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EZRA POUND'S EARLY EXPERIMENTS WITH MAJOR FORMS, 1904-1925: DIRECTIO VOLUNTATIS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that the coherent vision and single impulse which led to the major form of the Cantos also underlay Ezra Pound's seemingly disparite early experiments. In order to demonstrate that Pound's pre-occupation with major form provided a common denominator between his earliest, middle, and mature poetry, I have divided this study into three sections, which correspond to the three main stages of Pound's development. Part One: Instigation (1904-1911), demonstrates the two theories of perfect form that first attracted the young Pound, and documents his drive toward ever-subtler architectonic structures in his initial phase of development. Part Two: Experiment (1912-1919), re-defines the three qualities of rhythm, tone, texture, as they apply to Pound's experiments with major form. Part Three: Accomplishment (1920-1925), describes what stimulated Pound's theoretical breakthrough in 1922, and traces the expression of this theory through XVI Cantos, to show that this first installment of Pound's major poem fused his theory and practice of poetry. This achievement can only be properly appreciated properly, however, in the context of his earlier twenty-year experiment with other major forms. The Conclusion points out that the critical

moment in the evolution of Pound's exploration of major forms occurred when he dropped his aspiration to write a purely personal document featuring "perfect" form, and became content to write a broader social "testament." Underneath the formal superstructures of his attempts at major form, Pound's holistic vision provided the base, or "unwobbling pivot", for his attempt to "show men the way to try" to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the patterned integrities of the "vital universe": stone, tree, and mind--alive.

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ABBEVIATIONS

ALS, 1908..... A Lume Spento. Venice Antonini.
ALS..... A Lume Spento and Other Early Poems. London: Faber, 1965.
C..... Canzoni. London: Elkin Mathews, 1911.
CEP..... Collected Early Poems, ed. by Michael King. N.Y.: New Directions, 1976.
CNTJ..... The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan. New Directions, 1959.
CSP..... Collected Shorter Poems. London: Faber, 1968.
GB..... Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir. Hessle, East Yorkshire: Marvell Press, 1960.
GK..... Guide to Kulchur. London: Peter Owen, 1952.
LE..... Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot. N.Y.: New Directions, 1968.
MIN..... Make it New. London: Faber, 1934.
P, 1909..... Personae. London: Elkin Mathews, 1909.
P..... Personae. N.Y.: Boni and Liveright, 1926.
P/J..... The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, ed. by Forrest Read. N.Y.: New Directions, 1967.
PM..... Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony. London: Peter Owen, 1962.
SFL..... Pound's Letters to Dennis Goacher held at Simon Fraser University.
SL..... Selected Letters, ed. by D.D. Paige. N.Y.: New Directions, 1971.
SP..... Selected Prose, ed. by W. Cookson. London: Faber, 1973.
SR..... The Spirit of Romance. N.Y.: New Directions, 1968.
YC..... Yale Collection, American Literature. Uncollected and unpublished material held in the Beinecke Library.

The 1979 New Directions edition of The Cantos is used throughout this work. References are given in the text as (CXVI, 796) to designate Canto CXVI, page 796.

to

Peter

"God is that one man helps another"

--Ezra Pound

INTRODUCTION

Pound critics have occupied two main camps: those who deal mainly with the early poetry, up to 1920, and those who deal primarily with the poetry after 1920--which is to say the Cantos. Among the former group, N. Christophe de Nagy has said of his study of the pre-Imagist stage: "It would obviously be tempting and rewarding, with 116 cantos and several books about them in print, to examine the early poetry only in so far as it is a stage towards Imagism, and especially the Cantos. But this is precisely what is going to be avoided."[1] Other critics of the early period, such as Hugh Witemeyer, Thomas H. Jackson, J.J. Espey, J.P. Sullivan, Stuart McDougal, and Eric Homberger, have followed similar guidelines, focussing attention on single works or periods of Pound's early development, with little or no reference to the Cantos.[2]

