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EZRA POUND AND THE IDEOGRAMMIC METHOD

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1983

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-5. DEC. 1983

## ABSTRACT

Christopher Matthews

### Ezra Pound and the Ideogrammic Method

This work addresses the question of Pound's poetics, proceeding upon the conviction that the term "ideogrammic method", so often slighted by commentators, is to be taken seriously, and that an understanding of its nature and implications provides a sound framework for one's understanding of Pound's mature poetic practice.

Part One begins by tracing the evolution of Imagism/Vorticism, locating in Pound's theory and practice at that time his first adumbration of the poetic morphology which I maintain is central to the Cantos. The first four Cantos are then examined and their pattern of theophanies related to the morphology. The Malatesta Cantos are identified as the first expression of the ideogrammic method, the latter being defined as an extension into the "epic" dimension of Imagist/Vorticist principles.

Part Two retreats somewhat from the detail of the Cantos to deal more speculatively with the ideogrammic method and its related ideas. In particular, through the figures of Francis Bacon, Emerson, Fenollosa and Pound himself, the method is set in relation to the Adamic conception of language.

Part Three begins by further enlarging the terms of the ideogrammic method to incorporate Pound's notion of the forma, and relating both method and notion to the poetic morphology. This complex of ideas is then shown in action in Cantos XXXIX and XLVII. The rhythms of the Leopoldine Cantos are examined, and a more generalizing discussion of rhythms in the Cantos as a whole follows. This is then related to the question of form in the poem. The work concludes with a detailed examination of the Pisan Cantos and Canto XC.

The ideogrammic method is not a body of settled doctrine, but I believe it to be the generative locus of Pound's mature poetics. It is as such that I would recommend the concept for fresh attention.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

References to the Cantos are given in the following form: IX/35. This means Canto IX, page 35. The edition referred to is the Faber Revised Collected edition of 1975.

The following abbreviations are used for works frequently cited:

- ChWrCh: Ernest Fenollosa, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, San Francisco, 1936.
- CPW: Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Complete Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1900.
- CW1: Adrian Stokes, The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes. Vol.1: 1930-1937, 1978.
- CW2: Adrian Stokes, The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes. Vol.2: 1937-1958, 1978.
- P: Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship, ed. Carroll F. Terrell, Orono.
- PE: Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era, 1972.
- PW: Francis Bacon, The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, ed. John M. Robertson, 1905.

The following abbreviations are used for Pound's works:

- ABCR: ABC of Reading, 1934.
- C: Confucius: The Great Digest, The Unwobbling Pivot, The Analects, translation and commentary by Ezra Pound, New York, 1969.
- CA: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius, trans. Ezra Pound, 1955.
- CC: Confucius to Cummings: An Anthology of Poetry, ed. Ezra Pound and Marcella Spann, 1964.
- CSP: Collected Shorter Poems, 2nd edn., 1958.
- GB: Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir, 2nd edn., New York, 1961.
- GK: Guide to Kulchur, 2nd edn., 1952.
- L: The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, ed. D.D. Paige, 1951.
- LE: Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot, 1954.
- LI: Letters to Ibbotson 1935-1952, ed. Vittoria I. Mondolfo and Margaret Hurley, Orono, 1979.

- M            Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism, ed. R. Murray Schafer, 1978.
- PD            Pavannes and Divagations, New York, 1958.
- P/J            Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce, ed. Forrest Read, 1968.
- SP            Selected Prose 1909-1965, ed. William Cookson, 1973.
- SR            The Spirit of Romance, 2nd edn., 1952.
- I              The Translations of Ezra Pound, ed. Hugh Kenner, 2nd edn., 1970.
- VA            Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts, ed. Harriet Zinnes, New York, 1980.

For translations from foreign languages in the Cantos, and for other material, I am indebted throughout to the works by Edwards and Vasse, and by Terrell, cited in the 'List of Sources Consulted'.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this book I attempt to characterize the ideogrammic method by referring the concept both to Pound's critical writings and to the poetry of the Cantos. I hope to show that this amounts to a characterization of his mature poetics.

I begin, in Chapter One, by dealing with Pound's earlier poetry from the first books up to Cathay and Lustra. First I consider the emphasis Pound's version of Vorticism placed upon the role of "energy" in the act of poetic creation, and his consequent emphasis on and concern for the process of writing. I then go on to consider two crucial essays dating from this period - 'Vorticism' and 'Affirmations - As for Imagisme' - identifying in them Pound's first adumbration of the poetic morphology which, drawn from his own experience when writing the poem 'In a Station of the Metro', can be identified as the root of his later characterizations of the creative act. Finally, I trace in the development of Pound's early poetry his movement from the strophic writing of Personae and Exultations to the stichic, line-based poetry of Cathay and Lustra.

Chapter Two deals with the first four Cantos, and begins with a distinction Seamus Heaney draws in one of his essays between the "masculine" and "feminine" - or "Yeatsian" and "Wordsworthian" - modes in poetry. This distinction is then related to the poetic morphology of the 'Vorticism' essay and the latter is shown to be essentially "feminine" in bearing. On this I base the - as yet tentative - conclusion that Pound is essentially a poet of "feminine" or "vatic" tendency.





Cantos I to IV are examined with this thesis in mind, and the examination is mostly concerned with tracing the pattern of theophanies running through them, and with what this pattern reveals of the poet's relation to the syncretic Goddess - a being who appears in many guises throughout the Cantos, but under the dominant aspects of Circe and Aphrodite. Cantos I and II are shown to be paradigmatic in this respect. Canto I embodies the Odyssean moment, in which the hero confronts spiritual energies by means of an act of appropriation or penetration. Canto II embodies the Acoetian moment, in which the hero figures as a delighted witness to the divine and as its celebrant. Cantos III and IV are examined in relation to this temperamental paradigm. The conclusion to this chapter sums up the argument so far and indicates its further direction.

Chapter Three deals with the Malatesta and Hell Cantos. I suggest that in the Malatesta Cantos Pound employs the ideogrammic method for the first time, that the latter is simply an extension or enlargement of Imagist/Vorticist principles to allow for the direct incorporation of hard historical facts and documentary matter, and that its development relates to Pound's definition of the epic as "a poem including history".(1) Pound's epic ambitions are then related to the poetic morphology previously outlined, and I suggest that the two are not opposed as long as the poet's treatment of historical material is a loving anamnesis, a recalling of loved matter.(2) The Malatesta Cantos effect a union of the "masculine" and the "feminine" through their presentation of Sigismundo, an 'Odyssean' figure whose exploits are directed towards the building of a monument to Love. This accommodation cannot be effected in regard to the Hell Cantos, and I associate

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(1) LE, p.86 ('Date Line', Make It New, 1934).

(2) See David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.21.

their failure with their lack of relation to the poetic morphology. A short biographical section relates their hysteria to some of the details of Pound's career.

Part Two, Chapter One opens with a further discussion of the character of the ideogrammic method and of its place in Pound's theory and practice of poetry. I then go on to relate the ideogrammic method to Pound's notion of "process"; I suggest that "process" (a complex, quasi-mystical notion too involved to characterize briefly here) is the quality which the method is designed to express and which Pound felt could not be expressed in a more conventional form of discourse; and I relate both to his prose, which he regarded as equally bound to the method. Finally, I draw some conclusions regarding the relation of the process of nature and the process of writing.

Chapter Two associates this current of feeling with Fenollosa's epistemology and his philosophy of language.

In Chapter Three this is in turn related to Pound's attitude towards language, and both Pound and Fenollosa are set within the context of Emerson's and Francis Bacon's linguistic thought. I associate the Adamic linguistic philosophy embraced by all of these figures with the poetic morphology of the 'Vorticism' essay, and trace the kinship of the two. The chapter concludes with a philosophical excursus regarding Organicism generally, and relating Pound to this current of thought.

Chapter Four deals with Pound's development, in the late 1930s, of a "totalitarian" poetic. I dissociate my reading of this from that of

Donald Davie in his Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, and relate it both to Pound's conception of poetic technique and to the poetic morphology. I conclude that it represents a new emphasis in Pound on a Yeatsian masculinity in the arts, but retains a continuity with his earlier thinking through its Organicist basis.

Part Three, Chapter One begins by examining Pound's conception of the forma. I find in it the essential image of the morphology, but with a new emphasis on the Odyssean mastery of the poetic material. I maintain that the ideogrammic method is essentially opposed to this Odyssean emphasis. I contrast the 'ideogrammic' free verse of Pound with the 'syntactic' free verse of William Carlos Williams, and assess the closeness of the latter's relation to prose usage. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ideogrammic method as an organizer of large-scale forms: I find that, while traditional poetics are concerned with achieved structure, the ideogrammic method is oriented towards the process of writing and necessitates "open" forms rather than architectonically conceived wholes. This disparity is viewed within A.N. Whitehead's concept of the "specious present".(1)

Chapter Two begins with a detailed examination of Cantos XXXIX and XLVII. It finds in them an expression of Pound's emphasis in this period on a masculine or Odyssean approach to the poet's material, and identifies in them a sort of achievement rare in the Cantos, for I contend that most that is successful in the poem is written in the vatic or Acoetian mode, and that when Pound attempts to master rather than attend to his material the poetry is frequently distorted. I suggest that these two Cantos are more traditional in orientation

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(1) See A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.131.

than most of Pound's poetry in the Cantos, and relate this again to Whitehead's concept of the "specious present". I conclude that the ideogrammic method in its most characteristic form is an essentially Acoetian instrument. I then go on to consider the Leopoldine Cantos, comparing them to the Malatesta sequence. This examination is conducted mostly in terms of rhythm, and serves as an introduction to the next section, on rhythm generally in the Cantos.

This section begins by outlining the various metrical forms characteristic of English verse, and identifies free verse as a metreless accentual measure. The consequences of this, both rhythmic and syntactic, are then considered, and the contribution of Pound's stichic free verse to the syntactic fragmentation characteristic of the ideogrammic method is assessed. The absence of metrical closure in the poem is related to its "open" forms.

The next section picks up and expands upon the question of "major form" in the Cantos, first broached in Part Three, Chapter One.(1) Pound's prose formulations regarding the subject are considered, and I conclude that there is no formal closure in the Cantos, that consequently the poem must be read for its texture alone, and that this is a necessary consequence of Pound's adoption of the ideogrammic method.

Chapter Three concludes the argument with a detailed examination of the Pisan Cantos and Canto XC, conceived of as the consummate expression of Pound the vatic, Acoetian poet, and of the ideogrammic method in so far as it is an essentially Acoetian instrument.

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(1) On "major form" - with Pound celebrating its frequent inutility - see LE, pp.394-95 ('Dr Williams' Position', The Dial, 1928).

A final word regarding my treatment of the poetry. There is a great deal of it which I do not consider; for instance, there is little reference made to, and no extended treatment of, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley or Homage to Sextus Propertius nor, at the other end of Pound's career, Thrones de los Cantares or Drafts and Fragments. In other words my treatment of the poetry is selective, and the part analyzed is intended to stand for the whole. I have adopted this approach in accordance with the general thrust of my book, which is broadly speculative and synthesizing. It has not been my intention to provide a detailed guide to the text.

PART I

THE EARLY POETRY1. Vorticism: from Heat to Form

The two reformative axes of Imagism are conveniently summed up in a report on the movement by F.S. Flint which appeared in Poetry for March 1913. He wrote:

They had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only, and they had not published them. They were:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing', whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

By these standards they judged all poetry, and found most of it wanting. They held also a certain 'Doctrine of the Image', which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and would provoke useless discussion.(1)

In the same issue of the magazine Pound's 'A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste' cleared up this clouded issue of the "Doctrine of the Image":

An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term 'complex' rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart, though we might not agree absolutely in our application.

It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.(2)

Imagism, then, had two separate but related points of attack: there was on the one hand the matter of technical hygiene, the reformation of the executive means of poetry; and on the other the status of the

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(1) Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.129.

(2) Ibid., p.130.

image. The former issue is straightforward and well-documented: a great deal of Pound's energy was spent in dashing off prose prescriptions for healthy technique. The question of the image, on the other hand, was less amenable to definition, and Pound's attempts are often frustratingly gnomic. Nevertheless, a clear understanding of what Pound intended by the term is essential to a proper understanding of his poetic theory and practice, and it is this aspect of Imagism I shall be concentrating upon.

Hugh Kenner is concerned to qualify the importance of the movement:

... Involving as it did many minds, Imagism received much attention. The Egoist ran a 'Special Imagist Number' as late as May 1915. Several factors moreover - Amy Lowell's secessionist group, which kept using the name; Pound's effort to incorporate the Imagist terminology into the Vorticist; the printer's delays that held up Des Imagistes until March 1914 though the mss. had gone to America the previous summer - have made Imagism seem to occupy Pound's mind much longer than it did. Even the stones and squares and hard edges and sculptured forms in the Cantos have helped perpetuate this confusion, though such detail is more plausibly traced to his time with Gaudier.(1)

We can acknowledge the justice of this while insisting on the continuing importance of the image itself to Pound, and noting the continuousness of his concern with it as he moved from the formulation of Imagism to the incorporation of the Imagist poetic within the Vorticist. The continuity is real and important: for within either movement Pound continually and emphatically stressed the crucial rôle of "energy", "emotion" or "feeling" in the genesis of the poem and the propagation of the image. We shall see that this grounding of the poem in impulse, and stress upon the poet's creative energy, has a profound influence upon the poem's formal qualities.

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.173.



As early as late 1911 - early 1912, in his series of articles 'I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', Pound was drawing analogies between the vivifying force of art and natural energies: various engines - like, the implication is, various paintings - "all 'produce power' - that is, they gather the latent energy of Nature and focus it on a certain resistance. The latent energy is made dynamic or 'revealed' to the engineer in control, and placed at his disposal."(1) And by the time of 'The Serious Artist', published in instalments between the October and November of 1913, this slight emphasis has burgeoned into doctrine:

Aristotle will tell you that 'The apt use of metaphor, being as it is, the swift perception of relations, is the true hall-mark of genius'. That abundance, that readiness of the figure is indeed one of the surest proofs that the mind is upborne upon the emotional surge.

By 'apt use', I should say it were well to understand, a swift-ness, almost a violence, and certainly a vividness.(2)

This, before Vorticism had claimed him, is a Vorticist stress:

"abundance", "the emotional surge", "swiftness", "violence", "vividness". Again:

The prose author has shown the triumph of his intellect and one knows that such triumph is not without its sufferings by the way, but by the verses [a handful of touchstones he has quoted] one is brought upon the passionate moment. This moment has brought with it nothing that violates the prose simplicities. The intellect has not found it but the intellect has been moved.

There is little but folly in seeking the lines of division, yet if the two arts must be divided we may as well use that line as any other. In the verse something has come upon the intelligence. In the prose the intelligence has found a subject for its observations. The poetic fact pre-exists.

In a different way, of course, the subject of the prose pre-exists. Perhaps the difference is undemonstrable, perhaps it is not even communicable to any save those of good will. Yet I think this orderliness

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(1) SP, p.25 ('I Gather the Limbs of Osiris', The New Age, 1911-12).

(2) LE, p.52 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

in the greatest poetic passages, this quiet statement that partakes of the nature of prose and is yet floated and tossed in the emotional surges, is perhaps as true a test as that mentioned by the Greek theoretician.(1)

We can see in this passage Pound's notions of technical hygiene, of the prose virtues, being transfigured by a far more ardent-sounding emphasis on "emotional surges". He doesn't disavow the relevance of the disciplines of prose to the writing of verse, but he knows that they don't exhaust the latter problem. In poetry "something has come upon the intelligence", and that "something" is the apprehension of divinity. This isn't clear looking at the passage in isolation, but becomes so when one is familiar with later pronouncements on the same theme. In the same way we know that the "poetic fact pre-exists" in a different way to the pre-existing prose "subject" because poetry deals with what Pound will later call the "permanent world", the "radiant world", the "world of moving energies", (2) whereas prose deals with the quotidianly pre-existent. The language of Pound's essay doesn't make this clear - in fact he despairs of explicitness: "perhaps the difference is undemonstrable" - but later formulations enlarge upon and clarify his hesitations, as we shall see. At any rate, the continuity between these and later, Vorticist pronouncements is apparent, and at its most telling in this passage, which moves from energy to the form it generates:

We might come to believe that the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radio-activity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying. A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in swift motion. You may make what image you like.

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(1) LE, pp.53-54 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

(2) See ibid., p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make it New, 1934).

I do not know that there is much use in composing an answer to the often asked question: What is the difference between poetry and prose?

I believe that poetry is the more highly energized.(1)

The image of swirling sand clearly anticipates the later vortex figure, and is picked up again in Canto IV: "The water whirls up the bright pale sand in the spring's mouth" (IV/15). It was the proposition that "energy creates pattern"(2) that Pound's version of Vorticism was to attempt to justify.

There was no lack of energy in Pound's associates in the later movement: the "EXPLOSIVE" Wyndham Lewis;(3) Gaudier and "the daemon of energy that possessed him, or served him".(4) In Blast, Lewis characterized Vorticism in terms of activity and energy (a character in his 1914 play The Enemy of the Stars exclaims "Energy has been fixed on me from nowhere"(5)):

By Vorticism we mean (a) Activity as opposed to the tasteful Passivity of Picasso; (b) SIGNIFICANCE as opposed to the dull or anecdotal character to which the Naturalist is condemned; (c) ESSENTIAL MOVEMENT and ACTIVITY (such as the energy of a mind) as opposed to the imitative cinematography, the fuss and hysterics of the Futurists.(6)

Gaudier writes in similar terms, again in Blast:

Sculptural energy is the mountain.(7)

HIS [the Greek's] SCULPTURE WAS DERIVATIVE his feeling for form

- (1) LE, p.49 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).  
 (2) SP, p.344 ('Affirmations - As For Imagisme', The New Age, 1915).  
 (3) Ibid, p.423 ('D'Artagnan Twenty Years After', The Criterion, 1937).  
 (4) GB, p.39.  
 (5) Wyndham Lewis, Collected Poems and Plays, ed. Alan Munton, Manchester, 1979, p.104.  
 (6) Wyndham Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, ed. Walter Michel and C.J. Fox, 1969, p.96 ('Vorticist Exhibition', 1915).  
 (7) GB, p.20.

secondary. The absence of direct energy lasted for a thousand years.(1)

VORTEX IS ENERGY!(2)

When we first knew them [Africans and Oceanians] they were very near the paleolithic stage. Though they were not so much dependent upon animals their expenditure of energy was wide, for they began to till the land and practice crafts rationally, and they fell into contemplation before their sex: the site of their great energy: THEIR CONVEX MATURITY.(3)

WITH ALL THE DESTRUCTION that works around us NOTHING IS CHANGED, EVEN SUPERFICIALLY. LIFE IS THE SAME STRENGTH, THE MOVING AGENT THAT PERMITS THE SMALL INDIVIDUAL TO ASSERT HIMSELF.(4)

MY VIEWS ON SCULPTURE REMAIN ABSOLUTELY THE SAME.

IT IS THE VORTEX OF WILL, OF DECISION, THAT BEGINS.(5)

The modern sculptor is a man who works with instinct as his inspiring force... What he feels he does so intensely and his work is nothing more nor less than the abstraction of this intense feeling... That this sculpture has no relation to classic Greek, but that it is continuing the tradition of the barbaric peoples of the earth (for whom we have sympathy and admiration) I hope to have made clear.(6)

Pound gives an uncharacteristically diffident account of his first brushes with Gaudier, from which it appears that he found himself a little intimidated by the sculptor's formidable vitality:

I was interested and I was determined that he should be. I knew that many things would bore or disgust him, particularly my rather middle-aged point of view, my intellectual tiredness and exhaustion, my general scepticism and quietness, and I therefore opened fire with 'Altaforte', 'Piere Vidal', and such poems as I had written when about his own age... He even tried to persuade me that I was not becoming middle-aged, but any man whose youth has been worth anything, any man who has lived his life at all in the sun, knows that he has seen the best of it when he finds thirty approaching; knows that he is entering a quieter realm, a place with a different psychology.(7)

And it was Gaudier's ardent vocabulary of energy and stress, less acidulous than Lewis', more sanguine, that Pound adopted to

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- (1) GB, p.21.  
 (2) Ibid., p.22.  
 (3) Ibid., p.23.  
 (4) Ibid., p.27.  
 (5) Ibid., pp.27-28.  
 (6) Ibid., p.37.  
 (7) Ibid., pp.45-46.

characterize the motions of creativity. "Art", he wrote in his memoir of the sculptor, "comes from intellect stirred by will, impulse, emotion"; but he added, in a characteristic qualification, that "art is emphatically not any of these others deprived of intellect".(1) Whatever his emphasis on energy, he would always insist that that quality must be within the artist's control. The carver in stone doesn't go at his block wildly, hammering and gouging, but cuts "energy . . . into stone, making the stone expressive in its fit and particular manner".(2) The result must be 'fitting'; the artist's "will" subjugates and disciplines detail; and we can "define style as 'the absolute subjugation of the details of a given work to the dominant will; to the central urge or impulse'".(3) And "all this is new life, it gives a new aroma, a new keenness for keeping awake".(4) The agent of this "new life", the "complete man" must have more interest in things which are in seed and dynamic than in things which are dead, dying, static".(5) The community of such artists knows that "'will and consciousness are our Vortex', and an integral part of that consciousness is the unwavering feeling that we live in a time as active and as significant as the Cinquecento. We feel this ingress and we are full of the will for its expression."(6)

Energy, then, "creates pattern"; and pattern makes manifest the "permanent world", the world of Form. The process of creation modulates powerful impulse into radiant form. We shall examine the morphology of this process in the next section; here we see the characteristic formulation of its formal goal:

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- (1) GB, p.105.
  - (2) Ibid., p.110.
  - (3) Ibid., p.78.
  - (4) Ibid., p.126.
  - (5) Ibid., p.117.
  - (6) Ibid., p.110.

We are indissolubly united against all non-artists and half-artists by our sense of this fundamental community, this unending adventure towards 'arrangement', this search for the equations of eternity. A search which may end in results as diverse as the portrait of Miss Alexander . . . or a formula like

$$(\underline{x} - \underline{a})^2 + (\underline{y} - \underline{b})^2 = \underline{r}^2,$$

or Brzeska's last figure of a woman, or Lewis' 'Timon' or even a handful of sapphics.(1)

The "equations of eternity" arise, spiritously, from the "heat" of art:

These manifestations at their intensest are the manifestations of men in the heat of their art, of men making instruments, for the best art is perhaps only the making of instruments.

A clavicord or a statue or a poem, wrought out of ages of knowledge, out of fine perception and skill, that some other man, that a hundred other men, in moments of weariness can wake beautiful sound with little effort, that they can be carried out of the realm of annoyance into the calm realm of truth, into the world unchanging, the world of fine animal life, the world of pure form. And John Heydon, long before our present day theorists, had written of the joys of pure form . . . inorganic, geometrical form, in his 'Holy Guide'.(2 - his dots)

A couple of paragraphs from an essay of 1912, 'The Wisdom of Poetry', again on "form", anticipate almost word for word the formulations of Pound's crucial essay 'Vorticism', and will serve as introduction to the argument developed there:

What the analytical geometer does for space and form, the poet does for the states of consciousness. Let us therefore consider the nature of the formulae of analytics.

By the signs  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ , I imply the circle. By  $(a - r)^2 + (b - r)^2 = (c - r)^2$ , I imply the circle and its mode of birth. I am led from the consideration of the particular circles formed by my inkwell and my table-rim, to the contemplation of the circle absolute, its law; the circle free in all space, unbounded, loosed from the accidents of time and place. Is the formula nothing, or is it cabala and the sign of unintelligible magic? The engineer, understanding and translating to the many, builds for the uninitiated bridges and

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(1) GB, p.122.

(2) Ibid., p.127.

devices. He speaks their language. For the initiated the signs are a door into eternity and into the boundless ether.(1)

It was the business of 'Vorticism' to translate this rather static account of what he was to call, much later, the "SECRETUM", (2) into a dynamism.

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(1) SP, p.332 ('The Wisdom of Poetry', Forum, 1912).

(2) See L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

## 2. The Theory: 'Vorticism' and 'Affirmations'

In this section I shall be considering in some detail two crucial essays Pound wrote in 1914-15. At this time he was turning away from the Imagist movement (which retained a half-life under the direction of Amy Lowell) and enthusiastically embracing Vorticism (the first issue of Blast appeared in the June of 1914). As we shall see, his avowal of Vorticism didn't lead him, as yet, to discard the title of Imagist, bound as it was to the seminal concept of the image. The terms "image" and "vortex" are, at this time, interchangeable, and richly significant for the student of Pound's poetry. I begin with a critique of the essay 'Vorticism' which, after its magazine appearance, Pound reprinted in his Gaudier memoir of 1916.(1)

### 'Vorticism': Fortnightly Review, September 1914

p.82 Pound begins by saying that he can't explicate Vorticism by invoking all of the arts, and so he will concentrate on "the vorticist art with which I am most intimately connected, that is to say, vorticist poetry". And this Vorticist poetry is "Imagisme".

pp.82-3 There is, he continues, "poetry where music, sheer melody, seems as if it were just bursting into speech"; and "there is another sort of poetry where painting or sculpture seems as if it were 'just coming over into speech '". Rather curiously, the presenters of the "image" are denied traffick with the first mode, which "has long been called 'lyric'" - though he points out that the drama, say, may contain "lyric" passages. The second type of poetry is as old as lyric but up until recently it hasn't been named. It concerns the presentation of the image, as Ibycus and Liu Ch'e presented it; as Dante

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(1) Marginal references are to, in the case of 'Vorticism', GB, and in that of 'Affirmations', SP.



did, as Milton failed to do. So far we have been given exemplars of the image but no definition of it other than the reference to painting or sculpture "'just coming over into speech'". Pound goes on to define it negatively as at "the furthest possible remove from rhetoric", rhetoric being defined as cozening persuasion - "the art of dressing up some unimportant matter so as to fool the audience for the time being". Aristotle defined rhetoric as persuasion and opposed it to "the analytical examination of truth", which seems to bring the image into consonance with the latter. The movement "Imagisme", he goes on to say - which he sets in the past ("of 1912 to '14") - was a "'critical'" movement (and so consonant with "analytical examination"), and it "set out 'to bring poetry up to the level of prose'". That is the technical side of it, treated of in Flint's report on the movement's three principles, and doesn't touch upon the "Doctrine of the Image". Pound then sets out again these "tenets of the Imagiste faith".

p.84      Following upon these "tenets" he acknowledges that the arts have things in common but argues that work "of the 'first intensity'", in whatever medium - in other words work utilizing "the 'primary pigment'" of its art(1) - can only be approximated to in another medium: "There is music which would need a hundred paintings to express it." Similarly, certain ranges of subject-matter, certain opportunities for presentation, are the province of one particular art and can only be approximated to in another: "A painter must know much more about a sunset than a writer, if he is to put it on canvas. But when the poet speaks of 'Dawn in russet mantle clad', he presents something which the painter cannot present."

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(1) GB, p.81.

The argument now switches abruptly to the subject of rhythm, and Pound declares his belief in "an absolute rhythm", a belief which "leads to vers libre and to experiments in quantitative verse". "I believe that every emotion and every phase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it." If we ask ourselves what un-absolute or relative rhythm might be the answer seems to be metrical verse, the form of which pre-exists the impulse to expression and to which that impulse accomodates itself. It would seem then that absolute rhythm arises with the impulse as its unique, as it were bespoken, embodiment; whereas metrical expression, though it too may be coincident with the poetic impulse, has nonetheless a prior existence as a shared and public form. In his suggestion that unique, particular emotions should be granted particularized, unprecedented rhythmic expression Pound seems to imply that absolute rhythm and metrical form are irreconcilable. But his phrasing should give us pause. Every emotion "has" a "toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it". From where? From, perhaps, the world of Forms? This may seem fanciful, until we read on into the next paragraph: "To hold a like belief in a sort of permanent metaphor is, as I understand it, 'symbolism' in its profounder sense. It is not necessarily a belief in a permanent world, but it is a belief in that direction." The belief in "a sort of permanent metaphor" is "a like belief" (my italics), it parallels Pound's faith in an absolute rhythm; and both doctrines invoke enduring form. It seems then that absolute rhythm is absolute because it is unconditional, it pre-exists the impulse, "toneless", wordless, a measure in posse waiting upon its occasion. Thus we see that the iambic pentameter, or any other metrical convention, is admitted on the same terms as the improvised measure into this repertoire of Forms, the difference being that the former has a history, and is publicly acknowledged.

And the "permanent world"? Pound asserts elsewhere that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol".(1) If Pound were being merely naturalistic in saying this it wouldn't be necessary to bring in the term "symbol"; it would do to say that the natural object is always adequate. But he is not discussing the adequacy of a literalist's conception of the world, he is defining the nature of "symbol". His version constitutes "'symbolism' in its profounder sense" and involves a belief which gravitates in the "direction" of a "permanent world". The hesitancy of this goes with the critic's recognition of the audacity of his argument, for he is giving hesitant assent to the "permanent world" of Platonic Forms, a region he was later to apostrophize as "the radiant world".(2) And this world, the realm of the image, has its auditory counterpart in the Forms of "absolute rhythm". Does this then make the image purely visual? If the image is in touch with the permanent world through its use of the "natural object" (always the "adequate symbol") then it seems to be restricted to the depiction of objects, to the visual sphere, and must work in a sort of tandem with "absolute rhythm": at least there seems to be no provision for the integration of auditory and imagistic factors in the poem. We shall return to this point.

Having invoked the symbol Pound goes on to deal with symbolism itself. We can take Yeats as a representative of this school, Pound having said as much himself at this time.(3) "Imagisme is not symbolism", he writes, and defines the latter by its use of a quasi-allegorical correspondence between symbol and significance, as in the use of "the

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(1) See Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.131 ('A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste', Poetry, 1913).

(2) See LE, p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(3) See ibid., p.378: "'Is Mr Yeats an Imagiste?' No, Mr Yeats is a symbolist, but he has written des Images as have many good poets before him" ('The Later Yeats', Poetry, 1914).

term 'cross' to mean 'trial'. This, he says, is to degrade the symbol "to the status of a word". The Imagist's symbol, we remember, deals with "the natural object". The symbolist's is "a form of metonymy [sic]" having "a fixed value, like numbers in arithmetic, like 1, 2, and 7". But "the imagiste's images have a variable significance, like the signs a, b, and x in algebra". This last sentence shows that Pound thought of symbol (as he had defined it) and image as synonymous, though "image" became the preferred term by virtue of its lack of unwanted associations. And this image was not a mere "word", it drew upon the wealth of the "permanent world".

p.85 But if Imagism didn't employ the symbolist's sense-confounding allegory, neither was it naturalistic. The natural object wasn't adequate, it was the adequate symbol. Thus Pound next goes on to dissociate the movement from literary Impressionism, the common title of such diverse figures as Arthur Symons and Ford Madox Ford. And this is necessary because the Imagist poem frequently recalls the Symons-type poem in its visual concentration (as Kenner has pointed out(1)) - "one borrows, or could borrow, much from the impressionist method of presentation".

Having made these dissociations and having defined Imagism thus negatively, Pound goes on to give a more direct account of its workings, and he chooses to do so through autobiography: "The precise statement of such a matter must be based on one's own experience." As "the search for 'sincere self-expression'" is a "'search for oneself'", each approximation to self-identity, each saying of "'I am'", shifts the poet away from a momentary point of rest and on to the

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(1) See Hugh Kenner, PE, pp.180-86.

next poem, the next definition. Just so, he says, the monologues in Personae functioned, and the process was continued in "long series of translations, which were but more elaborate masks". This is frankly Yeatsian, and its stress upon personality, sophisticated self-concealment, and flux seems to be at odds with the thrust of the essay so far, which has treated of objective poetic procedures and hinted at their relation to a set of permanent verities. Sure enough, Pound shifts quickly to less portentously personal concerns, citing two other types of poem he has written: "Secondly, I made poems like 'The Return', which is an objective reality and has a complicated sort of significance, like Mr Epstein's 'Sun God', or Mr Brzeska's 'Boy with a Coney'. Thirdly, I have written 'Heather', which represents a state of consciousness, or 'implies', or 'implicates' it." The mention of Epstein and Gaudier with reference to 'The Return' suggests that the poem is a particularly fitting example of poetry "where painting or sculpture seems as if it were 'just coming over into speech'", and yet the poem is not particularly visual in its impact:

See, they return; ah, see the tentative  
 Movements, and the slow feet,  
 The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
 Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,  
 With fear, as half-awakened;  
 As if the snow should hesitate  
 And murmur in the wind,  
 and half turn back;  
 These were the 'Wing'd-with-Awe',  
 Inviolable.

Haie! Haie!  
 These were the swift to harry;  
 These the keen-scented;  
 These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,  
 pallid the leash-men!(1)

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(1) CSP, p85.

'Heather', on the other hand, which Pound represents as the presentation - or implication - of "a state of consciousness", is highly visual:

The black panther treads at my side,  
And above my fingers  
There float the petal-like flames.

The milk-white girls  
Unbend from the holly-trees,  
And their snow-white leopard  
Watches to follow our trace.(1)

This apparent, albeit submerged, contradiction can only be resolved, I think, by revising our first interpretation of what Pound's painting and sculpture analogy entails; not a visual stress, necessarily, but a concern for the objectively bodied-forth and apparent is implied. While 'Heather', on the other hand, though it "represents a state of consciousness", is to be distinguished from the earlier persona poems by virtue of its 'impersonality', a quality it shares with 'The Return': "These two latter sorts of poems are impersonal, and that fact brings us back to what I said about absolute metaphor. They are Imagisme, and in so far as they are Imagisme, they fall in with the new pictures and the new sculpture." Pound's locution here - "absolute metaphor" replacing the earlier phrase "permanent metaphor" - reinforces what we were saying about the parallelism obtaining between such metaphor and "absolute rhythm". "Absolute metaphor" is impersonal, not because it deals with frozen objects in an external world, but because it is concerned with the permanent world, which stands massively beyond our individualities. A "Russian correspondent" of Pound's saw that consciousness of this world was what 'Heather' embodied, not a simple and vivid

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(1) CSP, p 119.

evocation of particular things: "after having called it a symbolist poem, and having been convinced that it was not symbolism, [he] said slowly: 'I see, you wish to give people new eyes, not to make them see some new particular thing.' Such new eyes will open upon a permanent world.

The essay turns briefly now to painting, quoting Whistler: "'The picture is interesting not because it is Trotty Veg, but because it is an arrangement in colour.'" Upon which Pound exults: "The minute you have admitted that, you let in the jungle, you let in nature and truth and abundance and cubism and Kandinsky, and the lot of us." This, as "ousting" of "literary values", is paralleled in literature by, for example, the "movement against rhetoric" in the 1890s. We can add that either tendency represents the artist's effort to get back to the "primary pigment" of his art.

p.86 Again, the stress in these paragraphs upon the visual arts might lead one to interpret Pound's assertion "the image is the poet's pigment" in a painterly sense - after all, there is paint in the metaphor. As if to counteract this very interpretation, Pound supplies a footnote: "The image has been defined as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'." And the essayist is now to go on and define further his elusive concept of the image. The Vorticist painter, whether working in the representative or non-representative modes, "should depend . . . on the creative, not upon the mimetic or representational part in his work". The poet's case is similar: he "must use his image because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics". Pound, for better

or worse, was to come to believe that the image could accommodate such heterogeneous material, that economics could be presented as an image which is "real because we know it directly". Such direct knowing has, again, a quasi-metaphysical ring; the poet's "affair" is "to render the image as we have perceived or conceived it". The image is directly "perceived or conceived", and is "rendered" directly, not in terms of a "traditional paradiso" (my italics) but, the implication is, in paradisaical terms nonetheless. And this chimes with the earlier hints regarding the "permanent world", the world of forms.

Pound moves on to consider a particular paradiso: Dante's. He distinguishes the "image" it presents from the "mask" presented by Browning's Sordello, a distinction corresponding to that between his own early verse and the more recent Imagistic poetry. He dissociates the permanent part of the Commedia from discursive excrescences, "the discourses with the calendar of saints and the discussions about the nature of the moon". These are "philology"; "the permanent part is Imagisme". The image, then, is not necessarily single and limited in scope: "The form of sphere above sphere, the varying reaches of light, the minutiae of pearls upon foreheads, all these are parts of the Image." This makes no sense at all if we conceive of image according to its dictionary definition, nor if we take it in the sense of Pound's earlier, pluralist formulation: "The imagiste's images have a variable significance".(1) The capitalized Image is an articulated whole, recognized as such when the reader withdraws his gaze from the poem's details and contemplates it as a totality. Such consideration allows the discursive detritus to drop away and regards only the enduring essentials. In considering the image we contemplate the poem's form - a consideration which will animate Pound's labour on the Cantos.

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(1) GB, p.84.



p.87 Pound now narrows his focus and turns from the unity-in-diversity of the Commedia to the tiny unity of one of his most celebrated poems, 'In a Station of the Metro':

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.(1)

He writes of the poem's starting-point in Paris in a series of glimpsed faces, and of his struggle to find words for the experience, until he "found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation . . . not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that - a 'pattern', or hardly a pattern, if by 'pattern' you mean something with a 'repeat' in it." As becomes clear later in Pound's account of the affair, his - poet's - impulse to fit

p.88 words to the experience was half-mistaken. His "experience in Paris should have gone into paint. If instead of colour I had perceived sound or planes in relation, I should have expressed it in music or in sculpture. Colour was, in that instance, the 'primary pigment'; I mean that it was the first adequate equation that came into consciousness. The Vorticist uses the 'primary pigment'." But the pressure of the experience continued to exert itself, and he wasn't a painter. This meant that his linguistic resources were subject to unusual pressures - no bad thing: "Any mind that is worth calling a mind must have needs beyond the existing categories of language". Pound had a pattern, having nothing to do with language, lodged in his mind: one version of an entity he was later to call the forma, and which in Canto XXXVI he called - translating from Cavalcanti - the "forméd trace" (XXXVI/178). The magnet was exerting its pull; he had to wait, patiently, for the "steel dust" (LXXIV/449) to come into arrangement.

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(1) CSP, p119.

Further, "all poetic language is the language of exploration. Since the beginning of bad writing, writers have used images as ornaments. The point of Imagisme is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language." It fell to him so to arrange what words he could find that the image would be generated - a "word" (we can supply the inverted commas) beyond language: something created by, but somehow going beyond, language. An essence, of a sort; in touch with the permanent world. How was this to be done? On the model of the hokku. The child uses the "language of exploration, the language of art" when she asks if she may "open" the light, and the Japanese too use such a language:

'The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:  
A butterfly.'

Pound doesn't call this pretty, or quaint, or touching; he calls it a "sort of knowing" (my italics). Not "knowing" that a butterfly can look like an air-borne flower, nor "knowing" used, in a rather over-blown way, to denote fine sensibility, but knowing in its most rigorous application, in its epistemological sense. How can this be?

p.89 Pound calls the hokku, and also his own poem 'In a Station of the Metro', "a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea set on top of another". A third thing emerges from the conjunction, just as an unforeseen pattern emerges from the laying of one transparency over another, and this third thing is the image. The image is the "sort of knowing". This would be very difficult to understand if we interpreted the image, as it emerged from poetic super-position, as a sort of decorative blur, the confusion of two initially distinct

things. My simile of overlaid transparencies seems to imply such a vagueness, as do some formulations of Fenollosa's which bear strongly upon Pound's argument: "If we attempt to follow it [Chinese poetry] in English we must use words highly charged, words whose vital suggestion shall interplay as nature interplays. Sentences must be like the mingling of the fringes of feathered banners, or as the colors of many flowers blended into the single sheen of a meadow."(1) Pound, I think, envisaged such a form of unity arising from his dense particulars, whether on a hokku-like, or on an epic, scale; but his temperament led him, at this time, towards metaphors drawn from mathematics rather than nature, where there was less danger of seeming to advocate the obliteration of detail in a genial smudge. All the same, passages such as this of Fenollosa's must have fed Pound's imagination and its fondness for images of light: "Thus in all poetry a word is like a sun, with its corona and chromosphere; words crowd upon words, and enwrap each other in their luminous envelopes until sentences become clear, continuous light-bands."(2)

Such imagery has a purely aesthetic reference, though a sensibility which was used to the equation of light with intelligence might make other connections. Fenollosa's formulations give us one range of metaphors for the effects of poetic super-position; he writes that "poetry surpasses prose especially in that the poet selects for juxtaposition those words whose overtones blend into a delicate and lucid harmony. All arts follow the same law; refined harmony lies in the delicate balance of overtones."(3) But if we are to take seriously Pound's contention that the super-position of images constitutes a "sort of knowing", then this attention to delicious effects won't do.

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(1) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWxCh, p31.

(2) Ibid., p.32.

(3) Ibid., p.32.

Pound writes of his own hokku-like sentence: "In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective." "The apparition of these faces in the crowd" is the objective term here, though qualified by a word - "apparition" - already tinged with subjectivity; "Petals on a wet, black bough" is the subjective term, understood to be such though it concerns wholly objective phenomena. The darting inwards, then, is conveyed by the conjunction and super-position of two terms each of which is infected by the status of its opposite. The transaction concerns the facts of perception quite as much as the presentation of a sharp visual image, and to that extent it is concerned with "knowing". Pound is at pains to effect the distinction:

This particular sort of consciousness [as exemplified by 'In a Station of the Metro'] has not been identified with impressionist art. I think it is worthy of attention.

The logical end of impressionist art is the cinematograph. The state of mind of the impressionist tends to become cinematographical. Or, to put it another way, the cinematograph does away with the need of a lot of impressionist art.

Emphatically, then, the method employed in this poem has nothing to do with the rendering of natural appearances for their own sake. What, then, does it address itself to? Pound goes on:

There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man: firstly, you may think of him as that toward which perception moves, as the toy of circumstance, as the plastic substance receiving impressions; secondly, you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as conceiving instead of merely reflecting and observing. One p.90 does not claim that one way is better than the other, one notes a diversity of the temperament.

Imagism has often been taken as exemplifying such a passive recording of externals as Pound here attributes (a little later in the same

paragraph) to Impressionism and Futurism ("accelerated impressionism"). But Pound regards the Vorticist art of Imagism as an art of active conception, which doesn't passively record phenomena but transforms and enriches them. Again, the Vorticist's conceiving isn't of the conventionally intellectual sort. His knowledge isn't intellective, Aristotelian, syllogistic. It is novel, and learned from the East. This extra-Occidental reference of the Imagist/Vorticist movement is invoked by Pound when he writes: "We do not desire to evade comparison with the past. We prefer that the comparison be made by some intelligent person whose idea of 'the tradition' is not limited by the conventional taste of four or five centuries and one continent." The discursive intelligence, like the procedures of the Impressionists, dissipates energy; it is extensive in its reference. But "Vorticism is an intensive art. I mean by this, that one is concerned with the relative intensity, or relative significance of different sorts of expression. One desires the most intense, for certain forms of expression are 'more intense' than others. They are more dynamic." Intensity, concentration, dynamism: such are the prescriptions. But to what end? What predilection or dogma lies behind Pound's advocacy of these modes? What expressive advantage is gained by working within them? The novel, for instance, works extensively, by the accretion of many small facts and observations; that is to say, there are other ways to work than intensively. Epic poetry builds its effects on a large scale, in an expansive, leisurely span. But Pound works intensively. He turns to mathematics to explain why.

p.91      After setting down an "ordinary common sense" formula(1) and finding it devoid of interest, he passes on to an algebraic formula,

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(1) GB, p.90.

" $\underline{a}^2 + \underline{b}^2 = \underline{c}^2$ ", of which he declares: "That is the language of philosophy. IT MAKES NO PICTURE. This kind of statement applies to a lot of facts, but it does not grip hold of Heaven." Two objections are involved here: firstly, that the algebra evokes no concrete image (in the pictorial sense); secondly, that it doesn't come to grips with the permanent world ("Heaven"). He goes on:

Thirdly, when one studies Euclid one finds that the relation of  $\underline{a}^2 + \underline{b}^2 = \underline{c}^2$  applies to the ratio between the squares on the two sides of a right-angled triangle and the square on the hypotenuse. One still writes it  $\underline{a}^2 + \underline{b}^2 = \underline{c}^2$ , but one has begun to talk about form. Another property or quality of life has crept into one's matter. Until then one had dealt only with numbers. But even this statement does not create form. . . . Statements in plane or descriptive geometry are like talk about art. They are a criticism of the form. The form is not created by them.

This stage then, the third, of Euclidian statement, is hung between the algebraic formula, which (like an Impressionist novel) "applies to a lot of facts" but doesn't address the permanent world, the world of Forms; and the culminating, as yet uncharacterized point in the series, analytical geometry. This third stage begins to conceive of Form, but does not create it. But in the idiom of analytics "one is able actually to create". If stage two resembled the Impressionist novel - Ford's or Conrad's - in its attention to more or less inert data, then this stage corresponds to the dynamism of Vorticist art. And such dynamisms are addressed to the eduction of Form:

Thus, we learn that the equation  $(\underline{x} - \underline{a})^2 + (\underline{y} - \underline{b})^2 = \underline{r}^2$  governs the circle. It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is the universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time. Mathematics is dull ditch-water until one reaches analytics. But in analytics we come upon a new way of dealing with form. It is in this way that art handles life. The difference between art and analytical geometry is the difference of subject-matter only. Art is more interesting in proportion as life and the human consciousness are more complex and more interesting than forms and numbers.

The essay begins to build towards its climax. "Particulars", wrote Plato in The Republic, "are objects of sight but not of intelligence, while the Forms are the objects of intelligence but not of sight."<sup>(1)</sup> It is the Platonic doctrine, in its full strength and purity, which Pound evokes here when he distinguishes between the "particular circle" and the "universal" circle "existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time". And likewise the work of art addresses the intelligible world, causes "form to come into being":

The statements of 'analytics' are 'lords' over fact. They are the p.92 thrones and dominations that rule over form and recurrence. And in like manner are great works of art lords over fact, over race-long recurrent moods, and over tomorrow.

Great works of art contain this fourth sort of equation. They cause form to come into being. By the 'image' I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about a, b, and c, having something to do with form, but about sea, cliffs, night, having something to do with mood.

Here Pound hints at a vital distinction. He has been addressing the question of transcendent Form through the analogy of mathematics. But the movement he espouses doesn't call itself Idealism, or Platonism, but Vorticism, and this for the very good reason that the organizing forms of its art are not transcendent and distinct, but immanent and active; they are not statically perfect, but dynamic and energizing; and they are concerned, not with abstractions - "a, b, and c" - but with concretions: "sea, cliffs, night". Hence his consummating definition of the image:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. In decency one can only call it a VORTEX. And from this necessity came the name 'vorticism'. Nomina sunt consequentia rerum, and never was that statement of Aquinas more true than in the case of the vorticist movement.

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(1) Plato, The Republic, trans. H.D.P. Lee, Harmondsworth, 1955, p.271.

The intelligible or permanent world isn't distinct from phenomena but pulses within them, and within the Vorticist poem; it is, as it were, an efficient cause inhering in the physical world, not a final cause existing beyond it, and is to that extent closer to Aristotelian doctrine than to Platonism (see page 239). We can call this Idealist if we want to but it is, as we shall see, less abstract and less deliberate than that title implies. Its formal consequences for the writing of poetry are immense, as this book will hope to show. Hugh Kenner has seen the importance of Pound's conception of pre-existent form:

As the rope makes the knot visible, the language makes Homer's imagined realities apprehensible. The poem is not its language. It exists, just here and now, in this language, this niceness of linguistic embodiment, inspection of which will tell us all we shall ever know about it.

The poem is not its language. Hence Pound's reiterated advice to translators, to convey the energized pattern and let go the words. To tie the knot you need not simulate the original fibres. 'I'd like to see a "rewrite" [he wrote to W.H.D. Rouse] as if you didn't know the words of the original and were telling what happened.' And to Michael Reck, about a proposed Japanese Trachiniae (from Pound's English, from Sophokles' Greek), 'Don't bother about the WORDS, translate the MEANING.' And even, to his German translator, 'Don't translate what I wrote, translate what I MEANT to write'. (1 - his insertion)

'Affirmations - As for Imagisme': The New Age, January 1915

The 'Vorticism' essay dates from September 1914. In the first month of the new year Pound contributed an essay to The New Age which adds vital elements to his conception of Vorticism. 'Affirmations - As for Imagisme', one of a series, is a more orderly and focussed essay than 'Vorticism', if, for that very reason perhaps, not quite so pregnant. It restates and expands some of the earlier piece's most salient points, and stresses something which was neglected in 'Vorticism', but which is central to Pound's conception of poetry - the role of "energy" p.344 or "emotion" in the poem's composition. He writes: "In the second article of this series I pointed out that energy creates pattern. I gave examples.

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, pp.149-50.



I would say further that emotional force gives the image." We remember the force of Pound's Metro experience: "I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion".(1) He goes on: "By this I do not mean that it gives an 'explanatory metaphor' . . . We have left false metaphor, ornamental metaphor to the rhetorician. That lies outside this discussion." The energy isn't willed but given, as if by the Muse; in the poet's mind, as a consequence, a pattern, a form is thrown up. Is this wordless? At this stage in the essay such a question is difficult to determine, as Pound is writing in a generalizing fashion about the artist's emotion, and not attributing it to any particular art. But if we remember what he has said in 'Vorticism', and will say later here, about the "primary pigment" of music, of painting, of poetry, we shall realize that such a pattern is indeed vouchsafed to the poet wordlessly, for the utilization of the pigment of, say, poetry is a choice made after the particular impulse has been felt. So: "Intense emotion causes pattern to arise in the mind - if the mind is strong enough. Perhaps I should say, not pattern, but pattern-units, or units of design." As regards this "pattern-unit", we remember that in the 'Vorticism' essay Pound spoke of the "pattern", the "little splotches of colour" that led to the writing of 'In a Station of the Metro' as calling, essentially, for the "primary pigment" of visual art: "my experience in Paris should have gone into paint".(2) So this word "pattern", which he used in that connection, he sets aside when he comes to consider, specifically, poetry, and the rôle of the personal impulse in its conception. Its equivalent in poetry is the image:

pp.344/5 Not only does emotion create the 'pattern-unit' and the 'arrangement of forms', it creates also the Image. The Image can be of two

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(1) GB, p.87.

(2) Ibid., p.88.

sorts. It can arise within the mind. It is then 'subjective'. External causes play upon the mind, perhaps; if so, they are drawn into the mind, fused, transmitted, and emerge in an Image unlike themselves. Secondly, the Image can be objective. Emotion seizing up some external scene or action carries it intact to the mind; and that vortex purges it of all save the essential or dominant or dramatic qualities, and it emerges like the external original.

Again, this corresponds to a distinction made in the earlier essay regarding his own poetry. 'The Return', he wrote, "is an objective reality and has a complicated sort of significance".(1) An "external scene or action" is purged in the mind "of all save the essential or dominant or dramatic qualities", in this resembling the emphatic and expressive simplifications of a Gaudier or Epstein sculpture. While 'Heather', which "represents a state of consciousness", (2) arose "within the mind" and is "'subjective'". The two poems exemplify twin aspects of the p.345 image, which is defined thus in the 'Affirmations' essay: "the Image is more than an idea. It is a vortex or cluster of fused ideas and is endowed with energy. If it does not fulfil these specifications, it is not what I mean by an Image." This is an interesting redefinition of the more celebrated earlier statement of 'Vorticism': "The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster".(3) In 'Affirmations' Pound reaffirms that it is not an idea; it is "a radiant node or cluster" of ideas. This air of paradox results, I think, from Pound's effort in the later essay to exclude painterly formulations in his effort to define the image. He wants a less visual word than pattern and has not yet recognized the usefulness of a term he will enthusiastically embrace: forma. At any rate, these formulations serve to emphasize the pre-verbal provenance of the image-creating impulse or emotion. He writes: "one 'discards rhyme' not because one is incapable of rhyming neat, fleet, sweet, meet, treat, eat, feet, but because there are

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(1) GB, p.85.

(2) Ibid., p.85.

(3) Ibid., p.92.

certain emotions or energies which are not to be represented by the over-familiar devices or patterns". The emotion or energy comes first; the representation is attendant upon it. As we shall see, this order of psychic events has far-reaching implications for poetic language and poetic form.

The essay now moves on to a consideration of rhythm, and at this point it becomes clear that there is a submerged tendency to fragmentation in Pound's account of the poet's creative act. His model is in danger of falling into three distinct, and potentially unrelatable, segments. So far we have the pre-verbal impulse, and the verbal image it generates. Where does rhythm enter? In a long essay of 1929, 'How to Read', Pound divided matters thus:

There are three 'kinds of poetry':  
 MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.  
 PHANOPOEIA, which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination.  
 LOGOPOEIA, 'the dance of the intellect among words', that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode.(1)

"Phanopoeia" and "logopoeia" represent a later separating out into visual and verbal of what was, in 1914-1915, the undifferentiated image. "Melopoeia", under the title of "rhythm", he always regarded as separate. And these two spheres, that of the image and that of rhythm, are twofold, they are substantially separable. He writes in the introduction to his 1912 Cavalcanti edition: "I believe in an ultimate and absolute

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(1) LE, p.25 ('How to Read', New York Herald, 1929). The footnote in LE has the date as "1928 or '27", but see Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, p.281.

rhythm as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence. It is only, then, in perfect rhythm joined to the perfect word that the two-fold vision can be recorded."(1) We spoke earlier of Pound's quasi-Platonic conception of rhythm-forms or -shapes, and of their existence, separate from the mind, in the permanent world. And we noted that this supramundane existence applied, not only to metrical verse forms, but to free verse cadences. We find him writing, in pp.345/6 'Affirmations', of "a great number of regular and beautifully regular metres . . . quite capable of expressing a wide range of energies or p.346 emotions", and of the invention of a "music or rhythm-structure" to express "emotional energy" and "impulse". He writes of the "skill" which makes "words move in rhythm of the creative emotion". He pictures emotion being fed into the machine of technique - of such metrical shapes and rhythm-forms as are available to a particular poet - and of the excellence of the machinery being measured by the exactness of "the record of the voltage and of the various currents which have passed through it". He thus gives an account of the passage of creative energy, through the poet's mind, from impulse to image, and from impulse to rhythmic expression, but not of how image and music are related. Unless, that is, we relate both to their extra-personal existence within the permanent world, as twin expressions of that world. They occur together there, as they occur together in the finished poem. In the poem they are indivisible. The reader cannot separate them. But in the act of writing Pound seems to have apprehended them as diverse. Poetry is a "centaur", compounded of two things, as he wrote in 1913: "The thinking word-arranging, clarifying faculty must move and leap with the energizing, sentient, musical faculties. It is precisely the difficulty of this amphibious existence that keeps down the census record of good

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(1) I, p.23 (Introduction to the Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti, 1912).

poets."(1) The wordless emotion comes first, and "when the vowel and consonantal melody or sequence seems truly to bear the trace of emotion which the poem . . . is intended to communicate, we say that this part of the work is good".(2) Technique coaxes into manifestation, as language, this "fostering or parental emotion";(3) but initially words do not impinge on the poem's germ. This has many and ramifying consequences for the poet's product, as we shall see when we come to examine the question of technique at length. For the moment it will be enough to say that his expertise results, if his work is good, in a final, indivisible issue, a poem which forms an "'Intellectual and Emotional Complex'" the elements of which are, and must be, "in harmony, they must form an organism, they must be an oak sprung from an acorn".(4) The illusion of organic growth is achieved, though in its attainment will and an intensity of conscious ordering have been involved.

We can, then, trace a morphology in the act of writing a poem, as Pound experienced it, from the initial impulse or emotion, through the image, or idea, or pattern, or vortex, which remains pre-verbal, to the final rhythmic incarnation when the image is fleshed in words. The crucial thing to note is the late persistence of wordlessness in the process. The final stage, when the poem has been written, is its recoiling reference back to wordlessness, for in 'How to Read' Pound characterizes melopoeia as "poetry on the borders of music and music is perhaps the bridge between consciousness and the unthinking sentient or even insentient universe".(5) The circuit is unbroken.

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(1) LE, p.52 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

(2) Ibid., p.51 ('The Serious Artist').

(3) Ibid., p.51 ('The Serious Artist').

(4) Ibid., p.51 ('The Serious Artist').

(5) Ibid., p.26 ('How to Read', New York Herald, 1929).

In conclusion, then, let us run through Pound's model of the poetic process. The source of the poem is in some energetic intuition arising either objectively, through the apprehension of the external world, or through subjectivity, introspection. This impulse issues in a wordless pattern, a "radiant node or cluster", which isn't itself an idea but "from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing". This focal energy or vortex attracts to it verbal formulations or "ideas", amongst which, we may suppose, are to be numbered "rhythm-forms", and the poet's compositional effort consists in aiding the coagulation of word and rhythm into a satisfactory shape, one which will not falsify - as Pound's original thirty-line version of 'In a Station of the Metro' falsified(1) - the originating pattern. Having thus escaped inauthenticity the poem is incorporated into "the unthinking sentient or even insentient universe" by reason of its faithful cleaving to that order of being. It hasn't gone off into urbanities of syntax, into diffusions, but grips within it, and radiates, an energy equivalent to that of natural phenomena. To understand what this entails for the poem itself, to understand the formal consequences of Pound's model as here set out, we must turn to his own poetry.

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(1) See GB, p.89.

### 3. The Poetry: from 'Personae' to 'Lustra'

Pound, in his early poetry - the three volumes Personae, Exultations and Canzoni - exhibits, characteristically, an overriding interest in large rhythmic and syntactic units. He employs swathes of words, as it were, and the reader's attention is caught up in their billowing, expansive movement and hurries on, the sense half-attended to. It is with a positive wrench that one turns from this streaming movement to scrutinize individual words, phrases, images. A stanza from a poem after Leopardi:

And still when fate recalleth,  
 Even that semblance that appears amongst us  
 Is like to heaven's most 'live imagining.  
 All, all our life's eternal mystery!  
 To-day, on high  
 Mounts, from our mighty thoughts and from the fount  
 Of sense untellable, Beauty  
 That seems to be some quivering splendour cast  
 By the immortal nature on this quicksand,  
 And by surhuman fates  
 Given to mortal state  
 To be a sign and an hope made secure  
 Of blissful kingdoms and the aureate spheres;  
 And on the morrow, by some lightsome twist,  
 Shameful in sight, abject, abominable  
 All this angelic aspect can return  
 And be but what it was  
 With all the admirable concepts that moved from it  
 Swept from the mind with it in its departure.(1)

The poet's attention - and the reader's interest - is focussed upon the fate of the elaborate syntax as it eddies across line-breaks, momentarily baulked, and then surges on. So heady is the rhythmic impetus that one may not immediately note the unconsummated sense initiated by "Beauty / That . . ." and somehow dissipated after the semi-colon. This is syntax employed, not for the orderly setting-out

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(1) CSP, pp.55-56 ('Her Monument, the Image Cut Thereon').

of some verifiable proposition, but for the sake of its auditory possibilities, its propulsions, and its sweep. The ear lulls the mind. Nor is there any sharp imagery which might invade it, but a procession of sonorous abstractions; we read of "life's eternal mystery", of "the fount / Of sense untellable", of "blissful kingdoms and the aureate spheres". The words are shadowy, their sense subordinated to a vague glamour. The poem's only life is its rhythm, and the drive of this makes do with the frail diction current at the time. The words are picked up en route. But the strophe can be used in other ways:

All night, and as the wind lieth among  
 The cypress trees, he lay,  
 Nor held me save as air that brusheth by one  
 Close, and as the petals of flowers in falling  
 Waver and seem not drawn to earth, so he  
 Seemed over me to hover light as leaves  
 And closer me than air,  
 And music flowing through me seemed to open  
 Mine eyes upon new colours.  
 O winds, what wind can match the weight of him!(1)

This poem has none of the elastic, consuming, rather formless energy of the Leopardi stanza. The syntactic ingenuity seems, not wilful, but an effusion of the speaker's delight, as if her wonder grew with the growth of the sentence. The final exclamation - "O winds, what wind can match the weight of him!" - exhibits a use of the clinching, and isolated, line which Pound was to remain attached to. Here its impact is dramatic rather than, as it was to become, a matter of imagistic or Vorticist super-position. A line isolated in the poem 'La Fraisine' attains by that means a rhetorical emphasis within the poem's monologue form, as if the protagonist were speaking with special deliberation:

By the still pool of Mar-nan-otha  
 Have I found me a bride

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(1) CSP, p.53 ('Speech for Psyche in the Golden Book of Apuleius').



That was a dog-wood tree some syne,  
 She hath called me from mine old ways  
 She hath hushed my rancour of council,  
 Bidding me praise

Naught but the wind that flutters in the leaves. (1)

Either use of the isolated line is essentially dramatic, a function of the individual voice. It forms another element in the creation of the mask, that histrionic poetry from which Pound weaned himself as he focussed and subordinated the overwhelming influence of Robert Browning. Pound was to return to the poem of reverie, such a poem as 'La Fraisine' or 'Cino', in the Pisan Cantos, where we find, occasionally, the same rhetorically- rather than imagistically-ordained ellipses (see pages 302-04). But there are other anticipations in these early poems, of more importance for the bulk of Pound's later poetry and the modes within which he was habitually to work. Most of the poems in these three early volumes, with their ardent, streaming movement, their head-long impetus, remain, at their close, open-ended, with a sense of unexpended energies. They are not self-contained. So 'In Durance' ends: "'Beyond, beyond, beyond, there lies . . .'" (2) And this is a device which will be picked up again in the Cantos, for there the individual Canto, as one part of a much longer poem, cannot afford to violate decorum by appearing wholly self-contained, and so opens up into the next: a procedure epitomized in the first Canto's concluding "So that:" (I/5). And this avoidance of symmetry or closure, though it is innocent of doctrine in these early poems, will become linked to Fenollosan ideas regarding the epistemological precedence of the objective world, the world of flux and process, and the rôle of the poet in finding words to match and express this burgeoning realm. A glance at chronology will show us that Pound's bent for "open forms"

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(1) CSP, p.18.

(2) Ibid., p.35.

and an organic-seeming growth of line from line pre-dates his reception of the Fenollosa material, and we can guess that the latter served to reinforce rather than initiate what seems to have been a native tendency in the poet.

Besides this concern with rhapsodic, strophic writing the early poetry exhibits another and very different manner, and one which remained a constant resource of his later poetry - a chanting measure audible in the poem 'Night Litany':

O God of silence,  
                   Purifiez nos coeurs,  
                   Purifiez nos coeurs,  
 O God of waters,  
                   make clean our hearts within us,  
                   For I have seen the  
 Shadow of this thy Venice  
 Floating upon the waters,  
                   And thy stars

Have seen this thing, out of their far courses  
 Have they seen this thing,  
                   O God of waters,  
 Even as are thy stars  
 Silent unto us in their far-coursing,  
 Even so is mine heart  
                   become silent within me.

Purifiez nos coeurs  
O God of the silence,  
                   Purifiez nos coeurs  
O God of waters.(1)

Here the line-breaks don't form a grid across which the syntactic flood breaks and re-forms, but each termination is a full pause, marking the close of a rhythmic unit. Despite this formal difference, however, the emotional tonality of 'Night Litany' is close to that of the strophic poems. Their shadowy exaltation is never discharged into definition, rarely localized in a particular image or locution, but everywhere permeates their surging or chanting rhythms and arcane diction.

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(1) CSP, p.41.

Of these two modes, the strophic and the chant-like, only the latter is retained in its pure form in Ripostes, indeed reaches its apotheosis in the sumptuous 'The Alchemist', a "Chant for the Transmutation of Metals".(1) The more homogeneous strophe-form is broken down and as it were aerated in such poems as 'Doria' and 'The Return', in which we are more conscious of rhythmic arrest than of sinuous propulsion, and yet don't experience the static qualities of the chant poem. If we except the urbane 'Portrait d'une Femme', we find that throughout the volume earlier syntactic fluidities are curbed and hardened, and by that very discipline rendered more telling. So the sapphics of 'Apparuit':

Half the graven shoulder, the throat aflash with  
strands of light inwoven about it, loveliest  
of all things, frail alabaster, ah me!  
swift in departing.(2)

The real advances, however, are represented by 'The Seafarer' and 'The Return'. Hugh Kenner's account of the latter poem emphasizes its syntactic originality:

The sentences of which the poem is made are syntactically very simple - "See, they return"; "These were the souls of blood" - while no syntax specifies the coherence of the whole poem. The fragmentary effect . . . corresponds to a feeling we may have that a statement of some length has been made but that important syntactic members of this statement have dropped out, as they have dropped through rents in the ruined papyri of Sappho. And yet nothing has dropped out. We have, thanks to the rhythmic definition, every necessary element, held in place in the poem's continuum so exactly that alterations of tense will specify everything.(3)

The fragmented syntax is replaced, as a cohesive and unifying force, by delicately discriminated rhythm. And this account of the poem chimes with Pound's model of the creative process, as outlined in the

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(1) CSP, p.86.

(2) Ibid., p.81.

(3) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.191.

previous section. There we saw that the "pattern" was elucidated, brought into the verbal realm, by means of rhythmic expression - not by diction, not by syntax. And 'The Return', though it uses a non-prose syntax highly expressively, is actually organized as an articulated whole by its various and delightful rhythm. When we come upon the poem in the volume of Collected Shorter Poems it is with a sense that here is the poet's authentic answer to the mimicry and ventriloquism of the earlier work; and this finding of his voice coincides with formal qualities which we can relate directly and unambiguously to the sketch of the creative process in the 'Vorticism' essay. I think we can legitimately conclude from this that Pound found himself in his poetry when he broke with the syntactic continuousness of an earlier tradition and married his language to the reality of his "impulse". This meant dissolving and recombining syntax, the most artificial and socially-determined resource of language, and allowing rhythm, in touch with the periodicities and recurrences of the "sentient universe", to assume the burden of organization; for, he wrote in 1910, "rhythm is perhaps the most primal of all things known to us".(1)

The lesson of 'The Seafarer' is rather different. It is in the Homage to Sextus Propertius and Canto I that we find its true progeny, but the emphasis given there to gnarled and deeply expressive syntax Pound found himself, for the reasons that made 'The Return' a more persuasive example, unable and perhaps unwilling to generally sustain. 'The Seafarer' and Canto I adopt the bard's voice; in Propertius syntax is the instrument of a lavish irony; but these were special cases requiring unusual strategies. The Anglo-Saxon or Homeric bard addressed himself to a present audience and subsisted within, and acknowledged by, his society; the Roman poet disclaims a public rôle

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(1) I, p.23 (Introduction to The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti - published in 1912).

with - at least in Pound's version - intricate and passionate irony, and this irony sustains itself by reference to the public realm. In either case the poem's provenance demanded a shift in style towards the syntactically complex, and Pound's consciousness of this entered into the three-fold creative relationship we outlined above and transfigured its issue. The poems arise from within Pound's doubt, expressed in his autobiographical essay 'Indiscretions' (written just after he had re-read Henry James entire) as to "whether - the sentence being the mirror of man's mind", we haven't "long since passed the stage when 'man sees horse' or 'farmer sows rice', can in simple ideographic record be said to display anything remotely resembling our subjectivity".(1) But it was a doubt rarely voiced, and moments such as this from 'The Seafarer', where the verse's thewed movement and tortuous inversions evoke a clangorous regret, are rare:

There I heard naught save the harsh sea  
 And ice-cold wave, at whiles the swan cries,  
 Did for my games the gannet's clamour,  
 Sea-fowls' loudness was for me laughter,  
 The mew's singing all my mead-drink.(2)

This passage of panic and confusion from Canto I, memorably enforced by the staccato syntax, is heir to the intensities of 'The Seafarer':

These many crowded about me; with shouting,  
 Pallor upon me, cried to my men for more beasts;  
 Slaughtered the herds, sheep slain of bronze;  
 Poured ointment, cried to the gods,  
 To Pluto the strong, and praised Proserpine;  
 Unsheathed the narrow sword,  
 I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead,  
 Till I should hear Tiresias. (I/4)

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(1) PD, p.3 ('Indiscretions or, Une Revue De Deux Mondes', The New Age, 1920).

(2) CSP, p.77.

Or this from Propertius:

Sailor, of winds; a plowman, concerning his oxen;  
 Soldier, the enumeration of wounds; the sheep-feeder, of ewes;  
 We, in our narrow bed, turning aside from battles:  
 Each man where he can, wearing out the day in his manner.(1)

Donald Davie has celebrated the passage memorably: "Here the deliberate incongruity of reproducing in a relatively uninflected language the word-order and syntax of a highly inflected one produces a comic effect which, with a mastery which is the peculiar glory of this poem, modulates into profound and plangent feeling."(2)

It cannot be coincidental that all three passages come from translations or imitations. Not only was the social timbre of a voice there to be mimed, but the translator had that timbre, in its original setting, before him. If we think back to Pound's account of the poet's creative passage from impulse, through pattern, to word and rhythm, we will perhaps reflect that while such a model doesn't exclude a complex syntax it renders it unlikely; for word and rhythm are to cleave to the pattern (the forma), and that pattern is pre-verbal, non-verbal. For words to encompass it language must be re-made, and for that task the pushing around of syntactic relations is quite inadequate, because syntax itself is likely to bear within it the drive to falsify the image. It is a social construct, a verbalism. One can, in a Browningesque monologue, lame syntax with hesitancies, express 'character' thereby, but that doesn't bring it closer to the image, the pre-verbal truth. Syntax, we remember, evolved the thirty-line falsification of a vivid experience.

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(1) CSP, p.235.

(2) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, p.60.

That is not to say that 'The Seafarer' was a sport, its influence only picked up by the poet in one or two later instances. The poem, though it might look like one of Browning's monologues on the page, or like any piece of blank verse, has a clenched, retarded movement, so that it is continually starting again, moving off from some emphatic caesura; and its clotted syntax (following the Anglo-Saxon measure) frequently breaks the line into two-stressed halves either side of a caesura:

Neareth nightshade, snoweth from north,  
Frost froze the land, hail fell on earth then,  
Corn of the coldest.

Bosque taketh blossom, cometh beauty of berries,  
Fields to fairness, land fares brisker

Cuckoo calleth with gloomy crying,  
He singeth summerward, bodeth sorrow,  
The bitter heart's blood. Burgher knows not -  
He the prosperous man - what some perform  
Where wandering them widest draweth.

. . . Drear all this excellence, delights undurable!  
Waneth the watch, but the world holdeth.  
Tomb hideth trouble. The blade is layed low.  
Earthly glory ageth and seareth.  
No man at all going the earth's gait,  
But age fares against him, his face paleth,  
Grey-haired he groaneth, knows gone companions,  
Lordly men, are to earth o'ergiven (1)

The syntactic cohesion of 'The Seafarer', real though it is, is under pressure. Its author, who regarded the poem as a corrective to "pretentious and decorated verse" and "formal verbalism"(2) might want to draw lessons for the future, not from its complex syntactic splendours but from its contractions and juxtapositions, and might wonder whether "Waneth the watch, but the world holdeth. / Tomb hideth trouble. The blade is layed low" wouldn't make a small poem in itself. Lustra takes up this latter emphasis.

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(1) CSP, pp.77-79.

(2) LE, p.216 ('The Renaissance', Poetry, 1914).

But between Ripostes and Lustra lies Cathay, in which volume Pound establishes the end-stopped line as his habitual rhythmic unit. Ripostes itself anticipated such a development in its decomposition of the strophe; in 'The Seafarer', with its notable lack of enjambment; and there were earlier anticipations in the chant-poems of his first books. The Chinese poems represent an extended working out of this "vers-libre principle, that the single line is the unit of composition".(1) Again, and more radically than in the earlier volumes, this has the effect of opening the poem up, of loosening its texture. Imperceptibly as yet, this loosening of syntactic moorings will allow line to float from line, for each is, in many respects, self-sufficient:

Surprised. Desert turmoil. Sea sun.  
 Flying snow bewilders the barbarian heaven.  
 Lice swarm like ants over our accoutrements.  
 Mind and spirit drive on the feathery banners.  
 Hard fight gets no reward.  
 Loyalty is hard to explain.(2)

This is as yet some distance from the radiant disjunctions of Rock-Drill, but the lines are bound together by no more than a common area of reference. There is no structural or substantive connection. Disperse the references and one arrives at:

Formality. Heydon polluted. Apollonius unpolluted  
 and the whole creation concerned with 'FOUR'  
     'my bikini is worth your raft'  
 And there be who say there is no road to felicity  
     tho' swallows eat celandine  
     'before my eyes into the aether of Nature'  
 The water-bug's mittens  
                                     petal the rock beneath,  
 The matrix glides sapphire into the rock-pool. (XCI/616)

Typically, in a poem by William Carlos Williams the syntax drives through

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.199.

(2) CSP, p.149 ('South-Folk in Cold Country').



the lineation:

The universality of things  
draws me toward the candy  
with melon flowers that open

about the edge of refuse  
proclaiming without accent  
the quality of the farmer's

shoulders and his daughter's  
accidental skin (1)

In Cathay, for the first time consistently in Pound's writing - though the earlier chant-poems are organized similarly - he restricts the impetus of the verse to the span of one line. The line-ending represents an emphatic caesura. This restriction is linked to a simplification of syntactic structure. Not only the baroque contortions of 'The Seafarer', but such moderate complication as this (and consequently such superbly expressive interplay of syntax and lineation) is abandoned:

See, they return; ah, see the tentative  
Movements, and the slow feet,  
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,  
With fear, as half-awakened;  
As if the snow should hesitate  
And murmur in the wind,  
  and half turn back;  
These were the 'Wing'd-with-Awe',  
  Invoilable.

Now much - the decay of a city - may be implied by two juxtaposed lines:

The phoenix are at play on their terrace.  
The phoenix are gone, the river flows on alone.(2)

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(1) William Carlos Williams, Imaginations, ed. Webster Schott, 1970 (Spring and All, 1923).

(2) CSP, p.148 ('The City of Choan').

Curiously, for a poet who was at this time pledging himself to a poetry of dynamism, the effect is static. The Chinese translations, poems mostly of regret, loss, nostalgia, elegy, have a becalmed quality:

The clouds have gathered, and gathered,  
 and the rain falls and falls,  
 The eight ply of the heavens  
 are all folded into one darkness,  
 And the wide, flat road stretches out.  
 I stop in my room toward the East, quiet, quiet,  
 I pat my new cask of wine.  
 My friends are estranged, or far distant,  
 I bow my head and stand still.(1)

This may have something to do with the sources he was using, their arrays of disjunct words, the virtual absence of syntax. The original of the 'To-Em-Mei' poem reads, in part:

gathering gathering fixed clouds  
 pattering pattering temporary rain  
 eight surface same dark  
 flat road this wide&flat (2)

The line is pre-eminently the unit here, and here also is the source of Pound's impetus-retarding repetitions "gathered, and gathered", "falls and falls", "quiet, quiet". But this was a tonality he frequently returned to when no original text was before him; "quiet, quiet":

Then light air, under saplings,  
 the blue banded lake under aether,  
 an oasis, the stones, the calm field,  
 the grass quiet (XVI/69)

Lay there, the long soft grass,  
 and the flute lay there by her thigh,  
 Sulpicia, the fauns, twig-strong,  
 gathered about her;

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(1) CSP, p.152 ('To-Em-Mei's "The Unmoving Cloud"')

(2) Quoted in Hugh Kenner, PE, p.207.

The fluid, over the grass  
Zephyrus, passing through her (XXV/118)

Lay in soft grass by the cliff's edge  
with the sea 30 metres below this  
and at hand's span, at cubit's reach moving,  
the crystalline, as inverse of water,  
clear over rock-bed (LXXVI/457)

These passages have a tranquillity comparable to that of the Cathay poem, though their context is paradisaical, not melancholic. This should alert us to the fact that, for all his talk of impetus and energy, much of Pound's output in these years was notably unturbulent. When, through the connective "And", he links the burgeoning spring with the discomfiture of celestial bodies, he is fulfilling the Imagist programme of super-position, and in a spirit of elegy:

The trees in my east-looking garden  
are bursting out with new twigs,  
They try to stir new affection,  
And men say the sun and moon keep on moving  
because they can't find a soft seat.(1)

The sun and moon don't, as "And" implies, follow on from the spring and trees; they are set against the new growth, introducing a cycle more alien, less comforting than that of the seasons. Sense demands that the linking word should be "But". The syntax however isn't meant to be explicatory and directive: the use of "And" betrays the lapsing inconsequence of a sad man. It is a dramatically-motivated device, quite as much so as the ellipses of the early "mask" or persona poems (though far subtler). Lustra, on the other hand, shows us conjunctions wholly impersonal - not to be 'rationalized' by reference to a speaker's state of mind, and surpassing, in this regard, effects such as Cathay's "Surprised. Desert turmoil. Sea sun" which, spoken in the first person,

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(1) CSP, p.153 ('To-Em-Mei's "The Unmoving Cloud"').

may be taken as the phantasmagoric perceptions of an exhausted soldier. The volume represents Pound's first fully comprehensive working-out of Imagist/Vorticist principles.

For those principles require that language be placed entirely at the beck of perception - a statement of the obvious only if one holds that language colours, or constitutes, perception: Pound, like Fenollosa, didn't. He found himself as a poet when he subdued the swarming voices of his predecessors - like all good young poets, he was an accomplished ventriloquist - and learned to attend to his own energies, and to the wordless patterns - vortices - which they generated. When he had the experience, accomplishment, and confidence to bend a language touched by so many masters to the expression of this prior realm, and in mimetic subordination to it - when he could cut back the no doubt plausible exfoliations of his original Metro poem to the bare two lines - then he had found himself.

Nevertheless, the book opens with a clutch of poems sardonically urbane in tone and with none of the terse concision we associate with the Imagist poem and Pound's prescriptions for it. A note appended to the 'Vorticism' essay gives us their rationale:

No artist can possibly get a vortex into every poem or picture he does. One would like to do so, but it is beyond one. Certain things seem to demand metrical expression, or expression in a rhythm more agitated than the rhythms acceptable to prose, and these subjects, though they do not contain a vortex, may have some interest, an interest as 'criticism of life' or of art. It is natural to express these things, and a vorticist or imagiste writer may be justified in presenting a certain amount of work which is not vorticism or imagisme, just as he might be justified in printing a purely didactic prose article. Unfinished sketches and drawings have a similar interest; they are trials and attempts toward a vortex.(1)

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(1) GB p.94n.

So we have 'Tenzone', 'The Condolence', 'Salutation' and 'Salutation the Second', 'Commission', 'Further Instructions'; all poems of sententious, Whitmanian parallelism ("Speak against unconscious oppression,/ Speak against the tyranny of the unimaginative,/ Speak against bonds"(1)), taking the line as their unit, emphatically, as Cathay did, but exhibiting none of the ingenious and telling sonorities of the Chinese poems, having none of their imagistic clarity. And we have poems which, in their deliberateness of syntax and grave movement, recall 'Doria' and 'The Return' of Ripostes: 'The Spring', 'The Coming of War: Actaeon':

An image of Lethe,  
                   and the fields  
 Full of faint light  
                   but golden,  
 Gray cliffs,  
                   and beneath them  
 A sea  
 Harsher than granite,  
                   unstill, never ceasing;  
 High forms  
                   with the movement of gods,  
 Perilous aspect (2)

Poems which, like 'The Return', exploit the expressive possibilities of the playing of syntax off against lineation: nowhere better than in the opening of 'Provincia Deserta':

At Rochecoart,  
 Where the hills part  
                   in three ways,  
 And three valleys, full of winding roads,  
 Fork out to south and north,  
 There is a place of trees . . . gray with lichen.  
 I have walked there  
                   thinking of old days.  
 At Chalais  
                   is a pleached arbour;

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(1) CSP, p.97 ('Commission').

(2) Ibid., p.117.

Old pensioners and old protected women  
 Have the right there -  
 it is charity.(1)

Strangely, this superbly articulated passage leads into the formulaic progression "I have walked", "I have seen", "I have gone", "I have climbed" which constitutes the rest of the poem. It is as if the mode of 'The Return' had been invaded and overcome by that of 'Further Instructions!'. These are poems of formal exploration, absorbing, expanding, complicating, sometimes compromising the fruits of earlier discoveries. The decisive advance, the point at which fresh perception and experience come together with newly evolved expressive means, is registered in those poems which effect the abrupt, undiluted superposition of images, areas of experience.

There is, within this mode, room for wit, as in the poem 'April' with its epigraph "Nympharum membra disjecta":

Three spirits came to me  
 And drew me apart  
 To where the olive boughs  
 Lay stripped upon the ground:  
 Pale carnage beneath bright mist.(2)

We move through the dismemberment accomplished by grotesque literalism, the wrenching of intent from phraseology (should we choose to notice it) - "drew me apart" - to the despoiled boughs, an apparently trivial violence made disturbing by the presence of spirits, and our consequent sense that the celebrants of some rite may have been violated ("stripped"); to the deepest level of violence, the strong word "carnage",

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(1) CSP, pp.131-32.

(2) Ibid., p.101.

oddly qualified by "Pale" (the white wood under the bark? bodies drained of blood?) and the aureole of mist surmounting the scene. All is done very deftly, giving a pellucid, almost 'fey' surface just beneath which shadows stir. The last line - the super-posing line - in accordance with this pervading doubleness, needn't strike us as another, complicating image if we take "carnage" as hyperbolically applied to torn branches; it is only when we take the word in its bloody sense, and allow this to reverberate with the - perhaps sadly gesturing? - spirits and the overtones of violation, that the 'transparency' is overlaid. As in the two lines of 'In a Station of the Metro' we then have an interpenetration of significances, conveyed, unusually for this poet, through the medium of an almost Empsonian 'wit'.

To that extent the poem is uncharacteristic. Pound is not often concerned with the indirections of word-play. 'Liu Ch'e' offers another kind of indirection:

The rustling of the silk is discontinued,  
 Dust drifts over the court-yard,  
 There is no sound of foot-fall, and the leaves  
 Scurry into heaps and lie still,  
 And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them:

A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.(1)

Hugh Kenner writes that this poem "illustrates [Pound's] flirtation with a poetic of stasis", that it is Imagist as opposed to Vorticist and doesn't exhibit the latter's characteristic "dynamism".(2) We saw that 'In a Station of the Metro' was dynamic by virtue of the way in which the poem swirled objectivity and subjectivity, like

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(1) CSP, p.118.

(2) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.159.

marble, the one into the other. And here again, though the poem deals with still things, the absence of rustling silk, of footfalls, of the "rejoicer of the heart", and with the melancholy presence of dust and dry leaves in the courtyard - all elements present in the inane Giles translation Pound drew his poem from(1) - its last, which has no counterpart in the original, transfigures these earlier properties with an image of arrested flight. Where all is absence, or futile motion - drifting, scurrying - the woman's spirit, or the memory of it, remains perilously clinging. Her presence informs the courtyard, its leaves and dust are memorials of her, and all the life she retains is in the perceptions of one who knew her. It is a tenuous connection to life, and the tenuity is conveyed by the clinging leaf, soon to be expelled by the wind which stirred dust and leaves and has temporarily subsided. Without its last line the poem is merely quiescent: the final image brings to it an element of tension, a stasis which radiates from it, by implication, movement - the leaf whirled into oblivion. The poem is not static; it uses "the language of exploration. Since the beginning of bad writing, writers have used images as ornaments. The point of Imagisme is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language."(2) Kenner writes that the last line "simply applies Imagist canons, the mind's creative leap fetching some token of the gone woman into the poem's system".(3) But that leaf is not merely a token, a picturesque remembrancer; it is the poem's "speech", its reverberations extending "beyond formulated language".

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(1) See Hugh Kenner, PE, p.196.

(2) GB, p.88.

(3) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.197.



This is a very different procedure from that employed in the poem  
'Gentildonna':

She passed and left no quiver in the veins, who now  
Moving among the trees, and clinging  
  in the air she severed,  
Fanning the grass she walked on then, endures:  
Grey olive leaves beneath a rain-cold sky.(1)

The last, super-posing line seems, in comparison with the complex, ramifying implications of the same device in 'Liu Ch'e', merely decorative; we are being shown a portion of the desolation the lady's tenuous presence inhabits. But the image doesn't interact with the preceding verse, it is simply produced as another instance of what has been previously specified. As such it seems to warrant the limiting evaluation Kenner applied to 'Liu Ch'e'. Some element of contrast, of imaginative expansion is required of the super-posing image. Kenner misreads 'Liu Ch'e' when he takes the last line to be merely in accord with what has gone before, to be more of the same. But the wet leaf's movement, which has been arrested like that of the dust and leaves, is immeasurably more significant. The passage is, suddenly, from the quotidian to the metaphysical. 'Coitus' effects another sort of expansion:

The gilded phaloi of the crocuses  
  are thrusting at the spring air.  
Here is naught of dead gods  
But a procession of festival,  
A procession, O Giulio Romano,  
Fit for your spirit to dwell in.  
Dione, your nights are upon us.

The dew is upon the leaf.  
The night about us is restless.(2)

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(1) CSP, p.101.

(2) Ibid., p.120.

The poem begins with a matter-of-fact declarative sentence: it is spring and the crocuses are coming up - though the matter-of-factness is qualified by the rather dandyish reference to the flowers as "gilded phaloi". We are prepared thereby - as the title prepares us - for some sort of celebration of nature and fertility. And it continues with a disclaimer regarding dead gods, the properties of winter. Apparently the speaker is present at a festival, a procession, and he evokes, in urbane, courtly terms, the spirit of "Giulio Romano": this is a procession "Fit for [his] spirit to dwell in". All is, so far, light, and a little mannered; but there is sudden ardour in the next line: "Dione, your nights are upon us". We are at, or approaching, Dodona, with its oracle of Zeus: the poet invokes Dione, the god's cult-partner there. With this glancing specification of place the poem's tone deepens. The final couplet passes from dew on a leaf - minute observation - to the unspecifiable dimensions of "restless" night: a restlessness which might stir the branches of the Dodona oak, scattering dew. Again, as in 'Liu Ch'e', the super-posing image offers an imperilled calm. "The dew is upon the leaf": there have been no oracular rustlings; "The night about us is restless": some revelation is impending, when the wind lifts. None of this is explicit: the poet doesn't unfold his meaning for us, doesn't make it syntactically explicit, as syntax will unfold or dilute. He specifies this, and this, and sets them together. From their conjunction arises the word "beyond speech", the meaning words cannot encompass, but may release.

