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Personality & Characterization in Cantos I-XVII of The Cantos of Ezra Pound

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Gary

1981
PERSONALITY AND CHARACTERIZATION IN CANTOS I-XVII OF
THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Gary Hottinger
August 1981
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PERSONALITY AND CHARACTERIZATION IN CANTOS I-XVII OF THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND

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Examining the modes of characterization and the types of personalities evident in the first seventeen cantos of The Cantos of Ezra Pound, one can perceive that Ezra Pound felt he was composing an epic which was to revitalize for the present the best minds of the past. Pound's method of revitalization has a close affinity to the doctrine of effluences in Longinus on the Sublime, a classical work of literary criticism. The personalities Pound employs in The Cantos fall into three broad categories: gods (deific), legends (archetypal), and men (historical). By applying Pound's neo-Platonism to their organization, one can further divide the gods into levels of spiritual ascent—Circe and the Sirens (the lowest), Persephone and the gods of the Underworld, Diana and the gods of land, Dionysus and the gods of the ocean, and Aphrodite and the gods of light. Similarly, the legendary figures can be further grouped into the archetypes of advisor, questor, midonz, and metamorph. Historical characters—the primary historical character in these early cantos being Sigismundo Malatesta—represent actualizations.
and "facts" which support the literary, sociological, and personal values Pound establishes through his presentation of the gods and legends.
CHAPTER I
EZRA POUND'S THEORY OF POETRY

Most literary critics would agree (some reluctantly) with T. S. Eliot's statement in 1954 that Ezra Pound's critical work forms "the least dispensable body of critical writing in our time." And many critics, like J. P. Sullivan, take Pound's impact further and credit him and Eliot with forming modern taste in poetry. When one turns to the question of Pound's worth as a poet himself, however—especially in regard to his masterwork, The Cantos—diversity of opinion becomes the rule: M. L. Rosenthal notes Pound's "genius" in positioning quotations and data; Ms. Flory believes Pound demonstrates he is unable to deal with real emotion; and while Noel Stock declares The Cantos formless and "uninformed, poetically or otherwise, by a larger purpose," Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship and the Pound Conferences in England, the focal work of both being The Cantos, intimate just the opposite. By and large, critics attempt to be honestly objective in weighing the pluses and minuses of Pound's cantos, and if there is any harsh criticism, the
impulse finds its genesis in one or both of the text's major obstacles: obscure reference and obscure method. For any reader coming at The Cantos for the first time, the twin obscurities are like twin flaming swords, and many dodge the first only (like veteran Noel Stock) to suffer impalement on the second.

Ezra Pound considered literary experimentation necessary. And surely he would not mind, perhaps he even intended, approaching The Cantos with an experimental method in hand and then analyzing the resultant reaction—if any. That is precisely the purpose of this paper: to analyze the characters and personalities introduced in Cantos I - XVII with a view to their systematic introduction qua characters filling certain stylistic and semantic roles. Why the first seventeen cantos? The number of major characters Pound uses in these first cantos is enough to busy oneself with; also, even though the first block of canti ended with Canto XVI, Michael Alexander has a good ear in perceiving Canto XVII as being the "finale" of the first cycle.

Before any analysis of personality and characterization in The Cantos can take place, one must be familiar with Pound's multi-faceted poetic theory. The greater
the familiarity, the easier one detects the currents and
cross-currents among the individual verses. In the
absence of a method, however, more awareness begets greater
confusion.

One concept of poetic analysis that Pound mentions
in The Spirit of Romance and repeats in Polite Essays and
Instigations, and which becomes a motif in ABC of Reading,
is the division of poetic expression into melopoeia,
phanopoeia, and logopoeia. Pound explains his terms in
the essay "How to Read" the following way:

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.

Pound goes on to interpret each, relative to how well
it would translate into another language. Melopoeia almost
never translates while phanopoeia is easily translated.
Logopoeia, on the other hand, cannot be translated at all,
"though the attitude of mind it expresses may pass through paraphrase."  

The term melopoeia—like the other two terms—is utilized by Pound more as an historic guide-post than as an analytical tool. He uses it to identify literary modes which tap into the Greeks, Provencal troubadours, and "minor nineteenth-century Frenchmen," those groups representing artistic advances in poetry's musicality. To memorize these groups and their contributions would not allow one to understand what Pound, or any other lyrical analyst, refers to. What Pound refers to can only be comprehended by those who possess an innate sensitivity to cadence and movement: find a man receptive to rhythmic form inside melody "and all he can say is that he gets what the Celts call a 'chune' in his head" and the words either fit or they don't. As J. P. Sullivan suggests, Poe's great influence on French symbolism could be explained in this light—it's pure melopoeia—just as Jules Laforgue's influence on English poetry, though the French viewed him as somewhat of a "joke," makes sense aesthetically. Pound further divides melopoeia into song, chant, and speech, adding that the "older one gets the more one believes in the first."
J. P. Sullivan also comes forward to try to "unravel the term logopoeia" although "critics have not generally made any use of it." He defines logopoeia as a refined mode of irony which shows itself in certain delicate linguistic ways, in a sensitivity to how language is used in other contexts, and in a deployment of these other uses for its own humorous or satiric aims, to produce an effect directly contrary to their effect in the usual contexts.15

This is not to equate logopoeia to parody, he believes, though he cannot explain why exactly. The "why" consists in the primacy of personal or local virtu over abstract statement and conglomerate literary or philosophical pretentiousness; above all it must be said subtly. Thus the "dance of the intellect" exists in the crisp expression of the individual artist against some popular or conventional blurred other. The sharp edges riding beneath the words enrich their value to the reader: "A people that grows accustomed to sloppy writing is a people in process of losing grip on its empire and on itself."16

Out of the phanopoeia together with a demand for precision, Pound was to develop the Imagiste rationale. Phanopoeia would translate; as a concept, people could more easily be informed by it than either melopoeia or logopoeia. In Instigations, Pound substituted "imagism"
for phanopoeia in listing the three principles:

- imagism, or poetry wherein the feelings of painting and sculpture are predominant (certain men move in phantasmagoria; the images of their gods, whole countrysides, sketches of hill and forest, travel with them). 17

The imagistic technique surfaces in The Cantos through Pound's deployment of individual pieces of painting and sculpture, through his references to actual architectural structures in their settings. These become facts, carrying their own undeniable inferences by reason of their external, objective reality. Fresh from a Swinburnian era, poetry had more or less suffered aetherialization. According to Eliot "the situation of poetry in 1909 or 1910 was stagnant to a degree difficult for any young poet of to-day to imagine." 18 Pound's aim, he makes clear, is not to render discussion of universals impossible; it is to render them more vividly, lucidly, "through particulars." 19 This set the stage for Pound's working definition of an image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." 20 In the sense that Pound desires to be scientific in his method, his approach is Aristotelian, examining particulars and judging them in terms of actualization of potential. His personal philosophical accomplishment was in joining an Aristotelian focus on particulars to a
neo-Platonic teleology. The vision reveals itself in individual instances of self-realization.

The "particulars" of the imagistic technique, and the "facts," differ from the particulars and facts of dry analysis; Pound found himself in enthusiastic agreement with Ernest Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character." There, Fenollosa made the distinction between the analytical fact as opposed to the metaphoric image used in poetry, saying that all art must be grounded in "the concrete of nature." For this reason, the discovery of the pictorial structure of the Chinese ideogram delighted Pound. Hugh Kenner states that to Pound the ideogram "bore out the possibility that a language might be a system of natural signs." One discovers in an imagist poem, then, not isolated and arbitrary partitionings, but an array of living facts—color, volume, place. Kenner refers to the vitality Pound incorporated into the imagistic technique, which leaves the movement of a poem a plot of "stabilized energies." "If you can't think of imagism," Pound wrote, "or phanopoeia as including the moving image" then you needlessly separate the object from action. To Pound, the ideogram allowed the Chinese to attain the "maximum of phanopoeia."
Critic William Pratt claims that the kind of image Ezra Pound was using evolved over a period before 1920 "from static to kinetic to ironical"; the discovery of the ideogram allowed Pound to fuse all the former modes of the image into one concept. Pratt asserts that he could "draw a direct line" from Hopkins' perception of inscape through Joyce's epiphany through Pound's image to Eliot's objective-correlative. All these terms share, believes Pratt, "a belief in Imananence or Incarnation, the truth revealed through the invisible world and expressed in exact, concrete language." Myles Slatin agrees with Pratt in "A History of Pound's Cantos I - XVII, 1915 - 1925"; quite possibly, Fenollosa's notes suggested that a method for writing a long, non-narrative imagist poem could be found.

The advent of the ideogram circa 1913 also helped urge Pound into a new poetic frame, Vorticism. Timothy Materer explains Vorticism, showing the intimate similarities between it and Imagisme. The greatest difference between the two lay in Vorticism's closer association to science in order to humanize it. The Vorticist artist did not mimic nature, Materer points out, but the artist instead "must usurp nature's formative power" and wield
that creative energy in order to mathematically display human emotion and intelligence. 30 Pound's Vorticist years were masked by much panegyric, political and aesthetic, against the flabby state of Western culture. The Vorticists maligned others and maligned themselves in order to energize the atmosphere with a critical intelligence. But as a movement, Vorticism failed sometime during World War I. 31 The monumental stupidity of the destruction broke the hope for a new Renaissance that had animated Pound before. Though he carried a belief in the energy of the Vorticist method, he turned more intensely toward shaping his own art, and it is from 1922 to 1925, Slatin tells us, that the early cantos took what was to be their final form. 32

A vortex does not demand a linear concept of time. Time itself becomes amorphous, and one can view the world not as a series of cause-and-effect actions but as comprised of fields of various life-intensities which are shared with all who have ever had some particular life-experience: the important gauge for one's life is not the calendar; it is the mirroring of archetypal experience across the calendar. The vortex was simply an extension of Pound's early non-linear conception of time, for as early as The Spirit of Romance he speaks of one event in
the Poema del Cid as "rhyming" with an event in the Quattrocento. In that instance the "rhyming," however, was of static similarity; but if one saw reality as constructed of vortices which register different energy levels, then level of intensity can be a measure of reality—much the same as Plato's epistemological-ontological parallel. This permits Pound to treat subjects separated by linear time as actually being co-temporal because they are co-vibrant. Such is the case in the following lines of Canto IV:

Then Actaeon: Vidal, Vidal. It is old Vidal speaking stumbling along in the wood, Not a patch, not a lost shimmer of sunlight, the pale hair of the goddess.

Here the story of Peire Vidal's running madly through the forest, thinking himself a wolf because of his love for Lady Loba, interprets and is interpreted by the legend of Actaeon, who was changed to a roe by the goddess Diana and chased and slain by her hounds. Walter Baumann is correct to the extent to which he explains the juxtaposition as "parallelism"; on the other hand, he does not extend the parallelism of Vidal and Actaeon to include what Pound ultimately shows the reader: how separate melodies merge into one song—tonally, thematically, and metaphysically.
Hugh Kenner also remarks on Pound's non-linear concept of time. According to him, Pound applied his time-perception to tearing down the narrative wall in order to "recover time" for literature. Kenner borrows the term "homeomorphic" to describe Pound's "system of interconnectedness." Though interconnected, the individuals of a system retain their sanctity as individuals; they are not blurred. Kenner aptly states, "Thus justifying, in a poem including history, ten thousand distinct particulars, to be distinguished without end in the faith that they will unify, leaves on one tree, trees in one forest, forests in one world." The personalities and characters, Kenner believes, remain intact because Pound had an unspoken mystical belief in his ability to apprehend the virtu of those with whom close study had made him conversant.

The relation of Ezra Pound to his personae constitutes one of the more discussed aspects of Pound scholarship. The question of "how" he relates is complex and I will tender a partial explication of the process in Chapter II of this thesis. Hugh Witemeyer has some very good things to say about Pound and his various personae in *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*. And what Witemeyer says about Pound's view of literary criticism (i.e. he saw himself as an
"omniscient historian" clarifying the interrelation between life and great works of art, believing them to have a "timeless order" of their own) could just as easily be applied to thematic arrangement in *The Cantos.*

Witemeyer's remark about "timeless order" leads to a consideration of Pound's view of the literary tradition. In the opening of *The Spirit of Romance,* one finds exact confirmation of Witemeyer's claim about Pound and criticism. Pound wrote further, in 1933, that he was in agreement with Eliot's opinion that there is an order to the existing body of literature which alters to include any new exquisite work. Inclusion into this order, Pound maintains, does not depend on an arbitrary standard; it depends on something less concrete yet just as valid:

> A classic is classic not because it conforms to certain structural rules or fits certain definitions (of which its author had quite probably never heard). It is classic because of a certain external and irrepressible freshness.

Or, to restate it in terms of literature's "function," literature incites "humanity to continue living," becoming the "nutrition of impulse" which relieves and sustains the mind. Thus, proceeds Pound, "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree." The qualitative element in Pound's definition of great
literature opens a gap between science and art that Pound constantly strived to bridge. But he recognized it as early as 1910 to be a real chasm forever separating art and science, and he was still arguing around 1927 that the qualitative side of aesthetics could not be forced into a falsified scientific mode "as if it were something not literature." Art touches man's spiritual sense--"Art is a fluid moving above or over the minds of men." Pound, in that neo-Platonic sentence, does not mean to divorce art from the critical position it holds in culture as nutrition of impulse; the artist and scholar are not the only ones fed by maintaining the pathways of cultural advance open and responsive, because in doing so, the "health of thought outside literary circles and in non-literary existence" is maintained.

One of Pound's concerns was to keep the inroads to literary tradition clean and therefore keep the culture's access to creative energies at a maximum. His task was to teach other artists and literati; they needed refinement of their aesthetic sensibilities through being kept abreast with the ancient points of creative contact. Although Eliot's claim that Pound was primarily a teacher overreaches (and wrongly underrates Pound's literary contributions),
transmitting necessary knowledge which keeps the modern intelligence activated did become one of Pound's primary concerns. Pound approached the problem in The Spirit of Romance by employing what later was one of his staple didactic devices—"luminous details." Witemeyer offers the following summation of Pound's device:

In his literary criticism, excernment by means of luminous detail usually involves pinpointing the moment in literary history when one of two things happened: either a radical or fruitful innovation in technique and expressions of feeling first appeared, or it was perfected by a master.

Pound explains his rationale behind luminous details in "How to Read," asserting that the use of important literary "specimens" to trace creative achievements would be of far greater worth than any random curriculum. Doing this would facilitate the separation of "live items from dead ones" and would be a simple method guaranteeing that the tools of the people—their collective thoughts—remain "clean." Also, Pound suggests the way to avoid needless confusion from any critic is to require that he produce a list of particular works and categorize them according to the critical terms he uses; this "ideograph" of luminous details acts to define his abstractions. Hence, "good" poetry is measured against an actual scale.
Michael Alexander notes the didactic element in *The Cantos*; he accuses Pound of cutting the quotations and documents on a purely personal basis. But Alexander amends his criticism somewhat by conceding Pound's passionate belief that he is presenting the "moral truth." In reality, Pound presents in the poem (as he does in his critical essays) luminous details patterned into ideogrammic wholes. The purpose is to teach us how to view life by letting the ideograms build arguments—arguments judged against the background of the facts of others' lives and of others' artistic endeavors.