Among the latter group, we find those who focus attention on the Cantos, while making little or no reference to Pound's earlier work considered as a whole. This group, which includes critics like Clark Emery, George Dekker, Daniel Pearlman, Christine Brooke-Rose, Ronald Bush, Michael Bernstein, and Donald Davie,[3] has generally down-played the relevance of Pound's earlier work to the

Cantos, following Hugh Kenner's lead, who stated in his early volume on Pound: "The early poems are deficient in finality; they supplement and correct one another; they stand up individually as renderings of moods, but not as manifestations of mature self-knowledge; they try out poses. They are leading the author somewhere; the reader may be excused if his interests are not wholly engaged."[4]

Unfortunately, neither group has taken the broad perspective on Pound's accomplishment. The problem has been that the two groups of poems are so different. The early period is characterized by constant change and experiments with various poetic masks; the later period is characterized by consistency, and a style that seems totally removed from that of the earlier poems. A vast gulf separates them. Surprisingly, no one has attempted to explore in detail the reasons for this most curious aspect of Pound's work, first noticed by Peter Russell: whereas "the difference in style between a poem written by Pound in 1907 and one written in 1917 is the easiest thing in the world to spot . . . if one compares a canto written in 1920 with one written in 1945, a gap of 25 years, it is not possible to observe any change in style."[5] Consequently, critics have tended to specialize in one of these areas, with the unhappy result of splitting our vision of Pound's overall accomplishment.

Even where critics have attempted to do justice to both the early poems and the Cantos, they have been extremely selective, examining only a few elements of Pound's early work, such as the Image and the ideogrammic method. This tendency is understandable, because the sheer size and complexity of the Cantos demands a larger amount of space than the early poems. Yet this necessity has encouraged the belief that Pound was splashing around before 1920, and only found his feet in the Cantos. This diminishes the significance of the Cantos, making them appear to be a last resort for a tired technician; it also diminishes the importance of the earlier poems, which appear to be simplified masks, cast off on the journey toward the mature poetic persona of the Cantos. Neither of these views does justice to Pound's accomplishment.

My contention is that this accomplishment can only be properly appreciated when we understand the connection between the early poems and the Cantos. Essentially, I hold that the exploration of major forms was the constant element, or constant denominator, in Pound's poetic development from the beginning, and that this focus stemmed from a deep and unchanging desire to express his holistic vision of the fundamental cohesiveness of the universe.[6] From the beginning, Pound's urge toward major form stemmed

from a deeply felt philosophic intent--which remained unchanged throughout his life. Seen in this light, his poetry is seen to have been motivated by a largely unappreciated consistency of purpose that could lead to a revaluation of his importance.

Why has it not previously been noted that Pound worked at major form long before 1915? For one thing, critics have concentrated on the seen, rather than on the unseen. To use contemporary learning terminology, Pound seems to me to have been an extreme example of a "right-brain" personality: strongly intuitive, musical, visual, given to instantaneous insights and experiences of certitude, and resolutely non-sequential; therefore, he was more inclined to concentrate on manipulating the relationships <u>between</u> things than the things themselves, and to pay as much attention to the space between his poems in a volume as to the matter of the poems themselves. We can see this from the fact that he arranged each volume of poetry with extreme care, striving for a concept of major form--an effort which culminated in the <u>Cantos</u>. Consequently, if a critic looks only at the poems in a volume like <u>Canzoni</u> he may see only poor poetry; if he also looks at the rhythms and "negative spaces" between the poems, he may see a fascinating early attempt at a major composition.