These poems then, in setting "one idea . . . on top of another" and concerning, as they do, the facts of perception, directly conveyed, not reflected or moralized upon, exemplify a "form of knowing" distinct from, and inaccessible to, that developed through the resources of

conventional syntactic discourse. They use the "language of exploration" to create the image, "the word beyond formulated language". The discursive intelligence dissipates energy; the imagistic, or Vorticist, focuses it. The poet devotes his verbal energies to the actualization of diverse verbal complexes, 'subjective' or 'objective', which, when set in relation, will generate a significance inattributable to any particular locution. In this way the poet goes "beyond language" to reach that primary realm of form, the "high thin air over the breathable air"(1), which embodies what Pound will call, in the Pisan Cantos, the "wisdom . . . past metaphor" (LXXXII/526). This, the basis of the ideogrammic method, Pound discovers and makes his own in Lustra. The Cantos will consolidate and extend that volume's discoveries.

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(1) M, p.405 ('Mostly Quartets', The Listener, 1936).

THE FIRST FOUR CANTOS

Seamus Heaney, writing, in 1974, on technique in poetry:

Technique is what allows [the] first stirring of the mind round a word or an image or a memory to grow towards articulation: articulation not necessarily in terms of argument or explication but in terms of its own potential for harmonious self-production. The seminal excitement has to be granted conditions in which, in Hopkins's words, it 'selves, goes itself . . . crying / What I do is me, for that I came'. Technique ensures that the first gleam attains its proper effulgence. And I don't just mean a felicity in the choice of words to flesh the theme - that is a problem also but it is not so critical. A poem can survive stylistic blemishes but it cannot survive a still-birth. The crucial action is pre-verbal, to be able to allow the first alertness or come-hither, sensed in a blurred or incomplete way, to dilate and approach as a thought or a theme or a phrase. Robert Frost put it this way: 'a poem begins as a lump in the throat, a home-sickness, a love-sickness. It finds the thought and the thought finds the words.' As far as I am concerned, technique is more vitally and sensitively connected with that first activity where the 'lump in the throat' finds 'the thought' than with 'the thought' finding 'the words'. That first emergence involves the divining, vatic, oracular function; the second, the making function. To say as Auden did, that a poem is a 'verbal contraction' is to keep one or two tricks up your sleeve.(1)

The distinction between emergence and making can be formalized, and the terms' relatedness preserved, by a particular definition of the words "craft" and "technique":

I think technique is different from craft. Craft is what you can learn from other verse. Craft is the skill of making. . . . It can be deployed without reference to the feelings or the self. It knows how to keep up a capable verbal athletic display; it can be content to be vox et praeterea nihil - all voice and nothing else - but not voice as in 'finding a voice'.(2)

Consider in the light of this distinction an avowal of Pound's, writing in 1913 to Harriet Monroe: "There's no use in a strong impulse if it

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(1) Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, 1980, pp.48-49.

(2) Ibid., p.47.

is all or nearly all lost in bungling transmission and technique. This obnoxious word that I'm always brandishing about means nothing but a transmission of the impulse intact. It means that you not only get the thing off your own chest, but that you get it into some one else's."(1) That word "impulse" returns us to the matter of the last chapter. In it we saw that Pound regarded the gestation of the poem as passing through three stages: from the impulse to the pattern, and from the pattern to the verbal embodiment. Interestingly, we find that Frost and Heaney concur: "the 'lump in the throat'" (Pound's "impulse") "finds 'the thought'" (or "pattern"), and the thought finds the words (the poem). The latter reaches of this process, says Heaney, concern "the making function" and employ the poet's "craft"; but the "first emergence" - the impulse - "involves the divining, vatic, oracular function", and concerns his technique. Technique is not simply an executive matter, but implicates all of the poet's faculties:

Technique, as I would define it, involves not only a poet's way with words, his management of metre, rhythm and verbal texture; it involves also a definition of his stance towards life, a definition of his own reality. It involves the discovery of ways to go out of his normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate: a dynamic alertness that mediates between the origins of feeling in memory and experience and the formal ploys that express these in a work of art. Technique entails the water-marking of your essential patterns of perception, voice and thought into the touch and texture of your lines; it is the whole creative effort of the mind's and body's resources to bring the meaning of experience within the jurisdiction of form. . . .

It is indeed conceivable that a poet could have a real technique and a wobbly craft . . . but more often it is a case of a sure enough craft and a failure of technique.(2)

Heaney cites Patrick Kavanagh and Alun Lewis as types of that conceivable - but rare - poet whose impulse outruns its embodiment: a

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(1) L, p.60 (Harriet Monroe, 1913).

(2) Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, 1980, p.47.

status Pound accords, admiringly, to Thomas Hardy in the Guide to Kulchur. Hardy's matter is sometimes stumblingly embodied, but that occasional clumsiness is a function of his fidelity to the substance of the poem, its impulse, the originating "lump in the throat", with the result that in his poetry "expression" is "coterminous with the matter"(1) and the craft is gnarled by filial compliance with the fathering urge ("the degree in which he would have . . . his mind on the SUBJECT MATTER, and how little he cared about manner, which does not in the least mean that he did not care about it or had not a definite aim"(2)). Pound's regard for Hardy, long-cherished but rarely voiced before the Guide, is an indication of the weight he attached to matters beyond the narrow sphere of "craft".

The impulse once born, and presuming an adequate grasp of craft in the poet, there are opposed ways of developing it into what Wallace Stevens called "the bread of faithful speech".(3) Heaney discusses these in terms of gender: "I have always listened for poems, they come sometimes like bodies come out of a bog, almost complete, seeming to have been laid down a long time ago, surfacing with a touch of mystery. They certainly involve craft and determination, but chance and instinct have a role in the thing too. I think the process is a kind of somnambulist encounter between masculine will and intelligence and feminine clusters of image and emotion."(4) Again, and more fully:

I am setting up two modes and calling them masculine and feminine . . . In the masculine mode, the language functions as a form of address, of assertion or command, and the poetic effort has to do with conscious quelling and control of the materials, a labour of shaping; words are

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(1) GK, p.285.

(2) CC, p.326.

(3) Wallace Stevens, The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens, New York, 1954, p.408 ('Notes toward a Supreme Fiction').

(4) Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, 1980, p.34.

not music before they are anything else, nor are they drowsy from their slumber in the unconscious, but athletic, capable, displaying the muscle of sense. Whereas in the feminine mode the language functions more as evocation than as address, and the poetic effort is not so much a labour of design as it is an act of divination and revelation; words in the feminine mode behave with the lover's come-hither instead of the athlete's display, they constitute a poetry which is delicious as texture before it is recognized as architectonic.(1)

Heaney cites two poets as exemplifying these divergent modes: "Wordsworth continued to think of the poetic act as essentially an act of complaisance with natural impulses and tendencies." And: "It is otherwise with Yeats. With him, the act is not one of complaisance but of control."(2) Pound frequently seems caught between these two paradigms. He wrote often as if Wordsworth were trying to make himself over into Yeats - though notably lacking Yeats' rhetorical assurance and histrionic gift, so that his public voice is frequently unformed and hectoring. Such a result would flow from the particular manner in which he handled his impulse or donné:

The quality of the music in the finished poem has to do with the way the poet proceeds to respond to his donné. If he surrenders to it, allows himself to be carried by its original rhythmic suggestiveness, to become somnambulist after its invitations, then he will have a music not unlike Wordsworth's, hypnotic, swimming with the current of its form rather than against it. If, on the other hand, instead of surrendering to the drift of the original generating rhythm, the poet seeks to discipline it, to harness its energies in order to drive other parts of his mind into motion, then we will have a music not unlike Yeats's, affirmative, seeking to master rather than to mesmerize the ear, swimming strongly against the current of its form.(3)

This male/female orbit of reference may, with relevance, be pursued into the details of biology; Heaney writes of "a vision of poetic creation as a feminine action, almost parthenogenetic, where it is the

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(1) Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, 1980, p.88.

(2) Ibid., p.71.

(3) Ibid., p.61.

ovum and its potential rather than the sperm and its penetration that underlies . . . accounts of poetic origins".(1) The poet as vates or diviner bears this ovular character, while the active, thrusting, masterful poet can be seen as spermatic in relation to his art. We can, indeed, apply it to Pound's model of the creative process, in which case the originating impulse figures as the fluxive, female pole and the movement from energizing pattern to verbal embodiment represents the male.

In Pound's critical writing the organizing, consciously manipulative aspect of poetic technique (craft, in Heaney's terminology) receives the major stress; while its more comprehensive side, that which implicates the writer's being as a whole (in Heaney's terms, technique properly speaking) is somewhat neglected. It seems to me that this is more a tactical emphasis than a genuine division of interest on Pound's part. As I hope to show later (see Part Two, Chapter 4: 'Totalitarian Poetry'), he believed that there wasn't much one could usefully say about the generative aspects of the art, on the principle that "nobody can DO anything about their contents anyhow; it either is or isn't".(2) His most interesting and extensive attempt along these lines is the account he gives in 'Vorticism' of the genesis of 'In a Station of the Metro' (see Chapter 1). While not denying the reality and importance of these questions, he didn't believe that it was possible to express them discursively, and the state of contemporary poetry, simply as a collection of artefacts, was such that the critic's emphasis on executive excellence was vital. Nevertheless, when Pound picks up the male/female range of metaphor in his 'Postscript' to Gourmont's

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(1) Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978, 1980, p.83.

(2) L, p.347 (Mary Barnard, 1934).



The Natural Philosophy of Love, it is to relentlessly stress the masculine, shaping, penetrative aspect of the relation at the expense of the female's receptivity, at the expense of "chance and instinct":

Without any digression on feminism, taking merely the division Gourmont has given (Aristotelian, if you like), one offers woman as the accumulation of hereditary aptitudes, better than man in the 'useful gestures', the perfections; but to man, given what we have of history, the 'inventions', the new gestures, the extravagance, the wild shots, the impractical, merely because in him occurs the new up-jut, the new bathing of the cerebral tissues in the residuum, in la mousse of the life sap.

Or, as I am certainly neither writing an anti-feminist tract, nor claiming disproportionate privilege for the spermatozoide, for the sake of symmetry ascribe a cognate rôle to the ovule, though I can hardly be expected to introspect it. A flood is as bad as a famine; the ovular bath could still account for the refreshment of the female mind, and the recharging, regracing of its 'traditional aptitudes'; where one woman appears to benefit by an alluvial clarifying, ten dozen appear to be swamped.

Postulating that the cerebral fluid tried all sorts of experiments, and, striking matter, forced it into all sorts of forms, by gushes; we have admittedly in insect life a female predominance; in bird, mammal and human, at least an increasing male prominence. . . .

Insect, utility; bird, flight; mammal, muscular splendour; man, experiment.(1)

The grudging quality of Pound's concessions - "where one woman appears to benefit by an alluvial clarifying, ten dozen appear to be swamped" - belies his gestures towards even-handedness. Man and woman, or the masculine and feminine principles, form a continuum opposed to the desiccations of abstraction, but there is no doubt as to which is the dominant, and the more admirable, of the two:

The dead laborious compilation and comparison of other men's dead images, all this is mere labour, not the spermatozoic act of the brain.

Woman, the conservator, the inheritor of past gestures, clever, practical, as Gourmont says, not inventive, always the best disciple of any inventor, has been always the enemy of the dead or laborious form of compilation, abstraction.

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(1) PD, pp.204-05 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

Not considering the process ended; taking the individual genius as the man in whom the new access, the new superfluity of spermatozoic pressure (quantitative and qualitative) up-shoots into the brain, alluvial Nile-flood, bringing new crops, new invention. And as Gourmont says, there is only reasoning where there is initial error, i.e., weakness of the spurt, wandering search.(1)

The poem's energizing, vortex-like pattern, which springs from and acts to shape the matrix of impulse, is clearly relatable to Pound's idea of the form-generating sperm: "the power of the spermatozoide is precisely the power of exteriorizing a form".(2) Its office, like that of the poet's image, is to exteriorize the latencies of impulse and, generalizing from this, we can say that "creative thought is an act like fecundation, like the male cast of the human seed".(3) This interpenetration of the biological metaphor and the facts of the poet's creative fiat is made virtually explicit in Pound's turn of phrase here: "Each of these particles [sperms] is, we need not say, conscious of form, but has by all counts a capacity for formal expression: is not thought precisely a form-comparing and form-combining?"(4) To speak of "a capacity for formal expression" is to invoke aesthetics rather than embryology. Image, we can say - driving home the submerged correspondences - is called into being and fertilized by impulse, which in so doing creates form. The form is created, not elicited: the spermatic impulse compels the matrix to evolve in a particular fashion. But this doesn't square with Pound's account of the genesis of 'In a Station of the Metro':

I tried all that day to find words for what [the experience] had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Rayouard, I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation . . .

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(1) PD, pp.212-13 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

(2) Ibid., p.204 ('Postscript').

(3) Ibid., p.207 ('Postscript').

(4) Ibid., p.207 ('Postscript').

not in speech, but in little splotches of colour.(1-his dots)

The search for appropriate words occupied him, on and off, for a further one and a half years. If we identify the ejaculation, the initiating "Nile-flood", with Pound's "sudden emotion" when stepping from the train, then its subsequent, lengthy maturation constitutes the gestatory period, culminating in a birth. Impulse having penetrated the creative mind's womb and initiated growth, an obscure gestation shapes and completes the poem. Here Pound speaks directly from his experience of creation; but in the 'Postscript' he writes that "the mind is an upspurt of sperm, no, let me alter that; trying to watch the process: the sperm, the form-creator, the substance which compels the ovule to evolve in a given pattern, one microscopic, miniscule particle, entering the 'castle' of the ovule".(2) This, with its talk of compulsion and its castle-storming sperms, introduces a note of violence which is amplified elsewhere in the essay. Pound's mind turns back to London (he is writing in 1921, in Paris): "There are traces of it [the notion that the brain is "a sort of great clot of genital fluid"(3)] in the symbolism of phallic religions, man really the phallus or spermatozoide charging, head-on, the female chaos. Integration of the male in the male organ. Even oneself has felt it, driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London, a sensation analogous to the male feeling in copulation."(4) This polarity of an urgent driving and an almost idiot passivity, and celebration of the head-long charging of chaos, is undeniably aggressive, disturbingly so as related to the act of love. It implies an overweening element, perhaps a strain of hysteria, within the masculine element of what is, after all, a psychic divide. (That

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(1) GB, p.87.

(2) PD, pp.206-07 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

(3) Ibid., p.203 ('Postscript').

(4) Ibid., p.204 ('Postscript').

is to say, if both ovule and sperm - matrix and pattern - subsist within the creative mind, and if one pole of that relation is seen as a chaos which pattern assaults and masters, then one half of the relation is devalued.) And it contradicts absolutely the account in 'Vorticism' of enlightenment followed by slow growth. As we shall see, the division in theory is twinned by opposed poetic modes, the masculine and feminine, which co-exist uneasily within the Cantos.

I think one can show that Pound's poetry suffers when masculine persuasive force assists at its parturition, because he was, fundamentally, a poet of feminine, receptive temperament driven again and again into grotesquerie when attempting to strenuously "command" his idiom, to "quell" and "control". A passage from the Cantos embodies an account of the female principle which complements and extends that given in the prose:

Jungle:

Glaze green and red feathers, jungle,  
Basis of renewal, renewals;  
Rising over the soul, green virid, of the jungle,  
Lozenge of the pavement, clear shapes,  
Broken, disrupted, body eternal,  
Wilderness of renewals, confusion  
Basis of renewals, subsistence,  
Glazed green of the jungle (XX/91-92)

And a little later: "Moon on the palm-leaf, / confusion; / Confusion, source of renewals" (XXI/100). And again: "the female / Is an element, the female / Is a chaos / An octopus / A biological process" (XXIX/144). Here the feminine is acknowledged as the "Basis of renewals, subsistence" - the matrix, as we have said - but remains a "chaos", an "octopus", a "biological process". The loam, the nutriment or basis, is formless and must be transformed. Within the Cantos such a transformation

is enacted, across decades and volumes, in the section Rock-Drill. In Canto XXIX woman "is submarine, she is an octopus, she is / A biological process" (XXIX/145); she is submerged potentiality, raised into form some twenty-five years later:

that the body of light come forth  
                                   from the body of fire  
 And that your eyes come to the surface  
                                   from the deep wherein they were sunken,  
 Reina - for 300 years,  
                                   and now sunken  
 That your eyes come forth from their caves  
                                   & light then  
   as the holly-leaf  
   qui laborat, orat  
 Thus Undine came to the rock,  
   by Circeo  
 and the stone eyes again looking seaward (XCI/610)

Among the multiple significances of this passage we can isolate one that will illumine our theme: that of "submarine" potential, woman, being raised from the sea's depths, into definition, and identified by those least fleshly organs, the eyes; this corresponds to the elicitation of form from the formless matrix of impulse; and its final reach and perfect formal embodiment, the metamorphosis of rich "confusion" into definition, is as the perfected artefact, the bust or figure with its "stone eyes . . . looking seaward", set against and surmounting flux.

Canto I, which is primarily concerned with Odysseus and his entry into the Underworld, presents to us more obliquely the two aspects of femininity which will dominate the rest of the poem: its malignity, in the form of the witch-goddess Circe, and its grace and kindness, in

the form of Aphrodite. In presenting these primal aspects the Canto reminds us that neither is unalloyed; that either deity may show, at another time and in different circumstances, qualities opposed to her primary and defining aspect. Thus Circe may prove kind and gently amorous, Aphrodite terrible. At such moments each assumes something of the virtù of the other, and the two together may be seen as shifting facets of a single unstill reality. The deities of the Cantos are never static: they are "moving energies"(1); and their various epiphanic appearances in Pound's poem define a complex and shifting idea of, amongst other things, woman - for the theophany almost always concerns a goddess. As we have seen, sexual metaphor deeply informs Pound's conception of the poet's creative act. In his 'Postscript' to Gourmont's book that act is pictured as uncompromizingly masculine. How is this model affected by the poet's commerce with the Goddess?

Circe is present in Canto I tangentially, but the presence is powerful. She is mentioned first in her beneficent aspect: as benecomata dea, "the trim-coifed goddess" and authoress of the fair wind Odysseus is riding. And her good offices as guide are memorialized in "came we then to the place / Aforesaid by Circe" (I/3). But the sight of Elpenor's shade, who "'slept in Circe's ingle'", recalls the darker side of Odysseus' recent adventure, and the "Limbs that we left in the house of Circe, / Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged other." (I/4) Elperor died full of Circe's wine. Book XI of The Odyssey, which Pound is translating via a Latin crib, is, of course, as narrative bound in to the rest of Homer's epic, and these allusions recall the precedent action on the island of Aea. Odysseus only leaves there because Circe suffers him to, and to obtain that suffering he must appeal to her kindness: "I / went through the dark to Kirkê's flawless bed / and took the

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(1) See LE, p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

goddess' knees in supplication,/ urging, as she bent to hear . . ."(1)

But the fact that he is in a position to appeal to her at all derives from the very different gesture he makes when he first comes upon the goddess:

The lady Kirkê

mixed me a golden cup of honeyed wine,  
adding in mischief her unholy drug.  
I drank, and the drink failed. But she came forward  
aiming a stroke with her long stick, and whispered:

'Down in the sty and snore among the rest!'

Without a word, I drew my sharpened sword  
and in one bound held it against her throat.  
She cried out, then slid under to take my knees,  
catching her breath to say, in her distress . . .(2)

Odysseus' later gesture of supplication recalls Circe's here and the goddess herself pleading. The hero subjugates her, and the conquest is sexual. He enjoys immunity from her bestializing sorcery on account of Hermes' gift of the herb moly. By virtue of the neutralization of her craft, and of his physical power, he is able to exact the promise that, should he lie with her - as she asks him - she will not harm (castrate) him, and that she will free the men whom she has transformed. This relation of supplicant to provident being is reversed when Odysseus leaves the island, as we have seen. Not only is his departure dependent on her, but she shapes his initial course:

'Son of Laërtês and the gods of old,  
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,  
you shall not stay here longer against your will;  
but home you may not go  
unless you take a strange way round and come  
to the cold homes of Death and pale Perséphonê.

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(1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.191.

(2) Ibid., pp.186-87.

You shall hear prophesy from the rapt shade  
of blind Tirêsiâs of Thebes, forever  
charged with reason even among the dead;  
to him alone, of all the flitting ghosts,  
Persêphonê has given a mind undarkened.'(1)

To stay with her in safety and to free his companions Odysseus must subjugate the Goddess, seen in her malign aspect; to leave the island he must supplicate her as beneficent. So, although the Cantos open with Odysseus and his men embarking upon their journey to Hades, the hero has been granted the opportunity: he leaves on sufferance, and having been advised to tackle the enterprise before he should turn for home. Circe's advice extends to the detailing of his course, of the appropriate mode of sacrifice to Dis and Persephone, and of the strategies of invocation which will bring Tiresias to him. The Canto's opening "And" says that all this lies behind Odysseus' embarkation, and the text itself recalls these bewildering aspects of the Goddess: the provider of favouring winds, the guide, and yet also the destroyer of Elpenor. As the Goddess thus shifts, so does the hero: first master, then supplicant. This relation between divine beneficence and malignity, and the reactions to the one or the other of the poet-hero, we shall find a pattern thrown up repeatedly in the Cantos.

The irruption of Aphrodite into the Canto towards its close is not entirely unexpected if we bear in mind her interpenetration with Persephone in Greek myth and ritual, the two being dual forms of the maiden Earth-goddess Korê.(2) But the Korê association is rather distant at this stage of the Cantos. A strangely "candied"(3) chronology brings the love goddess close up against Circe:

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(1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.192.

(2) See Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, New York, 1955, p.640 (reprint of 3rd edn., Cambridge, 1922).

(3) See L, p.285 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).



Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,  
 In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.  
 And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away  
 And unto Circe.

Venerandam,

In the Cretan's phrase, with the golden crown, Aphrodite,  
 Cyprī munimenta sortita est, mirthful, orichalchi, with golden  
 Girdles and breast bands, thou with dark eyelids  
 Bearing the golden bough of Argicida. So that: (I/5)

This refers to Odysseus' voyage to Aeaea after the account of his departure from it and, opening out into the invocation to Aphrodite, has the effect of drawing her into the Circean orbit (associated here with the malign Sirens). Aphrodite was not, for the Greeks, invariably a benign figure:

Such surnames as Androphonos, 'Killer of Men', Anosia, 'the Unholy' and Tymborychos, 'the Gravedigger', indicate her sinister and dangerous potentialities. As Epitymbidia she is actually 'she upon the graves'. Under the name of Persephaessa she is invoked as the Queen of the Underworld. . . . All these characteristics are evidence that at one time there were tales which identified the goddess of love with the goddess of death . . . (1)

As goddess of death, Aphrodite is related to Persephone, and to Circe, Queen of the sepulchral isle of Aeaea. That Pound was alive to the possible association of Aphrodite with Circe is demonstrated in the brief prose piece 'Credo' of 1930, in which he writes: "Given the material means I would replace the statue of Venus on the cliffs of Terracina." (2) Those cliffs look onto an isolated promontory (Circeius Mons) about eighty miles south-east of Rome which, because it looked like an island when viewed from a distance was traditionally thought to have been the island of Circe. This association of Aphrodite with Aeaea surfaces several times in the Cantos. In Canto XXXIX:

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(1) Carl Kerényi, The Gods of the Greeks, 1951, p.51.

(2) SP, p.53 ('Credo', Front, 1930).

To the beat of the measure  
 From star up to the half-dark  
 From half-dark to half-dark  
     Unceasing the measure  
 Flank by flank on the headland  
     with the Goddess' eyes to seaward  
 By Circeo, by Terracina, with the stone eyes  
     white toward the sea (XXXIX/195)

In Canto LXXIV:

as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her  
     and from her manner of walking  
                     as had Anchises  
 till the shrine be again white with marble  
 till the stone eyes look again seaward (LXXIV/435)

In Canto XCI:

Thus Undine came to the rock,  
                     by Circeo  
 and the stone eyes again looking seaward (XCI/610)

The association isn't made necessarily in terms of death or danger to man - though that is one element of it: "you are fearful, Cythera" runs the Greek in Canto LXXIX (LXXIX/492). Rather, it is an instance of Pound's habitual syncretism in the use of myth, and won't resolve into unitary correspondences. As we have seen, Circe is benign as well as fearful, and when she smiles on man she shows as an analogue of Aphrodite. The reverse applies to the love goddess. She is invoked in her great beauty at the end of Canto I, "Bearing the golden bough of Argicida" (I/5), a property offered up to Proserpine by Aeneas so that he could descend to Hades. In this connection she figures as an avatar of Koré (see page 72). But the title "Argicida" means "Slayer of Greeks", and refers us to her championship of the Trojans against Odysseus and the Greeks. In this aspect she is the Circean "dread Cythera" (see LXXVI/456) and a threat

to Odysseus. The whole complex associates violence, death, and the Underworld with Aphrodite's primary aspect of love in a form of "mythological exposition" which avoids "denting the edges or shaving off the nose and ears of a verity".(1) None of these elements, taken singly, 'explain' Aphrodite's appearance at this point in Canto I: taken together they constitute an ambiguous theophany, a disequilibrium, which tilts us on into the poem.

The formal context of the theophany is instructive. It follows upon the disconcerting, achronological fragment concerning Odysseus' voyage, and is succeeded by the abrupt and unresolved phrase "So that:". We experience its suavity of movement as a patch of calm amidst abrupt passage and urgent, onward-pressing energies. The divine interrupts quotidian sequences momentarily but the moment passed, they rush on, and Aphrodite is no more than glimpsed. We shall find that such a "magic moment"(2) is characteristically hedged about by turbulence in the Cantos, and that this fact says a great deal about the way Pound apprehends the Goddess. Taken as a whole, the Canto establishes Circe and Aphrodite as aspects of what we shall find to be a single female deity.

How do Pound's dealings with the matter of Circe and Aphrodite relate to our earlier argument regarding the masculine ideology of his prose criticism, and the essentially feminine provenance of his poetry? We are now in a position to relate the seaward-looking stone eyes of Canto XCI, defined earlier as an exemplum of the "perfected artefact" (see page 69), to Aphrodite. This conjunction of Amor and Art is highly significant. It stands against the fluxive sea (from which Aphrodite arose "by Terracina" (LXXIV/435)), and in opposition to the malign sexuality of Circe

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(1) GK, p.127.

(2) See L, p.285 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).

(underlined by the reference to "Undine" or Ondine, a variety of femme fatale sea-nymph). The passage as a whole is underwritten by the opening line, a conflation of several Provençal lines - "ab lo dolchor qu'al cor mi vai": "with the sweetness that comes to my heart". The succeeding lines can thus be seen in troubadour terms, as issuing from a contemplation of the beloved. And in those lines a three-fold emergence is detailed: "the body of light" from "the body of fire", eyes from the "deep", and eyes "from their caves". The "body of fire" is the sun, the source of the "tensile light"(1) of the intellect and analogue of the Divine Mind ("Shines / in the mind of heaven God / who made it / more than the sun / in our eye" (LI/250)). The "deep" is the sea's spawning matrix, from which form emerges. The eyes are Reina's, a generic term for the Goddess but here particularly associated with Aphrodite. The last instance - "That your eyes come forth from their caves" - is very complex. If we conceive of Reina's head as sculpted - as, perhaps, the statue of Venus on the cliffs of Terracina - then the eyes "come forth", either when the chisel reveals them in the caves of their sockets, or when the sun moves above the sculpture on its cliff and so shifts the shadow the brows cast over its eyes. The phrase "& light then" would thus refer to the eyes' bright emergence from shadow. But the phrase also entails an emergence from the Underworld, as an analogous passage in Canto CVI makes clear:

A match flares in the eyes' hearth,  
then darkness (CVI/752)

The context deals with "Dis' bride, Queen over Phlegethon": Persephone; and the darkness that obscures her eyes is that of Hades, heralding the onset of winter. And the caves Reina's eyes emerge from in Canto XCI,

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(1) C, p.187.

and into light, are those of the Underworld: a composite goddess, she here assumes the aspect of Koré who, as we have seen, is also one of Aphrodite's avatars. Her passage into light provokes the spring, and the earth attains a greenness like that of the enduring evergreens which have watched out the winter; a greenness "as the holly-leaf". Later in the Canto this movement from the unbroken deep to the emerging Goddess, and from the barrenness of winter to the foison of spring, reaches its apogee as the Princess Ra-Set enters "the protection of crystal" (XCI/611). These stages of emergence, which culminate in the definition of crystal, parallel the creative morphology we discussed in Chapter 1, from impulse to pattern, and from pattern to verbal definition.

It is important to notice that Canto XCI's rite of emergence is enacted in terms of Amor and is instigated by the "mantram" of the Lady(1): it is written "with the sweetness that comes to my heart". We said earlier that Pound was essentially a vatic poet working in a feminine idiom, and dependent for its insights upon a sort of poetic divination, an oracular sounding of deeps and origins. The Imagist poetic, as exemplified by 'In a Station of the Metro', and Pound's account of its origins, were rooted in a patient waiting upon definition: the originating impulse came unbidden, was figured by a pre-verbal pattern, and gradually accrued the words which, once mustered, raised it into definition. We can see, in the light of this, that the emergence of Reina from the sea is related compellingly to the creative morphology Pound established in his 'Vorticism' essay, and that it is linked to a beneficent Goddess, figuring now as Aphrodite, now as Persephone, now as some other. The presence of Aphrodite, and the Provençal ambience established by Canto XCI's first line, suggest that the impelling power which informs this ritual emergence, so like the poem's emergence from the mind, is that "affect"

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(1) See SR, p.97.

specified in Pound's translation of the 'Donna mi Preghe', "That is so proud he hath Love for a name" (XXXVI/177) (for Pound held that Cavalcanti was the inheritor of the troubadours' cult of Amor(1)). It is the quality of the poet's affection that educes this Canto, and carves its trace in our minds. If, then, the Imagist poetic - which was incorporated into Vorticism and is the substance of the subsequently formulated ideogrammic method - functions within this context compounded of unpredictable visitation, an intent hearkening only fractured by manipulative strategies, and Love, what principle informs those stretches of the Cantos which neglect such conditions? We shall be in a better position to answer that question when we have examined more fully the relationship of assertion to receptivity within the first sixteen Cantos as a whole.

Pound thought that Book XI of The Odyssey, the Nekuia, was older than the rest of the poem.(2) His stress upon it evinces an interest in the pre-Olympian, chthonic rites of archaic Greece, which were very different in feeling from the good-natured, neighbourly sacrifices of Socrates' time, apostrophizing distant anthropomorphic deities. The Neku-sia at Athens was the festival day of the dead at which the people sacrificed to Gea, Earth.(3) Such rites involved a complex of ritual by no means wholly addressed to the promotion of fertility. Other and darker forces were confronted. Pound probably saw a relation between the placatory or exorcising ceremonies of the ancient chthonic rites, addressed to malignant and potentially dangerous spirits, and the way the shades of the dead flock threateningly about Odysseus in Hades, so that he draws his sword to keep them off. Canto I tells of a descent and culminates in a theophany: descending, Odysseus grants the dead speech;

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(1) See Peter Makin, Provence and Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978.

(2) See Hugh Kenner, PE, p.349.

(3) See Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, New York, 1955, p.267 (reprint of 3rd edn., Cambridge, 1922).

Pound, penetrating the text he is translating, fathers a vision of Aphrodite. The Odyssean moment is parallel to the primary moment of Pound's poetic morphology, and shows us the poet penetrating, appropriating his impulse. The radiant disclosure of Aphrodite springs from the ardour of that penetration. The act, then, has a sexual provenance; it is a "head-long" penetration by the "spermatic intelligence", establishing a private relationship of object and subject; the ardour is heroically masculine. Another sense of the primary moment, the creative reach, can be taken from the ritual merging of man and earth in the "connubium terrae" (LXXXII/526) of Canto LXXXII:

How drawn, O GEA TERRA,  
 what draws as thou drawest  
 till one sink into thee by an arm's width  
 embracing thee. Drawest,  
 truly thou drawest. (LXXXII/526)

This moment then, primary and constitutive in Pound's poetic morphology, may be heroically penetrative and appropriative, as in Canto I, or it may enlist "a gentler order of feeling"(1), as in Canto LXXXII, and constitute a marriage with the earth, a union with the matrix which retains and values its substance. From the primary moment form arises. The vision of the Goddess in the Cantos is always a revelation in the light and air: either emerging into space, or forming from it. So the substance the Goddess emerges from - corresponding to the impulse of Pound's morphology, as the deity corresponds to the articulated form - may be the earth, or it may be water, as in Canto XCI, or it may be the ambient air. Aphrodite manifests herself in Canto I following upon Odysseus' ritual invocations in the Underworld. In Canto II revelation is of and in the air. Before examining the Canto, let us look at the recurrence of aerial forms in the poem as a whole.

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(1) Gaudier-Brzeska's phrase; see GB, p.28.

Natural detail in the Cantos is nearly always associated with a positive moment in the poem, and is itself radiant, a matter of clear water and well-lit vistas:

Lay in soft grass by the cliff's edge  
with the sea 30 metres below this  
and at hand's span, at cubit's reach moving,  
the crystalline, as inverse of water,  
clear over rock-bed (LXXVI/457)

The elements are characteristic: the leisured seer (as in "I sat on the Dogana's steps" (III/11)), the precise notation of distance ("30 metres") and its relation to the human scale ("at hand's span"), the scholastic strain in the diction ("cubit's reach", "inverse", "crystalline"), and the general feeling of luxu, calme et volupté ("Lay in soft grass by the cliff's edge"), a relishing of leisure which, Matisse-like, still retains and delights in clarity. Images of water and crystal, of "light fighting for speed" and "the aether of Nature" (XCI/616), reach their apotheosis in the great paradisaical Cantos of the Rock-Drill section, but the tonality is everywhere present. The first thirty Cantos abound in passages celebrating the unrefracting Italian light ("Light: and the first light, before ever dew was fallen" (III/11)), and those qualities of water which ally it to the radiance and transparency of glass ("the blue-gray glass of the wave tents them" (II/6); "glass wave over Tyro" (II/10)). Light, in these early Cantos, is imagined in its clearest aspect, and as an almost vitreous element: "'With the leaves green and then not green, / The click of light in their branches'" (XX/94: my italics). To get across this apprehension of the "crisp air", the Italian air which holds "the discontinuous gods" (XXI/99), Pound is drawn towards images of glass, faceting and cutting, the "faceted air" (XX/92), the "cut cool of the air", the "Light's edge" (XXIX/145). His admiration for "the men of craft, i vitrei" (XVII/78) is caught up with the theme of Venice, its



waters "richer than glass" (XVII/78), its light "not of the sun" (XVII/76). And in the poem Venice embodies artifice, the specifically human artefact created without reference to nature, and in despite of the sea. It is, says Hugh Kenner, "the most complexly ambiguous of all the sacred places, the most wholly an assertion of sheer will, like the will of young Pedro that exhumed the dead Inez da Castro for her hands to be kissed by the humbled lords who had murdered her".(1) The light, air and wind we come across everywhere in these early Cantos are seen under this Venetian aspect, are the productions of artifice, "fabrefactions of glass" (XXVI/122).

In a letter of 1915, to Harriet Monroe, Pound wrote: "Be glad you have a reckless competitor in N.Y. . . . to keep you from believing that scenery alone and unsupported is more interesting than humanity. Really geography IS not the source of inspiration."(2) The tension between the claims of aboriginal nature and its cultivation by art is well expressed in the formality of the first thirty Cantos' landscapes; in this from Canto XVII, "too tidy", as Kenner says, "to be anything but a Renaissance painting":(3)

And the cities set in their hills,  
And the goddess of the fair knees  
Moving there, with the oak-woods behind her,  
The green slope, with white hounds  
    leaping about her (XVII/76)

Examples could be multiplied. Throughout these Cantos nature's metamorphoses, the revelations of its virtù corresponding to that of Dionysus in the divine realm ("void air taking pelt" (II/8)), are seen in terms of Mauberley's "aerial flowers".(4) The reference is to the "botticellian

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.348.  
(2) L, p.113 (Harriet Monroe, 1915).  
(3) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.419.  
(4) See CSP, p.217.

sprays"(1) of the Birth of Venus, its "Petal'd . . . air" (XVII/131).

Such an emergence is enacted everywhere:

And the boughs cut on the air,  
The leaves cut on the air (XXI/99)

But in sleep, in the waking dream,  
Petal'd the air;  
                  twig where but wind-streak had been;  
Moving bough without root,

by Helios. (XXVII/131)

'The air burst into leaf.' (XXVII/132)

The cut cool of the air,  
Blossom cut on the wind, by Helios  
Lord of the Light's edge (XXIX/145)

And this revelation of form in the "void air" (II/8) - "twig where but wind-streak had been" - is clearly related to Pound's account of the sculptor's practice, his apprehension of form in space:

'as the sculptor sees the form in the air  
                  before he sets hand to mallet,  
'and as he sees the in, and the through,  
                                  the four sides  
'not the one face to the painter (XXV/117)

This reclamation of form from the "Bright void, without image", the nous (XXV/119), isn't a creation from nothing: the sculptor sees the form in the air, the "gods held in the air" (XXV/119: *my italics*), in the same way as he sees a shape implicit in the stone: "The god is inside the stone, vacuos exercet aera morsus. The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential, and the rest 'accidental' in the philosophic technical sense. The shape occurs."(2) The god is "inside" the stone; the gods are "held

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(1) CSP, p.218 (Hugh Selwyn Mauberley).

(2) LE, p.152 (Cavalcanti: Medievalism, Make It New, 1934).

in" the air. The formality I spoke of as characteristic of Pound's apprehension of nature isn't, by these tokens, a matter of looking at nature through books or at second hand. For Pound art and the natural world interpenetrate, so that form inheres in natural detail and the artist recognizes, rather than creates, order. In Emerson's phrase, he "ask[s] the fact for the form".(1) The mind attends to the external phenomenon rather than generating and shaping its own:

'as the sculptor sees the form in the air...  
 'as glass seen under water,  
 'King Otreus, my father...  
 and saw the waves taking form as crystal,  
 notes as facets of air,  
 and the mind there, before them, moving,  
 so that notes needed not move. (XXV/119)

This order of metaphor tends to make of the air and light - or rather, the two compounded - a tangible substance: a substance which is "crisp", which "clicks", which is a "cut cool" "faceted" and "edged". This being so, the visionary has similar opportunities and obligations in relation to the animate air as the sculptor has in relation to the animate stone. As the god is inside the stone, so he is implicit in the spaces of Italy. Italy is specifically the locale of these revelations because, in the words of Adrian Stokes, "we are prepared in the southern light to admire the evidence of Italian living concreted and objectified in stone".(2) In Italy light, air and stone are continuous, the one reveals the other in something of its own terms. The light is like a deep stone block; the air is brightened almost to solidity; stone flashes and breathes. And, in Venice particularly, another element interpenetrates - water: "the stones of Venice appear as the waves' petrification".(3) And if light in the early Cantos is a vitreous element, the glass itself is solid

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(1) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.133.

(2) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.184.

(3) Ibid., p.185.

air which holds and tinges the light, and "Venetian glass, compost of Venetian sand and water", may express "the taut curvature of the cold under-sea, the slow, oppressed yet brittle curves of dimly translucent water".(1) Pound, who reviewed Stokes' early books The Quattro Cento and Stones of Rimini,(2) responded deeply in these early Cantos to the instigation they offered the eye. He commends the "basic unity" Stokes has "found": "Water and Stone"; "for that alone the book is worth printing". And he writes that "Stokes' 'water' concept is . . . in harmony with the source of all gods, Neptune, in Gemisto's theogony"(3) ("Gemisto stemmed all from Neptune / hence the Rimini bas reliefs" (LXXXIII/528)). The complex of metaphors centring on air, stone, light and water, which informs many of the early Cantos, is partly drawn from Stokes, and gives the poet a wonderfully lucid and fitting context for the exploration of the relationship between substance and form. In Venice form seems an efflorescence on the face of the stone; at Rimini, Duccio's reliefs are the blooming of the stone's virtù.(4)

In his review of Stones of Rimini Pound offers the word "emergence" as an equivalent for Stokes' term "stone-blossom".(5) Stokes' figure expresses his sense that, in "Quattro Cento" sculpture, the carver allowed his forms to partake of the stone's qualities, not merely in the sense of appreciating and cherishing a good bit of marble - which might apply to the art in any age - but as a response to the forces that have created and shaped the substance under his hand: in this case the sea and its organic deposits. Marine "fantasies" inhere in the stone and possess its worker. This is one consummate and exemplary instance of the artist's relation to the substance of his art. There is an analogous

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.185.

(2) See VA pp.167-69, and pp.222-25.

(3) VA, p.168 ('Stones of Rimini', The Criterion, 1934).

(4) For the influence of Adrian Stokes on Pound see Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, pp.127-32.

(5) VA, p.167 ('Stones of Rimini', The Criterion, 1934).

relationship in the case of the poet. The "substance" he must respond to at the most basic level is the impulse and its attendant pattern. This presents itself to him as his primary matter, to be 'worked'. The working may be an act of collaboration between matter and maker, or the maker may hew to his own sovereign conception, and perhaps against the grain. If he takes the former course, then the poem will "emerge" as the Goddess emerges from the sea or as the air becomes "Petal'd". Pound expresses the distinction between the two modes in Canto LXXIX:

the imprint of the intaglio depends  
                   in part on what is pressed under it  
 the mould must hold what is poured into it (LXXIX/486)

The only emergence associated with the moulding process comes when the mould is broken and the transfigured substance shows: formerly just so much molten metal it is now formed, defined, made over. But the intaglio's imprint "depends / in part on what is pressed under it". When the poet collaborates with the matrix of his art, when pattern emerges from impulse and is transmuted undistortingly into verbal form, then we arrive at the intagliated poetry of 'In a Station of the Metro'. The poem blooms on the face of its impulse. The poet tends the matrix, attends to it. To wrench the impulse into art - as the young Pound wrote he hoped to wrench the impulse of America(1) - would mean the obliteration of the originating matter and the pattern it bears. The relation between substance and form lies at the heart of Pound's thinking about poetry. The collocation of air, stone, light and water, each a context within which formal properties unfold, each a matrix from which the gods may emerge, attracts to it, in these Cantos, a dense range of imaginative expression bearing upon that relation. Neglect of air-borne divinities brought

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(1) See CSP, p.251 ('To Whistler, American').

disaster to the crew of Acoetes' ship, and neglect of the god-educing rites killed King Pentheus. In Canto II divine energies flower upon the air.

Three main elements inform the Canto: Helen of Troy/Eleanor of Aquitaine as a sort of composite quasi-goddess both beautiful and terrible ("Helandros, Helenaus, Heloptolis" runs the Aeschylan pun: "Man-destroyer, Ship-destroyer, City-destroyer"(1)); the rape of Tyro by Poseidon, screened by a towering wave, and her subsequent metamorphosis into coral ("a theme of Ovid-Dafne, my own myth, not changed into a laurel but into coral"(2)); and an epiphany of Dionysus. The sea dominates the Canto: sounding the name Eleanor, running in Homer's cadences ("Ear, ear for the sea-surge"), gripping Tyro in its sinews, breaking around Acoetes' god-becalmed ship. The sea, which Poseidon informs, and the air, which becomes dense with Dionysus' cult-figures - lynxes, panthers, leopards - both enact the emergence of form in terms of theophany. The element Tyro enters is sinewed by the god's energy, and her transformation leaves her like a piece of Venetian marble under water:

And of a later year,  
                   pale in the wine-red algae,  
 If you will lean over the rock,  
                   the coral face under wave-tinge,  
 Rose-paleness under water-shift,  
                   Ileuthyria, fair Dafne of sea-bords,  
 The swimmer's arms turned to branches,  
 Who will say in what year,  
                   fleeing what band of tritons,  
 The smooth brows, seen, and half seen,  
                   now ivory stillness. (II/9)

The coupling with the god turns mutable flesh into enduring substance,

(1) See Peter Makin, Provence and Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978, p.130.

(2) Quoted in Mary de Rachewiltz, Discretions, 1971, p.159.

"sunken", like Reina, beneath the "glass wave" and "bright welter of wave-cords" (II/10) (though not in the "deep"). The movement is from the mutability of flesh or water to definition, as when the god possesses the element and it assumes his sinewed energy, or when the mortal is metamorphosed into a composite figure with "coral face", "ivory" in its "stillness", and yet (glancing at the Daphne myth) with "arms turned to branches". Analogously, in Acoetes' narrative we see the "void air taking pelt" when informed by the god:

And, out of nothing, a breathing,  
                   hot breath on my ankles,  
 Beasts like shadows in glass,  
                   a furred tail upon nothingness.  
 Lynx-purr, and heathery smell of beasts,  
                   where tar smell had been,  
 Sniff and pad-foot of beasts,  
                   eye-glitter out of black air.  
 The sky overshot, dry, with no tempest,  
 Sniff and pad-foot of beasts,  
                   fur brushing my knee-skin,  
 Rustle of airy sheaths,  
                   dry forms in the aether. . . .  
                   void air taking pelt.  
 Lifeless air become sinewed,  
                   feline leisure of panthers. (II/8)

The narrative ends with Acoetes' warning to his auditor, King Pentheus:

                                  And you, Pentheus,  
 Had as well listen to Tiresias, and to Cadmus,  
                                   or your luck will go out of you. (II/9)

We know that the king ignored this advice and was dismembered by Dionysus' Maenads, his mother, Agave, wrenching his head off. This theme of piety before the gods - given in the contrast between the now-reverent Acoetes and the stubborn, sceptical Pentheus - runs beneath each of the Canto's three main elements. We have accounted for its presence in the

Dionysus episode. On the Trojan elders' foreboding praise of Helen lies the shadow of blasphemy: "Moves, yes she moves like a goddess / And has the face of a god / and the voice of Schoeney's daughters" (II/6). This strain of impiety soon hardens into blasphemy as Helen's beauty begins to overwhelm their more sober judgement and is climaxed by Priam's attribution of the war to Olympus:

Thus, though these could beare so fit a hand  
On their affections, yet when all their gravest powers were usde  
They could not chuse but welcome her, and rather they accusde  
The gods than beautie. For thus spake the most fam'd King of Troy:  
'Come, loved daughter, sit by me, and take the worthy joy  
Of thy first husband's sight, old friends' and Princes' neare allyed,  
And name me some of these brave Greekes, so manly beautified.  
Come: do not thinke I lay the warres, endur'd by us, on thee:  
The gods have sent them, and the teares in which they swumme to me.'(1)

Finally, legend has it that Tyro's father, Salmoneus, announcing he was Zeus, transferred Zeus' sacrifices to his own altars, and was destroyed for his impiety by the god's thunder, his city perishing with him, as Troy will perish.

These instances of prophanity are set against compelling revelations of divinity in sea and air. Like the appearance of leaves and petals on the "faceted" air, which we considered earlier, these disclosures assume forms consonant with Pound's known predilection for clarity, demarcation, the "wirey . . . bounding line"(2) The metaphoric complex which associates neglect of, or contempt for, the divine with violence and death, and a fit relationship to it with a thronging crudescence of clearly-defined form in the elements of air and water, has an obvious bearing upon Pound's thinking about poetry, and the arts in general. More particularly, the

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(1) Homer, The Iliad, trans. George Chapman, ed. Allardyce Nicoll, 1957, III.174-82.

(2) William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 2nd edn., Oxford, 1966, p.585.



association of the emergence of form with theophanic phenomena knits together the poet's aesthetic apprehension, and his apprehension of the gods, in a way which anticipates Canto XCI's epiphany of Reina. As we have seen, that moment of emergence enacts the rising into definition of the poem itself.

Cantos I and II, then, stand in an opposed and mutually defining relationship the one to the other. Odysseus' descent enacts the penetrative, appropriating motion of the spermatic intelligence; Acoetes' "And I worship./ I have seen what I have seen" (II/9) represents, on the other hand, a more placatory or receptive relationship to the divine, parallel to the vatic poet's "wise passiveness". The rite of Canto I culminates in an ambiguous vision of Aphrodite as the supremely beautiful and the potentially treacherous. Canto II establishes a less perilous relationship with the deity, consummated in Dionysus' instructions to his acolyte as to the proper modes of rite and service to be paid him:

And Lyaeus: 'From now on, Acoetes, my altars,  
 Fearing no bondage,  
     fearing no cat of the wood,  
 Safe with my lynxes,  
     feeding grapes to my leopards,  
 Olibanum is my incense,  
     the vines grow in my homage'. (II/8-9)

We shall keep this two-fold paradigm of the divine realm and the poet's relation to it constantly in mind as we move through the succeeding, progressively more multifarious and ambiguous Cantos.

At the beginning of Canto III we hear again the poet's direct voice, as when he addressed Andreas Divus in Canto I or exclaimed impatiently

"Hang it all, Robert Browning" at the start of Canto II. This time, however, the voice situates the speaker in a particular place and time:

I sat on the Dogana's steps  
 For the gondolas cost too much, that year,  
 And there were not 'those girls', there was one face,  
 And the Buccentoro twenty yards off, howling 'Stretti',  
 And the lit cross-beams, that year, in the Morosini,  
 And peacocks in Koré's house, or there may have been. (III/11)

"That year" is 1908, and the "I" is, of course, Ezra Pound. We have dropped, then, from myth into (personal) history. As befits that ambit, perhaps, the references hereabouts are personal and virtually impenetrable unaided, though the gist of them has been dug out by commentators: the phrase "those girls" is excised from Browning's Sordello:

Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
 - Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like  
 Their native field-buds and the green wheat-spike,  
 So fair! . . .) (1)

- and "one face" refers us back to lines in the equivalent Ur-Canto:

"there was one flare, one face / 'Twas all I ever saw, but it was real . . ./  
 And I can no more say what shape it was . . ./ But she was young, too  
 young".(2) The "one face" then is of a mortal woman who is, like Aphrodite, glimpsed. The quotidian realm is, pre-eminently, the realm of problematic glimpses, and here there is nothing of the heraldic splendour and definition of the vision of the Goddess (though it is surely a curious procedure to convey this by quoting from oneself, and from a rejected draft at that). Further specification informs us that the Buccentoro (a "rowing club situated around the corner from the Dogana"(3)) was

(1) Robert Browning, Sordello, III.698-701, in The Works of Robert Browning, Vol.1,

(2) See Carroll F. Terrell, A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound, 1912.  
 Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, p.8.

(3) Ibid., p.8.

"twenty yards off". The name means "Golden Bark" and the gloss in Professor Terrell's Companion to the Cantos tells us that this was "the name used by the Doges of Venice for the ceremony in which they 'married' Venice to the sea by the act of dropping a ring into the Adriatic".(1) As well as sustaining the amorous note already struck, this reference (if indeed Pound was consciously using it) prepares us for the Stokesian theme of Stone and Water centred on Venice and fully adumbrated in Canto XVII. But the Buccentoro's immediate relevance is as the source of the "howling" voice: "Stretti" it sings, "in close embrace", a fragment from a popular Neapolitan song of that time: moving from myth into history, we have passed from the vision of Venus and the amours of Poseidon to profane, mundane love, expressed in raucous song. The "lit cross-beams" again anticipate the theme of Venice as pre-eminently a place of artefaction, echoing the scene in Canto XVII which evokes the canals at night and their chiaroscuro of torch-light and shadow, and echoing the line there, "the gilt beams flare of an evening" (XVII/78). Each of these details builds up our sense of the concrete milieu of Venice, its street life, its past ceremonies, the look of its buildings and the young poet in the midst of all this, remembering a girl. However, with the next line we seem to pass back into mythology: "Koré's house"; but the poet's air of uncertain recollection ("or there may have been") doesn't consort with vision. And what is Koré's house? The Underworld? With peacocks in it? Once again we must turn to the commentator for help: "In 1922 . . . Pound translated a D'Annunzio line . . . as 'In Koré's house there are now only white peacocks'. D'Annunzio appears to refer thus to the neglected grounds of the Palazzo dei Leoni on the Grand Canal."(2) Once again then we are referred to the geographical actualities of Venice. But whatever its immediate sense, the resonance of the divine name presages an abrupt modulation,

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(1) Carroll F. Terrell, A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, p.8.

(2) Ibid., p.8.

a "bust thru"(1) into the realm of gods, a vision:

Gods float in the azure air,  
 Bright gods and Tuscan, back before dew was shed.  
 Light: and the first light, before ever dew was fallen.  
 Panisks, and from the oak, dryas,  
 And from the apple, maelid,  
 Through all the wood, and the leaves are full of voices,  
 A-whisper, and the clouds bowe over the lake,  
 And there are gods upon them,  
 And in the water, the almond-white swimmers,  
 The silvery water glazes the upturned nipple,  
 As Poggio has remarked. (III/11)

The loose collocation of facts which has gone before is here replaced by a precision which assigns to each tree its appropriate nymph: to "the oak, dryas", to "the apple, maelid". The neatness of this attests to the formality of the passage, the charming note of pedantry which attaches to it, as in the scholastic citation of Poggio. The archaic spelling of "bowe" (not present in the Ur-Canto version) makes of it almost a furniture-maker's phrase, the clouds elegantly ornamental. The precision we spoke of inheres in the clear Italian light, in the vitreous water which, "silvery", "glazes the upturned nipple" - niceties of perception we are already familiar with. This scene of nymphs and cloud-cushioned gods has none of the unsettling power of Dionysus' theophany, nor is it intended to have; but it does sustain the connection between the divine realm and a certain heightened quality of perception, a receptivity in the poet towards phenomena of bright, sharply-defined aspect; towards that realm which has for its matrix bright water or air; from which emerges, or upon which flowers, form. In the early poem "Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula" the poet adumbrates a cult founded upon such qualities:

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(1) See L, p.285 (Homer L, Pound, 1927).

Will not our cult be founded on the waves,  
 Clear sapphire, cobalt, cyanine,  
 On triune azures, the impalpable  
 Mirrors unstill of the eternal change? (1)

And "cult" gives just that sense of aesthetic imperatives joined to religious feeling that informs Pound's commerce with light, air and water. His feeling for these elements is as the sculptor's for his stone, or the vatic poet's for the source or hiding places of his mastery.

Having moved through anecdotal detail to a tableau of Renaissance divinities, the Canto now passes on to the semi-legendary figure of El Cid. A canny, Odyssean figure, he puts one over on the pawnbrokers Raquel and Vidas. He exhibits his forceful virtù in "Breaking his way to Valencia" (III/12). Hard up against this episode is pressed Iñez da Castro, "murdered", and an evocation of ruins. Pound writes of her in The Spirit of Romance: "Her position was the cause of jealousy, and of conspiracy; she was stabbed in the act of begging clemency from the then reigning Alphonso IV. When Pedro succeeded to the throne, he had her body exhumed, and the court did homage, the grandees of Portugal passing before the double throne of the dead queen and her king, and kissing that hand which had been hers." (2) If Helen of Troy and Eleanor of Aquitaine recall Aphrodite in her dread aspect, terrible and beautiful, then, as Professor Terrell suggests, Iñez is an avatar of Koré, "untimely forced into Hades". (3) The dying fall of this close coincides with the introduction into the poem of the thrusting, soldierly will of Ruy Diaz, and the splenetic, aggrieved will of Pedro. The "Drear waste" (III/12) prefigures violence and desolation to come.

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(1) CSP, p.53.

(2) SR, p.218.

(3) Carroll F. Terrell, A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, p.10.

Canto IV confronts us immediately with the legacy of Helen's beauty:

Palace in smoky light,  
Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones (IV/13)

The Aeschylan epithet in Canto II - "Heloptolis", "City-destroying" - is thus consummated. But Pound doesn't dwell upon this vivid epiphany of destruction. In earlier Cantos the various strands have been blocked in: each has had a fairly substantial portion of a Canto devoted to it. In Canto IV, however, the elements are "'candied'"(1), intricately interwoven. It is the opening of what Hugh Kenner calls the "Phantastikon Group" - Cantos IV to VII - characterized by "apparitions, . . . blurred identities, . . . kaleidoscopic glitter".(2) The exclamation "Aurunculeia!" refers us again to the theme of love, here innocent, Vivia Aurunculeia being a bride celebrated in an epithalamium of Catullus. This having been set in apposition to the passion which has wrecked Troy, Cadmus is invoked, who, like the Greeks, set sail in pursuit of a woman - his sister Europe, abducted by the white bull Zeus - and ended by founding Thebes, its history strife-torn like Troy's. This swift conjugation of mythic elements, each with its nimbus of association - Troy, "Cadmus of Golden Prows" (IV/13) - is closed off by a strangely ambiguous image: "The silver mirrors catch the bright stones and flare" (IV/13). As the line is connected syntactically to those succeeding, it seems to concern the flaring reflection of light cast back from stone, and thus sustains the complex of image and feeling centred around light and stone which we noted earlier, and which is closely associated with the divine realm. And yet the line may equally well be taken in another sense. "The silver mirrors catch" - catch against, strike - "the bright stones and flare", shatter: if so, we are back at the sack of Troy. It is as if the two

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(1) See L, p.285 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).

(2) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.417.

poles of reference of these early Cantos - destruction and vision - were momentarily fused, before the latter emerges into primacy with the tread of "Choros nympharum" (IV/13). We note, in regard to this vision, that the light is no longer hazeless: "Dew-haze blurs, in the grass, pale ankles moving" (IV/13). This contrast with the clarity of Canto III's apparition seems to have something to do with the presence of the "goat-foot" (IV/13): nymphs and satyrs consort here, and in contrast to the sylvan innocence of the earlier scene, with its literary ambience and learned scholium, orgiastic rites are hinted at. The satyr was a cult-figure, part of the Dionysiac rout which also included the Maenads, dismemberers of Pentheus. Their glancing presence prefaces the catalogue of adulterous violence to follow.

This is a compound of the myth of King Tereus (the "barbarous king" of The Waste Land(1)) and the Provençal legend of the fate of the troubadour Guillem de Cabestanh. We hear the transformed Philomela, a nightingale (Pound incorrectly identifies the cry as a voiceless swallow's, the form Tereus' wife Procne takes), mourning the death of Procne's son Ityn, murdered by his frantic mother and fed to Tereus, Philomela's ravisher. And we hear the Lady Seremonda exclaiming in horror as she learns she has eaten her lover's heart; see her throwing herself from the window. Hard upon this, the name "Actaeon" establishes the provenance of the next divine vision, and we watch Diana bathing through the huntsman's eyes. The tonality of vision has shifted, and though water is once more associated with the Goddess Pound goes to great lengths to emphasize the absence of light. "The sunlight glitters, glitters a-top", but:

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(1) See T.S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1962, 2nd edn., 1974, p.66.

Beneath it, beneath it  
 Not a ray, not a slivver, not a spare disc of sunlight  
 Flaking the black, soft water;  
 Bathing the body of nymphs, of nymphs, and Diana,  
 Nymphs, white-gathered about her, and the air, air,  
 Shaking, air alight with the goddess,  
     fanning their hair in the dark,  
 Lifting, lifting and waffing:  
 Ivory dipping in silver,  
     Shadow'd, o'ershadow'd  
 Ivory dipping in silver,  
 Not a splotch, not a lost shatter of sunlight. (IV/14)

The light is "not of the sun"; it emanates from the goddess, and coats the "black, soft water" with a silver membrane, so that the nymph's bodies look to be "Ivory dipping in silver". The light is a sort of phosphorescence and - as the bathers' whiteness is strongly emphasized - it seems white and corpse-like. And the blackness of the water is obscurely subterranean and unenticing. The "Light's edge" (XXIX/145) has given way to a subterranean fluorescence, and the "bright welter of wave-cords" (II/10) to a blackness like that of cistern water. Actaeon, soon to be torn by his hounds, has seen a vision of the Underworld, presided over by the virgin queen Artemis, huntress, inveigher against pity in Canto XXX, here assuming the aspect of Koré. Soon he is the "blaze" of the sun (IV/14), his dogs leaping on him.

After an episode concerning the troubadour Piere Vidal, avatar of Actaeon, who is (rather improbably) pictured enumerating pools out of Ovid, each the scene of some myth of violation (and including Gargaphia, the pool Diana bathes in) the lucid sunlight reasserts itself in a tag out of Arnaut Daniel, "e lo soleills plovil":

Thus the light rains, thus pours, e lo soleills plovil  
 The liquid and rushing crystal  
     beneath the knees of the gods.



Ply over ply, thin glitter of water;  
 Brook film bearing white petals. (IV/15)

This clarity, which the Princess Ra-Set will penetrate in Canto XCI, here rhymes with the nipple-glazing water of Canto III, a "thin glitter", a "film"; and it bears form "floral and extant"(1) on its surface, "white petals". This notion of liberation into light, following upon the intent, claustrophobic ambience of Diana's bathing, broadens now to encompass the myth of Takesago, drawn from a Noh play (never translated by Pound) and concerning the synchronic growth of two far-planted pines, believed to manifest the spirits of a man and a woman. Thus the natural order may experience the divine not, as in the Actaeon myth, as a calamitous epiphany, but as an infusion, complementing organic energies.

Thus far in the Canto, then, we have witnessed a kaleidoscopic succession of images drawn from myth and legend, of nymphs, divinities, rape, dismemberment, suicide. Much of this turbulence lurks beneath the language, and the reader must plumb references to uncover it. We noticed in the earlier Cantos a pervading ambiguity, where, for example, a goddess' heraldic gesture flourishes a bough nominated "Greek-slayer". So here birds cry, not in terms of the natural order, but against rape and murder. Or a goddess is seen, and the price of the sight is death. The darkening of vision heralded by Inez da Castro becomes pervasive in Canto IV's instances until redeemed by Arnaut's raining sunlight. Following upon it, when we return to the world of history it is beneath an agate sky, analogue of the cult colours of "Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula":

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(1) See LE, p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

Torches melt in the glare  
     set flame of the corner cook-stall,  
 Blue agate casing the sky (as at Gourdon that time)  
     the sputter of resin,  
 Saffron sandal so petals the narrow foot: Hymenaeus Io!  
     Hymen, Io Hymenaeae! Aurunculeia!  
 One scarlet flower is cast on the blanch-white stone. (IV/15)

The context is that of what Philip Larkin called the "religious wounding" the marriage bed sanctions.<sup>(1)</sup> Out of Catullus, Hymen, god of marriage, is invoked (his colour is saffron: hence the saffron sandal). More primitively, he was a fertility god, variously thought to be the son of Apollo by a Muse or of Dionysus by Aphrodite. In contrast to the tales of abduction we have heard heretofore, Hymen saved his girl from a gang of pirates and they were lawfully married, remaining faithful thereafter. Hence the invocation of the god at wedding ceremonies. The last line, again drawn from one of Catullus' wedding hymns, images the bride's loss of maidenhood, literally her 'deflowering'. The rude forcing of Philomela by the barbarous king is here transformed into the infliction of a sanctioned and sanctified wound.

Danae is sequestered from all wounding. A question put to her, locked up by her father Acrisius, King of Argos, who is trying to subvert an oracular prediction foretelling his death at the hand of Danae's son, helps us to make sense of the anonymous rejoinder to Sō Gyoku's "'This wind, sire, is the king's wind'" (IV/15), which implies that mortal sovereignty comprehends the forces of nature. A dissentient voice denies this. The question put to Danae, however - and, by implication, put to the "god's bride" waiting on the "gilded tower in Ec-batan" (IV/16), who rhymes with Danae - gestures towards the divine sovereignty of Zeus, who will penetrate Acrisius' defences and, as a

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(1) See Philip Larkin, The Whitsun Weddings, 1964, p.22 ('The Whitsun Weddings').

shower of gold, impregnate his daughter (with consequences the oracle foretold). Zeus' descent rhymes with the raining sunlight and the crystalline and divine complex associated with it earlier, and with this incident the poem moves to its resolution. The concluding lines recapitulate earlier elements and frustrate a tidy progression from disorder to divine fructification, for such symmetry would be inappropriate to the turbulent modus of these Cantos. But the structure, we can see, hinges about the evocation of light and crystal at the centre of the Canto. Before that moment, passion had been destructive and the gods malign; following upon it, we read of a wedding ceremony presided over by its fit deity, and of divine fertility descending as golden rain, "e lo soleills plovil".

Having looked in some detail at Cantos I to IV, we may now step back and set in order some of the larger issues broached in our analysis. It will be convenient to list them in tabular form.

a) The central divine figure of these early Cantos - and, as we shall see, of the Cantos as a whole - is a composite goddess whose defining aspects are, on the one hand, and embodying grace and love, Aphrodite; and on the other, embodying destructive passion, Circe. As we discovered in examining Canto I, these two aspects are not fixed and each may, in certain circumstances, shade into the other. Circe thus becomes benecomata dea, and Aphrodite "dread Cythera".

b) Under the aspect of Aphrodite Amor and Art are conjoined. Thus the talismanic emergence of the goddess from the ocean culminates in her establishment, the perfected artefact, as hierophant watching over the

fluxive matrix, source of further epiphanies.

Pound's authority for this conjunction is Provence and the troubadours. We saw, in the figures of Cabestanh and Piere Vidal, the sourcing of this motive, and it is characteristic of Pound that he should not present the positive impulse unmixed with contrary matter (see 'c' below). Canto VI presents the turmoil centring about Eleanor of Aquitaine (an Aphrodite-Circe figure) and, from it, and from the troubadours' various devotions to various ladies (including Eleanor herself), the achieved lyrics of Bernart de Ventadorn ("My Lady of Ventadour . . .") (VI/22) and, of a later generation, Sordello ("Winter and Summer I sing of her grace . . .") (VI/23)).

c) The vision of the benign Goddess (a), and the consequent eduction of Art under the aspect of Love (b), is constantly threatened by other, malign forces. The dichotomy vision/disorder runs throughout these first four Cantos, and on into later ones. In Canto V Pound invokes the cult colours of "Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula", associated with vision, and presents them transfixed on "the barb of time" (V/17). Vision is, consequently, spasmodic, "spezzato" (LXXIV/438): "By no means an orderly Dantescan rising / but as the winds veer" (LXXIV/443):

Topaz I manage, and three sorts of blue;  
                   but on the barb of time.  
 The fire? always, and the vision always,  
 Ear dull, perhaps, with the vision, flitting  
 And fading at will. (V/17)

And in Canto VII the poet's communion with his vision is set amidst, but absolutely sealed from, the triviality and exhaustion of the circumambient culture:

And all that day  
 Nicea moved before me  
 And the cold grey air troubled her not  
 For all her naked beauty, bit not the tropic skin,  
 And the long slender feet lit on the curb's marge  
 And her moving height went before me,  
     We alone having being.  
 And all that day, another day:  
     Thin husks I had known as men,  
 Dry casques of departed locusts  
     speaking a shell of speech...  
 Propped between chairs and table...  
 Words like locust-shells, moved by no inner being;  
     A dryness calling for death. (VII/26)

In the next chapter we shall examine the deepening of this sense of division into the scatological hysteria of the Hell Cantos, and its bearing upon the development of the ideogrammic method.

d) Cantos I and II constitute the two halves of a paradigmatic relation to the divine realm. This relation corresponds to that of the poet towards the matter of his art, which may likewise be divided into a pair of alternative procedures. The Odyssean moment involves the penetration of the divine realm. The venture requires heroic strength and fortitude, and that the hero should strive against the supernatural in order to gain his end, speech with Tiresias. It corresponds to the spermatic, penetrative intelligence, and the masculine or Yeatsian mode of address in poetry. The Acoetian moment, on the other hand, makes of the protagonist a celebrant, an institutor of rite and invocation, a delighted witness to divine energies. It corresponds to the receptive, ovular intellect and the feminine or Wordsworthian mode of address in poetry.

e) In their diverse manners, Odysseus and Acoetes engage with the divine realm. To neglect it, as King Pentheus does, or to violate



its principle of life, energy and fertility, as King Tereus does, results in violence, madness, death. In the contemporary world the proper relation to the divine, such as the poet should sustain, results in the recrudescence of ancient patterns of vision and worship, while an improper relation to it, or a denial of its powers, leads to perversion and sterility (the "thin husks" of Canto VII; the sodomitic sailor of Canto XII).

f) The manifestation of the divine in the profane realm is enacted in the Cantos as an emergence of form, whether rising from water or flowering upon the air. Consequently, the artist has a reverence for the elements within which the gods take form, and this parallels his relation to the matter of his art. For example, the relation of the god to the stone he inheres in is the same as that of the god to the space he manifests himself in. The visionary (who may be the same individual as the artist) reverences the Italian light and air because it is the medium within which the divine epiphany takes place. So the sculptor reverences the stone; but with this critical difference: he is not wholly a witness, as the visionary is; he must, through the excellence of his craft, disclose the stone's latencies. The moment of apprehension of this possibility parallels the visionary's experience: it is also the moment of Pound's "impulse" and of Robert Frost's "lump in the throat". To be prone to the poetic equivalent of visions is to possess "technique" in Seamus Heaney's sense. But the poet must move beyond the stasis of the visionary to free and define the latency he has sensed. This is the sphere of "craft" as Heaney defines it. The poet's care for his technique in the subsequent shaping is consonant with the visionary's reverence for the medium of epiphany. Hence the interpenetration of artistic and religious considerations in the Cantos' motif of light, air, water and stone.

g) This motif is the product of the artist as Acoetes rather than of the artist as Odysseus. As Acoetes, the poet is celebrant, vates, diviner. His art is an art of genesis, or revelation of form, rather than appropriation, or imposition of form.

h) In Chapter 1 we discussed the poetic morphology Pound outlined in his essay 'Vorticism'. In his account he described the emergence of form from the matrix of impulse. This model is analogous to the manner in which the gods and the divine energies manifest themselves in the Cantos, emerging from water or forming upon the air. It also corresponds to Pound's account of the sculptor's apprehension of form in the stone. Viewed in the light of the Cantos, this morphology is the meeting-point of Pound's religious and aesthetic apprehensions.

i) In the 'Postscript' to Gourmont's The Natural Philosophy of Love we saw Pound align himself with the Odyssean mode, with the spermatic intelligence. In the Cantos thus far we have seen him, as a poet, celebrant of the theophanic emergence of form within the matrix of light, air, water and stone. We shall see him, with the Malatesta Cantos and the formulation of the ideogrammic method, taking steps to accommodate a more masculine, less lyric insistence within his poetry.

THE MALATESTA AND HELL CANTOS1. The Malatesta Cantos

Sigismundo Malatesta is an Odyssean figure. In Canto IX Pound applies to him the Homeric term "POLUMETIS", "Many-minded" (IX/36), stock epithet of Odysseus. Within the economy of the Cantos he corresponds to other exemplars of the spermatic intelligence: Odysseus himself, John Adams, Sir Edward Coke. The list could be extended. But behind the campaigns and dissensions catalogued in Cantos VIII to XI lie two very different realities: Sigismundo's mistress, later his wife, Isotta degli Atti, and the structure Sigismundo built to memorialize their love, the Tempio at Rimini. We have seen the complex made up of strenuous - often depraved - will, and a beauty associated with the divine world, in operation in earlier Cantos. Will properly directed - such as Odysseus' - subjugates malign forces (Circe's), enjoys divine beauty (Circe's), and penetrates the Underworld. Will given up to the gods - such as Acoetes' - obtains a direct vision of divine energies and a privileged relation to the god, secure in face of potencies which destroy King Pentheus. Depraved will - such as that of King Tereus - brings death. With the Malatesta sequence this hierarchy, and the values dependent upon it, enter the historical realm. We have seen that the divine realm interpenetrates with substance, that substance is the matrix it emerges from; thus one of the values associated with this complex relates directly to the arts. The visionary reverences the Italian light and water as the matrix from which the gods emerge; so the sculptor reveres the stone as the matrix from which his forms emerge. And the visionary poet reverences both the lit air for the visions it grants, and the matrix of his art, the form-generating matrix of impulse,



for its analogous disclosures. In either case - that of the visionary or of the artist - the individual gives up his will to the gods, like Acoetes, in order that the divine energies may be revealed to him. But the protagonist of the Malatesta Cantos is, as we have said, an Odyssean figure, a man of strenuous - and sometimes misdirected - will. He is a great soldier and a great patron. He is not an artist. Although Pound did not take to using the term "ideogrammic method" until around 1929 (see Part Two, Chapter 1), the form he evolved to encompass this figure can be seen as the first application of the method in his poetic oeuvre(1), the first time in his poetry that its forms and procedures can be seen to modify - in fact, to expand - Imagist/Vorticist principles. That expansion represents an effort to incorporate in his text documentary minutiae, the real recalcitrancies of history. The result is a sequence mostly concerned with Sigismundo's will, his capacity for decisive action: in other words, a poetic surface predominantly masculine in temper; but behind it lie the different realities of Isotta and the Tempio. These latter relate directly to the complex of emotion and idea centred around feminine receptivity and the parturition of form from the womb-like matrix. I hope to show that in the sequence Pound contrives a balance between the two realms.

The first of the Malatesta Cantos, number VIII, presents us immediately with the conjunction - or rather collision - of war and art, destruction and creation, which will recur throughout the sequence:

Giohanni of the Medici,  
Florence.

Letter received, and in the matter of our Messire Gianozio,  
One from him also, sent on in form and with all due dispatch,

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(1) In his prose it is anticipated as early as 1911-12 in the essay 'I gather the Limbs of Osiris', with its talk of "the method of Luminous Detail" (see SP, p.21).

Having added your wishes and memoranda,  
 As to arranging peace between you and the King of Ragona,  
 So far as I am concerned, it wd.  
 Give me the greatest possible pleasure,  
 At any rate nothing wd. give me more pleasure  
     or be more acceptable to me,  
 And I shd. like to be party to it, as was promised me,  
     either as participant or adherent.  
 As for my service money,  
 Perhaps you or your father wd. draw it  
 And send it on to me as quickly as possible.  
 And tell the Maestro di pentore  
 That there can be no question of  
 His painting the walls for the moment,  
 As the mortar is not yet dry  
 And it wd. be merely work chucked away  
     (buttato via)  
 But I want it to be quite clear, that until the chapels are ready  
 I will arrange for him to paint something else  
 So that both he and I shall  
 Get as much enjoyment as possible from it,  
 And in order that he may enter my service  
 And also because you write me that he needs cash,  
 I want to arrange with him to give him so much per year  
 And to assure him that he will get the sum agreed on.  
 You may say that I will deposit security  
 For him wherever he likes.  
 And let me have a clear answer,  
 For I mean to give him good treatment  
 So that he may come to live the rest  
 Of his life in my lands -  
 Unless you put him off it -  
 And for this I mean to make due provision,  
 So that he can work as he likes,  
 Or waste his time as he likes  
 (affatigandose per suo piacere o no  
non gli mancherà la provixione mai)

never lacking provision. (VIII/28-29)

The idiom is unexpected, after the rapid, glancing movement of the  
 preceding Cantos. It is pedestrian, full of the redundancies of world-  
 ly intercourse; and this after the imagistic rapidity, or the chant-  
 like slowness of the earlier verse, and its concision. The redundancy  
 attests to the actuality of the words, their being lifted, unaltered,  
 from the continuum of history. Reinforcing this, fragments of the  
 original Italian are interpolated, and the whole concludes with full  
 and cumbrous epistolary paraphernalia:

SIGISMUNDUS PANDOLPHUS DE MALATESTIS  
In campo Illus. Domini Venetorum die 7  
aprilis 1449 contra Cremonam (VIII/29)

The letter concerns, first of all, Sigismundo's offer to act as mediator between the Medici and the King of Ragona, and secondly, his solicitous provisions for a painter to be employed upon the Tempio. The two essential facets of the man's character, as apprehended by Pound, are thus set out in miniature. Sigismundo as peacemaker is not an impression to be gleaned from the sequence as a whole, but his general embroilment in politics is an abiding aspect of his life therein. Equally consistent, however, is his concern for and promotion of the arts, and this reference to the painter will bear some looking into.

Adrian Stokes identifies him as Filippo Lippi.(1) The frescoes were never executed, and the only bit of painting in the Tempio is a fresco by Piero della Francesca. Duccio and stone were to shoulder aside the sister art. Sigismundo's letter to Giovanni de' Medici was written at the time when he was gathering himself and his resources to carry through a project as yet hardly begun. At the time only the walls of the two chapels - one dedicated to his patron saint Sigismund, the other to be celebration and memorial of his love for Isotta - had been completed, built within and extending beyond the existing Gothic church of San Francesco. Pound, then, presents Sigismundo to us at the uncertain beginning of his great enterprise, displaying the magnanimity of a great patron, but also beset by misgivings as to the reliability of intermediaries ("So that he may come to live the rest / Of his life in my lands - / Unless you put him off it"). As well as indicating the Tempio's beginnings, this first Canto of the sequence serves as a compendious sheaf of the motives which will recur later.

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.154 ("This painter was possibly Filippo Lippi").

Though it opens as if at the start of an orderly chronology, as if establishing its point of origin, the succeeding verse hurries us from incident to incident, and from year to year, in an apparently random fashion, and with no regard to chronological sequence. So, following Sigismundo's letter, a contemporary document regarding mercenary service he is to undertake is cited, again carrying as pendant cumbrous documentary ratification ("Aug. 5 1452, register of the Ten of the Bailly" (VIII/30)); and then, sharp against such aridities, the actuality of Sigismundo's passage into Tuscany to fulfill the commission is evoked:

From the forked rocks of Penna and Billi, on Carpegna  
 with the road leading under the cliff,  
   in the wind-shelter into Tuscany,  
 And the north road, toward the Marecchia  
   the mud-stretch full of cobbles. (VIII/30)

The slog of campaigning ("the mud-stretch full of cobbles") is thus fixed in the reader's mind. Such barren effort contrasts with Sigismundo's struggles over the Tempio. The first couple of pages of the sequence have established this contrast. Now another element enters. We have seen the close association of Amor and Art in the earlier Cantos. The Tempio is a perfect paradigm of this conjunction, not simply because it was built for love of a woman, but because the endeavour is hedged about with turmoil, the monument is unfinished at Sigismundo's death, and he is poorly buried by an impoverished Isotta. We said earlier that the good is embattled and precarious in Pound's scheme; of this, as of much else, the Tempio is emblem. Sigismundo's love for Isotta is celebrated in a poem he wrote, a passage from which beginning "O Spreti che qia fusti in questi regny" is delightfully translated by Pound, and then pressed up against the mud and misery of another campaign:

Lyra:  
 'Ye spirits who of olde were in this land  
 Each under Love, and shaken,  
 Go with your lutes, awaken  
 The summer within her mind,  
 Who hath not Helen for peer  
                   Yseut nor Batsabe.'

With the interruption:

Magnifico, compater et carissime  
 (Johanni di Cosimo)

Venice has taken me on again

At 7,000 a month, fiorini di Camera.  
 For 2,000 horse and four hundred footmen,  
 And it rains here by the gallon,  
 We have had to dig a new ditch.  
 In three or four days  
 I shall try to set up the bombards. (VIII/30)

When we come to examine the Hell Cantos we shall be able to appreciate the significance of this opposition between formless mud and the definition of lyric verse; here it underlies the more explicit opposition between love and war (the "interruption").

The passage following, a superb portrayal of the festive reception given to Bianca Visconti and Francesco Sforza in Ancona, a part of Bianca's dowry, again instances that frustration of the reader's expectation of orderly chronology and narrative noticed earlier. It concludes with a mention of the footling Sforza's preoccupation with fishing rather than combat, and the sardonically dismissive "To the war southward / In which he, at that time, received an excellent hiding." (VIII/31) Having expended such sumptuous means on the description of Sforza's luxurious entourage his subsequent defeat, while allied to Sigismundo, at the hands of enemies determined to repossess the Marches of Ancona (Sforza's father-in-law and the then pope Nicholas V) is dismissed in a line. A passage dealing with the Greek philosopher whose remains Sigismundo brought back with him to Rimini and interred there, Gemistus Plethon, follows, apposed significantly to this account of the vacuous Sforza. The apposition arrives with the more force as the reader

has been half-lulled into an expectation of narrative. A similar device operates at the start of Canto IX, which opens with a strong and lucid account of Sigismundo's difficulties when campaigning:

One year floods rose  
 One year they fought in the snows,  
 One year hail fell, breaking the trees and walls.  
 Down here in the marsh they trapped him  
 in one year,  
 And he stood in the water up to his neck  
     to keep the hounds off him,  
 And he floundered about in the marsh  
     and came in after three days (IX/34)

- before fizzling out in a welter of disparate details, loosely concatenated by repeated "Ands". Again, the narrative impulse, and the expectations that impulse sets up in the reader, are frustrated. Similar elisions occur throughout the earlier Cantos, and we noticed a similar frustration of chronological order in Canto I, but neither so consistently as here, nor against a biographical background which stirs in the reader anticipations of narrative, exposition - anticipations courted by Pound only to be deliberately rebuffed. In examining the possible reasons for this device of the poet's we need to look more closely into this matter of the reader's expectations.

In his review of A Draft of XXX Cantos, R.P. Blackmur established a very valuable distinction between narrative and anecdote in poetry.(1) Narrative is fully explicit, makes over the full tally of reference to the reader; anecdote is gapped, allusive, presupposes readers 'in the know'. As a public art, narrative 'sets the scene' and 'fills in the details'; its crafty lacunae only serve to increase the subsequent weight of enlightenment (or puzzlement, if that is the burden of the

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(1) Reprinted in Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry, 1954. Having acknowledged as much, I had better absolve Blackmur of the rest of my argument. My account of the division departs fairly widely from his own.

tale). This is one side of its relation to an audience: narrative 'fills in' an ideal ignorance, it restructures a set of erroneous, or inadequate, expectations. It is able to do this because it is addressed to the public realm and an anonymous readership. The story does not concern a friend or acquaintance familiar to the auditor. Thus it can't allude glancingly to known characteristics of a known individual or situation: it must propose an ignorance which it then works to enlighten.(1) This pre-existing ignorance is virtually total in the case of the modern novel: upon the substratum of a culture's common assumptions the new thing is built up, leading the reader on from definition to definition until, at the close, the totality is established and the circuit of the reader's nescience closed. The case with such a retelling as that of Paradise Lost is rather different. The protagonists and the situation are, of course, deeply familiar; but the poet must define them anew. Much may be assumed but, given Milton's radical purpose, much must also be redefined. The relations of God the Father to the Son, of Heaven to Hell, of God to Man must be made explicit, as their contours may diverge significantly from those familiar to his readers. The difference from the case of the modern novel is one of degree, not of kind. Both must create and people a fictive universe; consequently, both must found their work on the explicitness of narrative. But Paradise Lost holds an additional dimension. Within the public, as it were bardic, mode of his epic lies a web of allusion. The multitude of classical and biblical references running through the poem levy the reader's comprehension, they literally 'tax' his understanding. They exist as a sort of anecdotal enclave within the narrative fabric. Today, as a glance at most modern editions of the poem will suggest, a large proportion of these allusions have dropped out

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(1) Oral poetry - The Iliad say, or Beowulf - lies outside the terms of this argument.

of the private, anecdotal world, much as if the listening friend had been stricken with amnesia. They become, against the grain, 'public' in the same way as the hieroglyphics on an Egyptian stele are 'public': apparent, but, to the museum visitor, densely gnomic. They require the ministry of the scholiast, the artificial fleshing-out of footnote and gloss, and we are left contemplating an historical Eden pre-dating this dissociation. Easy commerce with, or recolonization of, this Eden constitutes that tradition which "cannot be inherited" (though once it could); and "if you want it you must obtain it by great labour".(1)

We have called the references to past literature in Paradise Lost a kind of anecdotage. Nevertheless, Milton's references represent a most severe, disciplined and systematic use of that resource. Some of Pound's usages are much closer to the everyday sense of the word. Its etymology, from the Greek anekdota, "things unpublished", reminds us how uneasily the word sits in critical parlance; by what strong bonds of usage and propriety it is rooted in the vernacular. Pound's anecdotage - private elaboration rather than public avowal - takes the form of a jocular exchange with a friend from which the latter has mysteriously absented himself, leaving us to flounder towards the point of it all if we can. An extreme but still characteristic case of this is the story of the lady from Kansas in Canto XXVIII:

And in the railway feeding-room in Chiasso  
 She sat as if waiting for the train for Topeka  
 - That was the year of the strikes -  
 When we came up toward Chiasso  
 By the last on the narrow-gauge,  
 Then by tramway from Como  
 Leaving the lady who loved bullfights  
 With her eight trunks and her captured hidalgo,  
 And a dutchman was there who was going

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(1) See T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays, 3rd edn., 1951, p.14.



To take the boat at Trieste,  
 Sure, he was going to take it;  
 Would he go round by Vienna? He would not.  
 Absence of trains wdnt. stop him.  
 So we left him at last in Chiasso  
 Along with the old woman from Kansas,  
 Solid Kansas, her daughter had married that Swiss  
 Who kept the buffet in Chiasso.  
 Did it shake her? It did not shake her.  
 She sat there in the waiting room, solid Kansas,  
 Stiff as a cigar-store indian from the Bowery  
 Such as one saw in 'the nineties',  
 First sod of bleeding Kansas  
 That had produced this ligneous solidness;  
 If thou wilt go to Chiasso wilt find that indestructable female  
 As if waiting for the train to Topeka  
 In the buffet of that station on the bench that  
 Follows the wall, to the right side as you enter. (XXVIII/134-35)

Such pointless little stories - there are others in the poem - are the far side of the method, and nothing much can be said for them. But in the Malatesta Cantos the device serves a more lucid purpose. We have said that in these Cantos Pound repeatedly frustrates the expectation of his readers regarding narrative. One begins to step along with the story when the firm causeway of progression gives way and one is among splinters, fragments of documents. The significance of these documents, and of much else, is far from clear until the reader has done a considerable amount of research. How strange then that Pound should write of the sequence, in the Guide to Kulchur: "There is no mystery about the Cantos, they are the tale of the tribe . . . No one has claimed that the Malatesta cantos are obscure. They are openly volitionist, establishing, I think clearly, the effect of the factive personality, Sigismundo, an entire man."(1) But the poet quite certainly - and apparently consciously - lames his lines, his citations, excises, precisely so as to drive the reader, in simple bafflement, back to the source material. Or at least, that has been commonly assumed to have

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(1) GK, p.194.

been the reason. Is Pound misremembering, or is he the perfect - and hence half-mad - solipsist, generalizing the contents of his own mind into a general possession? Neither, it seems to me, though these appear to be the most immediately plausible explanations. Two phrases from the passage above help us to make clear his meaning: the Cantos are "openly volitionist", and they establish "the effect of the factive personality" (my italics). The sense of "volitionist" is given in another passage from the Guide:

The component of error in an idea shows in its working out.