Anyone who has read "How to Read" is woefully aware of Pound's estimate of the least amount of literature one should have to incorporate, if one wants to be either humanly whole or partially knowledgeable. The stress Pound places on learning leads Wendy Stallard Flory to accuse him of elitism. Obviously, she contends, Pound's target audience are those harboring an innate aesthetic sense which only needs refinement and direction. Though attempting to buoy Pound up by claiming that a reader need not be privy to the wealth of heteroclite information in *The Cantos*—that *The Cantos* can still be understood and enjoyed without that knowledge—Alexander also relents to
Flory's assertion. He writes, "Pound's subject-matter is very often internal and symbolic. The arcane lies near the centre of his work." And the sad fact, Alexander notes, is that it is Pound's "more learned critics" who are most unsympathetic to the intellectual complexity and the pedagogical presentation of information; the pre-requisite for reading The Cantos is then a "vital intellectual and moral curiosity rather than vast erudition."

Essentially both critics are correct; Pound's premium on the intellect as well as the intelligence is high, though he concedes that "vast reading" does not insure one's education. In the ABC of Reading Pound says that he translated the Ta Hio into English so that those handicapped with just the one language can learn where to start thinking. Also he lets the reader know the minimum requirement for understanding the roots of English poetry -- the "other languages" of Dante, Cavalcanti, Villon, and Provencal. Leaving what he must have considered a simple demand, i.e. modern man can't think with "only one language," Pound's underlying conviction comes out later, more adamant, about his lists of authors: "YOU WILL NEVER KNOW either why I chose them, or why they were worth choosing, or why you approve or disapprove my choice, until
you go to the TEXTS, the originals; the logical inference here being that Mr. Pound's word is the law until one acquaints oneself with the literary facts.

Not surprisingly, Pound thought translations—good translations—important. His three fundamental principles (melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia) were explained by him in their ability to translate. He felt that "every new exuberance, every new heave is stimulated by translation, every allegedly great age is an age of translations." And his translations of Confucius and Sextus Propertius found their impulse in this conception. Relative to the first seventeen cantos, his Homage to Sextus Propertius probably had a shaping influence; Pound completed the translation by 1917 when the first few cantos were in flux. Sullivan reveals in Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius some of the academic flack Pound received for his non-literal version of Propertius' elegiac poems. Sullivan feels the reason other Latin scholars reacted so vehemently was their failure to understand Homage as a "creative translation" and a form of criticism. As creative translation, Sullivan places Homage in the same class as Fitzgerald's imaginative version of the Rubaiyat by Omar Khayyam. Concerning the Homage as a form of criticism, Sullivan claims of Pound,
His main contribution to criticism was in reminding us of the poet, in re-arousing interest in him and causing us to look for bases of agreement or disagreement with the Homage. Propertius was made a twentieth century literary figure. 67

Perhaps a mention of those creative translations which Pound admired is in order: Chaucer's paraphrases, Gavin Douglas's Eneados ("better than the original"), Arthur Golding's Metamorphoses, Marlowe's translation of Ovid's Amores, and Hughes Salel's translation of Homer. 68

The most important aspect of Pound's poetic theory is probably the least accessible—his philosophy. The best source, Pound's Guide to Kulchur, was unavailable to me. However, since Pound repeated often any idea which he felt cried for repetition, all important aspects should easily show forth in his other works. Three elements come to the forefront from his poetry and prose: (1) neo-Platonism and Eleusis; (2) the three cults of Provence, Tuscany, and the Renaissance; and (3) banks as the source of modern corruption ("Usura").

A sentence occurs in Sullivan which causes one to re-read whatever one had considered accurate to that point: "Pound is not concerned with any deeper spiritual reality; his roots strike only into this world and this society. . . ." 69

A false assumption for Homage; une betise considering
The Cantos. Obviously, as the essay "Genesis" illustrates, Pound is no orthodox Catholic. But that does not mitigate Sullivan's blunder; the spiritual sensitivity present in the following quotation may represent Pound in his youth, but having looked over it as late as 1932, he did not bother to amend it:

We have about us the universe of fluid force, and below us the germinal universe of wood alive, of stone alive. Man is--the sensitive physical part of him--a mechanism, for the purpose of our further discussion a mechanism rather than an electric appliance, switches, wires, etc. Chemically speaking, he is ut credo, a few buckets of water, tied up in a complicated sort of fig-leaf. As to his consciousness, the consciousness of some seems to rest, or to have its center more properly, in what the Greek psychologists called the phantastikon. Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos. And with certain others their consciousness is "germinal." Their thoughts are in them as the thought of the tree is in the seed, or in the grass, or the grain, or the blossom. And these minds are the more poetic, and they affect minds about them, and transmute it as the seed the earth. And this latter sort of mind is close on the vital universe; and the strength of the Greek beauty rests in this, that it is ever at the interpretation of this vital universe, by its signs of gods and godly attendants and oreads.

Inherent, here, is Ezra Pound's neo-Platonism. Ms. Flory outlines the neo-Platonic approach and Pound's affinity for it. She summarizes the neo-Platonist's quest to transcend material existence through a search "for moral
perfection and intellectual enlightenment which allows the individual soul to rise to apprehension of Intelligence" and thus merge into the divine Unity. As Flory indicates, Pound does not necessarily subscribe to neo-Platonism as a religion, but he does use it as a pointing-stick for his own intuitions of the spiritual. Elsewhere, Flory selects the crystal from a number of Poundian symbols, explaining it as being the most complex and also the most apt to neo-Platonism because it symbolizes man's creation of his ideas of the gods, which involves his participation in the Nous. The attempt to conceive of god-qualities enjoins man to rise above his own consciousness.

It may appear odd that Pound selected neo-Platonism over a refined and reputable body of Christian experience available to him. The discrepancy is logical in view of Pound's sense of history. Leon Surette suggests that, for Pound and others, Christianity had been decaying since about the sixteenth century; the theological and philosophical system could not be accepted without a "crippling intellectual effort." Therefore, Surette believes, Christianity did not fit Pound's poetic needs, but the cult of the Eleusis did. According to Surette in his book A Light From Eleusis, "Eleusis is a cult of the
chthonic, uniting in the doubled goddess and god the double process of death and birth." Within Pound's poetic vision, the Eleusinian initiation rite holds a major position; it serves as an analog for the search for an experience with the divine, a revelation of life's deepest mysteries. Further, Surette claims, the Eleusis is the key to Pound's poetry.\textsuperscript{74} Surette sees Pound employing the Eleusinian rituals in \textit{The Cantos}, beginning with Canto I --the nekula, i.e. Odysseus' journey to the Underworld.\textsuperscript{75}

From the cult of mystery one steps into the cult of history. Regardless of the aetherial nature of Pound's religious sentiments, the historical eras he admired are clearly marked. For the most part, he was interested in three societies: Provence, Tuscany, and Renaissance Italy. Provence was a "cult of the emotions"; Tuscany, "a cult of the harmonies of the mind"; and the Renaissance, "a cult of culture."\textsuperscript{76}

Pound's study of the Provencal culture, the Langue d'Oc, dominates his writings and he often takes his literary cue from their poets. Primarily, the troubadours were to be studied for their music,\textsuperscript{77} but Flory delineates a close philosophical connection, saying that Pound felt the chivalric love code of the troubadours was inherited from
the Eleusis. Through the Provencal poets, the ecstatic religion of the Eleusis was preserved. Pound thought Arnaut Daniel's works exemplified the best of Proenca; his and the troubadour's was the "poetry of a democratic aristocracy" which took in all whose intelligences had anything to offer.

The cultures of Provence and Tuscany co-existed spatially and temporally (the hey-day of Provence dating from the twelfth century to Guido Cavalcanti's birth (1250), and Cavalcanti representing the development of Tuscan harmonies). Cavalcanti was the bridge, having a foot in both traditions. Surette writes that Pound adopted Cavalcanti's belief that the divine is "manifest in the beauty of woman." So historically, the Provencal worship of Amor is transmitted through Cavalcanti to his friend, Dante Alighieri, the virtuoso of harmony. Of Dante's poetry Pound writes,

Thus, there are works of art which are beautiful objects and works of art which are keys or passwords admitting one to a deeper knowledge, to a finer perception of beauty; Dante's work is of the second sort.

One can see here the neo-Platonic ascent, from love of woman to love of the mind, where Love pulls the devotee higher and higher, towards the One.
In *The Spirit of Romance* Pound remarks that the Renaissance "brought in rhetoric, and all the attendant horrors," yet, originally, he conceded some benefits from its arrival. The 1929 footnote to the text finds him disposed otherwise and wondering what benefit he meant; finally, Pound says that one must reject all art "invented after 1527." With the Renaissance came the humanism of the modern. And with the Renaissance came the economic evil--the rise of the banking system.

Pound, just before World War II: "I am writing for humanity in a world eaten by usury." That is how he saw himself--a crusader struggling to keep the ancient inroads to the imagination open, and the major obstacle barring the twentieth century mind from its heritage was usury--the lending of money to be repaid with interest. Surette gauges Pound's temperament respecting usury nicely when he distinguishes between qualitative value and quantitative effort--the artist values the quality of the effort, not the quantity expended in accomplishing the task. For analogy, Surette compares the construction of the atomic bomb to that of Notre-Dame Cathedral: though the bomb embodies a vaster amount of human labor behind it than does Notre-Dame, it is not necessarily the more valuable
of the two. But "the most vicious implication," continues Surette, is that the bounty of nature--its living and non-living wealth--has no value because it is not a product of human labor.\textsuperscript{85} The modern banking system Pound held to be a perversion of natural law. As Hugh Kenner points out, it is the fact that money was used to create money by banks and this aspect, "and not any quibble over interest rates, is what Pound means by usura."\textsuperscript{86} Consequently, Kenner explains, because the banking system was worldwide and because the international bankers knew exactly "what they were about," Pound believed them to cause wars in order to create debts, and so they became his villains.\textsuperscript{87} When reading The Cantos, and his essays, one must view Pound's anti-semitism as synonymous with his hate for the banking system; the Jews, custodians of usury in the Middle Ages, control, Pound thought, the monetary flow today. And Flory believes Pound's interest in Mussolini's Fascism to be an outgrowth from his belief that Mussolini would attack the usurious institutions and pave the way for cultural advance.\textsuperscript{88} Ultimately, Pound claimed, bad economics causes "false writing" and the problem could be rectified by making money accessible to good writers.\textsuperscript{89} Likewise, Houston declares, style mirrors economics: "production
of goods is the equivalent of ch'eng, or precision in language; usury corresponds to inflated style, words unnaturally divorced from things. 

The foregoing, then, illustrates in some measure the weight of Pound's theory of poetry, or more appropriately theories of poetry, for--even though the elements here presented were more or less stable ones because they were ingrained in him--he was evolving and his analytic mind was ever acting to add or drop, accent or downplay, the information available to him. If The Cantos are too complex in the sense that they do not admit reading by the entire American population, one must forgive Pound. He did not view it so. By writing for the best minds, he thought, he was writing for the great mass of the culture.
CHAPTER II
AN ARBITRARY CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

To my knowledge, Pound nowhere mentions the book variously titled Of Dionysius Longinus Concerning Sublimity or Of Longinus on Sublimity of Language or Longinus on the Sublime, though probably the work was written by neither Dionysius of Halicarnassus nor Cassius Longinus but, as the errata affixed to the copy at Florence bears out, is of "uncertain author." Nevertheless it is interesting to note that Cassius Longinus was a neo-Platonic educator and that Longinus on the Sublime is of a definite neo-Platonic temper; so considering Pound's voracious reading habits and the fact that it is a well-known classical text, his having picked it up at some time or other is probable.

The Longinus text interestingly affords a critical framework for some of his ideas, especially those concerning character. Since Pound had a heavy streak of Romance in him, a comparison of his theories to one of the touchstones of the Romantic Age is plausible, and Longinus on the Sublime is an important touchstone.
On the other hand, if one wanted a more technical classical ancestor to Pound's style, Horace would probably be a better choice.  

As a point of departure, one may consider some minor areas of similarity between Pound and the text. W. J. Bate, in his comments on Longinus, lists Longinus' five sources of sublimity: (1) high intellect; (2) inspired passion; (3) figurative language; (4) "noble diction"; and (5) "the rhythmic and elevated arrangement of words." The last three are purely technical. With a little re-shaping one can immediately fit Pound's three principles into Longinus' categories of technique, if one takes "figure" in the spirit of Poundian suggestivity to hint at "image"; hence--figurative language equals phanopoeia; "noble diction" equals logopoeia; and rhythm and word arrangement equals melopoeia. Although there is little similarity (in reality) between Pound's three principles and Longinus' principles of art, both men squarely agree on the two pre-requisite natural abilities. Writing of Remy de Gourmont, Pound asserts, "There is no intelligence without emotion"; in the same spirit, he indicates elsewhere that one needs to do more than read a book to understand it--a person must have experienced life.
More importantly, from M. A. Prickard's translation of Longinus one gets several impressions of a Poundian likeness. Longinus' "choosing the most vital of included elements" parallels Pound's demand for precise language. His claim that "vulgar idiom" is, at times, more expressive conduces to Pound's frequent use of idiom in The Cantos. And Longinus' extended condemnation of "love of money" as one of the major hindrances to producing great minds would have struck a chord in Pound. Also Longinus' insistence that sublimity is not simply a "feeling" meets with Pound's "There may be emotion without much intelligence, but that does not concern us." Finally, there are numerous parallels between Longinus and Pound which are no doubt products of their neo-Platonism. Compare, for example, Longinus' "For beautiful words are, in a real and special sense, the light of thought" with Pound's "... by naming over all the most beautiful things we know we may draw back upon the mind some vestige of the heavenly splendor."