Another reason why Pound's experiments with major form may have escaped some critics is that the Pound Archives at Yale have only been accessible since 1976. This collection contains a number of early unpublished long poems of up to 100 lines, plus early unpublished letters to his parents and friends, which conclusively document Pound's concentration on major form. Some of these materials appear in this thesis. A further reason for Pound's efforts at major form remaining hidden lies in the untrustworthy nature of Pound's texts. Most critics have tended to use the Collected Shorter Poems, which is based on the 1926 Personae. They could not tell from either text that "Alba" and "Tame Cat", which there appear as individual poems, were originally published as elements in a longer sequence, "Zenia." As a result of this kind of problem, we find even one of Pound's best critics, passing on too quickly to a discussion of the Cantos, telling us wrongly that the early poem "Au Salon" first appeared in Personae (1909), along with "Cino", "Na Audiart", "Mesmerism", and "Villonaud for This Yule."[7]

Having pointed these things out, I would like to add that I owe an enormous debt to Pound's critics, particularly Hugh Kenner, K.K. Ruthven, Hugh Witemeyer, and Donald Gallup. More generally, my understanding of the unity of Pound's poetry owes a great deal to the studies of numerous

other critics, especially to those by Donald Davie, Daniel Pearlman, and Christine Brooke-Rose. While I have noted particular instances of the help they have provided in my text, it is a pleasure to acknowledge here my general indebtedness to their works.

This thesis demonstrates that the coherent vision and single impulse which led to the form of the Cantos also underlay all Pound's seemingly disparite early experiments.[8] In order to demonstrate the ubiquity of this intention, I have divided this study into three sections corresponding to the three main stages of Pound's early development. Part One: Instigation (1904-1911), demonstrates the two theories of perfect form that first attracted Pound, and documents his drive toward ever-subtler architectonic structures in this initial phase. Part Two: Experiment (1912-1919), re-defines the three qualities of rhythm, tone, texture, as they apply to Pound's experiments with major form. Part Three: Accomplishment (1920-1925), describes Pound's theoretical breakthrough in 1922, both in terms of what provoked it and what it shared with his earliest formulations; also, it traces the expression of this theory through XVI Cantos, distinguishing between what has been carried forward from the earlier experiments and what has been added, to show

that though it marked the fusion of Pound's theory and practice of poetry, it can only be properly appreciated in the context of a twenty-year experiment with major form. In the Conclusion, I point out that the key moment in the history of Pound's exploration of major forms occurred when his aspiration changed from wanting to write a purely personal document to attempting to write a broader social "testament." Underneath the formal superstructure of his attempts at major form, Pound's holistic vision provided the base for his attempt to "show men the way to try" to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the patterned integrities of the "vital universe": stone, tree, and mind--alive.

This study makes no claim to have treated all relevant aspects of Pound's development of major form. The organization of such volumes as Lustra, Umbra, Quia Pauper Amavi, and especially Instigations--of which Pound said in 1934: "Years ago I made the mistake of publishing a volume (Instigations) without blatantly telling the reader that the book had a design" (LE, 75)--could usefully have been considered. However, to have done so in satisfactory detail would have been to enlarge this study well beyond the imposed limits. Similarly, my discussion of XVI Cantos had to be limited to a few of the ways in which it relates to

themes and techniques first explored in earlier poems. Ideally, the study would have included a consideration of the complete text of Pound's Cantos, but this would have taken the emphasis off the exploration of major form in the early poems.

The most that can be claimed for this study is that it provides a new way of looking at the context of Pound's early poetry, draws attention to his earliest experiments with major form, highlights the integrity of his intention during the 1904-1925 period, and documents his concern with major form from the beginning of his career--a fact which, though often suspected or asserted, has never before been proved.

PART ONE:

INSTIGATIONS: THE EARLY YEARS

"A true idea (for we have a true idea) is something different from its ideal (ideatum). For a circle is one thing, and the idea of one another.

--Baruch Spinoza, "On the Correction of the Understanding"

"Most apt indeed that I should choose to study the 'Fool' scientifically"

--Ezra Pound, 1905

I

THE STARTING POINT: PRACTICE AND THEORY

For the young Pound, the ultimate purpose of art was to draw the mind toward contemplation of God.[1] During the 1904-1911 period he sought to create through art what he termed an "equation of eternity" which would lift him out of everyday experience into a realm of eternal truth, beauty, and joy. His early poems--particularly the unpublished ones--continually refer to this desire, but exemplify the difficulty of realizing it. The fundamental problem is that he conceived the coherence of the universe not in terms of an easily discernible order, as Milton did, but rather as an elusive, subtle, linking force behind seemingly disparate realities. Consequently, when he tried to reflect this kind of intangible coherence in the structure of his poems, he sometimes failed to achieve sufficient formal unity. Dante Alighieri, Pound's mentor at this time, could offer no help here.[2] Pound's own profound belief in a cosmos which is essentially ordered and unified conflicted with his perception of a social or human world which is fragmented and contradictory. He sought a form which would reconcile his intuitive certitude with his immediate perceptions, without being false to either.