And before that demonstration occurs, note that when an idea does not go into action, this is because of some inherent defect in the idea (vide the whole story of cranks from the dawn of all human records). . . .

[T]his view repudiates materialism. It is volitionism. It inheres and adheres in and to certain kinds of thinking, certain systems of values.(1)

Volitionism, then, is a function of the spermatic intelligence, an attribute of the Odyssean, "factive" Sigismundo, a force penetrating and transmuting circumstance. "Factive" is given in The Oxford English Dictionary as "Tending or having the power to make; concerned with making. Obs." It is also given as an obsolete correlative of "factitive": "Of a verb: Expressing the notion of making a thing to be . . . of a certain character (e.g. 'To make a man king', 'to call one a fool', to paint the door green)". Sigismundo is possessed of a verb-like energy, analogous to that by which the verb inspirits and impels circumjacent language; and Fenollosa has taught us that verbal energy springs from and feeds from the energy of nature. The Malatesta Cantos, then, establish the effect of such a personality. This is very important. Pound is saying that the Cantos project a powerful sense of energy, of strife-stirring, of magnanimity, of "masculine

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(1) GK, pp.188-89.

will and intelligence". It is not essential that we recognize every allusion, nor even that we have a clear sense of the identity of every one of his numerous antagonists. What it is essential to pick up, and what is, I think, successfully conveyed, is the significant and commanding presence of Sigismundo throughout the sequence. That, and one other factor, perhaps the most crucial: the fact that, as a structure, these Cantos are an analogue of the Tempio, that they attempt to exist as the Tempio exists, as spatial form.

Hugh Kenner writes of the first sixteen Cantos that only the Malatesta group "offers a wholly novel rhetoric";(1) the Cantos give the impression of "real things pasted onto the page (the cubists used newspaper scraps)", and the documents thus pasted represent "an order of reality which the early poetry had always felt it ought to transcend".(2) The difference from Pound's earlier poetry, and from the earlier Cantos - Kenner likens the "Phantastikon Group" (IV-VII) to "a compendium of Pound's early poetry, economically rewritten"(3) - is certainly marked. We note the absence most of all perhaps of the insistent musicality, the concern for canorous sequence, of virtually everything Pound had written before these Cantos. They represent a break-through in that the new manner (which remains to be defined) made it possible for Pound to incorporate new ranges of subject matter in his poem. The range, technical and emotional, of a particular idiom will to a very large extent determine what subjects it can successfully handle; indeed with that idiom ringing in his head the poet will be insensibly drawn towards certain types of subject. Nor is an idiom to be chosen at will; when he has stopped using those of other men the emergent 'voice' of the young poet will be a somatic phenomenon, possibly related to the timbre of his voice, and certainly deeply implicated with his emotional

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.416.

(2) Ibid., p.418.

(3) Ibid., p.418.

nature. Yvor Winters wrote of Pound, with the first thirty Cantos primarily in mind, that "his free verse . . . remains in spite of his efforts a lyrical instrument which is improperly used for other than lyrical effects". And: "Purely didactic poetry is impossible in this form, because of the chanting, emotional quality of the rhythms, from which there is no escape, even momentarily: the rhythm implies a limited lyrical mood." And: "The metre is naturally elegiac".(1) Pound seems to have apprehended a similar division, though without drawing Winters' conclusions: the divide is ordained by the nature of the art; and it is not one between 'free' and 'formal' verse, but between music and content. Writing in 1933 to T.C. Wilson he declares:

I do not believe there are more than two roads:

1. The old man's road (vide Tom. Hardy) - CONTENT, the INSIDES, the subject matter;
2. Music.(2)

Cantos I to VII are 'musical'; the Malatesta Cantos subordinate music to content, subject matter. As Pound's formulation indicates, it is a question of either/or: either content, or music. Gristly actualities are engaged only with the cessation of Pound's typically "chanting, emotional . . . rhythms". That the means enabling the engagement came to Pound as a breakthrough following upon a puzzled hiatus is indicated by the chronology of the first sixteen Cantos' composition. The first seven Cantos (the first three later scrapped or revised) were completed in 1919, although only Canto IV was published in that year.(3) In 1921 his volume Poems 1918-21 included Cantos IV to VII, and the May 1922 copy of The Dial carried the 'Eighth Canto'; partially revised, it is now Canto II. In January 1925 A Draft of XVI Cantos appeared, carrying the Malatesta sequence. It is safe

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(1) Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason, 1960, pp.145-46.

(2) L, p.332 (T.C. Wilson, 1933).

(3) See Leon Surette, A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos, Oxford, 1979, p.27.

to assume then that what are now Cantos VIII to XVI were written sometime between May 1922 and the end of 1924. Their publication followed upon roughly four years' silence, broken only by the publication of the 'Eighth Canto'.

In the ABC of Reading Pound wrote that "rhythm is a form cut into time".(1) The 'musicality' of the first seven Cantos exploit that fact. Their movement is characteristically slow, suave, legato. If Yvor Winters is right, and "the selection of a convention is a very serious matter", (2) because it largely determines the range of subjects the medium is capable of treating, then the manner of these Cantos imposed severe restrictions on a poet who was bent on writing "a poem including history".(3) As we have seen, vision and elegy largely compose their substance; history - particular facts and individuals - is only presented glancingly, phantasmagorically. How, then, to treat of the "factive personality"? Pound's answer involves a shift away from the "form cut into time" and the concentration upon "music". His subject matter itself provided an alternative model: the Tempio. Some words of Adrian Stokes' will make clear the association between Sigismondo's energy and spatial form, an association which the Malatesta Cantos perpetuate:

During the fifteenth century we judge that passions ran wild, while loose motives and chaotic guile discourage the upright historian. A Sforza, a Cosimo, an Alphonso, a Foscari, a Niccolo D'Este, a Piccinino, a Pio II, a Federico, Sigismondo, what were they up to at any particular moment? But over all this coming and going, upon Gothic San Francesco is clamped Alberti's encasement, Sigismondo's white wall decorated at its girth with a frieze of his emblems, the elephant of Fame, the chequered shield of his coat of arms, the § monogram symbol of his love for Isotta, each well garlanded and joined by his other emblem, the eglantine rose. Templum aedificavit. The whole is his emblem . . . For a compulsion lies upon Sigismondo, a constraint to manifest himself, like the compulsion that weighs on the sunlight to kindle and to colour. . . . [H]is passions savage, more than others he was compelled to objectify his energy, the

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(1) ABCR, p.202.

(2) See Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason, 1960, pp.101-02.

(3) See LE, p.86 ('Date Line', Make It New, 1934).

Nature inside him . . . Sigismondo personifies, his building proclaims a constriction upon energy, energies not thus held in, but on the contrary, a constriction that necessitates their simultaneous expansion so as to spread like the sudden fan of the peacock's tail . . . in the façade and flanking arches, the encasement of San Francesco, in Sigismondo's life, there is nothing that suggests music, no vigour unfolded like a theme, in spite of the reiteration of arch and war, stone-blossom and love, no pervading melody. The Tempio is sudden like a glimpse, firm like a flower in full bloom. Yet, though movement be lacking, there supervenes on contemplation of this building, no sense of exhaustion. Energy is pent-up here, not spilt, pent-up to instant manifestation of all of it all at once, constricted then, because energy usually emerges like a melody, gains momentum, showers on a captured world, like a lava-stream overlapping rocks and villages. Any architecture that is even vaguely Quattro Cento in spirit, the Tempio foremost, gives the lie to Pater's dictum about all art approximating to the condition of music. Music, so watery, flows, that is to say, moves in the path of Time, perhaps in front, perhaps behind, perhaps accompanying. But the Tempio is instantaneous, simultaneous, opposite to the piled-up architectonic of melody and rhythm, the shattered flood of Time, the gathering cascade. Yet it is not a bold stroke, a brilliant, unsupported flash which once only will intrigue and startle. The devotee is not intrigued nor startled, but arrested as by the wide face of a rose. Never has the feeling for mass been so urgent, mass all at once like mountains in unbroken sunlight. (1)

Hugh Kenner spoke of "real things pasted on the page" in these Cantos, and compared it with the Cubist technique of collage, and this hints at the ambience of the visual arts; but it doesn't go far enough. Stokes writes that "in the façade and flanking arches, the encasement of San Francesco, in Sigismondo's life, there is nothing that suggests music, no vigour unfolded like a theme, in spite of the reiteration of arch and war, stone-blossom and love, no pervading melody. The Tempio is sudden like a glimpse". We can apply the same terms to these Cantos. The quasi-musical echoings within the first thirty Cantos generally - such as the variations played upon the phrase "'Peace! keep the peace, Borso'" (XX/91), or the picking up of Canto I's "So that:" at the start of Canto XVII - is replaced in Cantos VIII to XI by a more steadfast duplication: not the glancing fluidity of music, but the august and architectural twinning of stone members. References to the difficulties of Sigismundo's military

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, pp.19-20.

campaigns, and the spite of his adversaries, recur not with the sense of theme and recapitulation, but as if heavily blocked in again and again to enforce the fraught sense. Just so the letters lie on the page, squat, dense, unenlivened, untouched by rhythm. The nimbleness of the earlier Cantos' repeats and refrains puts us in mind of music, but the twinning of elements in this sequence is, in intent at least, immobile, massive. References to the Tempio, fulcrum of the sequence, are few but telling, placed strategically as structural supports. References to Isotta are, again, scarce, distributed like the motif § on the walls of the Tempio, emblematic. But direct references are scarcely necessary; as Sigismundo's scheming and enterprise raised the building, so the tale of his facilitating activity is built up into an analogous structure: the form itself represents the Tempio. Pound wished to convey the "effect" of the "factive personality", and that effect is transmitted by the sequence in terms of the "mass effect"(1) the still face of a façade imparts. That is why Pound thought the Cantos unobscure, though many readers have found them very much so: he was not aiming at a lucid biography of his hero but at the communication of an embracing, atemporal impression of his personality analogous to that given by the grave breadth of Alberti's encasement. He attempted to show "a temporal process . . . . crystalized as a surface".(2)The frustration of the reader's expectations regarding narrative, noticed earlier and left in the air then (see pages 108 - 110), we can now relate directly to this aim of the poet's. The abolition of time and the triumph of spatial relationships cannot, of course, be established literally within the temporal medium of language. The impression only of such a triumph can be conveyed, and that against the grain of the medium. Joyce attempts something of this nature in the 'Wandering

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(1) See Adrian Stokes, CW1, pp.134-35.

(2) Adrian Stokes, CW2, p.21

Rocks' chapter of Ulysses, just as in the 'Sirens' chapter he forces his language, unavailingly (and to comic effect) towards the condition of music. Either endeavour must push against the essential thrust of language, in the first case against its comportment in time, in the second against its linear successivity, because of which, fugal and harmonic effects can only be obtained as it were metaphorically. Mindful of this inalienable property of language, the unconsummated narrative shards of the Malatesta Cantos enforce their compromise of temporal succession by invoking its shade only abruptly to banish it. This serves as an indication of the manner in which the Cantos should be read and 'taken'.

From this concatenation of elements significance should radiate as from the members of a façade. I said earlier that the Malatesta Cantos represent the first use in Pound's oeuvre of the ideogrammic method, though he wasn't calling it that at the time. We have seen that the poetic morphology Pound articulates in the 'Vorticism' essay depends upon the lyric "impulse" to set it in motion. But in writing epic the poet cannot rely on such fugitive impulsions. Nor can he base the work exclusively on matter which 'moves' him. This is particularly pertinent to such an undertaking as the Malatesta Cantos, with their welter of heteroclite detail. The distinction between the lyric and the epic modes, as it concerns and conditions the poet's subjectivity, might seem to be expressed in the difference between knowledge and understanding:

Knowledge is or may be necessary to understanding, but it weighs as nothing against understanding, and there is not the least use or need of retaining it in the form of dead catalogues once you understand process.



Yet, once the process is understood it is quite likely that the knowledge will stay by a man, weightless, held without effort.(1)

Epic as Pound conceives it - "a poem including history"(2) - demands that the poet should 'mug up' some, at least, of his materials: as we can imagine Pound transcribing dates and documents from reference books for the Malatesta sequence. But these Cantos are not therefore caught at the level of "knowledge". Such concrete material as Pound presents is as it were the shape the poet's whirling mind has made upon that inert body. The Cantos are the material which can reconstitute for others the precise contours of an internalized knowledge of Sigismundo and the Tempio, can re-flesh the "forméd trace" (XXXVI/178) in the mind, its "ripples and spirals": "We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time."(3) The "ripples and spirals" emanate from the poet, they are what his mind has made of the material. In accounting for the communication of such knowledge - as, for instance, how to duplicate on the page his sense of Quattrocento Italy - Pound, significantly I think, makes use of a spatial metaphor:

At last a reviewer in a popular paper . . . has had the decency to admit that I occasionally cause the reader 'suddenly to see' or that I snap out a remark . . . [his dots] 'that reveals the whole subject from a new angle'.

That being the point of the writing. That being the reason for presenting first one facet and then another - I mean to say the purpose of the writing is to reveal the subject. The ideogramic [sic] method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register.(4)

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(1) GK, p.53.

(2) See LE, p.86 ('Date Line', Make It New, 1934).

(3) GK, p.60.

(4) Ibid., p.51.

Pound seizes delightedly on the dead metaphor in the reviewer's casual phrase "from a new angle" and proceeds to take it very seriously indeed. The facets presented by the ideogrammic method can be equated with the abutting planes of material we are invited to contemplate in the Malatesta Cantos, as if moving from wall to wall in the Tempio. And we can see that this form evolves from the internalized matter the poet understands as well as knows. The poetic morphology we have situated at the root of Pound's procedures as a poet might seem, at first glance, to be compromised by the epic ambition. If a poet is putting together a passage out of source books, how can we identify therein the crucial moment of form's emergence from the known and loved matrix? Isn't that an essentially lyric moment? But the pattern-bearing matrix in this case, concerning Sigismundo, is constituted by the "ripples and spirals" perusal of history books and contemplation of the Tempio have impressed upon the poet's mind. Though later he researches his subject, it is only in order that this pattern should emerge into definition. It was with this possibility in mind that Pound could assert, in a note to the 'Vorticism' essay, that "I see nothing against a long vorticist poem".(1)

If the "poem including history" can be accounted for in terms of the poetic morphology, still another apparent contradiction remains to be considered. That morphology presupposes a feminine, Acoetian receptivity in the poet, a divinatory knack for tuning in to the deep sources of expression. We have seen that the deliberateness of historical research is only a raising into explicitness of this expressive core. But how does the ferocious masculinity the Malatesta Cantos mostly record sort with such a model? The Cantos are almost entirely

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(1) GB, p.94n.

devoted to the restless violence of Sigismundo's political career. Isotta is barely mentioned in them; personal matters concerning the Tempio, and exchanges regarding the materials for its construction, are recorded, but there is no evocation of the building itself, or of Duccio's reliefs. Isn't the sequence given over entirely to the spermatic intelligence?

In so far as most of the sequence is concerned with Sigismundo's political career, this is so; but to take such a view is to ignore the modus vivendi of that career. At its heart lie Isotta degli Atti and the building raised to memorialize his love of her. As we have said, references to the woman and the building are few but telling, incised motifs. Canto VIII refers us at the start to Sigismundo's initiatory dealings, his plans for fresco work to adorn the Tempio's walls; there is the poem to Isotta; and towards the end of the Canto, amidst the swarming detail of campaigns, his epithet of temple-rearer is as it were chiselled in Latin:

Commanded the Milanese in the spring,  
 the Venetians at midsummer,  
 The Milanese in the autumn,  
 And was Naples' ally in October,  
     He, Sigismundo, templum aedificavit  
 In Romagna, teeming with cattle thieves (VIII/32)

Again, capitalized for emphasis, in Canto IX we read of the monument, the word like a stone block set in flux:

And all you can say is, anyway,  
 that he Sigismundo called a town council  
 And Valturio said 'as well for a sheep as a lamb'  
     and this change-over (haec traditio)  
 As old bladder said 'rem eorum saluavit'

Saved the Florentine state; and that, maybe, was something.  
 And 'Florence our natural ally' as they said in the meeting  
     for whatever that was worth afterward.  
 And he began building the TEMPIO,  
     and Polixena, his second wife, died. (IX/35)

We read further in this Canto of Sigismundo's efforts to get hold of  
 marble for the building and of the progress of work on it; also of  
 Isotta, in domestic letters addressed to him, before it closes thus:

'et amava per dutamente Ixotta degli Atti'  
 e 'ne fu degna'  
     'constans in proposito  
'Placuit oculis principis  
'pulchra aspectu'  
'populo grata (Italiaeque decus)  
 'and built a temple so full of pagan works'  
     i. e. Sigismund  
 and in the style 'Past ruin'd Latium'  
 The filigree hiding the gothic,  
     with a touch of rhetoric in the whole  
 And the old sarcophagi,  
     such as lie, smothered in grass, by San Vitale. (IX/41)

The Italian is from the (mostly hostile) Pius II's Commentaries; the  
 single line of Latin is from Horace. The whole translates as: "And  
 he loved Isotta degli Atti to distraction / and she was worthy of it /  
 constant in purpose / She delighted the eye of the prince / lovely to  
 look at / pleasing to the people (and the ornament of Italy)".(1) This  
 is the last mention of Isotta in the sequence: she figures neither in  
 Canto X nor XI. The line "'and built a temple so full of pagan works'"  
 refers to Duccio's crowding of what was ostensibly a Christian church  
 with images of pagan deities; being sanctioned in this by the Humanist  
 Sigismundo ("according to Pope Pius II, Sigismondo was avowedly anti-  
 Christian or, at any rate, anti-God"(2)). The whole was, writes Pound -  
 gnomically - in the style of "'Past ruin'd Latium'". The reference is  
 to Landor's poem:

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(1) See Carroll F. Terrell, A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound,  
 Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980, p.48.

(2) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.291.

Past ruin'd Ilion Helen lives  
 Alcestis rises from the Shades;  
 Verse calls them forth; 'tis Verse that gives  
 Immortal Youth to mortal Maids.

Soon shall Oblivion's deepening Veil  
 Hide all the peopled Hills ye see,  
 The gay, the proud, while Lovers hail  
 These many summers you and me.

The tear for fading Beauty check  
 For passing Glory cease to sigh,  
 One Form shall rise above the Wreck,  
 One name, Ianthe, shall not die. (1)

Pound thus indicates the Tempio's achievement in preserving Isotta's "Form" in face of the "Wreck" of her lover's worldly fortune; just as Homer grants "Immortal Youth" to Helen, and Euripides to Alcestis. It is an unChristian ambition: Isotta replaces Mary as object of worship in this 'church'.

Canto XI affords us a glimpse of Sigismundo sitting, disconsolate, in the Tempio's unfinished structure, "hunched up and noting what was done wrong":

And one day he was sitting in the chiexa,  
 On a bit of cornice, a bit of stone grooved for a cornice,  
 Too narrow to fit his big beam,  
     hunched up and noting what was done wrong,  
 And an old woman came in and giggled to see him  
     sitting there in the dark  
 She nearly fell over him,  
     And he thought:  
 Old Zuliano is finished,  
 If he's left anything we must see the kids get it,  
 Write that to Robert.  
 And Vanni must give that peasant a decent price for his horses,  
 Say that I will refund. (XI/49-50)

This is the "Wreck" - touching even the flawed Tempio (Pound called it "both an apex and in verbal sense a monumental failure"(2)) - which

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(1) Quoted in ABCR, p.184.

(2) GK, p.159.

Alberti's and Duccio's labours raise the "Form" of Isotta above; as much as to say, "In the gloom, the gold gathers the light against it" (XI/51). The gold of the Tempio, amidst wars, gathers the scattered gods to this place of nominally Christian worship. Rimini lies on the Adriatic; Gemisthus Plethon, whose ashes lie in a Tempio sarcophagus, "stemmed all from Neptune / hence the Rimini bas reliefs" (LXXXIII/528). Pound indicates this ambit in Canto VIII:

And the Greek emperor was in Florence  
 (Ferrara having the pest)  
 And with him Gemisthus Plethon  
 Talking of the war about the temple at Delphos,  
 And of POSEIDON, concret Allgemeine (VIII/31)

The gods of the Tempio are referred constantly to Poseidon's realm, not only in the context of the reliefs, with their shells and dolphins, the ubiquitous motif of water curling behind their figures, but by the stone itself, an organic deposit, a petrification of the sea's life.

There is no description of the Tempio in these Cantos for good Vorticist reasons: "certain emotions or subjects find their most appropriate expression in some one particular art".(1) The reliefs should be seen, not read about. The Cantos presuppose a first-hand knowledge of the building. Its beauty is the raison d'être of the struggles they depict. The thematic constatation at the end of Canto IX, quoted above, associates the 'pagan' temple and its gods with the building's power to preserve Isotta "'Past ruin'd Latium'", thus bringing together the central motifs of earlier Cantos: the recrudescence of the gods effected by the visionary artist (whether Duccio or Ezra Pound) with that art's centring upon Amor and the Goddess. Aphrodite is the beneficent deity who reigns over the Cantos. In the Tempio, Isotta figures as Diana.(2)

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(1) GB, p.84.

(2) See Adrian Stokes, CW1, pp. 260-301.

In the Tempio "Artemis, Hermes and Aphrodite have come down to Rimini after long transfiguration in the skies".(1) There we "see the first reappearance, after the dark centuries, of real pagan gods and goddesses, Diana, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. . . . In the best of these reliefs the pagan spirit is re-created from its very source: what lay separate in Greek myth, in Greek life, in Greek sculpture, after long storage in the yearning heart appears concentrated with the full force of rediscovery; a pagan essence, undiluted, snatched from Time's filter."(2) Of these deities "it is Diana with her moon that we first see up the aisle, suggesting to us all the powers and all the heavens";(3) amidst this pantheon it is the dominant, regnant "Moon, Diana who confounds the heights with the depths, goddess of waters, of pools and stones".(4) As when the elders praised Helen, the artist's enunciation of the female mantram raises mortal to the status of goddess:

Agostino's stone forms, luminous and swimming on the stone reduplicate Isotta's magnetism to which Sigismondo was, or wished to think he was, subject. Like the planetary orbits, her powers exercised him. She was the huntress Moon; and as the fruit of the waters is concreted into marble, so he would possess her clear magnetic charms stabilized in figures upon the stone. He needed these emblems and this shrine, perhaps because he sought and could not find a guiding star or a love worthy of his histrionic sense and of his ancestors; or more probably, in part because of this, and, in part, because he truly loved Isotta and felt the goddess in her.(5)

The female then, the node, the attractive matrix, in this respect like the influxive moon swaying the tides, draws to her image in the artist's mind forms which will congeal in her image: "The idea of Influence and attraction, the idea of Isotta's pervasive magic, stimulated in the sculptor the fantasies that his art inherited of fecund moisture in

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.288.

(2) Ibid., p.275.

(3) Ibid., p.293.

(4) Ibid., p.296.

(5) Ibid., p.294.

stone, of glimmering forms seen under water, of suctional forces congealed as shapes on the surface of the marble."(1) Stokes was familiar with Pound's 'Cavalcanti' essay,(2) and its concept of the forma, the magnet drawing iron filings as the concept magnetizes detail, echoes in these images of attraction and magnetism. Isotta, he writes, "is mistress of the moon-influence to which she is also subject, because the power, the magic she exerts over Sigismondo is, like all female seductiveness, magnetic, a form of indiscriminate suction drawing in diverse material".(3) This vortex-influence of Isotta is reflected in Duccio's carving:

From [Mercury's] knees to his navel and again about his head there is a vortex. It is the whirring night from which Diana emerges clean . . . It wraps the loins of the Twins . . . , sucks evil Saturn . . . , hurls up the dripping Virgin . . . , encircles the Dance . . . and distributes her wiry coils of hair. But the predominant vortex is about the hips. . . . Agostino gave back to marble its primeval eddies. This vortex is sometimes recalled and set to work by the incision of a few curving lines in the background . . . (4)

The eddies are "primeval" because they remember the marble's source in water. As we have seen, Pound commended this association of Stone and Water (see page 84). Isotta-Diana is regnant at the centre of the Malatesta sequence. Her moon-influence has drawn Sigismundo through the trials of construction towards the - albeit incomplete - structure, and these Cantos exist with a parallel incompleteness; the provisionality of their structural 'planes' mimes the unfinished Alberti encasement. As the "undulations, the vortices, the suctional forces and the swimming forms" in Duccio's reliefs were the precipitate of water, "an image of liquid magnetism"(5), so the tangible matter of the Malatesta Cantos is shaped by the influence of Isotta, to whom.

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.295.

(2) See ibid., p.330n.

(3) Ibid., p.299.

(4) Ibid., p.254.

(5) Ibid., p.290.



they are homage and memorial. And as the stone images liquidity in terms of rigid marble, so Isotta, the tender matrix, is imaged in terms of masculine strength, Odyssean enterprise. Nevertheless - and answering our question, How does this sequence square with the "Acoetian" morphology Pound outlined in 'Vorticism'? - we can see that the Cantos' animating centre is an image of femininity. Pound returned to it, to Diana-Isotta, in the Pisan Cantos, adjusting Duccio's mythology into congruence with his own tutelary deity Venus, but remembering Diana the slayer, the huntress, in the epithet he gives the goddess, "dread Cythera". The lines are a recalling of Duccio's relief of Diana "in the moon barge":

with the veil of faint cloud before her  
*Κύθηρα δελῶ* as a leaf borne in the current  
 pale eyes as if without fire (LXXX/511)

To sum up: Placing the Malatesta Cantos in the context of Pound's poetic morphology, we can see that the sequence represents a full and fit expression of that structure of emergence. Concerned almost exclusively with the "factive" Sigismundo and the details of his career - interspersed with stolid documents, the whole unenlivened by musical impetus - the sequence forms a quasi-spatial structure figuring as analogue of the Tempio. The Tempio is never described, but exists as the actuality of the whole sequence. As Sigismundo's exploits built the Tempio, so the poet's detailing of them builds up into an analogous structure, incomplete or gapped like the original (but this time by design). Let into the Cantos' blocks of historical material are emblematic references to, and celebrations of, Isotta, as it were motifs

incised upon the recalcitrant documentary matter. The focal motif of this kind is that at the end of Canto IX, which reminds us, via a reference to Landor, that Isotta, like Helen and Alcestis before her, has been raised above time's "Wreck": she exists now as splendidly invulnerable "Form". As we have said, the Tempio isn't described, it is embodied in analogous form: the reader is referred to the actual building for confirmation that it was worth the poet's attention. The evocation of its actual appearance doesn't sort with the "primary pigment"<sup>(1)</sup> of verbal art: the architect and sculptor have done it first, and done it uncounterfeitably. Thus, as with the allusive historical material, we are referred outside the poem for confirmatory information and experience. On the same principle, it is appropriate that we should remember Isotta's identification with Diana in Duccio's reliefs. Such a recognition serves to stress her function as embodiment of the fructuive, feminine matrix which draws Sigismundo's dispersed efforts towards a still and resplendent centre. This, in its turn, refers us back to Pound's animating morphology. We can see that the relation of the poet to the matrix of impulse is mirrored in the relation of Sigismundo to Isotta, and that the common end of either relation is achieved form.

Nevertheless, the concentration upon Sigismundo's violent exploits - including rape, laconically recorded<sup>(2)</sup> - remains. In the earlier Cantos (with the partial exception of Canto VII) the dark forces of violence and destruction are expressed through myth and legend, and hence retain a certain 'literary' distance from both author and reader; but Pound feels the actual, historical wrongs done Sigismundo much more keenly, and this feeling overflows into a violence of language which anticipates that of the Hell Cantos.

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(1) See GB, p.81.

(2) In IX/36: "And there was a row about that German-Burgundian female".

2. The Hell Cantos

Towards the end of Canto VIII we read these resonantly ominous words:

And the wind is still for a little  
 And the dusk rolled  
           to one side a little (VIII/32-33)

Sigismundo "rolled" the dusk "to one side a little" with the light of the Tempio, dusk being the weltering forces of darkness and ignorance that opposed him. The same sense of a fragile light assailed by outer blackness is expressed in a late Canto:

Falling spiders and scorpions  
 Give light against falling poison,  
 A wind of darkness hurls against forest  
                           the candle flickers  
   is faint  
 Lux enim -  
                   versus this tempest. (CX/781)

This division between the light of intelligence and the darkness of ignorance and malice recurs throughout Pound's work. Peter Makin puts the division uncompromizingly:

Not only art, but also moral qualities and sciences - especially economics - were either 'clean' or 'filthy' for Pound. British journalism was an 'excrement' poisoning the human colon. All this was related to sexuality: usury obstructed the natural desires of youth and defiled the altar of the sex-rite, creating 'a species of monetary Black Mass'; in a decent age usury was placed 'on a par with buggery'. Pound, consciously or not, made the Freudian connection between money-hoarding and anality. . . .

Two currents of metaphor seem to be joined in all this: (a) constipation/messing around with one's own filth/refusal to void and clean up; (b) buggery as a diversion of the 'natural' current/coitus reservatus or refusal to risk the phallic commitment.

Against this, writes Makin, Pound set such positives as heterosexuality, sharp distinctions in all matters, stonecutting, the clean line - and so on. He continues:

At moments, both sides of the basic opposition are stated by Pound in an hysterical way; there is a violence about the usury/buggery talk, and a certain unreality about the insistently clean encounters with the semi-divine in the Cantos. Perhaps these aspects of life are by him separated out too much. His insistence that the business of life must be possible cleanly [sic: 'impossibly cleanly?'], without complication, weakness, or obsession with one's own problems, may have led to the later breakdown.(1)

This is very suggestive. A particular vocabulary is used by Pound whenever he writes about something he disapproves of, or dislikes, or loathes. Thus in the Malatesta sequence Sigismundo's adversaries are characterized in such terms as these: "old Sforza bitched us at Pesaro" (IX/34); "So that in the end that pot-scraping little runt Andreas / Benzi, da Siena / Got up to spout out the bunkum / That that monstrous swollen, swelling s.o.b. / Papa Pio Secundo / . . . Had told him to spout, in their best bear's-greased latinity" (X/44); "And old Pills who tried to get him into a front rank action / In order to drive the rear guard at his buttocks" (X/46); "But Pio, sometime or other, Pio lost his pustulous temper" (X/46); "that nick-nosed s.o.b. Feddy Urbino" (XI/49); "Little fat squab 'Formosus'" (XI/51). The evil is without boundary, without clear line; it is a formless eruption, a pustule. So Pope Pio II is "swollen", his temper is "pustulous"; and the "bunkum" he and his kind come out with is "spouted, retched up. Their "latinity" is "bear's-greased", unclean, slippery. Their military actions smack of homosexual rape: "In order to drive the rear guard at his buttocks". Pound wrote in the Guide to Kulchur

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(1) Peter Makin, Provence and Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978, pp.32-34.

that "when you get out of the hell of money there remains the undiscussable Paradiso. And any reach into it is almost a barrier to literary success."(1) Such paradisal manifestations as the Tempio are won out of arduous and exhausting struggle with the s.o.bs. Such visions of the divine as Acoetes enjoyed, or as the poet enjoys in Canto III, are "spezzato" (LXXIV/438), "jagged" (XCII/620), and their apprehension, typically, is caught up with a sense of the "lice" threatening them:

Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel  
but is jagged,  
For a flash,  
for an hour.  
Then agony,  
then an hour,  
then agony,  
Hilary stumbles, but the Divine Mind is abundant  
unceasing  
improvisatore  
Omniformis  
unstill  
and that the lice turned from the manifest;  
overlooking the detail  
and their filth now observes mere dynamic (XCII/620)

This sense of threat, of the fragility of the individual's connection with the "Divine Mind" (always present, but frequently inaccessible) derives from history, temporal process. The Cantos embody, in their content, this dispensation: the poem is dominated by the usurious shambles of history. At the beginning of Canto XLVI Pound taunts his readers:

And if you will say that this tale teaches...  
a lesson, or that the Reverend Eliot  
has found a more natural language...you who think  
you will  
get through hell in a hurry... (XLVI/231)

He double-spaces the last words, to enforce the hectoring inflection.

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(1) GK, p.292.

For hell is potent, almost overmastering, in Pound's scheme. There are two alternatives: "the hell of money" and "the undiscussable Paradiso". That is the division: absolute filth, absolute beatitude - and nothing in between. The dung and the flower: "The modern artist wishes dung to stay dung, earth to stay earth, and out of this he wishes to grow one or two flowers, which shall be emphatically not dung, not earth."(1) The division corresponds to what he saw as "the bass and treble" of Joyce's method: "On almost every page of Joyce you will find just such swift alternation of subjective beauty and external shabbiness, squalor, and sordidness."(2) And he goes on to say, in the same essay:

I have yet to find in Joyce's published works a violent or malodorous phrase which does not justify itself not only by its verity, but by its heightening of some opposite effect, by the poignancy which it imparts to some emotion or to some thwarted desire for beauty. Disgust with the sordid is but another expression of a sensitiveness to the finer thing. There is no perception of beauty without a corresponding disgust.(3)

Or you can label the two sides of the divide "mud" and "aether": "We are . . . one humanity, compounded of one mud and of one aether".(4) From which it follows that "humanity is malleable mud, and the arts set the moulds it is later cast into. Until the cells of humanity recognize certain things as excrement, they will stay in human colon and poison it."(5) Against the "excrement" of contemporary society are set "the mysteries. Eleusis. Things not to be spoken save in secret."(6) But the mysteries are no longer a collective possession, so that "a modern Eleusis [is] possible in the wilds of a man's mind only".(7) The poet, then, is guardian of the flame. He looks up from his desk in Rapallo and pictures "England off there in black darkness,/ Russia off there

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(1) Quoted by Ronald Bush in The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos, Princeton, 1976, p.50.

(2) LE, p.412 ('Joyce', The Future, 1918).

(3) Ibid., p.415 ('Joyce').

(4) SP, pp.32-33, ('I gather the Limbs of Osiris', The New Age, 1911-12).

(5) L, p.249 (Felix E. Schelling, 1922).

(6) GK, p.145. (7) Ibid., p.294.

in black darkness" (XXVII/129). The light emanates from his study, and from the scattering of similarly embattled individuals with whom he is in communication. This sense of isolation undoubtedly exacerbated Pound's apprehension of a great and potentially overwhelming mass of actively malevolent ignorance and cupidity encircling the scattered centres of illumination. Fully to understand the pressures which erupted in the outcry of the Hell Cantos we must trace the evolution of this sense of the poet as exile or outlaw.

Pound came to London to be at the centre of things. Great men were there: Yeats, James, Ford. The literary life of the capital served as a matrix within which the young poet could find himself. It was a place of collaborative effort. Caught up, first in the Imagist movement, then in the Vorticist, Pound celebrated the virtues of the metropolis. London was a creative vortex, analogue of "the great Roman vortex", alive to "the value of a capital, the value of centralization, in matters of knowledge and art, and of the interaction and stimulus of genius foregathered".(1) In 1913 he wrote to Harriet Monroe: "All countries are equally damned, and all great art is born of the metropolis (or in the metropolis). The metropolis is that which accepts all gifts and all heights of excellence, usually the excellence that is tabu in its own village. The metropolis is always accused by the peasant of 'being mad after foreign notions'."(2) From the flaccidity of village life it is a significant step to the "minute vortices at such castles as that of Savairic de Maleon, and later at the universities", but the momentous progression is from such far-flung points of energy to "the sense of the capital".(3) Such a reawakening as at the time of the Renaissance may not have "resulted . . . in a single great vortex, such as Dante

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(1) LE, p.220 ('The Renaissance', Poetry, 1914).

(2) L, p.62 (Harriet Monroe, 1913).

(3) LE, p.220 ('The Renaissance').

had dreamed of in his propaganda for a great central court . . . ; but it did result in the numerous vortices of the Italian cities, striving against each other not only in commerce but in the arts as well".(1) With the help of enlightened patrons, a new Renaissance could be induced in London. Patronage is necessary: "Great art does not depend on the support of riches, but without such aid it will be individual, separate, and spasmodic; it will not group and become a great period."(2) Without such grouping "the individual artist will do fine work in corners, to be discovered after his death".(3) A reawakening depends upon conscious, centralized effort:

If we are to have an art capital it . . . must be made by conscious effort. No city will make such effort on behalf of any other city. The city that plays for this glory will have to plot, deliberately to plot, for the gathering in of great artists, not merely as incidental lecturers but as residents. She will have to plot for the centralization of young artists. She will have to give them living conditions as comfortable as Paris has given since the days of Abelard.(4)

Pound left the diffusions of America to half-participate in, half-create the concentrations of a great metropolis. In the retrospect of 1934 he saw himself as part of a fated emigration of live men - Whistler, James - from the New World in search of a social and artistic context which could sustain them: "What little life has been kept in American letters has been largely due to a few men getting out of the muck and keeping the poor devils who couldn't at least informed."(5) Gradually, however, with the war and the dissipation of the London vortex - Lewis on active service, Hulme and Gaudier dead, and of the older writers who had helped establish the intellectual atmosphere of that time, James and Gourmont dead also - Pound found the communal ferment he thrived

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(1) LE, p.220 ('The Renaissance', Poetry, 1914).

(2) Ibid., p.221 ('The Renaissance').

(3) Ibid., p.221 ('The Renaissance').

(4) Ibid., pp.220-21 ('The Renaissance').

(5) L, p.341 (Felix E. Schelling, 1934).



on waning. He wrote to Lewis at the Front, in 1916: "I appear to be the only person of interest left in the world of art, London."(1) He had always been conscious of what he regarded as the necessarily restricted census of the enlightened: the London vortex was made up of a handful of gifted individuals who had come together in that city and should be organized so as to exploit its resources to the utmost possible extent. The public they address consists of - he writes in 1914 - "a few hundred people and a few reviewers".(2) With the possibility of a coming together in one place of the cognoscenti apparently scotched forever by the war he declares in 1920, still in London, but a becalmed London: "Civilization is individual."(3) With the end of the vortex the "waste places" encroach more palpably; so he wrote to H.L. Mencken in America, 1919: "We have all sinned through trying to make the uneducated understand things. Certainly you will lose a great part of your public when you stop trying to civilize the waste places; and you will gain about fifteen readers."(4) In 1921 he moved to Paris, looking for a more responsive milieu, for, he writes to Lewis, "England is under a curse".(5) But the French capital was not the answer; indeed, living there seems to have exacerbated his sense of isolation; he writes to William Carlos Williams in the March of 1922 enclosing the carbon outline of a fund-raising blast on behalf of Eliot, which reads in part:

There is no organized or coordinated civilization left, only individual scattered survivors.

Aristocracy is gone, its function was to select.

Only those of us who know what civilization is, only those of us who want better literature, not more literature, better art, not more art, can be expected to pay for it. No use waiting for masses to develop a finer taste, they aren't moving that way.

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(1) L, p.133 (P. Wyndham Lewis, 1916).

(2) Ibid., p.78 (Amy Lowell, 1914).

(3) LE, p.344 ('Rémy de Gourmont: A Distinction', Instigations, 1920).

(4) L, p.208 (H.L. Mencken, 1919).

(5) Ibid., p.242 (P. Wyndham Lewis, 1922).

All the rewards to men who do compromise works.

No hope for others.

Millionaires all tapped too frequently. Must be those of us who care. We are none of us able to act alone. Must cooperate.

Increase production of the best, by releasing the only energies that are capable of producing it. . . .

To release as many captives as possible.

Darkness and confusion as in Middle Ages; no chance of general order or justice; we can only release an individual here or there.(1)

In 1914 the literary world seemed moving from Medieval torpor, from its "darkness of decentralization", (2) into a new awakening, a centralizing renaissance. The war had ended that. After brief light, the darkness had again fallen. All of Pound's formulations regarding the lone candle and encircling night remember this calamitous historical fact.

The darkness intensified, and with it Pound's isolation. Links were severed. In 1923, it seemed, his connection with America: "The Dial has sacked me . . . . As far as I can see, my communication with America is over. I.e., public communication. The last link severed." (3) In 1940, the country of his birth still had its literary doors closed against him:

Is it conceivable that in any other damned country on earth a man cd/ get thru the work I am KNOWN to have got thru and find himself at my time of life (54 not being infancy) with no means of communicatin' wiff his con/damn/patriots save by private letter. . . . For possibly 7 years out of 30 I have had from time to time a means of communication. Will you consider the fact that at the present moment there is NO weakly in America to print me, and not even a monthly where I cd. print IWO pages a month.(4)

With this contraction of opportunity Pound's organizational ambitions became more modest. As we have seen, in 1922 he tried to organize a

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(1) L, p.238 (W.C. Williams, 1922).

(2) LE, p.220 ('The Renaissance', Poetry, 1914).

(3) L, p.255 (Kate Buss, 1923).

(4) LI, p.108.

living for Eliot so as to free him for creative, rather than clerical, work - the "Bel Esprit" fund.(1) Its animating agents were to be the "scattered survivors", harried by Pound into a community, though no longer one centred on a particular place. The ideal of the metropolis was dead: "If there aren't 30 or 50 people interested in literature, there is no civilization and we may as well regard our work as a private luxury, having no aim but our own pleasure. You can't expect people to pay you for enjoying yourself."(2) Interest in literature was to be demonstrated by the correspondent's willingness to help establish the fund; the project fell through, however, Eliot refusing to accept the money raised. Paris was soon to be abandoned. Pound now recognized that the time for involvement with movements, for him at least, was past: "At the start a man must work in a group; at least that seems to be the effective modus; later in life he becomes gradually incapable of working in a group. But in any case no one man can do everything, or be the whole of a milieu."(3) He moves to Rapallo, and resigns himself to singularity. But his organizational appetite was unslaked. The "Bel Esprit" group, had it lived, would have proven that a community of artists could be established, acknowledging a common aim and, though scattered across the globe, bound together by postal communication. In the Guide to Kulchur Pound remembers saying to Yeats "I can see a time when we may all of us have to join together, that is everyone possessed of any degree of civilization".(4) As the London vortex wasn't, essentially, bound to its locality, but was - as Pound saw it - merely a convenient meeting-place for its constituent members, and an exploitable habitat, surely a similar end could be achieved - albeit without the stimulus of personal interaction - by

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(1) See Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, pp.244-45.

(2) L, p.243 (P. Wyndham Lewis, 1922).

(3) Ibid., pp.271-72 (R.P. Blackmur, 1925).

(4) GK, p.155.

letter-writing. If "the only way to make a civilization is to exploit to the full those individuals who happen to be given by nature the aptitudes, exceptional aptitudes, for particular jobs", (1) then surely the modern means of communication could be exploited towards that end.

Pound exerted himself continually and admirably for many years to achieve it. He was isolated in Rapallo, though he saw Yeats sometimes, and Bunting and Zukofsky visited. But he was fired by the conviction that "a group of 500 people can have any (I mean positively any) kind of civilization they want. With the afterthought: 'up to the capacity of their best artists'. I doubt if Pericles had more than 80 citizens who knew the worse art from the better." (2) For "there were 16 millions that did not elect Hoover. It takes about 600 people to make a civilization. There were umpteen billions of unbreached barbarians in the north woods when Athens etc." This being so, it follows that "if the 243 Americans who ever heard of civilization wd. quit crabbing each other and organize, it wd. be a start". (3) The scattering of such individuals as are qualified to instigate a civilization is as the result of economic pressures, the barbarian status of their homelands: "Culture is individual and not national so long as the individual having unusual capacity is forced OUT of his native milieu by material (i.e. economic) conditions and the imbecility or incapacity of the milieu to sustain and coordinate effort." (4) Pound was thus forced out because "after the debacle of American culture [in 1861] individuals had to emigrate in order to conserve such fragments of American culture as had survived". (5) Having travelled to London, and then

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(1) L, pp.269-70 (Simon Guggenheim, 1925).

(2) M, p.377 ('Money Versus Music', The Delphinian Quarterly, 1936).

(3) L, p.297 (James Vogel, 1928).

(4) SP, p.133 ('National Culture: A Manifesto 1938', first published Impact, 1960).

(5) Ibid., p.131 ('National Culture: A Manifesto 1938').

to Paris, in search of a community which would complete the exiled fragment, and finding that community either destroyed by exterior forces, or essentially unwelcoming, Pound retired to Rapallo, "retired from the world of vanities".(1) Having done so, he "didn't expect to find musical pleasures [there] superior to those I had already experienced in London and Paris".(2) The concerts he organized in the small Italian town, featuring the pianist Walter Rummel and the violinist Olga Rudge, went some way towards justifying his claim that a civilization could be effected synthetically by will and conviction. But the outer darkness threatened it:

For 25 or more years I have seen the BEST artists caput lupinum, I have seen the unutterable FILTH that rules the world driving all the finest talents to wall, making it impossible for the arts to exist save at the edge of starvation. . . .

The beggarly swine tried for twenty years to kill me off by starvation.. I dont mean personal action, I mean the putrid action of the usury system and its slugs and leaches.

Most of my prose writing has been in defense of FOOD for a small number of artists.

The snot in the Bank of England has even attacked out Rapallo music VIA the arsehole of hell Geneva.(3)

And it wasn't a literary civilization. There is poignancy in his statement to W.H.D. Rouse in 1934 that "I need yr. criticism more than you do mine. Nobody has taught me anything about writing since Thomas Hardy died. More's the pity."(4) He continued to press for the effective organization of the few gifted individuals who served as conservators of the past, but even as late as 1938 he spoke of such a network as something to be achieved, as not yet actualized: "It should

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(1) M, p.361 ('The Singer Lonny Mayer', Il Mare, 1934 (translated)).

(2) Ibid., p.361 ('The Singer Lonny Mayer').

(3) LI, p.39

(4) L, p.351 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

be possible to establish a communications service between individual components of such culture-containers and engines as humanly exist."(1) And of course it never was: war intervened, then incarceration. During the Rapallo years Pound felt that his ambition to "teach an elite" was being frustrated by wilful incomprehension and intellectual barbarism: "What I am trying to get at is, given the economic inferno that one has been through, trying to teach an elite and the present distracted writer cursed for every allusion he ever made to Greek or Latin, surrounded by people who complain that they can't 'understand' a passage, for the simple reason that something Greek or Latin is mentioned."(2) Increasingly isolated and ignored, the Cantos came to figure for Pound as the creation of an ark of the literary Covenant, a form encyclopoedic and conservatory, a poetry addressed, not to the 'public', but to initiates: "prose is NOT education but the outer courts of the same. Beyond its doors are the mysteries. Eleusis. Things not to be spoken save in secret."(3) By striking for the root of knowledge the poet inevitably decimates the number of his readers: "The minute you proclaim that the mysteries exist at all you've got to recognize that 95% of yr. contemporaries will not and can not understand one word of what you are driving at. And you can not explain. The SECRETUM stays shut to the vulgo."(4) These formulations of the late 1930s show how far Pound's faith in the possibility of creating a real community of artists and intellectuals had dwindled. In the London years that community was to consist of a vital, close-knit group exploiting the potentialities of a great capital, penetrating and informing its dense, sluggish mass; in Paris, and initially in Rapallo, though the break-up of the London vortex had badly shaken him, he continued to hope for

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(1) SP, p.131 ('National Culture: A Manifesto 1938', first published Impact, 1960).

(2) L, p.350 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

(3) GK, pp.144-45.

(4) L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

a civilization built upon a "communications service" between "culture-containers"; in his last years in Italy, before the war, this ambition had been largely abandoned, and the poet was seen as hierophant presiding over a cult of knowledge only the initiate could comprehend. The creation of a lasting civilization, whether local or international, had proven impossible; now its only existence was in the "wilds" of Pound's mind.

The barrier to any of Pound's group ideals was the "economic inferno" fomented by the "obstructors of knowledge, / obstructors of distribution" (XIV/63), by intellectual and economic cupidity. Pound experienced this obstruction most immediately and bitterly in England, the country he had made his early reputation in; hence "the hell cantos are specifically LONDON, the state of English mind in 1919 and 1920".(1) He writes to Lewis in 1924 that "you will readily see that the 'hell' is a portrait of contemporary England, or at least Eng. as she wuz when I left her".(2) The animus that informs them derives from the destruction of the London vortex, a destruction that tallied with earlier dispersions of creative energy:

Six weeks after Blast was published Europe was at war.

End of a Vortex, though it was 1919 before Pound fully realized this bitter fact. By then he had a theme to animate what was to have been the Vorticist epic and became instead a poem on vortices and their fate: shapings of characterizing energies, and the bellum perenne that dissipates them. The Provençal vortex of poetry, music, and architecture ended after the Montségur massacre. The Tuscan vortex of painting and poetry thickened from greed as did the Venetian vortex. In Rimini a vortex of architecture and sculpture did not outlast the one man responsible for it, whom bigotry and jealousy pulled down. That one had been made, as had the London vortex, against the time's currents of power, and true to the nature of a vortex had gathered in everything

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(1) L, p.320 (John Drummond, 1932).

(2) Ibid., p.262 (P. Wyndham Lewis, 1924).

movable: the best architect and the best stonecutter in Italy, and a poet (Basinio) who 'kept his melodic sense active' by using Greek phrases as mantrams, and Pisanello the maker of medallions, and Piero della Francesca, and even a craftsman to make dies to impress a profile and monogram on a wafer of wax to be 'caught, as was the custom, between two surfaces of paper in a letter from the young Salustio Malatesta'. Pound owned a seal made by Edmund Dulac, and a clavichord made by Dolmetsch, and when Yeats deflected \$200 toward him bought not only a typewriter but two carvings by Gaudier. One could still do something.(1)

Kenner emphasizes Pound's rôle as a conserver, taking the part of patron as far as his severely restricted resources would permit. He doesn't choose to focus on the rage "the time's currents of power" inspired in him. The Hell Cantos are the expression of this rage. Eliot's reference to them in After Strange Gods is well known:

If you do not distinguish between individual responsibility and circumstances in Hell, between essential Evil and social accidents, then the Heaven (if any) implied will be equally trivial and accidental. Mr Pound's Hell, for all its horrors, is a perfectly comfortable one for the modern mind to contemplate, and disturbing to no one's complacency: it is a Hell for the other people, the people we read about in the newspapers, not for oneself and one's friends.(2)

This is well put, and covers the Cantos in so far as they consist of simple abuse. Mostly they do consist of that. But there is another element in the sequence, from which it gains a measure of intensity: the sense given of the poet's genuine, and well-nigh pathological, revulsion at the self-invoked obscenities the Cantos abound with; feeling concentrated in these passages:

a stench, stuck in the nostrils;  
beneath one

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(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.247.

(2) T.S. Eliot, from After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy, 1934, in Ezra Pound: A Critical Anthology, ed. J.P. Sullivan, Harmondsworth, 1970, p.182.



nothing that might not move,  
mobile earth, a dung hatching obscenities,  
inchoate error (XV/65)

Andiamo!

One's feet sunk,  
the welsh of mud gripped one, no hand-rail,  
the bog-suck like a whirl-pool,  
and he said:

Close the pores of your feet!  
And my eyes clung to the horizon,  
oil mixing with soot;  
and again Plotinus:

To the door,  
Keep your eyes on the mirror.  
Prayed we to the Medusa,  
petrifying the soil by the shield,  
Holding it downward  
he hardened the track  
Inch before us, by inch,  
the matter resisting,  
The heads rose from the shield,  
hissing, held downwards.

Devouring maggots,  
the face only half potent,  
The serpents' tongues  
grazing the swill top,  
Hammering the souse into hardness,  
the narrow rast,  
Half the width of a sword's edge.  
By this through the dern evil,  
now sinking, now clinging,  
Holding the unsinkable shield.

Oblivion,  
forget how long,  
sleep, fainting nausea.  
'Whether in Naishapur or Babylon'  
I heard in the dream.

Plotinus gone,  
And the shield tied under me, woke;  
The gate swung on its hinges;  
Panting like a sick dog, staggered,  
Bathed in alkali, and in acid.

Ἥλιον Ἥλιον

blind with the sunlight,  
Swollen-eyed, rested,  
lids sinking, darkness unconscious. (XV/66-67)

And I bathed myself with the acid to free myself  
of the hell ticks,  
Scales, fallen louse eggs. (XVI/69)

We can as it were neutralize the passages of abuse, regard them as  
a mere error of judgement, by setting against them Pound's own words:

the "invention of hells for one's enemies . . . is always symptomatic of supineness; bad hygiene, bad physique (possibly envy); even the diseases of the mind, they [ascetics] do not try to cure as such, but devise hells to punish, not to heal, the individual sufferer".(1) But nothing in the rest of Pound's output balances the hysteria of the above passages. Indeed a great deal reinforces it, as we have seen in examining his characteristic division of life into mud and aether, dung and flower, the "hell of money" and the "undiscussible Paradiso". The stench, the breeding dung, the predatory maggots, the poet's "fainting nausea", his desperate clinging to the clean line of the horizon, his defilement by ticks, scales and louse eggs, all this quite overpowers the reader's sense of what such verminous detail is intended to represent. We respond, not to the sketchy allegory, but to the author's shrinking horror, pant with him as he emerges into light, as he bathes himself "in alkali, and in acid". We share his relief when, in Canto XVI, he emerges from a sort of purgatorio into the paradiso terrestre:

Then light air, under saplings,  
 the blue banded lake under aether,  
     an oasis, the stones, the calm field,  
 the grass quiet,  
     and passing the tree of the bough  
 The grey stone posts,  
     and the stair of gray stone,  
 the passage clean-squared in granite:  
     descending,  
 and I through this, and into the earth,  
     patet terra,  
 entered the quiet air  
     the new sky,  
 the light as after a sun-set,  
     and by their fountains, the heroes,  
 Sigismundo, and Malatesta Novello,  
     and founders, gazing at the mounts of their cities.

The plain, distance, and in fount-pools  
     the nymphs of that water  
 rising, spreading their garlands,  
     weaving their water reeds with the boughs,

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(1) LE, p.150 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

In the quiet,  
                   and now one man rose from his fountain  
 and went off into the plain. (XVI/69-70)

This passage from an "inchoate", formless hell, through a "passage clean-squared in granite", to a "quiet" paradise, equipped with nymphs (we are reminded of Pound's wry and self-deprecating lines of some forty years later: "again is all 'paradiso' / a nice quiet paradise / over the shambles" (CXVI/796)), recalls Peter Makin's observation, quoted earlier, regarding Pound's sometimes "hysterical" perception of an ordurous, usury-ridden mortality and, set against it, an idealized, impossibly cleanly divine realm (see pages 131-32). We can at least partially account for the division by reference to the break-up of the Vorticist group by the war, and particularly by the death of Pound's dear friend Henri Gaudier.<sup>(1)</sup> This, and later griefs, his growing sense of isolation and embattlement, lent tangible weight and threat - personal threat, where it regarded the earning of his livelihood - to the forces of darkness. But whatever the causes, the division damaged his poetry. To understand this fully, we must refer it to the three-fold scheme he (at least early on) entertained for the Cantos, and which accommodated his hell and his heaven in a comprehensive structure.

While he was writing the early Cantos Pound occasionally sketched out this structural principle, which he intended to animate and inform the poem. In 1927, writing to his father, he expressed it like this:

Afraid the whole damn poem is rather obscure, especially in fragments. Have I ever given you outline of main scheme ::: or whatever it is?

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(1) See Wendy Stallard Flory, Ezra Pound and the Cantos: A Record of Struggle, New Haven and London, 1980, p.84: "When his friend was killed in the trenches at the age of twenty-three, the shock to Pound was overwhelming and generated the intense anger which plunged him into his obsessive campaign against the usurers."

1. Rather like, or unlike subject and response and counter subject in fugue.

- A. Live man goes down into world of Dead
- C. B. The 'repeat in history'
- B. C. The 'magic moment' or moment of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidien into 'divine or permanent world'. Gods, etc.(1)

And in 1928 Yeats reported conversations he had had with Pound on the same subject:

He has shown me upon the wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triumph of Chastity, in the middle Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura's day. The Descent and the Metamorphosis - A B C D and J K L M - his fixed elements, took the place of the Zodiac, the archetypal persons - X Y Z - that of the Triumphs, and certain modern events - his letters that do not recur - that of those events in Cosimo Tura's day.(2)

The "two themes" of the Cantos, then, as reported by Yeats (a report Pound wasn't very happy with) are "the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, medieval or modern historical characters".(3) Pound's discontent with Yeats' account resulted from the latter's treatment of the poem's 'fugal' elements; he didn't know "a fugue from a frog".(4) But Yeats' treatment of the tripartite structure corresponds to Pound's own formulations. The "Descent" represents an Inferno; the "historical characters" and "modern events" a Purgatorio; and the "moment of metamorphosis", the "bust thru from the quotidien into 'divine or permanent world'", the "original world of gods",(5) constitutes Pound's Paradiso. Elsewhere he wrote that the "best div. prob. the permanent, the recurrent, the casual".(6) This Dantesque structure has been frequently noticed by critics, and there

(1) L, pp.284-85 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).

(2) W.B. Yeats, A Vision, 2nd edn., 1937, p.5.

(3) Ibid., p.4.

(4) See L, p.385 (John Lackay Brown, 1937).

(5) Ibid., p.285 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).

(6) Ibid., p.321 (John Drummond, 1932).

is a general concensus now that it can't be applied in any rigid way to the poem, though it does provide the poet with a very general frame of reference. I don't intend to argue the point here. Another formulation of the scheme, which helps indicate its correspondence to Pound's own temperament and the modes of his poetry, has been less generally remarked, tucked away as it is in his 'Postscript' to Gourmont's The Natural Philosophy of Love. The formulation isn't made with reference to the Cantos at all. I shall give it in context:

The spermatozoide is, I take it, regarded as a sort of quintessence; the brain is also a quintessence, or at least 'in rapport with' all parts of the body; the single spermatozoide demands simply that the ovule shall construct a human being, the suspended spermatozoide (if my wild shot rings the target bell) is ready to dispense with, in the literal sense, incarnation, en-fleshment. Shall we postulate the mass of spermatozoides, first accumulated in suspense, then specialized?

Three channels, hell, purgatory, heaven, if one wants to follow yet another terminology: digestive excretion, incarnation, freedom in the imagination, i.e., cast into an exterior formlessness, or into form material, or merely imaginative visually or perhaps musically or perhaps fixed in some other sensuous dimension, even of taste or odour (there have been perhaps creative cooks and perfumers?).(1)

Here the Dantesque division Hell-Purgatory-Heaven is related to the context of sperm and ovule we are already familiar with. Hell is outside that context, being - as the Hell Cantos demonstrate abundantly - the domain of excrement, hence of buggery and the perversion of sex. Purgatory is the realm of incarnation, of the ovule which gives flesh to the male idea of form. Paradise is the realm of "freedom in the imagination", the realm of the form-generating sperm which "is ready to dispense with, in the literal sense, incarnation, en-fleshment". It grants its form to the ovular matrix, and the matrix, previously homogeneous and passive, is stirred, gives the masculine impetus body and a local habitation.

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(1) PD, p.212 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love, by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

We can see that here - in an essay which, as we have said, celebrates the "spermatic intelligence", the storm and stress of masculinity, and slights the feminine, receptive mode - the order of generation outlined in the poetic morphology of the 'Vorticism' essay is disrupted. The impulse isn't envisaged as a matrix from which form arises, but as a spermatic force which fecundates a wholly passive and receptive mass of material. The figure celebrates, not Reina's emergence from the sea, but Odysseus' penetration of Circe and the Underworld. We have argued the pros and cons of this elsewhere, and shall return to the complex in Part Three, this time setting it in relation to the Cantos as a whole. Here we can note that the infernal, excremental division of the model Hell-Purgatory-Heaven doesn't enter into the scheme at all. We have seen that the scheme - and the complex of metaphors regarding the value of the artist's matter, the emergence of form from that substance, and the relation of the two to the divine realm - enters into Pound's creative thought at its deepest level. Standing over against it, in utter opposition, is the excremental vision, the scatological vocabulary Pound resorts to whenever he wants to castigate something or someone. As against the energies of heterosexual love this derives from, and finds its fittest expression in, the act of sodomy. We have seen that the complex sexual love-form emergence-the divine realm not only constitutes much of Pound's subject matter, but is essentially implicated in his procedures as a poet. And we have seen that such procedures are those of Imagism, Vorticism, and the ideogrammic method. We noted that the Malatesta Cantos came into being as a precipitate of his epic ambitions; as an extension of Imagist/Vorticist principles to cover the exacerbated demands of a "poem including history". I suggested that such an incorporation came off in the case of those Cantos because the historical material embodied the "forméd trace" in Pound's mind, carved

there by affection, and that the sequence centred about the inexplicit presence of Isotta, and the temple raised in celebration of Sigismundo's love for her. Thus the achieved artefact was deeply interknitted with the poet's deepest "fantasies" regarding his art. There is no such animating base underlying the Hell Cantos. They bear no relation to Pound's central morphology. They spring from another area of his mind. We have surveyed the pressures which account, in part at least, for their presence in the Cantos; but biography cannot justify them as art. As he went on with his great project again and again the scope of the long poem shifted Pound from his secure basis as celebrant of the rites of emergence, and consequently stretched the embracing formal concept of the ideogrammic method to breaking point. The psychic division which resulted in such a tension of incompatibilities is perfectly expressed by two people who knew him intimately; by his friend W.B. Yeats:

When I consider his work as a whole I find more style than form; at moments more style, more deliberate nobility and the means to convey it than in any contemporary poet known to me, but it is constantly interrupted, broken, twisted into nothing by its direct opposite, nervous obsession, nightmare, stammering confusion . . . (1)

And by his daughter:

It seemed as though he possessed two voices: one angry, sardonic, sometimes shrill and violent for the radio speeches; one calm, harmonious, heroic for Homer, as though he were taking a deep, refreshing plunge into the wine-coloured sea after a scorching battle.(2)

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(1) The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935, ed. W.B. Yeats, Oxford, 1936, p.xxv.

(2) Mary de Rachewiltz, Discretions, 1971, p.150.

PART II



THE PRIMACY OF NATURE

It is time now to step back from the detail of the Cantos for a while and set the cluster of concepts we have been considering - summarized at the end of Part One, Chapter 2 - in relation to two others of the greatest importance for Pound's theory and practice as a poet: the idea of "process", and the idea of a lingua adamica. In surveying these concepts we shall see to what a marked extent they interact with and clarify the nature of the ideogrammic method; but before doing so, it will be convenient to characterize the latter briefly, and on the basis of our preceding argument. This should help keep in view the goal towards which our further argument is tending.

In his book The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos Ronald Bush puts the evolution of the ideogrammic method in an accurate and illuminating chronological context, though his interpretation of these facts differs somewhat from my own:

Around 1929, the ideogrammic method became one of the most frequently used phrases in Pound's critical repertory. In 1929's How to Read, for instance, he asserted that the first job of the critic was to present his 'ideograph of the good'. Concurrently, he began to translate his old critical tenets into terms of the ideogram. In 1933's ABC of Reading, we can recognize earlier comparisons between the exactitude of science and the procedures of poetry transformed into the following: 'By contrast to the method of abstraction, or of defining things in more and still more general terms, Fenollosa emphasizes the method of science, "which is the method of poetry", as distinct from that of "philosophic discussion", and is the way the Chinese go about it in their ideograph or abbreviated picture writing.'

The same process was evident in the 'exhibits' at the back of the volume. Below a series of comparative examples first published in 1913, Pound placed this note: 'Example of ideogrammic method used by E.P. in The Serious Artist in 1913 before having access to the Fenollosa papers.'

In Jefferson and/or Mussolini, written in 1933, Pound informed his readers that the ideogrammic method was not only the subject but also the form of his criticism: 'I am not putting these sentences in monoliner syllogistic arrangement and I have no intention of using that

old form of trickery to fool the reader, any reader, into thinking I have proved anything, or that having read a paragraph of my writing he KNOWS something that he can only know by examining a dozen or two dozen facts and putting them all together.'

Inevitably, the ideogram had its impact on the Cantos. Parts of 'Eleven New Cantos, XXXI-XLI', published in 1934, revealed yet another shift in emphasis, this time toward spatial configurations and away from the expressive movement of an anterior sensibility or of a controlling music. It is easy to see Pound's new emphasis on juxtaposing whole blocks of material in this excerpt from Canto XXXVII:

Thou shalt not', said Martin Van Buren, 'jail 'em for  
debt.'

'that an immigrant shd. set out with good banknotes  
and find 'em at the end of his voyage  
but waste paper....if a man have in primeval forest  
set up his cabin, shall rich patroon take it from him?  
High judges? Are, I suppose, subject to passions  
as have affected other great and good men, also  
subject to esprit de corps.

The Calhouns' remarked Mr Adams

'Have flocked to the standard of feminine virtue'

'Peggy Eaton's own story' (Headline 1932)

Shall we call in the world to conduct our  
municipal government?

It would be wrong, however, to interpret a change in stress as a genuine new beginning. The ideogrammic method changed the Cantos more in theory than in fact. And while the Cantos' technique altered slightly, the new theory achieved the prominence of an official program.(1)

But we have seen that the Malatesta Cantos of 1925 employ "spatial configurations" and juxtapose "whole blocks of material". This is as much as to say that the ideogrammic method was in poetic employment before it had entered Pound's critical vocabulary; and if this was the case, then the critic cannot maintain that the method was merely a theoretical excrescence upon already established procedures, involving only a slight alteration of technique in a handful of passages. New formal needs had been registered by the poet and worked out in his poetry - in the Malatesta Cantos - before that answer found its way into critical and polemic formulae. The 'need' was, above all, and as we have mentioned earlier, for some way of expanding or re-ordering Imagist/Vorticist

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(1) Ronald Bush, The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos, Princeton, 1976, pp.12-13.

principles in order to accommodate gristly detail: facts, dates and documents. The poetic morphology which underlay the Imagist/Vorticist aesthetic, founded as it was upon the fugitive "impulse", could easily be interpreted as a purely lyric resource, of severely limited use to a poet of epic ambition, who intended to write "a poem including history". But - as Pound's epistemology of 1938 runs - the concept "understanding" embraces both intuition ("impulse") and discursive "knowledge", by conceiving of the latter in terms of the former: once "process is understood" knowledge "will stay by a man, weightless, held without effort".(1) What exactly this "process" is we shall attempt to discover shortly; meanwhile it is enough to note that the Malatesta Cantos are ordered by, and incorporate, the sort of knowledge which is "held without effort". Presumably Pound cheated a little in this case: he can't have had all the detail of those Cantos in his head; as we have already remarked, he must have done some mugging up. This tendency of the Cantos' historical matter to pull from the sphere of "understanding" towards that of "knowledge" increases the further we progress into the poem, and is resolved only at Pisa, and by necessity, for there Pound had only the Bible and Legge's Confucius to refer to (besides a Pocket Book of Verse picked up in the lavatory(2)). But, at least in the Malatesta Cantos, research was directed towards the incarnation of the "formed trace" Pound's initial immersion in the historical material, and his love of the Tempio, had carved in his mind. This matrix, and the efflorescing pattern it bore, was thus directly equatable with the lyric mode of his earlier poetry. Having, after prolonged struggle, discovered this fact in the course of writing the Malatesta sequence, published in 1925, Pound produced the theoretical terms which justified it in 1929, the year before the appearance of A Draft of XXX Cantos. They acted as discursive background to that definitive production.

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(1) GK, p.53.

(2) See Hugh Kenner, PE, p.476.

The quality of Pound's affection for the Tempio carves the trace of the Malatesta Cantos on our minds; behind them, subtly informing them, lies the beneficent matrix-figure of Isotta degli Atti. Like the Tempio, they are devoted to the feminine principle. They are a production of the poet as vates, diviner; demonstrate that such a temperament, as long as it is animated by the constructive principle of love, may grapple with the stubborn structure of history. But "If love be not in the house there is nothing" (CXVI/796). The Hell Cantos cannot feed from any nutritive matrix, because they are not animated by love.

The ideogrammic method we can define then, initially, as in its lyric aspect indistinguishable from Imagist/Vorticist principles; and in its epic aspect (epic being defined here as "a poem including history") as simply an extension of those principles to cover the incorporation of historical matter. In this latter aspect, the method is a recalling of loved matter, what David Jones called an "anamnesis".(1) The method breaks down when the matter is matter of hatred, disintegrative (as in the Hell Cantos), or matter only perfunctorily known (as in the Chinese History Cantos). When loved and known, the method springs from and articulates the originating matrix in the poet's mind.

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(1) See David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.21.

## 1. Process and the Ideogrammic Method

I shall begin by bringing together most of Pound's prose definitions regarding process. It will be clear when I have done so that the concept cannot - on Pound's terms - be defined discursively, and that we must turn to the poetry, and his thinking about the business of writing it, in order to find the roots of the idea.

We shall look in the next chapter at Ernest Fenollosa's distrust of the structure of language, and his corresponding faith in the individual word. The word is valued because it names (whether noun or verb), and thus bears an objective sanction. But, Fenollosa reasons, the worth of language derives from the world it gestures towards, and there are aspects of the world which it cannot name. Likewise, there are considerable areas of our subjectivity which escape it; there is a sort of knowledge which, once clouded by words, may be lost. Pound shares this conviction:

The desire of the candidate, or of the 'mystic' . . . , is to get something into his consciousness, as distinct from getting it into the vain locus of verbal exchanges.

If knowledge gets first into the vain locus of verbal exchanges, it is damnably and almost insuperably difficult to get it thence into the consciousness. Years afterwards one 'sees what the sentence means'.(1)

In happier cases the knowledge is internalized, enters the domain of the "understanding"; it escapes from verbal snares and exists, independent of language, within the knower. This individual's use of language may be an unreliable index to the state of his knowledge and

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(1) SP, p.57 ('Terra Italica', The New Review, 1931-32).

the quality of his understanding, for "a man whose verbal manifestations appear inexact may often understand things quite well".(1) He understands phenomena because he has grasped the relations holding between them: "The understanding of things implies a quick and ready perception of when the given case fits the general formula."(2) In other words he understands the process informing them, and that sort of insider's information can lead to impatience with the clumsy armature of language: "The candidate is trying to understand something. Verbal manifestation is of very limited use to the candidate. Any intelligent man has understood a great deal more than he has ever read or ever written or ever pushed into verbal manifestation even in his own mind."(3) But the moment of direct apprehension having passed, people frequently make a written record, upon the shoulders of which further speculation mounts. Pound summarizes the grim process as it operates within a "cult":

The personal inspection of the candidate [is] an infinitely more effective way of perceiving what he understands and to what degree he is capable of understanding than is communication in writing.

When this immediate sight is lacking the cult dilutes into verbal formulations; above the intuition in its varying profundity there arises a highly debatable intellectual paraphernalia usually without cultural force.(4)

This verbal confusion is, at root, a confusion of thought. As early as 'The Serious Artist' essay of 1913 Pound was insisting that "the very algebra of logic is itself open to debate".(5) What that received logic failed to accommodate relates to the concept of "process", a rare order secreted within or behind - occasionally shining through - the

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(1) SP, p.273 ('Freedom de Facto', c.1940-41; first published in Agenda, 1971).

(2) Ibid., p.273 ('Freedom de Facto').

(3) Ibid., p.56 ('Terra Italica', The New Review, 1931-32).

(4) Ibid., p.59 ('Terra Italica').

(5) LE, p.50 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

phenomenal world, and masked by the inert arrangements conventional logic presents. Pound drives home the incommensurability of phenomenon and logic here: "All systems of philosophy fail when they attempt to set down axioms of the theos in terms of consciousness and of logic; similiter by the same figure that electricity escapes the physics of water."(1) "In terms of consciousness and of logic": the truth escapes both the individual's symbolizing medium and his cognizance; "certain truth exists", bodied objectively against us - in spite of us - even if we fail "to fix it on paper".(2) But if that 'fixing' was ever to be achieved the received forms of language, embodying a discredited logic, must be discarded and new forms evolved. Replying to Yvor Winters in 1933, Pound decries those who think that "logic is limited to a few 'forms of logic' which better minds were already finding inadequate to the mental needs of the XVIIIth century".(3) And again, three years earlier: "we no longer think or need to think in terms of mono-linear logic, the sentence structure, subject, predicate object etc. We are as capable or almost as capable as the biologist of thinking thoughts that join like spokes in a wheel-hub, and that fuse in hyper-geometric amalgams:"(4) It is open to us to object that "sentence structure" at least means something, whereas the notion of thoughts joined "like spokes in a wheel-hub", thoughts fused "in hyper-geometric amalgams", doesn't seem to, despite the biologist; but Pound wasn't always so cavalier in defining his "method". He can, more modestly, equate it with the simple making of connections:

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(1) SP, pp.49-50 ('Axiomata', The New Age, 1921).

(2) See GK, p.295.

(3) Quoted in Yvor Winters, In Defense of Reason, 1960, pp.57-58n.

(4) Quoted in Anthony Woodward, Ezra Pound and the Pisan Cantos, 1980, p.115n.

People quite often think me crazy when I make a jump instead of a step, just as if all jumps were unsound and never carried one anywhere.

From that take off I land on the Walter Page correspondence . . . (1)

And he can more soberly, in a list answering the question "what ought to be done?" in letters, ask for "dispassionate examination of the ideogrammic method (the examination and juxtaposition of particular specimens - e.g. particular works, passages of literature) as an implement for acquisition and transmission of knowledge".(2) The parenthetical definition inserted there isn't exhaustive. We can distinguish at least two, and possibly three, distinct functions the "method" is meant to serve, and to serve in both his prose and poetry. Firstly, there is the function defined above, which is essentially pedagogic. It 'examines' and 'juxtaposes' - or rather examines by juxtaposing - discrete particulars, "as an implement for acquisition and transmission of knowledge". There being no explicit connection made between the apposed "specimens", it is up to the reader to 'take' the significance of the conjunction. (The importance of this voluntaristic - indeed partly creative - relation of reader to text will become clear later: see Part Three, Chapter 2.) In prose, this leads to the "exhibits" of the ABC of Reading, where he protests that old and bad habits prevent him from taking the procedure to its proper conclusion: "The ideal way to present the next section of this booklet would be to give the quotations WITHOUT any comment whatever. I am afraid that would be too revolutionary. By long and wearing experience I have learned that in the present imperfect state of the world, one MUST tell the reader."(3) In poetry, and again with the pedagogic or didactic thrust, it leads to the terse constataions

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(1) SP, pp.122-23 ('The Jefferson-Adams Letters as a Shrine and a Monument', North American Review, 1937-38).

(2) LE, p.61 ('The Teacher's Mission', English Journal, 1934).

(3) ABCR, p.95.



of the Chinese History Cantos, which, by the use of highly selective detail, attempt to give flesh to Pound's Machiavellian notion of history as "'a school book for princes'" (LIV/280). The second and crucial function the "method" serves is more elusive: the revelation of "process". Again, this aspect of "function" Pound envisages as operating in both his prose and his poetry. I shall return to it and treat it more fully in a moment. Finally, there is the occasionally expressed and much less ambitious sense of the device as a simple heaping of useful materials, prior to some later ordering: "Very well, I am not proceeding according to Aristotelian logic but according to the ideogramic [sic] method of first heaping together the necessary components of thought."(1)

This is ambiguous: the heaping could constitute the method or, possibly, represent its first stage only. The passage is from the ABC of Economics of 1933. One from A Visiting Card helps us to determine this ambiguity: "if I have made any contribution to criticism I have done so by introducing the ideogrammic system. True criticism will insist on the accumulation of these concrete examples, these facts, possibly small, but gristly and resilient, that can't be squashed, that insist on being taken into consideration, before the critic can claim to hold any opinion whatsoever."(2) This, with its separation of thought and the materials of thought ("Thought is organic. It needs these 'gristly facts'"(3)), and ascription of the latter to the "ideogrammic" province, seems to confine the method to a merely propaedeutic function. But it is an uncharacteristic modesty. Pound more usually represented the device as a hermeneutic tool, as, emphatically, a method: "In another eighty years a few people may begin to see that the present author's insistence on Ideogrammic method has not been mere picking daisies. Fenollosa

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(1) SP, p.209 (ABC of Economics, 1933).

(2) Ibid., pp.303-04 (A Visiting Card, first published in Italian as Carta da Visita and published in Rome, 1942).

(3) Ibid., p.304 (A Visiting Card).

saw the possibilities of a method."(1) Its properties as such are crucially involved with Pound's concept of process.

Pound saw process as everywhere informing the phenomenal world, and therefore deeply implicated in our perception of things. In formulating his perceptions, the writer's language should be determined by this primary realm. A falsified discourse springs from the denial of this realm's primacy, and of its fluxive, dynamic energies. Pound was always inclined to the objective and palpable, and to these qualities conceived of as alive and in flux, part of that "Unstill universe" Charles Tomlinson's poetry records:

Unstill universe of gusts  
of rays, of hours without colour, of perennial  
transits, vain displays  
of cloud: an instant and -  
look, the changed forms  
blaze out, millenia grow unstable.(2)

The idea of a "still world" is an imposture: "Human theorising has proceeded from an Euclidian stasis, from statecraft to music the theoreticians have dealt with a still world, and received derision, quite properly."(3) This perception of things becomes entangled with the question of method when the masking of the "radiant world"(4) by the literati is considered. Francis Bacon's inductive method, which received Pound's support against Aristotle and his scholastic followers,(5) constituted an earlier reformative attempt in the same area. Lisa Jardine has this to say of it:

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(1) SP, p.251 ('The Individual in his Milieu: A Study of Relations and Gesell', The Criterion, 1935).

(2) From 'Unstill Universe' in Charles Tomlinson, Selected Poems 1951-1974, Oxford, 1978, p.117.

(3) SP, p.274 ('Freedom de Facto', c.1940-41; first published Agenda, 1971).

(4) See LE, p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(5) See GK, p.304 and p.314.

Only one method has any privileged status for Bacon: scientific principles communicated by the stages of the inductive method . . . will be perspicuous and unmisleading, because it is open to the listener to retrace in its entirety an infallible method of discovery. . . . Otherwise all means of presentation exploit to a greater or lesser extent the prejudices and credulity of an audience.(1)

I said earlier that the ideogrammic method could be separated into at least two distinct functions: one didactic, and one expressive of process. In the light of the above quotation we can see them coming together. One possible Baconian gloss of "process" is "causation": "It would be sheer prejudice not to suppose he [Heraclitus] and a good half-dozen of the sages tried, that is to say tried to correlate their thought, to carry a principle through concrete and apparently disjunct phenomena and observe the leaves and/or fruits of causation."(2) This carrying of a principle "through concrete and apparently disjunct phenomena" is very like the understanding of process, an understanding that "implies a quick and ready perception of when the given case fits the general formula".(3) And it is also close to Pound's understanding of historical process: "History taken as a lesson, and taking into account the difference between certainty and supposition, would be an exposition of the nature of events, rather than a chronicle of names."(4) Again: "Naturally there is nothing duller than the results of such digging [into historical material] , UNLESS the searcher have some concept to work to. Not the document but the significance of the document."(5) Of course Pound is here advocating deduction as a complement to induction, but the point is hardly important: what is strikingly relevant is Jardine's stress on the perspicuity of Baconian method, its refusal to "exploit . . . the prejudices and credulity of an audience". A quotation

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(1) Lisa Jardine, Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse, Cambridge, 1974, pp.74-75.

(2) GK, p.31.

(3) SP, p.273 ('Freedom de Facto', c.1940-41; first published Agenda, 1971).

(4) Ibid., p.139 ('An Introduction to the Economic Nature of the United States', 1944 (translated from the Italian)).

(5) GK, pp.220-21.

from the Guide to Kulchur which we looked at earlier will demonstrate here how the same concern for the "perspicuous" leads Pound, from considering method, to a contemplation of the ground of method, process:

At last a reviewer in a popular paper . . . has had the decency to admit that I occasionally cause the reader 'suddenly to see' or that I snap out a remark . . . [his dots] 'that reveals the whole subject from a new angle'.

That being the point of the writing. That being the reason for presenting first one facet and then another - I mean to say the purpose of the writing is to reveal the subject. The ideogramic [sic] method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register.(1)

So far this is the familiar definition of the method as an "implement for . . . transmission of knowledge". But a question we didn't ask when examining its didactic cast was: What sort of "knowledge" was this device intended to promote? In its aspect as an accumulator or 'heaper' of "gristly facts" it can set neglected matters before the reader but, as we have seen, Pound grants "knowledge" a rather humbled station, as set against the "understanding". Indeed, it turns out that the pedagogue and his provision of "knowledge" may well be superfluous, given that one understands: "A man with the 'wrong ideas' or a man whose verbal manifestations appear inexact may often understand things quite well."(2) And so, returning to the Guide to Kulchur, we find Pound's concentration on method extending itself into a consideration of process. The passage continues:

It does not matter a two-penny damn whether you load up your memory with the chronological sequence of what has happened, or the names of protagonists, or authors of books, or generals and leading political spouters, so long as you understand the process now going on, or the Processes biological, social, economic now going on . . . (3)

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(1) GK, p.51.

(2) SP, p.273 ('Freedom de Facto', c.1940-41; first published Agenda, 1971).

(3) GK, p.51.

Method is a vehicle for the revelation of process, and all its strategies and formulations are devoted to that end. In its rôle as a presenter of "gristly fact" it simply presents the materials, the "knowledge", upon which "understanding" is founded. And "understanding" may be glossed as the perception of process. My definition is, of course, circular, but I think it corresponds to the disposition and rationale of these terms within Pound's writing. The ideogrammic method must be an instrument of the understanding because it reveals process, and to understand is to apprehend process, process being that which is thus understood, and which determines the particular configuration of the method. Not one of these terms is defined closely anywhere in Pound's prose writings. This is not a fact which should excite the censoriousness of the critic. It is inevitable, given Pound's 'epistemology' - in other words, given Pound's temperament. His sensibility was founded upon the apprehension of congruence in disjunction, and some complex of terms naming this perception was essential, given his didactic purpose. The actuality of process, and the virtues of understanding, were to be enforced upon the reader, and their cultivation in terms of the ideogrammic method promoted. But once an enabling discourse had been defined, and those less transparent castigated, there was little he could do but gesture towards a principle given life in his poetry. This problem for the critic lies at the heart of Pound's poetry and his thinking about it: given his faith in the non-verbal, the absolutes of process and understanding not only baffle critical demonstration, but extend beyond, and are seen as in important ways opposed to, the resources of language. To grasp them adequately we must relate what we have already concluded from an examination of Pound's prose to the morphology his poetics are founded upon. The idea of process is a generalized form of, or an extrapolation from, that morphology, and hence is founded upon the shape of

Pound's temperament as a poet. When he wrote 'In a Station of the Metro' he seems to have fully clarified for himself, for the first time, the essential modus of that temperament. The experience, running from initial impulse to finished poem, seems to have had the clarity and distinctness of a laboratory demonstration: "This", it seems to have said, "is how things work for you; this was their instigation, this, how matters developed, this, the definitive end." And it was as a cynosure that Pound presented his account of the genesis of the poem.

As we have seen, the poetic act as rite of emergence lies at the heart of the Imagist/Vorticist programme, and was carried over into the epic enlargement of that programme in the ideogrammic method. But the method represents, in addition, a further extension of that morphology to cover prose expression. The Guide to Kulchur, for example, is presented by Pound as a realization of the ideogrammic method in discursive form. He writes there: "let the reader be patient. I am not being merely incoherent. I haven't 'lost my thread' in the sense that I haven't just dropped one thread to pick up another of different shade. I need more than one string for a fabric."(1) - Strings having "no syllogistic connection one with another";(2) woven therefore by proximity, simply? No: "I am trying to get a bracket for one set of ideas, I mean that will hold a whole set of ideas and keep them apart from another set."(3) One set of ideas being "the whole ambience of the Anallects"(4) and, generally, "the whole tone, disposition, Anschauung of Confucius"; the other, very generally, being the Western tradition and specifically Christianity; and between the two a certain amount of give and take so

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(1) GK, p.29.

(2) Ibid., p.28.

(3) Ibid., p.29.

(4) Ibid., p.29.

that, for example, we will find a virtue analogous to Kung's in St Ambrose and St Antonino; and the "bracket" being a distinction between the sort of knowledge held as, for instance, a "form-colour acquisition", "a certain real knowledge which wd. enable me to tell a Goya from a Velasquez", and that sort "you or I wd. have if I went into the room back of the next one, copied a list of names and maxims from good Fiorentino's History of Philosophy and committed the names, maxims, and possibly dates to my memory".(1) This then is Pound's definition of "the meaning of 'ideogramic' [sic]":(2) the apposition of Chinese and Christian philosophy is intended to express - non-discursively - that distinction between understanding (the "form-colour acquisition") and knowledge (the data from the philosophy handbook) we discussed earlier. And the ideogrammic method is an instrument of the understanding. Thus the Guide, which is an expression of the method, is intended to draw upon Pound's reserves of understanding only. The inert realm of knowledge - save that which has stayed with him, "held without effort" - is to be avoided; hence he will consult as few books as possible in the writing of it: "In the main, I am to write this new Vade Mecum without opening other volumes, I am to put down so far as possible only what has resisted the erosion of time, and forgetfulness."(3) In other words, the ideogrammic method in its prose incarnation is a recalling of loved matter, an anamnesis, just as ideogrammic poetry is. In discarding "syllogistic connection" it affirms its determination to hew close to the mind's "formed trace", to impose no bluffing dogmatisms of structure which would apply an ad hoc, external coherence. That "trace" in the mind, it is important to remember, is not merely a subjective form; as the matrix-impulse of 'In a Station of the Metro' sprang from the impact on the poet of objective

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(1) GK, p.28.

(2) Ibid., p.27.

(3) Ibid., p.33.

phenomena, so the trace is carved by the loving apprehension of externals. We haven't previously insisted on this element of the morphology, but it is vital. The trace is a faithful registration of objectivity, and the elicitation of form from it reincarnates that objectivity in other - verbal - form. An identical kinesis permeates both the objective world and the writer's poetic resource, and Pound's term for this was "process". We can thus speak of the process informing objective phenomena, and the process informing the creative act. The latter is analogue of the former, the two realms - objective and subjective - being thus intimately bound together. It is as if the external process were deposited in compacted form in the poet's mind by the vivifying impulse, and the impulse-matrix were then drawn into verbal definition, emerging as the perfected artefact. The finished product thus retains the pattern of the objective process.

We must now address this question of the "finished product". We have seen that objective process is mirrored in creative process; likewise, the finished poem conserves in its lineaments an image of the external world. But we shall see that like Fenollosa, Pound distrusted language, wanted to avoid "the vain locus of verbal exchanges".(1) How then could a verbal medium encompass and represent objective verities? No poet can be an absolute sceptic regarding language; to be such would be to deny that regard for the substance of his art which Pound required of any artist. As we shall see, the concept of a lingua adamica balances his linguistic scepticism and affirms his reverence for the poet's medium. Before dealing with it, however, we must attend to Fenollosa's congruent linguistic philosophy.