Despite all these and other minor similarities, Longinus, in his doctrine of apprehending character by emulation and imitation (which W. Rhys Roberts translates as the doctrine of "effluences"), offers a way of viewing
Pound's handling of personae and virtu that may elucidate the presentation of characters in _The Cantos_. Though "doctrine of effluences" is a good critical term, for the translation of the passage, I prefer Prickard over Roberts:

> Here is our mark, my friend, let us hold closely to it: for many are borne along inspired by a breath which comes from another . . . even so from the great genius of the men of old do streams pass off to the souls of those who emulate them, as though from holy caves; inspired by which, even those not too highly susceptible to the god are possessed by the greatness which was in others.¹⁴

The reference of being "susceptible to the god" does not mean that the souls become gods, but instead harks back to Longinus' simile of a Pythian priestess and a god which is passed over here by the ellipsis. Longinus claims that this apprehension of the spirit and the technique of great men will allow the imitator to "vie with them;" and thereby "they will stand out before our eyes, and lead our souls upwards towards the measure of the ideal we have conjured up."¹⁵

Hugh Witemeyer extracts a segment from Pound's essay series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" in which Pound discourses on his belief in virtu, saying he conceives of the soul of every man as compounded of the "elements of the cosmos of souls" but that there is one element in each
person which he shares with no other—his virtu. If a poet
discovers his virtu and gets it down in verse, he will gain
immortality.\textsuperscript{16} One can perceive Pound's affinity to Longinus
on this point, if only one recalls Kenner's statement that
Pound, especially in his early poetry, seems to hold an
almost mystical belief in his ability to assume the char-
acters of others.\textsuperscript{17} And very close is the way both stress
the single line: Longinus says "sublimity" can be found in
"a single idea"\textsuperscript{18} and Pound that the "single line" is a "per-
f...
"secondary apparition," and "emotional apparition," indicating that ghosts or effluences are visible in the lines. 23

Both Longinus and Pound emphasize a moral significance behind authors' abilities which causes the reader to discover something in the line which draws him back to it or causes him to remember it. While Longinus writes, "So it is on the lips of men of the highest spirit that words of rare greatness are found," 24 Pound echoes, "An artist's technique is a test of his personal validity." 25

The fact that Pound, as Flory remarks, comes to locate each age in terms of the great personalities of that age 26 implies a consolidation and an ordering of literary and social processes through the effluences of others, others whom Pound had infused in his mind by study of their thoughts and styles. It is Eliot's idea of an ordered literary tradition transformed into a living literary tradition with whose members one, through apprehending the artists' virtus, can communicate. "After all," Pound matter-of-factly writes,

Homer, Villon, Propertius, speak of the world as I know it, Mr. Tennyson and Dr. Bridges did not. Even Dante and Guido with their so highly specialized culture speak of a part of life as I know it. ATHANATOS. 27
"Athanatos" means from their immortal nature. Mark, however, that Tennyson and Bridges "did" speak—past tense.

One apprehends the effluence of a great mind for a purpose. Longinus tells Terentianus that the doctrine of effluences is a "road"—to "sublimity." Longinus defines "sublimity" as "always an eminence and excellence in language" and from this exclusively have great poets and authors achieved their immortality; for "it is not to persuasion but to ecstasy that passages of extraordinary genius carry the hearer. . . ." Pound, in the poem Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (composed 1919-20), strove "to maintain 'the sublime'/In the old sense. . . ." And though one can only speculate what he meant there, the similarity between Pound's definition of great art in The Spirit of Romance to Longinus' definition of "sublimity" tenders the possibility that Pound could have meant the same thing: "Great art is made to call forth, or create, an ecstasy." Earlier Pound had equated ecstasy with "some splendor of thought, some presentation of sheer beauty, some lightning turn of phrase. . . ." Indeed, Longinus uses the same wording; for sublimity is brought out "like a lightning flash. . . ." Even the tests for ecstasy and sublimity are the same, i.e. repetition. Pound, speaking of that
special beauty in Dante's *Convito*, describes it as a beauty which never tires—"Time after time one can return to it, and always one's hunger is satisfied." Likewise in Longinus: "You may take it that those are beautiful and genuine effects of sublimity which please always and please all."

The goal of this comparative analysis has been to place Pound's concept of the *virtu* of individual authors and, for that matter, his whole approach to literature as a living tradition of personalities within a well-known critical tradition. The contention has not been that Pound used Longinus or that they align at all points, but the contention is that, for all intents and purposes, Longinus' use of the doctrine of effluences and his definition of sublimity operate within Pound's poetic theory, and, actually, that those terms are better because they are more exact. The benefit, or rather the major benefit, is that one perceives how Pound uses historical personages in *The Cantos*. The argument heretofore in criticism has been whether Pound presents his historic characters as they really were or whether he poeticizes them for his own purposes—in other words, presents them as he wants them to be. This either/or is unacceptable. There is a
philosophical distinction that Pound, in line with a critical tradition, makes. That is, implicit behind the doctrine of effluences is the pragmatic assumption (not mystical) that an artist's work reflects his character to some degree, and that the more and better one is acquainted with that artist, the better idea one has of his psyche. This process is just as viable—shows the person as "he really was"—as the pseudo-scientific method of trying to gauge all documented information on essentially the same basis.

The historian records data in a valueless universe—seeking to portray people in their cultural milieu. He desires to be impersonal, to keep himself out of it, so that the narrative line is "objectively true." The poet, on the other hand, works from the individual outward. He is interested in the cultural milieu only insofar as it adds to the understanding of how that individual thinks and feels. Realizing events to be not so simply cause-and-effect, the poet disregards the story-line if his sensibility says otherwise. And neither does the poet seek to keep himself out of the process even when an "objective correlative" is aimed for, since as Pound claims,
"there is always something of the author or composer which must be transmitted." 36

Therefore, critics who concur with Surette that Pound in The Cantos "fictionalizes history" mask a philosophical assumption: the conventional ways of interpreting history paint the best possible realistic picture and Pound's method, because it is too subjective, falsifies the picture. And were anyone to dwell for a moment on the inaccuracy inherent in modern printed and TV journalism, knowing that that is what future historians will look at, such an assumption would seem unwarranted.

Pound does not claim to know everything, just those whom he has studied. If he sees any continuity between different individuals, perhaps one ought not to discredit what he believes because those individuals are centuries apart; instead, one ought to credit that discovered continuity as a thread perceived by a specialist, but nevertheless a thread until some other specialist discredits it.

When Ezra Pound produced the cantos on Sigismundo Malatesta, he flew in the face of historical opinion almost 500 years old. Today, at least one historian produces a portrait of Sigismundo similar to Pound's--agreeing with Pound on certain basic facts. 37
O bright Apollo,

What god, man, or hero,

Shall I place a tin wreath upon! ¹

Pound composed this stanza around 1919, about five years before the first sixteen cantos were published in their final form. ² The categories Pound introduces here—"god," "man," and "hero"—could as easily be applied to analysis of character presentation in The Cantos. In fact, Michael Alexander anticipates these divisions in his assertion that there are three major categories—"history, myth, and anecdote." ³ By examining Cantos I - XVII in terms of character-types introduced, i.e. mythopoetic, legendary, and historical, a better understanding of the structure of these early cantos will be gained, and, perhaps, an inkling of the complex process of The Cantos can be gotten. For instance, depending on how one interprets allusions, approximately forty-six deities are introduced in Cantos I - XVII; about ninety-seven fictionalized characters (some of whom are also treated historically elsewhere);
and about 214 historical personages, again depending on how far one takes allusions. The lopsidedness is not surprising; but it does affirm that Pound believed he was writing an epic and not merely a sacred book or a book of tales.4

In the chapter "Psychology and Troubadours" in The Spirit of Romance, Pound discusses his various notions of the "gods"—what the Provencal poets meant in their praises of Amor and, by extension, how he himself interprets the use of deities in language. There are two types of religion, Pound asserts, coercive and ecstatic. Coercive religions are those like the Hebrew's, the Roman's, and the British Empire's; they invent "a disagreeable bogie" for the purpose of keeping "a troublesome rabble in order." Ecstatic religions, on the other hand, seek to instill "a sort of confidence in the life-force"; their concern is not dogma or the exertion of control over their members, but instead, an ecstatic religion searches for temperaments and intellects which will thrive under its influence and which in turn will vitalize it. (Although Pound enlisted Christianity along with the Provencal worship of Amor as an ecstatic religion when he wrote the chapter in 1910, he meant it only in a limited sense.5 Clark Emery
traces Pound's gradual disengagement from Christianity in his book *Ideas Into Action*. Also important, Pound claims, to a viable employment of a cosmology is sex: as heat and light are different manifestations of the same vibration, so sex performs two functions, reproduction and education. Sex, and Love, places individuals in a state which allows them to catch intimations of divine order. Pound rejects the idea that he is merely indulging in subjective fancy on this point:

> For our basis in nature we rest on the indisputable and very scientific fact that there are in the "normal course of things" certain times, a certain sort of moment more than another, when a man feels his immortality upon him.  

From this platform Pound further remonstrates that—there being no place for ecstatic religion in our society—we must weigh the language and artistic achievements of the Christian mystics and cults "of union with the god, or with Queen Isis" when interpreting the worth of the "trobar clus" tradition.

These elementary aspects of Pound's attitude present in "Psychology and Troubadours" of 1910 are readily discernible in the shape of the sixteen cantos of 1925, beginning with the nekuia of Canto I—Odysseus' descent into the Underworld. That Pound opens with the nekuia
and ends Canto I with a vision of Aphrodite has suggested
the importance of mythological deployment in The Cantos to
several critics. The backbone of Leon Surette's interesting
book, A Light From Eleusis, is an interpretation of The
Cantos according to the Eleusinian mysteries, which revolve
primarily around the myth of Persephone's kidnap and rape
by Pluto, king of the Underworld. Critic Akiko Miyake's
essay "The Greek-Egyptian Mysteries in Pound's 'The Little
Review Calendar' and in Cantos 1 - 7" offers an explanation
of The Cantos in light of the Isis and Osiris myth of
Egypt. And Boris De Rachewiltz's "Pagan and Magic Elements
in Ezra Pound's Works" looks at The Cantos in terms of
medieval alchemy as a poetic device. However, such
attempts as Miyake's and De Rachewiltz's serve little,
pragmatically, when reading the cantos, for they treat
only one small aspect of Pound's cosmology. Although
Surette's book is more useful, basically the same crit-
cism applies. Some of Pound's mythological evocations do
not fit neatly into the Eleusinian motif, and where Surette
makes them fit, one becomes more aware (as is painfully
obvious in Miyake's case) that if one looks long enough
there is some erudite connection between all the indi-
vidual gods of the pantheon.
To place all the gods adequately into their semantic positions in the first seventeen cantos, the reader must perceive how Pound thought of myth as functioning in poetry. "Meaning," he thought, cannot be reduced to a coldly analytical statement; how one feels is also integral to "meaning," and that too can be verbalized. "Clarity" is the only means available to the poet by which he can verbalize feeling. In a footnote to his essay "Henry James" Pound writes, "Poetry = Emotional synthesis, quite as real, quite as realist as any prose (or intellectual) analysis." That Pound's use of myth is to clarify emotions and states of consciousness is deductible from a passage from Pound's *Pavannes and Divisions* as quoted by Emery:

What is a god?  
A god is an eternal state of mind.  
What is a faun?  
A faun is an elemental creature.  
What is a nymph?  
A nymph is an elemental creature.  
When is a god manifest?  
When the state of mind takes form.  
When does a man become a god?  
When he enters one of these states of mind.

The mock-catechism continues, asserting that the gods are known through beauty and that there are two types of knowledge, immediate and hearsay. The question then is,
What is the greatest hearsay?
The greatest hearsay is the tradition of the gods.
Of what use is this tradition?
It tells us to be ready to look.
In what manner do gods appear?
Formed and formlessly.
To what do they appear when formed?
To the sense of vision.
And when formless?
To the sense of knowledge... \[15\]

He then lists the gods one comes to experience in this manner: Apollo, Helios, Diana, Aphrodite, Kore, Demeter, and "certain elemental creatures."\[16\]

Hugh Witemeyer calls Pound's psychology of myth "visionary empiricism"\[17\] and summarizes its five basic tenets: (1) one has psychic experiences which are brief but subjectively true; (2) it is just an experience and does not logically infer some external transcendent reality; (3) art and myth have their locus in "this rare emotion"; (4) myth becomes the nearest equation to the intensity and actuality of the experience; and (5) as myth-maker, the poet must don masks which allow him to objectify the experience. In this manner, Witemeyer believes, Pound's poetry becomes "a record of delightful psychic experience."\[18\]

This may seem to deny reality to the neo-Platonic theory of Being, but Flory agrees with Witemeyer, saying that Pound seems to elevate myths to Platonic Forms yet he will
assert their existence only for use "as a workable hypothesis." However, to the coterie of individuals who have had experiences of a nature such as Pound describes, Pound directs his poetry and, furthermore, in regard to a religious perception of one's place in the world, Pound guides the individual to the highest expressions of this depth experience—expressions which are supposed to energize the intelligence by bringing nearer the essence of creative life. The inference of Pound's psychology of myth is that only those struggling to refine such ecstatic moments, to coalesce them into one body, only those seeking that beauty are vitally alive. And herein is the link to sexuality: spiritual vitality lies close to sexual potency inasmuch as it is a life-force.

Boris De Rachewiltz is on the right track when he detects a dualism of "fire" and "light" in The Cantos. "Fire," he believes, signifies perceptions from sensual experience while "light" signifies perceptions derived from the intellect. Each perception is personified by several deities; De Rachewiltz locates Aphrodite, Circe, Helen, and Hathor with "fire" and Artemis, Selena, and Diana with "light." While this may be true for the
later cantos, a more exacting neo-Platonic organization is woven into the first seventeen canti.

Most critics minimize Pound's neo-Platonism in analyzing the structure of *The Cantos*. The reason may be a suspicion—justifiable in many ways—of any neat hierarchy of concepts or simple ordering of elements. Yet that has not hindered analyses of the poetry in terms of complex point-counterpoint or, as in Miyake's essay, some rather fantastic interpolations of the arcane. Though the cantos mirror the fragmented and chaotic twentieth century, many critics have forgotten the centrality of Canto XIII, the Kung (Confucius) Canto:

And Kung said, and wrote on the bo leaves:
   If a man have not order within him
   He can not spread order about him;
   And if a man have not order within him
   His family will not act with due order;
   And if the prince have not order within him
   He can not put order in his dominions. (13/59)

Since Pound translated Confucius' *Ta Hio* to show people where to start thinking, perhaps the neo-Platonic sentiment obvious in Cantos I - XVII belies an underlying neo-Platonic structure; after all, he refers to the "original world of the gods" as one of the repeated themes in his oft-quoted letter to his father in which he gives a tentative outline of *The Cantos* method:
Here the three levels of characters are discernible—archetypal ("Live man"), historical, and divine. But it is in his reference to a "bust thru" from normal consciousness to the spiritual that one sees an analogy to the neo-Platonic upward path of Knowing; conversely, this suggests the downward path of Being which is represented by the well-known metaphor of proximity to the sun: the closer one is to the sun the purer one's being; the further away one is the more one's being is filled with darkness. Thus, the spiritual is of purer being while the physical, matter, is closer to the dark. No wonder De Rachewiltz perceived a distinction between gods associated with fire and with light. However, touching base with the neo-Platonism in the cantos, the gods' relation to light is an hierarchical one of Being; fire, on the other hand, reflects the sexual-creative element existent at each level. (Remember Pound's analysis of light and heat as products of a single vibration of varying intensities.)

Cantos I - XVII, then, exhibit the following neo-Platonic organization of deities:
(1) Aphrodite and the gods of light: love of ordered beauty.

(2) Dionysus and gods of sea: creative imagination.