At this very early stage, Pound's poetry vacillated between two goals: "perfect" form and "organic" form. We can see in this nascent stage a strong tension between a poetic form that would in its perfection reflect the ultimate coherence of the universe, and a form that would reflect not the achieved coherence but the urge toward order of the creative human mind. Pound was attracted to both Dante and Browning. This tension between the qualities of statis and kinesis became the single most important struggle in the history of Pound's movement toward major form. It was not until 1922 that the struggle was decided--with great difficulty but with equally decisive finality--in favour of kinesis. Though this structural decision gave the Cantos their mature shape, however, the belief in divine order that we see most clearly in the earliest poems contributes to the reading of the Cantos in a pervasive and often unrecognized way.

In this chapter we will first isolate themes and techniques of Pound's earliest poetry that are submerged, or hidden, in his later work; next, we will examine how the evolution of the metaphor of the circle illustrates the direction and pace of Pound's gradual abandonment of the theory of perfection as a basis for the structure of his own work. These two early glimpses of Pound's developing

mind and art provide an important insight to his later work.

A

The Early Poems

The significance of Pound's early quest to get beyond conventional literary form is that they did not correspond, even from the beginning, to his idea of cosmogony. Despite the suggestions of some critical caricatures, however, Pound did not start out a full-fledged literary radical. He reputedly wrote a sonnet a day for a year. What he did with the sonnet after that illustrates his temperament perfectly. Becoming impatient with the form's restrictions, he went on to experiment with the sonnet sequence. As Rossetti had done in the House of Life, Pound sought to balance the demand of formal perfection of the single sonnet with the emotional scope afforded by a sequence of sonnets. Those who have placed Pound's experiments with longer forms in the 1915-20 period have not taken these early experiments sufficiently into consideration, probably because the sequences were broken up and presented as single sonnets by Pound in collected editions of his poetry.

At any rate, Pound's experiments did not stop with the sonnet sequence. As early as 1911, he gave up writing the sonnet altogether, in favour of the canzone, which binds thought patterns into more subtle, polyphonic rhymes than the more conventional and restricted sonnet forms. This early movement from writing sonnets, to sonnet sequences, and then to the canzone, illustrates three of his basic motivations: first, his urge toward poetic inclusiveness; second, his resurrection of lost patterns of creative expression, as a tribute to and a statement of affiliation with past creative minds; third, his search for poetic forms unusual enough to express nearly intangible perceptions -- beyond the ear's normal range.

These tendencies can be detected in Pound's earliest poems. "To La Contessa Bianzafior," for instance, is a sequence of four sonnets meant for inclusion in Pound's second volume of poetry, A Quinzaine For This Yule (1909). This sequence proves that Pound could follow conventions. However, he didn't follow convention long: it is the only one among dozens of his sequential poems to maintain a constant number of lines in each section. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, Homage to Sextus Propertius, the Cantos, and other shorter and less well known sequential poems differ from "To La Contessa", all being characterized by

great variety in the length of their individual sections.