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(1) SP, p.57 ('Terra Italica', The New Review, 1931-32).



FENOLLOSA1. The Text

The editorial vicissitudes of Fenollosa's essay The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry are soon told. They mostly concern the frustration of Pound's plans for its wide currency. He received an extensive body of manuscript material, including the essay, from Fenollosa's widow at the end of 1913, and more was posted to him, from America, in November 1915. Mary Fenollosa seems to have settled on Pound as literary executor partly out of regard for his poetry, and partly, perhaps, because of his apparent freedom in the face of scholarly authority. Pound's biographer writes of this material: "Altogether there were about sixteen notebooks containing notes on Far Eastern literature, draft translations of Chinese poetry and Noh dramas, and an essay by Fenollosa on 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry'." (1)

He worked on the papers at Stone Cottage in Sussex in the winter of 1913-14, while acting as secretary to Yeats. He began with the Noh plays, and the fruit of his work on other draft translations of Fenollosa's was the volume Cathay, which appeared in April 1915. But in June of the same year he was writing to his old teacher Felix Schelling of his disgust at being unable to get the Chinese Written Character essay published. He had sent it to America for publication in the philosophical journal The Monist, but it was rejected. In late 1915 he was in touch with the Yale University Press about possible publication, but nothing came of the exchange.

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(1) Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, p.148.

Meanwhile other of Pound's gleanings from the Fenollosa papers were being printed. In 1916 four new poems were added to the 'Cathay' section of Lustra. Early in 1917 MacMillan published 'Noh' or Accomplishment. But in January of the same year he had sent the essay to the American magazine The Seven Arts, and had had it rejected. The rejection was anticipated; he wrote to John Quinn: "It is one of the most important essays of our time. But they will probably reject it on the ground of its being exotic."(1) "His faith in the essay remained, however, unshaken; it seemed, in fact, to grow. From its being, in 1915, a most enlightening work which provided 'a whole basis of aesthetic', and in 1916 a very good theory for poets to go by, it had by 1917 become 'one of the most important essays of our time', 'basic for all aesthetics', and Fenollosa was beginning to look like an Imagist and a Vorticist."(2) In 1919 that faith was rewarded. The Little Review began serial publication in September, and the rest of the essay followed in October, November and December. In April 1920 the complete text was included in his book of essays, Instigations.

In late 1927 the process was to begin again. Instigations was out of print, and Pound was in touch with Glenn Hughes, an American Academic later to produce a book on Imagism,(3) exhorting him to publish the essay ("I think Fenollosa did a lot that ought not to be lost"(4)). Nothing came of the contact, and it wasn't until March 1936, after the failure of earlier attempts to interest the Basic English circle, and T.S. Eliot, in the essay, that Stanley Nott published it, now with a subtitle - "An Ars Poetica With Forward and Notes by Ezra Pound" - and an appendix in which Pound speculates as to the meaning of various characters. It formed the first volume in a projected "Ideogramic [sic]

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(1) L, p.154 (John Quinn, 1917).

(2) Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, p.199.

(3) Glenn Hughes, Imagism and the Imagists, Stanford, 1931.

(4) L, p.289 (Glenn Hughes, 1927).

Series" he was to edit, and which got as far as Pound's version of the Ta Hio before folding. This was the essay's first publication as an individual volume.

There followed a great space of time during which the essay must have been very hard to get hold of indeed. Its next appearance in book form was in 1950, as part of Kaspar and Horton's Poundian "Square Dollar Series", bound in together with Pound's Confucian translations The Unwobbling Pivot and The Great Digest. Currently available in the 'underground' City Lights edition, it has never achieved wide currency, nor has it appeared in the imprint of a major publishing house. Against this resounding indifference we can set Pound's fervent advocacy:

Fenollosa's essay was perhaps too far ahead of his time to be easily comprehended. He did not proclaim his method as a method. He was trying to explain the Chinese ideograph as a means of transmission and registration of thought. He got to the root of the matter, to the root of the difference between what is valid in Chinese thinking and invalid or misleading in a great deal of European thinking and language.(1)

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(1) ABCR, p.19.

2. Summary and Critique of 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry' (1)

Throughout this section exposition and analysis are run together. The exposition is itself interpretative, trying to draw out the significance of Fenollosa's often highly compressed formulations. Beyond this drawing-out it remains expository. The more tendentious aspects of my argument are reserved for its analytic strand. I don't separate exposition and analysis to the extent of providing each with its separate section: that would have defeated the purpose of this discussion, which is to associate an understanding of Fenollosa's argument as closely as is possible with a critical appreciation of its shortcomings; but I hope that, as presented here, the two remain distinct in the reader's mind.

- p.6 Preliminaries over, Fenollosa begins his argument by asking two related questions: How "can verse, written in terms of visible hieroglyphics, be reckoned true poetry?" And: How can poetry, "a time art", be accommodated in a pictorial medium? By way of answer he contrasts Gray's line "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day" with a line of five Chinese characters, transliterated as "Moon Rays Like Pure Snow", and asks "how can the Chinese line imply, as form, the very element that distinguishes poetry from prose?" (this "element" isn't specified). The Chinese characters seem to have nothing in common, unless their sound be given. But, he says, there is a necessary order underlying the Chinese line considered as a purely visual unit. This order isn't to be found as an immanent principle among the words; it derives from what Fenollosa supposes to be their correspondence to the successive character of natural operations. This principle he opposes to the apparently plausible sanction of subjectivity. The attribution of the successive operations of thought (here represented by the sentence "Moon Rays Like

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(1) Marginal page references are to Ernest Fenollosa, ChWCh.

Pure Snow") to our subjective operations is unwarrantable, and the idea that thought derives its essential characteristics from the utilizing subject is delusive. Indeed, so intimate is the fit between thought and nature that the latter's activity, conceived of as "transferences of force", may be given in terms of linguistic categories, as a force operating between agent and object. But this isn't to say that nature, or our idea of it, derives from language and is, as a consequence, an ideal construction; in fact Fenollosa would maintain the reverse to be the case: such categories have grown up as a direct reflection of natural causation. Grammatical agent and object mimic nature's agential and objective states. In order to give an undistorting account of "natural phenomena", therefore, thought must reproduce their "temporal order", the movement of natural force from agent to object.

Fenollosa now proceeds to exemplify this idea of the determination of syntax by nature's causal sequences. We look out of a window and see a man. He turns his head and fixes his attention on something. We look p.8 and see that the man is watching a horse. When transferring this experience to the realm of language we subdivide its "rapid continuity" into its "three essential parts": Man sees horse. At this an immediate and very obvious objection springs to mind: the three "parts" he adduces are surrounded, inexplicitly, by an extrinsic and rhetorically-motivated syntax. The fuller syntax he assumes would run something like: "I see that this man sees a horse", and out of this he has built the fiction of our looking out of a window and seeing a man fix his attention on something, and so on. In Fenollosa's argument, the transitive sequence "Man sees horse" is represented as expressing or repeating the narrative sequences of this fiction. By filling the foreground of his argument

with this spurious narrative he has half-obscured the fact that "Man sees horse" in fact articulates the subject, "Man", actually seeing the object "horse". The obfuscation of this essential point helps to hide from Fenollosa the fact that the existential immediacy of a man seeing a horse is in no way represented by the subject-verb-object form. The sleight-of-hand is further underlined if we read on into the next paragraph, where it is asserted of the three words that they "stand for the three terms of a natural process". By "natural process" Fenollósa must mean the "process" of seeing the horse; but if they mean that, they don't also stand for somebody else seeing the man seeing the horse: he has done his explaining in terms of the latter, but has now slipped back into the actual terms of his argument which makes its assertions in terms of "process", having avoided the ticklish business of reconciling "process" with the logical form of language. In a phrase a few lines later Fenollosa's recognition of the true reference of the sentence becomes explicit: he refers to its subject matter as "this mental horse-picture"; that is to say the words refer to the man's seeing, not to anyone else's seeing of him.

The argument moves on. As the phonetic signs "Man", "sees" and "horse" are, in fact, arbitrary counters standing for "the three terms of a natural process", it follows that their associated sounds are as "arbitrary" as any other of their aspects and their significative office could as well be filled by visual signs "which had no basis in sound". He instances the three appropriate Chinese characters: if we grasped their significance, what each referred to, we could communicate by them quite as efficiently as through spoken words. In fact, he says, gesture often supplants spoken language in just this way. It is necessary

for us to add at this point - while indicating that Fenollosa's contrary position is one instance of his thoroughgoing linguistic naturalism - that gesture, as distinct from a systematic sign-'language', is wholly unlike language properly speaking in that it is bound to the concrete occasion of its use and the present referents of that occasion, while language exists apart from and independent of any particular set of referents or specifiable occasion. Fenollosa regards the two as commensurable in the light of his naturalistic conception of the purely physical reference of language.

But, Fenollosa continues, the Chinese character is not an arbitrary sign. (He uses the term "symbol", but this is inconsistent with the terminology used in this chapter, and its adoption would only confuse matters.) It actually represents in pictorial form - albeit abbreviated - the operations of nature. It constitutes "a vivid shorthand picture". The spoken word, like the figure in algebra, depends absolutely upon convention for its semantic validity. But the Chinese characters follow "natural suggestion".

At this point we must ask whether Fenollosa considers the "ideograms" to be pictorial or symbolic. His terminology isn't clear. For instance, he represents the character jen as actually a man - or at least his phrasing implies that: "First stands the man on his two legs"; and the horse too: "Third stands the horse on his four legs." "Sees" is more problematic. He refers to the character as "a bold figure", and obviously recognizes its composite character, though it is a composite of two "modified picture[s]" (my italics). We can't define any further at this point, but evidence to come will clarify matters.

Thus the Chinese characters not only provide an adequate substitute for phonetic signs, but in fact far surpass the latter in concreteness and vividness. If a concept such as "Man sees horse" is describable as a "thought-picture", this visuality of conception (for conception only pictures extant reality) is naturally given far more satisfactorily in the quasi-representational mode of Chinese. As opposed to the phonetic sign, Chinese written characters - as Fenollosa, controversially, conceives of them - are pictorially adequate, and hence truer to one's p.9 "thought-picture"; they have an inherent vivacity and ardour. ("Legs belong to all three characters: they are alive"); and they have, seen successively by the eye which hence links up the characters analogously, "something of the quality of a continuous moving picture". We can say then that not only is the "ideograph" pictorially representational in a way the phonetic sign cannot be (though, as mentioned above, we have yet to determine the degree of literalness involved in Fenollosa's idea of representation); but he takes the correspondence between language and reality a step further, and tentatively predicates imitative movement of the significative medium, in response to the 'movement' of its subject matter. But we have seen that the movement thus responded to is generated by a fiction wholly external to the business of this sentence, which is concerned with perceptual immediacy (though it can't express it).

The Chinese written language shares important characteristics with the visual arts but, Fenollosa argues, there is one crucial point at which it in fact surpasses the latter's representational resources: a painting or a photograph represents a static world, whereas the fundamental characteristic of reality is evolutionary motion, "the element



of natural succession". Poetry is superior to, say, sculpture in respect of its structural relationship to time, which is the fundamental reality. But Chinese poetry combines the advantages of visual and verbal art in a unique way: it is representational like art, and it is mobile, as sounds are. And this combination of elements results in a privileged epistemological status - a greater "objective" and "dramatic" quality than either of the two modes, visual or aural, in separation. Chinese seems to transcend subjectivity and render the "fate" of "things" directly. This contention, founded upon Fenollosa's belief that the Chinese written language was a form of conventionalized picture writing, has been much discussed by specialists in the field, and seems now to be generally discredited. Its substance as such does not, however, concern us here; it is the application of this linguistic fiction to the English language that is the process under consideration.

He now moves on from the form of the sentence to "the structure of detached Chinese words", and again finds activity paramount. The characters were originally pictorial, and despite "later conventional modifications" they remain so. This might be thought to confer a noun-like status on the characters: we usually think of a picture as a picture of a thing. In fact "a large number of the primitive Chinese characters" represent action, process. It becomes clear at this point that Fenollosa conceives of the written character as essentially conceptual; in fact such a concept is necessitated by his theory, for the "ideograph" represents action and a picture is a type of noun. But it is his own use of the word "picture" that is confusing: when he refers to the "picture" of an action he really intends the notion of a conceptual symbol, which gives an atemporal representation of temporal process. The paragraph

p.10 devoted to what is in fact an idea of the conceptual is compressed to the point of obscurity. A "simple, original" ideograph, which can be called a "picture", is of, for example, a mouth with two words and a flame emerging: this meaning "to speak". Surely this is a conceptual symbol. Similarly, the "simple" picture character which represents grass with a twisted root doesn't have representation as its goal; it is a symbol for the concept "to grow up with difficulty". To call either of these characters "shorthand pictures of actions or processes" (p.9) is misleading, for whatever we picture is frozen: the pictorial representation of a flying bird is as static, literally speaking, as that of a rock. Fenollosa contrasts these original "pictures" with "compounds" such as "messmate", built of the elements "man" and "fire". He defines the mode of operation of the simpler ideograph as a putting together of "two things" to "produce a third thing"; but in the "compound" that apposition of two things suggests "some fundamental relation between them". The distinction isn't clear in the light of the chosen examples. At any rate, that "fundamental relation" is a conceptual one, holding between two signs we have brought together for expressive purposes, and constituting a further meaning. It is, of course, possible to interpret that relation naturalistically, as a further sign as it were picturing an actual relation in the world: that between a man and a fire. It is only in terms of such a relation between concrete entities - the argument would run - that the more abstract notion of "messmate" may be understood. Hence the excellence of the ideograph: it represents the constituting elements of the "concept". The "concept" is not an abstract entity divorced from any particular occasion, but merely a pragmatic inference wholly based and dependent upon such an occasion. Such seems to be Fenollosa's idea of the concept, and it represents an attempt to account for conceptual modes and entities while denying the possibility of real and constitutory abstraction.

The sort of picture a Chinese character is, Fenollosa continues, does not make it a "thing". A "thing", as we conceive of it, has the artificiality of a snapshot: it is a moment of some process abstracted and isolated from the continuum of active nature. Just so the noun is a verbal fiction - no such entity exists in nature; and the written character cannot be described as a noun. This principle is of larger application. A "pure verb" is inconceivable: there is in nature no "abstract motion", no activity without a sensuous vehicle (this declaration regarding the verb has damaging implications for his theory of the transitive sentence, as we shall see). In reality our categories of noun and verb interpenetrate, and the existential witness of "things in motion, motion in things" discredits the abstractions of our grammar. But the ideograph doesn't abstract; it doesn't separate off "motion" from "thing" and assign them separate functions within language, but represents or "pictures" (more properly speaking, symbolizes) the complex of substance and activity as it occurs in nature.

Leaving the specific case of Chinese for a moment, and returning to the question of the form of the sentence, Fenollosa asks: "what power it adds to the verbal units from which it builds". And, more fundamentally, why does the sentence form exist at all? Why is it a universal property of language, of whatever kind? What is its "normal type"? - for, given its universality, it should "correspond to some primary law of nature".

p.11 The "professional grammarians" have given two ("lame") answers: that a sentence enunciates a "complete thought"; and that it unites a subject with a predicate (a formulation we may think too passive,

and unfairly imputed to the grammarians: for we don't "bring about a union" of subject and predicate, we predicate something of a subject).

The first answer is preferable, Fenollosa argues, in that as a thought cannot embody the criteria for its own completeness, the notion of a "complete thought" must imply "some natural objective standard". At first blush this seems a reasonable enough position: a single thought cannot postulate its own completeness because it forms a part of a larger cognitive matrix; from this matrix its authority is derived, as are the very terms of its possibility. But the notion of a single thought is obscure. How do we define such a unit? Fenollosa's presentation of this idea is far too elliptical for us to determine an answer, nor does he cite sources. Assuming its intelligibility, however, we can see that Fenollosa doesn't refer it to what I have called the cognitive matrix, but to the objective world. At this point we must follow his argument very closely. He says that the grammarians' first answer to the question "What is a sentence?", that it enunciates a complete thought, "has the advantage of trying for some natural objective standard, since it is evident that a thought can not be the test of its own completeness. But in nature there is no completeness." This could mean, either that the grammarians correctly refer "a thought" as embodied in "a sentence" to nature, but err in postulating completeness as a term in the comparison (there is no completeness in nature and therefore the completeness of the sentence can't derive from nature); or that they refer thought and sentence to something left unspecified by Fenollosa, but obviously malign (say, the cognitive matrix), something narrowly or meanly complete, and pass by the great ramifying processes of nature which are, properly speaking, interminable. The

argument is unclear, the "objective standard" utilized by "professional grammarians" is unspecified. We can't determine this particular crux, which may have something to do with the fact that the essay was left in draft form; but whatever the mistakes of grammarians Fenollosa regards the proper stress to be on the processes of nature, and what sort of figure language cuts when set in front of this primary realm.

The notion of completeness doesn't, in Fenollosa's estimation, apply to nature, which persists in unstinting continuity, ceaseless process. Any determinate utterance necessary on the purely practical, everyday level is encompassed by interjectional exclamations - "as 'Hi! there!', or 'Scat!'" - or even by physical gesture ("shaking one's fist"). For practical purposes this is all the meaning one needs, and the sentence form adds nothing essential. "On the other hand, no full sentence really completes a thought." It is essential to determine exactly what Fenollosa means by "thought" in this context: it will affect the whole argument. He exemplifies the word now by returning to the context of "Man sees horse". We saw earlier that Fenollosa referred to the "thought-picture" expressed by this sentence, a picture far more vividly "called up" by the Chinese characters (p.8), but also with a kinetic reference entirely absent from the phonetic script ("something of the quality of a continuous moving picture" (p.9)). And we saw that this quality had something to do with the legs each character incorporates as an ideographic element ("Legs belong to all three characters: they are alive" (p.9)). A question we didn't ask then was: What have legs and the movement they somehow generate (by analogy?) to do with the content of the sentence, with a man seeing a horse? Fenollosa tells

us that the "element of natural succession" characterizing all "verbal poetry" gets us "back to the fundamental reality of time" (p.9): but to his own exemplum temporality is irrelevant except in the trivial sense that any perception must occupy a unit of time, however infinitesimal; the fact remains that the perceptual act is not represented by the successivity of the ideographs. We also saw that Fenollosa obscured this issue by weaving a fiction concerning a second observer around the protagonists represented in the sentence. At any rate, for Fenollosa, thought as presented here is, properly speaking, a "thought-picture" (my italics), imitative of nature, an image but an image in motion, most nearly evoked by the pictorial and conceptual properties (singly), and the kinetic properties (sequentially) of the Chinese "ideograph". "Conceptual", as used here, is of the limited speculative reference indicated earlier.

So, Fenollosa continues, returning to an earlier example, "the man who sees and the horse which is seen will not stand still". The activity re-presented in the sentence "Man sees horse" is thereby quite artificially separated from the existential continuum within which and as a part of which that activity occurred. "The man was planning a ride before he looked. The horse kicked when the man tried to catch him." None of this living context is expressed in the three words "Man sees horse" (nor, we should add, is it in the three Chinese characters, however interpreted). All acts in nature are interrelated, and even the most compendious, syntactically complex compound sentence is helpless in face of this fact. If, then, a sentence expresses a "complete thought", but exercises no abstractive and symbolizing action, and we define "thought" as a literal image of the real world, then the only complete

sentence would be one coterminous with nature, a sort of vast verbal template "which it would take all time to pronounce". Such a conclusion depends on the denial of abstraction and the definition of thought as literal image.

But even the Chinese written language as Fenollosa conceives it is unequal to the task of reproducing the world, and reproducing it without distortion. Although he repudiates the conceptualizing action of phonetic script, and regards subjectively generated symbols as a betrayal of nature, he does not in fact hold to the impossible notion of an Ursprache that reproduces reality; though the weight of his polemic against the phonetic languages won't allow him to spell it out, we have seen that he does make room in his theory for conceptualization (albeit severely curtailed) as exercised by the ideograph in its combination of "pictorial" elements. The question is whether Fenollosa is justified in admitting, for the coherence of his own theory, a highly restrictive mode of conceptualization - a type of pragmatic inference (see pages 176-77) - while denying the possibility of a realist idea of language, with its very much more thoroughgoing and self-consistent use of the notion of concept.

As we have seen, the grammarian's first sentence-definition referred to "some natural objective standard"; but the second - that a sentence unites a subject and a predicate - refers to none; with it "the grammarian falls back on pure subjectivity. We do it all; it is a little private juggling between our right and left hands." Both subject and predicate have been plucked from the stream of nature and isolated for discourse, but, Fenollosa argues, any such reference expresses mere

subjective partiality ("The subject is that about which I am going to talk; the predicate is that which I am going to say about it"). Such a definition makes of language a subjective and virtual medium, but an adequate definition will account for the actual status of the sentence as "an attribute of nature". Further, a subjective conception of the sentence robs us of the capacity to determine its truth. Fenollosa's argument leaves this point at the level of bare assertion; arguing from it we can see that the "truth" of a sentence must consist, from this point of view, in the degree to which it corresponds to the particular aspect of nature that constitutes its subject matter; and that on the other hand subjectivity must be conceived of as purely solipsistic to be thus denied the relevance of authentic, objective "truth". In response to this we may ask whether correspondence per se can be made the measure of truth; surely there must be a subjective, normative assertion made that accurate correspondence is a good, and that in its maintenance consists the maintenance of "truth". Another point arises here. While we may conclude that such subjective valuation constitutes truth, whether it is correspondence of relational structures that is valued, or something else, that valuation is itself constituted, not by an hermetically sealed, isolated subject, but in and through the mediation of a society's communal subjectivity, and its deposits of value and precept. The implications of this non-recognition of the social character of language will be discussed in the next chapter.

p.12      Having dealt, under the rubric of the "complete thought", with the mental image and its relation to nature, Fenollosa now turns to the grammarians' subject-predicate thesis, dealing with conceptual thought and its relation to nature.



The subject-predicate thinking of the grammarians derives from the pre-scientific verbalism of the scholastic philosophers, their "discredited, or rather . . . useless, logic". In their view thought dealt solely with abstractions but, says Fenollosa, in fact these abstractions derive at second hand from things, they are "concepts drawn out of things by a sifting process". (Nothing could be further removed from a realist understanding of abstractions as speculative instruments which organize and render intelligible the fluxional immediacy of nature.) Similarly, the "qualities" these Aristotelians conceived of as inhering in matter were never referred to their material habitus, it was never enquired how they "came to be there". In fact what truth remained in "their little checker-board juggling" derived from "the natural order by which these powers or properties or qualities were folded in concrete things, yet they despised the 'thing' as a mere 'particular', or pawn". Apparently Fenollosa is not denying the existence of qualities, but given his scepticism in regard to universals their status is hard to determine. His conception of language proscribes its trafficking in abstractions; it is in fact a nominalistic conception and cannot, as far as I can see, be reconciled with such a philosophically realist notion as that of quality, integral or otherwise. But with another turn of the argument we are in a quite different intellectual context. The fluidity of Fenollosa's terminology - a glittering vagueness which allowed Pound to draw his own quite un-nominalist conclusions from the essay, just as Fenollosa himself gave to his 'philosophy', this sort of detailed argument apart, a rather soupy or plummy Idealist cast - is such that we now find these same integral "qualities" transposed to the context of experimental science, and apparently become observable entities. They are now identified with the pulsing "forces"

the scientist scrutinizes through the microscope. Given this trans-  
mogrification, it seems unlikely that "qualities" was ever meant very  
seriously. Unless one can demonstrate a rigorous and consistent termin-  
ology informing the essay as a whole, and lending weight and point to  
this particular usage (and is this really possible?), then Fenollosa's  
nominalism remains undisturbed. As if to confirm this, he closes the  
paragraph by denying altogether thought's commerce with the "bloodless"  
concept; rather it "watches things move under its microscope". Follow-  
ing the scientist, thought must return to the concrete and to minute  
observation, altogether eschewing abstractions.

Fenollosa now produces his own theory of the sentence. Primitive  
humanity had the form forced upon it by nature. The sentence wasn't  
made by man; it was a "reflection" of causation in the natural world,  
and consequently reproduced its temporal sequence. This prompts us to  
ask: Why then did language arise at all? As reflection is an entirely  
passive mode, what impelled its emergence? If there is no shaping im-  
petus within it, language must be either eternally ordained or non-  
existent: no principle is provided by Fenollosa's argument for its  
generation in time. He goes on: "All truth has to be expressed in sen-  
tences because all truth is the transference of power." In other words,  
truth appears in language not as in its proper sphere, not because it  
only appears with and in language, but because as transference of power,  
process, it has a structure analogous to that of the simple transitive  
sentence, and therefore the sentence reflects truth so conceived. Lan-  
guage, in its proper form, is a literal reflection of causality, and  
causality constitutes truth. Truth, therefore, is defined, not as qual-  
ity but as activity, "transference of force", and consequently isn't

expressed by making verifiable propositions in language, but by reflecting causality in syntax. For example, "the type of sentence in nature" - the causal structure of which can be reflected in transitive syntax - may be epitomized by a flash of lightning. The flash is activity, passing between the relative stases of cloud and earth. All natural processes subsist in this three-fold relation. "Light, heat, gravity, chemical affinity, human will", each of these is dynamic, its activity, like that of the lightning flash, moving "force" or energy on, redistributing it, and so maintaining a dynamism of process. This dynamism, rather than any abstract quality or essence, is itself the Good or Truth.

Fenollosa now passes on to consider the detailed structure of the transitive sentence. The fundamental dynamic relation described above is three-fold and may be expressed thus: term from which; transference of force; term to which. If we consider a relation involving an agent acting either consciously or unconsciously, we may express it thus: agent; act; object. The act is the constitutive term of this relation, p.13 and therefore paramount; agent and object "are only limiting terms".

We can see clearly here how Fenollosa's attempted derivation of the transitive sentence from concrete causal relationship leads to his devaluation of the noun, which thus becomes what W.M. Urban called a "dead petrifact".(1) As regards the verb, it is difficult to see how - in the light of his earlier statement that "neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things" (p.10) - Fenollosa can maintain that the verb, the act "is the very substance of the fact

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(1) See Wilbur Marshall Urban, Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism, 1939, p.113.

denoted. The agent and the object are only limiting terms." In saying this he seems to be recognizing a rift between immediate experience and natural language which runs counter to his entire epistemology. In nature a "pure verb" is unthinkable; but when a fact is "denoted" by language the verb is its "very substance", and the nouns - agent and object - become mere "limiting terms". Fenollosa appears to have disguised the ramifying consequences of this from himself and, apparently, from many of his readers by the fogginess of his terminology; for in this sentence regarding the denoted fact and hence dealing with language, he refers to the verb as "the act", making it possible, in simple confusion, to attribute the experiential unity of the action to the verbal unit, a unity which abolishes verbal distinctions between noun and verb in "the very stroke of the act".

There is a further confusion. When Fenollosa asserts, in this portion of his argument, that (in effect) causality is truth, he draws his exempla from the objective realm, the realm of demonstrable action: a flash of lightning passes from cloud to earth, a farmer pounds rice, and the causal sequence of these occurrences is reflected in the subject-verb-object structure. But what of the earlier exemplum "Man sees horse"? We saw Fenollosa avoid the fact that this statement concerns an act of perception by weaving a spurious objectivity, a narrative, around it and introducing a wholly unwarranted second spectator. Where does "cause and effect" come into this sentence? Fenollosa's narrative - this was its essential strategy - attempted to drag in causal sequence by having an observer witness the man's attention becoming focussed on the horse ("Suddenly he turns his head and actively fixes his attention upon something" (p.7)). Let us recall the exact terms in which Fenollosa related his story to language:

We saw, first, the man before he acted; second, while he acted; third, the object toward which his action was directed. In speech we split up the rapid continuity of this action and of its picture into its three essential parts or joints in the right order, and say:

Man sees horse.

It is clear that these three joints, or words, are only three phonetic symbols, which stand for the three terms of a natural process. (pp.7-8)

Fenollosa is so thoroughly embroiled in his own fiction that the image of a man looking up and seeing a man seeing a horse has wholly supplanted the actual content of the sentence. The fiction has given him warrant for reference to "the three terms of a natural process", in other words to temporal, causal sequence, whereas the sentence itself proposes an instantaneous and indivisible act of perception. It doesn't refer to the visible horse as cause and its envisioning by a man as effect, but to the act of seeing.

We shall return to this question of causality and its relation to language; in the meantime let us briefly sum up the critical side of our argument thus far. Fenollosa's normative linguistic criteria refer to only one narrow order of language use, concerning a certain type of objective occurrence. In his view language itself consists of the designatory sign rather than the significative symbol. Thus the transitive sentence refers to the pounding farmer, or the lightning flash, and is held to be justified, not by its own internal coherence and as supported by the whole of language, but by the causality of nature, its proper referent. The logical consequence of such a position is that at some point the structure of language reflects the structure of nature, and Fenollosa locates that point by pruning syntax - which he correctly identifies as, in its developed form, the most obvious index of subjectivity

in language - back to the simple transitive sentence. But the problem concerns the basic structure of language, and can't be met by reformative prescriptions, no matter how radical. When Fenollosa has tracked language back to noun and verb, omitting particles, he can still find no justifying structural principle, because on his terms language doesn't operate according to an innate morphology; and he concludes his analysis of the transitive sentence by reducing the nouns to the status of "limiting terms" (p.13) which constrain the activity of the verb. Ideally, "pounds" should include, subsume, "farmer" and "rice", for the activity is thus unitary in the real world. According to this reasoning, then, the verb itself is emasculated, having the qualifying terms of its activity separated out. What survives?

The "normal and typical sentence in English as well as in Chinese" expresses the causal sequence agent-act-object, "this unit of natural process" (Fenollosa must be using normal and typical in their root senses of norm and type, not in the looser sense of widespread):

It consists of three necessary words: the first denoting the agent or subject from which the act starts, the second embodying the very stroke of the act, the third pointing to the object, the receiver of the impact. Thus:

Farmer    pounds    rice

"Natural process" (p.8) must then subsist in causal sequence, as it is causal sequence, Fenollosa believes, that the transitive sentence articulates. But his conception of causality hovers between a genuinely abstractive concept, and a sort of vitalist metaphor for natural operations, for "the actual and entangled lines of force" which "pulse through things" (p.12). The more emotional and programmatic side of his idea of causation is centred on the verb, and we can see in the quotation above what obfuscation this leads him to. The sentence, he says,

"consists of three necessary words". These words are sufficient because they entirely fulfil what is the only proper office of language: reflection of the natural world under its most fundamental aspect, cause and effect. Thus the "act", process, causality, starts with the initiating "agent or subject", and this is denoted in the sentence; it concludes with the object, "the receiver of the impact", the entity to which force is transferred, and this too the sentence denotes, in the proper - concluding - part of the sequence. In between stands the verb, "embodying the very stroke of the act" - a formulation which asserts the adequacy of the verbal form to encompass and express vital function, its "very stroke". But as we have seen earlier, the verb "pounds" is a purely abstract notion without the limiting, defining terms of agent and object. In the real occurrence agent and act are inseparable, but the verbal representation of the real occurrence gives only a conceptual diagram of the relations involved. In doing so it separates out elements which are integrated in the real occasion. Consequently it is quite inappropriate to speak of the verb embodying the existential immediacy, the "very stroke" of an act: in itself it is an empty abstraction, the generalized idea of pounding exerted on no particular material and issuing from no particular agent.

The question of the status of causality in Fenollosa's scheme arises again as we continue, this time centring around the word "form". He writes: "The form of the Chinese transitive sentence, and of the English (omitting particles), exactly corresponds to this universal form of action in nature." The "form of action in nature" is causal sequence and in this context, where it corresponds to the "form", or syntactic and logical structure, of the sentence, causality is presumably

conceived of in rigorous and abstractive terms. But the next sentence casts doubt on this assumption: the correspondence of linguistic and natural structure "brings language close to things". If, as has been assumed, Fenollosa has been discussing structural correspondence, surely this is an odd locution, for the recognition of correspondence would rather bring us closer to the sense of things than to their italicized actuality. If this is, indeed, what Fenollosa means by "things" - objects as given immediately to sense - then we must give far less weight than we have done to the carry-over of the term "form" from language to nature, discussed above: perhaps the term was used loosely. If so, then the "form of action in nature" is to be conceived of as vital process, scientifically observable - not logical structure. Such doubts arise because of his inconsistent and ill-defined use of key terms. Here the sense of the passage depends on which term one decides is used the more loosely: "form" or "things".

To clarify this matter: Either a) Fenollosa conceives language (the transitive sentence) to be structurally related to nature as an articulation of its causal "form"; or b) language, in the quintessential form of the transitive sentence, mirrors in its thrust of verbal energy from agent to object the thrusting vitality animating the natural world. In a) cause-and-effect appears as a logical abstraction; in b) it is simply a loose way of referring to the fact that events in nature are successive.

Fenollosa now passes on to consider a possible obstacle to his theory of the correspondence between language and reality. The inflected languages appear to present such an obstacle: they are certainly languages,



and they follow a structural sequence distinct from that of the uninflected. But if language is directly generated by nature, and answers to its structure, how can generic differences between language families arise, some of which considerably distance the language in question from its supposed progenetrix? He doesn't actually address himself to this question (which raises large questions as to the methodological propriety of condemning any language in the light of one's own polemical preferences) but refers to his preferred models' dependence upon word order. They distinguish parts of speech, not by the use of "little tags and word-endings", but solely by word order, "and this order would be no sufficient indication, were it not the natural order - that is, the order of cause and effect". This is as much as to say that, properly used, language always expresses cause-and effect. Patently untrue if cause-and-effect is conceived of as in a) above, it is true in regard to position b) only if we grant Fenollosa his use of the terms in question - in which case cause-and-effect means any sort of temporal sequence. "Farmer pounds rice" is "the natural order" of words not because it articulates cause-and-effect properly speaking (which it doesn't), nor because it represents in the sequentiality of its verbal elements the temporal sequence of the activity denoted (which it doesn't); what then is its relation to the objective world grants such a sentence its privileged status? There is no epistemological basis for Fenollosa's advocacy; rather it derives from his intuitive sense of an analogy holding between the directness of a stripped transitive syntax and the un-deviating passage of natural process. The consequent theory goes on to attempt to establish identity between the two.

The argument moves on. It is true, says Fenollosa, that even in English there are "intransitive and passive forms" which appear to

violate the analysis of language given here. "Grammarians and logicians" notwithstanding, however, Chinese confirms what one had suspected regarding this question: that the transitive forms are primordial, the intransitive and passive being the products of "alteration, or modification", a wearing away process (a formulation which glances at the problem of the existence of the inflected languages noticed above). This transformation is still going on in Chinese.

p.14 The intransitive form, he says, depicts states rather than acts but outside of grammar the term "state" is unscientific, invalid; just so its depiction in language involves offering an incomplete sentence as a complete one, as when we say "'He runs (a race)'", "'The sky reddens (itself)'", "'We breathe (air)'". In all these cases the linguistically consummating object has been left out. These "weak and incomplete sentences . . . suspend the picture and lead us to think of some verbs as denoting states rather than acts". (We can see here the motion-picture analogy - "suspend the picture" - surfacing again.) Common sense tells us that such an intransitive construction as "the wall shines" omits the cardinal fact that it shines for our eyes, "actively reflects light" to them. Thus, Fenollosa's argument implies, the infinitive doesn't achieve a valid hypostatization of some given fact, but artificially truncates an expression of experience and is understood only in so far as the reader makes good that truncation.

However, Chinese verbs "are all transitive or intransitive at pleasure". Indeed, as regards language generally, "there is no such thing as a naturally intransitive verb". He goes on: "That the object is not in it itself passive, but contributes some positive force of its own to the action, is in harmony both with scientific law and with ordinary experience." But the passivity of the object would seem to be guaranteed in Fenollosa's scheme, where it figures as a mere limiting term.

And Chinese shows us too that negation is a development from the active and affirmative elements of language. This is crucial to Fenollosa's argument because the existence of negation would seem to support a subjectivist conception of language: there is nothing in nature (the subjectivist argument would run) to parallel such an operation, therefore language must spring from subjectivity; "we can assert a negation, though nature can not". Here again, however, Fenollosa presents the method of science as sound, set against that of the logician. Apparent negation or disruption in the natural world motivates other, positive forces within the larger matrix. "It requires great effort to annihilate" he writes, and goes on: "Therefore we should suspect that . . ."; but this, the argument from nature, is no argument at all, as the position concerns a particular language-function, negation, which (Fenollosa concedes) has no counterpart in nature. Having apparently recognized the force of this argument (" . . . would seem to corroborate . . .") he finds a point of egress from it in the assertion that apparently negatory processes in nature in fact "bring into play other positive forces". But what bearing has this on language? It simply confirms the point that nature doesn't negate but man does. The subsequent analogy struck up between nature's apparent negations and linguistic ones (which aims to prove that the latter, too, are only apparent) establishes nothing because the argument is by analogy. There is no necessary connection established here between the two realms, but the absoluteness of such a connection is assumed. On such a basis, he argues, "we should suspect that", if we went back far enough into etymology, we should find "negative particles" were "sprung from transitive verbs". Unfortunately this morphology p.15 is no longer discoverable in the Aryan languages, "the clue has been lost; but in Chinese we can still watch positive verbal conceptions passing over into so-called negatives". One can see here a sort of linguistic

universalism at work: it doesn't occur to him that Chinese may operate according to laws different from those of the Aryan languages. But this isn't the universalism of the Rationalists - of the Port Royal grammarians, for example. This essential correspondence of apparently disjunct linguistic forms is grounded on the common nature all such forms reflect or mirror, not on the universality of certain rational structures, the universality of mind.

The infinitive, continues Fenollosa, extends the abstractive process noted above in the movement of language from transitive to intransitive verbs. With this final stage the living, "colored" verb, representing a concrete action in the tangible world and generalized into a state by the omission of its object (i.e. of a part of reality), reaches its furthest attenuation, "the abstractest state of all, namely bare existence". But the "pure copula" is a linguistic fiction, there is "no such original conception". It cannot be traced to the agency of nature. "'Is' comes from the Aryan root as, to breathe. 'Be' is from bhu, to grow."

Chinese preserves and exemplifies these connections of language with its animating matrix in nature. In translating from its verse, we should p.16 eschew "adjectives, nouns and intransitive forms wherever we can, . . . seeking instead strong and individual verbs". Owing to "the likeness of form", translation from Chinese into English is "exceptionally easy". With the omission of particles "a literal word-for-word translation" will often be both intelligible and poetically strong. "Here, however, one must follow closely what is said, not merely what is abstractly meant." (This refers to translation by etymologizing.)

Fenollosa now returns from the Chinese sentence to "the individual written word", and asks if there is in language the noun, the adjective, the verb "by nature". Is this a natural classification or a conventional distortion? Analysis of the Aryan languages suggests that such attributions are the work of grammarians only, intent on confusing "the simple poetic outlook on life. All nations have written their strongest and most vivid literature before they invented a grammar." The etymology of Aryan languages "points back to roots which are the equivalents of simple Sanskrit verbs". More than this, and conclusive, there is no grammar in nature. It would be absurd to tell a man he was a noun, "a dead thing rather than a bundle of functions!". The verbal counter standing for an individual in fact contradicts the mode of his existence, which consists in activity. The notion "noun" exists only outside the context of living language - that is Fenollosa's essential point; the so-called part of speech "is only what it does". When, as often, one part of speech reproduces the supposed function of another, this points back to an original unity, adumbrated in that correspondence between Aryan roots and "simple Sanskrit verbs".

p.17 We have forgotten, says Fenollosa, the original use and beauty of various function in language, which doesn't correspond to the classifications of grammar but to the fluid and vital differentiations of "the inner heat of thought, a heat which melts down the parts of speech to recast them at will". Chinese allows us to see - what must once have occurred in our own language - the progressive, branching division of language into parts of speech which, in this case, and without the unwelcome attentions of the grammarians, remain vital, "growing up, budding forth one from another". The Chinese words "are alive and plastic" because, as in nature, "thing and action are not formally separated": the nominal and verbal functions run together.

Fenollosa goes on to a further "digression concerning parts of speech" (p.21) which we may safely bypass.

p.21 On page 21 there occurs an important progression in the argument. So far the analysis has concerned itself with the relation of language to the natural world and to relationships tangible for sense; it has limited itself to "seen" actions. In this regard Chinese provides "vivid shorthand pictures of actions and processes in nature". But "Chinese would be a poor language, and Chinese poetry but a narrow art, could they not go on to represent also what is unseen". It may seem paradoxical, Fenollosa acknowledges, this passing over from pictorial to intellectual representation by means of "mere picture writing". The "ordinary Western mind", cumbered with the paraphernalia of "logical categories", largely condemns the faculty of immediate intuition ("direct imagination"); but that faculty passes from the seen to the unseen by a means "which all ancient races employed. This process is metaphor, the use of material images to suggest immaterial relations."

Language, he urges, reposes upon and is constituted by metaphor. The most seemingly abstract terms reveal through their etymology some concrete and vivid basis in nature and "direct action". Such "primitive metaphors" are not expressions of "arbitrary subjective processes". They reproduce actual forces and relations in the objective world. Such relations "are more real and more important than the things which they relate". For example, their implicit presence within the acorn guarantees the "branch-angles" of decades later. Parallel forces serve and shape the most diverse active phenomena; "a nerve, a wire, a roadway, and a clearing-house are only varying channels which communication

forces for itself. This is more than analogy, it is identity of structure." (my italics) This wealth "of homologies, sympathies, and identities" furnishes human expression with an answering abundance; if it hadn't existed, then "thought would have been starved and language chained to the obvious". For Fenollosa supposes that language cannot surpass the world it mirrors; when it departs from nature, it strays into arid p.23 perversions. The "major truth of the unseen" is not a realm of universals but a ramifying web of natural relationships, vast "harmonies . . . , vibrations, cohesions and . . . affinities" (p.22). Thus the movement of Fenollosa's argument from the "seen" to the "unseen" doesn't alter the fact of his naturalism: it simply confirms that that naturalism is 'organic' in temper. Nature, in this wider sphere of action, remains absolutely determinative upon language: "The wealth of European speech grew, following slowly the intricate maze of nature's suggestions and affinities."

Metaphor, then, is "the revealer of nature": that is to say, Fenollosa believes that it is through metaphor that the complex of relations which, properly speaking, constitutes nature gets expressed. In this way, he maintains, language is closely allied to myth, for both interpret the "obscure" through the "known". Poetry deals with the "beauty and freedom of the observed world", with "the concrete of nature", not with "the general and the abstract" nor with, at another extreme, "rows of separate 'particulars'". The "chief device" of poetry is metaphor, which "is at once the substance of nature and of language"; consequently, p.24 "poetry, language and the care of myth grew up together". It is at this point that Fenollosa actually identifies metaphor with the processes of nature; the Chinese written language "has . . . absorbed the poetic substance of nature and built with it a second work of metaphor". We

have seen him maintain that the relationship between, say, a nerve and a roadway is substantial, not analogical: both are varying expressions of a common essence, communication; they are "only varying channels which communication forces for itself" (p.22). It isn't then the human mind which sees the possibility of a relationship between two such phenomena and subsequently expresses it in terms of a metaphor, but nature embodies the "metaphor" (a name we give to such embodiments) as actual relation; and it is only because of this prior fact of substantive relation - this natural metaphor - that metaphorical expression in language is possible. This must be so because, as we saw, the proper office of language is reflection, and it originates only perversions.

Fenollosa believes the "substance of nature" to be, itself, "poetic"; and were this not so then on Fenollosan principles we should have been powerless to express ourselves in art: art would not have been possible. The Chinese written language, drawing directly on this fact, has built "a second work of metaphor". In their primordial phase all languages have done this, but Chinese, owing to its "pictorial visibility", has "been able to retain its original creative poetry with far more vigor and vividness than any phonetic tongue". The original metaphor thus visible on the face of the written character penetrates "to the heart of nature"; "it retains the primitive sap, it is not cut and dried like a walking stick".

All languages were originally built out of the "accumulations of metaphor" which nature provides, but later a narrow criterion of utility demanded that words have their living associations curtailed, that they be filed down to provide a cutting edge. The dictionary, says Fenollosa, presents words to us in this condition.



Scholars and poets alone, he continues, concern themselves with re-constituting the original fulness of meaning; but they have to struggle against the very nature of phonetic script which, as it doesn't figure p.25 its own etymology, doesn't "bear its metaphor on its face", easily loses touch in our consciousness with "the embryonic stages of its growth". With time the phonetic sign grows ever more impoverished. This cannot happen to the Chinese written character; indeed, Fenollosa maintains, time and usage tend to enrich it.

There now occurs a sudden transition in the argument. Having dealt with the "seen" and the "unseen", it narrows its focus to treat of a particular way in which men have systematized the latter. The subject is scholastic logic.

Fenollosa begins by comparing the scholastic conception of thought p.26 to the idea of a brickyard, wherein thought "is baked into little hard units or concepts". Such concepts are then subjected to classification and grouped accordingly, as bricks are piled according to size; each concept has attached to it its extrinsic word, its label. In use, the concepts required are picked out according to their labels and set together to form propositions "by the use either of white mortar for the positive copula 'is', or of black mortar for the negative copula 'is not'". Because of the essentially mechanical and manipulative nature of such sentence construction we may, without violating any of its rules, come up with "such admirable propositions as 'A ring-tailed baboon is not a constitutional assembly'".

In reply, we can say that this has force as criticism of natural language only if we leave the notion of context out of account. The

baboon and the assembly are brought together out of far-removed contexts (universes of discourse), within each of which propositions regarding such terms have meaning. The copula "is", directly attacked here, only appears to be an engine of indiscriminate apposition because the notion of context has been ignored. This doesn't alter the fact that "is" will - if only grammatically - associate anything, but it turns its force: Fenollosa's example thus appears not as an exhibition of the failings of the copula, but as an example of mixed and incompatible contexts, arbitrarily associated. The fact that a correct grammatical form embalms this hybrid is methodologically trivial: no one doubts that grammar can be emptied of content and remain narrowly - artificially - 'correct'. The fact remains that it is the ability of language to bring together apparently discrete realms which makes it so powerful an hermeneutic instrument. It is in fact Fenollosa's epistemology - with its reliance on the operations of nature - which chains "language . . . to the obvious" (p.22), rendering it, not exploratory, but weakly mimetic.

He continues. Logic takes, say, "a row of cherry trees", and abstracts from each in turn "a certain common lump of qualities" expressible as the noun "cherry", "cherry-ness". If this term is then associated with others - such as "rose, sunset, iron-rust, flamingo" - all may be subsumed under a concept of higher attenuation such as "red", "redness". We have thus a pyramidal structure each ascending step of which involves a greater degree of abstraction and, consequently, of unreality, "dilutation", "mediocrity". The apex of such a structure is the wholly empty and meaningless label, "being". At its base, disregarded, as it were "stunned", "lie things".

for these are naturally the names of classes". Its characteristic verbal element is the denatured "quasi-verb 'is'. All other verbs can be transformed into participles and gerunds."

"The sheer loss and weakness of this method are apparent and flagrant. . . . It has no way of bringing together any two concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other and in the same pyramid." We can approach a critique of this assertion by returning to an earlier point in Fenollosa's argument against "European logic" (p.25). We have noticed the pyramidal structure he attributes to scholastic abstraction. The fundamental heresy involved in this is that "at the base of the pyramid lie things, but stunned, as it were. They can never know themselves for things until they pass up and down among the layers of the pyramids." (p.26) But isn't it apparent that logic deals with a great deal more than "things", even as refined to a "redness"; with concepts which haven't been drawn out of anything material, with "certain modes of knowledge" which, as Kant put it, "leave the field of all possible experiences and have the appearance of extending the scope of our judgments beyond all limits of experience, and this by means of concepts to which no corresponding object can ever be given in experience"?(1) Whether or not Fenollosa conceded the validity of such concepts, he was quite wrong to expound logic as if it took no account of them. Similarly, he distorts logic when he writes of "things" passing only "up and down among the layers of the pyramids". There is also an indigenous lateral commerce within the "pyramid". The vehicle of the commerce is syntax and, more generally, the associative, exploratory aspects of language, just as that of the vertical steps was categorical logic. To characterize

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(1) Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd edn., 1933, p.173.

the abstract realm of logic, he has left out the language. With concepts locked ineluctably within an ascending and descending scale of their own attenuation, Fenollosa can afford to assert that such logic "has no way of bringing together any two concepts which do not happen to stand one under the other and in the same pyramid". This is plainly untrue: the means here denied is, in fact, language, as we have seen; but the assertion becomes necessary, for the safety of the argument, when one considers that the pyramid's columns, or sections from the columns, are variously associated by the "unmotivated"(1) instrument of syntax; and that it is that same syntax, albeit in skeletal or primitive form, which articulates "Farmer pounds rice". Fenollosa's rhetorically-motivated omissions all have the effect of decisively separating the discursive and the poetic idioms, by denying them a common articulating device. The omissions and denial are necessary in order to obscure the unity of the discursive, and the intensive or poetic, at this level of articulation.

Such a system of logic, Fenollosa concludes, is wholly static, it cannot "represent change . . . or any kind of growth". This inbuilt stasis stood in the way of evolutionary thought, which could make no progress until it destroyed the rigidities of classificatory logic. Equally, such logic could not deal with "interaction", "process", "multiplicity of function" (though as we have seen, it is the excised associative instrument of syntax which embodies "interaction"). Nerves and muscles, he goes on, exist in separate logic-columns, so there can be no commerce between them; and of course our bodies would recognize this as absurd. Science set such absurdities to rights, "fought till she got

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(1) On linguistic "motivation" see Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin, 2nd edn., 1974, pp.131-34.

at the things", attended to the bottom of the pyramid. Its language is p.28 a verbal language. As such it corresponds to the "correlated verbs", in other words to the complex of activity, which constitutes the cherry tree. In fact science is opposed to logic "in diction and in grammatical form". How this can be he doesn't specify, but the usages of science correspond to the primitive languages and to poetry. "The moment we use the copula, the moment we express subjective inclusions, poetry evaporates." Properly, poetry expresses "the interactions of things", "the motive and vital forces", the objective world as subject to the verifications of science.

There are two principles which lie at the base of language. The first may be termed the bi-polar relation between the signified (the designated image or concept) and the signifier (the word);(1) this is a relation within difference, for the terms are related by meaning - the word means this image or concept - but are disjunct in being. The second is constituted by the fact that language exists only within the speech community and by convention. The first principle is that which characterizes the relation of language to our conception of the objective world; the second characterizes its mode of existence, the cardinal fact that meaning exists only in communication, potential or actual.

There are two strands to Fenollosa's conception of language, and they parallel this fundamental division. He gives a great deal of

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(1) See Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin, **2nd** edn., 1974, p.67.

attention to the relation of sign and signified, but as we have seen he views their relation as one of absolute dependence, in which the sign must cleave to its designated object or be judged invalid. He doesn't conceive of a social context generating and sustaining language, but he presents another large and unifying concept, a concept which lies behind and fortifies his separate formulations: it is the idea of its essentially metaphorical nature. Language, he believes, is characterized in its essence by a tendency to bring together, and hence relate, diverse and apparently heterogeneous entities. Such is his naturalism, however, that, as from Emerson and Hegel he has imbibed the notion of the primacy of metaphor in language, he must connect it - if he is not to validate subjectivity - with "metaphorical" processes in nature, and make these latter prior. Thus he says that language is capable of relating entities only because nature so relates them, with the obvious corollary that it is improper to relate entities not so related in nature, and that any such unbacked, "subjective" relation is vicious. In exactly the same way, and for the same reasons, Fenollosa makes the "syntax" of nature (lightning passing between two terms, cloud and earth) the progenitor of syntax proper.

A number of anomalies arise in regard to this position of Fenollosa's. For example, his ideographic ideal assumes that each term in language stands uniquely for its particular object, so that the transitive sentence "Farmer pounds rice" stands in a quasi-pictographic relation to the event designated, representing and cleaving faithfully to the objective process. The simple transitive sentence in English is thus elevated to the privileged epistemological status of the three Chinese characters. We may add that in the English sentence the two

nouns are, indeed, unambiguous, but that the verb may, in other contexts, refer to currency, weight, or the rhythm of a policeman's beat. Further, linguistic ambiguity is a necessary prerequisite of meaning, as language, a limited set, must stand for an infinity of objects and relations. Some media picture reality: for instance, representative portraiture, whatever its purely formal qualities (in so far as these may be separated out), bears a directly apprehensible relation to its subject matter. But language bears a mediate relation to reality and doesn't directly picture the world. Fenollosa's representational ideal - perhaps understandably in an art historian - is that of picturing, and, as he takes Chinese to be an ideographic language with prominent pictographic elements, it receives his advocacy. But the unique and unambiguous relation of single ideograph to single object which he imputes to Chinese isn't applicable to a phonetic language even in the minimalistic representation of "Farmer pounds rice". There is always a potential ambiguity which reveals the phonetic word as a mere counter and convention. This means that, even following Fenollosa's prescriptions, English cannot aspire to the condition of his Chinese Ursprache.

Fenollosa then, in placing the sign in a condition of absolute dependence upon the signified, imputes to it a quasi-pictographic status which is undercut by the actual, manifold ambiguity of phonetic languages. In relating this matter of sign and signified to what we have said is the other half of the language question, that of the language community, we may say that, while even at its simplest the linguistic situation comprizes sign and signified, these two most basic elements each implicate their own background. In the case of the sign, its existence presupposes communicability, some other for whom the meaning

is; in the case of the signified, the thing meant, there is presupposed a universe of discourse within which that meaning has its being, and without which it could not exist. This dual background is left out of account by Fenollosa, who, though he treats of the meaning relation at its most basic, even then does not treat of it adequately, as the simplest meaning relation implicates both the universe of discourse and the speech community. Without such a context the notion of meaning collapses. We cannot conceive of a single isolated word unsupported by the universe of discourse - not as we can conceive of a photograph in a world in which all other photographs have been destroyed - because the single word is a particular sound or, written, a particular mark bearing no relation to anything. The larger context of usage gives it significance.

In Fenollosa's scheme, language can only mean in so far as it reproduces the external world. This is its sole sanctioning relationship. How then, in this perspective, does the poet using a phonetic script come to write his poems? He first possesses his subject intuitively, wordlessly, by empathy with, for example, a natural process (say a tree coming into leaf), and then, in an effort to reproduce that intuition, renders it in terms of an arbitrary and conventional script, bearing no relation to his original impulse. Language must be remade to encompass intuition. Intuition is the matrix of impulse, deriving from nature, from which a rectified language must effloresce. Such a poetic morphology, which we have seen Pound embrace, follows from Fenollosa's principles, according to which the intuitive apprehension of nature constitutes experience - experience being a primal intuition upon which language artificially and misleadingly supervenes.



There is more than a purely philosophical implication to the question, "does language create the world of meanings, or does it find a world of pre-linguistic meanings which it embodies or expresses?"(1) The actual form of language, its concrete presence, will be affected by one's answer to such a question. Language which strives to embody and express "pre-linguistic meanings" is likely to be regarded as a more or less inadequate instrument, in need of overhauling; whereas language which is regarded as the creator and guarantor of meaning will be, not necessarily less restless and 'experimental' than the first kind, but these things conceived of as operative within the language-firmament, utilizing resources inherent in the medium. Fenollosa, and Pound, are of course of the former persuasion, and we shall see in the succeeding chapters, in Pound's work, the consequences for poetic practice of such a conviction.

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(1) Wilbur Marshall Urban, Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism, 1939, p.340.

ADAMIC NAMING1. Pound and the Lingua Adamica

Pound's poetics are based on a sense of the numinousness of the individual word. The poetry written out of this conviction becomes, in Herbert Schneidau's phrase, "a poetry of transubstantiation", rendering "the real presence in the symbolic medium".(1) The eucharistic metaphor here implies, of course, a transfiguring of the "symbolic medium": the real becomes incarnate in the word, and the word thereby no longer merely 'symbolizes'. Thus Canto XLIX is attuned to what Thoreau called "the language which all things and events speak without metaphor", (2) and disclaims any particular authorship ("For the seven lakes, and by no man these verses"):

Rain; empty river; a voyage,  
 Fire from frozen cloud, heavy rain in the twilight  
 Under the cabin roof was one lantern. (XLIX/244)

Things are named with the gravity of invocation. Three elements - "Rain; empty river; a voyage" - are set down barely, as if they were ideographs. Unadorned, they yet evoke a scene and a powerful sense of desolation. This transparent language is the result of many years' engagement with the "problem of the word". This is how Pound poses it:

The problem of the word cannot be exhausted in a single lifetime. It consists of at least two parts:

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(1) Herbert N. Schneidau, Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real, Baton Rouge, 1969, p.51.

(2) Henry D. Thoreau, The Variorum Walden, New York, 1962, p.105.

(1) the word of literary art which presents, defines, suggests the visual image: the word which must rise afresh in each work of art and come down with renewed light;

(2) the legal or scientific word which must, at the outset, be defined with the greatest possible precision, and never change its meaning.(1)

As regards "the legal or scientific word", Pound never ceased campaigning for clearly-defined terms: "Unless a term is left meaning one particular thing, and unless all attempt to unify different things, however small the difference, is clearly abandoned, all metaphysical thought degenerates into a soup. A soft terminology is merely an endless series of indefinite middles."(2) In the same way, "the word of literary art" must be bound to something single and determinate. As the "term", in scholastic philosophy, referred to a definite concept, so the poet's "word" discloses a particular "thing" or object: "Language is made out of concrete things. General expressions in non-concrete terms are a laziness; they are talk, not art, not creation. They are the reaction of things on the writer, not a creative act by the writer."(3) It follows that writers, whose "very medium, the very essence of [whose] work" is "the application of word to thing", (4) should present in their work "more, predominantly more, objects than statements and conclusions, which latter are purely optional, not essential, often superfluous and therefore bad".(5) Pound's definition of "the word of literary art" above would seem to confine the poet to descriptive writing, limited as it is to that which "presents, defines, suggests the visual image"; but although this isn't an early formulation, its provenance is extended

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(1) SP, p.291 (A Visiting Card, first published in Italian as Carta da Visita and published in Rome, 1942).

(2) LE, p.185 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(3) L, p.91 (Harriet Monroe, 1915).

(4) LE, p.21 ('How to Read', New York Herald, 1929).

(5) L, p.142 (Iris Barry, 1916).

by Pound's practice, where the utility-words "thing" and "object", to which the rectified "word" defers, can be seen to include in their scope entities we might call in another context 'abstract': the name of a goddess (Artemis), a theological term ("atasal" (LXXVI/458)), an economic concept (usury); but which are, for Pound, thingly: potent and actual in the world.

Clearly the "word", considered as the vehicle of immanence and sacred as such, was of crucial importance to Pound. Its sacramental coming down "with renewed light" is the business of the poet to achieve in every generation, but, as always where the paradisaical is concerned in Pound's work, the endeavour is under threat; "putrefaction" threatens the "word": "The power of putrefaction would destroy all intrinsic beauty. Whether this power is borne by certain carriers, or by certain others, remains to be determined. It is spread like the bacilli of typhus or bubonic plague, carried by rats wholly unconscious of their role."(1) The state of language heritable in 1910 demanded reform: "The poetical reform between 1910 and 1920 coincided with the scrutiny of the word, the cleaning-up of syntax."(2) And vocabulary, the lexicon, was the vital area, not syntax: "As to plain words: I wonder if it isn't part of a writer's duty to clean them. A beastly writer can and often does defile his whole vocabulary, without least violence to correct syntax."(3) Reform was imperative because "with the falsification of the word everything else is betrayed".(4) Renovation involves "scrutiny of the word", as seen above, but also, more polemically, "castigation":

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(1) SP, p.287 (A Visiting Card, first published in Italian as Carta da Visita and published in Rome, 1942).

(2) Ibid., p.291 (A Visiting Card).

(3) L, p.351 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

(4) SP, p.277 (A Visiting Card).

"The befouling of terminology should be put an end to. It is a time for clear definition of terms. Immediately, of economic terms, but ultimately of all terms. It is not a revolution of the word but a castigation of the word. And that castigation must precede any reform."(1) Pound's passion and virulence as a reformer can only be fully understood when this concern for language, the clear term, "the word which must rise afresh in each work of art", is fully taken into account; for the gravest issues may hang by it: "Italy went to rot, destroyed by rhetoric, destroyed by the periodic sentence and by the flowing paragraph, as the Roman Empire had been destroyed before her. For when words cease to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish. Rome went because it was no longer the fashion to hit the nail on the head. They desired orators."(2) The breaking of the lingua adamica may threaten empires by handing language over to social man and the urbanities of syntax. Government may atrophy with the fission of word from thing, and its association with others in socially-determined linguistic structures, suasive arrangements, inevitably cozening and false.

There is no room in Pound's scheme for the conception of language as a body of shared symbols, and of linguistic value as a precipitate of usage and convention. In this he follows Fenollosa. Of course he can never really do without our agreement that so-and-so means such-and-such, but he wants a framework that compromises this property of language, a methodology that exalts the processes of nature, from which, and in cooperation with which, language springs, as against the more

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(1) SP, p.132 ('National Culture: A Manifesto 1938'; first published Impact, 1960).

(2) GB, pp.113-14.

complex and conditional structures of social discourse. His convictions rest with the Adamic, rather than the social or syntactic, logos; with the faculty of unfallen and adequate naming rather than with the intellect's ordering of those names. He would agree with Heidegger that "the intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriative interpretation of it".(1) The noun is its object. The verb is the action it depicts. Nature is a Book, and may be read. But abstractions have no such backing; they derive from "pure subjectivity", which Fenollosa glossed as "a little private juggling between our right and left hands".(2) It follows that:

A narrative is all right so long as the narrator sticks to words as simple as dog, horse, and sunset.

His communication ceases almost entirely when he writes down 'good', 'evil' and 'proper'.(3)

The writer should "go in fear of abstractions".(4) "Language", Pound tells us (but he really means the proper kind of language), "is made out of concrete things."(5) A regard in his conversation for "concrete things" earns Ford Pound's vote over Yeats:

and for all that old Ford's conversation was better,  
consisting in res non verba,  
despite William's anecdotes, in that Fordie  
never dented an idea for a phrase's sake (LXXXII/525)

It follows that in a good style, prose or verse, "there must be more, predominantly more, objects than statements and conclusions, which latter are purely optional, not essential, often superfluous and

(1) Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson, New York and Evanston, 1962, p.203.

(2) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWCh, p.11.

(3) GK, p.48.

(4) Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.131 ('A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste', Poetry, 1913).

(5) L, p.91 (Harriet Monroe, 1915).

therefore bad".(1) A writer vulnerable to the Siren-voice of eloquence detaches himself from the truth, which is the actual, and flounders into the untruth of rhetoric.

It is the business of the writer to respond to the external world rather than shape it; process must determine discourse, not the other way around. The received structure of language - corrupt as it is - doesn't coincide with the structure of reality, and the writer must shape it towards the condition of nature. Art strains after spontaneous verity, expression of which "is almost a barrier to literary success".(2) But:

I mean or imply that certain truth exists. Certain colours exist in nature though great painters have striven vainly, and though the colour film is not yet perfected. Truth is not untrue'd by reason of our failing to fix it on paper. Certain objects are communicable to a man or woman only 'with proper lighting', they are perceptible in our own minds only with proper 'lighting', fitfully and by instants.(3)

This "truth" is beyond the grasp of conventional syntax because that syntax is a subjective instrument expressing ideal relationships: in writing "John kills Jack" we falsify, because we render successive, the simultaneity of the real occasion. Though that simple transitive sentence employs a very rudimentary syntax we can see that it 'falsifies' the action it proposes to describe. Any syntactic structure will do this; it will neglect the quiddity of an action so as to isolate and express its abstract modus. The transitive sentence here (John kills Jack) performs a conceptual abstraction and proposes - though it doesn't embody - the sequence cause-and-effect. It obliterates the actual

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(1) L, p.142 (Iris Barry, 1916).

(2) GK, p.292.

(3) Ibid., p.295.

simultaneity of the action, replacing it with abstract articulation. "John" and "Jack" are proper nouns, "kills" the verbal unit associating them in a simple proposition. The verbal operation is 'subjective' or 'ideal' because it finds no echo or warrant in the real world, where blows land intransitively. Hence Pound's profound distrust of the ordinariness of language. He asks a question in the course of the Guide to Kulchur which, by its very casualness, reveals the depth of this distrust: "Even if results" of adventurous research, he writes, "were wrong, or vague, or contained, like all other verbal manifestations, a component of error".(1 - my italics) The fact of this distrust is one way of accounting for his stringency of literary judgement, his search for the absolute, the consummate, in other men's writing, for examples of "absolute rhythm".(2) It is interesting to compare Pound's with a similarly anathematizing stringency - that of Yvor Winters. Winters is exacting wholly by reference to a verbal ideal; but in Pound's case the verbal realm is itself accountable to the prior objective realm and the ideal is, ultimately, non-verbal; it exists as the "arcanum"(3) Honegger is congratulated upon penetrating: "he has sent his imagination up . . . into the high thin air over the breathable air and earned at least more gratitudes than mine in the process".(4)

This being so, there is a proportionate stress, in Pound's writings, on the individual word and on the lexicon, at the expense of those words' due sequence and arrangement. Hence his emphasis on terminology. A writer's vocabulary is of greater moment than the quality of his syntax. Syntax can exist unchanged as a sort of frozen armature, holding

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(1) GK, p.216.

(2) LE, p.9 ('Credo', Poetry and Drama, 1912).

(3) GK, p.292.

(4) M, p.405 ('Mostly Quartets', The Listener, 1936).



together a corrupt vocabulary, single debased words: "As to plain words: I wonder if it isn't part of a writer's duty to clean them. A beastly writer can and often does defile his whole vocabulary, without least violence to correct syntax."(1) And this intentness on the atoms of discourse is in marked contrast to the lack of definition Pound allows to blur his articulating instrument, the ideogrammic method. Susanne Langer puts the orthodox view of the relations holding between these two poles of language, and their complementary functions: "One may say that the elements of propositions are named by words, but propositions themselves are articulated by sentences."(2) Pound's theory makes elaborate provision for naming, but leaves articulation vague. This relative stress is in accord with his "greater trust in rough speech than in eloquence", (3) his belief that "an imperfect broken statement if uttered in sincerity often tells more to the auditor than the most meticulous caution of utterance could".(4) It follows that "abrupt and disordered syntax can be at times very honest, and an elaborately constructed sentence can be at times merely an elaborate camouflage".(5) For while a complex syntax - as in Henry James - expresses the social, the gregarious, the urbane, and deals in wholly human convolutions, the enthusiast for "rough speech" and "broken statement" is anxious to trace by those means a pattern in the external world, process objectively demonstrable. Like the aphorist he resembles so much in pungency of formulation, he attempts "to establish axes of reference".(6) And this looser correlation of statement, by its avoidance of the explicit or cut-and-dried syntactic patterns a more orthodox discourse fosters, helps to keep words and their structures more plastic, more responsive to the observed world. Francis Bacon saw

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(1) L, p.351 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

(2) Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from 'Philosophy in a New Key', 1953, p.30.

(3) GK, p.181.

(4) Ibid., p.129.

(5) ABCR, p.34.

(6) GK, p.195.

the advantages of this: "knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations . . . is in growth; but when it ~~once~~ is comprehended in exact methods, it may perchance be further polished and illustrate, and acomodated for use and practice; but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance."(1) For the writer's responsibility isn't turned in upon himself, his sensations and impressions; it is an obligation towards the external res:

Do not move  
 Let the wind speak  
     that is paradise. (CXX/803) (2)

This reference, achieved by the successful poem, returns it to external process, to the realm which stands behind and validates its formulations. There is then, overall, a cyclical movement to Pound's poetic, from the pre-existent process out there in the world, through the creative morphology which objectivity instigates, to the achieved artefact gazing back, reaffirmingly, at the matrix from which it emerged. In regard to each stage of this process we can note the same care for the originating matrix which we stressed in connection with Pound's creative morphology. The initial impulse is a faithful, though not merely mimetic, registration of the objective realm by the creative mind; the growth of that impulse into form is a careful fostering of registration into explicitness; and the achieved form mirrors in its shape the lines of force, the pattern of process, in the mothering subject matter. In addition, the medium of that form, language, has been so managed by the poet that it does not violate its principle of dependence on the world. This vatic reverence for deeps and sources we can relate, once more, to Adrian Stokes' distinction between carving and

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(1) Francis Bacon, PW, p.59.

(2) Cantó CXX is only printed in the New Directions edition of the poem.

modelling. The poet's reverence for source, for substance, is an expression of his devotion to the feminine principle:

In the two activities [of carving and modelling] there lies a vast difference that symbolizes . . . the respective rôles of male and female. Man, in his male aspect, is the cultivator or carver of woman who, in her female aspect, moulds her products as does the earth. We see both the ultimate distinction and the necessary interaction between carving and moulding in their widest senses. The stone block is female, the plastic figures that emerge from it on Agostino's reliefs are her children, the proof of the carver's love for the stone.(1)

But the devotion isn't to language in and for itself. Language is precious in so far as it respects its progenetrix, objective reality. It should, therefore, bear a sort of "carving" relationship to reality. Its elicitations should reveal a pre-existing content, just as the sculptor's chisel reveals the shape latent in the stone. However, language doesn't come into relation with reality by itself, but through the mediation of a language-user, in this case the poet. He is the go-between through whom the primary objective realm emerges into verbal definition. The web of relationships can be schematized thus: the poet is stirred by contemplation of the objective realm; the impulse-matrix, wordless as yet, emerges in his mind; with it is associated a "pattern", a forma, which draws the originating matter into relation and significance, into the verbal realm; when fully articulated, matrix has passed over entirely into form; the substance of that form, language, thus figures as a direct and faithful articulation of a precedent reality and exists, as a medium, supported, underwritten by that reality, as it were gazing back over the mothering element like Reina's sculpted head. Thus language, the substance the poet "carves", is precious because it affirms the world (both natural and divine). This carving conception of language

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, pp.230-31.

which Pound entertained stems directly from Fenollosa, as may be verified if we turn back to the formulations of the last chapter. Behind Fenollosa stands the figure of Emerson, and behind Emerson, that of Francis Bacon. I would like now to look at these latter two figures' conception of language; it should complement and clarify those of Fenollosa and of Pound.

## 2. Emerson and Bacon

What we have called the lingua adamica meant, for Pound, an absolute correspondence between word and thing. Emerson held the same conviction. As we shall see, the idea of this relationship was grounded upon a particular conception of nature; and it is with an exposition of Emerson's doctrine of nature that we begin.

### i. Emerson and Nature

In Emerson's ontological scheme the individual and the cosmos are inseparable. He recommends "the analogy that marries Matter and Mind";(1) he asks us to "make friends with matter", an affability "which the ambitious chatter of the schools would persuade us to despise".(2) If we ask what substantial affinity will vouch for these sentiments, we can find elsewhere the assertion that "because the history of nature is characterized in his brain, therefore is he [man] the prophet and discoverer of her secrets", (3) a coincidence of essence fortunate not only for the natural philosopher or poet, but for the moralist also, as "the laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass".(4) Emerson speaks sometimes of this mutuality of man with nature in the idiom of struggle, establishing a brief accord with the "tragic compulsion to honour the facts" George Santayana acknowledged, "imposed on man by the destiny of his body, to which that of his mind is attached";(5) his note occasionally sounds with Bacon's, and Bacon's strenuousness: "And this is the very thing which I am preparing and labouring at with all my might, - to make the mind of men by help of art a match for

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.318.

(2) Ibid., p.132.

(3) Ibid., p.135.

(4) Ibid., p.317.

(5) George Santayana, The Realm of Essence, 1928, p.xii.

the nature of things."(1) Thus he picks up a common figure of Bacon's in speaking of art as "a nature passed through the alembic of man"(2) and, if he is using the figure seriously, brings to bear associations of desiccation and fierce heat upon the labour of creation. But the pervading geniality of the context calls the precision of the metaphor into question, for Emerson's purposes. The next sentence reads: "Thus in Art, does nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works". The composer Charles Ives, as thoroughgoing a disciple of Emerson's as one is likely to find (vide his 'Concord Sonata'), echoes the general tenor of Emersonian doctrine, and that same geniality, in speaking of "God's perfect balances; . . . the analogy, or, better, identity of polarity and duality in nature with that in morality".(3)

Emerson elaborates a pattern in experience to account for these correspondences; the passage occurs in his long miscellany 'Nature'. He is discussing the tendency to perceive events in metaphorical terms, so that a river will put us in mind of "the flux of all things", or a dropped stone's ripples appear "the beautiful type of all influence".(4) But these perceptions are by no means what Fenollosa called, in another context, "a little private juggling between our right and left hands";(5) they don't originate in us:

~~It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him.~~(6)

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(1) Quoted in Elizabeth Sewall, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History, 1961, pp.143-44.

(2) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.315.

(3) Charles Ives, Essays Before a Sonata and Other Writings, ed. Howard Boatwright, New York, 1964, p.15.

(4) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.316.

(5) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWrCh, p.11.

(6) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.316.

Accordingly, the human realm and the impersonal reality are inseparable: "neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man".(1) It is curious that Transcendentalism, properly described by Santayana, in his essay on 'The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy', as a "systematic subjectivism", (2) should evince such regard for the objective. In the same essay Santayana accounts for this as follows:

There was another element in Emerson, curiously combined with transcendentalism, namely, his love and respect for nature. Nature, for the transcendentalist, is precious because it is his own work, a mirror in which he looks at himself and says (like a poet relishing his own verses), 'What a genius I am! Who would have thought there was such stuff in me?' And the philosophical egotist finds in his doctrine a ready explanation of whatever beauty and commodity nature actually has. No wonder, he says to himself, that nature is sympathetic, since I made it. And such a view, one-sided and even fatuous as it may be, undoubtedly sharpens the vision of a poet and a moralist to all that is inspiring and symbolic in the natural world. Emerson was particularly ingenious and clear-sighted in feeling the spiritual uses of fellowship with the elements.(3)

This sounds plausible, and accounts for a good deal; it is, as it were, a memory of some past immersion in Emerson, generalized, and therefore falsified, by distance. To isolate all that it ignores we have only to return to the prose; to this, for example, from the essay 'Nominalist and Realist':

Nature will not be Buddhist; she resents generalizing; and insults the philosopher in every moment with a million of fresh particulars. It is all idle talking: as much as a man is a whole, so is he also a part; and it were partial not to see it. What you say in your pompous distribution only distributes you into your class and section. You have not got rid of parts by denying them, but are the more partial. You are one thing, but nature is one thing and the other thing, in the same moment. She will not remain orb'd in a thought.(4)

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.316.

(2) George Santayana, Selected Critical Writings, ed. Norman Henfrey, Vol.2, Cambridge, 1968, p.91.

(3) Ibid., p.95.

(4) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.148.

There is a sense in which the spectacle of the creation grounds the elasticity of Emerson's doctrine in a Naturalism; as the sceptic Wallace Stevens saw life, sensuous, problematic, yoked to the pathos of endeavour, against the background of the unchanging sky - "The basic slate, the universal hue"(1) - so Emerson, more optimistically, projects the personal and problematic against a vast and redemptive impersonality: "it is the magical lights of the horizon, and the blue sky for the background, which save all our works of art, which were otherwise baubles".(2) For both men Pan is "the most continent of gods", (3) and nature a proper object of secular devotion: "The aspect of nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship."(4) Indeed, so far, frequently, is Emerson from the egotistical subsumption of appearance that we are readier to call his enthusiasm, with some astonishment, a voluntary abasement or self-immolation. "Here", he exults, "we find Nature to be the circumstance which dwarfs every other circumstance, and judges like a god all men that come to her"; and "Here is sanctity which shames our religions, and reality which discredits our heroes"; and, reverting to the sky figure, "Here no history, or church, or state is interpolated on the divine sky and the immortal year."(5) I am not suggesting that Emerson was a systematic Naturalist; only that we feel this response as the lowest, and most resonant, pitch of his somewhat indeterminate gamut. The world, he tells us, "is not . . . subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is, therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind. It is a fixed point whereby we may measure our departure."(6)

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(1) From Wallace Stevens, 'Le Monocle de Mon Oncle', in The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens, New York, 1954, p.13.

(2) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.133.

(3) Ibid., p.134.

(4) Ibid., p.325.

(5) Ibid., p.132.

(6) Ibid., p.325.



If we turn now to the character and extent of this "departure", and what influence Nature may have upon it, we discover an epistemology of natural deference, a vatic susceptibility and restraint. Unity, full commerce with nature, and therefore mastery of self and circumstance, depend upon an adjustment of the spiritual vision: "The ruin or the blank, that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself."(1) We must "ask the fact for the form";(2) knowledge has its proper order and precedence, rooted in natural verity, and "art and luxury have early learned that they must work as enhancement and sequel to this original beauty".(3) Engaged in this discipline, addressing ourselves to this source, fired by this instigation, we shall taste that "true nectar, which is the ravishment of the intellect by coming nearer to the fact";(4) or, as another New Englander will tell us, "The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows".(5)

#### ii. Francis Bacon and the Book of Nature

Having granted such weight to the not-me, whether material or spiritual, the problem is always, for the thinker, how to justify his own wielding of the instrument of subjectivity, language, and how to account for the status of language as a wholly virtual power somehow mastering, parcelling-out, or manipulating actuality. The actual as Absolute or, in Bergson's lovely figure, "the gold coin for which we

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.328.

(2) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.133.

(3) Frank Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.133.

(4) Ibid., p.98.

(5) From Robert Frost, 'Mowing', in Collected Poems, 1951, p.37.

never seem to finish giving small change", (1) must be considered violated, in its rich tangibility, by any symbolic representation. This crux in feeling and expression was given great resonance, in the early years of this century, by the Cambridge school of philosophers. Taking language as an instrumental code, it proved for them distinct from, indeed incommensurate with, the primary articulations of substance and life. Their most brilliant associate, Ludwig Wittgenstein, christened this solipsistic activity "the language-game". Language was a grid through which alone, and in terms of which, the human animal could picture reality: "One thinks one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it." (2) And again: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." (3) Wittgenstein devoted himself, in the later years from which these quotations are taken, to tracing the morphology of this delusive medium, a symbolic realm wholly divorced from its referent. In acquiescing to the primacy of the medium - "all philosophy is critique of language" (4) - philosophy was edged close to the more nearly descriptive discipline of linguistics, while remaining, at least in Wittgenstein's hands, if narrowly, then still deeply, speculative. But the problem approached from another side, one impatient with the opacities of the language-medium and anxious, as a realism, to faithfully characterize actuality, yielded an opposite perspective. A.N. Whitehead, in Process and Reality, declares that "all modern philosophy hinges about the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject

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(1) Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T.E. Hulme, 1913, p.6.

(2) Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 3rd edn., Oxford, 1968, p.48.

(3) Ibid., p.48.

(4) Quoted in George Steiner, Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution, 1972, p.77.

and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal. The result always does violence to immediate experience."(1) It is significant, I think, that either theoretical polarity is the work of a mathematician-turned-philosopher. In the one case language is assimilated to something like the symbolic autonomy of mathematics; in the other, mathematics is the transparent and purely instrumental symbolism beside which language appears markedly impure. In either case an impassable breach stretches between language and its objective matrix. I want to turn now and look at an analogy which, for one empiricist, and accredited father of empirically rigorous natural philosophy - Francis Bacon - seemed to bridge this division.

Bacon, who boldly declared that "the intellect left to its own course is not to be trusted", and that its formal instrument, "the logic which is received, though very properly applied to civil business and those arts which rest in discourse and opinion, is not nearly subtle enough to deal with Nature", (2) had, nonetheless, a magnanimous, or in Elizabeth Sewell's phrase, an "Orphic" regard for language. (3) Of course the logic that he speaks of, in this case the logic of the schoolmen, isn't to be effaced; in so far as it is kept to the disputatious public or rhetorical realm it is perfectly adequate, but - and this is the essential point - it has proved worse than useless in dealing with nature, either directly as speculation, or indirectly as a methodological framework for experiment. In other words the vehicle of scholastic logic - dialectic - is given over solely to rhetorical use, and a new methodology in empirical investigation is demanded. By this light language

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(1) Quoted in The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Evanston and Chicago, 1941, p.306 (W.M. Urban: 'Whitehead's Philosophy of Language and Its Relation to His Metaphysics').

(2) Quoted in Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China. Volume 1: Introductory Orientations, Cambridge, 1954, p.200.

(3) See Elizabeth Sewell, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History, 1961, pp.53-168.

might get on with the job of what Pound called (after Cavalcanti) "natural dimostramento", "natural demonstration" (XXXVI/177). But doesn't language itself prove a barrier to this ambition? As we have seen, Whitehead was to think so. What if grammar, by its very accident, fosters the syllogistic proposition? Clearly this is what the schoolmen themselves believed, and they went on to propose a similar determination as holding between language and the natural world; they maintained, writes Lisa Jardine, "a view of language as providing a perfect map for process and change in nature". Dialectic was "seen as analysing natural relations as embodied in discourse, and manipulating language to gain insight into the natural world".(1) It was against this assimilation of process to discourse that Bacon protested. He believed that "words and phrases represent the analysis of facts which were made by our remote ancestors. Some of them are names for non-existent things or for inappropriate concepts based on bad observations and false theories. They are thus crystallized errors, all the more dangerous because we do not recognize that they embody theories at all."(2)

I take my quotation from C.D. Broad's little book on Bacon. His stress there on the philosopher as inductionist, and on the consequences for language of such a preference, undoubtedly accounts for one area of Bacon's complex outlook. A profound suspicion of received language is characteristic of any empirically oriented or pragmatic philosophy. Such a philosophy, grounding itself upon a realm substantially independent of the self and of human ordinance, is inherently iconoclastic. But the crucial divergence between Bacon and, say Whitehead is that this project doesn't lead him to despair of language. The syllogism is inapt not because it is, inevitably, worded, but because it abuses the proper being

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(1) Lisa Jardine, Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse, Cambridge, 1974, p.4.

(2) C.D. Broad, The Philosophy of Francis Bacon, Cambridge, 1926, pp.48-49.

of those words:

The syllogism consists of propositions; propositions of words; and words are the tokens and signs of notions. Now if the very notions of the mind (which are as the soul of words and the basis of the whole structure) be improperly and over-hastily abstracted from facts, vague, not sufficiently definite, faulty in short in many ways, the whole edifice tumbles.(1)

Bacon was no doctor Empirick. He wanted to unite rationalism and empiricism with an eye to formulating a genuinely inductive method for natural philosophy. Indeed he posited a teleology in nature, investigation of which fell to "metaphysics" as opposed to the more directly practical activities of the "physicist". This investigation constituted an empirical science only in so far as it attempted to determine the substantial generic forms underlying the variety of specific substance. As such it was quite distinct from, although nourished by, the purely descriptive ambitions of the empiricist more narrowly conceived. Language, to serve this end, must forsake the skeletal articulations of syllogistic logic; it must be rendered more plastic and responsive to the observed world, and more readily expressive of the novel conclusions of experimental science. Process must determine discourse. The large governing analogy within which these prescriptions were made, and from which they derived their authority, was ancient, familiar, and profound. It evolved, in George Steiner's words, from:

the Orphic belief that the grammars and creative modes of human speech have their counterpart in all nature. There is a haunting if deceptive modernity in the notion, so often celebrated by baroque poets and thinkers, that arteries and the branches of trees, the dancing motions of the microcosm and the solemn measure of the spheres, the markings on the back of the tortoise and the veined patterns on rocks are all ciphers. . . . [T]o Francis Bacon and to Giordano Bruno, life is language, and organic processes are articulate forms.(2)

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(1) Quoted in Elizabeth Sewall, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History, 1961, p.145.

(2) George Steiner, Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution, 1972, p.181.

The current of feeling Steiner here celebrates is caught up - conveniently, for our brief purpose - in a single figure, the Book of Nature, and I want to examine a handful of its occurrences in Bacon's writings. They will show us by what path Bacon skirted the marl of linguistic scepticism; how he ceded language its truth by rendering it, by analogy, directly expressive of the body of nature. An "error", he writes,

hath proceeded from too great a reverence, and a kind of adoration of the mind and understanding of man; by means whereof men have withdrawn themselves too much from the contemplation of nature and the observations of experience, and have tumbled up and down in their own reason and conceits. Upon these intellectualists . . . Heraclitus gave a just censure, saying, Men sought truth in their own little worlds, and not in the great and common world; for they disdain to spell and so by degrees to read in the volume of God's works; and contrariwise by continual meditation and agitation of wit do urge and as it were invoke their own spirits to divine and give oracles unto them, whereby they are deservedly deluded.(1)

The malady is intellectualism; its symptoms, inconsequence in the face of manifest truth, and the withering of discourse within the self. The natural orthography men pass over every day, to become apparent, demands both the rectification of our faculties and, subsequently, the fullness of our rectified attention:

We must exhort men again and again . . . to approach with humility and veneration to unroll the volume of Creation, to linger and meditate therein, and with minds washed clean from opinions to study it in purity and integrity. For this is that sound and language which went forth into all lands, and did not incur the confusion of Babel; this should men study to be perfect in, and becoming again as little children condescend to take the alphabet of it into their hands, and spare no pains to search and unravel the interpretation thereof.(2)

This figure of the Book of Nature isn't meant fancifully; Henry David Thoreau, some 250 years later, takes it very seriously: "Is it

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(1) Francis Bacon, PW, p.59.