(3) Diana and the gods of land: reflections of divine beauty.

(4) Persephone and gods of the Underworld: gateway to the divine order.

(5) Circe and the Sirens: the traps of matter.

Also evident is the ascendency of the gods of light over the other groups; for, in different aspects, the purity of the source surfaces in the lower realms. Canto II enjoins the splendor-born Dionysus to transformative power of the gods of the sea; yet Zagreus, the mystical name of Dionysus, is affiliated with the gods of light, e.g. in Canto XVII—"ZAGREUS!/With the first pale-clear of the heaven" (17/76). Thus, Isis (of light) has her counterpart in Diana, a god of land; likewise Eros, a god of light, has a counterpart in Hymen, a god of earth. Kore (of light) is manifest as Persephone of the Underworld. And finally, Zeus can be conceived as represented in the lowest realm of Circe by the God of Christianity, as Aphrodite is represented there by the Virgin.

Surette's contention that both Circe and Aphrodite "stand at the gateway to the Underworld" could be
misleading; the bridge-building critics indulge in simply reflects an insecurity as to what the text is actually saying.\textsuperscript{26} The "bridges" established between different legends and myths grow into a tangle, a natural result of their net-like state, connected and inter-connected from antiquity. Still, in myth, the story and details remain lucid and the import clear because one stops with the myth. In literary analysis, however, the individual myth is sometimes "symbolized" out of existence, Isis' having become identified with Circe, Circe with Aphrodite, Aphrodite with Helen, etc. \textit{ad infinitum}. This certainly contradicts Pound's demand for precision.

Looking at Cantos I - XVII and letting Circe stand for herself alone, we find her a dominant figure in Canto I and mentioned in brief in Canto XVII—"For this hour, brother of Circe." (17/79). Occupying as she does the opening of both sections of the first thirty cantos, Circe's location would seem to suggest, as Surette remarks, that she holds a key to revelation.\textsuperscript{27} This position is better explained by E. M. Glenn in "A Guide to \textit{Canto I} of Ezra Pound"; Circe is in "a king of hierarchy of the feminine" presented at the end of Canto I:
And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away
And unto Circe,
Venerandam,
In the Cretan's phrase, with golden crown, Aphrodite. . . .

The Sirens, states Glenn, "are alluring and destructive"; Circe is dangerous also, for she can convert men to beasts, but, if effectively handled, she represents a positive force; and Aphrodite seems to be a "higher manifestation" of this positive aspect. In actuality, every level of the cosmogony has inherent in it a danger—that one will improperly or clumsily direct its power. Circe represents a case in point: having been given the magic plant moly by Hermes, Odysseus is protected from Circe's power and, instead, she becomes an asset to him, allowing him to make the journey to Hades and, eventually, home. Odysseus can utilize Circe's sexual potency advantageously because the "gods" visit him (in this case, a god of light, Hermes); and the gods visit him because he is polumetis, "of many counsels," and able to steer by the Sirens and, thereby, worthy of the gods. Elpenor represents an instance of an disadvantageous experience with Circe—he took one wrong, fatal step.

In the cantos following Canto I, many men fall victim to the traps of matter. In some way their love is perverted
or they are not sufficiently polumetis to pass over "spiteful Neptune" (1/5) but, like Elpenor, are drowned by the pitiless energy of life's creative element. The initiation of Odysseus and Pound in Canto I is completed by the time one reaches Canto XVII; for here, Kore elevates Pound-Odysseus to "brother" of Circe (17/79). Thus Pound and Odysseus "bust thru" to the divine. Pound has reached this stage by reason of his own passage through hell aided by Plotinus (Cantos XIV and XV); there Pound sees two of the chief snares of the physical realm, Invidia (14/63)—i.e. Envy—and Usura (15/64). However, using Plotinus as a guide and the power of the Underworld (the Medusa) as protection, Pound perseveres and then faints, only to awake under the gaze of Helios:

\[ \text{blind with sunlight,} \]
\[ \text{Swollen-eyed, rested,} \]
\[ \text{lids sinking, darkness unconscious.} \]

(15/67)

Despite Surette's emphasis on Persephone and the Underworld, the use of the Eleusis myth is proportionate to the employment of the other myths up to Canto XVII. Its station in the early cantos, the fact that it is not ascendant over the other "eternal states of mind," accents its importance as only one step in the neo-Platonic climb.
If it is more frequent in later cantos, perhaps it is because the descent into the Underworld represents the critical first step in attaining a vision of the divine.

The myth of Persephone and the descent into Hades is introduced in Canto I and alluded to in Canto III, Canto IV, and Canto XVI. Surette begins a consideration of Canto XVII with the admission that the deities present have no connection with Eleusis, except in name, only to wind up the discussion referring to "the visit to the Underworld" shown at the end of the canto. Surette's first intuition was the more accurate, Kore being the only direct connection to Eleusinian mysteries, and Zagreus connected indirectly by an obscurer myth. Surette points out that Pound refers to Canto XVII as a "paradiso terrestre"; this alone would place it in the category representing the gods of light—which, as will be shown later, is more precisely how it functions. Also, the allusions in Cantos III, IV, and XVI, though using Eleusinian ritual to imply a mystical enlightenment, probably signify an experience or an exit to the "paradiso terrestre."

Canto I, then, exhibits Persephone's realm. In fact, since it is mostly a translation of Homer's nekūia (Book XI of the Odyssey) via Andreas Divus and his Renaissance
almost the entire canto is taken up with this landscape. Odysseus, by Circe's directions, journeys to the place where the ocean flows backward, a place devoid of sunlight. There Odysseus and the others dig a pit and perform the rites to call up the dead. Then ghosts of the dead come before them:

Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides Of youths and of the old who had borne much; Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender, Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads. . . .

Pressed by a chaotic flurry of souls, a frightened Odysseus orders more sacrifices and invokes Pluto and Persephone with supplications:

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. (1/4)

After a "hurried" word with his dead shipmate, Elpenor, Odysseus allows Tiresias to drink from the sacrificial pit and then receives Tiresias' prophecy.

Contextually, Pluto and Persephone operate in a positive manner; that is, Odysseus uses prayer to them in order to achieve his goal, or, at least, to help insure his reaching it. The two gods are constructive because Odysseus
establishes a proper relation to them, just as he adamantly adheres to the proper performance of the ritual sacrifice in strict accordance with Circe's directions. The benefit Odysseus receives from obedience is an ordered experience with the dead and an understanding of what direction his life must take. The danger of his adventure is obvious: if he steps out of place or violates the procedure, Odysseus and his crew would be lost in a chaos of the dead, and he would never comprehend his future.

Pound in his Dante-esque traversal of Hell also taps into the positive energy of the Underworld. Instead of supplicating to Pluto and Persephone, Pound and Plotinus pray to the Medusa's head which is attached to a shield: "Prayed we to the Medusa,/petrifying the soil by the shield. . . ." (15/66) Through this device, Pound and Plotinus make their way out of Hell.

The next logical stage in the neo-Platonic ascent through the divine landscapes is that one predominant in Canto IV. Canto IV is comprised of deities representing mirrorings of the ecstatic spiritual beauty (introduced by the myth of Diana and Actaeon) aligned with several block images of the gods of light; the purpose of the juxtaposition of the two realms is to illustrate the source
of ecstasy discoverable in the world. Canto III, also, near the beginning of it, displays this juxtaposition, creating a transition—from a meeting of the gods of land with the gods of sea at the end of Canto II:

And we have heard the fauns chiding Proteus
in the smell of hay under the olive trees,
And the frogs singing against the fauns
in the half-light. (2/10)

The gods of land are lorded over by Diana, she herself being a reflection of the gods of light; for the most part, the land gods are what Pound labelled "elemental creatures"—fauns, satyrs, tree sprites, tree gods, pool nymphs, and river nymphs. They are in a realm of "half-light," surrounded by lively natural colors, green, blue, saffron, and silver. Curiously, it is because the sun touches the earth deities that they are not equal in stature to the gods of light; the gods of light exist in a realm illuminated "not of the sun" (17/77) but by the intensity of the vision which they themselves are. Therefore, the more one moves (symbolically) into the shade of the trees or the depths of the pools, the closer one comes to the earth's sacred fecundity. And Diana, goddess of the moon and of hunting, stands in Canto IV as holiest of these secular intimations of the divine.
Canto IV opens with an image of the destruction of the glory of Troy and then cuts to cue words taken from Pindar and Catullus, which serve to remind the reader that through the power of lyric poetry the beauty once vested in Troy lives on; in addition Pound ironically wants to demonstrate his ability to outdo Pindar, whom he thought was over-rated. So Pound calls on the lyric poets to hear him, and also for Cadmus, the founder of a great city, Thebes. Then the poet introduces the vision of the divine attainable through Nature:

The silver mirrors catch the bright stones and flare, Dawn, to our waking, drifts in the green cool light; Dew-haze blurs, in the grass, pale ankles moving. Beat, beat, whirr, thud, in the soft turf under the apple trees, Choros nymphaeum, goat-foot, with the pale foot alternate; Crescent of blue-shot waters, green-gold in the shallows. . . .

(4/13)

The canto proceeds with a coupling of the fable of Itys to that of the Provencal legend of the suicide of Soremonda. Shifting to a parallel of Actaeon and Peire Vidal, we are shown the incredible beauty of Diana and her nymphs in a valley. The goddess moves, shaking the air with her light (she being totally in the shade); she appears to be like "Ivory dipping in silver" when she fans herself.
Pound employs Actaeon and Vidal to picture an improper reaction and a non-beneficial result to the visionary experience while he uses Catallus' Aurunculeia and one Hsiang from a Chinese poem to illustrate an appropriate spiritual perception of this sort. Actaeon is metamorphosized by the power of Diana and becomes a stag that Diana's hounds pursue and slaughter. The sheer beauty of the experience destroys Actaeon:

Gold, gold, a sheaf of hair
Thick like a wheat swath,
Blaze, blaze in the sun,
The dogs leap on Actaeon. (4/14)

Similarly, Vidal goes mad from his love for Loba (which means "she-wolf") and believes himself transformed into a wolf. Vidal runs through the woods, hunted by dogs because he has on a wolf-skin, muttering snatches of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Both possess some fault which prohibits a beneficial outcome from their experience: Actaeon's spiritual experience is destructive because of his inability to cope with it (he haplessly blundered into the scene) and Vidal's love for Loba has no successful outcome but is reduced to sexual frustration. In Hsiang, however, is an image of a proper relationship to the natural world, and in Aurunculeia, an appreciation for human sexuality.
Hsiang and So-Gyoku are arguing about the authority of the king, with So-Gyoku voicing the opinion that the sovereign of a nation owns its natural resources and Hsiang countering it:

And So-Gyoku saying:
"This wind, sire, is the king's wind,
This wind is wind of the palace,
Shaking imperial water-jets."
And Hsiang, opening his collar:
"This wind roars in the earth's bag,
it lays the water with rushes."
No Wind is the king's wind.
Let every cow keep her calf.
"This wind is held in gauze curtains. . . ."
No wind is the king's. . . . (4/15-16)

Hsiang expresses the proper social relationship of man to Nature. Man cannot claim the unlabored for natural produce as his own; yet that he did not labor for it does not mean it is without value. Quite the opposite, the natural resources are invaluable and should be treated with reverence by reason of the intrinsic, mysterious, generative powers present in Nature. Catullus shows reverence for the beauty of the procreative instinct in man with his praise of the young bride, Vinia Aurunculeia.38 The god Hymen is hailed, indicating the joy and hopeful fertility of the married couple and suggesting the divine beauty present in Aurunculeia's body: "Saffron sandal so petals
the narrow foot: Hymenaeus Io! / Hymen, Io Hymenaeae!
Aurunculeia!" (4/15)

Canto II, after touching an assortment of images related to the sea, settles on the myth of the abduction of young Dionysus. Thematically, the necessity of baptism into the creative-destructive element as part of the neo-Platonic ascent to the Nous appears at the close of Canto I in the form of Tiresias' prophecy to Odysseus. Tiresias says that Odysseus will return "through spiteful Neptune, over dark seas" and that all his crew will perish. This motif of a dangerous journey, which one must make alone, is often repeated in the early cantos; one is most aware of the isolation in the legendary Cid's abandonment and in the historical character Sigismondo Malatesta's embattled duress. Fantastic metamorphoses occur in the ocean; its energy is mysterious, beautiful, awesome, and frightening; Poseidon is, as Pound writes in Canto VIII, a concrete universal (8/31). Pound links the sea's creative energies to artistic inspiration through his use of Ovid's story of Dionysus' abduction and through inference to Chang-Tzu, a Taoist philosopher, of whose dream of turning into a butterfly Pound was aware. 39
Disrespectful of the creative vision, blind to everything other than the monetary worth of objects, or people, some men provoke the anger of the gods. In Canto II, the crew who kidnap Dionysus to sell him into slavery are changed into seafish, except for Acoetes, who perceived there was a god in the boy. And King Pentheus, whom later Acoetes tries to warn not to violate a bacchanal, is torn to pieces by his mother and his aunts. Acoetes' uncorrupted intuitive sensibility permits him to make a correct moral judgement, and thus he avoids committing the mistake of the rest of the crew; he honors the Dionysian and for this Dionysus ordains him priest of his altars. Pound mentions So-shu for the same reverence of this ancient, archetypal consciousness; it is So-shu's artistic perception (shared by Ovid) which Pound highlights, more specifically, his Protean ability to enter other objects and to put on other personae:

And So-shu churned in the sea, So-shu also, using the long moon for a churn-stick...
Lithe turning of water, sinews of Poseidon, Black azure and hyaline, glass wave over Tyro... (2/9-10)

The sustained lyric beauty which guides the reader gently through the shifting images of Canto II is nowhere approached
in the rest of the early cantos, except tonally in Canto XVII. This renders Canto II an adoration of the Dionysian—a perfect marriage of melopoeia and phanopoeia.

The worship of Dionysus in his highest aspect, as a god of pure light, Zagreus (the adult Dionysus),\(^{41}\) opens Canto XVII. Initially, however, the realm of the gods of light was introduced in the last five lines on Canto I. Startling in their effect on the reader, these lines (part of the ten of the final segment) contribute to the effect of the last segment to make it equal in weight to the two pages gone before:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Venerandam,} \\
\text{In the Cretan's phrase, with the golden crown,} \\
\text{Aphrodite,} \\
\text{Cypri munimenta sortita est, mirthful,} \\
\text{orichalchi, with golden} \\
\text{Girdles and breast bands, thou with dark eyelids} \\
\text{Bearing the golden bough of Argicida. (1/5)}
\end{align*}
\]

Aphrodite is announced as the appointed goal of The Cantos, with everything within the quotation suggesting the journey to get there. The gods of light are injected at points from Canto I on to Canto XVII. Most notably, one encounters them at the beginning of Canto III; the latter half of Canto IV, especially in Zeus' marriage to Danae, the "god's bride" (4/16); the beginning of Canto V—-Iamblichus'
light, the souls ascending" (5/17); and the latter third of Canto XVI.