But although Pound faithfully followed a rigid scheme in "To La Contessa Bianzafior," it is amusing to notice that even here he couldn't resist giving the lines <u>some</u> variety. Hence, although the octave in all four sonnets follows an indentical rhyme (abbaabba), and sections I and IV have identical rhymes in the sestet (cdeedc), the sestets in sections II and III vary from this pattern (i. e., cddccd; cdcede). Similarly, Pound varies the lineation of the sonnets to disguise their similarity, so that whereas section III follows the traditional arrangement of division after the octave, section I divides the last line into two ("And lo! / A thousand souls to thine are brought"). Section IV expands the first two lines of the octave to four, as well as isolating the last line of the octave between the two sections of the sonnet ("Ye mock the lines. Pardon a poor fool's whim"). Section II then divides into two four-line stanzas and two more of three lines each. By altering the usual visual appearance of the sonnet in these ways, Pound foreshadowed his life-long rendency to carefully disguise his structural devices, and to adapt conventional literary methods to his own purposes. The critical treatment of his early poems as unrelated fragments testifies to the success of his disguises.

Another sonnet sequence we have access to is "Leviora", a sequence of four sonnets--like "To La Contessa Bianzafior"--three of which Pound cut from Canzoni at the proof stages. In this series, like the last one, Pound follows the abbaabba pattern in each octave and varies the rhyme pattern in the sestets. Unlike the sequence written three years earlier, however, "Leviora" discusses the relationship between the strict requirements of the sonnet form and the poet's need to express himself in an original fashion. The first section, "Against Form", laments the need to speak through the sonnet form. To do so would be to abandon truth for propriety:

> Whether my Lady will to hear of me
> The unrhymed speech wherein the heart is heard,
> Or whether she prefer the pefumed word
> And powdered cheek of masking irony?
> Decorous dance steps ape simplicity,
> The well-groomed sonnet is to truth preferred;
> Let us be all things so we're not absurd,
> Dabble with forms and damn the verity.
> . . .
> And then to have your fame forged doubly sure,
> Let taste rule all and bid the heart be dumb.[2]

As soon as he wrote it, Pound probably noticed that this sonnet sacrificed "verity" to form. At any rate, in "Hic Jacet", the second sonnet, he disparaged himself for having "Jammed our words within the sonnet's rim." His

discomfort, while obvious, at least shows that he obeyed conventions before he discarded them.

In "L'Art," however, the third sonnet of the sequence and the only one published in Canzoni, Pound conceded that master poets have been able to treat the same subject in wholly original ways. Horace, Shakespeare, Shelley, and Keats have been able to take a single subject and make it new in turn. Pound's conclusion from this, "'Tis Art to hide our theft exquisitely," (C, 38) implies that genius can revivify any form--a conclusion which tempers his earlier criticisms. The fact that the three other sections were deleted from Canzoni, however, abandoning the form, indicates that in his own experiments he was turning away from the sonnet and toward the greater scope of the canzone, as early as 1911.

The sonnet was not the only form of restriction from which Pound sought to break free in his art in order to achieve truthfulness. In the early poem of some length "Capilupus Sends Greetings to Grotus," for instance, he gave personal goals priority over conventional rhymes and metres:

I care no more for the tumble of an ictus

Or the tinkle of a rime
Than thou dost for the color
Of the paper my brief words
Be printed on,
So to God's glory they be strong,
With all a man's good feeling
And contempt of sneers.
And know ye I will not bend
To rime yoke nor to time yoke,
Nor will I bow to Baal
Nor weak convention
That the crawlers think is law.

. . .

Know you that I would
Make my poem, as I would make myself
From all the best things, of all good men
And great men that go before me.
Yet above all be myself.(CEP,266)

Pound's comparison of the conventional use of metre and rhyme to bowing to a false god, shows that his concept of verity in art involved an unconventional stance toward and selection from "all the best things," "all the good men," in order to define one's true self. His technical idiosyncracy in later years finds its roots here, in the equation of individual expression with truthfulness.

Another of Pound's early unpublished poems, "Alba," similarly defends free expression. The tension between the predictability of the couplets and the variety of lineation supports Yeats' observation about the young Pound: "if he

writes rhyme like an amateur he writes rhythm like a master."[3]

Oh why should I chain them
Free words and glad
Into metre, into rime
Why make their joyous feet keep time
To warden's call
And fettered ball
In lock-step measure?
What care you for plodding feet
Of dull hexametre, My Sweet?
Why confine your flowing hair
In a sonnet's snood, My Fair?
Let winds make play
And rain kiss stray
On your brow
For I trow
There is enough of bondage now
So that we need not bind you, Little Sister of the sun
of dreams. (YL)

The expanded final line surprisingly defies the restrictions on length and the expectations set up in the rest of the poem. Its inclusiveness exemplifies freedom from all forms of bondage.