(2) Quoted in Elizabeth Sewall, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History, 1961, pp.146-47.

not as language that all natural objects affect the poet?" he asks.(1) For these men "language and the mind's operations with it lie at the living centre of natural structures where forms also may be supposed to be".(2) And it is this notion of forms or essences that contains the key to the metaphor, the logic that renders it, for Bacon, active and demonstrable. The forms he considers, following Aristotle, efficient causes, a teleology inhering in matter; therefore he denounces Plato, who granted form an exclusively metaphysical status, bearing no active relation to phenomena. These formal properties are quite limited in number, but constitute between them the infinitely various phenomenal realm of matter. Would it, then, be altogether fanciful to liken them to the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, out of whose permutation grows the entire fabric of written language? Forms are the alphabet of Nature:

It is manifest that Plato in his opinion of Ideas, as one that had a wit of elevation situate as upon a cliff, did descry that forms were the true object of knowledge; but lost the real fruit of his opinion, by considering of forms as absolutely abstracted from matter, and not confined and determined by matter; and so turning his opinion upon Theology, wherewith all his natural philosophy is infected. But if any man shall keep a continual watchful and severe eye upon action, operation, and the use of knowledge, he may advise and take notice what are the Forms, the disclosures whereof are fruitful and important to the state of man. . . . [T]he Forms of Substances . . . (as they are now by compounding and transplating multiplied) are so perplexed, as they are not to be enquired; no more than it were either possible or to the point to seek in gross the forms of those sounds which make words, which by composition and transposition of letters are infinite. But on the other side, to enquire the form of those sounds or voices which make simple letters is easily comprehensible, and being known, induceth and manifesteth the forms of all words, which consist and are compounded of them. In the same manner to enquire the form of a lion, of an oak, of gold, nay of water, of air, is a vain pursuit: but to enquire the Forms of sense, of voluntary motion, of vegetation, of colours, of gravity and levity, of density, of tenuity, of heat, of cold, and all other natures and qualities, which like an alphabet are not many, and of which the essences (upheld by matter) of all creatures do consist; to enquire I say the true forms of these, is that part of Metaphysic which we now define of. . . . This part of Metaphysic I do not find laboured and performed; whereat I marvel not, because I hold it not possible to be invented by

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(1) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.86.

(2) Elizabeth Sewall, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History, 1961, p.147.

that course of invention which hath been used; in regard that men (which is the root of all error) have made too untimely a departure and too remote a recess from particulars.(1)

This seems to me absolutely crucial, and I have therefore cited at length. Bacon tells us that the grammar of nature is disclosed through a patient attention to particulars, and consists of a limited body of essences or qualities "upheld" by the infinitude of matter. Hence nature's variety, like that of the written language, may be resolved into a permutable corpus of "natures and qualities": to read, philology-wise, in this book requires the eye of the natural philosopher. Of course a moment's reflection will show us that the metaphor isn't water-tight: an abstract quality is, necessarily, a qualitative essence, whilst the single letter remains a purely material figuration until yoked with its fellows. But the metaphor is nonetheless important in that it hands over to thought and hence clarifies, or indeed more fully actualizes, a profoundly felt correspondence between language and the natural world. He has numbered a handful of these correspondences a little earlier, both as they knit together art with art, and as they extend across from the arts to the creation:

Is not the trope of music, to avoid or slide from the close or cadence, common with the trope of rhetoric of ~~deceiving~~ expectation? Is not the delight of the quavering upon a stop in music the same with the playing of light upon the water? . . . Are not the organs of the senses of one kind with the organs of reflexion, the eye with a glass, the ear with a cave or strait determined and bounded? Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or matters.(2)

In the consonances between arts, between the arts and nature, and within nature, we witness the palpable confirmation of that community

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(1) Francis Bacon, PW, pp.94-95.

(2) Ibid., p.91.



of process running through all realms. A theory of the abstract relations of substance in essence is confirmed, and given metaphorical lustre, by the bold evocation of a similarly reciprocal pattern running through the phenomenal world, and uniting in affinity the several human arts and sciences. Certainly Bacon saw the dangers of a narrow and exclusive empiricism, its tendency to fall into the condition of acatalepsia, or the "denial of the capacity of the mind to comprehend truth", (1) and it was against such exclusivity that he marshalled the ancient doctrine of correspondences, establishing Nature as at one with the economy of Mind. Language was assured thereby of a rational and "motivated" commerce with Nature, and the pitfalls of intellectualism and of pragmatic endeavour - Wittgenstein's solipsism or Whitehead's despair - were both avoided and rendered questionable. We shall see that Emerson's conception of language approximates Bacon's in several crucial respects.

### iii. Emerson and Language

The question of language is crucial to our sense of the relation Emerson establishes between the subject and its world. In his account this relation throves when language, rather than more or less obliquely mediating between man's world and nature's, was directly given in the quick of their contact. If we cast back far enough, language begins to show as the point of collusion between these two realms, and the token of their indivisibility: "Because of this radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts, savages, who have only what is necessary, converse in figures. As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry . . . [A]ll

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(1) Lisa Jardine, Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse, Cambridge, 1974, p.72.

spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols."(1) The 'going back' is the business of the etymologist, and the surest witness to "this radical correspondence between visible things and human thoughts" is the metaphorical brilliance of words' etymological roots: "though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolized the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry."(2)

From this flows a double consequence: firstly, that language springs from, and should point back to, nature; secondly, that any rectification of language should aim to bring it closer to its parent. The poet, therefore, is he "who reattaches things to nature and the Whole", (3) and his poems are, necessarily, "a corrupt version of some text in nature, with which they ought to be made to tally".(4) Such correspondences are possible only because of that doctrine of the equivalence of mind and its object we discussed earlier. Just as "the laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass", so "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture."(5) Language is expressive, and semantic import plausible, only because Nature itself is expressive and inherently meaningful - that is, it may be read: "It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic";(6) "Things admit of being used as symbols, because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part".(7) Clearly Emerson is

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.316.

(2) Ibid., p.97.

(3) Ibid., p.96.

(4) Ibid., p.97.

(5) Ibid., p.315.

(6) Ibid., p.315.

(7) Ibid., p.94.

tapping some ancient springs here: appearance wrought up to symbol in situ, as it were, without some transposition to a symbolic medium, smacks very much of the literalism of myth and mythic thinking. He is not being merely fanciful when he declares: "An enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch."(1) A web of correspondences, native to man, but reaching beyond him, stands surety for such audacious leaps of the mind:

It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him.(2)

Convictions such as these (along with others, more ambiguous and troubling: see pages 449-53) lie behind Pound's great chthonic reverie, Canto LXXXII. The poet, having called up the shade of Whitman, turns to invoke that bard's principle and progenitrix, mother earth:

How drawn, O GEA TERRA,  
 what draws as thou drawest  
 till one sink into thee by an arm's width  
 embracing thee. Drawest,  
 truly thou drawest.  
 Wisdom lies next thee,  
 simply, past metaphor. (LXXXII/526)

So runs the argument: the actuality of such correspondence "past metaphor". Emerson sets it down definitively here, and with a Confucian weight anticipating that of Pound:

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.316.

his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. . . . Hundreds of writers may be found in any long-civilized nation . . . who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things . . . (1)

Turning back to Pound then, we can see, in the light of the kindred doctrines of Fenollosa, Bacon and Emerson, that the apprehension of process in nature demands of the Adamic poet a parallel realization in words. This realization is as it were 'natural': language being the offspring of nature, poetic expression figures as an efflorescence on the face of nature. But man, having "made too untimely a departure and too remote a recess from particulars", has thrown up a cozening and obscuring screen compounded of rhetoric, which cuts him off from the natural world. Ideogrammic discourse, on the other hand, substitutes for such egocentricity a vatic or divinatory hearkening to natural process. It is infinitely receptive, unrolls "the volume of Creation" "with humility and veneration", "linger[s] and meditate[s] therein", and "washed clear from opinions", studies it "in purity and integrity". The morphology of such attentiveness, as it figures in the writing of poetry, we have examined earlier. We then called it essentially feminine in character, an ascription which chimes with Bacon's constant stress upon the importance of a receptive awe in the face of natural process. Proceeding thus the poet rearticulates in verbal form his loving apprehension of process. This is the raison d'être of the ideogrammic method. As we have already

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, pp.316-17.

noted, such an instrument can, like Acoetes, celebrate the emergence of form, divine or natural; it cannot accomodate rage and hysteria.

### 3. Organicism

The intellectual current which informs and underwrites Pound's notion of process is that of Organicism, though he wouldn't necessarily have been aware of, or indeed have approved, the appellation. We have already examined Organicism as it is embodied in Emerson's doctrine of Nature. what was only hinted at then - that the pattern of Pound's thinking was remarkably close to Emerson's in this respect - will emerge more fully in this section. It will also be seen that the elusive concept of process takes its place within this context, and is clarified by it. Such clarification is one aim of my exposition, and to enforce it I introduce the supplementary testaments of four other writers: Leibniz, Thoreau, A.N. Whitehead and Joseph Needham. I hope that their common witness compensates for their heterogeneity within the context of Pound's poetry. I had better make it clear from the start that I do not ascribe any particular influence upon Pound to these writers (though he had read Leibniz - as he had read Bacon - admiringly(1)): they have simply thought about the same matters as Pound, and have reached similar conclusions. My second, and secondary, aim in discussing Organicism is to prepare the ground for the introduction, in the following chapter, of a new concept: that of "totalitarianism" in art. This idea is rooted in the notion of organic process, and directly depends on the ideas to be discussed now.

To get a clear sense of the nature of Organicism, we must firmly dissociate it from the deceptively similar doctrine of Naturalism. We have

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(1) See GK, pp.74-75, p.304 and p.314.

already discussed Fenollosa's naturalistic philosophy of language, but it is apparent that the wider terms of his thinking coincide with the Organicism of Emerson. In the Chinese Written Character essay Fenollosa demonstrates the consequence for language of this stance towards experience, an issue which lies dormant in Emerson's writing, and in Bacon's; for as we have said, to accord the objective realm primacy is to throw into question the apparently subjective instrument of language. Pound's thought also exhibits this characteristic division, in which an intense regard for the natural world leads to a form of nominalism. Having dealt with the latter, I want now to balance that emphasis by underlining the broader, synthesizing aspects of Organicist thought. Naturalism also has a unitary or monistic basis, however, and to dissociate its characteristic stress from Pound's 'Monism' requires a little philosophical background.

For Greek thought the world, as a physical entity, figured as a living body, an organism, whose particular agitations issued from a vitality or soul properly and innately possessed. In addition to this soul, the world fell under the sway of mind as form, and form ordained the patterns of growth and recession followed by this ensouled substance. The status of form was variously debated as the notion passed through the pre-Socratic, Platonic, and Aristotelian cosmologies. Standing over against this scheme, its successor and adversary, was the Renaissance cosmology dating (as it were) from 1543 and Copernicus' De revolutionibus orbium coelestium. This current of thought denied to substance that animistic vitality imputed to it by the Greeks, and established the machine, and the processes of mechanism, as an alternative model for its activity. Consequently mind, as motive principle and guarantor of intelligibility, was established as the property of a transcendent God. For Greek thought

substance was vital, and vitality flowered in form. Plato supposes a life in substance, and a tendency or *nisus* in that life: substance is trying to imitate the ordained and immutable forms, though at a vegetable and imperfect level. For Descartes, on the other hand, matter is dead, is, per se, incapable of activity, and his schema demands a supervenient first mover to predicate motion. But in either case substance is rendered intelligible by being yoked to, and governed by, the abstract and transcendent. Naturalism differs profoundly from these two great cosmologies. We find in it neither the autonomous forms of Platonism, eternally ordained, towards which quotidian substance aspires and falls away, eternally imperfect; nor Aristotle's modification of that doctrine, in which form is actively implicated with substance, an efficient as well as final cause. We have, that is, neither transcendent nor immanent forms. Nor have we transcendence established absolutely outside of nature, as in the Cartesian scheme: the first mover applying himself to an elaborate but inert machine. In fact, and alternatively, we have something much closer to Spinozan Pantheism, where value, formerly the property of immaterial form or transcendent Deity, is relocated in substance, and substance, so enriched, may be termed God or Nature indifferently. Naturalism rethinks the doctrine in secular terms, so that the crux of the Pantheistic cosmology - the relation of extension and thought to one another, both conceived of as attributes of substance - is re-established, and the more uncomfortably as it is without the theistic frisson. There is substance, and there is mind: what, the Naturalist is asked, are the terms for establishing their congruence? Why should substance, in its higher reaches, entail cognition? And why should cognition, in its lower reaches, entail extension? For Spinoza this implicit dualism had its nominal coherence in the mediation of a Deity: substance and cognition



are both attributes of the Godhead, and the Godhead is coterminous with the Creation. Hence the jarring realms chime in a name, and in a gesture of piety. But Naturalism, in scotching that name and gesture, does nothing to affect the endemic dualism of the system: and the philosopher, starting from matter, is still helpless to account for the activity of mind.

As we should expect, Pound's position regarding these questions is heterodox. A man who indignantly exclaimed that "mud does not account for mind"(1) could have no truck with Naturalism; and his Emersonian regard for nature precluded any sympathy with Cartesian mechanism. He is much closer to the Greeks in feeling, if not avowedly - for he had little time for Plato, and quarrelled violently with Aristotle. But the conviction of both philosophers that the processes of nature accorded with a determining form, their recognition of the primacy of mind over mud, is close to Pound's thinking.

The aspect of nature that especially engages his attention is its foison, and man's part in calling that forth. He learned from the Confucian texts that the man who "has a further efficiency in perfecting something outside himself", whether that something is a field of corn or a poem, by that act heals the division between "outer and inner, object and subject, and thence constitutes a harmony with the seasons of earth and heaven".(2) Metaphors from agriculture recur throughout the writings of Confucius and Mencius, where they indicate man's dependence upon nature; also his part in ameliorating its fruits. A crucial passage in Pound's translation of the Chung Yung treats of this relationship, and emphasizes its absolute centrality:

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(1) GK, p.172.

(2) C, p.179.

Only the most absolute sincerity under heaven can bring the inborn talent to the full and empty the chalice of the nature.

He who can totally sweep clean the chalice of himself can carry the inborn nature of others to its fulfillment; getting to the bottom of the natures of men, one can thence understand the nature of material things, and this understanding of the nature of things can aid the transforming and nutritive powers of earth and heaven [ameliorate the quality of the grain, for example] and raise man up to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth.(1 - his insertion)

Nature for Pound then, when seen through the medium of Confucianism, has little in common with a Wordsworthian delight in its untrammelled, feral aspects. Pound has other moods, but in this context man's relation to nature is active, not contemplative, concerning itself with "transforming and nutritive powers", with the amelioration of the grain. But natural abundance is prior to man's cultivating ministry: "Work does not create wealth, it contributes to the formation of it. Nature's productivity is the root".(2) Engaged thus jointly in the creation of natural riches (a collaboration which Ricardo and Marx, and the labour theory of value, failed to envisage) man and the earth he works are one, and this unity constitutes a natural process.

This is the "organic reality"(3) which Pound accuses Aristotle of cutting man off from. His strictures have a more than Baconian vehemence: Aristotle is "master of those that cut apart, dissect and divide. Competent precursor of the card-index. But without the organic sense. I say this in the face of Aristotle's repeated emphases on experience, and of testing by life."(4) In the rabid and chaotic critique of the Nichomachian Ethics which Pound appended to the Guide to Kulchur, he charges the philosopher with solipsism, the natural consequence of a self-centred withdrawal from natural verity: "In vii. 9 he treads on

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(1) C, pp.173-75.

(2) GK, p.357.

(3) Ibid., p.339.

(4) Ibid., p.343.

thin sophism. The pitfall of all men who get entailed in their own reasoning. The element of sheer assertion slips into the argument, cut off from organic reality - the tricky 'therefore' or 'accordingly' that does NOT glue two statements together."(1) Here we see again the impugment of a formalized discourse as weakly subjective and potentially cozening. It is ideogrammic discourse, "broken statement", that cleaves to "organic reality". But Aristotle detaches object from subject, outer from inner, and he does this largely through the egocentric elaborations of his syntax. Many of Pound's remarks on Aristotle are of this Wordsworthian, "We murder to dissect" order: "Whatever these worthy highbrows may have meant, their gross weight in human history has left occidental man with a belief that Aristotle was THE typical high-brow dissecting, hyperintellectual, inhuman."(2) He was banned by the church, Pound maintains, because it "felt the menace of logic-chopping, of all this cutting up, rationalizing and dissecting of reality".(3) Pound's holistic Organicist convictions are revealed very fully here, in his emphasis on the evils inherent in the dissection of reality, for, in the words of the Chung Yung:

The celestial and earthly process can be defined in a single phrase; its actions and its creations have no duality. [The arrow has not two points].

There is no measuring its model for the creation of things.(4 - his insertion)

Nor is the divisive contagion in Greek thought confined to Aristotle: "Ideogram is essential to the exposition of certain kinds of thought. Greek philosophy was mostly a mere splitting, an impoverishment of understanding, though it ultimately led to development of particular sciences. Socrates a distinguished gas-bag in comparison with Confucius

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(1) GK, p.339.

(2) Ibid., pp.39-40.

(3) Ibid., p.45.

(4) C, p.183.

and Mencius."(1) The Chinese sages are so manifestly superior to Socrates because their disputations were directed towards right action (Pound's denial of this emphasis to the Greeks was highly tendentious, as he recognized (2)): "Rightly or wrongly we feel that Confucius offers a way of life, an Anschauung or disposition toward nature and man and a system for dealing with both."(3) And the only school among the Greeks to escape this general condemnation was that of the Porch, the Stoics, for their philosophy, says Pound, "was a system of ethics with logic and cosmology as periphery".(4) The more abstract disciplines are peripheral; ethics should be the central concern of the philosopher.

Because man plays a part in the maintainance of "the celestial and earthly process" by his proper regard for nature, and in participation with it, this question has important ethical implications. Here again we find the word "totalitarian" coming up, signifying that unity of process Aristotle stands accused of violating:

As working hypothesis say that Kung is superior to Aristotle by totalitarian instinct. His thought is never something scaled off the surface of facts. It is root volition branching out, the ethical weight is present in every phrase.

The chief justice had to think more soberly than the tutor and lecturer.(5)

Typically, the totality of Pound's concerns ramifies out from this as from many other nodes. Process unites heaven with earth, the concerns of the intelligence with nature's abundance and man's cultivation of it, mind with mud:

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(1) L, p.447 (Katue Kitasono, 1940).

(2) See page 241.

(3) GK, p.24.

(4) Ibid., p.122.

(5) Ibid., p.279.

Equity is something that springs up from the earth in harmony with earth and with heaven.

Translator's Note: The ideogram represents the sacrificial vase. Ethics are born from agriculture; the nomad gets no further than the concept of my sheep and thy sheep.(1)

And the term Pound found for that unity embracing brain-work and back-work, heaven and earth, nature and man (mind and mud, in the more starkly dichotomous phrase which, as we have seen, hints at a submerged Manichaeon ontology, a fatality of temperament which drags at Pound's desire for unity), was "process", the strong but subtle trace of their coherence. Process bound apparently disparate realms together organically, and Leibniz's great metaphor for unity, the monad, was thus organic: "I recur to mention of Leibniz because his monad was organic, quasi protoplasmic."(2) The monad is "unsquashable"(3) because it is a "living substance": "Each monad, together with a particular body, makes a living substance. Thus there is not only life everywhere, joined to members or organs, but there are also infinite degrees of it in the monads, some of them more or less dominating over others", writes Leibniz.(4) As Hugh Kenner suggests, the ideas of the great neo-Confucian philosopher Chu Hsi "may have fertilized the 'organicism' Leibniz passed down to Emerson, thus to Fenollosa and to Ezra Pound".(5) Just so The Unwobbling Pivot's evocation of "the process which unites outer and inner, object and subject, and thence constitutes a harmony with the seasons of earth and heaven" is recalled, in its passion for unity, by Leibniz's central work the Monadology:

56. Now this connection or adaptation of all created things with each, and of each with all the rest, means that each simple substance

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(1) C, p.149.

(2) GK, p.172.

(3) See ibid., p.74.

(4) G.W. Leibniz, Philosophical Writings, trans. Mary Morris, 1934, pp.22-23.

(5) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.433.

has relations which express all the others, and that consequently it is a perpetual living mirror of the universe.

57. And just as the same town, when looked at from different sides, appears quite different and is, as it were, multiplied in perspective, so also it happens that because of the infinite number of simple substances, it is as if there were as many different universes, which are however but different perspective representations of a single universe from the different points of view of each monad.

58. And this is the means of obtaining as much variety as possible, but with the greatest order possible; that is to say, it is the means of obtaining as much perfection as possible.(1)

And just as The Unwobbling Pivot concludes with a magnificent salute to the beauty and variousness of the Creation - "This earth that bears you up is a handful of sand, but in its weight and dusky large, it holds The Flower Mount and Dog Mountain without feeling the weight of them; Hoang Ho, the river, and the oceans surge and the earth loses not a drop of their waters, holding them in their beds, containing the multitude of their creatures"(2) - so the Monadology: "Thus there is nothing waste, nothing sterile, nothing dead in the universe; no chaos, no confusions, save in appearance."(3) The consonances, of course, are more by way of temperament than transmitted doctrine: the connection between neo-Confucianism and the Organicism of Leibniz, though plausible, remains vague in outline.(4) But the clear kinship between Leibniz's philosophy and Pound's thirst for unity, the organic whole, led to those approving citations in the Guide to Kulchur, and demonstrates, in exhibiting their equable concern for balance in establishing a just ratio between the physical and spiritual realms, the similar distance both men stood away from the Naturalism we looked at earlier: "man, earth : two halves of the tally" (LXXXII/526).

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(1) G.W. Leibniz, Philosophical Writings, trans. Mary Morris, 1934, pp.12-13.

(2) C, p.185.

(3) G.W. Leibniz, Philosophical Writings, trans. Mary Morris, 1934, p.16.

(4) See G.W. Leibniz, Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese, trans. Henry Rosemont Jr. and Daniel J. Cook, Honolulu, 1977.

Pound's assertion "that the universe is alive" (XCIV/637) finds repeated echo in the writings of A.N. Whitehead: "nature is a structure of evolving processes. The reality is the process";(1) "The whole spatial universe is a field of force - or, in other words, a field of incessant activity";(2) "Nature is a theatre for the interrelations of activities."(3) We find in Whitehead's writings a very full and coherent adumbration of the Organicist perspective, and one that touches at several points upon Pound's most characteristic formulations. For example, Pound's proposition that "In nature are signatures / needing no verbal tradition, / oak leaf never plane leaf" (LXXXVII/573) is supported by Whitehead's "the character of existent reality is composed of organisms enduring through the flux of things";(4) and his magnificent affirmation that nothing exhausts "the unquenchable splendour and indestructible delicacy of nature"(5) has its muted equivalent in "the relationships among actual occasions are . . . unfathomable in their variety of type".(6) We saw, in looking at Naturalism, that a monistic philosophy which starts from matter has great difficulty in accounting for the evolution of mind. For Whitehead the categories matter, being and mind interpenetrate to the extent that, a priori, they cannot be separated. His philosophy is therefore monistic. But in examining the relation of, say, mind to being in this scheme, we find a situation far removed from Naturalist materialism, and recalling Donne's idea of the body's thought: "I have . . . sketched an alternative philosophy of science in which organism takes the place of matter. For this purpose, the mind involved in the materialist theory dissolves into a function of organism. . . . Our bodily event is an unusually

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- (1) A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.90.  
 (2) A.N. Whitehead, Nature and Life, Cambridge, 1934, p.27.  
 (3) Ibid., p.35.  
 (4) A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.250.  
 (5) GK, p.282.  
 (6) A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.217.

complex type of organism and consequently includes cognition."(1) This is in perfect consonance with Pound's "conception of the body as perfect instrument of the increasing intelligence", (2) enunciated in the 'Cavalcanti' essay and elsewhere; it recalls Fenollosa's contention that "thought deals with no bloodless concepts".(3) Conclusions such as Pound's regarding the proper relation of man to nature depend upon such an holistic sense of the relationship of individual experience to the world. Whitehead, in his interpretation of this relationship of mind to matter, stresses the fact of sentient man alive within, and bound to, nature: "It is a false dichotomy to think of Nature and Man. Mankind is that factor in Nature which exhibits in its most intense form the plasticity of Nature."(4) This relationship has a biological, rather than a meta-physical, basis: "We cannot determine with what molecules the brain begins and the rest of the body ends. Further, we cannot tell with what molecules the body ends and the external world begins. The truth is that the brain is continuous with the body, and the body is continuous with the rest of the natural world."(5) These relations constitute a seamless sheet of being, extending from the electron to the pulses of cognition; man is, in Emerson's phrase, "only a piece of the universe made alive".(6) We have thus a thoroughgoing interpenetration of inner and outer: "there is a dual aspect to the relationship of an occasion of experience as one relatum and the experienced world as another relatum. The world is included within the occasion in one sense, and the occasion is included in the world in another sense."(7) "We have to construe the world in

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- (1) A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.241.  
 (2) LE, p.152 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).  
 (3) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWCh, p.12.  
 (4) A.N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, Cambridge, 1933, p.99.  
 (5) Ibid., p.290.  
 (6) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.107.  
 (7) A.N. Whitehead, Nature and Life, Cambridge, 1934, p.85.



terms of the bodily society, and the bodily society in terms of the general functioning of the world."(1) Cognition itself is fully naturalized and becomes a function of organism: "The points I would emphasize are: First that [the] sharp division between mentality and Nature has no ground in our fundamental observation. We find ourselves living within Nature. Second, I conclude that we should conceive mental operations as among the factors which make up the constitution of Nature."(2) The categories indicated earlier - matter, being and mind - run together in the fluid medium of organism; we arrive at the unifying conception Wyndham Lewis turned his irony upon: "Dead, physical, nature comes to life. Chairs and tables, mountains and stars, are animated into a magnetic restlessness and sensitiveness, and exist on the same vital terms as men. They are as it were the lowest grade, the most sluggish, of animals. All is alive; and, in that sense, all is mental."(3) This is fair enough, but we must add, in deference to Whitehead's "dual aspect", that if we switch our perspective all is, in the same sense, organic - Pound's "organic reality".

We have looked at the Chinese provenance of Pound's Organicism, and that same current as it is systematized and expounded in Whitehead's philosophy. Whitehead and China come together in the work of the great sinologist Joseph Needham.

One of Needham's theses holds that the Western reclamation of Organicist thought in the work of Spinoza, Leibniz and Hegel, after centuries of Dualism, was in fact a belated emulation of what had been

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(1) A.N. Whitehead, Nature and Life, Cambridge, 1934, pp.86-87.

(2) Ibid., pp.70-71.

(3) Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, 1927, p.449.

from the first possessed of by the Chinese; for "while European philosophy tended to find reality in substance, Chinese philosophy tended to find it in relation".(1) And he sees this perception of relation as crucial to the advances made by modern science, so that "we should do well to give up all the old arguments about Form and Matter, replacing these factors with two others more in accordance with modern knowledge of the universe: Organization and Energy".(2) As we have said, relation is central to Pound's thought: the apprehension of consonance where there had appeared merely disjunction is the fundamental modus of both his criticism and poetry. Indeed if anything, his faith in the potency of relation was too fervid, for it led, along with much that is strong and challenging, to obliquity and paradox in his criticism, and to an uncritical faith in the powers of invoked relation, of the ideogrammic method, to hold together a poem. Plainly the Confucian texts' emphasis on relation was among the factors commending them most strongly to Pound; and particularly, we may think, their argument by sorites, in which a rhetorical extrapolation is made from, say, the virtuous Prince, by successive steps, to a virtuous and prosperous Commonwealth. He saw here the desired unity of all realms made absolute, and demonstrated with a show of rigour. So too the ethical weight of Chinese thought must have appealed, for, as Needham writes, "Confucius thought of Heaven 'as an impersonal ethical force, a cosmic counterpart of the ethical sense in man, a guarantee that somehow there is sympathy with man's sense of right in the very nature of the universe.'"(3) It was particularly this ethical stress in the Confucian writings, and their concern with the nature of government, that recommended them to Pound over and above that Taoism which, as Hugh Kenner points out, he was remarkably close to

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(1) Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China. Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought, Cambridge, 1956, p.478.

(2) The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Evanston and Chicago, 1941, p.270 (Joseph Needham: 'A Biologist's View of Whitehead's Philosophy').

(3) Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China. Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought, Cambridge, 1956, p.8.

temperamentally.(1) His pursuit of ethical, rather than metaphysical, precision of judgement found support in the Confucian position that "what particularly characterized man [was] expressed as the sense of justice rather than the power of reasoning".(2) And a further habitual subordination, that of the intellectual's "dissection" of reality to the actual and livening presence of the world, was corroborated by the whole tenor of Chinese thought: "the Chinese mind throughout the ages did not, on the whole, feel the need for metaphysics; physical Nature (with all that that implies at the highest levels) sufficed".(3) Holding together these various concerns with ethics, with government, and with nature, as it held together Heaven with Earth, was the concept of process, "the thesis that sense-perception is a superficial mode of knowing as against the more basic intuition of process".(4) This submerged but potent principle of relation establishes the universal totality of which man is an integral, but not a dominant, part, and which the poet enters into harmony with by making his thought correspondingly "totalitarian".

The workings of process are detected within, and as they animate, the phenomenal world; for as Thoreau writes, "we do not learn with the eyes; they introduce us, and we learn after by converse with things".(5) We learn by "converse": sight grants us a merely appropriative relation to things, but we live and come to awareness only in the midst of reality, and by entering into a reciprocating conversation with it. This enveloping environment is characterized by its abundance of relating elements,

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(1) See Hugh Kenner, PE, pp.454-58.

(2) Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China. Volume 2: History of Scientific Thought, Cambridge, 1956, p.23.

(3) Ibid., p.36n.

(4) The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, Evanston and Chicago, 1941, p.409 (Roy Wood Sellars, 'Philosophy of Organism and Physical Realism').

(5) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.88.

a multiplicity which we have seen Leibniz liken to a series of perspective representations of a town. Thoreau employs a similar figure:

If we knew all the laws of Nature, we should need only one fact, or the description of one actual phenomenon, to infer all the particular results at that point. Now we know only a few laws, and our result is vitiated, not, of course, by any confusion or irregularity in Nature, but by our ignorance of essential elements in the calculation. Our notions of law and harmony are commonly confined to those instances which we detect; but the harmony which results from a far greater number of seemingly conflicting, but really concurring, laws, which we have not detected, is still more wonderful. The particular laws are as our points of view, as, to the traveller, a mountain outline varies with every step, and it has an infinite number of profiles, though absolutely but one form. Even when cleft or bored through it is not comprehended in its entirety.(1)

That last sentence, recalling the language of Pound's Confucian translations, reminds us that Thoreau was the recipient, through his association with Emerson, of the current of Organicist thought stemming from China, and himself read in the Chinese classics. There are other correspondences. Pound's idea of "the kind of intelligence that enables grass seed to grow grass; the cherry-stone to make cherries"(2) recalls Thoreau's exclamation, "no wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labours with the idea inwardly".(3) And we can go to Thoreau for the basis of an Organicist poetic, founded upon natural process: for if "the earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit, - not a fossil earth, but a living earth", (4) then poetry itself "is a natural fruit. As naturally as the oak bears an acorn, and the vine a gourd, man bears a poem, either spoken or done."(5)

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(1) Henry D. Thoreau, The Variorum Walden, New York, 1962, p.235.

(2) Quoted in Hugh Kenner, PE, p.103.

(3) Henry D. Thoreau, The Variorum Walden, New York, 1962, p.247.

(4) Ibid., p.249.

(5) Henry D. Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, ed. Carl F. Hovde, Princeton, 1980, p.91.

Also, the belief that one's action may be a "poem" chimes with Pound's idea of the totalitarian, as we shall see in the next chapter. Action, when the knight is not "captive" (see page 277 ), can put the breath and sweat of life into one's style; the wise poet "will confine the observations of his mind as closely as possible to the experience or life of his senses. His thought must live with and be inspired with the life of the body."(1) "Steady labour with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing."(2) Submitted to this discipline, the poet's "song" will be "a vital function like breathing, and an integral result like weight".(3) This conception of the bloom-like efflorescence of poetry, in which the writer avoids the sedentary toil of verse-making by a proper self-discipline and adjustment to the world, is close to the conception of creative process Pound adumbrated in the 'Vorticism' essay. Excellence results from the appropriate disposition of the whole being, the whole man. Such excellence passes "directly out of the hands of the architect into the hands of Nature, to be perfected" (4) - in Pound's figure, it gazes back towards the eliciting sea - and this is only proper, for "Nature is a greater or more perfect art".(5) Pound's sense, like Thoreau's, of the importance of the poet's attitudes and convictions, which lie at the basis of his art, this fundamentally ethical bent, joins hands with the fertile order of nature; and from the poet's participation in this totality springs a poetry of organism, a totalitarian art founded upon the conviction that "a true account of the actual is the rarest poetry".(6)

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(1) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.96.

(2) Ibid., p.96.

(3) Henry D. Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, ed. Carl F. Hovde, Princeton, 1980, p.91..

(4) Ibid., p.62.

(5) Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 1941, p.154.

(6) Quoted in ibid., p.85.

Organicism underpins the totalitarian ideal. The latter, posited as a unifying Weltanschauung, derives from, and depends upon, Pound's apprehension of organic relationship within the realms of aesthetics, ethics, statecraft and the natural world, and binding these together as a totality.

TOTALITARIAN POETRY

So far we have stressed Pound the Acoetian figure, the vatic, divinatory poet who takes up a receptive, essentially feminine attitude to experience. Although such a temperamental configuration is demonstrably present in the Cantos, and underlies his, as it underlies Fenollosa's, conception of language, there is, obviously, a great deal that such an exclusive stress leaves out. For one thing, vast stretches of the Cantos, post-1930, can in no way be accommodated to the Acoetian model: Odysseus is their talismanic figure, and the "spermatic intelligence" the faculty they pre-eminently employ. For another, Pound's prose is - almost unrelievedly - masculine in intent, thrusting, sometimes aggressively so. It seems to figure to itself the driving of ideas into a "great passive vulva".(1) Any discussion of his poetry which leaves this element out of account must be disastrously incomplete. In the 1930s Pound evolved a concept which embraced, though it didn't unite, the two sides of this divide - sometimes confusingly so: that of "totalitarian" poetry. In fact it was an idea which drew together all of his concerns, literary, economic, ethical and religious. It had, as I interpret it, a dual reference, the two poles of which are not easily reconcilable. On the one hand, it was tied to a reading of the literary history Pound himself had lived through. He regarded it as a supersession upon the work of the Vorticist period, and upon "the next phase, the 1920's", which was a "sorting out, the rappel à l'ordre".(2) That is to say, it supervened upon the years which had produced Pound's earlier poetry (the foundation of his oeuvre) and the first thirty Cantos. To those

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(1) PD, p.204 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

(2) GB, p.95.

years belongs all of the poetry we have discussed so far, and which we have seen to be predominantly Acoetian in character, despite the premonitory ravings of the Hell Cantos. The products of this "totalitarian" phase, "the new synthesis", (1) are Cantos XXXI to LXXI, in which emerges a new preponderance of the masculine will to master the poetic impulse, and to harangue. As I shall explain, the sponsor of this novel (though not unprecedented) stress was Wyndham Lewis - Totalitarian Man in excelsis, as Pound regarded him (see pages 263-68). On the other hand, and balancing all this, there is an element of Pound's totalitarian conception which supplies an important strand of continuity between the new conception and the older procedures. The 'totality' celebrated by the poet he represents as an organic whole, plant-like in its integrity, and much of the critical vocabulary of these years makes play with the analogy between organic nature and the holistic, efflorescing form he demanded of works of art in whatever medium. The balance - or perhaps mutual antagonism - of these two factors in Cantos XXXI to LXXI, and further, will be considered in Part Three. Here, as a prelude to that discussion, I shall outline Pound's conception of totalitarian poetry.

I begin with a discussion of poetic technique as it relates to this concept. This is necessary in order to meet on their own ground Donald Davie's formulations regarding Pound's conception of totalitarianism. I regard these as mistaken, and my own conception must be disengaged from that of Davie's before we proceed any further.

In his book Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor Davie refers to the touching and eloquent pages on Thomas Hardy in Pound's Guide to Kulchur,

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(1) GK, p.95.



and has this to say of what they reveal: "in these pages . . . we see more clearly than before what a volte-face was involved when Pound disavowed modernist intricacy and technical sophistication in favor of a limpidity he considered 'totalitarian'".(1) It is Davie's argument in this part of his book that Pound's advocacy of a totalitarian poetry represented a profound break with his earlier practice and thought. This is how he defines the term, as Pound used it in relation to the arts:

What Pound envisages as totalitarianism in art . . . becomes clearer with an interesting passage in Chapter 19, where he speaks of Bartók's Fifth Quartet . . . as 'the record of a personal struggle', as 'too interesting', as having 'the defects inherent in a record of struggle', which are 'the defects or disadvantages of my Cantos'. Set against the Bartók is a work by Boccherini . . . in which 'no trace of effort remained', any more than it remains in the disconcerting limpidity of the Analects or in the simplicity of 'the jokes in Boccaccio'. Totalitarian art will be simple and transparent; the obscurity and oddity of modernist art like the Cantos will nowhere be treated with such contumely as in the totalitarian states . . .(2)

Totalitarian art, then, is lucid and perspicuous; as lucid perhaps as one of Pound's own Confucian Odes, written twenty years later:

In the South be drooping trees,  
long the bough, thick the vine,  
Take thy delight,  
my prince, in happy ease.

In the South be drooping boughs  
the wild vine covers,  
that hold delight, delight, good sir,  
for eager lovers.

Close as the vine clamps the trees  
so complete is happiness,  
Good sir, delight delight in ease,  
In the South be drooping trees.(3)

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(1) Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, p.151.

(2) Ibid., p.147.

(3) CA, pp.3-4.

This, in its simplicity and decorum, is very far from the idiom of the Rock-Drill Cantos, published a year after the Classic Anthology, in 1955. And yet Davie nowhere satisfactorily accounts for the fact that, despite the poet's avowals in the Guide to Kulchur, he never brought his long poem into line with the totalitarian ideal (as Davie interprets that ideal), and indeed at St Elizabeths wrote turbulent Cantos side by side with the mostly restrained and decorous Chinese translations. Surely if, as Davie says, Pound "vowed" himself to totalitarian poetry in the Guide,<sup>(1)</sup> we should expect him to carry through that affirmation in his most important work. And yet clearly he does not.

We have seen that Davie represents the shift in Pound's thinking about poetry at about the time of the Guide to Kulchur as, in part at least, a turning away from his earlier absorption in, and polemical stress upon, the importance of the poet's craft. In the book, he says, "Pound disavowed modernist intricacy and technical sophistication in favor of a limpidity he considered 'totalitarian'". Pound has often been accused of having a merely external conception of technique, reducing it to a matter of tricks of the trade and practical devices, rules of thumb, tips for accurately gauging and carrying off a 'job'. And indeed his letters of 1916 to Iris Barry, and his celebrated article 'A Few Don'ts' of 1913, would seem to bear out such an attack. Davie, in turning the force of these criticisms by reference to the Pound of 1937, must have in mind such passages from the Guide as these:

Without a rigorous technique, NO renaissance. I don't say technique is enough . . . but without rigorous overhauling of technique and rigorous demands laid on technique, no renaissance.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) See Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, p.247.

(2) GK, p.204.

There is a distinct decadence when interest passes from significance - meaning the total significance of a work - into DETAILS of technique.

That sentence must not be taken to contradict my sentence of 30 years ago that technique is the test of a writer's sincerity. The writer or artist who is not intolerant of his own defects of technique is a smear.

But the aim of technique is that it establish the totality of the whole. As in Simone Memmi's painting. The total subject IS the painting.

When the usurer climbs into the saddle you have attention absorbed by the detail, colour, lighting etc. to DETRIMENT of the total reason for the work's coming to be.(1)

A craft that occupies itself solely with imitating Gerard Hopkins or in any other metrical experiment is a craft misdirected. We engage in technical exercise *faute de mieux*, a necessary defensive activity. Out of these sentences you may omit neither the 'solely' nor the 'necessary' without destroying their meaning.(2)

Davie comments on this last passage that:

Here Pound is not quite unsaying what he had said many times in earlier years, for he saves himself (with a spurt of renewed pugnacity) by observing, 'Out of these sentences you may omit neither the "solely" nor the "necessary" without destroying their meaning.' But the emphasis of the earlier Pound had been so consistently the other way, in favor of 'technique', and of 'technique' that could be learned, that even so close an associate as Wyndham Lewis had, in Men Without Art, taken this to be Pound's central and distinguishing characteristic.(3)

As we shall see, Wyndham Lewis was very much on Pound's mind when he was developing the notion of a totalitarian art. But the more immediate question concerns this matter of Pound's "unsaying" of earlier and emphatic pronouncements concerning technique. First of all, let us put the idea of technique into some sort of context. In T.S. Eliot's introduction to Pound's Selected Poems we find this:

This introduction will serve its purpose if it makes clear to the reader one point: that a poet's work may proceed along two lines on an

(1) GK, pp.89-90.

(2) Ibid., p.293.

(3) Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, p.151.

imaginary graph; one of the lines being his conscious and continuous effort in technical excellence, that is, in continually developing his medium for the moment when he really has something to say. The other line is just his normal human course of development, his accumulation and digestion of experience . . . Now and then the two lines may converge at a high peak, so that we get a masterpiece.(1)

This is extremely interesting. From a look at his Collected Poems, it seems as if Eliot himself discarded all those exercises; even the very accomplished 'Landscapes' are relegated to a 'Minor Poems' section. The "technique", then, is severely subordinated to its client, the potential "masterpiece". When the occasion arrives technical procedures have been wholly assimilated by the poet's sensibility and operate by rote or instinctively: "an accumulation of experience has crystallized to form material of art, and years of work in technique have prepared an adequate medium".(2) All the meticulous craft has been laid down elsewhere, at another time; when the moment arrives it dissolves in the unitary motion of the self as it discharges its sea-changed accumulations.

It is just this concern of Eliot's with the larger context within which the rigours of technique function that has been denied to Pound by hostile critics,(3) and which Davie maintains only surfaced in the older Pound. In Seamus Heaney's terms, and from this hostile perspective, Eliot utilizes, predominantly, "technique", and Pound "craft". (According to Heaney's scheme, this latter is a masculine emphasis.) But I don't think such an ascription is correct. From the very first Pound can be shown to have had a fully rounded concept of technique, and to have been prepared to subordinate its demands to the general life of the poem. And although this subordination or sense of proportion becomes

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(1) Ezra Pound, Selected Poems, ed. T.S. Eliot, 2nd edn., 1948, p.17.

(2) Ibid., p.17.

(3) See Charles Tomlinson's 1954 review of Pound's Literary Essays, reprinted in Ezra Pound, The Critical Heritage, ed. Eric Homberger, 1972. Tomlinson later changed his attitude to Pound considerably.

more marked in the 1930s, in 1913 he was writing to Harriet Monroe:

There's no use in a strong impulse if it is all or nearly all lost in bungling transmission and technique. This obnoxious word that I'm always brandishing about means nothing but a transmission of the impulse intact. It means that you not only get the thing off your own chest, but that you get it into some one else's.(1)

The stress here is typical, and it is not surprising that it led to misunderstandings. Technique is quite definitely at the service of impulse, but the latter is left undefined and though the poet obviously regards it as crucial his definition tends to lodge technique in the mind to the exclusion of other matters. Unlike Eliot or Valéry, he isn't interested - speculatively - in the genesis of the poem, on the principle that "nobody can DO anything about their contents anyhow; it either is or isn't".(2) Hence the great value of Pound's testimony in the 'Vorticism' essay. To right the balance one must allow for the rhetorical stress he felt was necessary given the condition, the technical slovenliness, of contemporary letters. Moderately careful attention to the prose reveals the balance of his attitude from the first. In 1913 he is writing: "Purely and simply . . . good art can NOT be immoral. By good art I mean art that bears true witness, I mean the art that is most precise";(3) and: "The artist must have discovered something - either of life itself or of the means of expression."(4) And in 1918:

It is perhaps that Gautier is intent on being 'hard'; is intent on conveying a certain verity of feeling, and he ends by being truly poetic. Heredia wants to be poetic and hard; the hardness appears to him as a virtue in the poetic. And one tends to conclude that all attempts to be

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(1) L, p.60 (Harriet Monroe, 1913).

(2) L, p.347 (Mary Barnard, 1934).

(3) LE, p.44 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

(4) Ibid, p.56 ('The Serious Artist').

poetic in some manner or other defeat their own end; whereas an intentness on the quality of the emotion to be conveyed makes for poetry.(1)

Here Pound's conception squares with that of Stravinsky: technique is an expression of the "whole man", and though it may be supplemented, it cannot be instilled against the grain:

Robert Craft: What is technique?

Stravinsky: The whole man. We learn how to use it but we cannot acquire it in the first place; or perhaps I should say that we are born with the ability to acquire it. At present it has come to mean the opposite of 'heart', though, of course, 'heart' is technique too. A single blot on a paper by my friend Eugene Berman I instantly recognize as a Berman blot. What have I recognized - a style or a technique? Are they the same signature of the whole man? Stendhal . . . believed that style is 'the manner that each one has of saying the same thing'. But, obviously, no one says the same thing because the saying is also the thing. A technique or a style for saying something original does not exist a priori, it is created by the original saying itself. We sometimes say of a composer that he lacks technique. We say of Schumann, for example, that he did not have enough orchestral technique. But we do not believe that more technique would change the composer. 'Thought' is not one thing and 'technique' another, namely, the ability to transfer, 'express' or develop thoughts. We cannot say 'the technique of Bach' (I never say it), yet in every sense he had more of it than anyone; our extraneous meaning becomes ridiculous when we try to imagine the separation of Bach's musical substance and the making of it. Technique is not a teachable science, neither is it learning, nor scholarship, nor even the knowledge of how to do something. It is creation, and, being creation, it is new every time. There are other legitimate uses of the word, of course. Painters have water-colour and gouache techniques, for example, and there are technological meanings . . . In these senses one may talk of composing techniques - the writing of an academic fugue. But in my sense, the original composer is still his own and only technique. . . . Technical mastery has to be of something, it has to be something. And since we can recognize technical skill when we can recognize nothing else, it is the only manifestation of 'talent' I know of; up to a point technique and talent are the same. At present all of the arts, but especially music, are engaged in 'examinations of technique'. In my sense such an examination must be into the nature of art itself - an examination that is both perpetual and new every time - or it is nothing.(2)

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(1) LE, p.285 ('The Hard and Soft in French Poetry', Poetry, 1918).

(2) Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, Conversations with Igor Stravinsky, 1959, pp.26-27.

In 1936 Pound was anxious to vindicate his younger self, and to turn aside any charge that his earlier concerns were narrowly technical, concerned wholly with "craft" as Heaney defines it:

Honesty of the word does not permit dishonesty of the matter.

If in my early criticism I showed a just contempt for the falsity of writers who would not face technical problems, that cannot pass, for much longer, as indifference to ethos or to values of any kind. An artist's technique is test of his personal validity. Honesty of the word is the writer's first aim, for without it he can communicate nothing efficiently.(1)

Nonetheless, while technique for Pound was always a matter of the "whole man", it remains true to say that his fully mature position is a product of the 1930s; by then an immersion in the Confucian texts had permeated his sensibility, and reinforced the ethical bearing of his thought about poetry, and language generally. It was only out of this Confucian context that he could write to Basil Bunting: "The poet's job is to define and yet again define till the detail of surface is in accord with the root in justice."(2) That the proper use of language bore upon questions justice - ethical questions - was a perception granted him fully only by exposure to such a text as the Chung Yung, The Unwobbling Pivot, where, as translator, Pound glosses the word "sincerity" as "this activity which defines words with precision".(3) And a passage which in Legge yields the colourless "Such is the manifestness of what is minute! Such is the impossibility of repressing the outgoings of sincerity!"(4) in Pound's version reads thus:

Intangible and abstruse  
the bright silk of the sunlight

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(1) M, p.398 ('Civilization', Polite Essays, 1937).

(2) L, p.366 (Basil Bunting, 1935).

(3) C, p.173.

(4) Confucius, Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of the Mean, trans. James Legge, Oxford, 1893, p.398.

Pours down in manifest splendor,  
 You can neither stroke  
     the precise word with your hand  
 Nor shut it down under a box-lid.(1)

The "precise word" which Pound here apostrophizes with such fervour had always been his concern, but over the years its importance became increasingly bound up with ethical and political questions. And this was part of that process of the drawing together of his multifarious concerns which, when it possessed him as a whole, he sought a name for. Exact and candid expression came to be wedded in his mind to private rectitude and public morality. The individual word implicated its user's being completely, so that a betrayal of the word amounted to a betrayal of the self and - because language communicates - of the community. Technique, then, was simply the cutting edge of experience, its right use ensuring that experience's proper embodiment and transmission, the whole and faithful emergence of form from matrix. The word Pound found for the sum or unity of his concerns, of which this care for technique formed a part, was of course "totalitarian". I want now to examine its relation to his idea of the nature of poetry, and what sense the embracing concept makes of this latter.

In 1937, writing in The Criterion, Pound celebrated Wyndham Lewis as Totalitarian Man:

Any full man, any man who approaches the Renaissance totalitarianism, who refuses to run in the most paying groove repeating himself once a

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(1) C, p.133.



week or once monthly to meet a 'demand' is bound to suffer occultation, to remain three-fourths in shadow because men of little comprehension can not reconcile themselves to, or digest the concept of, intelligence shining in divers places from a centre.(1)

The pugnacious vitality of Lewis, and his great variety of interests and modes of expression, were, if one cared to put the two figures together, in marked contrast to Joyce's more parsimonious genius ("The natural antithesis now as it was two decades ago is between Joyce and Lewis"(2)).

The contrast was one fully exploited by Lewis himself, in Time and Western Man, and when Pound writes this, in the same article, he is simply condensing part of that book's argument:

Flaubert was . . . grandfather to any verbal renovation of our time, but the phase specifically touted by Mr. Joyce's Parisians and international penumbra was already in full vigour in Mr. Lewis' writings in BLAST 1914. At a time when Mr. Joyce was still the strict classicist of 'Chamber Music', 'Dubliners' and the Portrait of the Artist as a beau jeune homme. The difference being that Lewis' renovation of the word was a vigorous renovation and not a diarrhoetic imitation of Mr. Joyce's leisurely flow and murmurous permuting. Lewis' renovation was conceptual. Joyce's merely, in the main, sonorous, an attraction of the half-awake consciousness to and by similar sounds.

Naturally the abundance of conceptual bustle in Lewis is infinitely less digestible, thence less attractive to writers of mediocre enver-gure. It is radically inimitable in that it can only come from a think-organism in action, a mind actually initiating concepts, or at least very busily chucking them from one side of a head to another.(3)

The "leisurely flow and murmurous permuting" is that of Finnegans Wake of course, a book Pound never respected. And the extent of Pound's disaffection, following upon his great admiration for Ulysses, is indicated by the employment of scatological language ("diarrhoetic"), which is always a sign of his most solemn disapprobation. Pound disapproves because

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(1) SP, p.424 ('D'Artagnan Twenty Years After', The Criterion, 1937).

(2) Ibid., p.427 ('D'Artagnan Twenty Years After').

(3) Ibid., p.425 ('D'Artagnan Twenty Years After').

Joyce is essentially an executant (or so the argument would run), not an initiator. Similarly, Joyce doesn't 'think', doesn't concern himself with ideas and their fruits in action, but the totalitarian artist is to be "a think-organism in action, a mind actually initiating concepts". As Davie says (see page 258), Lewis regarded Pound as, like Joyce, a penman, a man concerned rather narrowly with technique and technical excellence; and ironically enough it is in Time and Western Man that Lewis castigates Pound for the very same faults that he found in Joyce. There can be little doubt that Pound's "totalitarian" formulations were in part a response to this critique.(1) His reference to classicism in the above passage is instructive. Joyce, as the archetypal penman, the butt of Lewis, and of course a one-time close associate, was the inevitable figure to assail when it came to moving beyond the classical or what he called in the Guide to Kulchur the "monumental". And the example of Lewis was to sponsor the "new synthesis", an art of the "prospect". The context is Joyce: "in the new paideuma I am not including the monumental, the retrospect, but only the pro-spect".(2) The sort of art Pound is proselytizing for in the Guide was characterized by Lewis in his essay of 1919, The Caliph's Design:

As to what judgement you should arrive at, at the end of your critical survey [of Picasso's work], there the issue is quite clear. It will depend upon whether this mercurial vitality, so adaptable as to be flesh-creeping, seems to you preferable to a vertical source of power, like the sour and volcanic old crétin, Cézanne. It is which manner of life you most prize, or admire, really. I consider Pablo Picasso as a very serious and beautiful performer . . . But he appears to me to be definitely in the category of executants, like Paganini, or Pachmann, or Moiseivitch; whereas Cézanne is clearly a brother of Bach, and the Douanier was a cousin of Chardin.(3)

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(1) For an extended discussion of the influence of Wyndham Lewis on Pound see Wendy Stallard Flory, Ezra Pound and the Cantos: A Record of Struggle, New Haven and London, 1980, pp.63-83.

(2) GK, p.96.

(3) Wyndham Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, ed. Walter Michel and C.J. Fox, 1969, pp.171-72.

In a blurb on his own work, written in 1932, Lewis explicitly avows the connection between Cézanne's initiatory art and his own work in literature: "Mr Lewis may very well come to be regarded in literature as an initiator in literary forms in the way that Cézanne was an initiator, in contrast to the more common type of craftsman-exploiter."<sup>(1)</sup> And yet curiously enough, Donald Davie represents Pound's concept of the totalitarian in art as polemic on behalf of the "craftsman-exploiter", the writer of "tours-de-force of taste, and DEAD ARRANGEMENTS BY THE TASTEFUL HAND WITHOUT, not instinctive organizations by the living will within".<sup>(2)</sup> This is how he characterizes the argument of the Guide to Kulchur on this subject:

In Part II he relates his own activities between 1916 and 1921 to contemporaneous French movements connected with the names of Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, and Erik Satie; that is to say, his and Wyndham Lewis's work for Blast (no less, in a rather special way, Joyce's in Ulysses) are now considered as wholly, though necessarily, destructive or at least disruptive - the vorticist movement corresponds to Dadaism across the Channel in being deliberately anarchical, a summing up or clinical clearing out and breaking down of categories and conventions inherited from the nineteenth century. It can be justified only retrospectively when it produced by reaction Cocteau's Rappel à l'ordre. Cocteau is declared to be a poet of genius, the presiding genius of the 'twenties, and yet his work too is only preparatory. It prepares for 'the new synthesis, the totalitarian'.<sup>(3)</sup>

And of course, as we have seen, Davie represents Pound's totalitarian ideal as one of an art effortlessly limpid, transparent. The passage from the Guide which Davie has in mind runs as follows:

If I am introducing anybody to Kulchur, let 'em take the two phases, the nineteen teens, Gaudier, Wyndham L. and I as we were in Blast, and the next phase, the 1920's.

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(1) Wyndham Lewis, Collected Poems and Plays, ed. Alan Munton, Manchester, 1979, p.222n.

(2) Wyndham Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, ed. Walter Michel and C.J. Fox, 1969, pp.65-66 ('A Review of Contemporary Art', Blast, 1915).

(3) Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, pp.145-46.

The sorting out, the rappel à l'ordre, and thirdly the new synthesis, the totalitarian.(1)

Admittedly this sounds as if Pound were turning his back on the Blast period in favour of the totalitarian "new dawn" and its different principles; but he speaks of this latter as a synthesis, and we can safely assume that a large element in that synthesis was the Vorticist work Lewis was doing in 1914, and with which Pound feels he is catching up belatedly. (in Time and Western Man Lewis writes of the general feeling amongst the Blast group that Pound was odd-man-out, quaintly archaic, "A Man in Love with the Past"(2)). And it is in the essay I cited earlier, of 1937 ('D'Artagnan Twenty Years After'), that Lewis, lauded there as an embodiment of Totalitarian Man, is presented as pre-eminently the creator of Blast, and Blast as a still vividly relevant document. I asked earlier how it was to be explained that Pound, having embraced a totalitarian ideal in the arts, continued to write the 'experimental' Cantos. But the question is only problematical if we grant Davie's thesis that the ideal discountenanced experiment. We have seen that Pound celebrated, as a totalitarian faculty, Wyndham Lewis' turbulence, his Vorticist stress on "the 'organizing' or creative-inventive faculty" as "the thing that matters".(3) This was the Lewis that Pound memorialized in a late fragment:

Wyndham Lewis chose blindness  
rather than have his mind stop. (CXV/794)

And such a will-driven persistence corresponded to his own deep sense

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(1) GK, p.95.

(2) The title of Chapter XV of Time and Western Man.

(3) SP, p.347 ('Affirmations - As For Imagisme', The New Age, 1915).

of himself, a sense which coexisted, often uneasily, with the Acoetian strain in his character. So he wrote, again in the Drafts and Fragments:

Out of dark, thou, Father Helios, ledest,  
but the mind as Ixion, unstill, ever turning. (CXIII/790)

Pound's typically muscular intellectualism was certainly carried over into the late Cantos, and he was never so eccentric or self-deluded as to vow himself to an aesthetic which never touches upon his major work.

But of course Pound did conceive of a totalitarian poetry, and if it was concerned with energy and dynamism and proclaimed an art of and for the curious, then we must try to define it. Davie consistently makes the connection between the totalitarian in art and the totalitarian in politics. The connection is obvious, though not every Pound commentator has chosen to recognize it. In their political aspect, Pound's totalitarian ideals tend to suck in, and to subordinate to exigencies of statecraft, the more general life of the intelligence. At this point the unity of Pound's concerns takes on a more sinister aspect. In the light of political and intellectual absolutism, the activities of the Vorticists begin to look self-indulgent to him; he writes of the generation of James, Hardy, Swinburne and others that:

they bred a generation of experimenters, my generation, which was unable to work out a code for action. We believed and disbelieved 'everything', or to put it another way we believed in the individual case.

The best of us accepted every conceivable 'dogma' as a truth for a particular crux, crisis or temperament.

And a few serious survivors of war grew into tolerance of the 'new synthesis', saw finally a need for a 'general average' in law. There

was, in this, perhaps no positive gain save that, again, a few saw a dissociation of personal crises or cruces, that exist above or outside economic pressure, and those which arise directly from it, or are so encumbered by, and entangled in, the root problems of money, that any pretended ethical or philosophical dealing with them is sheer bunk UNTIL they be disentangled.(1)

As Davie points out, the "personal crises" that exist "above or outside economic pressure" are the domain of the poetry of "the individual elegy and the personal sadness", and Pound, in his admirable readiness to own to confusion, is prepared to admit that the "transition" from this to a totalitarian poetry "may have been from literary to rhetorical".(2) But the thrust of his argument is away from the divisiveness of individuality and towards the "need for a 'general average' in law". This move away from the sort of intellectual multiplicity and scission that characterized pre-war London is sponsored by his regard for the unitary organism of the totalitarian state. "Now that the Empire exists", he writes in 1936 (the reference is to Italy's conquest of Abyssinia, which Pound elsewhere refers to - employing the sort of evasive language he so often deprecated in others - as "the Abyssinian acquisition"(3)), "we must consider the relationship between center, periphery, and minor nuclei of the State. An Empire needs a Center in which the intelligence and the strength of the race are concentrated, but from which in turn the light of its civilization spreads across and penetrates the lesser nuclei."(4) And:

The New Order will spread from Rome in ways neither understood nor dreamed of, in ways foreseen only by a few people who have an 'ardent imagination', and it will spread not only 'geographically' in space, but will also grow in depth of development and concept. The

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(1) GK, p.291.

(2) See Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor, 1965, pp.151-52.

(3) GK, p.229.

(4) M, p.393 ('Marconi's Violins', Il Mare, 1936: translated).

cells and nuclei, whether small cities or large, are not rivals of Rome. The corporate concept has implicit in itself the idea of organic composition. The liver is not the rival of the lungs; the small glands do not repeat the function of the heart but work as complements to it.(1)

In a 1937 review Pound carried over this Organicist language into a consideration of Hindemith's Viola Concerto, and made the connection between totalitarianism in politics and in aesthetics explicit: "Here [in the concerto] the totalitarian ideal, the corporate ideal contemporary with to-day's musical thought, whoever may ignore it, stands manifest."(2) The concerto was performed at a festival in Venice, and Pound is celebrating the corporate ideal's fruition, in music, on Italian soil (what Hindemith himself would have thought of such plaudits is another matter). A year earlier, Pound had hailed the concerto in identical terms, as an organism, plant-like in its integrity: "Conscious or unconscious, the composer is impregnated with the sense of growth, cellular, as in the natural kingdoms. From the initial cells of the root-heart out to the outermost leaf of the foliage, in this case the harp notes, the 'Schwanendreher' is natural in its liveliness."(3) This recalls Pound's formulations of twenty years previous, his invocation of "the pattern-making faculty which lies in the flower-seed or in the grain or in the animal cell".(4) This current of thought feeds in its turn from the poetic morphology's idea of a gestatory matrix from which form stems, and refers us to Fenollosa's conviction, shared by Pound, that language springs from nature, and should mirror natural process in its forms. Pound's conviction that the processes of language and art are, or should be, organic, is grounded upon Fenollosa's perception that "the forces

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(1) M, p.393 (Marconi's Violins', Il Mare, 1936: translated).

(2) Ibid., p.415 ('Ligurian View of a Venetian Festival', Music and Letters, 1937).

(3) Ibid., p.405 ('Mostly Quartets', The Listener, 1936).

(4) Quoted in Hugh Kenner, PE, p.163.

which produce the branch-angles of an oak lay potent in the acorn".(1) And behind Fenollosa lies Emerson. In 1937 the Emersonian Organicism we examined earlier was, via Fenollosa's mediation, still fuelling Pound's responses to the arts. He writes of the Hindemith concerto: "As the plant mind or unity which can be only that kind of plant, so the mind or unity of this composition."(2) Because the term "totalitarian" (with its Latin root totus, "entire") signified for Pound a totality of interests and activities, he necessarily carried over his perceptions as to the natural basis of language, and the vegetative growth and organic integration of a work of art, into his political thinking. But to regard the Italian state as some sort of plenum and Mussolini as its Deity was, to say the least of it, unwise.

In Canto XCIX Pound writes of his long poem:

This is not a work of fiction  
nor yet of one man (XCIX/708)

The Cantos is a work of discovery. The poem seeks, not to impose form, but to discover it; "the shape occurs": "The god is inside the stone, vacuos exercet aera morsus. The force is arrested, but there is never any question about its latency, about the force being the essential, the rest 'accidental' in the philosophic technical sense. The shape occurs."(3) One of the elements vital if the artist is to free the god from the stone, form from matrix, is a procedure we have seen Donald

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(1) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWrCh, p.22.

(2) M, p.416 ('Ligurian View of a Venetian Festival', Music and Letters, 1937).

(3) LE, p.152 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).



Davie deny to the concept of a totalitarian art: experiment. In the preface to his Active Anthology (1933), compiled four years before the Guide to Kulchur was written, Pound writes: "As for experiment: the claim is that without constant experiment literature dies. Experiment is ONE of the elements necessary to its life. Experiment aims at writing that will have a relation to the present analogous to the relation which past masterwork had to the life of its time."(1) Pound was well aware that such a stress could lead to imperfections or callowness in a work, as his remarks on Bartók in the Guide(2) and this, from a review of a Scriabin concert given in 1919, make clear: "Scriabine was just brushed by too great a desire to be unusual. One can, perhaps, have no advance and no artistic discovery without this. It is the peril of inventors, and one should not grumble at its spoiling or damaging part of their work if the other parts attain ultimate beauty."(3) A totalitarian poetry, in its struggle towards "ultimate beauty" and, equally, a pungent didacticism, would necessarily display "the defects inherent in a record of struggle";(4) but the alternative to a vigorously questing poetry, says the Guide to Kulchur, is "relapse into the intolerable", "the weak man's answer".(5) In a distracted age, careless of the arts, the exclusivity of a narrow perfection is useless. The function of the epic is to act as ark of the literary Covenant, a function requiring the totalitarian poet's volatility and capaciousness:

I dunno how you feel about Eliot's evil influence. Not that his crit. is bad but that he hasn't seen where it leads. What it leads TO.

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(1) SP, p.368 ('Prefatio Aut Cimicium Tumulus', Active Anthology, 1933).

(2) See GK, pp.134-36.

(3) M, p.170 ('Music', The New Age, 1919).

(4) GK, p.135.

(5) Ibid., p.287.

Attention on lesser rather than greater. At a time when there is imperative need of a BASIS, i.e., what ole Unc. Wm. Yeats called 'new sacred book of the arts'. Something, or some place where men of good will can meet without worrying about creed and colour etc.(1)

The Cantos attempts to establish such a "sacred book", a transcendent meeting-place for the scattered artistic community. It was Eliot himself who gave memorable expression to that harried sense of the age which exacted the savant's conservatory role (as opposed to the lineal passing on of tradition characteristic of happier ages):

The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.(2)

The Cantos' mode of conservation is encyclopoedic, as Richard Sieburth points out:

The new synthesis would be . . . 'totalitarian'; that is, it would take a dynamic open form based on the encyclopoedic principle of inclusion, of plenitude. . . . Rather than pretend omniscience ('No man can carry an automobile factory on his back'), Pound wanted to devise 'an efficient tool kit' for the organic and ideogrammic ordering of available knowledge into some sort of usable, active shape.(3)

The savant must be "very patient" says Eliot; but the general incomprehension and restlessness in the face of his use of Latin and Greek spurs Pound to anger:

What I am trying to get at is, given the economic inferno that one has been through, trying to teach an elite and the present distracted

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(1) L, p.322 (John Drummond, 1932).

(2) T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays, 3rd edn., 1951, p.387.

(3) Richard Sieburth, Instigations: Ezra Pound and Rémy de Gourmont, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978, p.126.

writer cursed for every allusion he ever made to Greek or Latin, surrounded by people who complain that they can't 'understand' a passage, for the simple reason that something Greek or Latin is mentioned.

Granted the bulk of the sabotage and obstruction is economic and nothing else, there is the fact to be faced that the modern world has lost a kind of contact with and love for the classics which it had, not only in the 18th Century and in the Renaissance (part snobism), but throughout the Middle Ages, when in one sense it knew much less.

And life is impoverished thereby.(1)

The Cantos doesn't simply employ the classical languages; they are con-  
served in the poem, along with much else, and as part of that encyclo-  
poedic impulse Sieburth speaks of. The ambition, of course, leads to an  
heterogeneous or impure poetry far removed from "limpidity": but the  
effect is an essential part of the totalitarian programme.

Totalitarian poetry, then, is capacious, a poetry of instigation;  
it is pro-spective, an art of the "initiator" rather than the "craftsman-  
exploiter"; its wholes are organically unified, and its ambitions en-  
cyclopoedic and conservatory. As such it represents a decisive step be-  
yond the "capitalist literature" of its time: "Bourgeois litcherchoor  
is pretty well on the blink";(2) "How much of capitalist literature can  
have a meaning in 1950, I don't know."(3) Later we shall look at the  
tenuity of the connection of Pound's poetry with prose canons (see pages  
285-304); the totalitarian ideal emphasizes that disjunction and makes  
it programmatic: "poetry is totalitarian in any confrontation with prose.  
there is MORE in and on two pages of poetry than in or on ten pages of  
any prose save the few books that rise above classification."(4) Poetry  
grants the reader ingress into the "SECRETUM":(5) "prose is NOT educa-  
tion but the outer courts of the same. Beyond its doors are the mysteries.

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(1) L, p.350 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

(2) Ibid., p.313 (Harriet Monroe, 1931).

(3) Ibid., p.343 (Sarah Perkins Cope, 1934).

(4) GK, p.121.

(5) See L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

Eleusis. Things not to be spoken save in secret."(1) As we have seen, the "SECRETUM" is central to Pound's sense of himself as a poet. Indeed, we can see in the idea of the totalitarian a coming together of many of his most characteristic and urgent concerns. Nevertheless, in its emphasis on the poet's duty to the polity, and in its obvious kinship with absolutist politics, the concept leaves no room for the personal, elegiac utterance, as Davie recognized. Public, masculine concerns swamp the receptive and feminine. Pound saw this, and the ultimate fruits of his concern with the ideas set out in the Guide to Kulchur were Cantos LII to LXXI, the Chinese History and Adams Cantos published three years later. The poetry is in a fairly obvious sense public, and fulfills all too clearly Pound's fear that, "in a communist age"; "the transition may have been from literary to rhetorical".(2) In a letter of 1922 Pound defined the sort of profound didacticism he must have had in mind for these Cantos:

It's all rubbish to pretend that art isn't didactic. A revelation is always didactic. Only the aesthetes since 1880 have pretended the contrary, and they aren't a very sturdy lot.

Art can't offer a patent medicine. A failure to dissociate that from a profounder didacticism has led to the errors of 'aesthete's' critique.(3)

The sources of this attachment to the normative ran deep in Pound. A much-cited passage from the Guide makes this clear: "Not only is the truth of a given idea measured by the degree and celerity wherewith it goes into action, but a very distinct component of truth remains ungrasped by the non-participant in the action."(4) And he regarded poetry, and

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(1) GK, pp.144-45.

(2) See ibid., p.293.

(3) L, p.248 (Felix E. Schelling, 1922).

(4) GK, p.182.



is done (in the main). I shall have to go on condensing and restating, but am now definitely onto questions of BELIEF.(1)

"Personal ends" became paramount when there were no citable documents to hand, and one's public self had been abolished. Though the Pisan Cantos still want to teach and to hector, they do so only sporadically, their true and enduring note being that of "the individual elegy and the personal sadness". It is the voice of an active, a volcanic man made introspective by necessity; the voice of the "captive knight":

The word which is best said came nearest to not being spoken at all, for it is cousin to a deed which the speaker could have better done. Nay, almost it must have taken the place of a deed by some urgent necessity, even by some misfortune, so that the truest writer will be some captive knight, after all. And perhaps the fates had such a design, when, having stored Raleigh so richly with the substance of life and experience, they made him a fast prisoner, and compelled him to make his words his deeds, and transfer to his expression the emphasis and sincerity of his actions.(2)

During the 1930s, then, Pound's stress upon the spermatic, masculine virtues, which was always present in the upper reaches of his mind, finding its way thence into prose - but which, up until this time, the poetry had mostly worked independently of - began to reach down and permeate its creative depths. Or perhaps we should say that Pound increasingly wrote Cantos out of the more superficial and vehement layers of his consciousness. Whichever is nearer the truth, the effect was the same: ever-spreading patches of aridity began to show in the texture of the Cantos, culminating - if that isn't too sanguine a word - in the almost unrelieved

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(1) L, p.424 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

(2) Henry D. Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, ed. Carl F. Hovde, Princeton, 1980, p.105.

desiccation of the Chinese History and Adams Cantos, synthetic products which remind us that between 1937, when The Fifth Decad of Cantos appeared, and his commencement on the Pisan Cantos in 1945, Pound wrote virtually no original poetry. The essence of the creative morphology was retained within the totalitarian conception by virtue of the latter's organic bearing, its stress upon the emergence of plant from seed as the pattern of all formal growth, from that of a poem to that of the state. But the parlous conditions of the times, and their consequences for the arts - the raging around Italy of "the economic inferno"<sup>(1)</sup> - pushed that vivifying conception to one side where the Cantos were concerned. The poem came to be viewed by its creator more and more as an instrument of practical instruction and moral reproof, and its language was extruded from that part of his mind which had produced the Hell Cantos. The delicate question as to how far Pound's creative silence, the lack of original poetry through the latter portion of these years, may be attributed to the gradual triumph of the male over the female principle in Pound's psyche - it is noticeable that the various modes he castigates as non-totalitarian are characterized as "the weak man's answer" (see page 272), as the products of "aesthetes" (see page 275): in other words, as disabblingly 'feminine' - can only be determined after a detailed examination of the relevant texts. We shall turn to that examination a little later but first we must tackle some more general considerations concerning the ideogrammic method.

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(1) See L, p.350 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1934).

PART III



THE IDEOGRAMMIC METHOD

Up to now we have characterized the ideogrammic method by reference to its enabling capacities, in as much as it figured for Pound as a means of encompassing an order of reality which the earlier poetry had neglected. I have not discussed the formal qualities of the Cantos, concentrating instead on its thematic aspect. It is time now to correct the imbalance. We shall find that formal questions mesh intimately with Pound's characteristic themes, and with his status as celebrant of the rites of emergence.

In Part One, Chapter 1 I maintained that such diverse products as 'The Seafarer', Homage to Sextus Propertius and Canto I represented an order of syntactic complexity which Pound came later to abandon, and suggested that the most important reason for that abandonment was the poet's gradually focussing apprehension and acknowledgment of the claims of the creative process (as he apprehended it), sketched in the poetic morphology of the 'Vorticism' essay. This showed the originating impulse as pre-verbal, and demanded of the poet a remaking of his idiom, indeed a remaking of language. The conventional ordinance of language tended to mask rather than to reveal this wordless reality. I have already discussed Pound's Adamic conception of language, and its roots in the work of Fenollosa, and shall not labour it now. It will enter into our discussion, subsequently, in connection with the formal means of the later poetry. In terms of this context, I want to examine Cantos XXXI to LI, using as exemplars of that sequence (for it is a distinct sequence, the individual Cantos sharing characteristics which mark them off from those preceding and succeeding) the two great Cantos of sexual

energy, numbers XXXIX and XLVII, and the three which make up the Leopoldine sequence (XLII - XLIV). Others shall be drawn in where appropriate, but my primary focus will be on these, and for the following reasons: Cantos XXXIX and XLVII continue that confrontation with femininity and the Goddess which has been a large part of our theme so far, and relate closely to the first four Cantos, examined earlier; and, like the Malatesta Cantos, the Leopoldine sequence deploys the resources of the ideogrammic method in relation to known and recorded history. The novel element in this examination will be the concurrent reference, throughout, to formal questions, left out of account earlier. In order to focus this latter emphasis, before examining particular texts it will be necessary to elaborate upon this formal question; but before doing so I want to put a term we shall be considering then, and which is central to Pound's formal concerns - the forma - into its thematic context.

Pound's central formulation regarding the term occurs in the Guide to Kulchur, written in 1937:(1)

'I made it out of a mouthful of air' wrote Bill Yeats in his heyday. The forma, the immortal conchetto, the concept, the dynamic form which is like the rose pattern driven into the dead iron-filings by the magnet, not by material contact with the magnet itself, but separate from the magnet. Cut off by the layer of glass, the dust and filings rise and spring into order. Thus the forma, the concept rises from death . . .(2)

The similarities to the poetic morphology of 'Vorticism' are obvious: like the impulse, the forma is the generative locus of form. Equally obvious is the change of stress: that manifestation isn't an efflorescence on the face of the locus, an emergence from the originating matter,

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(1) On the chronology of the composition of Guide to Kulchur see LI, p.67 and p.79.

(2) GK, p.152.

but a sudden crystallization of an initially "dead" substance at the behest of a masterful and mastering urge. As such, it is unequivocally related to Pound's "spermatic" formulations of some sixteen years previous, where he writes of "the sperm, the form-creator, the substance which compels the ovule to evolve in a given pattern".(1) The two sets of concepts - efflorescence and compulsion - have a parallel provenance, but their intonations are, respectively, feminine and masculine. We saw the two poles of this intellectual gendering more or less in equilibrium in the Malatesta Cantos. A similar, but more tense and potentially schismatic reciprocity resides in the forma's illustrative figure itself which, while insisting on the synthetic construction of an iron rose, stirs images of the real flower's emergence from the bud. Pound acknowledges this tension in another passage, from the Cavalcanti essay, concerning the same phenomenon:

For the modern scientist energy has no borders, it is a shapeless 'mass' of force; even his capacity to differentiate it to a degree never dreamed by the ancients has not led him to think of its shape or even its loci. The rose that his magnet makes in the iron filings, does not lead him to think of the force in botanic terms, or wish to visualize that force as floral and extant (ex stare). (2)

The "botanic terms" are somewhat different from the "driving" of "pattern" into "the dead iron filings"; they relate to the emergence of embodying form from the "plant brain" which Pound invokes in the next paragraph: "Even Bose with his plant experiments seems intent on the plant's capacity to feel - not on the plant idea, for the plant brain is obviously filled with, or is one idea, an idée fixe, a persistent notion of pattern

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(1) PD, p.206 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

(2) LE, p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

from which only cataclysm or a Burbank can shake it."(1) The iron filings which make up the rose pattern are "dead": they are modelled freely and indiscriminately, made over into congruence with magnetic form. Just so the sperm - in Pound's formulation - compels the ovule to evolve. But a plant's leafing and flowering represents a self-evolution of substance, and parallels the sculptor's loving apprehension of form in the stone, which his careful intervention frees; or the visionary's delighted witness to the flowering of divine form on the air, or its emergence from water. These exemplary figures hold to the carving conception which coexists in the Cavalcanti essay with the modelling emphasis initially apparent in the forma, and in this they fulfil that same essay's injunction to accord to "substance its virtù".(2)

It is noticeable that the forma conception involves a stress upon the creator's energy: the forma is that focussed energy which "creates pattern", "a force transfusing, welding and unifying". We remarked a similar emphasis as obtaining within Pound's conception of totalitarian poetry (see Part Two, Chapter 4). This may put us in mind of the thrusting energy of the sperm, or, indeed, of that regard for force qua force which William Carlos Williams noticed in his friend: "It is still a Lenin striking through the mass, whipping it about, that engages his attention. That is the force Pound believes in."(3) In other words the forma seems to be conceived of in masculine, assertive terms; conceived of as modelling rather than carving. We have noticed the tension between the masculine and feminine references of "the rose in the steel dust" (LXXIV/449) figure; its setting together of the compulsions of magnetism and the

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(1) LE, p.155 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(2) Ibid., p.154 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism').

(3) William Carlos Williams, Selected Essays, New York, 1954, p.111.

emergence, the unfoldings and flowerings, of form "floral and extant". We said earlier that Cantos I to IV, and the Malatesta Cantos, registered "the quality / of the affection" (LXXVI/457) the poet entertained for their substance, were the exemplars of a careful elicitation of form from the known and loved matrix; while, on the other hand, the Hell Cantos were still-born because they had no such nutritive matrix to sustain a growth into definition. Their matter is asserted, modelled, indiscriminately and wilfully. My metaphors are botanic, though they might just as relevantly have been drawn from Canto II's "void air taking pelt" (II/8), or from Canto XCI, the parturition therein of the Goddess from water. The essential concept, linking these various metaphoric complexes, is that of emergence. The concept of the forma represents a significant departure from that concept, though not an unqualified departure. Its source is that stress upon the artist's energy which we discovered to be one very important element in Pound's conception of Vorticism (see Part One, Chapter 1). And we have seen the same emphasis at work in his conception of a totalitarian poetry (see Part Two, Chapter 4). Just as the poetic morphology of the London years - the root of Pound's Imagist/Vorticist practice - underlay, and balanced, the more turbulent and combative aspects of Vorticism, so - as we have seen - an organic or vegetative conception of form underlay and mitigated his totalitarian conception. And we have seen a similarly inexplicit organic provenance attaching to "the rose in the steel dust" figure, and indirectly acknowledged by Pound in the Cavalcanti essay. The continuities are very important, but they do not alter the fact of this surfacing, in the 1930s, of an assertive, modelling conception of form, of a vision of the creative impulse as magnetic force commanding its material rather than fructive matrix from which the sculptor-poet elicits form. Nor should this surprise

us given Pound's political allegiances of the time, his devotion to a figure - Mussolini - he admiringly saw as "striking through the mass, whipping it about". As we have seen, the totalitarian conception itself embodies this conjunction of the political and aesthetic realms. The modelling conception entails, writes Stokes, a lack of restraint: "One can say . . . of modelling forms (as opposed to carving forms) in the widest sense, that they are without restraint: I mean that they can well be the perfect embodiment of conception: whereas, in the process of carving, conception is all the time adjusted to the life that the sculptor feels beneath his tool."(1) In many of the Cantos of this period we are at the mercy of Pound's conceptions; his impulse, conceived of as a making over of inert matter into form, has not evoked the resistance, nor been driven to care for, a material valuable in and for itself.

But there is an air of paradox about this head-long, modelling conception as employed within the framework of the ideogrammic method. That masterful energy is at the service of a poetic which relinquishes syntactic assertion, its officious grading of clauses, and attempts to grant its elements the unimportuning weight of the relata of nature ("notes as facets of air,/ and the mind there, before them, moving,/ so that notes needed not move" (XXV/119)). It is hard to reconcile a wilful, plastic disposition of materials with the edged and faceted quality of the best of these Cantos. Such an uneasiness at the level of intuition should alert us to press further, to reach towards the possibility of methodological incompatibles at work and at loggerheads beneath this disruption of the surface. As it relates to the immediate texture of the poem, the question can best be explored by textual analysis. In so doing

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.235.

we should be alert to discover pointers towards the nature of the poet's gestatory impulse in any particular case: can we infer the vatic poet's officiation over the rites of emergence, or does Pound, instead, knead his material into a willed configuration?

Before proceeding to a detailed consideration of the later Cantos however, I want to introduce what I shall call the syntactic free verse of William Carlos Williams into our discussion; then, using Williams' poetry to throw Pound's very different practice into relief, I want to examine the relation of syntax to a poem's large-scale form, and the relation to both of the ideogrammic method and its syntactic discontinuities.

In America the generation following Pound's has looked, for the de-  
tail of its craft, much more to Williams than to the Cantos. This means that Williams, who was the more profoundly indebted to prose of the two, and who drew a great deal of his strength as a poet from the closeness of that relation, proved for the younger generation the more attractive, because the less schismatic, master. The three-ply verse of Williams' later years resolved for the poet the tricky question regarding the relative status of the written and the spoken poem. The principle of marking off the line-ending at some aurally tangible caesura, pursued spasmodically before, becomes the form's rationale. Before, his books were full of this sort of eye-poetry, playing off the syntactic structure against arbitrary line-breaks:

The sunlight in a  
yellow plaque upon the  
varnished floor

is full of a song

inflated to  
 fifty pounds pressure  
 at the faucet of  
 June that rings  
 the triangle of the air(1)

With which compare this superficially similar but ear-determined layout  
 of Zukofsky's:

The more that -  
 who? the world  
 seeks me so  
 to speak

the more  
 will I  
 seek  
 you(2)

Williams' poem is unperformable - or rather performance gives us only half of it. (Robert Creeley's practice of pausing at the end of such lines - making the eye-device audible - is perverse: we might just as well, in reading a novel aloud, pause at the end of a line and of a page, to give the feel of its typographic existence. You don't approximate to the eye's experience, you just render your performance mysteriously halting.) It employs what is essentially a semantic device, retarding the completion of a clause across line-breaks while depositing in those cracks various teasing half-senses and illusory completions. This sentence half-resolves itself six times:

A perfect rainbow! a wide  
 arc low in the northern sky/  
 spans the black lake/

troubled by little waves/  
 over which the sun  
 south of the city shines in/

(1) William Carlos Williams, Imaginations, ed. Webster Schott, 1970, p.109 (Spring and All, 1923).  
 (2) Louis Zukofsky, '1959 Valentine', in All: The Collected Short Poems, 1923-1964, New York, 1971, p.211.



when the sun strikes it  
           and the waves  
                           are wakened.  
       \*  
       But if I have come from the sea  
                           it is not to be  
 wholly  
           fascinated by the glint of waves.  
                           The free interchange  
 of light over their surface  
           which I have compared  
                           to a garden  
 should not deceive us  
           or prove  
                           too difficult a figure.  
       \*  
       In the huge gap  
                           between the flash  
 and the thunderstroke  
           spring has come in  
                           or a deep snow fallen.  
       \*  
 Light, the imagination  
           and love,  
                           in our age,  
 by natural law,  
           which we worship,  
                           maintain  
 all of a piece  
           their dominance.(1)

Williams fastens on an element common to both poetry and prose and makes it his organizing and vivifying centre. In that last extract from 'Asphodel', the ornate and decorous syntax replaces metre as a source of impetus and principle of progression. And though the poem with metre has syntax too, it is never isolated as here, doesn't have to bear the full weight of the poem. Neither has Williams' poem simply lost half of what the syntax-with-metre poem had: it doesn't just repose on the syntax; the quality of the poet's attention to this one element transforms it. That is what I mean when I refer to it as a musical device: in their prominence clauses become half-autonomous, and their interplay, and place

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(1) From William Carlos Williams, 'Asphodel, That Greeny Flower', in Pictures from Brueghel, New York, 1962, pp.153-82.

within the overarching sentence, become audible. The innards of the sentence are exposed, just as in an architect's projection a building's are. These procedures hint at a relationship to prose going well beneath the level - Pound's level - of diction and usage, and establish a middle ground from which both prosaist and poet may learn:

Memory is a kind  
of accomplishment,  
a sort of renewal  
even  
an initiation(1)

The lineation here is expressive because it answers to the movement of the verse, to what the verse already implied. The first break, though not obviously called for, registers and displays the thought's movement - unhurried; grave and considering - and draws out the possibility of the breath's pause. How much more risky, dependant on luck and rightness of touch, how difficult to sustain for long, is the beauty of this:

Agility, that is from the juniper,  
rice grows and the land is invisible  
By the pomegranate water,  
in the clear air  
over Li Chiang  
The firm voice amid pine wood,  
many springs are at the foot of  
Hsiang Shan  
By the temple pool, Lung Wang's  
the clear discourse  
as Jade stream (CXII/784)

R.P. Blackmur once spoke of Williams' "facility for the double effect of weight and speed".(2) "Weight", in his later work, he gets from the

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(1) From William Carlos Williams, 'The Descent', in Pictures from Brueghel, New York, 1962, p.73.

(2) R.P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry, 1954, p.348.

"pull of the sentence" (Marianne Moore said that she was "governed by the pull of the sentence as the pull of a fabric is governed by gravity"(1)); "speed" from his nimble transitions from particle to particle of syntax, displayed in the layout. But this passage from the Cantos, while it depends just as much as the variable foot on typography for its articulation, is of a quite different character. We are conscious, not of "speed", but of arrest, a heavy rhythmic retardation; of the "long suavity" (CX/778) of its movement. The typography doesn't confirm the syntax, it largely replaces it, keeping the verse firm with its precise indications of how the passage should be performed. With syntax vestigial, it is the ample and leisurely 'rests' at the line-endings which pace the lines and keep them distinct; and these 'rests' are set down unmistakably in the 'score', the arranged poem. In a long poem some recourse must be made to the unremarkable; functional stretches which, besides their own utility and the grace associated with that, may actually throw into relief the points of elevation. It is much easier to work this sort of transition, and the general pattern of which such transitions are a part, within a familiar context, and working with a medium both poet and reader know intimately. Eliot called that sustaining context the prosaic:

In a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole; and the passages of less intensity will be, in relation to the level on which the total poem operates, prosaic - so that, in the sense implied by that context, it may be said that no poet can write a poem of amplitude unless he is a master of the prosaic.(2)

Williams grasps the informing principle of the prosaic when he lays bare

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(1) See Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Charles Tomlinson, Englewood Cliffs, 1969, p.33.