The critics are more vocal about the function of Aphrodite in the poetry, realizing her central importance. Robert Mayo analyzes her in reference to Pound's essay on Remy de Gourmont; he believes Pound uses her to represent the sexual and aesthetic desire arising from their common source in the beautiful. 42 Ms. Flory, however, believes Pound's verse cannot be read as an expression of sexuality's ideal state; for Pound could not "gloss over" the dangers of sex. But Flory does perceive Canto XVII as picturing "the two poles of the paradisal--its most concrete manifestation in marble and most evanescent as states of mind. . . ." 43 Looking at Pound's doctrine of Amor, Surette asserts that it is employed as a kind of "theophany of Aphrodite"44 and identifies Amor's positive values as an affirmation of "Mediterranean values."45 Aphrodite herself, Surette remarks, represents "sexuality in a noumenal role, free of all social, physical, and reproductive functions."46 Among the numerous speculations, Baumann's assertion (though not related to Aphrodite) on Pound's image of the day and its relation to his opinion of time matches
pleasantly the grandeur of the timelessness of Aphrodite and the gods of light:

The time span that matters is the one that no war, no human folly can destroy, as long as nature exists: it is the single day, every day, the day as portent that after every period of darkness there is a new period of light.47

Although Aphrodite is not mentioned per se in Canto XVII, clearly Pound is "punning" on Venice (for Venus), as Alexander points out,48 and on cypress (for Cyprus, holy to Venus). According to Flory, the canto takes its actual setting from Venice, Pound having made a trip there in 1908. Flory sees the canto alternating between two levels of reality, a description of Venice and the world of the gods.49

However, a reading of the passage reveals the primacy of the world of the gods; that world is on the first level of meaning, and the rest of its levels are auxillary. Canto XVII begins with an image of the poet's metamorphosis into a tree; after the change is complete, the mystical name of Dionysus, "Zagreus," he hears shouted within himself and he follows Diana "down to the creek's mouth" and boards a craft, evidently setting out across a sea-harbor. It is evening. Pound crosses the harbor, passing between "cliffs of amber" to the cave of Nerea. Nerea is a sea-god--"she like a great shell curved"--and her cave leads to the
realm of the gods of pure light. There, Pound sees Zagreus first—"feeding his panthers"—whose name called him hence. Paradoxically, this region, voyaged to in the night, is untouched by the sun. However, upon entering Nerea's cave Pound sails into "light not of the sun" and Zagreus is viewed on an expanse "clear as on hills under light." The illumination of this abode has its origin in the natural luminosity of the gods themselves. One could consider it, in psychological terms, as the accumulated cathectation of these modes of consciousness, the result of having been drawn upon, again and again, by the greatest minds of humanity; the energy roughly equals that in what Fenollosa labels "race-words." 50 After his confirmation as a "brother of Circe," Pound beholds "the sun for three days, the sun fulvid,/As a lion lift over sand-plain..." (17/79).

All "men of craft" are drawn by the beauty of Venus unto her; all craftsmen share in the worship of her beauty. In the same manner, men of active intelligence who struggled to stay above the muck of Quattrocentro Italy (at the start of the chaotic Renaissance) ventured to Venice (the pun) on the sea:
Thither Borso, when they shot the barbed arrow at him,
And Carmagnola, between the two columns,
Sigismundo, after that wreck in Dalmatia.
Sunset like the grasshopper flying.
(17/79)

This sadly exquisite allusion to Tithonus’ fate sounds the final chord of Pound’s previous sixteen cantos. The image supplies a wry antecedent to the assumption, which Longinus articulates, underlying Pound’s whole presentation of art, civilization, and individual growth up to this point: "... other qualities prove those who possess them to be men, sublimity raises them almost to the intellectual greatness of God."51 Almost.
CHAPTER IV

LEGENDS

While Surette's charge that Pound fictionalizes history in tracing lines of belief between Eleusis and the Provencal culture illustrates a sterile, documentary prejudice, there are instances where Pound does "fictionalize" history in his cantos—or, more precisely, the subject he treats may sometimes lie in the gray of legend or in fragments of detail which the poet himself fills in with conjecture. Or for instance, when William Blake, troubadour Peire Cardinal, Sordello, Dante, and Saint Augustine are mentioned at the beginning of Canto XVI, all are set within a purgatorial landscape of Pound's creation and the characters comment—by their conditions—on the literary and philosophical concerns of the sequence. Pound does not mean that historical evidence shows that that is where they have passed to, nor do documents indicate that Sigismundo Malatesta and Novello Malatesta are in a feasible paradise.

Although very little actual "fiction" occurs in the poetry, Pound often employs fanciful versions of men and
and women contained in myth and romance. These characters are transitional to his desire to treat history; for the scholarly part of Pound's life was spent in accumulating a knowledge and sensibility of literati and their works. His mind was peopled with incidents and characters embodied in or surrounding literature—literature of the East and West. The study of history, it seems, and the necessity of documentary research came ancillary to his desire to write an epic, which he defined as "a poem including history." Pound's use of quasi-historical characters causes a problem in categorization; for example, where does one place Vinia Aurunculeia? She actually existed yet Pound has her through Catallus' poem on her. One method, the one used here, for overcoming this problem is through determination of the artist's intention—i.e. if a reading of the text indicates Pound means the character as one who sets an archetypal behavior pattern or who is a fictional character, then the character is "legendary"; on the other hand, if a character is used as an historical instance of one who fits an established archetypal behavior pattern and who is being cited in relation to known facts, then that character is an "historical" character. Thus, Aurunculeia is an historical character, being cited through
the actual effect of her beauty on Catullus, but Peire Vidal is "legendary" (in Canto IV), being cited through an incident, according to Jack Lindsey, augmented by fiction and probably not actual.\(^3\)

All the legendary characters present in Cantos I - XVII fit, in some manner, into the journey motif introduced in Canto I. It is a journey across time and across culture, the goal being a society which is vital and which is civilized but not self-destructive and not stagnant. As Surette points out, the reader does not follow one "hero," for there is no one character who is the hero of *The Cantos*. Instead, one follows moments of "heroic action" which are meant to function, together, as a didactic text which presents role models as arguments for the values being praised.\(^4\)

Very often, as Alexander informs us, Pound dwells on themes of violence; Alexander feels that Pound was better able thereby to paint the beauty that a person of high intelligence should strive for.\(^5\) Surette says that "Pound wanted violence and disorder in these early cantos because he was depicting his post-war world, although he looked primarily to other times and other wars."\(^6\) Surette's assertion is attendant to Flory's proposal that Cantos I - VII are transitional, Pound moving from predominantly aesthetic
concerns to social concerns; and really, this transition takes place throughout the first thirty cantos. The social goal of Pound's journey across time is "Ecbatan" (elsewhere called "Dioce"). Surette claims,

Ecbatan . . . represents the city as a work of art, the city in the mind, in contradiction to the actual cities and nations chronicled in the history which the Cantos contain. It is, if one likes, the city out of history, a dream city.  

One encounters, then, legendary characters voyaging to a legendary city. The further the legend moves from the gods, the closer it comes to the chaos of the struggle of individuals and cultures in history. This, Pound believes, is one "satisfactory effect" of art--

... 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.

For the most part, Pound draws his legendary figures from two sources: the human participants within Greco-Roman mythology and characters of tales of Romance. Odysseus, Acoetes, Helen, Danae, and Actaeon are examples of those of the first group. And Myo Cid, Soremonda, Peire Vidal, and Cabestan fall in the second group, merging sometimes indistinguishably with the historical characters.
Within the journey motif, several individuals are either consulted or offer guidance to other characters who are at some point of danger or require some information. These wise characters represent the archetypal advisor. He is present in different aspects in *The Cantos*: we find him first in Tiresias (1/4-5) as prophet; also we see him in Acoetes, as priest (2/7-9); in Plotinus as Pound's guide through inferno (15/66); and in Jim X—though some insist that he is John Quinn, an American patron of Pound and Eliot— as a financial advisor (12/55-56).

Tiresias and Plotinus have a positive influence on those who need them—Odysseus and Pound, respectively. Tiresias provides Odysseus with an overview of his fate, a vision which, depending on Odysseus' cunning and wisdom, will allow him to direct his energies more effectively towards his one goal. Also, in the *Odyssey*, Tiresias gives instructions on what Odysseus should do. As Odysseus sought Tiresias in his need, so does Pound turn to Plotinus when seeking a way out of the hell of Canto XV. Plotinus leads Pound towards Helios, praying with him to the Medusa head on the shield which they hold; the shield petrifies a path in the cess they are sinking in. Pound faints before he makes it outside the hell-gate; but he
awakes to discover "Plotinus gone,/And the shield tied under me ..." (15/66-67). Evidently Plotinus has saved Pound from being trapped in the hell of usurers, popular pablum writers, unimaginative pedants, the desiccated culture of English ennui, and visionless and oppressive politicians. The import is that Pound, through his understanding of the neo-Platonic vision, is able to comprehend (narrowly) the social and moral chaos about him because his mind is directed to higher goals by profounder motives; Plotinus' vision enables Pound to avoid becoming a party to the "obstructors of knowledge" and the "obstructors of distribution" (14/63).

Like Cassandra's warnings, the words of Acoetes and Jim X fall on deaf ears. They parallel Tiresias' and Plotinus' examples but, unlike them, Acoetes and Jim X are speaking to men who do not value their advice because those men's psyches inordinately lust after personal monetary enrichment. This lust clouds their inner spiritual vision so that they cannot perceive the injury they do to themselves and to their culture. Acoetes is a straight man. He does not profane the godly but endeavors to protect it and to bring it to the notice of his crew. Unfortunately, the entire ship goes along with an idea to kidnap the boy
who boarded the ship, all twenty "Mad for a little slave money." (2/7). Acoetes, unwarped by gold-lust, knows better:

When they bought the boy I said:
  "He has a god in him,
  though I do not know which god."
  And they kicked me into the fore-stays. (2/9)

Lyaeus (the name of youthful Dionysus) comes to and sees that the ship is bound away from Naxos instead of to it. He then changes all the crew, except Acoetes, into fish. Acoetes himself addresses King Pentheus with this narrative in trying to dissuade the King from violating a bacchanal; as was related in Chapter III, Acoetes was unsuccessful and Pentheus torn to pieces by frenzied worshippers: "And you, Pentheus,/Had as well listen to Tiresias, and to Cadmus,
/or your luck will go out of you" (2/9). While Acoetes functions like an ignored Tiresias, Jim X's function is more akin to Plotinus'--he gives unheeded philosophical advice. And if Acoetes' crew is guilty of blindness to the Dionysian, the members of the board whom Jim X addresses are guilty of stultifying and perverting the healthy Dionysian energies. At least Acoetes' crew is aware that kidnapping is not an honorable pastime; however, Jim X's audience are self-deceived hypocrites and, what's worse,
these twentieth century schemers lack even an interesting vitality or flair to their lives. They are boring:

Bored with their properties,
as they sat, the ranked presbyterians,
Directors, dealers through holding companies,
Deacons in churches, owning slum properties,
Alias usurers in exelsis. . . . (12/55)

To alleviate the boredom, Jim X tells the board members the tale of the Honest Sailor. The honest sailor was a drunkard and one day his drinking finally sent him to a hospital. At the hospital, the doctors operate on the sailor; during the surgery "a poor whore" gives birth to a boy in the women's ward. The doctors give the child to the honest sailor, telling him that that is what they found inside him. The sailor recovers, quits drinking, and works up the financial ladder until he owns a whole shipping line. During his climb to success, the honest sailor takes care of the boy and sends him to college. Unfortunately, he becomes ill again and this time, say the doctors, it is fatal. In the course of a bedside talk, the boy calls the man his father. The honest sailor responds

"You called me your father, and I ain't.
"I ain't your dad, no,
"I am not your fader but your moder," quod he,
"Your fader was a rich merchant in Stambouli."

(12/57)
The moral of the story is, believes Alexander, "that usury and sodomy are equally sins against nature. . . ."\textsuperscript{12} Jim X attempts to show the Presbyterian bankers that their self-aggrandizing pride in their being self-made men is not justified at all—they are portraits of man in his lowest, not highest, state.

The most important archetypal character is Odysseus. Although he is one of several other legendary questors mentioned—Theseus, Myo Cid, and the troubadours at the start of Canto V—Odysseus signifies the sojourner within the journey motif, and in this central role, much of the burden of meaning rests on the pattern of his appearances in the text and the similarities other characters and situations share with him. Surette gives a nice synopsis of the "essential modalities" that Odysseus as archetype establishes: (1) "war guilt" and "fruitless wandering," (2) "the recognition of beauty," (3) "the attempt to conquer beauty" (intellectually and sexually), and (4) the acquisition of self-knowledge through the "conquest of beauty."\textsuperscript{13} But again, Odysseus' importance as an archetypal questor does not mean he is the "hero" of The Cantos. Flory properly characterizes Pound's logic on this point: "Pound realizes that any one hero will be too limiting
for the complex, fragmentary, and problematic nature of the wide range of material he wishes to include in his poem. . . ."14 Predictably, Surette perceives Odysseus' position in The Cantos as primarily Eleusinian—the nekuia and Odysseus' relationship to Circe.15 Kenner, however, is less restrictive and perceives the intrinsic emphasis The Cantos put on Odysseus' journey home:

The world, he [Pound] was convinced, had once known the order it now lacked, and what has been known should not be difficult to recover, a simple matter of reactivating knowledge. And this was implicit in his guiding myth of Odysseus, whose journey through unknown dangers is directed toward his former home.16

But Pound admired Odysseus less abstractly also; Odysseus, even though a character drawn by Homer, had virtu. Pound writes, "The news in the Odyssey is still news. Odysseus is still 'very human', by no means a stuffed shirt, or a pretty figure taken from a tapestry."17 Elsewhere he calls him a "live man among duds."18 This may be the reason Glenn, like Kenner, intuits a more than superficial relationship between The Cantos and Odysseus' journey home. It is as if, Glenn remarks, Pound travels through the cantos from island to island within Western culture—experiencing the past in order "to find his way in the present."19
In the early cantos, the questor archetype is stressed in its epistemological sense, man's movement from ignorance to revelation. This process can be seen in three phases. Pound characterizes his questor variously as the "live man" (7/27), the man of the fountain (16/70), and the man sailing the boat (17/77). The "live man" represents Odysseus in his vital existence; he is the man who changes and activates affairs and people through his active intelligence. He is polumetis—that is, he has a great many tricks up his sleeve. In Canto VII, Pound discovers himself in an era of lifeless men, pedants without passion and concierges of houses where men brimming with life once lived. Against these, the ghost of Odysseus has more blood. And Pound identifies himself with those of Odyssean aspect: "The live man, out of lands and prisons,/shakes the dry pods,/Probes for old wills and friendships . . ." (7/27). He and Odysseus are men of will; their intellects fix on ordering the life given them. Earlier, in Canto V, an historical character, Alessandro de' Medici, is murdered and Pound lays the blame with Alessandro because he lacked the will to do anything about it—"In abuleia" (5/19)—even though forewarned. Pound finds Alessandro's murderer more admirable than the dry personalities of the twentieth
that, words before the man rises. Clearly, Po after one beseable to incar that, then no reminisence joins the f thrive on. However quesor must come in him. This last step in man in the boat, found arches the journey motif.
CORRECTION