This technique appears in "Anima Sola" as well, where the final stanza rejects the alternation of three and four stress lines set up earlier in the poem:

And lo! I refuse your bidding.
I will not bow to the expectation that ye have.
Lo! I am gone as a red flame into the mist,

My chord is unresolved by your counter-harmonies.[4]

In both poems the inclusive metre of the final line serves to subsume all preceding individual aspects into an overall reality, to absorb details into a syncretic vision. This idea of a final "resolution" demonstrates Pound's philosophic holism. The epigraph to "Anima Sola" further expresses Pound's bias toward a concept of a guiding intelligence of the universe: "In the firm vessel of harmony is fixed God, a sphere, round, rejoicing in complete solitude" (ALS, 31). Thus, although the supreme intelligence appears as a sphere, symbolic of perfection , its perfect harmonies are cosmic rather than human. Indeed, they may seem to human ears either disharmonious, or so subtle as to be non-existent: "My music is your disharmony / Intangible, most mad." The perfect work of art, similarly, may suffer from the criticism that it is either disharmonious or so internally structured as to appear to conform to no rules or organization. As we have seen, Pound was already well on his way to rejecting conventional forms of organization in favour of less tangible structuring devices, because these more nearly approached his concept of the organizing principle of the universe. The structure of art was to mirror the structure

of reality.

"Pageantry," another early unpublished poem of some length, elaborated Pound's belief that not only must the aspiring poet free himself from conventional modes, but also express a love for the divine element in humanity. He must use poetry to express his faith in the divine coherence of the universe, in its essential rightness:

> Spenser in broidered vair
> Where is thy spirit, where
> Is the naked truth
> That standeth in Browning's line
>
> 'Thout ruth?
> Dante, amid the spheres
> Where in the flow of years
> Thy following
> Who from the "olde French booke"
> Can take, as Chaucer took
> Live folk in true romance
> Where are the songs for dance
> Of Provencal troubador?
>
> ...
>
> What fellow here can
> . . . maketh moan
> For the measured song
> That the Greek choric throng
> Raised unto marble deities
> Neath the Elysian trees
> With robes of Cos and Chian wine
> Till man's self grew divine
> A-praising Dion of the groves?
>
> . . .

Where, men and brothers, where
Is there a wight with wit so rare
That will take life's joy to the full

. . .

That will make a song of his living
Spite the preface of prose
That will be to God a joyous son
And tear the thorn from his rose. (YL)

There is no trace here of the "cult of ugliness" which enters Pound's poetry in "Und Drang" (Canzoni) as he begins to deal with modern society in his work. Here the job of art is simply to cull the paradisal garden, to "tear the thorn" from God's rose (i.e., man). This anti-Presbyterian emphasis on man's essential goodness does not emerge unchanged from Pound's desperate attempt to make a living by selling his poetry from 1911 onwards, but it does remind us that holism lies at the core of Pound's poetics. Essentially, he saw the human spirit as nurtured and protected by the supreme intelligence of the universe, aspiring as inevitably upwards to this intelligence as a moth to light, or a flame to the sky.

Not surprisingly, Pound felt little affinity with his contemporaries in this regard, nor with his immediate literary predecessors, whose "poetry of nerves" he

dismissed in "Revolt, Against the Crepuscular Spirit in Modern Poetry" (Personae). He was more attracted to the Renaissance Latinists, in whose poetry he admired not only the feeling for nature, but also the innocence and lack of sophistication found there.

