on you can stuff yourself up with erudition as much as or little as suits you. At forty you will probably thank god there is something you haven't read. ([1950] 1974, 140)

As for the English poets, Pound advises Barry not to read Chaucer as there is a risk that she might start writing archaic English, as happened to him, even though Chaucer "has in him all that has ever got into English" ([1950] 1974, 140). He also laughs at Wordsworth and dismisses Byron's style (141). However, he does recommend Robert Browning and Kipling, as long as she first of all reads the most important Russian novels. In Spain there is, according to him, only one great modern writer, Benito Pérez Galdós (142).

In other letters, such as 105, Pound emphasises the importance and urgency of Barry's leaving Birmingham and the farm where she plans to live as soon as possible and moving to London. He also says that she should forget about the idea of getting married and consider making a start on writing her autobiography instead. She could begin by writing a series of letters addressed to him, this being "much easier than trying to write it all at a sitting, and it will keep the style simple and prevent your getting literary or attempting to make phrases paragraphs" ([1950] 1974, 140).¹ In Letter 110, dated September 22, 1916, Pound again insists that Barry should go to London, which he describes as "'intime,' but scarcely ever familiar." He also mentions the war in this letter as a topic that she should never refer to during conversations in the metropolis:

Dear Iris:

On the whole, it is all rubbish your going to a farm. The soul is more than flesh, etc. You had much better come up to London [...]. Simply the capital is 'intime,' instantly 'intime,' scarcely ever familiar. One talks aesthetics, literature, scandal about others, political intrigue (war, for the present, though no stranger should introduce this last topic) [...].

General instructions:

Ask questions. Every one likes to be asked questions.

Super-strategy:

Ask questions showing knowledge of or sane interest in something of interest to the interlocutor. ([1950] 1974, 149)

Pound's epistolary relationship with Barry comprises more than a dozen letters and extends from April 1916 to January 1917, according to the sources consulted. However, their first physical encounter, which marks the beginning of a new life for Barry, took

¹ Sitton quotes part of this letter, but does not include the date, only a footnote indicating "undated" (2014, 417). However, the letter does appear dated (August 24, 1916) in Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974, 144).

place on July 13, 1916 in London. Barry reminisced about the encounter years later in her article “The Ezra Pound Period,” published in 1931 in the American magazine the *Bookman*. This article is discussed in the section that follows.

4. BARRY’S “THE EZRA POUND PERIOD”

WALKING across Wimbledon Common one autumn day, Ezra Pound gave me what was undoubtedly an illuminating and comprehensive account—a sort of bird’s eye view for a provincial just arrived in the metropolis—of the state of literature and the arts in England in that year 1916. Though we had corresponded for some time, it was the first time I actually laid eyes on him. (Barry 1931, 159; capitals in the original)

This is the beginning of the article in which Barry portrays Pound and the London scene in the context of the First World War. Now older and much more experienced, Barry reflects on the personal impulse that led Pound to act as her mentor and, later, to exert his influence on around a dozen of the most respected English and American writers in history.

In the first part of the text, Barry recalls her first encounter with Pound. She offers a caricatured description of him and attempts to define the extraordinary manner and the original accent in which he used to express himself: “the base of American mingled with a dozen assorted English society and Cockney accents inserted in mockery, French, Spanish and Greek exclamations, strange cries and catcalls, the whole very oddly inflected, with dramatic pauses and *diminuendos*” (159; italics in the original). She then turns to the artistic and social scene, about which she writes, “ragtime had barely become jazz then and skirts were still only creeping up” (159). This helps the reader to understand the sociocultural context and the innovative nature of Pound’s poetry at that time in England. As Barry points out, the general public had barely even heard of the artistic avantgarde. The differences between artistic movements such as futurism, cubism, imagism and vorticism were not appreciated or understood and were collectively seen as something sinister.

As a direct witness, then, Barry remembers what the rebellious minority poetry of Pound and his allies and disciples meant within literary modernism:

There was a feeling that something exciting had happened which belonged peculiarly to them. Pound’s poetry, reprinted derisively in popular periodicals, immediately found for him a following. For fear of seeming to exaggerate now, I hesitate to say just what his poetry and that of his associates did mean to the rebellious minority at the time. [...] The influence of Pound was immediate and considerable, in the widest sense as well as in its more obvious effects, on a dozen writers now eminent in English and American literature. (160)

Barry refers to the young people who gathered around Pound as the “war generation,” underlining the historical First World War context rather than their own interest in the topic of the war, which indeed was not very strong. As she remembers it, the conflict was inevitably present and at the same time generally avoided. Only when it came to an end was it finally considered and qualified as “devastating and abnormal” (161) by its survivors.