PRECEDING IMAGE HAS BEEN REFILMED TO ASSURE LEGIBILITY OR TO CORRECT A POSSIBLE ERROR
century. Pound speaks of the spirit of Lorenzino de' Medici—"Lorenzaccio/Being more alive than they, more full of flames and voices" (7/27). The man of the fountain represents an extension of the questor as a man of will. He is the one who endeavors to bring his personal vision into actual existence. To symbolize this, Pound selects the historical characters Sigismundo and Novello Malatesta and shows them in an elysium, rewarded with the knowledge that they had established their "cities," or, in other words, they had succeeded in transmitting the elan of their personalities to their culture. They are posited before their "fountains" with other "heroes." Soon, a man rises out of his fountain and sets off across a plain. Clearly, Pound is structuring his epistemology here; after one becomes aware of his virtu, he is morally responsible to incarnate his virtu through his life. If he does that, then no more can be asked of him, for his intelligence joins the fluid energy which the best in a culture thrive on. However, the journey is not complete. The questor must come into the presence of the divine within him. This last step is contained in Pound's image of the man in the boat, found in Canto XVII. This image overarches the journey motif because it is at once symbolic
of the journey and of the goal. Pound has just passed through the cave of Nerea in the canto and has entered the realm of the gods of pure light. He now must pass through the next ritual of his enlightenment:

A boat came,

One man holding her sail,
Guiding her with oar caught over gunwale, saying:
"There, in the forest of marble,
the stone trees--out of water--
the arbours of stone--
marble leaf, over leaf,
silver, steel over steel,
silver beaks rising and crossing,
prow set against prow,
stone, ply over ply,
the gilt beams flare of an evening"

(17/78)

The mystical theophony reminds Pound of the artistic harmony discernible in Venice. Venice, a vortex of creative energy, drew "men of craft," skillful and perceptive, to it just as Venus draws men of active intelligence to her. Love attracts the individual souls, alight with its divine power, upward and unto it.

The subjective nature of the epistemological ascent does not blind Pound to the need to keep his cantos rooted in an actual world. The proof of his beliefs is that they vitalize this world and that they affect gifted individuals. Pound desires his poetry to be footed in concrete imagery; similarly, his values must be discoverable in life.
Odysseus is a living man uppermost. Rodrigo Dias de Bivar (the Cid), though, like Odysseus, Pound knows him chiefly through literature, is alive. Pound himself tries to correct any blurring of the individual he apprehended in the Poema del Cid by asserting that "the actual Ruy Diaz of Bivar was not a drivelling sentimentalist, but a practical fighting man. . . ."21 The Cid emerges in Canto III as another of the questor archetype. He is introduced through a portion of the Poema in which a nine-year-old girl informs him of his banishment by the King. Pound says of this passage,

This drawing to life, the variety of actors who are individuals, not figures, give the Poema much of its vitality; as the Spanish sense of tableau and dramatic setting give it so much of its charm.22

Much of what the reader is to extract from Canto III (and in every other canto) calls for a refined sensibility. Like sunlight broken by a prism, images are arranged in certain gradations; the sharper one's eye, the clearer the abundant details stand forth. For instance, Myo Cid is not merely being praised in Canto III as another Odysseus; the selection of that piece of the Poema del Cid represents a luminous detail supporting the values and literary heritage Pound loves.
Recalling that Pound concurred with Cavalcanti's belief that the divine is visible in a beautiful woman, we see that Pound utilizes a third archetype—the Midonz.23 She has many aspects. She can be Angel, Warrior, Adulteress, Madonna, faithful Mistress, or faithless Harlot. Often there is a touch of La Belle Dame sans Merci; yet the magical experience which the man has with her adds a necessary quality to his personality, for love of her evidences his own vitality; and the test of his ability to deal with his love for her—whatever aspect she presents—will either lead to greater spiritual development or will break him. Pound receives his notion of the Midonz, or the Lady, from the Troubadours; connected to that concept is the philosophy of Amor, which he also adopted.24 What Pound probably admired about the Troubadour worship of Amor was the fact that it brought down to life the misty Christian abstractions concerning love of God and the medieval academic belief in intellectual growth through the quadrivium. According to Jack Lindsay, the Troubadours brought the search for spiritual perfection, "a quest through stage after stage, into earthly life. . . ." Lindsay summarizes the paradoxical relationship the Troubadour held to his beloved, who was important to this development, in the following way:
The Troubadour, secularising such attitudes, saw himself as moving to an ever greater freedom the less he asserted his own will, the more he accepted that of the lady, which was seen as a rule emanating from pure beauty. Thus his union with a higher level of life (a higher level of his own self) was assured; he leaped into a new dimension where the dichotomy of law and freedom, rule and will, was overcome. But in fact this position, which hypostasised the lady and destroyed her individuality, was all the while contravened by the conviction of equality in love, by the acceptance of her as a real person who was also struggling forward. It represented a metaphysical carry-over, which all the same was necessary at this stage as the poet sought to realise fully in human life the dialectic which had been previously handed over to the lonely soul and God.  

Pound's principal archetypal Midonz is Helen of Troy. Helen reflects the beauty of divine Aphrodite—she the fairest on earth as Aphrodite is the fairest of heaven. Discounting the fact that Helen indirectly causes Odysseus' voyage, the reader's first meeting with her comes in the beginning section of Canto II. She is called Eleanor, destroyer of ships and destroyer of cities; later (7/24) destroyer of men is added. Though she is introduced with emphasis on the dangers of her beauty, shortly the paucity of men's spirits who are not captivated by her beauty becomes evident in the admonitions of the old men of Troy that Helen be allowed to return to the Greeks. The chorus-like voice of Troy's elders is invoked again in Canto VII.
Surette believes the implication of those men there is "that it is better to suffer the fate of Actaeon than to be either insensitive to or afraid of the beauty of woman."26 Further, Surette claims that because the act of perception is in itself creative, to perceive beauty is to create beauty.27 This would explain Helen's appearance, thematically, to Canto II's subject (Dionysus and the gods of sea), which is symbolic of the creative imagination. Also, one can understand from this Pound's equating creative energy with sexual vitality: using the logic of courtly love, if to perceive beauty in a woman and love it is to create it, then to seduce that woman and lie with her is to incorporate that beauty into oneself. As Danae illustrates (4/16), this selfsame beauty commands the reverence of even the gods of pure light, for Zeus visits her in a shower of gold. The import is that, for civilization to function at its best, there must be divine marriage of love and intelligence: "... upon the gilded tower in Ecbatan/Lay the god's bride, lay ever, waiting the golden rain" (4/16). The Midonz archetype is not simply limited to this divine manifestation, however. The legendary women mentioned or, as usual, alluded to cover the whole emotional spectrum, from simple lust
(Poicebot's wife--5/18) to divine love (Stefano's Madonna --4/16) and from the sorrows of Soremonda (14/13) and Dido (7/26) to the murderous rages of King Gyges' wife (4/16) and Clytemnestra (5/19).

The last major legendary character-type inhabiting the first seventeen cantos is the Metamorph, a human being who is transformed into another object or creature. Pound, consistent with his eye for distinctions, offers a view of the metamorph in its several states. From Ovid's tales of metamorphosis and other myths Pound borrows instances of men being changed to animals or things: Lycabs and Medon are changed to seafish by Dionysus in Canto II; Actaeon to a stag by Diana in Canto IV; allusions to Procne's and Philomela's changes in Canto IV; the old couple in the pines of Takasago (4/15); Dafne and Ileuthyeria (2/19); and the allusion to Tithonus (17/79). As Surette points out, these metamorphoses are sometimes a means of punishment (as a kind of death) and sometimes a means of escape, usually from sexual assault. However, in the case of the pine of Takasago--the full inference being to the two pines of Takasago, Japan, which are inhabited by the spirits of an old man and his wife, symbolizing fidelity and long life—the metamorphosis
represents perfect virtue rewarded. Pound also gives the reader portraits of psychological metamorphs, such as Vidal, Soremonda, So-Shu, the dullards of Canto VII, and Pound himself in XVII. Vidal's bout of lycanthropy is brought around by his frustrated love for Loba. In choosing Vidal and setting him beside Actaeon, Pound indicates that we should interpret Actaeon's and others' transformations like Vidal's; it is a psychological state instigated by an experience with Beauty. Likewise, Soremonda's suicide is coupled with Procne's metamorphosis into a swallow. And Pound's imagining himself a tree (17/76) is openly poetic and wonderful; his transformation matches the meritorious tone of the union of the Takasago pine with the pine of Ise (sacred to the Shinto Sun goddesses):

The pine at Takasago  
grows with the pine of Ise!  
The water whirls up the bright sand in the spring's mouth  
"Behold the Tree of Visages!" (4/15)

The image of the Tree of Visages becomes a metaphor which conveys a picture of the poet's ability to put on masks and to occupy personas. This ability is likened to water whirling in "bright sand"; it wells up from the source of the poet's creative imagination. So-Shu (Chuang-Tsu) displayed this same quality which makes a reality of
dream and a dream of reality—So-Shu who "churned in the sea . . . using the long moon for a churn-stick" (2/9).

Finally, there are a few fictional characters in the early cantos who are not archetypal but who function simply as pieces in a setting, placed there usually to support a didactic statement. Thus, the seven souls in Canto XIV and the seven souls in Canto XV merely stand as examples of usury and mindlessness undergoing punishment equal to their physical and aesthetic injuries to mankind. Pound's greatest fault reveals itself in these inventive personality constructs: his inspiration needs an actuality of life to spring from. If he has it not and is left totally to his own imagination, he fails to create any character who goes beyond one-dimensionality. Connective allusion to fully developed characters works. Building arguments from luminous details works. But, when there is nothing in a subject other than what Pound places there, one encounters a surprising dearth of imagination. William Blake, though obviously intended to represent a purgatorial grotesque, cuts instead a ridiculous figure (16/28) And the hell of XIV and XV is generally considered an artistic flop—the damned souls never emerging from the shrill emotion directed against them.
CHAPTER V

MEN

Writing of Camoens, Pound held that an "epic cannot be written against the grain of its time" because "the writer of epos must voice the general heart."¹ What was the "grain" of the twentieth century? Political, economic, and moral chaos. What was the general voice of its artists? There must be found a sustaining order. Pound re-conceived the epic for our time and the "how to" for any poet who would attempt to write one; the poet's technique (of including history) became one with his mission (of solving history). Or, to put it in another way, it is as if Dante had to recreate the notion of Christianity and its organizing principles for a people who had forgotten it instead of the opposite taking place (which is what happened: Dante wrote to a culture steeped in the Christian mindset). Surette remarks on Pound's definitional shift:

Pound differs from other epic poets in that he attempted to explain a great historical movement while it was still in progress. Historical epic traditionally justifies the present by its patterning of the past. Pound, by contrast, wishes to formulate the immediate future by his patterning of the past.²
In this way, Pound sought to induce a cultural Renaissance— at least at the start of The Cantos. Unfortunately, for all the poem's elephantine power, Michael Alexander's conclusion that it devolves into "intellectual biography" is probably just.

Perhaps the error—if one can call it that—which prohibits The Cantos from functioning as an epic mirroring the disorder of history yet rediscovering the secret of every well-ordered civilization is Pound's rudimentary eclecticism. Selecting the best aspects of various cultures and connecting them by whatever superficial similarities are discernible does not result perforce in an integrated or comprehensive whole. In the same manner, "naming over all the most beautiful things" does not necessarily make an excellent, or even enjoyable, poem. Beauty is evinced through several senses. Order is contingent on the willing marriage of the parts.

In many ways, Pound's use of historical characters in the early cantos is easiest to treat. They are the "repeat in history" of the themes and archetypes established by mythological and legendary characters. Within the I–XVII sequence, one historical character is paramount—Sigismundo Malatesta. Cantos VIII through XI are
devoted to the circumstances of his rise and fall. As Witemeyer suggests, Pound probably decided to open Canto I with the nekula of Odysseus because the Malatesta cantos would then be the "repeat" of the hero and thus would point The Cantos in the direction of revealing other such heroes throughout history. 5

Dispensing with the few vignettes (in XII and XVI for the most part) on modern men who display a watered down Odyssean cunning or who are trapped by the idiocy of the latest wars, there are five major historical groupings in the first seventeen cantos: (1) the literary guides and the historians (Homer, Dante, Varchi, etc.); (2) Eleanor of Aquitaine and the troubadours; (3) the principals in the Borgia--Medici intrigues (Canto V); (4) the Malatesta cantos; and (5) Confucius. These synchromesh moments are supposed to shift Pound's deific and archetypal realms into the actual rush of human events.

Pound's reliance on poets, authors, and his intimate acquaintance with world literature begins with the first word of the first canto. The bulk of Canto I is a translation of a translation; but that is not its sole peculiarity. What is unique about Canto I is that the reader must assimilate into the poem the literary fact
that Pound has translated from Andreas Divus' translation of Homer. The analytical reader sees—if he is able to reconcile the conclusion of Canto I with its beginning—that The Cantos' subject is not simply a descent into hell and a journey to the paradise of unviolated love; it is also this tracing of the transmission of civilization through the artist: from Homer through Divus through Pound. John Houston aptly terms Pound's use of various styles and levels of art and artists as a technique of "cultural symbols." Houston claims Pound's deployment is not so much one of contrasting opposites; but, rather, Pound renders a qualitative judgement on each artist's literary advance and the nuances which are awakened when that artist is juxtaposed with another.⁶

Pound, then, calls on the reader to use his critical faculties so that he might see what Pound's eye and wit have already grasped. The light of the great minds has not died, but those men have transferred it (to some degree) to their arts, by their craft; and their wisdom and skill is a living light for those who would desire to learn. They will vitalize any civilization which would learn from them—or so Pound indicates:
Eleanor (she spoiled in a British climate) and

poor old Homer blind,

blind as a bat,

Ear, ear for the sea-surge;

rattle of old men's voices.

And then the phantom Rome,

marble narrow for seats

"Si pulvis nullus" said Ovid,

"Erit, nullum tamen excute."

Then file and candles, e li mestiers ecoutes;

Scene for the battle only, but still scene,

Pennons and standards y cavals armatz

Not mere succession of strokes, sightless narration,

And Dante's "ciocco," brand struck in the game.

Un peu moisi, plancher plus bas que le jardin. (7/24)

As anyone with half an interest in drama will remember,

Eleanor of Aquitaine hardly settled down to being a passive wife after she married Henry II of England; she was not "spoiled," in spirit anyway. The same spirit animated Homer. He may have been blind, but he captured the dangerous beauty of Helen in his alliterative epithets; he described the awesome murmur of the ocean and caught the impotent shades in the voices of the old men of Troy. Thus also Rome used marble's beauty and did not merely look at it.