In the very early essay, "M. Antonius Flaminius and JohnKeats,"[5] he translated a passage from Flaminius which is "not dead classicism; it is pastoral unspoiled by any sham beauty. He is alive to the real people as well as to the spirits of the pools and trees":

> Thus may the mother of loves be tender and
> give thee youth forever,
> Keeping the bloom of thy cheek unfurrowed.
> And after the day's last meal, with thy mother
> and sweet Lycinna, may'st thou visit my
> mother, Pholoe beloved,
> And together we will watch by the great fire
> And that night will be more shining than the
> fairness of the day,
> As the old wives retell their tales we will sing
> joyous songs, while little Lycinna roasts
> her chestnuts.
> Thus we will beguile the night with mellow mirth
> Till over-hovering sleep weight down our eye-
> lids.[6]

While little Lycinna roasting her chestnuts represents a definite accomplishment in the portrayal of a real person, and Pound's admiration for her convinces, an urge to

sophistication also appears in the early Pound. His increasing use of irony and satire during the late 1910's testified to this attempt to attain sophistication, particularly in the Homage and Mauberley, but it never entirely displaced his appreciation of innocence. Pound ends his essay on Flaminius with a tribute to the ability of the innocent heart to reveal universal truths:

> To Rome of golden Latinity the myths were stale, a matter of course, a belief beginning to die. To the Renaissance they were a world of elusive beauty, new found (as in Celtic myths in our own day) and their wonder was dew-fresh upon them, even as it always is to whoso truly cares to find it. For Metastasio was quite right when he sang that the Golden Age is not a dead thing, but still living in the hearts of the innocent.[7]

Pound quoted Metastasio's celebration of innocence, in crucially important contexts, over the next thirty years. In "Prolegomena" (1912), for instance, he led off one of his most extended discussions of the purpose of poetry with this comment: "Metastasio, and he should know if anyone, assures us that this age endures--even though the modern poet is expected to halloa his verse down a speaking tube to editors of cheap magazines--. . . even though these things be, the age of gold pertains. Imperceivably, if you like, but pertains."[8] As the eternal music in "Anima Sola"

seems intangible, so the age of gold pertains imperceivably; poetry preserves this magical vision of divine grace and ultimate coherence.

The first Ur-canto (1917) points to the existence of gods, using Sirmione, as Flaminius had done, to exemplify not merely a place, but a state of mind:

> Our olive Sirmio
> Lies in its burnished mirror, and the Mounts Balde
> and Riva
> Are alive with song, and all the leaves are full of voices.
> "Non e fuggito."
> "It is not gone." Metastasio
> Is right--we have that world about us,
> And the clouds bow above the lake, and there are folk
> upon them . . .
> How shall we start hence, how begin the progress?[9]

Here--beginning his long-planned "long poem"--Pound describes Sirmione as the goal of "the progress." From the beginning, the Cantos were conceived as a "progress" that would lead man back to the paradisal garden, the magic circle of certitude and coherence. Similarly, Pound chose to begin XVI Cantos (1925) with a translation from the oldest part of Homer's poem, the Nekuia: he began by returning to the literary source. Also, in canto two he evoked a mythical world: a return to the imaginative

source. This retrospective bias was part of Pound's attempt to recapture for his poem the syncretic world vision of the Renaissance and its faith in the coherence of the world.

Hence, Pound again used Metastasio (in Guide to Kulchur) to oppose the skepticism in Johnson's "On the Vanity of Human Wishes": "Taking it by and large the poem is buncombe. Human wishes are not vain in the least. The total statement is buncombe. The details acute and sagacious. Metastasio knew more."(GK,180). The briefness of this reference has hidden its importance from Pound's critics. It contains a great deal of un-Fascistic tolerance.