(2) T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose, ed. Frank Kermode, 1975, pp.112-13.

its syntactic skeleton. The late poems draw on the substance of prose, and remain autonomous - remain poems - through the very intensity of their concern with it. They explore, culmulativevely, the musical properties of syntax, by which I mean that they make syntax 'musical' by working with, and making us conscious of, its system of balances, expectations, and resolutions. 'Asphodel' (not Paterson) shows the possibilities of this as a working ethic for the long poem, and it has been remarkably persuasive.

Our customary sense of the function of syntax in poetry is as an articulator of relationship. Insofar as the poem's consonances are explicit - that is, leaving aside such things as symbolic relationship - they are the work of syntax either literally, within the sentence, or metaphorically, as what we might call the syntax of the whole. It is in this metaphorical sense that Winifred Nowotny uses the word here: "In those words - 'syntax, the mode in which his [Homer's] thought is evolved' - Arnold expresses a discernment criticism cannot afford to overlook: a discernment of the importance of syntax at the highest creative point, that is, the poet's grasp of the relations inherent in the whole he is about to impart."(1) We can arrive at a better understanding of the relationship between these literal and metaphorical senses of the term by looking at what Susanne Langer, in an essay dealing with Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of language, has to say of syntax:

Language has more than a purely denotative function. Its symbols are so manifold, so manageable, and so economical that a considerable number

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(1) Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use, 1962, p.15.

of them may be held in one 'specious present', though each one physically passes away before the next is given; each has left its meaning to be apprehended in the same span of attention that takes in the whole series.(1)

It is this notion of a "specious present" that I want to concentrate upon. The term has its source in the work of A.N. Whitehead, and we can see it clearly - and briefly - at work in this passage from his book Science and the Modern World:

The total temporal duration of . . . an event bearing an enduring pattern, constitutes its specious present. Within this specious present the event realises itself as a totality. . . . One and the same pattern is realised in the total event, and is exhibited by each of these various parts through an aspect of each part grasped into the togetherness of the total event.(2)

Whitehead's characterization of the nature of event is plainly analogous to the sequences of syntax: both are irredeemably temporal in their operation, and both depend upon an atemporal and ideal realm for their unity and coherence. If we apply these syntactic considerations to poetry and begin at the level of the line, we find that we have a speculative model for the operation of agent upon object, and for our mode of apprehending that operation. The duration of predication in the flesh, as it were, has nonetheless its realm beyond time in the proposition enunciated. We apprehend that proposition atemporally, gathering up the discrete utterance into its cognitive reality as a specious present. This numinosity of the grammatical vehicle is a property and function of syntax. If we want to go on and talk about the 'syntactic' relation of sentence to sentence within the paragraph - the metaphorical sense of the term -

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(1) The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, New York, 1949, p.391 (Susanne K. Langer, 'On Cassirer's Theory of Language and Myth').

(2) A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, p.131.

it can only be by analogy: we here pass from the province of the grammarian to that of the rhetorician; from due order and ordinance to suasive arrangement. But the analogy subserves a real and active kinship between syntax properly so called and the architectonics of the paragraph and the stanza. There seems to me to be a demonstrable affinity holding between strength of syntax and strength in the larger and more fugitive relations. Firmness of deployed structure in the epic, for example, has traditionally depended upon the syntactic vigour of declamatory utterance. How then is syntax related to form in our experience of a poem, and particularly of a long poem?

A specious present has to be constructed - or is provoked - in the reading of poetry, not only in regard to the sort of syntactic comprehension required by any verbal communication, but also, and analogously, when labouring to grasp the formal relationships between part and part (however one defines those parts). In reading Blake's 'The Mental Traveller' for instance, which isn't a very long poem, there is a complex and baffling narrative structure to be mastered before one begins to grasp the poem's alogical or symbolic relationships. Our comprehension of syntactic utterance is spontaneous; the specious present which we are extending by analogy to embrace the formal relations within a poem is comparatively difficult to grasp. Having read a poem rationally structured, such as Paradise Lost, we will look back at, and meditate upon, the ground covered, thus constituting an artificial simultaneity, a "specious present". Assuming that we have read the poem adequately, this whole will be ordered and spacious, with precise subordinations and enhancements of interest attaching to one or other of its parts. The reasons why this should be so are bound up with what I have called

"rational structure". By this I mean our ability to account for the structure of a poem, in retrospect, without recourse to impressionism or metaphor. Obviously we must approach the lyric more indirectly, but these imperatives hold for the long poem as they do for the novel. All three forms articulate time, they are forms "cut into time", as Pound put it,(1) but the length of the epic's and of the novel's incision demands, not more rigorous, but more formally explicit contours than does the lyric's. It demands to be more syntactically explicit, as it were, in the sense that syntax articulates, unfolds, or dilutes. But Pound deeply distrusted, as many contemporary poets distrust, this faculty of naming relationship and process, mirroring or miming it in grammatical function. Grammar can assert anything, as in Fenollosa's example: "A ring-tailed baboon is not a constitutional assembly'."(2) But Pound's method of juxtaposition without copula would, he hoped, establish only viable relationships, for it arrayed its material, like nature, non-compulsively, and allowed the eye to make its own connections. The materials of the Cantos were to have the same sort of relationship to one another as hill to valley, pinewood to lake.

The idea of a specious present concerns the contemplation of a work rather than its utterance, and while the two can only be notionally separated, as they are equally essential to the creation and reception of poetry, it is still true to say that the reading or speaking of a poem occupies time and presupposes temporality, but its comprehension as a whole involves the reader in an abstraction from the temporal. And in going on to speak of "rational structure" we draw not merely an a-temporal, but a positively spatial analogy, for of course the art lying

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(1) See ABCR, p.202.

(2) Ernest Fenollosa, ChWrCh, p.26.

behind the phrase is that of architecture. What though if instead of structure we talk of energy; not of an achieved artefact, but of a subjective value? Pound speaks of an "energy" mattering in art, "a force transfusing, welding, and unifying".(1) Such a concept has reference, not to the finished work of art, but to the process of its creation. It is a factor discovered in composition. As part of the poet's organon its agency is creative: "Energy, or emotion, expresses itself in form."(2) The stress on process is morphological, but, as we have said, "energy", as Pound here intends it - that is to say, as distinct from the organic energy of a burgeoning organism - is a magnetic, modelling force, masculine in its provenance.

The same concern with process rather than structure is, however, evident in Pound's parallel organicist conception of creative activity. From this perspective, not only will the poet look upon the rigorous organization and structuring of poetic material as arrogant imposition, but those same principles will implicitly condemn the forma conceived of as a driving of pattern into inert substance - in which case the intaglio will be, by analogy, more admirable than the cast:

the imprint of the intaglio depends  
                   in part on what is pressed under it  
 the mould must hold what is poured into it (LXXIX/486)

And, as we have said, given Pound's Adamic principles - which underlie the organicist element in the forma figure - one would expect him to conceive of a sort of intagliated poetry also. Robert Duncan puts the position well: "when I speak of form I mean not something the poet

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(1) LE, p.49 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

(2) SP, p.346 ('Affirmations - As For Imagisme', The New Age, 1915).



gives to things but something he receives from things".(1) This respect of the poet's for the linguistic material beneath his hand, coupled with a commitment to the activity of writing rather than to polished results, issues in this sort of emphasis - Duncan's - on event and immediacy: "in the telling of the story and in the composition of the poem, powerful influences towards pattern emerge along lines of felt relationships and equilibrations having their immediate locus in each immediate event of the poem".(2) The events of the poem are not bound together by an apparent structure; they are transfused, welded and unified by the poet's energy (of a spiritual rather than neural kind), or they are bound together, as leaf is bound to root, by organic process; in either case the intended result is form, the emotion "expresses itself in form".

Form must be discriminated from structure (root struere, "to build").

Pound gives its root sense in Canto XCIII:

That love is the 'form' of philosophy,  
is its shape (è forma di Filosofia) (XCIII/626)

Form isn't something willed or built; it is the Idea of a creature or artefact, part of its being and hence present from its inception, not arrived at as a structure. So, paradoxically, we find form to be essentially intransitive while structure involves the temporal process of construction. In other words, Paradise Lost is put together, and read, piece by piece, to the end that the achieved structure, the architectonics, may be contemplated atemporally (the poem's temporality is violated when one's memory views its parts in relation). The Ideal is

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(1) Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography, Fremont Michigan, 1968, p.41.

(2) Ibid., p.14.

created through the artful disposition of the Actual. But Pound (other than in the special case of the Malatesta Cantos) rejects the notion of structure, the building of an edifice which is subsequently surveyed, looked back on, creating instead a poetic of immanence, of particles of language within each of which inheres the Idea of a whole nowhere explicitly articulated or unfolded. The ideogrammic method presupposes a something generated by its acts of apposition; what Denis Donoghue called, after R.P. Blackmur, the "trouble between the images".(1) The "trouble" is, of course, unformulable: the fact that it escapes language constitutes the form's rationale, its necessity. The communication of a truth "past metaphor" (LXXXII/526) demands an unprecedented idiom, far removed from the common idiom of prose, "an arrangement both of words and sentences and a use and selection of (what are called) figures of speech, both as to their kind, their frequency and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and alien in . . . prose".(2)

We have, then, two versions of the concept of poetic process, a concept the Cantos embodies over against the concept of structure. But, as we have noted, one of those versions - the organicist - may be turned against the other, modelling version on the very terms of Pound's argument against structure: the poetic that rejects structure also rejects the mastering, masculine forma. I hope to demonstrate, in examining Cantos XXXI to LI, that Pound's poetry justifies his rejection of structure where it springs from the vatic poet's ideal of emergence, and mostly fails - though, as we shall see, Cantos XXXIX and XLVII are interesting and complex exceptions to this - when impelled by an ideal of Yeatsian mastery over its materials because then, like the structured poem, it imposes form.

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(1) See Denis Donoghue, The Ordinary Universe: Soundings in Modern Literature, 1968, p.305.

(2) S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson, 1975, pp.205-06.

At this point, let us refer a passage from the Cantos to the term forma:

Serénely in the crýstal jét  
 as the bríght ball that the fountáin tósses  
 (Verláine) as díámond cleárness  
 Hówsóft the wínd under Taíshan  
     where the séa is remémbered  
 out of héll, the píť  
 out of the dúst and gláre évil  
 Zéphyrus / Apelióta:  
 Thís líquid is cértainly a  
     próperty of the mínd  
 néc áccidens ést but an élement  
     in the mínd's máke-up  
 est ágens and fúnctions dúst to a fountáin pán ótherwise  
     Hast 'ou seen the róse in the steel dúst  
     (or swánsdown éver?)  
 so líght is the úrging, so órdered the dárk pétals of íron  
 wé who have pássed over Léthe. (LXXIV/449)

Whitehead speaks of a "reasonable harmony of being" and, of that being's parts, asks that they should be "reasonably together".(1) Clearly the various portions of this passage are "reasonably together". We recognize in the sequence of images a coherence which at the words' end reaches back to embrace each detail and movement, to constitute a whole in the reader's mind. Whitehead also speaks, though, of "the mere fact of concurrent existence in the unity of one occasion".(2) A unity dependent solely on concurrence is an arbitrary coagulation, a clot of elements

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(1) See A.N. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 2nd edn., Cambridge, 1932, pp.34-35.

(2) See ibid., p.34.

bound by mere proximity. If we are happy to call the lines from Canto LXXIV a whole, what relations between them account for that fact, that "reasonable harmony of being"? Certainly the lines, and the words within the lines, exist concurrently; what then prevents their unity from being merely occasional?

Coherence here can be demonstrated at two levels: in terms of rhythm - rhythmic coherence - and in terms of structure, whether conceptual or imagistic. As a gesture towards comprehending the former, I have scanned the passage. It can contain so much heterogeneous material - the footnote-like citing of Verlaine, the notation identifying the winds, the Latin - because of the musical strength his (basically) trisyllabic 'feet' lend to every verbal element. In fact this material isn't just contained, it is assimilated, and this is achieved by the poet's working the heterogeneous matter into his musical scheme. So the bracketed "Verlaine" most effectively arrests the lines' movement - not swift, but powerful - by imposing a caesura before "as diamond clearness". And on the line "Zephyrus / Apeliota" the movement of the passage turns. The grandeur of the preceding lines, mounting to the staccato "out of hell, the pit / out of the dust and glare evil", hangs on those two singly-stressed names, before modulating into the rapid and prose-like "This liquid is certainly a / property of the mind". And the discursive or more soberly considering tone the word "certainly" warrants is carried through in, and as it were naturalizes, the snatches of Latin. In a similarly unifying way, the sequences of imagery and thought can be seen, by the reader, to fall into patterns of congruence, with the result that the image of "the dark petals of iron" (for instance) at the close, refers back to and enriches our earlier grasp of the fountain's significance, or that of the embodied

winds. These requisites - rhythmic unity, coherence of image and thought - are traditional, and lie behind traditional poetic dicta: though Pound satisfies them in a new way, as any original will. The sense communicated, of a powerful centre controlling the various elements of the poem and drawing them into significant form, is symptomatic of almost any successful poem. The juxtapositions of the ideogrammic method are given meaning, and rendered expressive, by the "trouble between the images"; and it is this trouble or resonance that stands in for a more conventional and explicit connecting element such as syntax. This is not to say, though, that we can number all of its explicit elements, as we can those of a structure: for the notions of explicit and implicit are meaningless in this context. The poetry has no inside and outside, no separable armature. We have therefore to write impressionistically about the poetry's unity; we have to supply a prosing of the whole out of our sense of its coherence. The retention of a prose-like syntax gives poetry a hold on the paraphrasable (even if paraphrase doesn't exhaust it); there is something to be discursively educed from the material. But what is the status of syntax in this passage from the Cantos? What is the precise nature of the association between (for example) "diamond clearness" and the "soft" wind a line later? Does the reader associate them spontaneously, or are there present in his mind suppressed - and conventionally syntactic - links? For example, take the line "est agens and functions dust to a fountain pan otherwise". There seem to be two possible answers to the question of what assumed presence fills the gap in the line: the word "as", in which case we have (implicitly) "and functions as dust to a fountain pan otherwise"; or (and this seems to me more likely) the gap could represent a very marked caesura, to which the sense corresponds, in which case the words would enter in after an intransitive "functions",

and would run something like "all we have is dust to a fountain pan otherwise". Of course "all we have is", or something like it, wouldn't be in the reader's mind as specifically as that: but the transitive feeling would, in the same way as a context accompanies the word "that" in these lines:

that the body of light come forth  
   from the body of fire  
 And that your eyes come to the surface  
   from the deep wherein they were sunken,  
 Reina - for 300 years,  
   and now sunken  
 That your eyes come forth from their caves (XCI/610)

Donald Davie accounts for that context or presence in terms of a phrase suppressed: "the introduction of such sentiments with 'that' (the antecedent 'I pray' or 'I will' being suppressed) is so common in the late Cantos as to be almost a mannerism".(1) Are the ellipses merely a modification of conventional syntax then, for which the reader makes allowance, or are his associations spontaneous, and substantially different from those established by syntax? The forma is constituted by a "reasonable harmony of being" the parts of which are "reasonably together"; we can more or less satisfactorily account for that reasonableness by making an impressionistic paraphrase of the harmonious passage in question; but we are no nearer an understanding of how the poetry's apposed elements enter into such eloquent association. We understand something of the content of the poetry, and how it hangs together, and of its rhythmic values insofar as these are susceptible to measurement, but we still don't know how it works (though we feel it working). In trying to find an answer to this question I shall first look at what seem to me vestigial traces of conventional, Browningsque poetic means in the Pisan Cantos, then, lengthily, at Cantos XXXIX and XLVII.

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(1) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, p.68.

As we remarked in Part One, Chapter 1, the basic unit of Pound's later poetry is the line. These lines constitute the material the ideogrammic method organizes. The elements of the later Cantos are brief syntactic units - occasionally single words - which are often without syntactic relation to surrounding lines. Frequently this unit is built up - as in the Pisan Cantos - into a sort of little epigram, and a succession of these are set one against another:

With drawn sword as at Nemi  
                   day comes after day

and the liars on the quai at Siracusa  
                                   still vie with Odysseus  
 seven words to a bomb

dum capitolium scandet  
 the rest is explodable  
 Very potent, can they again put one together  
 as the two halves of a seal, or a tally stick? (LXXVII/467)

There we have the method in its pure form, with nothing tangible but space between the separate utterances (which is not to say that they are in fact discrete); and as if to underscore this exemplary status, down the right hand side of the page are arrayed a series of Chinese characters, the sponsors of this reformation. What Pound intended us to hear, I think, in the blanks between his voice, was a sort of organic, invisible verb, similar to the transitive space he sensed between the individual ideographs. But the method wasn't always used so self-consistently. What Wyndham Lewis, in Time and Western Man, saw as the emotional and mimetic reference of the first thirty Cantos' ellipses(1)

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(1) See Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, 1927, p.88.

survives into the Pisan Cantos as the fairly frequent use of a bluffing syntax, giving the illusion of a voice picking up the thread of its story or being overheard mid-stream:

but in Tangier I saw from dead straw ignition (LXXIV/432)

or longevity because as says Aristotle  
philosophy is not for young men (LXXIV/441)

So that in the synagogue in Gibraltar  
the sense of humour seemed to prevail (LXXVI/454)

For nowt so much as a just peace  
That wd/ obstruct future wars (LXXVII/474)

who live by debt and war profiteering  
Das Bankgeschäft (LXXVII/474)

and as for sulking  
I knew but one Achilles in my time  
and he ended up in the Vatican (LXXX/502)

As Mabel's red head was a fine sight  
worthy his minstrelsy (LXXX/507)

Not one of these but's, or's, so's, for's, who's, and's or as's has any grammatical connection with the preceding words, as the reader may verify. And elsewhere in these Cantos the hesitant, rather theatrical voice of Browningsque persona is heard:

and the greatest is charity  
to be found among those who have not observed  
regulations  
not of course that we advocate -  
and yet petty larceny  
in a regime based on grand larceny  
might rank as conformity nient' altro (LXXIV/434)

but all the vair and fair women  
and there is also the more northern (not nordic)  
tradition from Memling to Elskamp, extending  
to the ship models in Danzig...  
if they have not destroyed them  
with Galla's rest, and... (LXXVI/455)



So Salzburg reopens  
 lit a flame in my thought that the years  
 Amari—li Am—ar—i—li! (LXXIX/484)

to that 'gadgett', and to the production and the slaughter  
 (on both sides) in memoriam  
 'Hell! don't they get a break for the whistle?'  
 and if the court be not the centre of learning...  
 in short the snot of pejorocracy...  
 tinsel gilded  
 of fat fussy old woman  
 and fat snorty old stallions (LXXIX/487)

Here Pound breaks off, apparently under the stress of private emotion  
 or a public indignity, and the ellipses, the juxtapositions, serve hist-  
 rionic rather than formal purposes. But such staginess isn't typical of  
 the later Cantos. In Canto LXXIV Pound mimes, not the plausibilities of  
 a voice, but the "periplum" of the winds as they cut about and "veer",  
 and he does it brilliantly:

By no means an orderly Dantescan rising  
 but as the winds veer  
 tira libeccio  
 now Genji at Suma , tira libeccio  
 as the winds veer and the raft is driven  
 and the voices , Tiro, Alcmene  
 with you is Europa nec casta Pasiphaë  
 Eurus, Apeliota as the winds veer in periplum  
 Io son la luna' . Cunizza  
 as the winds veer in periplum  
 and from under the Rupe Tarpeia  
 drunk with wine of the Castelli  
 'in the name of its god' 'Spiritus veni'  
 adveni / not to a schema (LXXIV/443-44)

The predominant qualities of this passage, its musicianly repetitions,  
 its strong controlling centre or forma informing and unifying the many  
 elements, I want to examine in detail now at work in a Canto where the  
forma is particularly masterful - Canto XXXIX.

THE CANTOS OF THE THIRTIES1. Cantos XXXIX and XLVII

Canto XXXIX represents Pound's most direct expression of amative experience in the Cantos. At its opening, it takes us back to the events preceding and preparing for the nostos of Canto I: to the transformation of Odysseus' men, to Odysseus' lying with Circe, and to Circe's grim words advising the Greeks' passage to the Underworld. Like Canto I itself, the Canto is an act of penetration - there are "fucked girls", (XXXIX/193) Odysseus couples with Circe, and the whole culminates in a spring-tide, god-making orgiastic rite. Such is the subject matter; but over and above this, the rhythmic idiom of the Canto is penetrative. We remarked on the slowness and "suavity" of a passage from the Drafts and Fragments earlier, and that measure is characteristic of the Cantos in their lyric aspect. Canto XXXIX's movement, however, is not slow in that way: though the verse hasn't the urging, forward movement of a poetry founded on enjambment and the verse paragraph - though it doesn't, in that sense, move anywhere - it has the circling, mounting, cumulative pace of sexual arousal and discharge. Its rhythms are copulative, as opposed to what we might call the contemplative rhythms of, say, Canto II, or Canto XVII. Those rhythms encompass the seer's delight as he watches over the flowering of form and the enactment of vision. The rhythms of Canto XXXIX - whose close cousin is the pounding ictus of Canto I - as it were participate in, rather than mirror, their subject matter. The conception of the god with which it culminates has been triggered by the rhythm's "male cast of . . . seed".(1)

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(1) PD, p.207 ('Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love, by Rémy de Gourmont, 1922).

Throughout our discussion thus far I have suggested that Pound's frequent espousal of mastery in relation to his impulse, his espousal of the Yeatsian creative fiat - "'I made it out of a mouthful of air'"(1) - was an aberration. But I have acknowledged that, from the time of Vorticism to the formulation of the totalitarian poetic in the 1930s, that masculine stress ran parallel to Pound's commitment to "a gentler order of feeling".(2) I have suggested that the prose is almost unrelievedly masculine, mastering in tone, but that the first thirty Cantos belie that emphasis in their concern for emergence, contradict the modelling emphasis by their loving regard for the matrices of stone, air and water. And I have suggested, further, that the prose emphasis, when it got into the poetry, was disastrous, and resulted in the debacle of the Hell Cantos. It would be strange, though, if that masculine emphasis, so much a part of the poet's character, persisted in fruitlessness throughout his career. The grounds for the success of Canto XXXIX's seminal poetry can be approached through a distinction made by Blackmur, and taken up by Denis Donoghue in a Yeatsian context. Yeats, he writes,

thinks little of an object until it conspires with his latent powers, delivering them: so R.P. Blackmur called him 'an erotic poet, with regards to his objects, not a sacramental poet'. A sacramental poet respects the object for itself but even more for the spirit which, however mysteriously, it contains: at some extreme point in his relation to the object, such a poet is always willing to 'let be', he is merely the spirit's celebrant. An erotic poet may respect the object in itself, but it is not characteristic of him to do so, and beyond the point of acknowledgement the only relevant spirit is his own and he is never willing to let be. When the erotic poet has done with the object, he may persist in his relation to it, but for his own sake: the object has helped him to define his power, and he is tender toward it for that reason. The distinction holds only for extreme cases: its relevance to Yeats is that a poet who resorts to the idiom of power has to decide, on tendentious occasions, whether his imagination comes first and the natural object second in his favour, or vice versa. Yeats would like to avoid such occasions, but if he must face them, he strikes out for power, and the natural object must fend for itself.(3)

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(1) See GK, p.152.

(2) Gaudier-Brzeska's phrase; see GB, p.28.

(3) Denis Donoghue, Yeats, 1971, p.32.

Curiously enough, Pound himself rejected Yeats' later strenuousness, preferring the early poetry. His selections in the anthology Confucius to Cummings included no poem later than 1914. This tells us something about Pound's allegiance to the Yeats whose presence had drawn him to London, the twilit Yeats who echoes in so many of his early poems, the Yeats - remaking his craft - he shared a Sussex cottage with in 1913. After Responsibilities (1914) Pound loses interest in the poetry. It gives a context for the expletive - "putrid" - that was Pound's only comment on Yeats' play The King of the Clock Tower, when its author showed it to him in Rapallo, 1933.(1) His allegiance to the Yeats of misted elegy may even tell us something about Pound's own deepest sympathies, for he turned his face against the masculine force of the later - great - poetry. Still, this doesn't alter the fact that Canto XXXIX celebrates an "erotic" penetration of the world as surely as Yeats celebrates it in 'Leda and the Swan'. And this despite the fact that the poet, in that work of his we have so far considered, is predominantly and pre-eminently a "sacramental" poet, as Blackmur defines such. Again, and with Odysseus again for theme, the poet celebrates - as in Canto I - the penetrative, spermatic intelligence. And that mode of the intelligence chimes with the magnetic, rather than with the organic, conception of the forma.

The Canto opens with a conflation of two places: Lake Garda, where the cat walked on the rail ("as the cat walked the porch rail at Gardone" (LXXVI/458)), and Rapallo, where Pound was a well-known and extravagant ministrant to cats. The specification is important by reference to this Canto's companion-piece, Canto XLVII, which details a pagan rite still operative in the Rapallo of the 1930s. Here it serves as a 'dissolve'

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(1) See Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, p.312.

into the Canto's Odyssean matter, for the "'thkk, thgk' / of the loom", heard from the "hill path" (XXXIX/193) up to Pound's apartment, Via Marsala 12, Rapallo, is inseparable (in this context) from the loom Circe plied, the sound of which reached the ears of Odysseus' scouting party as they approached "The house of smoothe stone", a sound mingled with her voice, "the sharp sound of a song / under olives": (XXXIX/193). They were charmed - and reassured. The voice of one of those beguiled men is then heard:

When I lay in the ingle of Circe  
I heard a song of that kind.

Fat panther lay by me  
Girls talked there of fucking, beasts talked there of eating,  
All heavy with sleep, fucked girls and fat leopards,  
Lions loggy with Circe's tisane,  
Girls leery with Circe's tisane

κακά φάρμακ' ἔδωκεν

kaka pharmak edoken (XXXIX/193)

The Circean sensuality is heavy, sluggish, drugged: "she gave them evil drugs", "kaka pharmak edoken". Beasts - "loggy" and "fat" - insinuate bestiality. "Ingle" - the most fitting reference, amongst the several available, is to "ingle-nook" (Scots), chimney-corner - enforces a sense of cramp, claustrophobia. It is not dwelt on. Elements from Odysseus' narrative are pressed together: his description of Circe's house, the fawning beasts his party found there, robbed of their savage virtù ("wolf to curry favour for food" (XXXIX/193)), in reality transformed men. We read of Circe's lineage and sibling - "born to Helios and Perseis / That had Pasiphae for a twin" (XXXIX/193) - for divine lineage consorts with the ritual that is to come, the engendering of the god. In accord, too, with those amative rites, she is evoked as an object of desire: "Venter venustus, cunni cultrix, of the velvet marge" (XXXIX/193) - "Belly beautiful, cunny

tender". Spring is invoked - "ver novum, canorum, ver novum" (XXXIX/193) - but it is a Circean spring, a thing of witchcraft, artificially prolonged like the paradiso of the "lotophagoi" (see Canto XX): "Spring overborne into summer / late spring in the leafy autumn" (XXXIX/193). Such crafted disposition of the seasons sorts with the current of feeling the Canto celebrates, the driving of form into matter, the manipulation of natural verities. And such charming of the natural order contrasts with Canto XLVII's careful instructions out of Hesiod, as to how the husbandman should hew to the season's contour ("Begin thy plowing / When the Pleiades go down to their rest" (XLVII/237)). As the loom, manufacture, opens this Canto, so the "fantasies" connected with agriculture inform Canto XLVII. The two activities parallel the carving/modelling distinction:

Just as the cultivator works the surfaces of the mother earth so the sculptor rubs his stone to elicit the shapes which his eye has sown in the matrix. The material, earth or stone, exists. Man makes it more significant. To wash, to polish, to sweep, are similar activities. But to weave or to make a shoe, indeed the processes of most trades, are pre-eminently manufacture, a making, a plastic activity, a moulding of things.(1)

The invocation to the spring - out of the Pervigilium Veneris - has been aborted by its reference to the malign rites of Circe. A similarly baffled hope inheres in the Greek words "KALON AOIDIAEI / . . . e theos e gune....ptheggometha thasson" (XXXIX/193), excerpted from the blithe speech of Polites ("most / faithful and likable of my officers"(2)):

'Dear friends, no need for stealth: here's a young weaver  
singing a pretty song to set the air  
a-tingle on these lawns and paven courts.  
Goddess she is, or lady. Shall we greet her?'(3)

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(1) Adrian Stokes, CW1, p.230.

(2) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.183.

(3) Ibid., p.184.

To which Pound apposes a chant-like, repetitive account of the party's actual treatment at the hands of the goddess:

First honey and cheese  
                   honey at first and then acorns  
 Honey at the start and then acorns  
 honey and wine and then acorns  
 Song sharp at the edge, her crotch like a young sapling  
 illa dolore obmutuit, pariter vocem (XXXIX/194)

As in Canto I, Circe is the malign, bestializing sorceress, providing hog-feed for her dupes - but also "the trim-coifed goddess" (I/3), beautiful and with clear voice and "crotch like a young sapling". We saw earlier this ambiguity in the Female echoed by Aphrodite, both beautiful and terrible, and reflected in those paired goddess' avatars, Helen of Troy, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isotta degli Atti. Violence attaches itself to beauty by some ill law which Pound abhors but cannot expunge; hence "there is no perception of beauty without a corresponding disgust".(1) Pound recalls this wider - indeed universal - context of the Circean beauty and malignity, in this Canto, by the most elliptical of means; the line of Latin above is taken from the Metamorphoses, and translates as "She hushed with grief, and her voice likewise". The words are spoken by Priam's wife Hecuba over the dead body of her son, Polydorus, washed ashore. His death is the far consequence of the violence instigated by Helen's beauty, and it issues in more violence, for the veangeful Hecuba blinds her son's murderer - his uncle Polymnestor - and kills Polymnestor's two sons, escaping vengeance in her turn by assuming a bitch's form.

Further play is made on the matter of Canto I when Pound transcribes, in the original Greek, Circe's injunction to Odysseus to voyage to the

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(1) LE, p.415 ('Joyce', The Future, 1918).

Underworld (a passage translated at the opening of Canto XLVII). This 'candying' of elements from The Odyssey recalls the similar disjunctions and ellipses we noted in the Malatesta Cantos; in that case, however, Pound was chopping up the chronology of history, and though the original order of events can be reconstituted, it requires a great deal of particularized and somewhat esoteric knowledge in the reader to do so. I have argued that such reconstitution, while it may be interesting and diverting, isn't strictly necessary for an adequate reading of the verse. Pound isn't playing upon an imputed body of specific knowledge in the reader, but upon his generalized expectations regarding narrative. And the purpose of that play is to negate the temporal continuum of history and to fabricate a quasi-spatial structure miming the solid presence of the Tempio. The sequence doesn't communicate a coherent body of historical data: it conveys an "effect"; and so Pound could claim in the Guide to Kulchur that it was unobscure.<sup>(1)</sup> However, in the case of Canto XXXIX one may assume that knowledge of The Odyssey's story is exoteric; hence the "candied"<sup>(2)</sup> shards of narrative will each have a resonance and reference born of the reader's specific knowledge. In this case then Pound is playing his poetry off against specific knowledge rather than generalized expectation. The effect of this, somewhat paradoxically, is to heighten the specificity of the text: though dealing with myth rather than history, the resonance of the poetry's elements is far more determinate than the significance of the Malatesta Cantos' historical matter. I would argue further - though the point cannot be fully developed as yet - that the sureness of reference of this Canto is uncharacteristic of the Cantos as a whole, and that this fact has something to do with the sort of poetic energy to which it gives expression. Its various elements all pull towards a centre, as the "steel

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(1) See GK, p.194.

(2) See L, p.285 (Homer L. Pound, 1927).



dust" (LXXIV/449) is drawn into the magnet's field. The energy is masculine, compulsive; whereas, more characteristically, a Canto, or a passage from a Canto, presents itself to the reader like the open face of a rose, as a disposed surface across which the reader moves, making his own connections. This effect is a function of the voluntaristic nature of the reader/text relationship which the Cantos mostly establish, and which is compromised by the powerfully felt thematic centres of Canto XXXIX and Canto XLVII. We shall return to this point at the end of the section.

This first portion of the Canto, though it is, as we have said, "candied" - shifts rapidly from image to image - does so with a sure step, and always within the Odyssean ambit. Heterogeneous matter is introduced in what can be felt as a distinct section of the Canto, the second of three, with the appearance of the Egyptian fertility goddess Hathor. I don't know what she is doing in a box at sea, but the figure who accosts her must be Maya (not "Mava", whom none of the commentators have succeeded in identifying; the name must be a misprint) for the phrasing in this Canto - "Came Mava swimming with light hand lifted in overstroke" (XXXIX/194) - is echoed in Canto LXXVI, in a context which involves Maya (Maia):

spiriti questi? personae?

tangibility by no means atasal  
but the crystal can be weighed in the hand  
formal and passing within the sphere: Thetis,  
Maya, *Ἀφροδίτη*,

no overstroke  
no dolphin faster in moving  
nor the flying azure of the wing'd fish under Zoagli  
when he comes out into the air, living arrow. (LXXVI/459)

Pound seems to be contrasting Aphrodite's effortless riding of the waves in her sea-shell with the effortfulness of even Maya's "light hand", her

"overstroke". In Canto XXXIX, though the anecdote is quite baffling, it is apparent that both Hathor and Maya are further and benign aspects of the syncretic Goddess.

After this clouded episode we are on surer ground; lines from the Paradiso are cited - more heterogeneous matter: "Che mai da me non si parte il diletto / Fulvida di folgore" (XXXIX/194). They are from different parts of the poem; the first reads, in its context (Binyon's translation):

Each of those white fires strained into a crest  
 Its flame, so that the affection infinite  
 They had for Mary was made manifest.  
 There for a while they lingered in my sight  
 Singing Regina Coeli, in tone so steeped  
 In sweetness, I still taste of the delight. (1 - my italics)

The conjunction here of Divine fire and Heaven's Queen (Regina Coeli) makes of Mary - heretically enough - another, gracious aspect of the syncretic Goddess. By isolating the phrase "I still taste of the delight", which Dante applies to his wonder at Vision, and dropping it into an erotic context, that tasting becomes a savouring of the memory of coitus. Nor is this a wilful or mischievous shifting of emphasis, given these two factors: firstly, Pound's belief that coition and vision are allied closely in the quality of experience they grant - "in coitu inluminatio" (LXXIV/435); and secondly, given a tradition Dante himself was in touch with - stemming from the troubadours - and which Dante's friend Cavalcanti celebrated: a tradition which assimilated Christian worship (and therefore Mary) to a quasi-mystical worship of the Lady. Peter Makin writes that there were three stages in the evolution of the courtly

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(1) Dante, Paradiso, XXIII.124-29, in The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano, 2nd edn., New York, 1969.

love-lyric: the doctrine of William IX, which held that to approach the Lady is to raise oneself to a higher level of existence; Arnaut's, where the exaltation of the beloved has widened to embrace the Virgin Mary's station, as a consequence of which "the element of worship in courtly love made it potentially a rival religion to Christianity; now [in Arnaut's time] it has come to include Christianity itself, or to regard Christianity as just an extension of itself";(1) finally the third stage, by which time,

the time of . . . Cavalcanti, and the other dolce stil nuovo poets, the metaphors are much more complex. The basis is that the Lady is the source of wisdom for her lover. So, as God informs the Virgin, who informs mankind; as the sun shines on the moon, which shines on the earth; as God illuminates His Church, which illuminates man; so the Lady irradiates the understanding of her lover.(2)

Pound's handling of this quotation from Dante places the latter squarely within this tradition, Beatrice being the source of enlightenment. But the erotic context makes a further connection - sanctioned by the more robust of the troubadours - and locates that enlightenment in the moment of sexual congress. The succeeding Dantean fragment and its context provides a further gloss on this: "Fulvida di folgore":

'Ever doth the Love which stills this heaven acclaim  
 Its own with salutation like to this,  
 Preparing so the candle for its flame.'  
 No sooner did these brief words on me seize,  
 Than I became aware that I had aid  
 To overpass my proper faculties.  
 And such new vision of the sense it made  
 That there is no intensity, my sight  
 Could not have borne to endure it unafraid.  
 And I beheld, shaped like a river, light  
Streaming a splendour between banks whereon  
 The miracle of the spring was pictured bright.(3 - my italics)

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(1) Peter Makin, Provence and Pound, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978, p.172.

(2) Ibid., pp.172-73.

(3) Dante, Paradiso, XXX.52-63, in The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano, 2nd edn., New York, 1969.

The Canto as a whole concerns Dante's ascent, with Beatrice, from the Primum Mobile into the Empyrean, the apex of his quest; and his vision of the Rose of Paradise. Boldly, then, Pound refers this quality of enraptured vision, quite literally paradisal, to a sexual context. The Dantesque ambience however - with the troubadour's cult of Amor behind it, and Cavalcanti - evokes an order of feeling more consonant with, say, Acoetes' reverence than Odysseus' mastering, by guile and force, of Circe. As we shall see, this ambivalence, this simultaneous presence of a feminine and a masculine stance towards experience, recurs in the Canto's culminating, orgiastic passage.

At this point in our reading, we notice the heterogeneity of reference of the Canto's middle section continuing with the surfacing of Glaucus: "Came here with Glaucus unnoticed, nec ivi in harum / Nec in harum ingressus sum" (XXXIX/194). The Latin comes from the 1804 translation of The Odyssey by Clark and Ernestus which Pound is using. The words are those of the prudent Eurylochus, who heard Circe's song, not as the "pretty song" of Polites' apprehension, but as a "chill, sweet song".(1) They translate: "Nor went I to the pigsty / Nor into the pigsty did I enter". This reminder of the goddess' predilections, pressed up against Dante's words, enforces the contrast between the paired realms of experience. But between the two Glaucus intervenes. What is his significance? The name must refer to Glaucus of Anthedon, a fisherman who became a sea-god by eating part of a herb sown by Cronos. He has various points of contact with the matter of The Odyssey. Two of these are merely analogical: he paid annual visits to the coasts and islands of Greece, where he prophesied to sailors and fishermen: and this may put us in

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(1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.184.

mind of Odysseus' more fraught and human debouchings on sea-coasts; and he profited by a divine herb's virtue, as Odysseus profits by moly. More concretely, Scylla, daughter of Hecate, was transformed into a monster who snatched away and devoured six of Odysseus' men as they tried to steer between this peril and that of Charybdis. And it was Circe who transformed her, the motive being that the mortal woman was loved by Glaucus, and the goddess was jealous. So much is clear, and reinforces our sense of Circe's malignity. But how is it then that the reference to Glaucus seems to come from Eurylochus? When was he in the god's company? The lines seem to imply that the two escaped from Circe's clutches together, reporting back thence to Odysseus. There is nothing in Homer about this - nor any reference at all to Glaucus for that matter. I can't pretend that I have any water-tight answer to the puzzle, but the following seems to me at least plausible: If we take the lines from Dante as spoken by Pound in propria persona, as an affirmation that he, like Dante, has had experience of the paradisaical realm (and we have seen that he did in fact make that claim - as in Canto XCI: "A lost kind of experience?/ scarcely" (XCI/617) - albeit the Paradise was "spezzato" (LXXIV/438)), then he "came here" - to the apprehension of Paradise - "with Glaucus", that is to say, as a mortal in touch with immortality, if only briefly; and "unnoticed" because his relation to the experience was contemplative, Acoetian, rather than assertive, penetrative. And "nec ivi in harum" because he has, as a consequence, escaped the toils of merely bestial passion. This is tendentious, but it is all I can make of the lines and the reference. Immediately after this affirmation, we hear Circe's Mae West-like proposition: "Discuss this in bed said the lady" (XXXIX/194).

This section of the Canto closes with another instance of the poetry's swirling chronology. Odysseus having bedded with the goddess unharmed,

and thus established his superiority - the mode of passion in marked contrast to that which apostrophized paradisaical light a moment before - a palimpsest of her remarks to him, from both before and after their coupling, is presented, concluding with the solicitous question of the benign Goddess: "Been to hell in a boat yet?" (XXXIX/195). It is the expression of a subjugated potency, the subjugation effected by Odysseus' god-inspired cunning - the use of the protective moly - and his mastering strength: his threatened use of the sword, and the consummation of that threat with the fleshly blade. It is a triumph of the spermatic intelligence, and follows upon the visionary's analogous triumph.

The Canto concludes with an enactment - literally an enactment, for as we have said the rhythms are copulative - of spring-inducing, god-making orgiastic rites. Necessarily they are mastering, for that seems to be how Pound experienced the sexual act (at least, such an assumption isn't wholly absurd given his formulations in the 'Postscript' to The Natural Philosophy of Love). But, just as Dante's visionary apprehension of Love was set against, and implicitly qualified, Odysseus' comportment with Circe, so here the Odyssean order is crossed with visionary talismans.

This matter is introduced via Catullus and Virgil:

Sumus in fide  
 Puellaeque canamus  
 sub nocte.... (XXXIX/195)

The first two lines come from Catullus XXXIV, a spring song. The whole

verse translates: "We girls and chaste boys are lieges of Diana. Diana let us sing, chaste boys and girls."(1) Chaste? But the apostrophe to the virgin goddess is omitted by Pound, and the Virgilian qualification (from Aeneid VI.268) is "sub nocte", "beneath the night". The rites take place "From half-dark to half-dark" (XXXIX/195), between dusk and dawn, and their tutelary goddess is Aphrodite. Their locale is specific: the cliffs at Terracina, here graced with the statue of Venus Pound wanted erected there, and looking out upon the imputed island of Circe. The rites are devoted to the engendering of the god: "'Fac deum!' 'Est factus!'" (XXXIX/195). The night is "Flora's", the Roman goddess of fertility. Spring is "sharp in the grass", but only properly consummated with the god's - probably Dionysus' - engendering: "Thus made the spring" (XXXIX/195). The Canto concludes with the magnificent lines:

Thus made the spring,  
Can see but their eyes in the dark  
not the bough that he walked on.

Beaten from flesh into light  
Hath swallowed the fire-ball  
A traverso le foglie  
His rod hath made god in my belly  
Sic loquitur nupta  
Cantat sic nupta

Dark shoulders have stirred the lightning  
A girl's arms have nested the fire,  
Not I but the handmaid kindled  
Cantat sic nupta  
I have eaten the flame. (XXXIX/195-96)

As we have said, hysteria is sterile, but both the Acoetian and the Odyssean moments are creative. One carves, the other models: both issue in form. This Canto celebrates the Odyssean moment, but crosses it: with contemplative, visionary experience, and in this final passage with the

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(1) See Catullus XXXI, in Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris, trans. F.W. Cornish, Heinemann, 1913.

figure of Venus' statue, talisman of emergence; with the triumphal phrase "Thus made the spring", a celebration of the natural eduction of spring which refers back to, and condemns, Circe's manipulations: "Spring overborne into summer / late spring in the leafy autumn" (XXXIX/193). The triumph is spermatic. The impregnated lover speaks in the tones of awed compliance: "I have eaten the flame". With whatever qualification, the Canto details the hero's circumvention of the bestial order, his subjugation of the castrating Goddess, and his triumphal impressment of form upon the passive matrix, beating flesh into light. The Canto centres on the magnetic forma. Such powerfully, compulsively unified poetry is uncharacteristic of the Cantos' habitual mode. The reasons for this will become clearer when we have examined Canto XLVII.

I want to concentrate initially on the argument of this Canto. Like Canto XXXIX, it has a powerfully unitary core of argument, presented, not (of course) discursively, but in terms of vivid evocation and juxtaposition. We can approach it through Blake.

The mistrust of reality that informs the Gnostic vision is central to Blake's thinking. Nature and Hell are synonyms ("meer Nature or Hell"(1)). Nature is "A Creation that groans, living on Death, / Where Fish & Bird & Beast & Man & Tree & Metal & Stone / Live by Devouring, going into Eternal Death continually!"(2) It is redeemed by the imaginative man, who beholds "the real and eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe

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(1) William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, 1966, p.93.

(2) Ibid., p.681.



is but a faint shadow, & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more";(1) by the poet who, in answer to the question "'what is the material world, and is it dead?'" shows us "'all alive / The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy'".(2) Visionary eyes see that:

. . . all are Men in Eternity, Rivers, Mountains, Cities, Villages,  
All are Human, & when you enter into their Bosoms you walk  
In Heavens & Earths, as in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven  
And Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within,  
In your Imagination, of which this World of Mortality is but a Shadow.(3)

This redemption of nature is accomplished by the imagination, which reveals to the seer that the external world is man, fallen into separation at the Fall. Its externality is therefore an illusion, for "in your own Bosom you bear your Heaven / And Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears Without, it is Within". The fallen material Creation is redeemed when assimilated to the self, when it is recognized, in Berkeleian terms, as a construct of the senses, and particularly (for Blake the artist) as a construct of the eye: "For the Eye altering alters all".(4) A note Blake scribbled on some lines of Wordsworth's is relevant in this context, and for its bearing on Pound. The passage is from The Excursion:

How exquisitely the individual Mind  
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
Of the whole species) to the external World  
Is fitted:--& how exquisitely, too,  
Theme this but little heard of among Men,  
The external World is fitted to the Mind.

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(1) William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, 1966, p.717.

(2) Ibid., p.237.

(3) Ibid., p.709.

(4) Ibid., p.426.

To which Blake replies: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted. I know better & please your Lordship."(1) His Gnostic Christianity cannot countenance such a homely notion of man's bearing upon nature, and nature's provision for man - "such fitting & fitted". But Pound, particularly in his dealings with the Chinese classics, proposes a scheme of accommodation and partnership between man and "the external World" (though, as we have seen, that scheme has an unWordsworthian cast in its emphasis upon man's melioration of the soil). In fact, Pound presses this accommodation very far indeed, and he presses it towards the term 'nature' in the equation. Hence the thing most urgent to say about Greek philosophy, for instance, is that it "was almost an attack upon nature"; and the great and counterbalancing virtue of Confucianism is that it "included intelligence without cutting it from its base".(2) That base is "organic nature":

At no point does the Confucio-Mencian ethic or philosophy splinter and split away from organic nature. The man who pulled up his corn because it didn't grow fast enough, and then told his family he had assisted the grain, is Mencius' parable. The nature of things is good. The way is the process of nature, one, in the sense that the chemist and biologist so find it. Any attempt to deal with it as split, is due to ignorance and a failure in the direction of the will.(3)

"The nature of things is good": the Creation doesn't need redeeming, as Blake would have it, and man's proper commerce with nature isn't by assimilation, in which the external is taken up into man and becomes a portion of his countenance, but by intelligent surrender, which will "raise man up to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth".(4)

This quotation is from The Unwobbling Pivot, and it is in that translation

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(1) William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, 1966, p.784.

(2) SP, p.100 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)', The Criterion, 1938).

(3) Ibid, p.101 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)').

(4) C, p.175.

that Pound's position comes through most clearly and eloquently, and with a "carving" emphasis stemming from its pervadingly agricultural reference:

He who can totally sweep clean the chalice of himself can carry the inborn nature of others to its fulfillment; getting to the bottom of the natures of men, one can thence understand the nature of material things, and this understanding of the nature of things can aid the transforming and nutritive powers of earth and heaven [ameliorate the quality of the grain, for example] and raise man up to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth.(1 - his insertion)

And a little later:

He who possesses this sincerity does not lull himself to somnolence perfecting himself with egocentric aim, but he has a further efficiency in perfecting something outside himself.

Fulfilling himself he attains full manhood, perfecting things outside himself he attains knowledge.

The inborn nature begets this activity naturally, this looking straight into oneself and thence acting. These two activities constitute the process which unites outer and inner, object and subject, and thence constitutes a harmony with the seasons of earth and heaven.(2)

As we have seen, the duality Blake proposes is transcended by the subject's assimilation of the external world: an adjustment of vision cancels nature's illusory objectivity and reveals it as a portion of being. This revelation is hard-won though, and the struggle towards it is tortuous and painful. Its absence is part of that privation consequent upon the Fall. Pound, though for him the union of "outer and inner" isn't simply given, regards this proper adjustment as the natural consequence of self-interrogation, once misconceptions have been cleared away: "The inborn nature begets this activity naturally, this looking straight into oneself and thence acting." And he says elsewhere that "'There is no darkness but ignorance'" (LXXX/501). Blake converts aesthetic questions

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(1) C, pp.173-75.

(2) Ibid., p.179.

into ethical terms, the "distinct, sharp, and wirey . . . bounding line" being an aesthetic, and, directly transposed, an ethical value: "How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox, but by the bounding outline?" And: "What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions?"(1) Pound, on the other hand, converts ethical questions into terms of excellence ("We must not consider the grace of God only as 'forgiveness' but also as an aesthetic quality, and we must consider morality not only as an ethical force but also as a deeply intellectual energy"(2)). That is why his Hell is "for the other people", as Eliot observed (see page 144); evil is a lapse, or absence, of intelligence; "There is no darkness but ignorance".

As we have seen, for Pound the natural order is paramount, and epistemologically prior to language and reasoning. Thus the mind attends to the external phenomenon, rather than generating and shaping its own:

'as the sculptor sees the form in the air...  
'as glass seen under water,  
'King Otreus, my father...  
and saw the waves taking form as crystal,  
notes as facets of air,  
and the mind there, before them, moving,  
so that notes needed not move. (XXV/119)

This recalls Robert Duncan's definition of form as "not something the poet gives to things but something he receives from things".(3) That "taking form" of the waves, that generation of order in the external world, finds its confirmation twenty-five years later: "Crystal waves weaving together toward the gt/ healing" (XCI/611). The waves have

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(1) William Blake, Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, 1966, p.585.

(2) M, p.393 ('Marconi's Violins', Il Mare, 1936: translated).

(3) Robert Duncan, The Truth and Life of Myth: An Essay in Essential Autobiography, Fremont Michigan, 1968, p.41.

taken form; now they actively weave together towards the "gt/ healing", light. The "weaving" isn't of fluid waves rising and merging, it is the sheet of light woven by the scintillation of many glassy planes (a figure having something in common with Pound's ideogrammic free verse, as we shall see). Such beauty is sustained effortlessly, by the mere facts of light and a surface. But in Canto XLVII Pound confronted nature and art, and their conjunction, in terms of struggle and privation, terms which recall the Gnostic Blake we looked at a little earlier. In that Canto we find the matter Rock-Drill vitrifies so beautifully, the wave still "taking form".

In Pound's conception the poetic elements juxtaposed in the Cantos shed light on one another, the reader - ideally - tracing in their sequence a controlling forma, an Idea embracing and unifying the various portions. In the Guide to Kulchur Pound glossed this as "dynamic form",<sup>(1)</sup> which may be glossed, in its context in that book, as a compulsive, magnetic force, but which, made over into an expression of Pound's more organic conception of process, can be regarded as equivalent to the Platonic nisus, the tendency of substance to comport itself in relation to and at the behest of its Idea. In either case we have an activity, a poetry, that operates by reference to an informing but inexplicit concept which may be inferred from the material, but is nowhere concretely present.

The particular forma or "dynamic form" exceptionally clear, strong, 'magnetic' in Canto XLVII, is prefigured in two lines from Canto VI:

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(1) See GK, p.152.

The stone is alive in my hand, the crops  
will be thick in my death-year... (VI/21)

The Canto's theme is to be sensed in the apposition of clauses here, where the interpenetration of nature and art is seen in its pathetic aspect: the natural world responds to the sculptor's hand but will also flourish at his death, in another of its forms, in despite of him. Such a paraphrase distorts though; perhaps the gap I fill with "but" could be filled in other ways - perhaps with "and": the crops flourish magically, because of his death. The alternatives arise because the bearing of the clauses upon one another isn't explicitly formulated: they are apposed, their parallel syntactic structures binding them together and bringing "stone" and "crops", "alive" and "thick", "hand" and "death-year" up against one another. And this parallelism persuades us very strongly that the two statements are significantly linked. I am reminded of something William Empson wrote about Arthur Waley's lines:

Swiftly the years, beyond recall.  
Solemn the stillness of this spring morning.

"Two statements are made as if they were connected, and the reader is forced to consider their relations for himself".(1) These, like Pound's lines, are certainly an example of a kind of ideogrammic apposition, but Pound and Waley are both, just as vitally, exemplifying something we might call "juxtaposition by congruence", for we find upon reflection that the apposed lines are "reasonably together". Empson's statement is an excellent definition of this. The only element to be added is that of plausibility: the parts must embody a "reasonable harmony of being".

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(1) William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd edn., 1953, p.25.

Of course the reasonableness of a particular conjunction can't be determined in the abstract; like any literary judgement, it must derive from the text. And, as always, the fact of judgement is problematic, particularly when as here the forma emerging from the conjunction of clauses isn't explicitly stated, but as it were precipitates out.

I take this to be the central problem in dealing with the ideogrammic method (and hence in dealing with Pound's earlier Imagist/Vorticist poetry also): just what is the nature of the "trouble between the images", and how may it be accounted for verbally when it was precisely Pound's intention, in developing the idiom, to circumvent verbal limits and pronounce the unspeakable? As Emerson wrote: "The path of things is silent. Will they suffer a speaker to go with them?"<sup>(1)</sup> We raised this question earlier (see pages 299-301). The problem is familiar to criticism, but is exacerbated in this case by the radicalism of Pound's procedures. In a sense the lines from Canto VI present us with a false case, for the syntactic parallelism there considerably simplifies the question of relation between clauses (though as we have seen this relation is still ambiguous). The best we can say, I think, is that it is the explicit weight of the clauses, and the implicit weight and resonance of their interaction, that makes their conjunction "reasonable". What we have called the forma constitutes that resonance amongst parts having no explicit connection which invites or compels (the distinction is important, as we shall see) the reader's assent.

This voluntaristic aspect of the text/reader relationship is inevitable given the subjective nature of the connections to be made. There is no

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(1) Ralph Waldo Emerson, CPW, p.98.

explicit, verifiable narrative or syntactic skeleton to the poetry, and so the reader must assent to the co-presence of the various elements. His assent will be engaged if he can apprehend a whole, however tentative, amongst the apparent parts. But should the reader withdraw his assent then the limbs and portions of the poem revert to fragments, and its being to "the mere fact of concurrent existence in the unity of one occasion". We have established that we shouldn't look for a built structure in the Cantos, but rather for form regarded as the Idea or Whole which sublimates the parts, the unformulated result of their conjunction. Let us then examine Canto XLVII with the notions of "juxtaposition by congruence" and of the forma in mind. We have looked at Pound's apprehension of nature and art, but this Canto extends our sense of it. Here the "death-year" crosses, and threatens, the relish of living stone.

Its first line gives the Canto's theme in miniature: "Who even dead, yet hath his mind entire!" (XLVII/236). Death, and the triumph over death; a triumph achieved, by Tiresias, through guile of art and mind. We see when we have read the Canto that this line stands as a sort of preliminary cynosure, presenting a condition the rest of the Canto aspires towards:

I hope that elsewhere I have underscored and driven in the greek honour of human intelligence

'Who even dead yet hath his mind entire'.(1)

Then come Circe's words to Odysseus, telling of the difficult way towards

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(1) GK, p.146.



the "road's end", knowledge, and the part Tiresias has to play in this, who is "full of knowing":

This sound came in the dark  
First must thou go the road

to hell

And to the bower of Ceres' daughter Proserpine,  
Through overhanging dark, to see Tiresias,  
Eyeless that was, a shade, that is in hell  
So full of knowing that the beefy men know less than he,  
Ere thou come to thy road's end.

Knowledge the shade of a shade,  
Yet must thou sail after knowledge  
Knowing less than drugged beasts. (XLVII/236)

Attention to the lineation of the verse is revealing. Indentation at "Knowledge the shade of a shade" marks the transition from direct translation to Homeric pastiche, and the next indicates the presence of new matter:

The small lamps drift in the bay  
And the sea's claw gathers them.  
Neptunus drinks after neap-tide.  
Tamuz! Tamuz!  
The red flame going seaward.

By this gate art thou measured.  
From the long boats they have set lights in the water,  
The sea's claw gathers them outward.  
Scilla's dogs snarl at the cliff's base,  
The white teeth gnaw in under the crag,  
But in the pale night the small lamps float seaward

Τῶν Διώνων

TU DIONA

Καὶ Μοῖραι Ἄδωνιν

Kai MOIRAI' ADONIN

The sea is streaked red with Adonis,  
The lights flicker red in small jars. (XLVII/236)

As we shift from Odysseus to memorializing custom - "The small lamps drift in the bay" - it is worth recalling Empson's words: "two statements are made as if they were connected, and the reader is forced to consider

their relations for himself". Why this particular transition? Empson goes on to say that "the reason why these facts should have been selected for a poem is left for him [the reader] to invent; he will invent a variety of reasons and order them in his own mind".(1) But, assuming a fresh reader, at this point in the Canto he will have little evidence on which to base his 'inventions'. There are two sorts of context that may persuade him to wait and see. There is the tradition of contemporary and near-contemporary verse, which habituates the reader to sudden shifts of perspective; and there is the pattern of expectations established by the earlier Cantos, to which the same applies. While writing, this matrix of theory and past practice is submerged but present to the poet as the context for his every decision and invention. It constitutes the sphere of experience and expectation corresponding to the reader's when he grants the unity of recognition; in other words it is a shared tradition, the products of which the reader recognizes and so unifies, the unity corresponding to that originally seen by the poet. It is only within the context of such a tradition or shared experience that the objective validity of Pound's juxtapositions can be established, for it is by reference to such that the subjectivity of the forma can be shown to have been established by a succession of readers and generations. On this basis the new reader of good will should be prepared to suspend disbelief. For the reader already familiar with the Cantos and re-reading, however, the transition (from Odysseus to the lamp-custom) will figure, and be recognized, as one element in the controlling forma; and as the first instance in the Canto of the layering technique that informs it throughout.

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(1) William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd edn., 1953, p.25.

The custom itself (which Pound witnessed at Rapallo) propitiates the sea by ritual, "claw" hinting at menace. In these lines:

Scilla's dogs snarl at the cliff's base  
The white teeth gnaw in under the crag,  
But in the pale night the small lamps float seaward (XLVII/236)

- the word "But" sets the ceremony explicitly against a hostile element. This sort of syntactic explicitness is rare though. The work of apposition and opposition is more usually done ideogrammically. The (significantly) indented line "By this gate art thou measured" is a perfect example of this. It breaks in upon the passage without reference to context, and is only picked up some thirty lines later. Its eloquence derives from a later occurrence:

By this gate art thou measured  
Thy day is between a door and a door (XLVII/237)

The practice of setting lamps in the sea where they are dispersed, gathered "outward", is thus related - almost musically - to later and grimmer verses. And, supporting this, the paradox of a gathering that withdraws or disperses ("The sea's claw gathers them outward") makes us feel that the sea's broad context annuls human distances.

Following this, the renewing blood of Adonis is related - again by apposition - to spring growth, the beauty of generation:

Wheat shoots rise new by the altar,  
flower from the swift seed. (XLVII/237)

These lines preface a modulation. The limits of natural growth and striving are now stressed:

Two span, two span to a woman,  
 Beyond that she believes not. Nothing is of any importance.  
 To that is she bent, her intention  
 To that art thou called ever turning intention,  
 Whether by night the owl-call, whether by sap in shoot,  
 Never idle, by no means by no wiles intermittent  
 Moth is called over mountain  
 The bull runs blind on the sword, naturans  
 To the cave art thou called, Odysseus,  
 By Molü hast thou respite for a little,  
 By Molü art thou freed from the one bed  
     that thou may'st return to another  
 The stars are not in her counting,  
     To her they are but wandering holes. (XLVII/237)

Woman doesn't see beyond the second generation ("two span"); the owl, the shoot's sap, the moth, the bull obey similar drives, for life or for death ("Nothing is of any importance"). And Odysseus, too, wears nature's harness, moly granting him "respite for a little". And the guile of navigation or of star-divining is his skill; to the woman the stars "are but wandering holes". The following lines recall, through Hesiod, a ritualization like that of the lamp-custom, and relate agriculture to the movements of stars and birds:

Begin thy plowing  
 When the Pleiades go down to their rest,  
 Begin thy plowing  
 40 days are they under seabord,  
 Thus do in fields by seabord  
 And in valleys winding down toward the sea.  
 When the cranes fly high  
     think of plowing. (XLVII/237).

The farmer reads the natural signa. But this is spliced immediately with qualification:

By this gate art thou measured  
Thy day is between a door and a door (XLVII/237)

- recalling the phrase's earlier incursion upon ritual. And shortly after we read, "Thus was it in time" (XLVII/237).

The phrase marks the thematic mid-point of the poem. We have been shown (though without Blake's Gnostic fervour) "A Creation that groans, living on Death". And the poet's place in that Creation is as a "shadow":

And the small stars now fall from the olive branch,  
Forked shadow falls dark on the terrace  
More black than the floating martin  
    that has no care for your presence,  
His wing-print is black on the roof tiles  
And the print is gone with his cry.  
So light is thy weight on Tellus  
Thy notch no deeper indented  
Thy weight less than the shadow (XLVII/237-38)

He goes unobserved in the larger rhythm, the martin has no care for his presence - "Yet" (and on this point the poem turns) he has "gnawed through the mountain,/ Scylla's white teeth less sharp" (XLVII/238). This parallels - again ideogrammically - the earlier passage in which Scylla's dogs were invoked ("Scylla's dogs snarl at the cliff's base" (XLVII/236)), but here the sea isn't offered anything, as the lamps were offered on that earlier occasion: it is bested. And now we enter what Pound called "the undiscussable Paradiso", "any reach into [which] is almost a barrier to literary success"; further, "sober minds have agreed that the arcanum is the arcanum. No man can provide his neighbour with a Cook's ticket thereto".(1) Nevertheless, in this passage Pound writes of an "ecstasy" (2) which he obviously experienced, which he attributed to the mystics, and

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(1) GK, p.292.

(2) See *ibid.*, p225.

which the poet could approach through exercise of his art:

Hast thou found a nest softer than cunnus  
 Or hast thou found better rest  
 Hast'ou a deeper planting, doth thy death year  
 Bring swifter shoot?  
 Hast thou entered more deeply the mountain?

The light has entered the cave. Io! Io!  
 The light has gone down into the cave,  
 Splendour on splendour!  
 By prong have I entered these hills:  
 That the grass grow from my body,  
 That I hear the roots speaking together,  
 The air is new on my leaf,  
 The forked boughs shake with the wind.  
 Is Zephyrus more light on the bough, Apeliota  
 more light on the almond branch?  
 By this door have I entered the hill. (XLVII/238)

He struggles to express the same kind of experience in the prose of the Guide to Kulchur, writing of the mystic state of "contemplation of the divine love, the divine splendour" that it:

is a dynamism. It has, time and again, driven men to great living, it has given them courage to go on for decades in the face of public stupidity. It is paradisaical and a reward in itself seeking naught further . . . perhaps because a feeling of certitude inheres in the state of feeling itself. The glory of life exists without further proof for this mystic.(1.-his dots)

And:

What remains, and remains undeniable to and by the most hardened objectivist, is that a great number of men have had certain kinds of emotion and, magari, of ecstasy.

They have left indelible records of ideas born of, or conjoined with, this ecstasy.(2)

It is this experience that he is reaching towards in Canto LXXVI, where

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(1) GK, pp.223-24.

(2) Ibid., p.225.



darkness, the receptive body he enters doesn't exclaim passively "I have eaten the flame" (XXXIX/196). He communes with its actual virtù - "I hear the roots speaking together" - and this communion, rather than the impressment of form, the sperm's compulsion of form within the formless ovule, is the end towards which his ardour is directed. Such communion is close to the seer's contemplation, or the sculptor's reverence for his matter: a context enforced by Pound's echoing of Paradiso XXIII:

But short the space was between when and then,  
 I mean between the expectancy I had.  
 And seeing in heaven splendour on splendour gain.(1 - second set of  
 italics mine)

And it is enforced again by the reference back of these lines - "Is Zephyrus more light on the bough, Ape' liota / more light on the almond branch" - to Pound's lovely early poem 'Speech for Psyche in the Golden Book of Apuleius', which, while expressing the female's awe at male potency, allows the matrix a personal voice (see page 40).

Nonetheless, the stress on the primacy of the male's contribution to the relation is there in Canto XLVII. Woman is merely generative, one of those factors which threaten to trap Odysseus within the mortality and cyclic constriction of the natural order: "Two span, two span to a woman, / Beyond that she believes not." The closeness of this to Gourmontian, spermatic ideas is underlined by the reference to the matter of the book Pound translated in the line "Moth is called over mountain": one of Gourmont's instances of the blind power of the sexual urge.(2) And particular women, too, are an entrapment: "By Molü art thou freed from the one bed / that thou may'st return to another". Would it be

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(1) Dante, Paradiso, XXIII.16-18, in The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano, 2nd edn., New York, 1969.

(2) See Rémy de Gourmont, The Natural Philosophy of Love, trans. Ezra Pound, 1926, pp.108-09.



impertinent to notice a correspondence between Odysseus' predicament here, bound by the sexual urge to the impercipience of woman, and Pound's own situation in regard to his wife, and to Olga Rudge? In this context, the release into communion with mother earth, "GEA TERRA" (LXXXII/526), appears a flight - however magnificently conveyed - into abstraction, into a realm where the loved matter cannot answer back. It recalls, perhaps, the "certain unreality" attaching to the poet's "insistently clean encounters with the semi-divine in the Cantos" which Peter Makin noted (see page 132). In this context, the male retains unchallenged the primacy and potency of his rôle. It will not be surrendered until the Pisan Cantos, where the "connubium terrae" (LXXXII/526) has the male figure surrendering himself to the earth, dying - in the old pun - into it, and that surrender is the source of fructification, the springing of herbs:

How drawn, O GEA TERRA,  
     what draws as thou drawest  
         till one sink into thee by an arm's width  
 embracing thee. Drawest,  
         truly thou drawest.  
 Wisdom lies next thee,  
     simply, past metaphor.  
 Where I lie let the thyme rise  
                                     and basilicum  
     let the herbs rise in April abundant (LXXXII/526)

The last two lines of Canto XLVII - "that hath the gift of healing,/ that hath the power over wild beasts" - relate the poet's to Odysseus' predicament in a way which is symptomatic of the Canto as a whole and a clue to its power. These last lines tell us that the act of imagination celebrated at the Canto's climax has, like moly, "the gift of healing", it has "the power over wild beasts" (XLVII/239). Just as that herb was set against manifold dangers, so the splendour of this Canto emerges

from a bloody context, from the grotesque fulminations of Canto XLVI ("Will any / JURY convict 'um" (XLVI/233)). Pound wrote that "when you get out of the hell of money there remains the undiscussable Paradiso. And any reach into it is almost a barrier to literary success."(1) Canto XLVII succeeds in expressing the paradisaical, the "lost kind of experience" (XCI/617); having considered the formal means that expression assumes we must now take account of the context of feeling and thought it emerged from.

Moly gives Odysseus "respite for a little". The poem's last lines, in equating the imagination's power with the herb's virtue, make it clear that revelation is momentary and embattled; that it comes rarely and, when present, is worked upon by adverse forces. It is "spezzato" (LXXIV/438), "jagged" (XCII/620). We have discussed this context of feeling earlier (see pages 131-51). Against this background one can begin to appreciate the imaginative pressure behind the Canto. It proclaims the mysteries, but "the minute you proclaim that the mysteries exist at all you've got to recognize that 95% of yr. contemporaries will not and can not understand one word of what you are driving at. And you can not explain. The SECRETUM stays shut to the vulgo."(2) As it is "almost a barrier to literary success", expression of the paradisaical, as in this Canto - ascension into "the high thin air over the breathable air"(3) - exacts a great discharge of energy and genius. And the beauty perceived necessitates "a corresponding disgust", (4) a disgust which disfigures the surrounding verse ("Pus was in Spain, Wellington was a jew's pimp" (L/248)).

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(1) GK, p.292.

(2) L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

(3) M, p.405 ('Mostly Quartets', The Listener, 1936).

(4) See LE, p.415 ('Joyce', The Future, 1918).

The pressure of this context helps to account for the Canto's unity. These persistent concerns lie behind its transitions and ellipses. The powerful forma drawing the poem's details into pattern springs from the poet's "imminent" and "hovering" sense of form, a sense which grants "freedom of detail". Pound set down the requisites for such a success in 1919:

A freedom of detail can only be durably effective if the sense of inner form is strong; one cannot hammer upon this too often; the musician or verse-writer who has the sense of form ingrained may take liberties in some safety, liberties which are fatal if the sense of form is not imminent, hovering, present without being obvious, but still present.(1)

But the form can't be separated from what it organizes, and the poet's sense of form is bound up with his sense of the potentialities of his subject-matter. The fitness we feel in Canto XLVII's transitions stems from their actual, and deeply meditated, congruence in the poet's mind. If "a firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of detail", (2) then major form itself, the forma, depends upon the poet's comprehension of all the elements of his shaping composition. So Pound wrote of a singer: "all through the programme one observed how Rosing takes with faultless instinct the central significance of each song and how the right details are magnetised to it".(3)

The congruence we apprehend is as it were compacted by the pressure of malign exterior forces which the Canto - difficultly, hence its tension and its power - triumphs over. Against this urgent, compelling core, an expression of the magnetic forma, we can set another kind of unity, expression of the organic forma. This holds itself in a simultaneous

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(1) M, p.202 ('Music', The New Age, 1919).

(2) Ibid., p.48 ('Arnold Dolmetsch', The Egoist, 1917).

(3) Ibid., p.150-51 ('Moussorgsky', The New Age, 1919).

efflorescence, an equalizing breadth which yet has a centre, apprehended not, as in Cantos XXXIX and XLVII, as a mastering thematic core, but inferred as the nutritive source of the text's open face, as one infers a root sustaining the flower. The two modes both exploit the "specious present" we intuit to order the whole, but in opposed manners. In the Cantos which we have just been examining the verse impels us towards its end - "I have eaten the flame"; "that hath the power over wild beasts" - as the moment when the temporal extent of the language can be gathered up into a specious present and viewed as a unit. Until that point is attained all the gestures of the language are provisional, they wait upon completion. In that poetry which celebrates the Acoetian moment, however - much of the Pisan Cantos for example - the verse gives no sense of progression towards a conclusive end; its centre is everywhere, and the reader's act of atemporal abstraction may be made, with equal justice, at any point within it, just as the eye may focus on one facet of a jewel to exemplify the radiance of the whole. This is what distinguishes the Tempio-like structure of the Malatesta Cantos from the structured poem per se: we can apply the latter term to the temporal continuum of Paradise Lost only when we have read the poem, and look back upon it: the term applies to this post facto review, not to the poem's immediate texture. But the Malatesta Cantos imply, at each point in their (necessarily) temporal progress, an atemporal status; the co-extension, around each such point, of congruous linguistic 'planes'. As we have said, the effect is an impression merely, it cannot substantively subvert the necessarily temporal character of language. But the architectural analogy is applicable to the immediate texture of the verse, and this is what distinguishes the formal mode of these Cantos from that of the structured poem.

In prosodic terms, the distinction between the Odyssean and the Acoetian modes is that between "the surge and sway of the epic music" - for example, the rhythmic climacteric of Canto XXXIX's copulative rhythms - and a "government of speed" which contrasts with such surging as "the rhythm of a drum compares to the rhythm . . . of the violin or organ".(1) As we shall see, the Acoetian mode requires a less rapt, more disengaged and contemplative reading than the consuming intensities of Cantos XXXIX and XLVII. It doesn't depend upon the ardent masteries of magnetism, but on the more steadfast and dispersed tenacity of organic process. We can say of such a text, as Pound says of Hindemith's concerto, that its patterns parallel "the organization of wood fibres in a tree trunk".(2)

We can see then that the Odyssean mode, like the structured poem, acknowledges and exploits the terminal, unifying "specious present". This, together with their thematic homogeneity, closely allies the Cantos we have been examining to traditional poetic dicta and familiar practice, and has ensured them a wider acceptance and reputation than much else, of equal distinction, in Pound's oeuvre (the same could be said of such another Odyssean Canto as number XLV). Having noted the disparity, we must add that they are, nonetheless, products of one mind and one temperament. We have identified two dominant areas within that temperament - the masculine and the feminine - and have thus far identified the bulk of Pound's positive achievement with the latter area. The Cantos we have just examined modify that picture. They are great poetry, and they are masculine, "spermatic" in provenance. I would maintain that they are exceptional, that the greater part of what is good in the Cantos

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(1) Quoted in Donald Davie, Pound, 1965, p.89. Davie's comments on this early formulation of Pound's are immediately relevant.

(2) M, p.411 ('Music in Ca' Rezzonico', The Delphinian Quarterly, 1937).

flows from the Acoetian strain in his personality, and that, indeed, the very poetic of the Cantos - the ideogrammic method - is founded, like the principles of Imagism/Vorticism, upon an expression of the receptive and feminine. But both Cantos XXXIX and XLVII and (say) the predominantly Acoetian Pisan Cantos depend upon the "forméd trace" (XXXVI/178) in the poet's mind. Both depend upon "the quality/of the affection" (LXXVI/457) with which he has meditated upon their materials. In other parts of the Cantos matter is taken up by Pound - material he hasn't known for long, material he has merely 'mugged up' - and shaped, set in relation one piece to another, by a fiat of the masculine will. In this case juxtaposition isn't "by congruence" but, simply, without copula; the poet's will, rather than anything immanent in the words, has done the binding. David Jones' precepts are worth taking to heart in this connection:

The poet may feel something with regard to Penda the Mercian and nothing with regard to Darius the Mede. In itself that is a limitation, it might be regarded as a disproportion; no matter, there is no help - he must work within the limits of his love. There must be no mugging-up, no 'ought to know' or 'try to feel'; for only what is actually loved and known can be seen sub specie aeternitatis. The muse herself is adamant about this: she is indifferent to what the poet may wish he could feel, she cares only for what he in fact feels. In this she differs totally from her sister, the 'Queen of the Moral Virtues', who, fortunately for us, is concerned only with our will and intention.(1)

If the poet is to build on the grand scale then he must use familiar materials, shapes known to him. They must lie together at the centre, with the other elements of his art and personality:

You use the things that are yours to use because they happen to be lying about the place or site or lying within the orbit of your 'tradition'.

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(1) David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.24.

It is very desirable in the arts to know the meaning of the word ex-orbitant, or there is pastiche or worse.

Of course, in any case, there may well be pastiche, padding, things not gestant and superficialities of all sorts; but all this is inevitable if you get outside what I believe Blake called the artist's horizon. I have tried to keep inside it.(1)

With the start of his 'Paris Letter' for The Dial (1921) Pound, writes Forrest Read, "urged resignation from any modern 'hyperunity', be it political (the capitalist state), intellectual (coercive ideologies, religious (monotheism), or syntactical (the 'rocking cradle' of the English sentence)".(2) His assault on syntax was certainly the most thoroughgoing and radical of his stylistic revisions. In prose it meant a trust in what he called "rough speech"(3) or "broken statement"(4); in poetry it led, via Imagism and Vorticism, to the ideogrammic method: in either case it produced a novel and distinctive idiom, a presence half-kindling, half-burdening the language of later poets. It had its source in a kind of regard for the external world which he shared with several of his friends in the arts: Ford, Williams, W.H. Hudson. In his case this regard went along with a profound distrust of the received forms of language. As we have seen, he held to a belief in the efficacy of individual words, their real consonance with objects and actions named; but the structures time and usage had built from these words he rejected, and looked to fabricate an alternative, to offer a new principle of relation, a less hide-bound and arbitrary way of putting the components of language together. The poetry lives by its juxtapositions,

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(1) David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.34.

(2) P/J, p.189.

(3) See GK, p.181.

(4) See ibid., p.129.

and the significance of a juxtaposition is to be determined by the reader. This act of determination may assume contrasting forms. The powerful thematic centres of Canto XXXIX and Canto XLVII compel that determination by virtue of their very potency, and a reading of them is - even to the extent of a comparable allusiveness - fully analogous to a reading of, say, Donne's 'A Nocturnal Upon St Lucy's Day'. These Cantos are in the Odyssean mode. The formal expression of the Acoetian mode is, however, more unfamiliar. Words, and small clusters of words, are apposed, form mute associations lacking the explicit directives of syntax. The elements of the verse are faceted, lacking the impulsion of syntax; they are:

. . . as facets of air,  
and the mind there, before them, moving,  
so that notes needed not move. (XXV/119)

That is why it is such a mistake to read these Cantos - say the paradisaical Cantos XC-XCIV in Rock-Drill - quickly ("'Slowness is beauty'" (LXXXVII/572)). The mind moves slowly among their elements, not directed from clause to clause but gathering their increment of suggestion ("So slow is the rose to open" (CVI/752)). It is an expression of leisure, alert repose, of that condition which Pound referred to as keeping one's "nerve-set open".(1) These sections of the Cantos frequently propose an earthly Paradise ("Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel" (LXXIV/438)); crystal, light, and a crystalline landscape:

In mountain air the grass frozen emerald  
and with the mind set on that light  
saffron, emerald,  
seeping. (CXIII/789)

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(1) See LE, p.152 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).



To read them properly we must read them easefully, as Pound insists:

Anatole France in criticizing French dramatists pointed out that on the stage, the words must give time for the action; they must give time for the audience to take count of what is going on.

Even on the printed page there is an analogous ease.(1)

And: "The reader will often misjudge a condensed writer by trying to read him too fast."(2) The "ease" is necessary because the reader is making the connections himself.

In poetry that sense-making needn't be laboured and puzzled-out: understanding comes more gradually and with acquaintance. But the ideogrammic method is designed to extend to prose. Ideogrammic prose also works by apposition, and must be read slowly:

The hurried reader may say I write this in cypher and that my statement merely skips from one point to another without connection or sequence.

The statement is nevertheless complete. All the elements are there, and the nastiest addict of crossword puzzles shd. be able to solve this or see this.(3)

Here the argument begins to run into difficulties. Both Odyssean and Acoetian Cantos work by juxtaposition by congruence, but if this is what is meant by the ideogrammic method then it is difficult to see how it can apply - beyond a very small compass - to prose, or for that matter to the more didactic and willed Cantos. For the congruence we speak of amounts to more than a willed unity, "the mere fact of concurrent existence in the unity of one occasion"; it constitutes a "reasonable harmony of being", the parts of which are "reasonably

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(1) ABCR, p.70.

(2) Ibid., p.70.

(3) GK, p.48.

together". It is a unity which we "see", as Pound's revealing self-correction above puts it. And surely the word corresponds to our experience of the unity of the great Cantos: they hang together with a self-evidence beyond the need for (and often baffling) demonstration. But the ambition of the method was to articulate, not only lyric poetry, but didactic poetry, and even prose; in all these modes the reader is to see rather than solve. And the quality thus shown to sight is what Pound called "process". Conventionally explicit prose (a word deriving from the Latin explicitus, to unfold) gains "points on explanatory elaborations. The explicitness, that is literally the unfoldedness, may be registered better" by these means.(1) But it articulates only the surface of a subject: it corresponds to knowledge in Pound's rather Coleridgean or Kantian division between "knowledge" and "understanding":

Knowledge is or may be necessary to understanding, but it weighs as nothing against understanding, and there is not the least use or need of retaining it in the form of dead catalogues once you understand process.

Yet, once the process is understood it is quite likely that the knowledge will stay by a man, weightless, held without effort.(2)

An ideogrammic organization of discourse, however, which corresponds to the "understanding", directly expresses the deep structure of a subject, traces its informing process. And as we have seen, it is to the revelation of process, the unscrambling of the vital trace within the static of conventional discourse and apparent reality, that the ideogrammic method is above all attuned.

Pound was confessing in the early 1930s that "I hadn't in 1910 made

(1) GK, p.279.

(2) Ibid., p.53.

a language, I don't mean a language to use, but even a language to think in".(1) The ideogrammic method gave him such a language. But it wasn't, as he sometimes maintained, a new semantic or an alternative methodology, and to that extent the term itself, "method", with its quasi-scientific or quasi-philosophical ring, is bogus. Its real use was in allowing him to keep his language as it were molten, ready to respond, allowing him to avoid the moulds and hardening of habit. The "'proper lighting'" it throws on "certain truth" is "spezzato" (LXXIV/438), falls "fitfully and by instants".(2) That is to say, the movement of the poem isn't measured and continuous as in conventional, syntactic discourse; it is generated by apposition, a presenting of facet after facet, the movement occurring between the arrests of presentation, the contemplation of each plane. As we have seen, the notion of cutting and faceting is prominent in the Cantos, a potent image of discontinuity, demarcation. And it is in these terms that Pound characterizes his "method": it is a discontinuous faceting of discourse which aims to reveal process. To this extent the Acoetian mode is its proper expression, and the Odyssean - the confluence of poetic elements towards a regnant thematic centre - is a reversion to more traditional and familiar procedures. The best image I can think of to epitomize the Acoetian poetic - though it won't, of course, encompass the two Cantos we have just examined - is that of Williams' from 'Asphodel' (see pages 287-88): a calm sea's many refracting planes struck by the sun, which, with pointilliste technique, creates a strict unity of effect - a "garden" - out of an apparent wilderness of individual detail. So it is presented, as an image of order, in the last paragraph of John Berger's novel, G.:

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(1) LE, p.194 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(2) See GK, p.295.

The sun is low in the sky and the sea is calm. Like a mirror as they say. Only it is not like a mirror. The waves which are scarcely waves, for they come and go in many different directions and their rising and falling is barely perceptible, are made up of innumerable tiny surfaces at variegating angles to one another - of these surfaces those which reflect the sunlight straight into one's eyes, sparkle with a white light during the instant before their angle, relative to oneself and the sun, shifts and they merge again into the blackish blue of the rest of the sea. Each time the light lasts for no longer than a spark stays bright when shot out from a fire. But as the sea recedes towards the sun, the number of sparkling surfaces multiplies until the sea indeed looks somewhat like a silver mirror. But unlike a mirror it is not still. Its granular surface is in continual agitation. The further away the ricocheting grains, of which the mass become silver and the visibly distinct minority a dark leaden colour, the greater is their apparent speed. Uninterruptedly receding towards the sun, the transmission of its reflections becoming ever faster, the sea neither requires nor recognizes any limit. The horizon is the straight bottom edge of a curtain arbitrarily and suddenly lowered upon a performance.(1)

To sum up: I posed the question earlier whether criticism was restricted to the merely descriptive in trying to account for the ideogrammic method. I think there are two immediate answers to this question: (1) that the beauties do, of course, largely escape the prosing critic's definition; and (2) that we can, nonetheless, formulate a compendious schema within which to consider (as opposed to experience) the poem. These are the categories under which I have been examining the Cantos: (a) the idea of form rather than structure, (i) as a controlling forma magnetizing the poem's elements and drawing the most heterogeneous in a common direction; or (ii) as a succession of facets presented, in legato succession, to the reader, and composing as a whole a unity of effect like that of the sea's, made up of a multitude of independent planes; (b) of "juxtaposition by congruence" as an adequate term for the method's general procedure, a device working by congruity, and dependent upon the poet's

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(1) John Berger, G., 1972, p.316.

inwardness with his material; (c) of a "reasonable harmony of being", a phrase standing for the reader's assent to the non-syntactic co-presence of language elements, an assent consequent upon his apprehension of a real whole amongst the apparent parts: this "assent" may be as it were compelled by the poem's magnetizing thematic centre, or it may arise more covertly, as an exhalation, as a breadth of whole light cast from the mass of separate scintillations; and, finally, (d) of the method as pre-eminently a revealer of process.

## 2. The Leopoldine Cantos

Thus far in our discussion of the Cantos we have considered both the poem's thematic and its formal aspects. Within the context of the latter, however, we have barely touched on the rhythmic and prosodic actualities of the poem. I will introduce such questions now in relation to the Leopoldine Cantos. In doing so, we shall keep in mind the thematic and formal areas already explored.

The Leopoldine Cantos record and celebrate the founding of the Sienese bank the Monte dei Paschi. We can grasp the significance of this event for Pound by looking over a handful of his prose references to the institution. The bank falls patly within the endemic quasi-Manichaeism of Pound's apprehension of the world - the Monte is a flower amidst dung:

Banks of two sorts:

A. Gangs of creditors, organized to squeeze the last ounce out of debtors, conquered cities, etc.

B. Reconstruction banks. The great light among which was and IS the Monte dei Paschi of Siena.

The charter of this bank (ad. 1602) is a code of honesty that would crush 90 per cent of modern so-called bankers and, were they capable either of moral desire, intellectual courage, or of any shame for connivance with murder and prologation of degrading conditions, CAUSED by their non-perception of relations, drive them into extreme expiation.(1)

In the notebooks Pound used when compiling his sources for the sequence he writes a paranthetical denunciation of the "arch bastards of London" (archetypal Hell, we remember), and notes that "most of the ministers & ambassadors of 52 nations/ in eternal perdition".(2) The rectitude and sound principles of the bank - as contrasted with what he revealingly

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(1) SP, p.61 ('Ecclesiastical History', The New English Weekly, 1934).

(2) See p 2-2, p.256 (Ben Kimpel and T.C. Duncan Eaves, 'The Sources of the Leopoldine Cantos').

calls the "hell banks"(1) - are founded upon the abundance of nature:

Two kinds of banks have existed: The MONTE DEI PASCHI and the devils.

Banks built for beneficence, for reconstruction; and banks created to prey on the people.

Three centuries of Medici wisdom went into the Monte dei Paschi, the only bank that stood from 1600 till our time.

Siena was flat on her back, without money after the Florentine conquest.

Cosimo, first duke of Tuscany, had all the Medici banking experience behind him. He guaranteed the capital of the Monte, taking as security the one living property of Siena, and a certain amount of somewhat unhandy collateral.

That is to say, Siena had grazing lands down toward Grosseto, and the grazing rights worth 10,000 ducats a year. On this basis taking it for his main security, Cosimo underwrote a capital of 200,000 ducats, to pay 5 per cent to the shareholders, and to be lent at 5½ per cent; overhead kept down to a minimum; salaries at the minimum and all excess of profit over that to go to hospitals and works for the benefit of the people of Siena. That was in the first years of the seventeenth century, and that bank is open today. It outlasted Napoleon. You can open an account there tomorrow.

And the lesson is the very basis of solid banking. The CREDIT rests in ultimate on the ABUNDANCE OF NATURE, on the growing grass that can nourish the living sheep.