And Ovid writes slyly in Ars Amatoria, "Even if there is no dust, brush it off anyway" --a ruse to touch the beloved's lap. And so on through "e li mestiers ecoutes"--"and the mysteries heard" --to invoke the love worship of Provence, and through a song of troubadour Bertrand de Born, "and
the horses all armed."⁹ (Pound says that Bertrand is most remembered for "his scorn of sloth, peace, cowardice, and the barons of Provence"—like Eleanor, full of the energy of life.¹⁰) To the lyrical Dante, who is "beautifully definite."¹¹ And finally to Gustav Flaubert, whom Pound praises for his attention to "exact presentation"; his followers have possibly been "the most beneficial force in modern writing."¹² Following this introduction, Pound, using the Jamesian metaphor of a house, reveals the vacuity of the modern spirit. Twentieth century intellect is a cheap veneer over the passionate thoughts of the past. Plastic flowers take the place of real ones: " 'Beer-bottle on the statue's pediment! / That, Fritz, is the era, to-day against the past, / 'Contemporary.' / And the passion endures" (7/25).

When one considers Pound from this vantage point—i.e. he is telling the reader a fact about an artist, his style, and his active relation to life or to another style and artist—the relation of Robert Browning's Sordello to the rest of Canto II, which is primarily Ovid's tale of Dionysus' abduction, is almost solved. However, the problem is that the reader must either be exceptionally acquainted with Ovid and Browning or know how Pound perceives
their being related. If one does not know either of these, this ray in the verse would not reach him. Yet Pound's inherent statement is thought-out. In ABC of Reading Pound writes,

In England Robert Browning refreshed the form of monologue or dramatic monologue or 'Persona', the ancestry of which goes back at least to Ovid's Heroïdes which are imaginary letters in verse, and to Theocritus, and is thence lost in antiquity.  

Pound sees a real evolutionary connection between Ovid and Browning. It is also helpful if one knows that Pound believes that Ovid is a "store-house" for much material we can no longer get from the Greeks.  

Pound's incorporation of literary theory and criticism as part of The Cantos' subject matter was not unreasonably erudite at the time. It was the lustrum of Joyce's Ulysses. And, as Eric Homberger notes, a deep interest in translations, the classics, and, especially, French literature rode a wave of popularity. An intelligent man knew some Latin. Or, at the very slightest, he was versed enough in Homer's storylines to discourse about them familiarly. How was Pound to foresee that a drop in the level of active knowledge would render his cantos almost unintelligible? Still, this drop does not invalidate
The Cantos, because the authors he mentions are important to the literary tradition and a recognition of those authors' craft strengthens each verse's solid foundation in that artist's intelligence.

It would require a book to explain the import of each artist or commentator to the meaning of the text. Yet, except for one of rare intellect, the less the reader is familiar with the authors, artists, and works cited, the more this aspect of the book is secreted from him. Nothing substitutes for a superficial knowledge (at least) of the lives and works being cited. In the first seventeen cantos, then, one should know something of around seventy-seven authors, poets, and artists mentioned there. Sometimes--as with Barabello and Mozarello--the bare information available in the Annotated Index to the Cantos is sufficient; sometimes--as with Dante and Cavalcanti--the inter-relations are manifold. However, the whole purpose of The Cantos is not to windowcase past accomplishments. "Art that mirrors art is unsatisfactory," writes Pound; art is to show the hidden connections between causes and effects. And for that "art becomes necessary only when life is inarticulate."¹⁶

Besides the Malatesta section, the literary guides and historical commentators comprise the largest historical
group contained in Cantos I - XVII. The other groups are primarily restricted to individual cantos. Eleanor of Aquitaine and the troubadours, for example, are focused on in Canto VI, though, naturally, scattered references surface in the text. The schizoid Sordello of Canto II--Pound torn between the fictional Sordello and the actual Sordello--reappears in Canto VI with Pound's emphasis being on the corporeal man. Pound notes the biographical fact that the Sordello's are from Mantua: 17

E lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana,
Son of a poor knight, Sier Escort,
And he delighted himself in chancons
And mixed with the men of the court
And went to the court of Richard Saint Boniface
And was there taken with love for his wife
Cunizza, da Romano... (6/22)

These are the recorded facts of his life. Similarly, another troubadour, Elia Cairels, was from Sarlat (6/23).

Canto VI begins with an assertion of the quintessential kinship of Odysseus and troubadour Guillaume Poitiers:

What you have done, Odysseus,
We know what you have done...
And that Guillaume sold out his ground rents
(Seventh of Poitiers, Ninth of Aquitain).

After having named Poitiers' birthplace as he does later with Sordello and the others, Pound publishes a piece of a bawdy tune by Poitiers--in the original Provencal.
Although looking at Pound's "Troubadours--Their Sorts and Conditions" does not overtly account for the reference to Poitiers' having "sold out his ground rents," we can probably understand it as a remark on some deucedly clever money deal of his. Guillaume Poitiers' significance to the poem goes much further, however; he is the first troubadour of any known worth. Lindsay says of him that his great contribution to Provencal poetry "was the consistent development of a system of verse-technique and of a set of ideas about Love as the source of self-fulfilment through an ethic of devotion and joy." Guillaume Poitiers is cited again, in Canto VIII, for his cultivation of the craft of Provencal poetry: "And Poictiers, you know, Guillaume Poictiers,/had brought the song up out of Spain/With the singers and viels" (8/32). Pound's purpose for this citation is to find the same "setting" in Italy for the dynamic human passion from which Guillaume's poetry had radiated. And he does discover the same titanic emotive force in the acts of Francesca and Paolo il Bello, and in Parisina's terrible fate at the hands of her husband, Niccolo d'Este. And both Parisina and Paolo were Malatestas.
More importantly, Guillaume Poitiers, as grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine,\textsuperscript{21} provides a recorded link between the traditions of Provence and the shaping of European (England included) history. Eleanor is the historical repeat of the legendary Helen of Troy. Allusion to Helen is usually mixed with an allusion to Eleanor, as is the case in 2/6 and 7/24-25. In her role of the Midonz, Eleanor affords Pound a descriptive instance of the driving energy which the refining emotions of Provencal wrought into Western civilization. Eleanor was wife of two kings (Louis VII of France and Henry II of England) and mother of Richard the Lion-hearted, Henry and John of England.\textsuperscript{22} Lindsay reports that Henry shared her tastes\textsuperscript{23}—thus her being "spoiled" in England—-that she was given to pleasure, that she made six judgements in the court of Love, that she seemed to have adopted "her grandfather's interest in Celtic material," that she caused Wace to translate Geoffrey of Monmouth's \textit{Historia}, and that she is praised in the romance of \textit{Troie}.\textsuperscript{24}

Pound stresses Eleanor as a demonstration of the vitality of the Provencal civilization by interspersing snatches of Langue d'Oc in her section:
Till Louis is wed with Eleanor
And had (He, Guillaume) a son that had to wife
The Duchess of Normandia whose daughter
Was wife to King Henry e maire del rei jove . . .
Went over sea till day's end (he, Louis, with Eleanor)
Coming at last to Acre.
"Ongla, Oncle" saith Arnaut
   Her uncle commanded in Acre. . . . (6/21)

In addition, he shows the heightened awareness and
delicate craft of the troubadour. The song he translates
is from Bernart de Ventadour, who was in Eleanor's entourage:

Eleanor, domna jauzionda, mother of Richard,
Turning on thirty years (wd. have been years before this)
By river-marsh, by galleried church-porch,
Malemorte, Correze, to whom:
   "My Lady of Ventadour
  "Is shut by Eblis in
  "And will not hawk nor hunt
      nor get her free in the air
  "Nor watch fish rise to bait
  "Nor the glare-wing'd flies alight in the creek's edge
  Save in my absence, Madame.
     'Que la lauzeta mover'
  "Send word I ask you to Eblis
      you have seen that maker
  "And finder of songs so far afield as this
  "That he may free her,
      who sheds such light in the air." (6/22)

As Flory remarks, the whole of Canto VI conveys a confidence
in the transcendent power of the source of beauty which
Eleanor stands for; the problems and the torments of love
Pound does not omit but includes as proof of the psychic
energy of the Provencal spirit.25
Back-stepping to Canto V, we see Pound's first transition into totally historical material with a mention of John Borgia's murder: "John Borgia is bathed at last. (Clock-tick pierces the vision) . . ." (5/18). Pound is following his own advice on giving his vision reality through placing it in its "due setting."

The setting of Canto V moves from Ecbatan and its energizing love to classical doorways and expressions of this inspiring beauty to the legendary wanderings and unhappy affair of troubadour Savairic Mauleon to, finally, the mixed presentation of John Borgia's and Alessandro de'Medici's murders. The movement is plainly a descent from the vision into the chaos of the material world. Pound reveals to the reader the hollow violence of a world which has lost the vision. It is, as Alexander appraises it, a world of "Renaissance pomp, passion, and skull-duggery."

Still, the vision remains, though it may shine forth from only one person. Pound writes, "Civilization is individual. The truth is the individual. The light of the Renaissance shines in Varchi when he declines to pass judgement on Lorenzaccio." Benedetto Varchi was the Italian historian whom Cosimo de'Medici commissioned to write a history of Florence. The honesty of Varchi's wanting to print only the truth,
this is the virtu that Pound discovers in reading him. And Varchi's over-riding objective attitude leads Pound to lend more credence to what he says as against what others --perhaps dull and unexacting copyists--might say. Varchi is not afraid to admit he has not enough facts to make a precise judgement:

"Whether for love of Florence," Varchi leaves it, Saying "I saw the man, came up with him at Venice, "I, one wanting the facts, "And no mean labour ... Or for a privy spite?" (5/19)

Though Varchi cannot decide whether Lorenzaccio killed Alessandro from "love of Florence" or "a privy spite," Pound, relying on Varchi's claim that Lorenzaccio wanted to assure that Alessandro knew who was murdering him, indicates Lorenzaccio's selfish motivation by repeating Varchi's wording of the matter--"O se morisse, credesse caduto da se" (5/19). In a similar manner, Pound places his trust in the diary of Giorgio Schiavone, the man on the boat who witnessed the disposal of Borgia's body. 30

The pitiful fates of Barabello (Italian poetaster) and Sanazarro (a poet who wrote about Borgia's murder) are woven into the concluding segment of Canto V. Flory correctly characterizes the overall tone of the canto as "the triumph of the sordid pressures of reality over the
Pound, however, does not concede a complete triumph of uninformed passion over intelligence fed by the vision: "The fire? always, and the vision always,/Ear dull, perhaps, with the vision, flitting/And fading at will" (5/17).

As Surette points out, Pound's struggle with the material he had collected on Sigismundo Malatesta led to his first use of a block of cantos to narrate historical action surrounding an individual; this grouping was later "to become characteristic of the poem's organization." 32 Myles Slatin records that Pound chose Sigismundo because he offered an "illustration of intelligent constructivity" which was also exhibited in his private life. 33 Pound did not want to hang his Odyssean cloak on a dry stick. And Sigismundo does not disappoint the reader but is a good example of Pound's Odyssean questor. Alexander corroborates this, saying that in Malatesta the "Odysseus theme" receives its "fullest statement." 34

With the voice of New Criticism, Alexander additionally remarks that Pound requires that a reader have too much acquaintance with the Medici and Malatesta families for one to understand his passages on them. He continues, "The historical novels of more recent times have abandoned
even the Medici, let alone the Malatesta." Hence, it is that many of the charges of obscurity result from an application of the most bandied about rule of New Criticism: the primary emphasis on the text. Pound's cantos demand that one bring an inquisitive mind to the verse, anxious to get at the brilliance as it unfolds there. Pound's unashamed use of his intelligence reasserts the possibility of sublime complexity. If one would complain to Pound that Sigismundo is not well-known, Pound would probably advise, "Look him up, and read!"

The fact is that the Malatesta cantos will leave one with large areas of unresolved relationships unless one reads another--more narrative--account of Sigismundo Malatesta's life. The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State by P. J. Jones provides a condensed but readable history of the Malatesta dynasty; it also makes Pound's confusing chronicle of events seem less the fault of the poet, for Jones' narration shows that the times were confusing and the motivations behind the actions of a single war were often capricious. Michael F. Harper's article "Truth and Calliope: Ezra Pound's Malatesta" centers on the controversy surrounding Pound's portrait of Sigismundo--whether he is historically accurate or
distorted. Harper refers to Jones' estimate of Sigismundo in support of his argument against the charge that Pound is a quack historian. He further notes what should be obvious for a poem of any worth, i.e. that poetry does not simply record external reality but fits particulars into the composite themes and value system which the poet develops. Harper writes,

I would urge a preliminary claim for the value of The Cantos based not on agreement or disagreement with any particular reading of history that Pound presents but rather on the very nature of the poem he wrought, on his denial of the conventional separation between "poetry" and "history." 37

Intervening with Jones' history of Sigismundo where necessary, a reader finds Cantos VIII through XI flow more smoothly. One does not need Jones to recognize the Spenglerian pattern of rise and fall. Canto VIII obviously depicts the youthful Sigismundo's successful management of affairs, all the more impressive when one learns at the end of the canto that Sigismundo is only twelve when he begins to shoulder the burden of rebuilding the Malatestas' holdings. Pound seeks to communicate the confident and enlightened virtu of Sigismundo by translating from Sigismundo's letters. The first letter catches Sigismundo in his bid for a painter, Francheshi, from Giovanni de'Medici.
Pound even gives us the original so that we can judge for ourselves the authenticity of the spirit moving beneath the words:

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 manchera la provixione mai).

This passage illustrates Sigismundo's receptivity to the artistic lifestyle: he does not try to relegate art to the time-clock. Unlike an accountant, an artist requires leisure to fuel his creativity. Pound reproduces a lyric Sigismundo had written to Isotta, his mistress, as further proof of his wholesome aesthetic nature. This access to the vision is also supported by Sigismundo's being interested in building a temple, the Tempio Malatestiano, in honor of Isotta. Flory notes Pound's respect for this architectural structure—respect mainly because it is almost totally the result of Sigismundo's will during a period which thwarted the aspirations of most men. In revealing Sigismundo's friendship with Gemisthus Plethon (a neo-Platonic philosopher), Pound finds another trait which links Sigismundo with the metaphysical framework of The Cantos. We also meet in Canto VIII Francesco Sforza, whom Pound portrays as an opportunist overlord whom Sigismundo
sometimes serves and sometimes wars against; the Medici, associated with usury—"With the Medici bank for itself" (8/32); Galeazzo Malatesta, whose betrayal of Pesaro to Federigo da Montefeltro led to Sigismundo's eventual downfall; and Gaspare Broglio, a soldier in Sigismundo's army, who—like Varchi—Pound indicates has a virtù that one can trust. Broglio, who recorded Sigismundo's campaigns and life in Rimini, seems to have the last word when it comes to how Sigismundo viewed his situation: "(as Broglio says 'bestialmente')" (8/32).