Throughout the article, the author mentions many of the artists and writers of that generation who, together with Pound, contributed through their talent to the recording of this historical period and the defining of modernism. James Joyce had recently completed *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.² D. H. Lawrence had managed to publish in *The English Review*, with the help of Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford). Monroe had founded the abovementioned *Poetry* magazine and Lewis had by now written *Tarr*.³ She also pays tribute to great promises who were killed during the war, such as the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and the writers who suffered so bitterly in it, such as Richard Aldington and Robert Graves. However, according to Barry, the conflict did not manage to put an end to the new aesthetic and moral attitude of this period; rather, it seemed to intensify it (161).

To Barry, Pound’s role was always to remind the world that the only thing that really triumphs over time is artistic work. Pound always defended the idea that civilisations do not go down in history for their military victories but rather for their artistic achievements. A good example of Pound’s personal struggle for art is provided by the letters that he wrote and the editorial and literary work that he carried out through them. As the following passage from “The Ezra Pound Period” shows, twenty years before Pound’s letters were published for the first time in 1950, Barry had already recognised their value:

It has never been sufficiently recognized what heavy and important work he did for letters at that time. There were innumerable aspects to it. As literary adviser to *The Egoist* and London editor of *Poetry* (afterwards of *The Little Review*) he was forever combing obscure periodicals and tracking down new and unprinted manuscript. It was natural to him to encourage and groom young writers [...]. Only the postman knew how many tons of manuscript poured into his little flat behind the church in Kensington. Pound not only read it all, but, if there seemed the least promise anywhere, he commented on it and criticized it in explosive letters many pages long, blue-pencilled it, later received it back corrected and—often—urged the best of it on not always willing editors. (162)

² *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was serialised in the *Egoist* in twenty-five installments from 2 February 1914 to 1 September 1915, thanks to Pound. It was first published in book form on 29 December 1916. It was also Pound who arranged for its publication by the American publishing house B. W. Huebsch.

³ *Tarr* was written in 1909-1911, revised and expanded in 1914-1915 and first serialised in *The Egoist* from April 1916 until November 1917. The American version was published in 1918 and an English edition, published by the *Egoist* Press, appeared shortly afterwards. The revised final version was published by Chatto and Windus in 1928.

Nowadays, a century after these letters were written, Pound's correspondence enjoys great attention in the academic world (see, in addition to Paige's edition (Pound [1950] 1974), the critical introductions to Pound 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2015). However, the letters addressed to Barry have never been analysed in depth and have rarely been cited in academic journals.

As well as from writers, the correspondence that Pound was receiving at that time in his Kensington flat also came from artists, sculptors and emerging musicians whom, according to Barry, Pound intended "to encourage, to find patrons for, to find inexpensive rooms for, to find friends for, to find a meal for, to find mental stimulation and aesthetic education for, to render happy by placing them in a restaurant where the shadow of the great—Yeats or Arthur Symons, perhaps—might fall upon them, or to be regaled with anecdote or that pointed or as-yet-unprintable bit of literary gossip which must be forever forgotten" (163). These same motivations led Pound to introduce Barry into the most avantgarde artistic and literary circles of London society, a fascinating world where, in spite of her youth and non-metropolitan provenance, she did not miss the opportunity to make her way. Barry's "The Ezra Pound Period" describes in detail the weekly meetings Pound organised for all the acquaintances with whom he shared common interests and tastes. Held first of all in a cheap restaurant in Soho and later on in another restaurant in Regent Street, these dinners were of an informal nature but had the very ambitious intent of bringing together the most innovative, brilliant voices and minds of Anglo-Saxon modernism.

Barry seems to be developing the characters in a play when she describes many of them. When introducing Ford Madox Hueffer (Ford), who was completely unknown to most people at the time, she starts by defining his physical features, his appearance, his clothing and some personality traits, in order to finally reveal who he is:

Semi-monstrous, bulging out his uniform, china-blue eyes peering from an expanse of pink face, pendulous lower lip drooping under sandy moustache as he boomed through endless anecdotes of Great Victorians, Great Pre-Raphaelites, Henry James, and somebody no one else had ever heard of and hardly believed in even then, was Ford Madox Hueffer—of particular interest to some of us when we realized that he had once been the little William Tell boy in the Rossetti painting. (165)

When describing T. S. Eliot, she highlights that even on social occasions he dressed in the manner of the bank clerk he actually was, as well as how his presence was irresistible to the female guests, whose attendance was permitted only if Pound had previously perceived in them some kind of artistic skill or talent, as Barry points out: "Tall, lean and hollow cheeked, dressed in the formal manner appropriate to his daytime occupation in Lloyd's Bank—that was T. S. Eliot, generally silent but with a smile that was as shy as it was friendly, and rather passionately but mutely adored by the three or four young females who had been allowed in because of some crumb of promise in painting or verse" (165).