And the moral is in the INTENTION. It was not for the conquerors immediate short-sighted profit, but to restart the life and productivity of Siena, that this bank was contrived.(2)

Such care in contriving has obvious affinities with Pound's aesthetic imperatives: the rectificative effort is directed towards tapping natural energies, and contrasts with other, mastering and exploitative efforts. Pound cites the Genoese bankers as representatives of this latter tendency.(3) Pound's stress on the abundance of nature chimes also with the radiantly Emersonian formulations of the near-contemporary 'Mang Tsze' essay of 1938.(4) Thus Pound makes play, in these Cantos, with the double sense of the Italian frutto: "fruit" and "interest". The moral we should derive from the bank's example is, as Pound says, in the "INTENTION" of its founders; but Hugh Kenner points to the

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(1) See SP, p.240 ('Banks', Social Credit: An Impact, 1935).

(2) Ibid., p.240 ('Banks').

(3) See SP, pp.240-41 ('Banks').

(4) See SP, pp.95-111 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)', The Criterion, 1938).

difficulty any reader of the Leopoldine Cantos will experience in registering that intention:

What you can go to see (yes, still: in Siena) looks like any other bank building. That is not what the words mean in the Cantos. What they denote in the Cantos is a perception about the true base of credit (the abundance of nature, the growing grass that can nourish the living sheep), and this we need to be told about. Though the facts are in the text we are not told, except in a retrospective phrase ten Cantos later. So a poetic opposed to generalizations is thwarting its own didactic purpose.(1)

Cantos XLII and XLIII present the facts by means of a device already familiar to us through our examination of the Malatesta Cantos: direct translation of documentary sources, larded with veracious minutiae concerning dates, signatories, ratifications and so on. The documents are drawn from a nine-volume Italian History of the bank, supplemented by visits Pound made to the public library of Siena to consult the manuscript sources of that History.(2) This source-checking is in accord with Pound's sense of historiography:

History is written with a knowledge of the despatches of the ambassador Barbon Morosini (particularly one dated from Paris, 28 January 1723 (Venetian style), describing the Law affair), together with a knowledge of the documents leading up to the foundation of the Monte dei Paschi, and the scandalous pages of Antonio Lobero, archivist of the Banco di San Giorgio of Genoa.(3)

Further:

Without history one is lost in the dark, and the essential data of modern history cannot enlighten us unless they are traced back at least to the foundation of the Sienese bank, the Monte dei Paschi; in other words, to the perception of the true basis of credit, viz., 'the abundance of nature and the responsibility of the whole people'.(4)

(1) Hugh Kenner, PE, p.429.

(2) See p 2-2, p.249 (Ben Kimpel and T.C. Duncan Eaves, 'The Sources of the Leopoldine Cantos').

(3) SP, p.280 (A Visiting Card, first published in Italian as Carta da Visita, and published in Rome, 1942).

(4) Ibid., p.278 (A Visiting Card).



The tracing effected by these Cantos represents an effort to free knowledge of the achievements of this bank from the wilful and sinister obscurings of other interested parties - from the "tricks of the usurocracy", for example:

Ignorance of these tricks is not a natural phenomenon; it is brought about artificially. It has been fostered by the silence of the press, in Italy as much as anywhere else. What is more, it has been patiently and carefully built up. The true basis of credit was already known to the founders of the Monte dei Paschi of Siena at the beginning of the seventeenth century.(1)

Such silence is best combated by making available crucial documents, or excerpts from documents, concerning the bank and its principles. Hence the Leopoldine Cantos, a mass of documentary evidence. And yet Pound is astonishingly cavalier with his sources:

From October 9th until the 3rd of November  
was unforeseen jubilation, four lines of tablet in marble:  
Frumentorum licentia  
coercita de annonaria laxata Pauperum aequae  
divitium bono conservit  
FERDINANDI 1792 (XLIV/225)

Of this Kimpel and Duncan Eaves write:

The dates 9 October and 3 November are not the dates between which the jubilation took place, as a first reading would lead one to believe. The inscription has seven lines, not four (and evidently there are other lines not quoted). 'Re' ('thing', here merely a filler) is misquoted as 'de' and 'consuluerit' as 'conservit', so that Pound's Latin is impossible grammatically: it means 'freedom of grains restrained of relaxed [or 'reduced'] provisions for the good of the poor and of the rich preserves', but the verb has an impossible ending and none of the nouns can be its object. Here there may be a printer's error, since Pound's notes have 'Frumentariorum' and 'Re annonaria' and the lineation is as it is on the tablet, though the last word is 'conserviverit'.(2- their insertion)

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(1) SP, p.309 (Gold and Work 1944, first published in Italian as Oro e Lavoro, and published in Rapallo, 1944).

(2) p 2-2, pp.265-66 (Ben Kimpel and T.C. Duncan Eaves, 'The Sources of the Leopoldine Cantos').

This is the most spectacular of Pound's dislocations of his material, but misspelled names, fallacious dates, scrambled quotations are scattered liberally through the sequence.

Why this apparent carelessness? Perhaps we can put it down to the fatigue of reading; not simply reading the multi-volumed History of the bank, but also crabbed manuscripts: "To read and be conscious of the act of reading is for some men (the writer among them) to suffer. I loathe the operation. My eyes are geared for the horizon. Nevertheless I do read for days on end when I have caught the scent of a trail."(1) The "trail" involves - of necessity in this case, concerning as it does the historical record - wholesale quotation of documents. When Pound announces that he will ("In the main") write the Guide to Kulchur without opening a book, it is because of the overwhelming attractions of quotation: "Any other course wd. mean that I shd. quite definitely have to quote whole slabs and columns of histories and works of reference."(2) In the same book he indicates the sort of attraction such records held for him:

Demosthenes argued a case wherein a bloke sailed out of Sicily, without taking the borrowed money on board, and carefully sank his ship which was worth less than the money, and was caught by the informal Lloyds' of the day. In fact the records of rascality (as conserved in fragments of law records) are so good one grudges them to the prose page, and wants to reserve them for poetry.(3)

But the researcher isn't merely a neutral conduit for these records: "Naturally there is nothing duller than the results of such digging, UNLESS the searcher have some concept to work to. Not the document but

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(1) GK, p.55.

(2) Ibid., p.33.

(3) Ibid., p.36.

the significance of the document."(1) Earlier we noted that Pound considered the Malatesta Cantos an attempt to convey "the effect of the factive personality".(2) The Leopoldine Cantos, which employ a similar historiography, dealing directly with documents, have a similarly comprehensive aim, an aim which the particularity of their materials may at first deflect the reader's attention away from, leaving him embroiled in a mass of problematic detail. They attempt to convey the embracing significance of a collection of documentary minutiae. This, I think, accounts for the carelessness of Pound's treatment of his sources, whatever his impatience with the reading process may have contributed: "Not the document but the significance of the document." The poetic surface Pound contrives to establish this effect differs, however, in one crucial respect from that of the Malatesta sequence. While the latter deliberately "'candied'" its chronology so as to compromise the temporal sequence of Sigismundo's career, the Leopoldine Cantos reflect faithfully - though not exhaustively - the chronology of events concerning the Monte dei Paschi from 1624, the date of the document which acted as "formal instrument founding the bank", (3) up to the French intervention of 1799 and Napoleon's subsequent interferences. And whereas the Malatesta Cantos exploited the slab-like solidity of cited and untransfigured prose in their attempt to construct a quasi-spatial artefact, the temporality of the Leopoldine sequence's concerns leads Pound into versifying most of his sources, and results in the poetry depending upon its rhythms a great deal for the interpretive work denied to the authorial voice by the method of direct presentation (the only exception to this latter rule that Pound allows himself is the ungainsayable one of diatribe). Consequently,

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(1) GK, pp.220-21.

(2) Ibid., p.194.

(3) p 2-2, p.251 (Ben Kimpel and T.C. Duncan Eaves, 'The Sources of the Leopoldine Cantos').

I shall devote the rest of my consideration of these Cantos to an examination of their rhythms, and these rhythms' part in educing the poet's 'message'. This will lead us on to a consideration of rhythm in the Cantos as a whole.

The Leopoldine Cantos move from the 'middle style' of the first two (XLII and XLIII) to the 'high style' of the first, celebratory half of number XLIV, and back to the 'middle style' with the intervention of Napoleon and the French detailed in that Canto. If we choose to regard Canto XLV as a part of the sequence, then the whole culminates in a 'high style' denunciatory crescendo which carries, by implication, the set of positive values embodied historically by the Monte dei Paschi.

Canto XLII opens with a palimpsest of exempla written in what can only be termed 'low' style: that is to say in verse (the words are lineated) having very little discernable rhythmic basis:

We ought, I think, to say in civil terms: You be damned'  
 (Palmerston, to Russell re/ Chas. H. Adams),  
 'And how this people CAN in this the fifth  
 et cetera year of the war, leave that old etcetera up  
 there on that monument!' H.G. to E.P. 1918  
     Lex salica! lex Germanica, Antoninus  
 said law rules at sea (XLII/209)

This is not to say that the lines have no rhythm - any collocation of syllables will have some: simply that their movement here is wholly gratuitous, a chance function of their existence as language; they give no sense of being deliberately ordered towards some specific effect. I am not concerned here with the detail of their meaning, and on this score refer the reader to Terrell's Companion to the Cantos. In our

context it is enough to note their status as a sort of thematic tuning up, and the effect of rhythmic tightening they confer, by contrast, upon the comparatively loose measures of the next lines:

FÍXED in the sóul, nell' ánima, of the Illústrious Cóllege  
 They had béen tén yeárs propósing such a Mónte,  
 That ís a spécies of bánk - damn goód bank, in Siéna (XLII/209)

These lines establish the loose accentual measure which will dominate these Cantos; the next lines effect a further tightening:

A móunt, a bánk, a fúnd a bóttom an  
 institútion of crédit  
 a pláce to sénd chéques in and óut of  
 and yét not a bánco di gíro, and the Baíley  
 sóught víews from the Sénate (XLII/209)

The tightening is achieved through a reduction in the number of unstressed syllables between stresses, the emphatic 'iamb' of the first line winding up the verse into a sort of excited incantation (note the cessation of commas) before the surprise - in verse based on the line unit - of the enjambment, and the next line's lengthening out: "institution of credit". That "credit" inaugurates a succession of feminine endings which terminate the succeeding rhythmic units - "in and out of", "a banco di giro", "views from the Senate" - and which doubtless give scope to that rather bogus bardism of intonation heard in Pound's recording of the Usura Canto (where the unstressed syllable terminating a line is drawn out in resonant monotone). Upon all of which supervenes the quick patter of prose. The rhythmic basis of the line-break is deliberately violated

to enforce the shift in rhythm:

'With paternal affection  
justice convenience of city what college had with such  
foresight wherefore S.A. (Your Highness) as in register  
Nov. 1624  
following details: (XLII/209)

In these first nineteen lines, then, the entire range of rhythmic patterns to be employed in the sequence is set down: the chaotic palimpsest, the loose accentual line, the tauter, chanting accentual line, and prose rhythm; a strategy comparable to that of Stravinsky's in his Violin Concerto, where a composite chord is sounded at the start of each movement, indicating the harmonic range of each. Two other devices should be noted: the interpolated lyric (with its disastrously homophonic "see weed"):

wave falls and the hand falls  
Thou shalt not always walk in the sun  
or see weed sprout over cornice  
Thy work in set space of years, not over an hundred. (XLII/210)

- and the artful, premonitory echo of Canto XLV's predominantly three-stress line and bardic desolation:

féw come to búy in the márket  
féwer stíll work the fiélds (XLII/213)

I shall consider the prosodic implications of all these procedures shortly. Before then - and referring the reader to the text of Cantos XLII and XLIII for confirmation that the above classification broadly



nor any yoke ox nor  
any peasant while he works with the same.

Pietro Leopoldo

Heavy grain crop unsold  
never had the Mount lacked for specie, cut rate to four and  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd.

creditors had always been paid,  
that trade inside the Grand Duchy be free of impediments  
shut down on grain imports  
'83, four percent legal maximum interest  
'85, three on church investments, motu proprio  
Pietro Leopoldo  
Ferdinando EVVIVA!!

declared against exportation  
thought grain was to eat

Flags trumpets horns drums  
and a placard

VIVA FERDINANDO

and were sounded all carillons  
with bombs and with bonfires and was sung TE DEUM  
in thanks to the Highest for this so  
provident law  
and were lights lit in the chapel of Alexander  
and the image of the Madonna unveiled  
and sung litanies and then went to St Catherine's chapel  
in S. Domenico and by the reliquary  
of the Saint's head sang prayers and  
went to the Company Fonte Giusta  
also singing the litanies  
and when was this thanksgiving ended the cortege  
and the contrade with horns drums  
trumpets and banners went to the  
houses of the various ambulant vendors, then were the sticks of the  
flags set in the stanchions on the Palace of the Seignors  
and the gilded placard between them  
(thus ended the morning)

meaning to start in the afternoon  
and the big bell and all bells of the tower in the piazza  
sounded from 8 a.m. until seven o'clock in the evening  
without intermission and next day was procession  
coaches and masks in great number  
and of every description e di tutte le qualita  
to the sound always of drums and trumpets  
crying VIVA FERDINANDO and in all parts of the piazza  
were flames in great number and grenades burning  
to sound of bombs and of mortaretti and the shooting of  
guns and of pistols and in chapel of the Piazza  
a great number of candles for the publication of this so  
provident law and at sundown were dances  
and the masks went into their houses  
and the captains of the ward companies,  
the contrade, took their banners to the Piazza Chapel  
where once more they sang litanies  
and cried again Ferdinando EVVIVA



Evviva Ferdinando il Terzo  
 and from the contrade continued the drumming  
 and blowing of trumpets and hunting horns,  
 torch flares, grenades and they went to the Piazza del Duomo  
 with a new hullabaloo gun shots mortaretti and pistols  
 there were no streets not ablaze with the torches  
 or with wood fires and straw flares  
 and the vendors had been warned not to show goods for  
 fear of disorder and stayed all that day within doors  
 or else outside Siena. This was a law called  
 Dovizia annonaria

to be freed from the Yoke of Licence (XLIV/223-225)

Pound has transfigured his source's emphasis, for the writer of Il Monte dei Paschi characterizes this popular demonstration of 1792 as "mixing the profane and the religious in a form more noisy than edifying".(1) But there is no doubt as to Pound's seconding of the endorsement the populace grant their ruler. After the earlier Cantos' self-bafflings of movement and this high point - rhythmic analogue of the struggle towards, and achievement of, a just economic order - the Canto moves into a more heterogeneous rhythmic condition, similar to that obtaining in Cantos XLII and XLIII; for the paradisaical moment is past, and though the Monte endures, it endures amidst the confusions of conquest.

This movement of apprehended history from instigation to disclosure is disclosed to us through the expressive rhythms of the Leopoldine sequence. It is important to recognize that the rhythmic evolution we have traced doesn't correspond to the historical evolution of the paradigmatic bank: the Monte is solidly in existence from the start of Canto XLII, and the public celebrations of Canto XLIV don't mark a particularly significant point in the bank's history. At various stages in the sequence an effulgence of rhythm marks the point at which some particular ameliorative event occurs. But these surges are not sustained for

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(1) See p 2-2, p.261 (Ben Kimpel and T.C. Duncan Eaves, 'The Sources of the Leopoldine Cantos').

long. The mixing of rhythmic modes mimes the discontinuousness of the historical process, its "ripples and spirals".(1) But the large-scale rhythm of the sequence, from such heterogeneity to the sustained exaltation of the Canto XLIV passage, represents a distinct process which co-exists with the historical. It traces the poet's own movement towards understanding, his piecemeal exploration of the significance of his material; and he allots such space to this one relatively insignificant carnival because he needs a focal point for the representation of a focussed and joyous apprehension of the Monte's significance. In this case the rhythmic stress expresses the movement of Pound's sensibility rather than the movement of history; the poet's response to the "ripples and spirals" eddying out - as "significance" - from the documentary material of history, and registered in his art: "Not the document but the significance of the document."

We saw that in the Malatesta Cantos historical materials were used, not to write lucid history, but to convey "the effect of the factive personality", and to construct a quasi-spatial structure. The historical materials of the Leopoldine sequence have a more complex reference. As animated by Pound's measures, they mime both temporal process (the Monte's establishment and - sometimes embattled - continuance) and the historiographer-poet's movement towards the full intellectual and emotional grasp of the "significance" of the document he has been working with; the moment when he can say, with Heracles, "what / SPLENDOUR, / IT ALL COHERES".(2) Of course this stress on rhythmic rather than discursive articulation means that a good deal of important information gets left out (vide Kenner);

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(1) See GK, p.60.

(2) Sophocles, Women of Trachis, trans. Ezra Pound, 1969, p.66 (first English edition 1956).

but such is the price of the convention Pound adopts: what his prose references to the Monte convey discursively, the corresponding Cantos will convey by rhythmic means. As in the Malatesta Cantos, Pound is as interested in the verbal texture of his sources as in their denotations: so in Canto XLIII he writes down the manuscript number of the documents he is using at this point - "1251 of the Protocols marked also / X, I, I, F, and four arabic" (XLIII/216) - not so much to refer us to Siena, and the public library there, as to convey the feel of the documentary material, its pleasant welter of detail. As in the Malatesta Cantos - though this time with a temporal rather than spatial basis - the linguistic surface itself is the meaning of the sequence. In practice this means that what Pound saw as the basis of the Monte's achievement - its drawing upon the abundance of nature - is obscured; but in Canto LII he makes it clear that he thought he had got the idea across:

And I have told you of how things were under Duke  
Leopold in Siena  
 And the true base of credit, that is  
the abundance of nature  
 with the whole folk behind it. (LII/257)

As when he wrote that there was nothing obscure about the Malatesta Cantos, Pound seems to have been confident that his non-discursive or a-discursive procedures, revolutionary though they were, nevertheless got the message across.

In this verbal surface rhythms are pre-eminent. We have seen that in the Leopoldine Cantos rhythm has a dual reference: as an expression of the affirmative motions of historical achievement ("A móunt, a bánk, a fúnd a bóttom an / institútion of crédit" (XLII/209)), and as an

expression of the poet's own apprehension and affirmation of that achievement. As Donald Davie has pointed out, this is one way in which a poem may include history:

Pound defined the Cantos as 'epic', and defined 'epic' as 'a poem including history'. We have not much pondered the possible meanings of 'including'. One way by which a poem might be thought to 'include' history is by mirroring in its own large-scale rhythms the rhythms of discovery, wastage, neglect and re-discovery, that the historical records give us notice of.(1)

To which we can add that such miming may also operate within the small-scale compass of a Canto, or short sequence of Cantos. The Leopoldine Cantos employ, mostly, the rhythms of "discovery" and "re-discovery"; "wastage" and "neglect" do not figure greatly in their matter. We may think that a large part of this affirmative tonality springs from the context of natural abundance that grounds the Monte; that the sequence thus draws upon those springs of delight in Pound which concern the natural world, a world he regarded with Acoetian reverence. But we should remember that, for this poet, "there is no perception of beauty without a corresponding disgust".(2) In his prose Pound shows a lone Monte posed against the "hell banks": "Two kinds of banks have existed: The MONTE DEI PASCHI and the devils."(3) Disgust erupts in the ugly pendant to this sequence, in the insane hysteria of Canto L. Leopoldo and Ferdinand III stand against, threatened by, cloacal shapelessness, chaos:

and Leopoldo meant to cut off two thirds of state debt,  
to abolish it

and then they sent him off to be Emperor  
in hell's bog, in the slough of Vienna, in

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(1) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, p.83.

(2) LE, p.415 ('Joyce', The Future, 1918).

(3) SP, p.240 ('Banks', Social Credit: An Impact, 1935).

the midden of Europe in the black hole of all  
 mental vileness, in the privvy that stank Franz Josef,  
 in Metternich's merdery in the absolute rottenness,  
 among embastardized cross-breeds,

But Ferdinando staved off an Anschluss and Paris exploded (L/247)

And Ferdinando Habsburg (but of the House of Lorraine)  
 which is the true name of the clean part of that family  
 got back a state free of debt

coffers empty

but the state without debt

England and Austria were for despots with commerce  
 considered

put back the Pope but

reset no republics: Venice, Genova, Lucca

and split up Poland in their soul was usura

and in their hand bloody oppression

and that son of a dog, Rospigliosi,

came into Tuscany to make serfs of old Tuscans.

S..t on the throne of England, s..t on the Austrian sofa

In their soul was usura and in their minds darkness

and blankness, greased fat were four Georges

Pus was in Spain, Wellington was a jew's pimp

and lacked mind to know what he effected.

'Leave the Duke, Go for gold!'

In their souls was usura and in their hearts cowardice

In their minds was stink and corruption

Two sores ran together,

and hell pissed up Metternich

Filth stank as in our day (L/248)

And these lines have the same rhythmic basis as those which celebrate  
 the Monte: "with b6mbs and with b6nfires and was s6ng TE D6UM" (XLIV/223);  
 "In their s6ul was us6ra and in their m6inds d6arkness" - an accentual line,  
 frequently of feminine ending, and mostly veying between three and four  
 stresses, with an indeterminate number of unstressed syllables (though  
 the verse often gives an impression of trisyllabic 'feet', quasi-anapaests).  
 The measure, then, can accomodate both delight and disgust: the common  
 ground between the two being in this case intensity of feeling. The thud-  
 ding ictus is the engine, in either case, of a forceful rhythmic insistence.  
 Indeed throughout the poem this insistence is prominent. In examining the  
 question of rhythm in the Cantos as a whole accentual measures will bulk  
 large.

### 3. Rhythms

Imagine a poem to be an animal, with, of course, feet; then imagine, with L'Abbé Rousselot, "'an animal . . . which seeks to conceal the / sound of its foot-steps'" (LXXVII/472), and apply the conceit, with William Carlos Williams, to the poetry of Marianne Moore: "Her own rhythm is particularly revealing", he writes. "It does not interfere with her progress; it is the movement of the animal, it does not put itself first and ask the other to follow."(1) In other words, the poem will not separate out, the rhythm is "one of its words".(2) In W.B. Yeats' poem 'Among School Children' there is a famous moment in which the transition to the last stanza is accompanied by an extraordinary access of power:

#### VII.

Both nuns and mothers worship images,  
 But those the candles light are not as those  
 That animate a mother's reveries,  
 But keep a marble or a bronze repose.  
 And yet they too break hearts - O Presences  
 That passion, piety or affection knows,  
 And that all heavenly glory symbolise -  
 O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

#### VIII

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
 The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,  
 Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
 Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.  
 O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,  
 Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
 O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
 How can we know the dancer from the dance?(3)

The charge which passes across the stanza-break is compounded of a number of elements we may fairly term "rhetorical": that is, we are able to abstract, for analysis, several of the plain devices which work

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(1) William Carlos Williams, Selected Essays, New York, 1954, p.126.

(2) Ibid., p.126.

(3) W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd edn., 1950, pp.244-45.

towards their complex issue in the poem. So stanza VII is really one long, parenthesis-filled sentence - despite the full stop after "repose", which is merely prosodic - preparing the ground for the explosion and resolution of sense in stanza VIII. The energy is generated by the syntactic leap across the stanza-break. One is tempted to say that the use of syntax here - the ramifying sentence always deferring its resolving clause - is close to oratory, but one must add the proviso that it is oratory in the same sense as is Shakespearean verse: both Yeats and Shakespeare transfigure "the common tongue"(1) and their verse is, to that extent, heightened speech. To name which antecedent is sufficiently to remark how traditional in kind Yeats' poetry is, and with what readiness we respond to it. A passage from Pound's work of 1910 on the Romance literatures, The Spirit of Romance, is relevant here: "This government of speed is a very different thing from the surge and sway of the epic music where the smoother rhythm is so merged with the sound quality as to be inextricable. The two things compare almost as the rhythm of a drum compares to the rhythm (not the sound) of the violin or the organ."(2) We have, in the Yeats passage, "surge and sway", music which is powerfully prospective, which bears us onward. Canto LXXXI exhibits a similar change of gear, while utilizing very different means:

and my ole man went on hoein' corn  
 while George was a-tellin' him,  
 come across a vacant lot  
           where you'd occasionally see a wild rabbit  
 or mebbe only a loose one  
           AOI!  
           a leaf in the current  
   at my grates no Althea

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Yet  
libretto Ere the season died a-cold  
 Borne upon a zephyr's shoulder  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I rose through the aureate sky

Lawes and Jenkyns guard thy rest  
Dalmetsch ever be thy quest (LXXXI/519)

(1) See W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd edn., 1950, p.369 ('The Municipal Gallery Revisited').

(2) SR, p.161.





Pound has already used the brief ejaculation "AOI!" as bounding-line; now he types "libretto" in his margin and, for further emphasis, gives "Yet" a line to itself, meaning us to take prolonged breath before we move on to the next stressed syllable, "Ere". By such means - very nearly as precise as those on a score sheet - Pound keeps his shifts in rhythm sharply defined and is the source of Charles Olson's observation:

It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the suspension even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet has the stave and the bar a musician has had. For the first time he can, without the convention of rime and meter, record the listening he has done to his own speech and by that one act indicate how he would want any reader, silently or otherwise, to voice his work.(1)

Rhythm bears a heavy burden in the Cantos (though Pound had plenty of sustaining virtuosity). Because the ideogrammic method outlaws the overt connectives established by a developed syntax, the facets or planes of the poetry are associated by two realities: that of association (the felt congruence of image with image, cited fact with cited fact), and that of rhythm. Previously our discussion has concerned itself with elucidating the nature of such associations, judging them, when successful, to have established a "reasonable harmony of being" in which part and part are "reasonably together". And we have termed the activity of making such "reasonable" conjunctions "juxtaposition by congruence". I have suggested that the establishment of such a harmony has to do with the poet's bearing towards his material, which may be an Acoetian care

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(1) Charles Olson, Selected Writings, ed. Robert Creeley, New York, 1966, p.22.

or (more perilously for Pound as regards the end result) an Odyssean mastery, but which must in either case confront long- and deeply-meditated poetic matter, and draw upon "the quality / of the affection" (LXXVI/457) which has carved its trace in the poet's mind; in other words it must spring from the generosity of love ("The populace loved the man who said 'Look into thine owne hearte and write' or approved Ue St. Circ, or whoever it was who recorded: 'He made songs because he had a will to make songs and not because love moved him thereto. And nobody paid much attention to either him or his poetry'."(1)). I have further suggested that there are occasions in the Cantos when the co-presence of syntactically unrelated elements does not establish a "reasonable harmony of being", but instead confronts us with "the mere fact of concurrent existence in the unity of one occasion". The unity is willed by the poet, not given to him by his impulse and the form which emerges from it (the Acoetian moment) or is organized by it (the Odyssean moment). The juxtaposition isn't "by congruence"; the elements are merely apposed. These formal considerations are related compellingly to the thematic concerns we have isolated: reasonable harmony of being may stem from the organic, feminine efflorescence of form, or it may stem from the magnetic, masculine imposition of form; the merely willed unity may be regarded as a negative or failed aspect of the latter mode, and it remains a question as to how far Cantos XXXIX and XLVII represent a rare - though precious - success of this mode within Pound's oeuvre, of which the longeurs of the Chinese History Cantos (say) are a more characteristic example.

So much for the associative component of ideogrammic form. I want now to treat of the rhythmic aspect. This will lead us into a discussion of the status of form in the Cantos as a whole.

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(1) ABCR, p.205.

I shall begin by distinguishing between accentual and accentual-syllabic metres, and between both and unmetred verse. Accentual-syllabic is a measure which counts both the number of stresses and the number of syllables in the line:

When I see birches bend to left and right

This line by Robert Frost has ten syllables and five stresses. It is, of course, an iambic pentameter line. Iambic pentameter is a rising rhythm. It moves from unstressed to stressed, and each such movement constitutes an iambic foot: ti TUM. This pattern is capable of considerable variation. In the above instance Frost reverses the iambic foot in the first position: "When I", TUM ti. The line thus begins with a trochaic or falling foot. Iambic pentameter is only the most widespread accentual-syllabic measure in English verse. The measure may be consistently trochaic (falling):

Who can 'scape his bow?  
That which wrought on thee,  
Brought thee low,  
Needs must work on me.  
(Herbert)

Both trochaic and iambic measures employ disyllabic feet. Alternatively, though less commonly, the feet may be trisyllabic; anapaestic (rising):

Yonder a maid and her wight  
Come whispering by:

Wār's annāls wīll clóud íntō níght  
 Ère thèir stóry díe.  
 (Hardy)

or dactylic (falling):

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning  
 (Heber)

In such poetry the metrical norm is an ideal which the verse sometimes incarnates - "And question this most bloody piece of work" - sometimes diverges from - "His silver skin laced with his golden blood". In the former case, the rhythm of speech coincides with the metrical pattern (and is thereby heightened); in the latter, speech rhythm enforces upon our ear what can be described in prosodic terms as a reversed foot in the third position. The counterpoint between words' proper rhythm in speech and the metrical norm - sometimes coinciding, sometimes more or less diverging - constitutes the centre of rhythmic interest in accentual-syllabic verse. The divergence must never be so great as to abolish either of two factors which, together, constitute the rationale of the verse: the recognizable and sufficiently regular recurrence of metrical elements (say, ti TUM), and their limited variability. Distinguishing between a poem's rhythm, which is the actual sounding of its language, and its metre, which is the abstract, conventional pattern which structures that sounding, we can say that rhythm must never, in this type of verse, so obscure the tangible recurrences of its metrical elements, or so far indulge in an unbounded variability of these elements, that the reader's consciousness of the abstract metrical pattern is obscured, compromised or abolished.

The metrical pattern, though abstract, is not wholly Ideal. Rather, rhythm and metre react upon each other in various and mutually-enhancing ways. In the case of the trochaic reversed foot in Shakespeare's line above we see rhythm impinging upon metre; but what of this: "The *éxpédítion* <sup>(*o*)</sup> *o*f *m*y *v*íolent *l*óve"? The sensitive reader will not give "of" an emphasis equivalent to that of, say, "love", but our consciousness of the metrical scheme certainly gives to this syllable a different weight to that of the succeeding "my". Here the metre reacts upon our apprehension of the line's rhythm.

There is a further element in the determination of rhythm which must be mentioned before we leave the subject of accentual-syllabic verse, and that is grammar. Take Heber's line above, which we have described as dactylic:

Brightest and/best of the/sons of the/morning

Here we can see that the division into feet overrides the natural grammatical form of the line. If we divide the lines according to this latter imperative we get the following:

Brightest/and best/of the sons/of the morning(1)

There is thus a further tension possible to accentual-syllabic verse, in addition to that obtaining between metre and rhythm: that is, between metre and grammatical form. Coincidences and divergences between these two elements make for an additional strand of counterpoint in the verse form. The sensitive reader will not read Heber's line as "Brightest and -

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(1) See Robert Bridges, Milton's Prosody, Oxford, 1921, p.93.

best of the - sons of the - morning", but the dactylic fiction will nevertheless be present to his ear, and will assert itself still more emphatically in lines where the grammatical and metrical units coincide more closely. A further instance of this tension, this time at work within the iambic pentameter, will enforce my point. First the lines divided into iambs:

The hún/ḡr̄y júdg/ēs soon/the s̄en/tēnce s̄ign,  
 Añd wr̄etch/ēs háng/thát jú/r̄ymer/māy d̄ine. . . .  
 (Pope)

Now the line divided into what Charles L. Stevenson calls "phrase-units":(1)

The hungry/judges/soon/the sentence/sign,  
 And wretches/hang/that jurymen/may dine.

Only in the last two syllables does the phrase-unit coincide with an iambic foot. Just as the rhythmic modulation in the line "His silver skin laced with his golden blood" is pointed up by its discrimination by the ear as a falling element within a rising metrical scheme, so it is the glory of Pope's couplets to play the sharp balances and oppositions of his syntax against the regularity of his metre.

Accentual verse may be illustrated out of Piers Plowman. Strong stresses are marked in the usual way. I have placed secondary stresses between brackets:

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(1) See The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody, ed. Harvey Gross, 2nd edn., New York, 1979, p.216 (Charles L. Stevenson, 'The Rhythm of English Verse').

In a sómer sésón, whan sóft was the sónne,  
 I shópe me in shroudes, as I a shepe were,  
 In hábíts like an héremite, unhóly of wórkes,  
 Went wýde in this wórld, wóndres to hère.

Lorde, I wyll in the wórldé go renne over ál,  
 And cruélly out-sérche both gréte and smáll.  
 Every man wyll I besét that lýveth beéstly  
 Óut of Goddes láwes, and drédeth not fóly.

Having distinguished accentual from accentual-syllabic (what they call "syllable-stress") verse, Wimsatt and Beardsley write this of the former, using the passage above as illustration:

Here only the major stresses of the major words count in the scanning. The gabble of weaker syllables, now more, now fewer, between the major stresses obscures all the minor stresses and relieves them of any structural duty. (Sometimes the major stresses are pointed up by alliteration; they are likely to fall into groups of two on each side of a caesura.) Thus we have Beowulf, Piers Plowman, Everyman, Spenser's February Eclogue, Coleridge's Christabel, the poetry of G.M. Hopkins (who talks about "sprung rhythm" and "outrides"), the poetry of T.S. Eliot, and many another in our day.(1)

We have seen that the accentual-syllabic metres are engines of discrimination, and that they anatomize their various elements by playing them off against one another: metre against rhythm against grammar against metre against rhythm and so on. The constituents of the verse are mutually defining. Stanley Kunitz writes of this cross-weave of components as the prerequisite of any art:

We have been, of course, in a long free period. But I do think . . . there is now some sense of a return to form. I also think that the

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(1) The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody, ed. Harvey Gross, 2nd edn., New York, 1979, p.161 (W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Concept of Metre: An Exercise in Abstraction').

whole concept of open form, which was around for a little while, out of Olson largely, the concept that the poem was infinitely open, with no possible closure, was anarchic and a denial of form. The whole concept of form depends on the setting of limits. There has to be a weave and a cross-weave in order to make the cloth. A straight line to infinity is not a poem; there has to be some sense of enclosure in order to complete the poem. There has to be at least an exhaustion of the impulse that began the poem. Aristotle said in his Poetics that a painting ten-thousand miles long was an aesthetic impossibility.(1)

Putting together the quotations from Wimsatt and Beardsley and from Kunitz, we can ask two questions of accentual verse: What positive account of the unstressed syllables is taken in its rhythmic pattern? And: What formal weft crosses the warp of its wholly stress-determined metre?

In colloquial speech syllable-length is determined by our tendency to organize words by emphasis, so that an utterance will organize itself in terms of a variously-spaced succession of (variously) stressed syllables, between the points of which syllables are more or less equalized, undistinguished in enunciation. Both accentual and accentual-syllabic measures are formalizations of speech rhythm, but as we have seen, in the latter case these are reacted upon by the metrical form; for example, Frost's line "Sóme thing thére ís thát dóesn't lóve á wáll" makes us conscious of the words' cleaving to the rhythms of speech and, delightedly, of their equal observation of a complementary metrical dispensation. It is a matter of reciprocity, and requires skill of the poet, a good ear. But that accomodation having been effected, the metre itself reacts upon the speech or prose rhythms it has incorporated, refining them. The tendency, in speech, of unstressed syllables to form a rather undifferentiated mass out of which arise the defining peaks of stress,

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(1) The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody, ed. Harvey Gross, 2nd edn., New York, 1979, p.267 (Stanley Kunitz, 'Action and Incantation: A Conversation on Prosody').



is minimized in accentual-syllabic verse because there the unstressed syllables are taken positive account of by the metrical convention. In writing a line of accentual-syllabic verse, the poet must observe two canons - speech-rhythm and metre - and establish a harmonious reciprocity between them. Generally, the normal emphases of speech will coincide with the metrical emphases, though divergence between the two may be exploited for expressive effect: an emphasis of speech may fall in a metrically unstressed position, or a metrical stress may fall upon a syllable normally unstressed in speech, and as long as this interplay is controlled, it will be pleasing to the ear. This is that counterpoint between rhythm and metre which we spoke of earlier. But the metre of an accentual line is established wholly by speech-rhythm (I mark only the principle accents):

Léwdly complainst thou laési ládde,  
Of Wínter's wrácke, for máking thee sádde  
(Spenser)

A Sénsitive Plánt in a gárden gréw,  
And the yóung winds féed it with sílver déw,  
And it ópened its fán-like léaves to the líght,  
And clósed them beneáth the kísses of Níght.  
(Shelley)

I caught this mórning mórning's mínion, kíng-  
dom of dáylight's daúphin, dápple-dáwn-dráwn Fálcon, in his ríding . . .  
(Hopkins)

Pálace in smóky líght,  
Tróy but a héap of smóuldering bóundary stónes  
(Pound)

There they wére as our guésts, accépted and accépting.  
So wé moved, and théy, in a fórmal páttérn  
(Eliot)

This is the rhythm of speech and/or prose, transferred to verse and heightened by the metre - in the case of Spenser, Shelley and Eliot a metre which calls for four, in the case of Hopkins which calls for five, main stresses to the line (I shall postpone discussion of Pound's use of the measure, which in the quoted instance is unmetrical; I have cited him here simply to indicate the relevance of this discussion to his procedures). Hopkins called accentual rhythm "sprung rhythm", and observed of it: "strict Sprung Rhythm cannot be counterpointed",<sup>(1)</sup> by which he meant that the measure projects only its aboriginal rhythm, there is no superimposition of an independent metrical framework for it to play against. Accentual metre stipulates that (say) four main stresses shall appear in the line, and this may help the ear to distinguish between main and subordinate stresses; but the metre is equivalent to the rhythm of the verse, it has no existence apart from the verse's phenomenal being. It is wholly numerical in reference.

Somewhat paradoxically, despite its variety to the eye (its frequent disproportion of line-lengths), and despite its apparent freedoms, accentual verse imposes a greater uniformity upon language than does accentual-syllabic. Not only is rhythmic variation in accentual-syllabic metres more significant, because more fully apprehensible, than in accentual verse, but the body of the language is, by the offices of an independent metre, rendered more particularized and discriminated. The metrical subdivisions of the line sharpen our apprehension of the line's components, and render a shift in the movement of those components more distinct, by reference to the metrical norm. The more or less homogeneous syllabic troughs between stresses which are characteristic of speech are thus articulated. But not only does accentual verse frequently increase the

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(1) Gerard Manley Hopkins, Poems and Prose, ed. W.H. Gardner, Harmondsworth, 1953, p.10.

number of syllables between stresses (most accentual-syllabic verse employs one, sometimes varied to two, unstressed syllables between stresses, and this serves to preserve a sort of equable significance between the metrical components) but it leaves them at the homogenizing level of speech. This means that accentual verse is actually more uniform than accentual-syllabic; the ear registers only the equivalence of stresses, not the tallying of metrical units, and that principle of equivalence leaves the unstressed elements altogether out of account. Equally, because the accentual measure is solely a heightening of speech rhythms, and because the notion of foot is fundamentally alien to it (for one cannot speak of feet where one has only metrical stresses surrounded by an unquantified number of unstressed syllables) that interplay between phrase-unit and metrical pattern we discussed above is unavailable to it. I shall return to this question shortly.

To recapitulate. There are two prosodic norms in English: the accentual and the accentual-syllabic (syllabic verse is refractory to the language, and rarely heard, though sounding, for example, in the first line of Eliot's 'A Song for Simeon': "Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and . . ."; we can safely leave it out of account here). Of the two, it is the accentual-syllabic measure that has proved sovereign vehicle for the English Muse; the accentual, from after Langland's time (and leaving aside the special case of Hopkins) being used almost always with a sense of conscious archaism. There are good reasons for this. Accentual metre counts stresses - say four to a line - and groups unstressed syllables freely about them. Thus there is no theoretic limit to the length of any four-stress line. Within the line, the exigencies of the ear and of the language rarely tolerate anything bulkier

than four or perhaps five syllables between stresses, but, apart from this practical fiat, the poet writing in accentuals is very 'free' indeed. The extent to which he squanders this latitude depends on his abilities, of course, and the able poet will contract the province of his 'freedom' according to the demands of his ear and of his art. But there will always be an arbitrary element in his rhythmic choices, and there will always be some slight scanting of the weaker syllables in his pattern. Taken at length the accentual metre can pall, with its several numerate thumps and their attendant, and protean, gaggle of syllables. We can take, as our model for the accentual-syllabic pattern, the English heroic line. This establishes a quite limited syllabic gamut, allotting five stressed syllables to each ten-syllable line. It is thereafter open to the poet to establish some determinate pattern amongst his allotted syllables - say a rising or iambic measure - and subsequently, having established that pattern in the reader's ear, to vary it with reversed feet or substitutions, or by stretching his line out to eleven syllables, or he may modulate briefly into a trochaic or falling measure, for variety. And all of this variousness can be precisely registered by the attentive reader, possessed as he is of the metrical norm the variations appeal to. But more than this, the accentual-syllabic measure is much more rapid than the accentual, partly because the lines are in fact usually shorter - an iambic tetrameter line will probably occupy fewer syllables than a four-stress accentual line - but much more importantly because its movement enacts, and demands from the reader, a swifter and more compact perceptual motion. The reader is carried by the accentual line: he marks the ordained succession of syllables, and that succession is infinitely various in relation to those left unstressed, but he isn't alive to their variation because they depart from nothing. They are shuffled at will,



Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy,  
   and the dance into Italy.  
 Who hath taught you so subtle a measure,  
   in what hall have you heard it;  
 What foot beat out your time-bar,  
   what water has mellowed your whistles?(1)

The virtuosity of this passage, and that virtuosity's like enlivening of the poem as a whole, triumphantly vindicates Pound's dictum that one should compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not of the metronome.(2) And the poet's resourcefulness carries the reader unhesitatingly through some twenty pages of verse. Even here though, in what is perhaps Pound's greatest poem, and one of the greatest poems of the period, there is a fierce tension between the poem's length, its beauty, and the essentially monotonous cadence of its accentual ground-bass (as free verse, it doesn't employ an accentual metre: see below). As Pound handles it, this proves an agglutinative measure. The individual line expends itself as a unit, and the next demands both rhythmically a fresh impulse, and grammatically a fresh proposition. The result is a language both acrobatic and stilted, both freely, even exuberantly self-developing, and also constrained within the most implacable limits; a tension between eloquence and arrest issuing, at its best, in the poetry of the celebrated Usury Canto:

Usura rusteth the chisel  
 It rusteth the craft and the craftsman  
 It gnaweth the thread in the loom  
 None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;  
 Azure hath a canker by usura; cramoisie is unbroidered  
 Emerald findeth no Memling (XLV/230)

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(1) CSP, p.225 (Homage to Sextus Propertius).

(2) See Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.129 (F.S. Flint, 'Imagisme', Poetry, 1913).

How does this distinction between accentual-syllabic and accentual verse - a distinction which, if my analysis is correct, is distinctly unfavourable to the latter - relate to free verse? Let us take Whitman, for the moment, as representative of a free verse poet, and contrast one of his long lines with a long accentual-syllabic line of Thomas Hardy's:

The móther at hóm̄e quiétly plácing the díshes on the súpper-táble  
(Whitman)

Whēn the prē/sēnt hās lá/tchēd its pōst/ērn bēhí/nd̄ m̄y tré/mūlōūs stáy  
(Hardy)

One test of the obvious difference in character of these two lines (though they are of approximately the same number of syllables) is to imagine each as part of a prose passage: Whitman's would fit in seamlessly, but Hardy's would sound very odd. Hardy's line is in anapaestic hexameter, with an elided syllable in the fifth position. We only attend to the stresses of Whitman's line because it is isolated as a line of verse; as prose the line would bear its rhythm much more quietly. Hopkins points to the neighbourliness of prose and accentual rhythms when he writes that the latter (what he calls "sprung rhythm") "is the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived in them".(1) (This accounts, incidentally, for the capacity of free verse to incorporate prose passages - versified or not - without an interruption or dislocation of texture.) Whitman's line carries seven stresses, but the next carries thirteen:

The móther with mild wórds, cleán her cap and gówn, a wholesóme  
ódor fálling off her pērsón and clóthes as she wálk̄s by

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(1) Gerard Manley Hopkins, Poems and Prose, ed. W.H. Gardner, Harmondsworth, 1953, p.11.

In other words, neither this poem, nor in fact any other by Whitman, is written in terms of an accentual metre, as we saw (say) 'The Sensitive Plant' written. The number of stresses from line to line is unfixed.

This I take to be the working principle of most free verse (leaving aside the syllabic verse of Marianne Moore, and the experiments in that medium of Auden, Thom Gunn and others, the formal basis of which doesn't allow us to describe it as "free"): it is a form of accentual verse which does not fix the number of stressed syllables employable in one line; that is to say, it is a metreless poetry. As such, it is to be distinguished from accentual verse which employs this quantitative metre (say, a number of the sections of Four Quartets), and from vers libéré (employed in much of The Waste Land), which is simply a loosened or diluted version of accentual-syllabic metre. In 'Reflection on Vers Libre' Eliot defined vers libéré (without calling it that) in terms which argued for its very wide provenance:

The most interesting verse which has yet been written in our language has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. It is this contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony, which is the very life of verse.(1)

The first half of Eliot's definition is simply a re-formulation of a principle which competent poets have always followed (though 'constant withdrawal' is an overstatement), namely, the employment of rhythmic variations within the metrical frame - a principle taken to its limits by the Jacobean playwrights, whom Eliot may have had in mind in this connection. In so far as Eliot identified this procedure with free verse,

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(1) T.S. Eliot, To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.185 ('Reflections on Vers Libre', The New Statesman, 1917).



he was mistaken, and he was taken to task for it by Pound ("In a recent article Mr Eliot contended, or seemed to contend, that good vers libre was little more than a skilful evasion of the better known English metres"(1)). The second half of his definition, which again purports to define free verse, is similarly covered by Pound's disclaimer. In fact the whole of Eliot's argument in this essay is vitiated by his failure to distinguish between rhythm and metre. He writes that free verse "is not defined by non-existence of metre, since even the worst verse can be scanned";(2) but the fact that verse may be scanned does not imply that it is therefore metrical (we have scanned Whitman, and have scanned his rhythm not his metre, which doesn't exist). Because of this confusion, Eliot's consequent assertion that "the division between Conservative Verse and vers libre does not exist, for there is only good verse, bad verse, and chaos"(3) is meaningless. The division does exist, because "Conservative Verse" is metrical, and vers libre is non-metrical.

If Donald Davie is right, then this misprision reflects the formal constitution of Eliot's verse itself, for he:

had no ear for verse that was truly 'free', but only for verse that departed - boldly sometimes, timidly sometimes - from a standard metre like the Jacobean pentameter. To the end of his career, vers libéré was to be the best that Eliot could manage - as witness his Four Quartets, which have many virtues, but the wearisome swack or thump of their mostly accentual metres isn't among them.(4)

Let us scan a passage from Four Quartets:

Footfalls echo in the memory

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(1) LE, p.421 ('T.S. Eliot', Poetry, 1917).

(2) T.S. Eliot, To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.189 ('Reflections on Vers Libre', The New Statesman, 1917).

(3) Ibid., p.189 ('Reflections on Vers Libre').

(4) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, p.86.

Dówn the pássage which we díd not táke  
 Towárds the dóor we néver ópened  
 Ínto the róse-garden. My wórds écho  
 Thús, in your mínd.

But to w<sup>h</sup>át p<sup>u</sup>rpose  
 Distúrbing the dúst on a bówl of róse-leaves  
 I dó not knów.

This is not vers libéré, because it neither draws towards nor away from any form: it is a form. It is accentual. And it is not vers libre because that accentualism is governed by a metrical convention (a convention as old as English verse): that each line shall have four main stressed syllables and an indeterminate number of unstressed syllables. "Wearisome swack or thump" overstates the case, but certainly the form is subject to the limitations outlined above. What then are we to make of these lines of Pound's?:

Ferdinándo EVVIVA!!

decláred agáinst exportátion  
 thought gráin was to éat

Flágs trúmpets hórn<sup>s</sup> drúms  
 and a plácárd

VIVA FERDINÁNDO

and were sóunded all carillóns  
 with bómb<sup>s</sup> and with bó<sup>n</sup>fires and was sún<sup>g</sup> TE DEUM  
 in thánks to the Hígh<sup>e</sup>st for thís so  
 próvid<sup>e</sup>nt l<sup>a</sup>w  
 and were líghts lít in the chápel of Alexánder  
 and the ímage of the Madónna unvéiled  
 and sung lítanies and then w<sup>e</sup>nt to St Cátherine's chápel  
 in S. Doménico and by the reliquary  
 of the Sáint's héad sang práyers and

wént to the Cómpany Fónite Giústa  
 also sínging the lítanies  
 and wén was this thánksgiving énded the cortége  
 and the contráde with hórn's drúms  
 trúmpets and bánners wént to the  
 hóuses of the várious ámbulant véndors, then were the stícks of the  
 flágs sét in the stánchions on the Pálace of the Seignórs  
 and the gilded plácard betwéen them  
 (thus énded the mórning) (XLIV/223-24)

Or these?:

So that the vînes búrst from my fîngers  
 And the bees weíghted with póllen  
 Move héavily in the vîne-shoots:  
     chírr--chírr--chir-rikk--a púrring sôund,  
 And the bírds sleepily in the bránches.  
     ZAGRÉUS! ÍO ZAGRÉUS!  
 With the fîrst pale-clear of the héaven  
 And the cíties sét in their hílls,  
 And the góddess of the fáir knees  
 Móving there, with the óak-woods behind her,  
 The gréen slópe, with white hóunds  
     leáping abóut her;  
 And thénce dówn to the creek's móuth, until évening,  
 Flat wáter before me,  
     and the trees grówing in wáter,  
 Márble trúnks out of stíllness,  
 On pást the palázzi,  
     in the stíllness,  
 The líght now, nó't of the sún. (XVII/76)

Surely this too is accentual, and in Canto XLIV as swacking and thumping as may be. And this, I would contend, is the measure the Cantos employ when they are not reverting to accentual-syllabic metres, and they do

the latter rarely. The measure springs, as Hopkins says, from the same roots as prose, and so may incorporate nearly one hundred pages of the versified prose of John Adams:

'Acquít of évil inténction  
or inclinátion to perseveránce in érror  
to correct it with cheerfulness  
partícularly as to the mótives of áctions  
of the gréat nátions of Éúrope.' (LXII/341)

It is free rather than metred accentual verse because, although it tends towards three or four stresses to the line, this enumeration isn't applied consistently. For example, the basic measure of the Pisan Cantos is the accentual hexameter, often broken at its caesural point into three-stressed lines. This measure is prevalent enough to establish a loose accentual convention, but it is too frequently violated - usually by lines of two and of four stresses - to establish a metre properly speaking. Such incursions violate both of the fundamental metric principles: that of regular recurrence, and that of limited variability. The sort of dominance established by the hexameter, and the incidence of two- and four-stress variations, may be indicated by scanning the opening passage of the sequence:

The enórmos trágedy of the dream in the peásant's bént shóuldérs  
 Mánes! Mánes was tanned and stúffed,  
 Thus Bén and la Clára a Miláno  
                   by the heels at Miláno  
 That mággots shd/ eát the déad búllock  
 DÍGONOS, ΔÍγovOS, but the twice crúcifíed  
                   where in hístory will you fínd it?  
 yet say thís to the Póssum: a báng, not a whimper,

with a báng nót with a whímper,  
 To build the city of Dióce whose térraces are the cólour of stárs.  
 The súave eyes, quiet, not scórnfúl,  
                                     raín álsó is of the prócess.  
 What you depárt from is nót the wáy  
 and ólive tree blown white in the wínd  
 wáshed in the Kíáng and Hán  
 what whítteness will you ádd to this whítteness,  
                                     what cándor? (LXXIV/425)

It is a chanting measure, and is heard as such in recordings of Pound reading various Cantos (notably XLV and XCIX). And yet Pound inveighed against Spenser's 'Epithalamium' in these terms: "the Spenser is declamatory, that is, to be spoken rhetorically rather than sung";(1) and he wrote in the same book (the ABC of Reading):

There are three kinds of melopoeia, that is, verse made to sing; to chant or intone; and to speak.  
 The older one gets the more one believes in the first.(2)

The Malatesta Cantos exhibit all three modes: documentary record for speaking, the lines beginning "One year floods rose" (IX/34) for chanting (as we have seen, these two modes have the same rhythmic basis); the lyric beginning "'Ye spirits who of olde'" (VIII/30) for singing. But the most cursory examination of the Cantos (the material is too extensive to examine comprehensively here) will show that the first two modes - the first tending constantly to shade into the second - are overwhelmingly preponderant. Yet Pound's prose emphasis seems to have taken in Donald Davie: "For the most part the rhythms of the Cantos . . . are the sung rhythms of Burns, not the intoned or chanted rhythms of Swinburne."(3)

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(1) ABCR, p.151.

(2) Ibid., p.61.

(3) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, p.90.

This of Pound, the incorrigible intoner and chanter of his own verse! Davie's sweeping "for the most part" is thoroughly misleading. He avoids the evidence by limiting his metrical analysis to the "Ere the season died a-cold" lyric of Canto LXXXI(LXXXI/519-20), and to this observation regarding Canto XLVII: "of the 24 lines given from Canto 47, no less than 18 can be scanned as anapaestic trimeter, though . . . continually varied with reversed feet and substitutions".(1) But in Canto XLVII, as in Canto XXXIX, and as rarely in the Cantos, the poetry is accentual-syllabic in character, as Davie's observations regarding anapaestic trimeter suggest.

As we can see from the lines from Four Quartets quoted above, accentual metre does not necessitate the adoption of the line as verse unit, but nevertheless the poet of 'The Seafarer' adopted it, as did Whitman, and Pound followed them in his own free accentual measures. As we observed earlier, his verse post-Ripostes is almost unrelievedly stichic rather than strophic (see pages 48-49). It is founded on the line unit. As in all metreless verse there is no theoretical limit to the length of a line (a factor accounting for the disproportion between the two of Whitman's quoted above), and the line-ending is identified with the exhaustion of grammatical impulse. And as there is no play to be made between phrase-unit and metrical unit, the formal consequence of the elaboration of complex phrase-units, and their complex interplay, is minimized. This may be an additional reason - together with those epistemological, Fenollosan reasons given earlier - for the progressive simplification of Pound's syntax from Lustra onwards. Coleridge writes of the forward-urging expectancy generated by verse, "the continued excitement of surprise, . . . the quick reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited".(2)

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(1) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, pp.91-92.

(2) Quoted in I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, 2nd edn., 1926, p.143.

And I.A. Richards writes of that same expectancy: "In prose, the influence of past words extends only a little way ahead. In verse, especially when stanza-form and rime co-operate to give a larger unit than the line, it may extend far ahead."(1) But in the line-based metreless poetry of the Cantos, rhythmic expectation extends no further than the line and, equivalently, neither does syntactic expectancy. As a consequence, the verse progresses by additive sequence rather than by the cumulative creation of significant form. Therefore, and as we remarked earlier, their thematic coherence is established by associative rather than syntactic or discursive means; and their rhythmic coherence is established by rhythmic analogy - the somewhat amorphous similarity between contiguous and/or disjunct lines - rather than by metric identity (in both senses of the word) which embraces and substantively unifies both the contiguous and the disjunct. Their sole dependence upon asyntactic thematic association, and upon rhythmic analogy, is sufficient to unify a poem of the size of those found in Lustra, but is virtually impossible to achieve across the vast stretches of the Cantos. And because the poetry progresses by additive sequence rather than by the establishment of form "full, sphere-like, single", (2) that quantitative progression is, in theory, infinitely extensible, and the achievement of a full close even within a single Canto very difficult to achieve. Though we have said that the open-endedness of individual Cantos is part of the decorum of the long poem (see page 41), it is difficult not to feel that such a strongly-defined unit as Canto XLV peters out rather weakly at the end.

Both as regards the detail of the verse then - the metreless poetry which can play against neither a metrical norm nor, through that norm,

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(1) I.A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, 2nd edn., 1926, p.140.

(2) The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935, ed. W.B. Yeats, Oxford, 1936, p.xxv.

against the disposition of phrase-units, and whose line is theoretically endless - nor as regards its large-scale form, which is haunted by the spectre of Aristotle's ten thousand mile long painting, and concludes only with the poet's leaving off, is there any trace of that cross-weave of elements Stanley Kunitz invoked as the prerequisite of art. In either case we seem to be presented with a line extending to infinity, arbitrarily broken into segments by the poet. Pound wrote that "rhythm is a form cut into time";(1) but we must add that form, whether that of a fabric, or of a leaf, or of a cathedral's nave, springs from a tension of elements.

We can see then that there are, essentially, two alternatives to traditional poetic procedures proposed by the Cantos: (1) associative, rather than structured, form: form which has as its vehicle ideogrammic association rather than syntactic connection; and (2) the relationship, by analogy, of rhythmic elements, based upon accentual measures, as opposed to rhythmic unity based upon the identity of metrical elements within an accentual-syllabic metre. This stress upon associative and analogous relations persists into Pound's conception of "major form".

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(1) ABCR, p.202.



#### 4. Major Form

The question of measure in the Cantos is subordinate to, and comprehended by, the question of ideogrammic form. The concentration upon the line unit, with its consequent fracturing of syntactic unity; and the use of accentual measures, with its consequent reliance on rhythmic analogy from line to line, rather than upon an embracing metric identity, are both expressions of the larger strategy. My discussion of large-scale form in the Cantos will therefore centre upon the poem's poetics in a broad sense, as comprehending its associative basis, and I will take as read the connection of this discussion to the detailed questions of syntactic and rhythmic coherence, which we have explored earlier.

The Cantos presents itself to us, both rhythmically and in terms of its large-scale units, as a sort of infinitely extensible continuum, like the scintillating waves of John Berger's figure, quoted earlier, cut off arbitrarily by the horizon; an extensive warp uncrossed by the weft of metre or syntactic closure. Before discussing the consequences of this for the poem's large-scale form, let us review our earlier characterization of the more traditional "structured" poem.

Syntax is the arbiter of relationship within the sentence unit. Upon its sequences depend both the intelligibility and, to a large extent, the character of discourse. If syntax is disrupted the lucidity of the sentence is threatened. Syntax is properly regarded as operative only within the sentence, but we may, by analogy, apply the term to the larger and less immediately specifiable relations within a work, and speak of the syntax of the whole. Similarly, we can speak of a "specious present" in

terms of the sentence: the atemporal cognizance of a meaning originally enunciated temporally, sequentially. And we may, again by analogy, extend the notion of a specious present to cover the broader affinities operative within a work, and relating part to part. A poem like Paradise Lost embodies this sort of relationship very clearly, and so we can say that it is "rationally structured". This means that we can account for the structure of a poem without recourse to metaphor, or to a sketch of our 'impressions'. Our consciousness of the poem as a whole is quasi-architectural; we look back upon it with a clear sense of the manner in which its episodes relate and interlock, and this clarity and firmness of structure, when reviewed, appears virtually spatial. Our experience in the reading of it was, of course, an experience of temporality, and we certainly don't forget this immediate texture, but the unity of the poem is such that it lives quite as much in the memory as a structure, as something massively built. We can gloss this term "specious present" by Robert Duncan's "the resonances in the time of the whole in the reader's mind"; the context is enlightening:

The old doctrine of correspondences is enlarged and furthered [sic] in a new process of responses, parts belonging to the architecture not only by the fittings - the concords and contrasts in chronological sequence, as in a jigsaw puzzle - by what comes one after another as we read, but by the resonances in the time of the whole in the reader's mind, each part as it is conceived as a member of every other part, having, as in a mobile, an interchange of roles, by the creation of forms within forms as we remember.(1)

This makes the process of memory fluid - "forms within forms" - and is thereby more faithful to the psychology of recollection than our architectural figure, but the spatial emphasis is the same. It regards the artefact, the achieved poem - an entity whose ideal presence the poet

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(1) Robert Duncan, Bending the Bow, New York, 1968, p.ix.

has continually invoked in the course of composition, as guide and grail. But as we have seen, Pound's stress is not on artefacture, but on "energy"; not on working towards a projected structure, but on the living process, minute to minute, as it is written. "Energy creates pattern", (1) and that pattern is the forma. Form is to be distinguished from structure; the latter is built, and such building is only fulfilled when the structure is complete. But form inheres in each particle of discourse, being the embracing conchetto which, nowhere explicitly shown either in progress or completion, still exists as the guarantor of coherence, the poem's Idea. This isn't to say that the poem as written is merely a sunlunary version of its Ideal Form, the "immortal conchetto", for the Form only exists in and through the poem.

Such a poetic of immanence raises many difficulties for the long poem. The indeterminacy to which, during composition, any work of magnitude is subject, is exacerbated in this case. Kenneth Burke:

The motivation out of which he [the writer] writes is synonymous with the structural way in which he puts events and values together when he writes; and however consciously he may go about such work, there is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he could not have been conscious of, since the generalization could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work. (2)

If it is true that the most carefully structured or built poem still cannot possess its own end, cannot fully envisage the resonances to be set up when all the pieces are in place, then how is the eventual shape of a poem like the Cantos to be anticipated? There is evidence that Pound himself was highly tentative about this very point: "As to the

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(1) SP, p.344 ('Affirmations: As for Imagisme', The New Age, 1915).

(2) Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, 2nd edn., Baton Rouge, 1967, p.20.

form of The Cantos: All I can say or pray is: wait till it's there. I mean wait till I get 'em written and then if it don't show, I will start exegesis. I haven't an Aquinas-map; Aquinas not valid now."(1) Such large ambitions, he seems to have felt, required the poet to declare his long-term intentions, but their very absence was a prodigious obstacle to this:

Perhaps as the poem goes on I shall be able to make various things clearer. Having the crust to attempt a poem in 100 or 120 cantos long after all mankind has been commanded never again to attempt a poem of any length, I have to stagger as I can.

The first 11 cantos are preparation of the palette. I have to get down all the colours or elements I want for the poem. Some perhaps too enigmatically and abbreviatedly. I hope, heaven help me, to bring them into some sort of design and architecture later.(2)

The reference to architecture is interesting, for his earlier reference to getting all the elements onto the palette seems to imply, along with the obvious painterly implications, a quasi-musical design, in which a theme is first stated and then elaborated upon and varied. And this would accord much more with the poem as we have it. The apparent incoherence of intention this reveals is borne out by a floundering passage in the same letter of 1922, to Felix Schelling: "I have managed to make certain passages intelligible in themselves, even though the whole is still unintelligible???? Or perhaps I haven't."(3)

The disposition of a long poem must be a matter of so arranging its individual elements that the desired totality emerges from the totality of their relations; and though, as Burke says, the work's total effect, while it is in composition, will always be to some extent indeterminate, nevertheless the writer has an idea of its general character. Pattern fully emerges only as the conclusion of an enterprise: "Meaning is not

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(1) L, p.418 (Hubert Creekmore, 1939).

(2) Ibid., p.247 (Felix E. Schelling, 1922).

(3) Ibid., p.248 (Felix E. Schelling, 1922).

a quality, but a function of a term'. A function is a pattern viewed with reference to one special term around which it centres; this pattern emerges when we look at the given term in its total relation to those other terms about it. The total may be quite complicated.(1)

In the Cantos this "total relation" is potentially infinite and our means of thinning it down are personal and interpretive rather than a matter of structural guidance. But is the poem susceptible of such an approach? If we ask of it questions which are only apposite to the structured work, mindful throughout of the reader's ordering reperusal, then it is bound to seem chaotic. Nor should we allow Pound's apologetics as quoted above to get in the way; for they appear to be rather a failure of nerve, an observation of alien canons, than a failing attempt to square himself to the task. A passage from one of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essays indicates another approach to the poem, consonant with Pound's idea of the forma:

If it is characteristic of the human gesture to signify beyond its simple existence in fact, to inaugurate a meaning, it follows that every gesture is comparable to every other. They all arise from a single syntax. Each is both a beginning and a continuation which, insofar as it is not walled up in its singularity and finished once and for all like an event, points to a continuation or recommencements. Its value exceeds its simple presence, and in this respect it is allied or accompliced in advance to all other efforts of expression.(2)

This seems to be something like the faith the Cantos are founded on. "Faith" rather than scheme or method; the relations to be sought are not the tangible, explicable and, to a large extent, plotted relations of the structured poem, the poem of "rational form"; the faith is that the "value" of each element in the poem "exceeds its simple presence, and in this respect . . . is allied or accompliced in advance to all other efforts of

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(1) Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957, p.55.

(2) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology, Language and Sociology: Selected Essays, ed. John O'Neill, 1974, p.65.

expression". That elusive "value" is the forma, a resonance beyond the word's or phrase's "simple presence".

The Cantos show a complete absence of distance between a question of the line and a question of the whole: there is no intervening mode which builds up from the one to the other, and the notion of the whole invades the poem and solicits the reader willy-nilly from line to line. There is little division of formal significance amongst the various sections, and what we can isolate as such - the invocatory status of Canto I for example - often derives from classic precedent and thus declares its rôle by recalling precedent function. Consequently, the poem at every point implicates its totality, the totality of relations of which the particular node under scrutiny forms a part. According to Ernst Cassirer, language has a dual capacity: it is capable of serving "not only as an expression of contents and their qualities, but also and above all as an expression of formal relations".(1) As we have seen, the Cantos dismember such "formal" - that is, syntactic - relations. The poem bears an immense wealth of signification, but relation is left indecisive and apparently arbitrary, though oppressively manifold. Rosamond Tuve writes that "syntax is the most unobtrusive of all methods of clarification, the closest one can come to the paradox of saying something tacitly".(2) The tacit saying of the Cantos is not syntactical, but ideogrammic; it is not articulated, jointed, like the tacit saying of syntax; being a function of the forma, it is necessarily ineffable. The possibilities of relation in the Cantos, then, are virtually infinite - "everything relates to everything else"(3) - and recall Kunitz's figure of the line extending into infinity. Pound recognized that such a principle of organization ( if it can be properly

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(1) Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume One: Language, trans. Ralph Manheim, New Haven, 1953, p.185.

(2) Quoted in Donald Davie, Articulate Energy, 1955, p.124.

(3) L, p.321 (John Drummond, 1932).

called such) precluded the possibility of "major form";(1) but a poetry of flux and possibility was to be preferred for its totalitarian qualities, its ability to assimilate diverse materials, its rag-bag virtues. Nonetheless, he was always aware of the virtues of an explicit and premeditated shape for a work of magnitude, and we can trace in his prose his shifting and uncertain valuations of the merits of the two modes. His uneasy recognition of the claims of major form lies, along with much else, behind the uncertainties of the letter to Schelling.

The poet doesn't arrive at his poem as a prose writer chooses the words to fit his conception - at least, the post-Romantic or Modernist poet doesn't, for as Eliot says, "I cannot think of Shakespeare or Dante as having been dependent upon such capricious releases".(2) By "capricious releases" he means that dependence upon the fleeting impulse or moment of inspiration we have come to think of as characteristic of the poet, and which Eliot, in the same passage, admits his reliance on - "the breaking down of strong habitual barriers" in which "some obstruction is momentarily whisked away".(3) Figuratively, we can say that the prose writer is in the midst of his writing, as it were in possession of it, while the poet must reach towards his work. What Henry James called the "charmed circle" of the novel while in composition, the "air" of his creation which the novelist breathes for months or years - the charm of this for the poet in this century, condemned to sporadic raids, partial definitions, "Parts of a World",(4) has been considerable. Even if, within his terms, the poet's definition is sometimes far from partial, even if it represents in the heat of its doing everything of which he is,

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(1) See LE, p.394 ('Dr Williams' Position', The Dial, 1928).

(2) T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 2nd edn., 1964, p.146

(3) Ibid., pp.144-45.

(4) The title of Wallace Stevens' 1942 collection of poems.

or feels, capable, he can only inhabit that world during its creation and brief after-glow, beyond which he becomes again the ex-poet waiting upon vocation.(1) Paterson suggested itself to Williams, I think, as a way out of this: "The first idea centering upon the poem . . . came alive early: to find an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world about me. The longer I lived in my place, among the details of my life, I realized that these isolated observations and experiences needed pulling together to gain 'profundity'."(2) Like-wise Pound, writing in 1917 to John Quinn, celebrates the scope granted him by his work-in-progress: ". . . work on a new long poem (really L O N G, endless, leviathanic)".(3) The project seemed finite to him initially; a letter of the same year to Harriet Monroe treats it as almost a diversion: "Anyhow my next batch of stuff will be short poems, which, let us hope, someone will enjoy. Also one should not do the same thing all the time. The long poem is at least a change."(4) Ten years later, though, he was writing: "There has been no definite request for Cantos, but there is no other verse available, and will be none."(5) He was to produce no poetry other than the Cantos until 1954 and the Confucian Odes. One thing it seems the Cantos finally freed in him, and perhaps one of its recommendations, a reason why the poem became indispensable, was its tolerance (as he saw it) of imperfections. His two major works before this, Mauberley and Propertius, were both, in their aspirations, firmly rooted in the Jamesian or Flaubertian tradition: they attempted to cut from the whole cloth, to lay profound technique at the service of diagnosis and demonstration, work fully carried off and definitive. But by 1928 - and, interestingly, in an essay devoted to Williams - he can write:

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(1) See W.H. Auden, The Dyer's Hand, 1963, p.41.

(2) William Carlos Williams, The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams, New York, 1951, p.391.

(3) L, p.157 (John Quinn, 1917).

(4) Ibid., p.173 (Harriet Monroe, 1917).

(5) Ibid., pp.288-89 (James S. Watson, 1927).



Art very possibly ought to be the supreme achievement, the 'accomplished'; but there is the other satisfactory effect, that of a man hurling himself at an indomitable chaos, and yanking and hauling as much of it as possible into some sort of order (or beauty), aware of it both as chaos and as potential. . . .

To come at it another way: There are books that are clever enough, good enough, well enough done to fool the people who don't know, or to divert one in hours of fatigue. There are other books - and they may be often less clever, and may often show less accomplishment - which, despite their ineptitudes, and lack of accomplishment, or 'form', and finish, contain something for the best minds of the time, a time, any time.(1)

The tentative emphasis here on the virtues of formlessness or the half-formed - "art very possibly ought to be the supreme achievement" - has been somewhat altered by the time of the Guide to Kulchur: "A difference exists between the small totality and the possibly larger fragment which has not in itself the sum of the potentials. And no good can be done by confusing them."(2) There is no doubt that Pound had the Cantos in mind when he spoke of "the possibly larger fragment". The "small totality" accounts fully for itself, ties in all the loose ends; the Cantos "has not in itself the sum of the potentials" by virtue of its very openness, the vast and indeterminate range of its inner relationships. From the (as he felt them) conflicting claims of poetic consonance and dynamism arose Pound's deep self-divisions as to the ambitions proper for the long poem. For he accorded to major form its full weight: "Any work of art is a compound of freedom and order. It is perfectly obvious that art hangs between chaos on the one side and mechanics on the other. A pedantic insistence upon detail tends to drive out 'major form'. A firm hold on major form makes for a freedom of detail."(3) In 1919 the emphasis is the same:

A freedom of detail can only be durably effective if the sense of inner form is strong; one cannot hammer upon this too often; the musician or

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(1) LE, p.396 ('Dr Williams' Position', The Dial, 1928).

(2) GK, p.332.

(3) Quoted in To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.171 ('Reflections on Vers Libre', The New Statesman, 1917).

verse-writer who has the sense of form ingrained may take liberties in some safety, liberties which are fatal if the sense of form is not imminent, hovering, present without being obvious, but still present.(1)

In 1913, when we might think that Pound was still close to the influence of the Coleridge he had read as a very young man, he represents this "sense of inner form" in terms that recall the English poet's concept of a "coadunative" or "esemplastic" power:(2)

We might come to believe that the thing that matters in art is a sort of energy, something more or less like electricity or radio-activity, a force transfusing, welding, and unifying. A force rather like water when it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in swift motion. You may make what image you like.(3)

This, with its talk of "energy", and its vortex-like evocation of swirling water ("The water whirls up the bright pale sand in the spring's mouth" (IV/15)), is far from the conscious structuring of "rational form"; indeed it anticipates remarkably the later concept of the magnetic forma, "the rose in the steel dust" (LXXIV/449). And by its light we can look back on the two earlier quotations and see that form is envisaged there as a property of the poetic material - "inner form" - not as something imposed from without. It seems clear then that major form was never, for Pound, equivalent to what we have called "rational structure". And yet, as we shall see, it was not any external armature of structure, it was that very "sense of inner form" that Pound implicitly denied his claim to, as author of the Cantos.

Another matter that much exercised Pound in his thinking about the long poem was the question of epic decorum, the need to pace the intensities

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(1) M, p.202 ('Music', The New Age, 1919).

(2) See S.T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. George Watson, 1965, Chapter XIII ('On the Imagination, or Esemplastic Power').

(3) LE, p.49 ('The Serious Artist', The Egoist, 1913).

of a considerable work. T.S. Eliot called the sustaining context of such intensities "the prosaic":

In a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole; and the passages of less intensity will be, in relation to the level on which the total poem operates, prosaic - so that, in the sense implied by that context, it may be said that no poet can write a poem of amplitude unless he is a master of the prosaic.(1)

And Samuel Johnson makes a topographical figure out of the relation of the prosaic to the intense:

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations. This is only to say that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing, than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night.(2)

Pound, too, apparently intended some such relation of "flats" to "elevations", at least in the early Cantos. A letter concerning the first thirty counsels John Drummond that he:

might be advised not to quote more than 2 Cantos gross, I mean not more than say 150 or 200 lines altogether; and that you might give a better idea of the poem by shorter and scattered quotations. Most Cantos have in them 'binding matter', i.e., lines holding them into the whole poem and these passages don't much help the reader of an isolated fragment. . . . More likely to confuse than help. . . .(3 - his dots)

But even here the stress is upon the knitting together of the poem rather than a contrast of intensities. And such "'binding matter'" needn't be,

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(1) T.S. Eliot, Selected Prose, ed. Frank Kermode, 1975, pp.112-13.

(2) Samuel Johnson, Prose and Poetry, ed. Mona Wilson, 2nd edn., 1957, p.839.

(3) L, p.323 (John Drummond, 1932).

and in the Cantos isn't, embodied in a chastened prosaicism. Such connecting matter as the irruption of Aphrodite into Canto I is as intense, as abrupt and gnomic, as any of the surrounding verse. The complexity and, perhaps, confusion of Pound's strategy for his long poem is indicated in a letter of 1933 to E.E. Cummings: "I don't think Eimi is obscure, or not very; BUT, the longer a work is, the more and longer shd. be the passages that are perfectly clear and simple to read. Matter of scale, matter of how long you can cause the reader to stay immobile or nearly so on a given number of pages."(1) Because Pound never seems to have taken his own advice, we might be tempted to regard this as a piece of insincerity. But though we have seen him ruefully acknowledging the difficulty of his poem, he could at other times pugnaciously maintain that at least some parts of it were eminently lucid: "There is no mystery about the Cantos, they are the tale of the tribe . . . No one has claimed that the Malatesta cantos are obscure. They are openly volitionist, establishing, I think clearly, the effect of the factive personality "(2) These protestations make it clear that some part of Pound still hankered after the perspicuity of, say, Dante. The example of the Commedia brought home once more the necessity for an appropriate decorum in the long poem: "Dante, in taking up narrative, chucked out a number of MINOR criteria, as any writer of a long poem must in favour of a main virtue".(3) The tension we have remarked between the demands of craft and larger, essentially ethical concerns, and which Pound resolved in a Confucian idea of technique, is twinned by the stress felt here between the lucidity and coherence of classical art and the claims of dynamism, "pro-spect".(4)

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(1) L, p.327 (E.E. Cummings, 1933).

(2) GK, p.194.

(3) LE, p.203 ('Hell', The Criterion, 1934).

(4) See GK, p.96.

Whatever Pound's acknowledgements, the isolation of, and devotion to, a "main virtue" went against the grain of his art. And though he dutifully conceded the importance of major form to the work of amplitude, the real colour of his concerns is shown up when, after an extended and fascinating discussion of the poetic modes melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia, he writes: "All writing is built up of these three elements, plus 'architectonics' or 'the form of the whole'".(1) And this, from an essay - 'How to Read' - which sets itself to expound the fundamentals of the poet's craft, is all the acknowledgement architectonics gets. For it is a work's texture that he is really interested in:

Very well, [Williams] does not 'conclude'; his work has been 'often formless', 'incoherent', opaque, obscure, obfuscated, confused, truncated, etc.

I am not going to say: 'form' is a non-literary component shoved on to literature by Aristotle or by some non-litteratus who told Aristotle about it. Major form is not a non-literary component. But it can do us no harm to stop an hour or so and consider the number of very important chunks of world-literature in which form, major form, is remarkable mainly for absence.

There is a corking plot to the Iliad, but it is not told us in the poem or at least not in the parts of the poem known to history as The Iliad. It would be hard to find a worse justification of the theories of dramatic construction than the Prometheus of Aeschylus. It will take a brighter lad than the author of these presents to demonstrate the element of form in Montaigne or in Rabelais; Lope has it, but it is not the 'Aristotelian' beginning, middle and end, it is the quite reprehensible: B E G I N N I N G W H O O P and then any sort of trail off. Bouvard and Pécuchet wasn't even finished by its author. And of all these Lope is the only one we could sacrifice without inestimable loss and impoverishment.

The component of these great works and the indispensable component is texture; which Dr Williams indubitably has in the best, and in increasingly frequent, passages of his writing.(2)

As we have said, major form means for Pound, not architecture, but "inner form"; form implicit and by necessity. This is how he distinguishes between the two:

Form. - I think there is a 'fluid' as well as a 'solid' content, that

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(1) LE, p.26 ('How to Read', New York Herald, 1927).

(2) Ibid., pp. 394-95 ('Dr Williams' Position', The Dial, 1928).

some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase. That most symmetrical forms have certain uses. That a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely, and therefore not properly rendered in symmetrical forms.(1)

Though Pound will never surrender the organic provenance of his tree analogy, it looks as if it is just this "fluid" conception of form that he recognizes as absent, along with the "symmetrical", from the Cantos as a whole. The poem's texture is paramount. And that texture should be as the flower's open face which feeds from the hidden root; precipitate of the organic forma, it is nourished and unified by the informing matrix of impulse. Alternatively, that texture should be the intricate, driven pattern established by the magnetic forma, its source the poet's mastering and compulsive impulse. And surely this stress on texture accords with our experience of reading the poem, where we are arrested by the minutiae of the text - by their non-compulsive efflorescing association, facet with facet, or their tense, magnetic alignment - and occasionally by such an obviously coherent unit as Canto XLVII, but never by any suspicion of an overarching shape unifying the entire work. And, taking our cue from Pound himself, we can acknowledge this as a legitimate (though limiting) procedure: "The rights of experiment include the right to be unsatisfactory."(2) We should at least then, as readers, avoid the pedant's complaint that the poem has fallen between two stools, having aimed at major form and fallen short into formlessness:

In all the books cited, the best pages of Williams - at least for the present reviewer - are those where he has made the least effort to fit anything into either story, book, or (in The American Grain [sic]) into an essay. I would almost move from that isolated instance to the

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(1) LE, p.9 ('Credo', Poetry and Drama, 1912).

(2) GK, p.252.

generalization that plot, major form, or outline should be left to authors who feel some inner need for the same; even let us say a very strong, unusual, unescapable need for these things; and to books where the said form, plot, etc., springs naturally from the matter treated. When put on ab exteriore, they probably lead only to dullness, confusion or remplissage or the 'falling between two stools'.(1)

As noted earlier, form springs from a tension of elements. But at every level the Cantos' procedures abolish traditional cross-grainings of elements - metrical, syntactic, architectonic. Other than in a more traditionally-conceived unit such as Canto XLVII, there is no closure. The poem refutes Aristotle, for it is in effect ten-thousand miles long. Much is therefore, inevitably, lost. But it would be foolish to regret this, for the loss is the condition of another kind of achievement. The Cantos shows us what may be achieved by way of consonance, through the beautiful exacerbation of one range of the possibilities of language. It shows us what happens when the writer relinquishes the freedom of order which is also, paradoxically, an imposition, and attempts to give to his words the graceful latitude of a tree's growth, or to achieve a perpetually oscillating surface like that of the sea. The growing tree, the sea's patterned energies are exempla of process, of its perpetual extensions, its unstillness. It is this emphasis on the poem's rich fluidity which Donald Davie takes up in this fine apologia:

And . . . we can forget about such much debated non-questions as whether this poem has a structure, and if so, what it is: or again, why the poem isn't finished, and whether it ever could have been. Does a sea have a structure? Does a sea finish anywhere? The Mediterranean boils into and out of the Atlantic, past the Rock of Gibraltar.(2)

Davie takes his sea-figure literally - the poem is a sea - and this is

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(1) LE, pp.397-98 ('Dr Williams' Position', The Dial, 1928).

(2) Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, pp.73-74.

faithful to Pound's own literalism, which derives ultimately from Fenollosa. When Yeats salutes the chestnut tree, the "great-rooted blossomer", (1) he is engaged in creating a form which has a sort of unity-in-diversity analogous to that of the tree. But Pound, after Fenollosa, considered that language properly used had a direct, sappy connection with the natural world; that language and the pattern of discourse were, when ordered according to the ideogrammic method, a direct product and expression of the prior realm of nature. Hence the absence of cross-graining, of a conscious and manipulative crossing of linguistic elements: is a tree's form manipulated into being? Hence the absence of closure: is a tree ever closed off, do its energies terminate?

This of course forgets Pound's early dictum that art creates "a resembling unlikeness", (2) and also Wyndham Lewis' contention that form is founded on the illusion of natural growth:

None of the things with which men supplement and perfect animal life grow: but often things are put down to some alien natural force of fatal growth which are really less anonymous. All art . . . is based on this illusion of the natural miracle. The pleasure we derive from a poem or statue is that we have no sensation of manufacture, but of anonymous growth. (3)

A tree's pattern of growth, its order, is given in its organic constitution; its grace is determined. But there is no such automatism available to the poet. One mode of Pound's positive procedures (as distinct from their negative, disintegrative aspect), the magnetic forma, a masterful imposition of form, is unquestionably distinct from this reflex organicism. The other, that of the organic forma, is - rightly interpreted - also opposed to such automatism: for the emergence of form involves the poet in the constructive and artful verbal fleshing of pattern. In Heaney's

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(1) See W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems, 2nd edn., 1950, p.245 ('Among School Children').

(2) See SP, p.41 ('I gather the Limbs of Osiris', The New Age, 1911-12).

(3) Wyndham Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 1926, pp.37-38.



sense, it involves the supervention of craft upon technique. Here still then, as in the case of Yeats, the organic reference is metaphorical. The further one recedes from the detail of the poem, however, to consider how a particular node relates to the totality of the Cantos, the more indeterminate become the binding relations, and the more dependent the poem becomes on a doctrine of automatic congruence, guaranteed by a right relation to the natural world and the apprehension of process. That is to say, in terms of its larger formal relations the poem depends very heavily upon the epistemological assumptions we examined earlier, regarding the reality of a natural, motivated language which can express the contours of process. The larger reference of the poem is without the resource of a shaping craft, and its technique is willed. That is to say, the sort of vatic resonance present in much of the poem's detail is asserted of its larger form, but doesn't invade the poet - consequently doesn't invade us - with its necessity. The further the poem spreads beyond the poet's immediate inspection and control, the more it must depend on programmatic fictions concerning organic form, for Pound has chosen to relinquish the conscious structuring of "rational form". But for the reader doctrine cannot replace the experience of order, and he returns to the beautifully articulated node, to a concern with the poem's texture, concluding, with Carl Rakosi, that "scale in the Cantos is in inverse proportion to expressive power".(1)

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(1) Carl Rakosi, Ex Cranium, Night, Los Angeles, 1975, p.112.

THE PISAN AND ROCK-DRILL CANTOS

1. The Pisan Cantos

The poetry of the Pisan Cantos is, pre-eminently, the poetry of the "formed trace" (XXXVI/178). Pisa broke Pound's omniscience. There could be no mugging up in the DTC, beyond what the Bible and Confucius offered.(1) For the "captive knight" there could be no action. There were no periodicals to write for. There were no correspondents to write to. Nothing mattered but the quality of the affection with which men, women, books, places had carved their trace in Pound's mind. Memory was the cohesive force. The poet was thrown back upon his mind's deposits and the daughters of memory: "The Muses are not memory but the Daughters of Memory. By them the creative artist seizes the elements of his composition from the labyrinths of his mind; by them the elements are assembled."(2) (A passage recalled in Canto LXXIV: "The Muses are daughters of memory" (LXXIV/445).) To say that is to place oneself once more in the context of the organic forma, to give oneself up to the vatic intimation, the oracular sounding. Whereas the mugged up poem may, as in the Malatesta Cantos, exemplify such qualities through the intensity of its concern with its material, it is equally likely that the poet should take hold of material insufficiently grounded in his sensibility, not because the material is inappropriate or that to have a regard for it is somehow aberrant, but because it is insufficiently known, insufficiently loved, "ex-orbitant".(3) But introspection, at Pisa, could only find long-known material, some of it the subject of Pound's rancour - for he remembers the banks - but much

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(1) See Hugh Kenner, PE, p.476.

(2) M, pp.130-31 ('Moiseiwitsch; Rosing', The New Age, 1918).

(3) See David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.34.