The remainder of the Malatesta block deals with the working out of the conflicting themes introduced in Canto VIII. Canto IX exhibits Sigismundo holding his own in an adverse environment. This canto stresses the growing struggle with "Feddy" over Pesaro. And, through his "post-bag," Pound demonstrates the quiet authority of Sigismundo's private life and his vigorous dedication to the completion of the Tempio. Canto X relates Sigismundo's crisis with the Vatican. Pope Pius II, political enemy of Sigismundo by reason of his Sienese heritage and his friendship with Federigo da Montefeltro, becomes intent on Sigismundo's destruction; the section ends with almost the whole of Italy warring with the Malatesta. In Canto XI we see
Sigismundo's defeat at the hands of Pius II; yet, though he was never to fully recover, Sigismundo's persevering spirit does not totally surrender. He presses Paul II, successor of Pius, to re-instate his power and lands, but Paul, fearing Sigismundo's popularity, refuses. The final anecdote of XI shows the Malatesta bantering with his steward, Enricho de Aquabello, and they make a pact that Sigismundo will trade "a green cloak with silver brocade" in return for Enricho's uncomplaining acceptance of any joke Sigismundo might play on him over four months.

Though defeated, Sigismundo still retains his joy in life.

Canto XI also introduces a phrase which becomes a coda to the rest of The Cantos: "In the gloom, the gold gathers the light against it" (11/51). Alexander explains the image this way:

In his portrait of Sigismundo, Pound is at pains to show the love of son and father, the trust of lover and mistress, the humanity of the leader; he also admires his courage and force. In a disorderly age you have to fight to realize your ideal of order and 'keep it against armed force'. Principled action will take revolutionary or conservative form according to the corrupt or harmonious nature of society.

Sigismundo represents the exceptional individual no longer acceptable to an age preparing the human psyche for the assembly-line. As Espey notes, artistically it
is the rejection of the fine line for the "thick"; or, as Pound elsewhere says, it is a switch from a proper concern with the subject of a painting to a decadent concentration on the background. Pound has the Malatesta cantos embody the struggle of Quattrocento sensitivity against Renaissance mediocrity. And, leonine ingenuity is pitted against the leaven of 'good business'.

The spiritual aridity of modern financial wizards and the tale of the Honest Sailor in Canto XII establish an effective contrast with Canto XIII, where the virtuous order inherent in Confucius' philosophy asserts the possibility of a stable society. Flory, analyzing the later Pisan cantos, claims that there Pound has "neoplatonized" Confucius, but one need only look at the first sentence of Pound's 1939 translation of the Ta Hio to see distinct elements of neo-Platonism prior to that. By itself, the Kung Canto is a clear and concise statement of sociological and ethical theories, pragmatic theories which call for the personal fortitude of the individual to put them into practice. Kung (Confucius) is an historical figure because his doctrine embodied his lifestyle: he wedded his daughter to a deserving man in prison and his niece to a good politician out of office (13/59).
Canto XIII opens with a question arising among Kung and his disciples concerning what Kung and his followers need to do to become "known." Tse-lou says he would better order the defenses of the state; Khieu would be a good governor of a province; Tchi would be a temple priest and perform the proper rituals; and Tian, a musician, says he would go swimming with young boys at the "old swimming hole" or sit beneath the trees, playing a mandolin. "Who has answered correctly?" asks Thseng-sie. "And Kung said, 'They have all answered correctly,/'That is to say, each in his nature' " (13/58). Confucius, like Pound, realizes the overwhelming importance of the individual's virtu; if one but latch onto his virtu, with his passions properly directed, then one will naturally do what is most productive for himself and for his society. Rather than freeing each person to do as he pleases, Confucius' doctrine makes the individual totally responsible for ordering his own affairs and developing a personal discipline: " 'Anyone can run to excesses,/It is easy to shoot past the mark,/It is hard to stand firm in the middle' " (13/59). Thus, Kung is said to "smile" on everyone "equally," (13/58) while Cosimo de'Medici's smile—the smile of Cosimo the banker, whose Medici bank had spread to almost every important trade
center in Europe—is the smile of monetary profit, of usury: "And that day Cosimo smiled . . ." (10/43).

In Confucius Pound discovers a realistic method for effecting to the vision of Ecbatan. Confucius provides a no-nonsense approach to the communication of the importance of individual development and personal effort. One is supposed to leave the canto refreshed, and this feeling is enhanced by its location between Canto XII and the Hell Cantos. Though Pound's critics will probably continue to argue over the Cantos' status as a "poem including history," Pound—via Kung—levies a little of his own criticism against contemporary pedantry:

"And even I can remember
A day when the historians left blanks in their writings,
I mean for things they didn't know,
But that time seems to be passing." (13/60)

Pound does not pretend to have worked out the secret pattern of the whole of history; he has tackled the more artistically pertinent task of bringing alive the people and values he deems important and showing us that life through the craftsmanship of his own virtu.
Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Homer's *Odyssey* can be said to exist simultaneously at the core of the human psyche because they plumb man's deepest selves yet draw in the expansive world: microcosm and macrocosm. Hugh Kenner makes a cogent argument for the archaeological importance of Joyce's *Ulysses*, based on the compression of the details of Dublin life into the novel—the contents of a kitchen cabinet, the specifics of a Dubliner's clothes closet.\(^1\) Pound, by incorporating the historic flow and not merely spinning off from historic subject-matter, was copying Joyce's process but with a view to showing where the best ideals of humanity have their sources and where they surfaced later (without an unctuous mysticism about one's fate after one's death); his aim was to depict the age-old battle of original intelligence against a reactionary plethora while reaffirming the vision of personal and social wholeness attainable through a passionate pursuit of meaningful life.
What Pound "came to" was an aesthetic concept of history. Aesthetic history offers what chronological history cannot: a revelation of a timeless order, the drama of man in all ages. In an age which considers any order—except the alphabet and the binary system—as a falsely subjective pattern forced on reality, an aesthetic history of man attempts to negate the modern's barrier of scientific skepticism with the assertion that artists of the past communicate with artists of the present—whatever the media. And the intelligent artist builds from that communication in a fashion that carries on the dialogue for the future. This communication is vital to the proper function of any healthy civilization: an electrical charge over certain synapses should cause a man to remember. The more defective this neurological process, the more incapacitating the resultant dyslexia. Pound, reacting to criticism of Henry James' repetitive subject matter, wrote:

Peace comes of communication. No man of our time has so labored to create means of communication as did the late Henry James. The whole of great art is a struggle for communication. All things that oppose this are evil, whether they be silly scoffing or obstructive tariffs.
And this communication is not a leveling, it is not an elimination of differences. It is a recognition of differences, of the right of differences to exist, of interest in finding things different.²

Finally, any discussion on characters in The Cantos would be remiss if it left out the poet himself. As Kenner notes, "Pound makes no effort to vanish; he is quite frankly a character in the Cantos. . . ." Kenner then more exactly explains that he means Pound's "persona" is there.³ Persona or himself, Pound unhesitantly lets the reader know how he feels, what he thinks, and where he has been. One can easily tell if he dislikes someone—"That that monstrous swollen, swelling s. o. b./Papa Pio Secundo" (10/44). And his biography, he lets the reader know, is important to the poem's development: "I sat on the Dogana's steps/For the gondolas cost too much, that year. . . ." (3/11). Yet because of the contemporary suspicion that all art is solipsistic—the alogical structure of The Cantos requires Pound's consciousness to unify it. In other words, he is being as factually accurate as possible in the presentation of his art; he is not blind (nor does he want the reader to be blind) to the fact that this is what Pound sees and it is not an objective view of "reality" by an egoless eye. Pound does not whitewash the subjectivity intrinsic
to his vision. That subjectivity is a fact along with all the other historic, psychological, and artistic facts handed over to the reader's judgement. Flory believes that Pound's convictions are the elements which, in the end, provide the poem with a "firm foundation": "He formulates them early, never questions them, and continues to reassert them throughout the work."4

According to Alexander, the first seventeen Cantos are the most difficult.5 This by no means indicates the rest to be inferior. However, the background material at first eyed with dread later becomes a background intelligence one feels is indispensable—not only to the poem but to one's personal aesthetic. Pound's aesthetic clarity—whether or not one agrees with the points of his aesthetic—challenges the sensitive mind with the possibility of being consciously involved with art as intellectual and spiritual nourishment.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


2 J. P. Sullivan, Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1964), p. 3.


13 Sullivan, p. 69.
15 Sullivan, p. 67.
16 *ABC*, p. 34.
17 "In the Vortex," in *Instigations*, p. 234.
18 Introd., *LE*, p. xiii.
19 "In the Vortex," in *Instigations*, p. 199.
23 Kenner, p. 56.
24 *ABC*, p. 52.
27 Pratt, pp. 22-23.
30 Materer, p. 116.
31 Kenner, p. 247.
32 Slatin, p. 189.

34. Ezra Pound, "Canto IV," in *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1972; rpt. New York: New Directions, 1979), p. 14; all further citations will occur in the text and will be documented according to Canto and page number—e.g., this citation would occur in the text as (4/14).


43. "How to Read," in *PE*, p. 163.


47. *SR*, p. 7.


49. *Introd.*, *LE*, p. xii.

50. Witemeyer, p. 6.

52 "How to Read," in PE, p. 188.
53 Alexander, p. 133.
54 "How to Read," in PE, pp. 188-189.
55 Flory, pp. 16-17.
56 Alexander, pp. 148 and 159.
57 Alexander, p. 139.
58 "How to Read," in PE, p. 172.
59 ABC, p. 58.
60 ABC, p. 57.
61 "How to Read," in PE, p. 186.
62 ABC, p. 45.
63 "How to Read," in PE, p. 184.
64 Sullivan, p. 4.
65 Sullivan, pp. 4-23.
66 Sullivan, p. 17.
67 Sullivan, p. 36.
68 "How to Read," in PE, p. 185.
69 Sullivan, p. 33.
70 "Genesis," in Instigations, p. 283.
71 SR, p. 92.
72 Flory, p. 11.
73 Flory, p. 30.
CHAPTER II


2 Longinus, p. xiii.

4 "How to Read," in *PE*, p. 173.

5 Bate, p. 59.

6 "In the Vortex," in *Instigations*, p. 200.

7 *ABC*, p. 100.

8 *Longinus*, p. 22.

9 *Longinus*, pp. 56 and 80.


11 "In the Vortex," in *Instigations*, p. 200.

12 *SR*, p. 96.

13 Bate, p. 68.


15 *Longinus*, pp. 31-32.

16 *Witemeyer*, pp. 7-8.

17 Kenner, pp. 267-268.

18 *Longinus*, p. 27.

19 *SR*, p. 110.

20 *SR*, p. 128.

21 *SR*, p. 113.

22 *SR*, p. 178.

23 *SR*, p. 159.

24 *Longinus*, p. 15.

26 Flory, p. 16.


28 Longinus, p. 30.

29 Longinus, p. 2.


31 SR, p. 82.

32 SR, p. 8.

33 Longinus, pp. 2-3.

34 SR, p. 113.

35 Longinus, p. 12.

36 "In the Vortex," in Instigations, p. 246.


CHAPTER III

1 Espey, p. 121.


3 Alexander, p. 133.

4 ABC, p. 46.

5 SR, p. 95.

7 SR, p. 94.

8 SR, pp. 95-96.


11 ABC, pp. 147-148.

12 ABC, p. 97.


14 Emery, p. 8.

15 Emery, pp. 8-9.

16 Emery, p. 9.

17 Witemeyer, pp. 32-33.

18 Witemeyer, p. 24.

19 Flory, p. 12.

20 Rachewiltz, p. 182.


22 Miyake, pp. 102-103.

23 ABC, p. 58.

25 Miyake, p. 81.
26 Surette, p. 64.
27 Surette, p. 64.
30 Surette, p. 46.
31 Surette, p. 50.
32 Surette, p. 43.
33 Glenn, p. 3.
34 Emery, p. 9.
35 Espey, pp. 87-88.
36 Index, p. 28.
37 Index, p. 238.
38 Index, p. 13.
39 Brooker, p. 241.
41 Surette, p. 54.
CHAPTER IV

1 Surette, p. 220.
2 ABC, p. 46.
3 Jack Lindsay, The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1976), pp. 174-175.

4 Surette, p. 120.
5 Alexander, p. 160.
6 Surette, p. 33.
7 Flory, p. 98.
8 Surette, p. 180.
9 "Dr. Williams' Position," in PE, p. 77.
10 Alexander, p. 156.

12 Alexander, p. 156.

13 Surette, p. 65.

14 Flory, p. 2.

15 Surette, p. 55.

16 Kenner, p. 377.

17 *ABC*, p. 44.

18 "Hell," in *PE*, p. 45.

19 Glenn, p. 4.

20 *Index*, p. 1.

21 *SR*, p. 73.

22 *SR*, p. 67.

23 Lindsay, p. 213.

24 Surette, pp. 71-78.

25 Lindsay, pp. 220-221.

26 Surette, p. 32.


28 Surette, p. 100.

29 *Index*, p. 211.

30 Alexander, p. 136.
CHAPTER V

1 SR, p. 216.
2 Surette, p. 131.
3 Alexander, p. 125.
4 SR, p. 96.
5 Witemeyer, p. 176.
6 Houston, pp. 172-173.
7 Index, p. 200.
8 Index, p. 58.
9 Index, p. 249.
10 SR, p. 45.
11 SR, p. 158.
12 "Dubliners and Mr James Joyce," in LE, pp. 399-400.
13 ABC, p. 78.
14 ABC, p. 48.
16 SR, p. 218.
17 Index, p. 59.
18 "Troubadours--Their Sorts and Conditions," in LE, p. 94.
19 Lindsay, p. 21.
20 Index, p. 291.
21 Index, p. 175.
22 Index, p. 58.
23 Lindsay, p. 100.
24 Lindsay, p. 24.
25 Flory, p. 120.
26 "In the Vortex," in Instigations, p. 196.
27 Alexander, p. 146.
29 Index, p. 236.
30 Flory, p. 118.
31 Flory, p. 118.
32 Surette, p. 18.
33 Slatin, p. 194.
34 Alexander, p. 153.
35 Alexander, p. 154.
36 Jones, pp. 176-234.
38 Flory, pl 123.
39 Index, p. 76.
40 Index, p. 25.
41 Jones, pp. 221 and 227.
42 Index, p. 10.
CHAPTER VI

1 Kenner, pp. 44-46.


3 Kenner, p. 33.

4 Flory, p. 8.

5 Alexander, p. 162.

43 Alexander, p. 43.

44 Espey, p. 89.

45 ABC, p. 132.

46 Flory, p. 25.

47 Ezra Pound, trans., Ta Hio, the Great Learning of Confucius (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1939), p. 5.

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