Among these women was Doolittle, whom Barry describes as “taller and more silent even than Mrs. Pound and looking, somehow, haunted” (166). Barry includes a photo and caption of this “American girl who went to Europe for the summer in 1911 and never came back, having been drawn into the Imagist movement by Pound,” who “sent some of her poems to Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry*, her first work to be published” (166). After this, Barry spends some time introducing the editor and suffragist activist Harriet Weaver, who she considers to be “lion-hearted”:

And who was the lady sitting up so very straight with her severe hat and nervous air—she might have been a bishop’s daughter perhaps? That was the lion-hearted Miss Harriet Weaver who printed Joyce when nobody else would and who, indeed, I believe made it possible for Joyce to enjoy sufficient leisure to write *Ulysses* at all, though she had never even seen him; who printed T. S. Eliot and Wyndham Lewis and Amy Lowell when nobody else did. (167)

This fragment stands out for its use of the rhetorical question and the admiration expressed by Barry for the female editor. She reminds the reader that it was Weaver who first edited works by Joyce, Eliot, Lewis and Amy Lowell, when nobody believed in them, and emphasises Weaver’s humility when she states that “she was never known to speak either of herself or of anything to do with that remarkable publishing activity” (167).

The last part of Barry’s “The Ezra Pound Period” focuses on the faith that Pound had in art, similar to that which other men had in patriotism, freedom, suffrage or religion. Barry supports his convictions, put forward in *The Spirit of Romance* (1928), that “artists are the antennae of the race, though the bucket-headed will never learn to trust their great artists. [...] Peace comes of communication [...]. The whole of great art is a struggle for communication,” as well as his claim that “all ages are contemporaneous” (Pound quoted in Barry 1931, 169), which underpins his belief in the existence of a continuous present. According to Barry, it was this passion for communication and continuity that was behind the weekly dinners that Pound held in London, a city he considered to be “a larger university” where “the best specialists are perhaps only approachable in chance conversation” (169). This finally triggers Barry’s epiphany; now, many years later, she is able to fully understand and explain what really motivated Pound to offer her that unique opportunity to attend the Ezra Pound University:

That was why he would waste an afternoon on the unpleasant and conceited youth who had come up from the country to see him after writing a poem or two, or a morning writing a long letter to advise an uncouth young woman how to behave in literary society, or an evening typing a long letter on the *Whole Art of Writing* which, if digested, might perhaps help to turn one disciple into a tiny contribution to the general stream of letters. (170; italics in the original)

Barry closes “The Ezra Pound Period” with a declaration of gratitude for the vast quantity of work carried out by Pound. Without fail, in her view, he expressed himself with freedom and fought in an unconventional way to encourage and defend the artistic talent not only of men like Joyce, Eliot and Gaudier-Brzeska, but also of some struggling women pioneers, like Barry herself, whose path was strewn with obstacles.

5. CONCLUSION

BARRY DID READ THE LIST OF LITERARY WORKS RECOMMENDED BY POUND IN 1916 AND THROUGHOUT HER CAREER FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED HIS MOST SIGNIFICANT PIECE OF ADVICE: TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT NO WOMAN HAD EVER MADE BEFORE. The guidance she received and the literary know-how she gained from her first mentor paved her way into the modernist scene, first in London and later in New York. All this experience subsequently allowed her, during the 1920s, to become, among other things, the first film critic in England to write for a serious English journal (Montagu 1970, 106), that is, the *Spectator*. She became a pioneer in the defence of film as art, leading the way for women in the worlds of film culture and literature by adopting roles and conquering spaces that had traditionally been reserved for men.

Examining Barry’s relationship with Pound sheds light on her first intellectual efforts years before she laid down the foundations for modern film criticism. And from a current feminist perspective, it also throws into relief the role Pound played in the liberation and promotion of modernist women writers. In conclusion, even after the enormous efforts made by feminist scholars since the 1970s in retrieving from oblivion countless women writers and artists, further extensive, in-depth research is required to rescue the many women who have been excluded from canonical histories of literature. A case in point are the numerous modernist women, such as Barry, whose silenced influence and key contributions deserve to be unveiled.

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Received 30 July 2018

Revised version accepted 3 February 2019

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