The last two lines are from Mencius. The second - "What you depart from is not the way" - concerns process ("the way"), something incarnated in a woman's or goddess' eyes, or in rain; and derives from the first chapter of The Unwobbling Pivot, a chapter which Yang Shih called "the essential marrow, the true meridian of the work".(1) It is worth quoting in full:

1. What heaven has disposed and sealed is called the inborn nature. The realization of this nature is called the process. The clarification of this process [the understanding or making intelligible of this process] is called education.
2. You do not depart from the process even for an instant; what you depart from is not the process. Hence the man who keeps rein on himself looks straight into his own heart at the things wherewith there is no trifling; he attends seriously to things unheard.
3. Nothing is more outwardly visible than the secrets of the heart, nothing more obvious than what one attempts to conceal. Hence the man of true breed looks straight into his heart even when he is alone.
4. Happiness, rage, grief, delight. To be unmoved by these emotions is to stand in the axis, in the center; being moved by these passions each in due degree constitutes being in harmony. That axis in the center is the great root of the universe; that harmony is the universe's outspread process [of existence]. From this root and in this harmony, heaven and earth are established in their precise modalities, and the multitudes of all creatures persist, nourished on their meridians.(2 his insertions)

The congruences of process extend from what is most comprehensive and exalted down to what is most secret and minute, and there "no duality", (3) each is linked with each and there is no slighting, no ungenerous subordination. Thus "the universe's outspread process" does not abase the humane man. He does not utterly comprehend this of which he is part - "in its utmost not even the sage can know all of the process"(4) - but

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(1) See C, p.103.  
 (2) Ibid., pp.99-103.  
 (3) See ibid., p.183.  
 (4) Ibid., p.117.

he grasps the axis at the centre of his nature, which is "the great root of the universe", and he is thus raised up "to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth".(1) The root of things thus grasped, his words will accord with it, for "this precision of terms is heaven's process".(2) The sun, fount of the process, illumines the just word:

Intangible and abstruse  
                   the bright silk of the sunlight  
 Pours down in manifest splendor,  
 You can neither stroke  
                   the precise word with your hand  
 Nor shut it down under a box-lid.(3)

And this is the reference of the Pisan Cantos' language: it defers to the energies of process, roots itself in a continuum spreading from the detail of an ant's forefoot, a grass blade, a clover leaf, through the animate air which holds "the discontinuous gods" (XXI/99), to the fount of light, the sun. And to embody all this it must not master, it must defer; to fulfil its divinatory function it must attune itself to the soundless, odourless workings of process. The humane man, who has "amity with the hills" (LXXXIII/529), who cares for and deploys the precise word, is pre-eminently Acoetian man, and the language of the Pisan Cantos is the most perfect expression of that oracular, divinatory mode whose troubled and spasmodic efflorescence we have traced thus far. With its triumph in these Cantos comes a recrudescence of those images of emergence, of forms flowering on the air, whose dominance we have traced in the first thirty Cantos, and which were eclipsed by the masculine, modelling emphases of Cantos XXXI to LXXI.

Just as insistently, however, the poet figures in the sequence as

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(1) C, p.175.

(2) Ibid., p.167.

(3) Ibid., p.133.

Odysseus, whom we have earlier identified with the masculine, penetrative poetic mode. Here he is "noman" (LXXIV/426), a necessary ruse in the Pisan Cyclops cage, but the name also expresses Pound's new sense of anonymity, his public identity scotched, and - at a further level - it figures as a declaration of humility in the face of greater verities than those of name and reputation. And somehow he has fallen into Circe's swine-sty along with his men, is "amid the slaves learning slavery" (LXXIV/431). The malign Goddess has him, but in these straits he is visited by other, merciful presences: Kuanon, Aphrodite. These Cantos redefine the Odysseus of the earlier parts of the poem, and that redefinition shows Pound shifting away from the penetrative, mastering figure he celebrated earlier, transforming him into the "humane man" of Confucianism. Earlier, we have seen Odysseus and the Goddess in opposition, confronting one another, and Odysseus' virility ensuring his dominance. It is the modulation from that Odysseus to an Acoetian figure that we witness in the Pisan Cantos.

The characteristic movement of these Cantos is from the dispersions of anecdotal recollection, or the rapid notation of earlier, economic themes, to points at which gather a characteristic knot of images. So, early in Canto LXXIV:

A lizard upheld me  
 the wild birds wd not eat the white bread  
 from Mt Taishan to the sunset  
 From Carrara stone to the tower  
 and this day the air was made open  
 for Kuanon of all delights,  
 Linus, Cletus, Clement  
 whose prayers,  
 the great scarab is bowed at the altar  
 the green light gleams in his shell  
 plowed in the sacred field and unwound the silk worms early  
 in tensile  
 in the light of light is the virtu  
 'sunt lumina' said Erigena Scotus

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concerning emergence, the Goddess, the sanctity of the natural world and the proper stance of language in relation to it. The second element I want to attend to - that concerning Odysseus - though not as dominant, is equally persistent. I want now to examine its incidence throughout the Pisan Cantos, for an understanding of the significance of Odysseus in the sequence will help clarify our later argument.

As I have said, the Odysseus presented to us in these pages is a chastened figure, the poet's simulacrum scarred by troubled voyaging. He first appears in these lines:

ὈΥ ΤΙΣ, ὈΥ ΤΙΣ? Odysseus  
the name of my family.(LXXIV/425)

ὈΥ ΤΙΣ: Noman. The qualification, the coming clean - "Odysseus / the name of my family" - does not derive from Homer. This is the passage from The Odyssey in question:

'Kyclops,

you ask my honorable name? Remember  
the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.  
My name is Nohbdy: mother, father, and friends,  
everyone calls me Nohbdy.'(1)

Polyphemus has promised Odysseus an unspecified gift, and after this avowal he names it:

'Nohbdy's my meat, then, after I eat his friends.  
Others come first. There's a noble gift, now'.(2)

Odysseus' circumvention of his fate - his blinding of the Cyclops, and

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(1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.168.  
(2) Ibid., p.168.







so lay men in Circe's swine-sty;  
*ivi in harum ego ac vidi cadaveres animae (LXXIV/436)*

The seer is cast down amongst the swinish, the dead souls, and Pound underscores the bitterly personal reference of the Latin by italicizing "ego". This cadaverous realm extends far beyond the confines of the DTC: it embraces the entire "commonweal", and is sponsored by the malign Goddess:

nec benecomata Kirkê, mah! *κακά φάρμακ' ἔδωκεν*  
 neither with lions nor leopards attended  
 but poison, veleno  
 in all the veins of the commonweal  
 if on high, will flow downward all thru them  
 if on the forge at Predappio? sd/ old Upward:  
 'not the priest but the victim' (LXXIV/437)

The graceful Goddess will make her appearance in these Cantos, but only when love has replaced the rancour which has possessed Pound for many years, and focussed his gaze on the "dreadful drugs" poisoning the body politic, and which has made a victim of the priest Mussolini. Though Pound wrote to Santayana in 1939 that he was ready now to write his Paradise, (1) the vision of the Pisan Cantos rarely clears wholly, for Paradise is "spezzato" (LXXIV/438), and Pound can never utterly forget the poison. The ambiguity of vision this leads to is epitomized by these lines:

the sharp song with sun under its radiance  
*λύγρ' (LXXIV/439)*

The English can be taken as a prescription for an aesthetic ideal: sharpness and clarity drawing on natural radiance; but refers directly to the

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(1) See L, p.428 (George Santayana, 1939).

captivating but dangerous beauty of Circe's song (we have read again, a few lines earlier, "in harum ac ego ivi" (LXXIV/439)), and this theme of Merciles Beaute is reinforced by the appended Greek, meaning "clear" or "shrill" and used in The Odyssey of the Sirens' song.

References to The Odyssey and Odysseus are concentrated in this first Canto of the series, as it were to define newly and in altered terms the contours of this focal figure. As we have said, he is no longer the mastering and triumphant figure of the earlier Cantos. In this redefinition Pound for the first time steps outside of Homer's poem and re-shapes the contours of Odysseus' destiny. The one constant is his hero's indestructible liveliness of perception. After Canto LXXIV, there are few other extended references to him in the Pisan sequence. There is one in Canto LXXX, and its two halves sum up what, for Pound now, is admirable and what is mistaken in his character:

care and craft in forming leagues and alliances  
 that avail nothing against the decree  
 the folly of attacking that island  
 and of the force *ὑπὲρ μῦθον*

with a mind like that he is one of us (LXXX/512)

What Pound rejects in these Cantos, and what he retains and moves to the centre of Odysseus' character, is epitomized in these lines. "The folly of attacking that island" exemplifies what he called in the Guide to Kulchur "the maritime adventure morals of Odysseus" (and compared unfavourably to Confucius' "sense of responsibility"(1)). The episode is specifically recalled in the 'Hell' essay of 1934: "Re punishment of Ulysses, no one seems to note the perfectly useless, trifling, unprovoked

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(1) GK, p.38.

sack of the Cicones in the Odyssey. Troy was one thing, they were in-veigled."(1) He puts it more strongly in Canto LXXIX:

Greek rascality against Hagoromo  
Kumasaka vs/ vulgarity  
no sooner out of Troas  
than the damn fools attacked Ismarus of the Cicones (LXXIX/485)

The reference stands in the Pisan Cantos as an exemplum of the folly - the "Charybdis" (LXXIV/431) - of action, the male principle overreaching itself and becoming destructive. But the line "with a mind like that he is one of us" sets against this the clarity of Odysseus' intelligence. It is spoken by Zeus, and its precise bearing and larger implication can be gleaned from two passages of Pound's prose. The first is from a letter to W.H.D. Rouse:

What about Zeus saying: 'How can I forget Odysseus, the fellow is one of us', or 'How can I forget Odysseus, who is one of us, one of our own kind', or 'almost one of us'.

'A man with a mind like that comes near to godhead'; 'when a man's got a mind like that even the gods respect him' ('can respect').(2)

The second is from the Guide to Kulchur:

And as Zeus said: 'A chap with a mind like THAT! the fellow is one of us. One of US'.

I hope that elsewhere I have underscored and driven in the greek honour of human intelligence

'Who even dead yet hath his mind entire'.(3)

The strain of "adventure" in Odysseus' character is sloughed off in these Cantos and he figures wholly as the clear intelligence. Let us now turn to what that intelligence perceives, sequestered at Pisa.

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(1) LE, p.212 ('Hell', The Criterion, 1934).

(2) L, p.358 (W.H.D. Rouse, 1935).

(3) GK, p.146.

The essence of that perception is gathered in the recurrence of the composite or syncretic Goddess. She first appears, almost parenthetically, early in Canto LXXIV, and under the dominant aspect of Aphrodite:

that the drama is wholly subjective  
 stone knowing the form which the carver imparts it  
 the stone knows the form  
 sia Cythera, sia Isotta, sia in Santo Maria dei Miracoli  
 , where Pietro Romano has fashioned the bases  
 OY TIS  
 a man on whom the sun has gone down  
 nor shall diamond die in the avalanche  
                   be it torn from its setting  
 first must destroy himself ere others destroy him. (LXXIV/430)

The necessarily absolute subjectivity of the imprisoned poet drawing on memory as his only resource discovers in the example of the sculptor an assurance that his perceptions find some warrant in the external world, for the "subjective" apprehensions of the latter free a form implicit in the objective block of stone. Aphrodite, Isotta, the mermaids in Santa Maria dei Miracoli are the palpable fruit of the subjective drama in the artist's mind, for "the stone knows the form". Poignantly, against this celebration of the particularized identity of art is set Pound's anonymous status as "noman", and in the light of these preceding lines we can now see another facet of reference in the diamond figure, for it may also encompass the endurance of the stone image through the violent flux of war. As those images were discovered in stone, so Pound's eye will discover the Goddess - despite his captivity - in the Italian air.

After this glimpse of the benign Goddess, her full theophany follows a few pages later, as the poet celebrates her emergence, not from stone

under the urging of the chisel, but from the sea, urged by the poet's  
mind:

as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her  
and from her manner of walking  
as had Anchises  
till the shrine be again white with marble  
till the stone eyes look again seaward  
The wind is part of the process  
The rain is part of the process  
and the Pleiades set in her mirror  
Kuanon, this stone bringeth sleep;  
offered the wine bowl  
grass nowhere out of place  
χθόνια γέα, Μήνηρ,  
by thy herbs menthe thyme and basilicum,  
from whom and to whom,  
will never be more now than at present  
being given a new green katydid of a Sunday  
emerald, paler than emerald  
minus its right propeller  
this tent is to me and ΤΙΘΩΝΩΙ  
eater of grape pulp  
in coitu inluminatio (LXXIV/435)

In Canto XXXIX Terracina was the scene of a copulative rite, enacted  
under the stone eyes of Venus; here, though, her office is the bringing  
of sleep's benefice, and in token of this Venus is twinned with Kuanon,  
goddess of peace, and with the earth goddess Demeter, "nether earth,  
Mother". The reference to "Gea" anticipates the "connubium terrae" of  
Canto LXXXII, where too the efflorescing herbs figure, their implicit  
and unforced order ("grass nowhere out of place") chiming with the stone  
form's equivalently natural emergence from its matrix. The more intimate  
reference of these images is taken up a few lines further on, where the  
coital reference of Teracina is resumed - "in coitu inlaminatio" - and  
Pound discovers in the image of Venus the figure of a loved and mortal  
woman, Olga Rudge:

Manet painted the bar at La Cigale or at Les Folies in that year  
she did her hair in small ringlets, à la 1880 it might have been,

red, and the dress she wore Drecol or Lanvin  
a great goddess, Aeneas knew her forthwith (LXXIV/435)

So, later, the eyes of a lover are found in those of the Botticelli Venus:  
"her eyes as in 'La Nascita'" (LXXIV/446).

In this Canto, which sounds all the chords to be drawn upon later,  
two more references complete the syncretic Goddess: to Athene, identified  
by her eyes:

under the olives  
saeculorum Athenae  
γλαυῆς, γλαυκώπις (LXXIV/438)

and to Persephone: "Περσεφόνη under Taishan" (LXXIV/443). Odysseus-  
Pound at the mast finds - "possibly" - the Sirens (ΣΕΙΡΗΝΕΣ) replaced  
by the Graces (ΧΑΡΙΤΕΣ), and witnesses Venus in "the great shell borne  
on the seawaves", her rising "By no means . . . orderly . . ./ but as  
the winds veer", just as the poet's rising towards the light is not  
"Dantescan", just as Paradise is "spezzato" (LXXIV/438):

ΣΕΙΡΗΝΕΣ had appreciated his conversation  
ΧΑΡΙΤΕΣ possibly in the soft air  
with the mast held by the left hand  
in this air as of Kuanon  
enigma forgetting the times and seasons  
but this air brought her ashore a la marina  
with the great shell borne on the seawaves  
nautilus biancastra  
By no means an orderly Dantescan rising  
but as the winds veer (LXXIV/443)

Canto LXXVI begins by invoking Cavalcanti's "forméd trace":

And the sun high over horizon hidden in cloud bank  
lit saffron the cloud ridge  
dove sta memora (LXXVI/452)



Memory here apparently mis-spells memory ("memoria") - though the missing 'i' could stem from a printer's error, with which the Cantos is littered (vide Mava/Maya in Canto XXXIX/194(1)). The immediate sight of the sun, from his captivity, instigates this recollection; for the lines in Cavalcanti speak of a "mist of light" (in Pound's 1910 version(2)) or a "diafan" (in Canto XXXVI/177), and the lit cloud has evoked this. The Canzone goes on to say that from this impulse "Love is created" (1910 version(3)). Memory and love are closely bound, for one remembers what one loves. For instance, one remembers a high cliff overlooking the sea, persistent setting for theophany throughout the Cantos:

But on the high cliff Alcmena  
 Dryas, Hamadryas ac Heliades  
 flowered branch and sleeve moving  
 Dirce et Ixotta e che fu chiamata Primavera  
 in the timeless air (LXXVI/452)

Or vision may be actual, now: "that they suddenly stand in my room here" (LXXVI/452) - a glimpse to be consummated in the climactic apparition of eyes in Canto LXXXI. Or, as later in this Canto, "la pastorella dei suini / driving the pigs home" may show as an incarnation of Circe, "benecomata dea" (LXXVI/460). The Odyssean intelligence is now alert to catch such broken intimations. They clot together later in Canto LXXVI in a passage which unites Anchises' sexual communion with Venus and the divine energies of air to the theme of hellish disintegration, the sufferings of Odysseus ("πολλά παθεῖν", "to experience, or suffer, much", from the poem's opening: "and weathered many bitter nights and days / in his deep heart at sea"(4)), and the redemptive power of memory:

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(1) For the textual history of the Cantos see Barbara Eastman, Ezra Pound's Cantos: The Story of the Text: 1948-75, Orono, 1979.

(2) See LE, p.155 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism', Make It New, 1934).

(3) See Ibid., p.156 ('Cavalcanti: Medievalism').

(4) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.13.

or Anchises that laid hold of her flanks of air  
drawing her to him

Cythera potens,  
no cloud, but the crystal body  
the tangent formed in the hand's cup  
as live wind in the beech grove  
as strong air amid cypress

κόρη, Δελά δεινά /et libidinis expers  
the sphere moving crystal, fluid,  
none therein carrying rancour  
Death, insanity/suicide degeneration  
that is, just getting stupider as they get older  
πολλά παθεῖν ,

nothing matters but the quality  
of the affection -  
in the end - that has carved the trace in the mind  
dove sta memoria (LXXVI/456-57)

Following almost immediately upon this we read again of the poet  
"in the timeless air" (LXXVI/452) over the sea-cliffs:

Lay in soft grass by the cliff's edge  
with the sea 30 metres below this  
and at hand's span, at cubit's reach moving,  
the crystalline, as inverse of water,  
clear over rock-bed

ac ferae familiares  
the gemmed field a destra with fawn, with panther,  
corn flower, thistle and sword-flower  
to a half metre grass growth,  
lay on the cliff's edge  
...nor is this yet atasal  
nor are here souls, nec personae  
neither here in hypostasis, this land is of Dione  
and under her planet  
to Helia the long meadow with poplars  
to Κήρυς  
the mountain and shut garden of pear trees in flower  
here rested. (LXXVI/457-58)

The friendly beasts ("ac ferae familiares") recall both Circe's dupes  
and the cult-figures of Dionysus in Canto II. But this is a moment of  
rest, of ease, not yet "atasal": an earthly paradise shadowed by hell,

for the closing phrase - "here rested" - recalls Pound's emergence from the Inferno of Canto XV:

blind with the sunlight,  
Swollen-eyed, rested,  
lids sinking, darkness unconscious. (XV/67)

As Pound notes wryly later in the Canto: "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel, / l'enfer non plus" (LXXVI/460). Nevertheless, he affirms the "tangibility" of his visions:

spiriti questi? personae?  
tangibility by no means atasal  
but the crystal can be weighed in the hand  
formal and passing within the sphere: Thetis,  
Maya, 'Αφροδίτη (LXXVI/459)

That weighing is also a caress, as when Anchises takes hold of the "flanks of air"; the poet has knowledge of the Goddess. That this knowledge - "in coitu inluminatio" (LXXIV/435) - is closely allied to the moment of artistic creation, is indicated by the earlier occurrence of this episode in the Cantos. In Canto XXIII Pound has Anchises say:

'King Otreus, of Phrygia,  
'That king is my father.'  
and saw then, as of waves taking form,  
As the sea, hard, a glitter of crystal,  
And the waves rising but formed, holding their form.  
No light reaching through them. (XXIII/109)

And in Canto XXV:

'as the sculptor sees the form in the air...  
'as glass seen under water,  
'King Otreus, my father...

and saw the waves taking form as crystal,  
 notes as facets of air,  
 and the mind there, before them, moving,  
 so that notes needed not move. (XXV/119)

"Notes" relates this moment to the art of music, and this passage relates it to that of sculpture, candying it with the voice and presence of the Roman poet Sulpicia addressing her love, Cerinthus:

And Sulpicia  
 green shoot now, and the wood  
 white under new cortex  
 'as the sculptor sees the form in the air  
                   before he sets hand to mallet,  
 'and as he sees the in, and the through,  
   the four sides  
 'not the one face to the painter  
 As ivory uncorrupted:  
                                   'Pone metum Cerinthe'  
 Lay there, the long soft grass,  
                   and the flute lay there by her thigh,  
 Sulpicia, the fauns, twig-strong,  
                                   gathered about her;  
 The fluid, over the grass  
 Zephyrus, passing through her,  
                                   'deus nec laedit amantes'. (XXV/117-18)

As is appropriate to the ambience of stone-carving, Anchises' communion with the Goddess is less ardent and mastering than that of the Odysseus of Canto XXXIX; it is tinged with awe and something approaching fear, for at the end of this Canto the first two lines of Sappho's 'Hymn to Aphrodite' are quoted: "IIOIKIAOΘPON", 'AΘANATA', "richly enthroned, immortal"; and a line later we read "'AΘANATA, saeva", "immortal, cruel" (LXXVI/462). Sappho's poem continues (in Wharton's translation): "Immortal Aphrodite of the broidered throne, daughter of Zeus, weaver of wiles, I pray thee break not my spirit with anquish and distress, O Queen."(1)

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(1) Sappho, Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings and a Literal Translation, ed. Henry Thornton Wharton, 2nd edn., 1887, p.48.

Canto LXXVII reminds us again of that theme of surpassing light and encroaching darkness, with a line attributed to Epictetus in the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: "ψυχάριον ἀεὶ βάρσραζον νεκρὸν", "you are a tiny soul supporting a corpse" (LXXVII/466); a formulation which is reminiscent of Pound's own: "We are . . . one humanity, compounded of one mud and of one aether" (see page 134). At other times Pound seems to have taken a more holistic view of the relation of mind or spirit to body, but it is the dualism of Epictetus which is reflected in the next lines:

a little flame for a little  
conserved in the Imperial ballet (LXXVII/466)

And later we read of tempest distorting a martin's flight, the lines qualifying the assertion that Paradise is not "artificiel" (we remember "Le paradis n'est pas artificiel, / l'enfer non plus" (LXXVI/460):

Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel  
nor does the martin against the tempest  
fly as in the calm air (LXXVII/468)

The same tempest threatens the "little flame" of a candle in Canto CX:

A wind of darkness hurls against forest  
the candle flickers  
is faint  
Lux enim -  
versus this tempest. (CX/781)

And it is this undercurrent of turbulence throughout the Pisan Cantos which lends edge and poignancy to the apparitions of deity. But, as we have seen, those deities share in the destructive properties elsewhere

evident. Circe administers "dreadful drugs" (see XXXIX/193), Aphrodite is "δελιά" (LXXVI/456). So, in this Canto, the gnomic notation "καλλιπλόκαμα Ida" (LXXVII/467) refers us again to the scene of Anchises' coupling with Venus, Mount Ida, and in the Greek word - "beautiful buttocked" - to those "flanks of air" (LXXVI/456) earlier invoked. On that occasion Venus was referred to as "κῆθηρα δελιά" (LXXVI/456). It is appropriate that we should bear in mind the mortal consequences of this conjunction of man and goddess, for Anchises, boasting later of his conquest, was crippled by the vengeful Zeus' thunderbolt, a blow which would have killed him had not Aphrodite interposed her girdle. Though she is kindly in this, still knowledge of her is dire in its consequences (she subsequently lost interest in the weakened mortal). The mythic context of this story is worth recalling:

Aphrodite Urania ('queen of the mountain') or Ergeina ('of the heather') was the nymph-goddess of midsummer. She destroyed the sacred king who mated with her on a mountain top, as a queen-bee destroys the drone: by tearing out his sexual organs. Hence the heather-loving bees and the red robe in her mountain-top affair with Anchises; hence also the worship of Cybele, the Phrygian Aphrodite of Mount Ida, as a queen-bee; and the ecstatic self-castration of her priests in memory of her lover Attis . . . Anchises was one of the many sacred kings who were struck with a ritual thunderbolt after consorting with the Death-in-Life Goddess . . . (1)

The aging poet of these Cantos is, in one of his aspects, a tremulous Anchises-figure:

Down, Derry-down /  
Oh let an old man rest. (LXXXIII/536)

When Mount Ida is next referred to in this Canto it has been transformed into a goddess in its own right, a transformation fully in accord

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(1) Robert Graves, Greek Myths, 4th edn., 1965, p.71.

with Pound's syncretic and fluid use of myth: "καὶ Ἴδα, θεὰ", "and Ida, goddess" (LXXVII/471). And this "goddess" - which may well be the Pisan hill Pound can see from the Camp, and which he elsewhere calls "Taishan" - "faces Apollo" (LXXVII/471). This reciprocation between the principles of earth and sky recurs throughout the Pisan sequence, and offers some hope that the wounding division between "mud" and "aether" can be made good (as we shall see when examining the "connubium terrae" of Canto LXXXII, when that reification comes, it is terrifying). So the line "the clouds over Pisa, over the two teats of Tellus, γέα" (LXXVII/468). The "bel seno" of earth is honoured, and a sexual communion with the earth-goddess Demeter to parallel that with Aphrodite in air is celebrated:

so kissed the earth after sleeping on concrete

bel seno Δημήτηρ copulatrix  
thy furrow (LXXVII/470)

The complex of image and feeling excludes rancour and disintegration, but it has taken near-death, the extinction of identity, passing over Lethe, to bring the poet within touching-distance of the great harmonies of Dante's terzo cielo:

Ils n'existent pas, leur ambience leur confert  
une existence...and in the case of  
Emanuel Swedenborg....'do not argue'  
in the 3rd sphere do not argue

above which, the lotus, white nenuphar  
Kuanon, the mythologies

we who have passed over Lethe (LXXVII/471-72)

But this realm of "Kuanon, the mythologies" is never held in tranquillity.

One considerable barrier to this is the fact that Pound resides, in Pisa, in Hell. And he must sustain himself "'in gran dispetto'". The reference is to Canto X of the Inferno:

Suddenly in my ear this sound was cried  
 From out one of those coffers; and I drew,  
 In fear, a little closer to my Guide.  
 And he to me spoke: 'Turn! What dost thou do?  
 See Farinata, raising himself amain!  
 From the waist all of him shall rise in view'.  
 My gaze from him I could not now have ta'en:  
 And he rose up to front me, face and breast,  
 As if of Hell he had a great disdain.(1 - my italics)

And shortly after this reference to Dante he says, with Bianca Capello, "se casco, non casco in ginocchion'", "if I fall, I do not fall on my knees" (LXXVII/473). The wonder is that this holding himself tense against his horrible conditions doesn't disable his apprehension of "a gentler order of feeling".(2) Part of this accomodating power of imagination comes from his ability to take up present concerns into the web of allusion established in earlier Cantos, written before the war. So here with Dante. And, at a further level of accomodation, the ability to transmute mundane trouble into the extramundanity of myth: "Mist covers the breasts of Tellus-Helena and drifts up the Arno" (LXXVII/473). Here Pound combines the themes of divine fertility (Tellus, Roman divinity of the earth) and mortal destructiveness (man-destroying, ship-destroying, city-destroying Helen) in the figure of a composite goddess, and by such a stroke somewhat ameliorates his persistent Manichaeism of vision. And a third layer, of delicate observation, grounds this apprehension in the world. This comprehensive but detailed and careful form of expression epitomizes that precision of

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(1) Dante, Inferno X.28-36, in The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano, 2nd edn., New York, 1969.

(2) Gaudier-Brzeska's phrase; see GB, p.28.



language and deployment of the "sincere" word which Pound discovered surpassingly expressed in the Confucian texts, and he closes this Canto with an invocation of ch'eng, the focussed word, twinning it with a complementary Dionysiac energy, and achieving a condensed and telling prescription for his kind of poetics:



ch'eng

bringest to focus

Zagreus

Zagreus (LXXVII/475)



ch'eng

Canto LXXVIII affords us a glimpse - no more - of wholly personal concerns:

To be gentildonna in a lost town in the mountains  
 on a balcony with an iron railing  
 with a servant behind her  
 as it might be in a play by Lope de Vega  
 and one goes by, not alone,  
                   No hay amor sin celos  
 Sin secreto no hay amor  
                   eyes of Doña Juana la loca,  
 Cunizza's shade al triedro and that presage  
                   in the air  
 which means that nothing will happen that will  
   be visible to the sargeants  
 Tre donne intorno alla mia mente  
 but as of conversation to follow,  
 boredom of that roman on Olivia's stairs  
                   in her vision  
 that stone angle all of his scenery  
                   with the balustrade, an antipodes (LXXVIII/483)

Earlier Pound has called on "Pallas  $\Delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$ " to "sustain" him in his single-ness, to balance somehow his fear that the work of the past forty years - forty years of looking for the "sincere" word - will now be effaced:

Pallas  $\Delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$  sustain me  
 'definition can not be shut down under a box lid'

but if the gelatine be effaced whereon is the record? (LXXVIII/479)

Now Pound turns to scenes not in the mythic record, scenes registered on the gelatine of his own mind only, and therefore desperately fragile. The "gentildonna" must be, one presumes, some anonymous woman seen once and never forgotten, and the one who "goes by, not alone" must be Pound, walking perhaps with one of the three women "alla mia mente" and whom Wendy Flory has identified as his wife, Olga Rudge, and Bride Scratton, the "Thiy" of a couple of pages earlier (LXXVIII/481).(1) It is, surely, of the difficulty of sustaining such tangled relations that Pound speaks in the Spanish lines (from Lope) which translate: "There is no love without jealousy, without secrecy there is no love"; and it must be the same experience that he writes of, with more directness, but still with a sufficient obliquity, in Canto CXIII: "Pride, jealousy and possessiveness / 3 pains of hell" (CXIII/787). The infernal element is, in the Pisan Canto, indicated by the reference to Doña Juana who was driven mad by the death of her husband Philip, and whose eyes Pound sees in the face of the woman at the balcony. As the Canto modulates towards his present conditions, the ambit of secrecy is evoked by "Cunizza's shade al triedro", abducted by Sordello. At Cunizza's first appearance in these Cantos there is likewise the mysterious presence of "l'altra", the other:

E' al Triedro, Cunizza  
e l'altra: 'Io son' la Luna'. (LXXIV/438)

Doubtless this more domestic "SECRETUM" likewise "stays shut to the vulgo".(2) Cunizza, at any rate, is part of "that presage / in the air / which means

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(1) See Wendy Stallard Flory, Ezra Pound and the Cantos: A Record of Struggle, New Haven and London, 1980, p.115 and p.297; also Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound, 1970, pp.243-44.

(2) See L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

that nothing will happen that will / be visible to the sergeants". Pound, alone with his visions, and the Europe around him (should he ever see it again) apparently "a broken ant-hill" (LXXVI/458), not infrequently lapses into solipsism (as is the case with the "roman" on Olivia Agresti's stairs), but such baffled communication is in a way a condition of the visionary and newly personal modus of the Pisan Cantos, and this we cannot regret.

In Canto LXXIX Pound drives home the altered condition of his Odysseus persona, for we hear Circe addressing the immobilized and tongue-tied hero:

'Prepare to go on a journey'.  
'I...'  
(LXXIX/488)

That enforced immobility means that the great lynx-hymn of this Canto must take place - as a "presage / in the air" - within the DTC: a fact which Pound very engagingly acknowledges:

O Lynx, wake Silenus and Casey  
shake the castagnettes of the bassarids (LXXIX/488)

Or again, while premonitory fragments of the hymn are still mixed with more heterogeneous material:

Salazar, Scott, Dawley on sick call  
Polk, Tyler, half the presidents and Calhoun (LXXIX/489)

But the bizarre location for this rite is no problem, for the air's presage regards a garden set in "the timeless air" (LXXVI/452):

and on the hill of the Maelids  
 in the close garden of Venus  
 asleep amid serried lynxes (LXXIX/489)

Dionysus and Aphrodite - sometime lovers, their son Priapus - are the titular deities of this passage, and their sexual energies inform the Confucian dispensation, the "equities", just as Zagreus informs the "sincere" or focussed word:

set wreathes on Priapus *Ἰακχος*, Io! *Κύθηρα*, Io!  
 having root in the equities  
 Io! (LXXIX/489)

The reciprocity between earth and sky we noted earlier darkens in this Canto, with the introduction of Persephone and Demeter. We read in Canto LXXVII: "belseno *Δημήτηρ* copulatrix / thy furrow" (LXXVII/470), but didn't pause to reflect that Demeter may be entered in two ways: sexually - "By prong have I entered these hills" (XLVII/238) - and in death - "Thy day is between a door and a door" (XLVII/237). Looking back at Canto XLVII, we can now see the intimacy the Canto proposes between sexual experience and death (thus taking the old pun quite literally). For at the close of Pound's celebration of sexual penetration he words the experience in the same terms as he had done that of death: as a door entered: "By this door have I entered the hill" (XLVII/238) - no longer "these hills", but the one hill where a grave might be dug. And to love and to die is to enter the same "cunnus", Demeter's "furrow" (LXXVII/470):

Hast thou found a nest softer than cunnus  
 Or hast thou found better rest  
 Hast'ou a deeper planting, doth thy death year  
 Bring swifter shoot?  
 Hast thou entered more deeply the mountain? (XLVII/238)

From this passage, to complete this bewildering of experience, we can see that the deep planting of man into woman, or of corpse into earth, raises up fruit, as the seed dies into the furrow. Again, the sexual act is a kind of plowing, what Adrian Stokes called a carving of the hillside (as opposed, he writes, with Confucian emphasis, to the modelling act of manufacture (see page 218)), but the poet asks us to consider plowing with a gravity which recalls a homiletic injunction to us to consider our death: "Think thus of thy plowing" (XLVII/238). To enter the hill - sexually, or in death - is to heal the wound of subjectivity, to unite inner and outer; and this is the composite experience Pound salutes at the end of the Canto, one "that hath the gift of healing" (XLVII/239). Such an end springs from the carving, substance-respecting ethos of agriculture, and Pound found such an ethos in the Chung Yung:

Equity is something that springs up from the earth in harmony with earth and with heaven.

Translator's Note: The ideogram represents the sacrificial vase. Ethics are born from agriculture; the nomad gets no further than the concept of my sheep and thy sheep.(1)

This conception of sex as a sort of husbandry (which, of course, grants the female an entirely passive rôle, as we have noted earlier, but still entails a reverence for her as the fruitful matrix, and so doesn't consort with an entirely Odyssean, penetrative, modelling conception) issues in the poet's union with the elemental forces, and joins with the Confucian idea that an "understanding of the nature of things can aid the transforming and nutritive powers of earth and heaven [ameliorate the quality of the grain, for example] and raise man up to be a sort of third partner with heaven and earth".(2 - his insertion)

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(1) C, p.149.

(2) Ibid., pp.173-75.

Faced with the real possibility of present death, however, Pound in Pisa reformulates this complex of experience. Persephone is enjoined to stay beneath the sun, moon and stars, and it is hard not to catch a self-reference, and a regret, in the poet's line "for the six seeds of an error", for his own errors may result in a passage into the Underworld:

'Eat of it not in the under world'  
See that the sun or the moon bless thy eating  
Κόρη, Κόρη, for the six seeds of an error  
or that the stars bless thy eating (LXXIX/490)

The next lines make this fear of the nescient earth explicit:

O Lynx, guard this orchard,  
Keep from Demeter's furrow (LXXIX/490)

The last line asks the lynx both to preserve fruit and trees from declining, lapsing into the earth - "Keep it, the orchard, from her furrow" - and also (for the lynx is Dionysus' beast) to avoid a communion with the Goddess which is both love and death: "Keep away from her furrow".

The invocation begins before dawn, and in the dark the pomegranates flame, are things of light opposed to the darkness:

This fruit has a fire within it,  
Pomona, Pomona  
No glass is clearer than are the globes of this flame  
what sea is clearer than the pomegranate body  
holding the flame?

Pomona, Pomona,

Lynx, keep watch on this orchard  
That is named Melagrana  
or the pomegranate field  
The sea is not clearer in azure  
Nor the Heliads bringing light (LXXIX/490)



no vine lacking flower,  
 no lynx lacking a flower rope  
 no Maelid minus a wine jar  
 this forest is named Melagrana

O lynx, keep the edge on my cider  
 Keep it clear without cloud

We have lain here amid kalicanthus and sword-flower  
 The heliads are caught in wild rose vine  
 The smell of pine mingles with rose leaves (LXXIX/491)

- Passes until these lines which, read properly, have an urgent and almost plaintive tone:

O lynx, be many  
 of spotted fur and sharp ears.  
 O lynx, have your eyes gone yellow,  
 with spotted fur and sharp ears? (LXXIX/491)

For, when seen by first light, the animal has been given the epithet - properly Athene's - glaukopis, "with gleaming eyes" ("O Lynx, γλαυκῶπις coming up from the olive yards" (LXXIX/490)); an epithet, Allen Upward maintained, which derived from the flickering of an olive leaf's opposed dark and light planes (remembered in Canto LXXIV(1)), a greenish-grey colour. The dignity of the epithet befits the god's cult-beasts. Now, in the definition of sunlight, the eyes seem to have "gone yellow", stirring again the poet's fears that this may be a Circean, rather than a Dionysiac gathering. Such a plangent tonality is cancelled with the incursion of Aphrodite and Helios, wholly dispelling darkness:

Therein is the dance of the bassarids  
 Therein are centaurs  
 And now Priapus with Faunus  
 The Graces have brought 'Αφροδίτην

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(1) See Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, pp.70-71.



Her cell is drawn by ten leopards  
 O lynx, guard my vineyard  
 As the grape swells under vine leaf  
 Ἥλιος is come to our mountain  
 there is a red glow in the carpet of pine spikes

O lynx, guard my vineyard  
 As the grape swells under vine leaf (LXXIX/491-92)

The Canto closes with an effulgence of deities, the trinity Persephone,  
 Delia and Maia chiming with the three mortal women who weigh on Pound's  
 mind:

This Goddess was born of sea-foam  
 She is lighter than air under Hesperus  
 δεινὰ εἶ , κύθηρα  
 terrible in resistance  
 κόρη καὶ Δηλια καὶ Μαῖα  
 trine as praeludio  
 κυπρις Ἀφρόδιτη  
 a petal lighter than sea-foam  
 κυθηρα  
 aram  
 nemus  
 vult

O puma, sacred to Hermes, Cimbica servant of Helios. (LXXIX/492)

Canto LXXX begins by stating the complement to dove sta memoria, to  
 the pre-eminence in these Cantos of a loving anamnesis: "Amo ergo sum,  
 and in just that proportion" (LXXX/493). And then, after a sheaf of mem-  
 ories, comes the more rueful acknowledgement of Pound as Anchises: "sen-  
 esco / sed amo", "I am getting old, but I love" (LXXX/493). It was such  
 love that impelled Pound's half-impatient, desperately affectionate out-  
 burst in Canto LXXIV:

O white-chested martin, God damn it,  
 as no one else will carry a message,  
 say to La Cara: amo. (LXXIV/459)

Three words set down hieratically half-way through Canto LXXX epitomize its substance, and the substance of the whole sequence:

wan

caritas

XAPITEΣ (LXXX/501)

- "culture, love, the Graces", each drawn from one of what Pound saw as the three root cultures: China, Rome and Greece. The Canto memorializes the culture he has known with love, and with the attendant benefice - the grace - of the divine realm. It is the locus of memories within the sequence - many of them concerning his first artistic home, London - and it is informed throughout by love.

Death, however, is still on his mind, and Pound remembers the intelligence of Tiresias, who even dead, in the company of Persephone, did not surrender perception:

Nothing but death, said Turgenev (Tiresias)  
                                   is irreparable  
 ἀγλαὸς ἀλάου πρόρνῃ Περσεφόνηια  
 Still hath his mind entire (LXXX/494)

Thus persisting, isolation - not simply that of the DTC, but that he had experienced for years in Rapallo, and of which his present plight is simply a heightening - is still daunting; the passage continues: "But to lose faith in a possible collaboration" (LXXX/494). All this though, writes the poet, accepting, is:

                                  inexorable  
   this is from heaven  
 the warp  
 and the woof (LXXX/494)

Pound remembers Yeats' experience of the inexorability of events, and fits this in jocularly with his own ruling dichotomy of the small light and the darkness:

the problem after any revolution is what to do with  
 your gunmen  
 as old Billyum found out in Oireland  
     in the Senate, Bedad! or before then  
     Your gunmen thread on moi drreams  
     O woman shapely as a swan,  
 Your gunmen tread on my dreams (LXXX/496)

Yet, despite the pressure of events and the darkness and ignorance of the world, Yeats' eyes saw the "glory" - as Pound pugnaciously asserts he himself has, the immediate impulse behind the assertion being a hearing of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' over the camp radio:

'mi-hine eyes hev'  
     well yes they have  
 seen a good deal of it  
     there is a good deal to be seen  
 fairly tough and unblastable  
     and the hymn...  
 well in contrast to the god-damned crooning  
     put me down for temporis acti  
     ΟΥ ΤΙΣ  
     "αχρονος"  
 now there are no more days  
     ου τις  
     "αχρονος"  
 the water seeps in under the bottle's seal (LXXX/498-99)

Once again Pound's fear is, not for the actuality of vision, but for the safety of his own record of it. He is "noman", he writes of "temporis acti", bygone days. The order Pound has created for himself out of the Camp's few poor properties - out of the glimpses it affords of the enduring order of nature, and out of his own mind's deposits - disintegrates beyond the range of his perceptions: "beyond the stockade there is chaos

and nothingness" (LXXX/501). The relation of perception to chaos is like that of saffron to war: Pound recalls a friend who "brought in about 2 ounces of saffron / for a risotto during that first so enormous war" (LXXX/501). From such small verities, as from the larger, the poet has been torn, to be "hurled into unstillness, Ixion" (LXXX/503). So, with great poignancy, the poet asks his daughter to preserve and pass on the precious saffron of tradition, which is essentially a conservation of memories:

remember that I have rembered,  
 mia pargoletta,  
 and pass on the tradition (LXXX/506)

It is to facilitate this conservation, to prevent their perishing with the perishing of his own mind, that Pound declares of his shades, of the personae of memory: "de mis soledades vengan", "out of my solitude let them come" (LXXX/510).

Towards the end of the Canto the poetry begins to record the pressure of this task in such conditions: "Je suis au bout de mes forces/", "I am at the end of my tether" (LXXX/512). He is close to "the gates of death" (LXXX/513), that "door" Canto XLVII speaks of. Like Odysseus, the raft has broken and the waters gone over him, and he casts about for some insubstantial Leucothea to aid him who has drunk "of the bitterness", who hopes to enter - "Introibo", the word is from the mass - the high air, the divine realm, "saeculorum" (LXXX/513). This passage, with its tension between extinction and eternity, concludes with the self-berating, prostrated line "I have been hard as youth sixty years" (LXXX/513).

And there is a calm after this "tempest", a calm induced by the unhardened recognition of ant and fellow inmate:

if calm be after tempest  
 that the ants seem to wobble  
 as the morning sun catches their shadows  
 (Nadasky, Duett, McAllister,  
 also Comfort K.P. special mention  
 on sick call Penrieth, Turner, Toth hieri  
 (no fortune and with a name to come)  
 Bankers, Seitz, Hildebrand and Cornelison  
 Armstrong special mention K.P.  
 White gratia Bedell gratia  
 Wiseman (not William) africanus.  
 with a smoky torch thru the unending  
 labyrinth of the souterrain  
 or remembering Carleton let him celebrate Christ in the grain  
 and if the corn cat be beaten  
 Demeter has lain in my furrow  
 This wind is lighter than swansdown  
 the day moves not at all  
 (Zupp, Bufford, and Bohon)

men of no fortune and with a name to come (LXXX/513-14)

Canto LXXXI opens with sky and earth coupled in the obliteration of night:

Zeus lies in Ceres' bosom  
 Taishan is attended of loves  
 under Cythera, before sunrise (LXXXI/517)

We have read in the preceding Canto "Demeter has lain in my furrow" (LXXX/513), a modulation of the theme of Demeter and the furrowed earth, for here the poet is one who, like a husbandman, witnesses the copulation of corn-priestess and sacred king, a fertility-inducing anamnesis of Demeter's coupling with the Titan Iasius,

with whom she fell in love at the wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia. Inflamed by the nectar which flowed like water at the feast, the lovers slipped out of the house and lay together openly in a thrice-ploughed field. On their return, Zeus guessing from their demeanour and the mud on their arms and legs what they had been at, and enraged that Iasius

should have dared to touch Demeter, struck him dead with a thunderbolt.(1)

So in this Canto Zeus lies with the Roman avatar of Demeter, Ceres, "before sunrise", as the sky merges with the earth in darkness. It is a deep and quiet verity to set against the Turneresque pomp of the sunset which closes the preceding Canto: "sunset grand couturier" (LXXX/516).

The first half of the Canto comprizes a mélange of memories and images which constitutes the loose body of language out of which the "water-spout" of the libretto tightens.(2) Within it sounds a note of disintegrative violence - "'Te caverò le budella' / 'La corata a te'" (LXXXI/518) - remembered from Canto X (see X/43), and, again, the submerged personal note: "'Some cook, some do not cook / some things cannot be altered'" (LXXXI/518), which apparently refers to Pound's wife.(3) We may detect the same personal ambience behind the fragment of Theocritus Pound quotes, which concerns a girl casting a spell with her magic wheel, to recall her faithless lover (see LXXXI/518). But the great heightening at the close of the Canto goes beyond such fragmented and masked intimations to present the most sustained and searching visionary experience of the sequence, an experience which now, thanks to Wendy Flory's researches, we can recognize as deeply personal, concerning as it does the three women "alla mia mente".(4) This recognition allows us to understand a Latin phrase which occurs at the end of Canto LXXIX, and which I ignored in my analysis of that Canto: "trine as praeludio" (LXXIX/492). The trinity of goddesses presages ("praeludio") the hypostatic presence of mortal women in Pound's pup-tent, of three pairs of eyes the evocation of whose colours

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(1) Robert Graves, Greek Myths, 4th edn., 1965, p.89.

(2) See Donald Davie, Pound, 1975, pp.62-74.

(3) See Hugh Kenner, PE, p.468.

(4) See Wendy Stallard Flory, Ezra Pound and the Cantos: A Record of Struggle, New Haven and London, 1980, p.217.



remembered,/ mia pargoletta,/ and pass on the tradition" (LXXX/506)). In the definition of David Jones (another who felt himself an embattled conservator in a period of great and tragic dissolution), poetry "evokes and recalls, is a kind of anamnesis of, i.e. is an effective recalling of, something loved".(1) The introspection necessary for this anamnesis is not an egotistical activity, for the material laid down in the mind is, along with personal recollections, composed of such forms - linguistic, musical, pictorial, sculptural - of the common culture as the individual has embraced, known and loved. Far from egotism, Pound refers this realm to the primary natural order, the vital matrix of all cultural efflorescence:

The ant's a cetaur in his dragon world.  
 Pull down thy vanity, it is not man  
 Made courage, or made order, or made grace,  
     Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.  
 Learn of the green world what can be thy place  
 In scaled invention or true artistry,  
 Pull down thy vanity,

    Paquin pull down!  
 The green casque has outdone your elegance.

'Master thyself, then others shall thee beare'

    Pull down thy vanity  
 Thou art a beaten dog beneath the hail,  
 A swollen magpie in a fitful sun,  
 Half black half white  
 Nor knowst'ou wing from tail  
 Pull down thy vanity  
     How mean thy hates  
 Fostered in falsity,  
     Pull down thy vanity,  
 Rathe to destroy, niggard in charity,  
 Pull down thy vanity,  
     I say pull down. (LXXXI/521)

At the close of the Canto the poet affirms his commerce with a "live tradition" of which his own memory is now the repository, ending with

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(1) David Jones, The Anathemata, 2nd edn., 1955, p.21.



a chastened declaration which still bears an element of pugnacity, for Pound doesn't regret things ill done, but regrets not carrying through to a conclusion lifelong, and proper, concerns:

But to have done instead of not doing  
   this is not vanity  
 To have, with decency, knocked  
 That a Blunt should open  
   To have gathered from the air a live tradition  
 or from a fine old eye the unconquered flame  
 This is not vanity.  
   Here error is all in the not done,  
 all in the diffidence that faltered . . . (LXXXI/521-22)

In Canto LXXIX we saw the poet fearful of the element of earth, of "Demeter's furrow" (LXXIX/490), and cleaving to the invoked presences in air of Aphrodite and Helios. There he waits for the sun-rise, for light, eagerly. In Canto LXXX we see a shift in the poet's relation to the Goddess, in which he figures as the husbandman greeting the copulatory rite: "Demeter has lain in my furrow" (LXXX/513). In Canto LXXXII he moves full circle, and surrenders to the darkness of earth:

Till forty years since, Reithmuller indignant:  
 'Fvy! in Tdaenmarck efen dh'beasantz gnaw him',  
   meaning Whitman, exotic, still suspect  
 four miles from Camden  
   'O troubled reflection  
   'O Throat, O throbbing heart'  
 How drawn, O GEA TERRA,  
   what draws as thou drawest  
   till one sink into thee by an arm's width  
 embracing thee. Drawest,  
   truly thou drawest.  
 Wisdom lies next thee,  
   simply, past metaphor.  
 Where I lie let the thyme rise  
   and basilicum  
   let the herbs rise in April abundant  
 By Ferrara was buried naked, fu Nicolo  
   e di qua di la del Po,  
 wing: 'εμόν τὸν ἀνδρα  
 lie into earth to the breast bone, to the left shoulder

Kipling suspected it  
to the height of ten inches or over  
man, earth two halves of the tally  
but I will come out of this knowing no one  
neither they me

connubium terrae

ἔφαρα πρόσω ἐμός  
X8ONIOΣ, mysterium

fluid X8ONIOΣ o'erflowed me  
lay in the fluid X8ONIOΣ;  
that lie

under the air's solidity

drunk with 'IXΩP of X8ONIOΣ

fluid X8ONIOΣ, strong as the undertow

of the wave receding

but that a man should live in that further terror, and live  
the loneliness of death came upon me

(at 3 P.M., for an instant)

three solemn half notes

their white downy chests black-rimmed

on the middle wire

periplum (LXXXII/525-27)

δακρύων  
ἐννεύθεν

In Canto XLVII the poet enacts a congruent rite, penetrating the earth  
and so hearkening to its mysteries:

By prong have I entered these hills:  
That the grass grow from my body,  
That I hear the roots speaking together (XLVII/238)

But there the mood is Odyssean, the act a forceful appropriation of the  
mysteries. Here the mood is Whitmanian, the act one of ecstatic, Acoetian  
surrender. Recalling the little poem 'A Pact' in Lustra, Donald Hall writes,  
justly I think: "Pound said, 'We have one sap and one root'. He was speak-  
ing of place and of the vulgar tongue, and he is right enough, but one  
could wish for the greatness of Pound that some of the reverie of Whitman  
could have been added to it."(1) A reverie very like that characteristic  
of Whitman is evident in the passage above, and the kinship of feeling  
is explicitly acknowledged by Pound: "'O troubled reflection / 'O Throat,

(1) Walt Whitman, A Choice of Whitman's Verse, ed. Donald Hall, 1968, p.19.

O throbbing heart!'. These lines are taken from Whitman's 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking'; the lone mockingbird calls his lost mate:

O darkness! O in vain!  
O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!  
O troubled reflection in the sea!  
O throat! O throbbing heart!  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!  
In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!  
But my mate no more, no more with me!  
We two together no more.

This has an obvious relation to Pound's predicament - to his loneliness - which it would be tasteless to labour. What is not quite so apparent is the similar movement of feeling in the two poems. When the young Whitman has heard out the he-bird's lament he asks for "the clew" to "The unknown want, the destiny of me". But it is the sea, "the savage old mother", who answers:

Whereto answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,  
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death, death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's  
heart,  
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.(1)

So in the Canto, when we have heard the bird's voice, the movement of feeling is towards the obliterating earth. We hear again, even more fragmented, the girl's spelling words from Theocritus, but here they are the earth's. They recall Circe's song, a song of delusion and trickery, and this should

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(1) From 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' in Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett, New York, 1973, pp.246-53.

give us pause, for though the passage has always been interpreted as positive, almost blithe, in character ("the vision of the grave inspires in Pound the calm of cosmic consciousness"!(1)), Pound wasn't given to a Keatsian or Whitmanian exaltation of death. We remember that the lynx was warned off Demeter, and that the poet's troubled questioning ran thus:

Will you trade roses for acorns  
 Will lynxes eat thorn leaves?  
 What have you in that wine jar?  
     ἔχωρ, for lynxes? (LXXIX/491)

That dubiety passed, and the rites celebrated were Aphrodite's, rites of air: "This Goddess was born of sea-foam / She is lighter than air under Hesperus"; "a petal lighter than sea-foam" (LXXIX/492). But throughout the Cantos vision is never untroubled, the Goddess never untroubling; so, in Canto LXXIX, "δεινάει, κύθηρα / terrible in resistance" (LXXIX/492). And in Canto LXXXII this interpenetration of harm and balm is even more thoroughgoing. The balm is apparent first, centring in the Mencian affirmation "man, earth: two halves of the tally", and down to this point the passage is affirmative, citing Niccolo D'Este's willed burial naked, "Without decoration, as ordered in testament, / Ter pacis Italiae" (XXIV/113). But, the poem continues: "but I will come out of this knowing no one / neither they me". It is the starkness of Mencius' formulation "man, earth", perhaps, which drives home to Pound his terrible isolation. From now on it is impossible to take a simple, single meaning from any of the poetry's "facets" (it becomes notably discontinuous at this point). For example, the affirmative-sounding "connubium terrae", marriage of the earth, has these Greek words pressed up against it: "ἐφ'απα πύουρ ἐμὸς",

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(1) See Walter Baumann, The Rose in the Steel Dust: An Examination of the Cantos of Ezra Pound, Bern, 1967, p.152.

words scrambled from Clytemnestra's speech in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus.  
Pound Englished the passage himself:

'This is Agamemnon,  
My husband,  
Dead by this hand,  
And a good job. These, gentlemen, are the facts'.(1)

This suggests that the "connubium terrae" is much like the drone's mating with the queen, or the mortal's with Circe: castrating, murderous. The "mysterium" Pound is entering at this point is Eleusinian, and unknown ground. The "fluid XΘONΩΣ" overflows him, as the waters went over Odysseus; he is drunk with the Circean "'ΙΧΩΡ", ichor, which the lynx, in light, avoided. So the chthonic reverie shapes itself in two halves, the first an affirmative relinquishment, the second a terror at the prospect of annihilation; the first governed by the Acoetian strain in Pound's character, the second by the Odyssean. At the close the annihilating wave recedes, the poet as it were breathing a sigh of relief that he has passed through the terror and survived: "but that a man should live in that further terror, and live". It leaves him - the word has sounded throughout the sequence - "δακρῦων", weeping; "ἐννευθεῖν" - thereupon - he is restored, comforted, by the enduring presence of the natural world:

three solemn half notes  
                                  their white downy chests black-rimmed  
on the middle wire  
  periplum

With Canto LXXXII a supervention of calm - though still a taut calm, not a flaccidity - coincides with Pound's return to the Confucian texts.

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(1) LE, p.270 ('Aeschylus', The Egoist, 1919).

The Canto's peace is elemental: "HUDOR et Pax" (LXXXIII/528). "For light / is an attribute of fire", the poet writes:

lux enim  
ignis est accidens (LXXXIII/528)

- anticipating the salute to the effulgence of light from "the body of fire" (XCI/610) which prefaces Canto XCI's great rite of emergence. In keeping with this tonality, the Canto is Acoetian in feeling, returning to the modus of the first, affirmative half of the preceding Canto's chthonic reverie:

the sage  
delighteth in water  
the humane man has amity with the hills (LXXXIII/529)

In this Canto the feminine principle is not incarnated in a goddess, nor in the element of earth, but in the humble dryad:

*Δρυάς*, your eyes are like the clouds over Taishan  
When some of the rain has fallen  
and half remains yet to fall (LXXXIII/530)

The emergent substance of nature is celebrated, with a distant, contrastive echo of the "white forest of marble", Venice (see XVII/79):

The roots go down to the river's edge  
and the hidden city moves upward  
white ivory under the bark (LXXXIII/530)

Dawn comes, and with it an epiphany of light that transfigures all save, poignantly, the enduring stockade posts:

Dryad, thy peace is like water  
There is September sun on the pools

Plura diafana

Heliads lift the mist from the young willows  
there is no base seen under Taishan  
but the brightness of 'udor *üδwp*  
the poplar tips float in brightness  
only the stockade posts stand (LXXXIII/530-31)

There follows the great poetry drawn from Mencius:

And now the ants seem to stagger  
as the dawn sun has trapped their shadows,  
this breath wholly covers the mountains  
it shines and divides  
it nourishes by its rectitude  
does no injury  
overstanding the earth it fills the nine fields  
to heaven

Boon companion to equity  
it joins with the process  
lacking it, there is inanition

When the equities are gathered together  
as birds alighting  
it springeth up vital

If deeds be not ensheaved and garnered in the heart  
there is inanition

(have I perchance a debt to a man named Clower)

that he eat of the barley corn  
and move with the seed's breath

the sun as a golden eye  
between dark cloud and the mountain (LXXXIII/531)

This wonderful paean to the force of ch'i is the emotional hinge-point of the Pisan sequence, for its expression of a harmony interpenetrating all realms and binding them together heals the wound opened by Canto LXXXII's epiphany of extinction and opens the way to the affirmative apprehension of the Underworld expressed in the succeeding episode of the

wasp. In the above passage Pound, through Mencius, separates out a force he usually named by the one term - process - into a triad made up of "breath" (or ch'i), equity, and process itself. Ch'i is a cosmological term:

To understand Mencius' teaching . . . , it is necessary first to say something about the cosmology prevalent in the fourth century B.C. It was believed that the universe was made up of ch'i but this ch'i varied in consistency. The grosser ch'i, being heavy, settled to become earth, while the refined ch'i, being light, rose to become the sky. Man, being half-way between the two, is a harmonious mixture of the two kinds of ch'i. His body consists of grosser ch'i while his heart is the seat of the refined ch'i. The blood, being neither as solid as the body nor as refined as the breath, lies somewhere in between, but as it is not static and circulates in the body it is more akin to the refined ch'i. . . . It is in virtue of the refined ch'i that a man is alive and his faculties can function properly. As the heart is the seat of this refined ch'i, it is necessary to have a regimen for the heart in order to be healthy and to live to a ripe old age.(1)

And it is ch'i "which unites rightness and the Way"(2) ("Boon companion to equity / it joins with the process"). This triad is interdependent; Canto LXXIV has shown us the effect of a single and too-weakly 'just' stress on equity:

not words whereto to be faithful  
 nor deeds that they be resolute  
 only that bird-hearted equity make timber  
 and lay hold of the earth (LXXIV/426)

This axile complex of meaning is, as we have said, usually designated as "process" by Pound, though in the Mencian passage from the Cantos above he has, in following his source, introduced a triad of terms he doesn't observe elsewhere, when both metaphysical and ethical questions, and questions of practical justice, are subsumed under the one term: "The

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(1) Mencius, Mencius, trans. D.C. Lau, Harmondsworth, 1970, p.24.

(2) Ibid., p.25.



way is the process of nature, one".(1) For "this doctrine is one, indivisible, a nature extending to every detail as the nature of being oak or maple extends to every part of the oak tree or maple".(2) By its light we see that - in the words of Wing-Tsit Chan - "human nature, endowed by Heaven, is revealed through the states of equilibrium and harmony, which are themselves the 'condition of the world' and the 'universal path'. The Way of Heaven transcends time, space, substance, and motion, and is at the same time unceasing, eternal, and evident."(3) It is through his apprehension of this "durability of natural process",(4) expressed in his recreation of Mencius' text, that Pound moves from the paralyzing subjective vision of "the loneliness of death" (LXXXII/527) to a state of mind wherein he can delightedly observe the motions of natural abundance, and find in the presence of wasp, ant, grassblade and clover an external verity through which to reinterpret and render benign the passage into the Underworld:

and Brother Wasp is building a very neat house  
of four rooms, one shaped like a squat indian bottle  
La vespa, la vespa, mud, swallow system  
so that dreaming of Bracelonde and of Perugia  
and the great fountain in the Piazza  
or of old Bulagaio's cat that with a well timed leap  
could turn the lever-shaped door handle  
It comes over me that Mr. Walls must be a ten-strike  
with the signorinas  
and in the warmth after chill sunrise  
an infant, green as new grass,  
has stuck its head or tip  
out of Madame La Vespa's bottle

mint springs up again  
in spite of Jones' rodents  
as had the clover by the gorilla cage  
with a four-leaf

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(1) SP, p.101 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)'), The Criterion, 1938.

(2) Ibid., p.96 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)').

(3) A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy, ed. Wing-Tsit Chan, Princeton, 1963, p.95.

(4) SP, p.100 ('Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)'), The Criterion, 1938.

When the mind swings by a grass-blade  
 an ant's forefoot shall save you  
 the clover leaf smells and tastes as its flower

The infant has descended,  
 from mud on the tent roof to Tellus,  
 like to like colour he goes amid grass-blades  
 greeting them that dwell under XTHONOS XΘONΟΣ  
 OI XΘONIQI; to carry our news  
 εἰς χθονίους to them that dwell under the earth,  
 begotten of air, that shall sing in the bower  
 of Kore, Ἱεραρόφονεια  
 and have speech with Tiresias, Thebae

Cristo Re, Dio Sole

in about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a day she has made her adobe  
 (la vespa) the tiny mud-flask

and that day I wrote no further (LXXXIII/532-33)

In recreating the Nekuia of Canto I out of such startlingly different prop-  
 erties, and incarnating the penetrative hero in the form of an infant  
 wasp who descends because of his nature, not at the behest of a goddess,  
 and who descends, not in fear, but to greet, Pound consummates the trans-  
 mutation of his Odyssean figure from adventurer into Acoetian celebrant.  
 In the Rock-Drill Cantos Pound takes that latter rôle upon himself. In  
 them he is the celebrant of emergence.

## 2. Rock-Drill and After

By the time of the Rock-Drill Cantos the Odyssean theme has thinned down to the single relation of hero to merciful nereid. The episode in question occurs in the Fifth Book of The Odyssey: Odysseus' craft has been disabled by a storm whipped up by Poseidon:

But Ino saw him - Ino, Kadmos' daughter,  
slim-legged, lovely, once an earthling girl,  
now in the seas a nereid, Leukothea.  
Touched by Odysseus' painful buffeting  
she broke the surface, like a diving bird,  
to rest upon the tossing raft and say:

'O forlorn man, I wonder  
why the Earthshaker, Lord Poseidon, holds  
this fearful grudge - father of all your woes.  
He will not drown you, though, despite his rage.  
You seem clear-headed still; do what I tell you.  
Shed that cloak, let the gale take your craft,  
and swim for it - swim hard to get ashore  
upon Skhería, yonder,  
where it is fated that you find a shelter.  
Here: make my veil your sash; it is not mortal;  
you cannot, now, be drowned or suffer harm.  
Only, the instant you lay hold of earth,  
discard it, cast it far, far out from shore  
in the winedark sea again, and turn away'.

After she had bestowed her veil, the nereid  
dove like a gull to windward  
where a dark waveside closed over her whiteness.(1)

Odysseus is at first distrustful of the gift, but events force his compliance:

'O damned confusion! Can this be a ruse  
to trick me from the boat for some god's pleasure?  
No I'll not swim; with my own eyes I saw  
how far the land lies that she called my shelter.  
Better to do the wise thing, as I see it.

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(1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, pp.102-03.

While this poor planking holds, I stay aboard;  
 I may ride out the pounding of the storm,  
 or if she cracks up, take to the water then;  
 I cannot think it through a better way'.

But even while he pondered and decided,  
 the god of earthquake heaved a wave against him  
 high as a roof-tree and of awful gloom.  
 A gust of wind, hitting a pile of chaff,  
 will scatter all the parched stuff far and wide;  
 just so, when this gigantic billow struck  
 the boat's big timbers flew apart. Odysseus  
 clung to a single beam, like a jockey riding,  
 meanwhile stripping Kalypso's cloak away;  
 then he slung round his chest the veil of Ino  
 and plunged headfirst into the sea.(1)

Eventually he finds his way to land, gives back the veil to sea, and lies  
 to kiss the earth like Pound at Pisa after sleeping on concrete (see LXXXII/  
 470):

In time, as air came back into his lungs  
 and warmth around his heart, he loosed the veil,  
 letting it drift away on the estuary  
 downstream to where a white wave took it under  
 and Ino's hands received it. Then the man  
 crawled to the river bank among the reeds  
 where, face down, he could kiss the soil of earth (2)

He heaps leaves for a bed and lies down, the goddess soothing him with  
 sleep:

A man in a distant field, no hearthfires near,  
 will hide a fresh brand in his bed of embers  
 to keep a spark alive for the next day;  
 so in the leaves Odysseus hid himself,  
 while over him Athena showered sleep  
 that his distress should end, and soon, soon.  
 In quiet sleep she sealed his cherished eyes.(3)

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- (1) Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, New York, 1961, p.103.  
 (2) Ibid., p.106.  
 (3) Ibid., p.107.



The doubled Greek word "Kredemnon" means "veil", and the rest corresponds to the line "a dark waveside closed over her whiteness" (see above), and rounds off the fragment of narrative ending the previous sequence. In Canto C we see Odysseus return the veil to the sea:

So that the mist was quite white on that part of the sea-coast  
 Le Portel, Phaëcia  
 and he dropped the scarf in the tide-rips  
 KREDEMNON  
 that it should float back to the sea,  
 and that quickly  
 DEXATO XERSI  
 with a fond hand  
 AGERTHE (C/716-17)

The mist on the coast at Le Portel is rhymed with Odysseus' gaining shore wearing Leucothea's veil on the island of Drepane, then occupied by the Phaeicians ("Le Portel, Phaëcia"). The experiences of fictive persona and poet are thus made to converge.

Finally, at the end of the Thrones sequence, we read "INO Ἰνώ Kadmeia" and "Καλλιόστραγος Ino Kadmeia" (CIX/774) - a final salute to Leucothea's mortal lineage (in Canto XCVIII (685) and Canto CII (728) we read "she being of Cadmus line"), and to her beauty: "beautiful buttocked". Thus we see that, though sparing, these references are placed at crucial, initiating or concluding points of the poem, and are thus thrown into strong relief. There is no reference made to either Odysseus or Leucothea in the final Drafts and Fragments.

We have seen Pound throughout the Cantos sustaining references to Odysseus, and drawing them from a number of The Odyssey's incidents. What are we to make of this late concentration upon a single episode? We said that in the Pisan Cantos Pound redefines his Odysseus persona,

transforming him from the masculine, subjugating hero of the earlier Cantos into a reverent, Acoetian figure, of feminine or vatic tendency. Rock-Drill and Thrones distil this emphasis. We are confronted by two quintessential elements: that of an individual in great trouble, and that of a female's mercy. It is this threatened figure, hoping for such divine aid and striving to possess the divine, who writes the late Cantos.

As in the Pisan Cantos, in Rock-Drill - though the poet deals throughout with states of mind and with the divine - there is no question of his attaining to an untroubled or quiescent vision. There are still the "lice" to be reckoned with, who "turned from the manifest", and whose "filth now observes mere dynamic"; paradise is still "jagged", a "flash", defined as such by quickly-supervening "agony" (XCII/620). The majority still have:

No classics,  
 no American history,  
 no centre, no general root,  
 No prezzo giusto as core. (LXXXV/549)

And not only ignorance is to be reckoned with; there are the actively malignant, those who "make total war on CONTEMPLATIO" (LXXXV/546), there is "Always the undertow" for the struggling Odysseus to master, the "gold-bugs against ANY order" (LXXXVII/572), those who "Remove the mythologies before they establish clean values" (LXXXVII/570). The poet may use as talisman:

San Domenico  
 where the spirit is clear in the stone  
 as against  
 Filth of the Hyksos, butchers of lesser cattle. (XCIII/623)

- but the filth remains.

Against such defilement the poet's resources are the "Gestalt seed" of the great books, and the clarity of light:

To Kung, to avoid their encirclement,  
 To the Odes to escape abstract yatter,  
     to Mencius, Dante, and Agassiz  
     for Gestalt seed,  
 pity, yes, for the infected,  
                                     but maintain antisepsis,  
 let the light pour. (XCIV/635)

The natural order, grass and tree, may be ward against infernal lust and contrivance:

Not led of lusting, not of contriving  
                                     but is as the grass and tree  
 eccellenza  
                                     not led of lusting,  
                                     not of the worm, contriving (LXXXV/544)

Though Pound's fortunes are against him, incarcerated, though man is "under Fortune" (LXXXVI/566), though the poet's situation threatens him with aridity ("(Yes, my Ondine, it is so god-damned dry on these rocks)" (XCIII/623)), it is still possible, though perilous, to climb "up out of hell, from the labyrinth / the path wide as a hair" (XCIII/632). In fact little has changed, for Pound's personal trouble hasn't altered the proportion of usurious evil in the world, for better or for worse: in Canto XV the path was just as narrow, "Half the width of a sword's edge" (XV/66); and it is still possible to envisage "Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell" (LXXXI/521).

The natural order is the surest basis if, foundering, one is to keep a fix on a "jagged" (XCII/620) paradise; for "the universe is alive", so that one may "have ecstasy, sober" (XCIV/637). And that unfrantic



ecstasy flows from the nature of things, since "Heaven and Earth begat the perceiver" and, furthermore, "Heaven's process is quite coherent / and its main points perfectly clear" (LXXXV/552). Holding to this, and recognizing that "'A man's paradise is his good nature'" (XCIII/623), one may perceive "That love is the 'form' of philosophy" (XCIII/626), and perceive and affirm a cosmos bound together by love:

LOVE, gone as lightning,  
 enduring 5000 years.  
 Shall the comet cease moving  
 or the great stars be tied in one place! (XCV/643)

That "LOVE" is a flash, and endures in and by a tradition which may be revived millenia later. It endures in spite of darkness, a light drawing minds through tempest:

But in the great love, bewildered  
 farfalla in tempesta  
 under rain in the dark:  
 many wings fragile (XCII/619)

Amidst such darkness, reaching for the apparent and yet obscured verity of light, the threatened seer calls on feminine compassion for aid, as Leucothea aided Odysseus:

Ursula benedetta,  
 oro  
 By the hours of passion,  
 per dilettevole ore,  
 guide your successor,  
 Ysolt, Ydone,  
 have compassion,  
 Picarda,  
 compassion  
 By the wing'd head,

by the caduceus,  
 compassion;  
 By the horns of Isis-Luna,  
 compassion. (XCIII/628)

Most movingly, Pound, in Rock-Drill, writes of the paradisaical condition as a brief and threatened sleep, pleading, as if with another self, not to wake to the surrounding hell (he is writing in St Elizabeths):

Au bois dormant,  
 not yet . . .! Not yet!  
 do not awaken.  
 The trees sleep, and the stags, and the grass;  
 The boughs sleep unmoving. (XCIII/629)

not yet! not yet!  
 Do not awaken. (XCIII/630)

And he entreats the "Beloved" to sustain him:

You who dare Persephone's threshold,  
 Beloved, do not fall apart in my hands. (XCIII/631)

It is not enough, though the parching dust has been laid for a time:

You are tender as a marshmallow, my Love,  
 I cannot use you as a fulcrum.  
 You have stirred my mind out of dust. (XCIII/632)

These heart-sore exclamations and resigned admissions occur, however, after two Cantos which detail a sustained and relatively untroubled ascension into the high air. I want now to examine Canto XC in some detail.

The Canto bears as epigraph a quotation from Richard of St Victor which sets Amor at the heart of process, and consummates the Pisan Cantos' exclamations of "Amo ergo sum" and "senesco / sed amo" (LXXX/493):

Animus humanus amor non est,  
sed ab ipso amor procedit, et  
ideo seipso non diligit, sed amore  
qui seipso procedit. (XC/605)

This is the first of the triad of quintessences which opens the Canto. From the love which flows like sunlight from the self's source, we move to John Heydon's Doctrine of Signatures:

'From the colour the nature  
& by the nature the sign!' (XC/605)

The ordained and natural emergence of significance from object is an Adamic conception, and is analogous to the efflux of love from the human soul. Thus we have two paradigmatic, summatory instances, regarding conduct and discourse, both drawn from the discursive, philosophic realm. The triad is completed with an image from mythology:

Beatific spirits welding together  
as in one ash-tree in Ygdrasail. (XC/605)

The sacred tree of Yggdrasil is an image of unity, drawing together earth and sky, rendering comprehensible the disjunction between the infernal and the paradisaical; Carlyle wrote that it "has its roots down in the kingdoms

of Hela and Death, and [its] boughs overspread the highest heaven!"(1)  
 Pound indicates that the spirits, the mythologies, constitute a similar  
 healing and reconciling unity, they weld together. All three terms -  
Amor, the Doctrine of Signatures, and Yggdrasil - make a similar gesture  
 of unity, and all three make it in terms of emergence, efflux: of love  
 from the soul, of signification from colour and nature, of universal har-  
 mony from the tree's organic reach.

From Yggdrasil we pass to Baucis and Philemon, metamorphosed into an  
 oak tree and lime tree in their old age by Zeus, in token of their kind-  
 liness, for they welcomed Zeus and Hermes at Phrygia though unaware of  
 the gods' identities. So, when Zeus flooded the whole earth, he spared  
 this couple and made of their poor cottage a temple: an indication, maybe,  
 that the soul's affection may spare one from the overwhelming of the world.  
 And Yggdrasil sponsors the next movement of the Canto, towards the sea:

Castalia is the name of that fount in the hill's fold,  
 the sea below,  
 narrow beach. (XC/605)

- for "the ash tree is the tree of sea-power, or of the power resident  
 in water; and . . . 'Ygge', from which Yggdrasil is derived, is evidently  
 connected with hydra, the Greek for 'sea' (literally, 'the wet element')." (2)  
 Assuming - what cannot be precisely determined - that Pound was aware of  
 this derivation, we can see that this intricacy of mythic and philologic  
 cross-reference bears out his contention that "mythological expression"  
 is a privileged type of discourse because it doesn't shave "off the nose  
 and ears of a verity"; (3) and also, in its structural use of word-roots,

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(1) Quoted in The Oxford English Dictionary under "Yggdrasil".

(2) Robert Graves, The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth,  
 3rd edn., 1952, p. 169.

(3) GK, p. 127.

John Heydon's contention that the "sign" is a direct, motivated expression of a thing's "nature".

The poet now evokes Castalia with superb economy, source of inspiration and sacred to Apollo and the Muses, which Spenser, in 'Virgil's Gnat', celebrated as a paradisaical locale, populous with the demigods who likewise adorn the earthly paradises of the Cantos. The poet invokes Phoebus:

He shall inspire my verse with gentle mood  
Of Poets Prince, whether he woon beside  
Faire Xanthus sprinckled with Chimaeras blood;  
Or in the woods of Astery abide;  
Or whereas mount Parnasse, the Muses brood,  
Doth his broad forehead like two hornes diuide,  
And the sweete waues of sounding Castaly  
With liquid foote doth slide downe easily.

Wherefore ye Sisters which the glorie bee  
Of the Pierian streames, fayre Naiades,  
Go too, and dauncing all in companie,  
Adorne that God: and thou holie Pales,  
To whome the honest care of husbandrie  
Returneth by continuall successe,  
Haue care for to pursue his footing light;  
Through the wide woods, and groues, with green leaues dight.(1)

Castalia's nutrition of impulse is used by the poet in his verbal rearing of a holy place where the gods may be honoured and the verities enshrined; he is "Templum aedificans" (XC/605) (a phrase applied, analogously, to Sigismundo in Canto VIII: "templum aedificavit" (VIII/32)), and in this he figures as avatar of Amphion, who danced the walls of Thebes together with his lyre, and with his lyre celebrated the syncretic Goddess of air (Aphrodite), earth (Demeter) and the Underworld (Persephone): "Amphion's three-stringed lyre, with which he raised the walls of Lower Thebes . . . was constructed to celebrate the Triple-goddess, who reigned in the air, on earth, and in the Underworld".(2) Amphion, then, is the type of the

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(1) See Edmund Spenser, The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, 1912, p.487.

(2) Robert Graves, Greek Myths, 4th edn., 1965, p.258.

Acoetian poet, who celebrates the divine energies in his work, and raises up a god-honouring structure; and it is particularly fitting that he should be invoked here, for, like the Pisan Cantos, the Rock-Drill Cantos are predominantly Acoetian or vatic in character.

The succeeding lines trace a common devotion to the "SECRETUM", (1) to quasi-Eleusinian mysteries, in China and Provence:

And from the San Ku

三  
孤

to the room in Poitiers where one can stand  
casting no shadow,  
That is Sagetrieb,  
that is tradition.  
Builders had kept the proportion,  
did Jacques de Molay  
know these proportions?  
and was Erigena ours? (XC/605)

James J. Wilhelm writes of this passage:

The temple imagery continues from the Chinese words San Ku, which refer to imperial officials, to that room in the Hotel de Ville at Poitiers, once part of the home of Duke William IX of Aquitaine, where a man cannot cast his shadow. The temple, the palace and the sacred ground are brought together in a context that emphasizes the instinctive drive of a spoken tradition (Sagetrieb or 'say-drive' in Pound's German coining) along with a sense of due proportion. . . . Just as Duke William spun poetry out of a void, and lived in a castle whose relation to the solar forces might be seen as Manichean or at least pagan and anti-Establishment, so Jaques de Molay, the last Grand Master of the secret cult of the Knights Templar, is seen as the possessor of mystic, subterranean secrets, including possibly magic and gnomon-reading, which can be related to Chinese and Manichean sun-rites. In any case, De Molay was accused of all kinds of anti-Christian acts before he was burned at the stake in 1314 in a collusion between King Philip IV of France and Pope Clement V. His open defiance of these Establishment forces made him in Pound's mind similar to the brilliantly progressive theologian Scotus

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(1) See L, p.425 (Douglas McPherson, 1939).

Erigena, that transplanted Irish 'pantheist' who spent a great deal of his life in France, and whose theology contains a vivid affirmation of natural forces. It was rumored that Scotus was murdered - stabbed to death by his students and stuffed in a winecask - under very mysterious circumstances. Duke William, De Molay, and Scotus were all fighters for their individual beliefs, and they were all either murdered or excommunicated.(1)

As Wilhelm says, "at this point, the reader may see an undercurrent of violence beneath the smooth and beautiful surface of the canto".(2) As we said earlier, the Canto's ascension into the high air is only relatively untroubled and, as in the Pisan Cantos, the paradisaical vision is always hedged about and threatened by malign forces (though here they are notably inexplicit).

The eternal ("sempiterna") and terrible ("Savá") Aphrodite is now invoked, and as complement to her presence Pound cites the lovely tag out of Richard of St Victor: "Ubi amor, ibi oculus" ("Where love is, there is the eye") (XC/606), re-emphasizing the pre-eminence of Amor in this Canto, as the matrix out of which the loved images emerge. The succeeding Latin, again out of Richardus, translates as "Woe to you who think without purpose" and, less strenuously, "The good things of will, through which an image of the divine likeness will be found in us" - in this defining, and gracing, the nature of the said "purpose". The latter quotation and translation is to be found in the 'Quotations from Richard of St. Victor', a selection Pound made in 1956. Several of the fragments translated there are apposite in our present context; for example: "To love is to perceive"; "Happy who can gather the heart's fragmentations into unity"; "There should be abundance of gratuitous love, as well as what is merely owed"; and "The plenitude of the law

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(1) James J. Wilhelm, The Later Cantos of Ezra Pound, New York, 1977, pp.81-82.

(2) Ibid., p.82.





If I was only what thou didst create  
 Last in me, O Love whose rule the heavens attest,  
 Thou know'st, who with thy light didst lift my state.(1)

The extent of the poet's former prostration, his inhabiting of "the dulled air and the dust" of Erebus, is indicated by the citing of Sibylla, unprecedented in the Cantos: for the Cumaeen Sibyl conjured up the spirits of the dead. Love has, Sibyl-like, raised him up, and his rebirth recalls that of Adonis, invoked by the votive lights off Rapallo:

And they take lights now down to the water  
 the lamps float from the rowers  
 the sea's claw drawing them outward. (XC/607)

This movement of the verse, from the initial incompleteness of the temple "not yet marble" (XC/605), to the consummating recollection of Canto XLVII's energies, has, at its close, achieved what will be the basis of the Canto's second half, where demigods, beasts and birds assemble for a rite; for now the "grove hath its altar" (XC/607), fulfilling a want signalled several times in the Pisan Cantos: "aram vult nemus" (LXXIV/446), "Aram vult nemus" (LXXVIII/481): "the grove needs an altar". That tag (altered to "aram / nemus / vult") appeared for the last time at the conclusion of Canto LXXIX's lynx-hymn (LXXIX/492), and its fulfilment now initiates a similar congregation:

The architect from the painter,  
                   the stone under elm  
 Taking form now,  
                   the rilievi,  
                   the curled stone at the marge  
 Faunus, sirenes,  
                   the stone taking form in the air  
                   ac ferae,  
                   cervi,  
                   the great cats approaching.

Pardus, leopardi, Bagheera  
 drawn hither from woodland,  
 woodland ἐπι χθονί  
     the trees rise  
 and there is a wide sward between them  
 οἱ χθόνιοι myrrh and olibanum on the altar stone  
 giving perfume,  
     and where was nothing  
 now is furry assemblage  
     and in the boughs now are voices  
 grey wing, black wing, black wing shot with crimson  
 and the umbrella pines  
     as in Palatine  
 as in pineta. χελιδών, χελιδών  
 For the procession of Corpus  
     come now banners  
 comes flute tone  
     οἱ χθόνιοι  
 to new forest,  
     thick smoke, purple, rising  
 bright flame now on the altar  
     the crystal funnel of air  
 out of Erebus, the delivered,  
     Tyro, Alcmena, free now, ascending  
 e i cavalieri,  
     ascending,  
 no shades more,  
     lights among them, enkindled,  
 and the dark shade of courage  
     Ἠλέκτρα  
 bowed still with the wrongs of Aegisthus. (XC/607-09)

This paean to emergence - of stone on the air, of "furry assemblage"  
 "where was nothing" (recalling the apparition of Dionysus' cult-beasts  
 in Canto II - "void air taking pelt" (II/8)), of delivered souls out of  
 Erebus - is given a final, plangent modulation at the close, with its ref-  
 erence to the wronged Electra: for Paradise is "spezzato" (LXXIV/438),  
 and never unmixed. The undoubted, and exhilarating buoyancy of the passage  
 returns us to earlier descensions, of Odysseus into the Underworld, of  
 Pound into the earth in the terror of the "connubium terrae", of the in-  
 fant wasp, so that the freeing of the gods of the Underworld comes with  
 the more force as it figures as a joyous reversal of earlier heaviness.  
 That joy is qualified by Electra's shade, and something of the poignancy

of her plight informs the poet's defiant assertion "Trees die & the dream remains" (XC/609). That dream is animated by Amor, and the Canto closes with a reaffirmation of Richardus' wisdom, translating the epigraph at its head:

Not love but that love flows from it  
 ex animo  
 & cannot ergo delight in itself  
 but only in the love flowing from it.  
 UBI AMOR IBI OCULUS EST. (XC/609)

Earlier, in discussing the opening of Canto XCI (see Part One, Chapter 2) I related its pattern of emergence - Reina from the sea - to the Acoetian poetic morphology, and remarked that both were governed by reverence and by love. It is necessary to add here that that love is desperately fragile, overlaying hatred and disintegration, and that though this Canto, and the previous, ascend "Over harm / Over hate / overflowing, light over light" (XCI/613), clinker-dry hell nevertheless manages to irrupt into the diaphanous fabric:

Democracies electing their sewage  
till there is no clear thought about holiness  
a dung flow from 1913  
and, in this, their kikery functioned, Marx, Freud  
and the american beaneries  
Filth under filth,  
Maritain, Hutchins,  
or as Benda remarked: 'La trahison' (XCI/613-14)

The unassimilated, unassimilable nature of this indicates, I think, the greater fragility or tenuity of the visionary poetry of Rock-Drill, as against that of the Pisan Cantos, for in the latter the flux of the purgatorial world was incorporated in the fabric of the verse, so that

invocation and the wry notation of externals passed the one into the other with facility, and with a unity of effect. This cannot be said of Rock-Drill, where areas of experience are not only felt to be opposed - Pound had always felt that - but are utterly disjunct, the poetry effecting no modus within which their interplay may find expression. By the time he came to write them his universe had become even more rigidly divided between a fragile Paradise and the potentially overwhelming Inferno, and the tension between the two which gives to the Pisan Cantos much of their power, and which informs and disturbs the earlier Cantos, had resolved itself into simple terror. Other than in the paradisaical Rock-Drill Cantos, and sometimes uncertainly there, Pound's faith in the animating power of love, and his patience to wait, as vates, upon the emergence of form from the loved matrix, were insufficient.

Nevertheless, the Cantos demonstrate that Pound's experience as "captive knight" at Pisa were never forgotten by the poet. They draw on the same complex of feeling that vivified the Cantos written there, and if these latter, written by a man of sixty, demonstrate a remarkable capacity for renewal in one who had, by that time, seemed to have given himself up wholly to the arid motions of an exclusive 'masculinity', then Rock-Drill, written by a septuagenarian sequestered in a madhouse, are a still more remarkable demonstration. Desperate as his condition was, and exacerbated as was his apprehension of an evil that seemed to have wrecked his life, his great resource remained the fluxive, fructifying sea from which, under the eyes, and urged on by the love, of the vatic poet, form rose like a Goddess.

### CONCLUSION

To write of Pound's poetics involves one in the consideration of the whole of his temperament and output. Thus in writing about the ideogrammic method I have set around that concept, for context, a more general framework centred upon what I see as the two poles of Pound's temperament: the feminine or Acoetian pole, and the masculine or Odyssean. I have suggested that the method represents an expansion of Imagist/Vorticist principles, and that the poetic morphology of the 'Vorticism' essay is the most thoroughgoing and revelatory adumbration of those principles. It is Acoetian in character. Pound's later formulations - in both his prose and poetry - reinforce and extend 'Vorticism's' characterization of the poetic act as an act of loving anamnesis. The ideogrammic method in its rejection of structure and of prosaic syntax is the poetic expression of this predilection. Its syntactic dislocations and "open" forms are necessitated by the poet's desire to hew close to the contours of his material. When successful, its accomodation of historical matter is similarly grounded upon the poet's familiarity with and affection for the documentary materials he is utilizing.

This complex of ideas can be traced in explicit form in the prose, and as a body of metaphor, a matrix of related "fantasies" (concerning the flowering of form on the air and its emergence from water) in the poetry. I have attempted to draw more or less equally upon these two realms in my discussion. I have further suggested that the body of work drawing upon this complex constitutes the heart of Pound's achievement. As regards the Cantos, this means locating the marrow of the poem in A Draft of XXX Cantos and the Pisan Cantos. I have examined two other modes within the Cantos to which the ideogrammic method bears a less

direct and compelling relation. On the one hand, I have taken the Hell Cantos as the exacerbated representative of those portions of the Cantos in which the matter treated is "modelled" rather than "carved"; in which the substance under the poet's hand fails to compel his respect, or actively invites his disdain. On the other, I have taken Cantos XXXIX and XLVII as representative of the reversion Pound sometimes made to more traditional poetic practice, its structures and closure.

Finally, I have attempted to set this complex of ideas in relation to a conception of language which Pound largely drew from Fenollosa, and for which I have traced, in addition, a rather more remote ancestry. Just as Pound pictured the moment of creation as the emergence of divine form from the sea's matrix, so this conception of language views that apparently wholly human construct as an efflorescence upon the ground of being, nature.

In both the linguistic and poetic realms Pound's concern - his thirst - was for unity, and the ideogrammic method represents a poetic which, in its complex ramifications, embraced the world.

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