The Ghero Anthology in which Pound discovered Flaminius is celebrated in another of Pound's early unpublished poems, "On the Finding of the Collection of Ghero: Nigh an Hundred Lost Poets of Old Time Therein." Here, as in the essay, the Latin classicists of the Renaissance are seen to be in possesssion of a tradition of eternal truths:

> Capilupus too was of you, was silent,
> Till his own soul found him, crowned him, bound him
> With new laurels proclaimed him
> Master of song, and named him
> "The poet of lost years." Bowed 'neath times

over-flood
Buried in tome-tomb old
Till one who "understood"
Flamed through the parchment's fold
LO I AM THE RENAISSANCE. (YC)

As "Pageantry" celebrated Dante, Spenser, Browning, Chaucer, and the troubadors for their positive qualities, "Ghero" admired not only the faith of the Latin writers of the Renaissance, but also Ghero's accomplishment in preserving their writing in his anthology. Pound later admired Confucius and the collector of the Noh plays for the same reason, and compiled his own anthology, Confucius to Cummings. While liberating himself from technical conventions, Pound worked to re-examine cultural history in search of examples of buried beauty. Respect for past accomplishments is another trait for which Pound, as an iconoclast, has not received sufficient credit.

The type of historical character Pound appreciated can be seen in another early poem of some length, "Jacques Chardinal--of the Albigenses," which presents the culture of the Albigensians as a luminous detail, a peak of European cultural history. Here the doomed leader of the Albigensians defends the ability of Art to survive, to continue to protect truth and beauty from the constant assaults of a vindictive world:

the arts fail not
while yet our blood
shall bid the Arts withstay
Hate and the cold and wrath
wherewith the world would slay
Beauty, that being Truth doth all
the world
Accuse of all world's shame and
worldly littleness.
So Triumph, till the sun with us
Shall die for one last time
entombed in gold. (CEP,245)

Metastasio's world, the magic circle, is within the reach of those with sufficient will to vision. The artist preserves Truth and Beauty by incorporating them in his song, protected from the wrath of "the world." This concept of opposition between the artist and society, which later developed into a staple of Pound's verse, is thus prepared for here.

In the early unpublished narrative poem "Old Chests: With Thanks to Leigh Hunt," the attempt to burst the bands of technique and to penetrate into the essential core of truth was subsumed under the attempt to reveal the soul of man:

Nay to be brief and end it all,
This my mad striving to burst the bands of technique
And pierce th'expression to the very truth
I'd show the heart and blood and not the clothes
The king and not his crown

> The man's soul not his waistcoat.
> And if I may not, at least show
> Men the way to try . . . (YC)

Such a pursuit enobled poetry for Pound, since it concerned itself--as did the supreme intelligence of the universe--with eternal values. This belief guided Pound's attempt to write his long poem for the next sixteen years.

The essential difficulty which the young Pound encountered in his attempt to "at least show/Men the way to try" to penetrate the truth of the cosmos, was that as he grew he found his concept of the universe enlarging. This continuous discovery of new interrelationships made it difficult for him to summarize his vision into a single coherent statement. His perception of this difficulty was put most vividly in the early, unpublished, "To R.B." Though the "crust of dead English" still plagued his style, Pound stated his discovery in Robert Browning of a shared vision of universal coherence:

> Begin with a different or a new idea and as we grow, following that idea in all its byways and branches, so we grow to comprehend it but a part of some greater thought tree, seen before in some other part and not known by us to be the same. So my Cavalcanti growing, joins Sordello, Sordello whom my faint understanding failed to comprehend till Guido stood ready for the

acting.

> Then looking on the fruits of both these men
> For fruit is the tree's token,
> Lo thou one branch, and I
> A smaller stem have broken,
> Both of one tree and in quality the same,
> thou show'st th'incomprehension's self
> Being greater and poet.
> . . . [40 lines omitted]
> But I ramble as ever,
> Thought half-cut from next thought--
> Two radii ill seen are blurred to one.
> And in o'er great confusion
> The priest and levite passing,
> See no radii, as such, at all;
> Nor even guess the circle and its laws
> Or know a centre and that lives lead thither.
> Or living mid mixed lines,
> Have no chance to hear
> The harmonies of thought God-leading. (YC)

But Pound found his attempt to create harmonies "of thought God-leading," to create a magic circle in his art, frustrated by his growth of understanding: "Two radii ill seen are blurred to one." His difficulty revealed itself through the two metaphors he chose to express coherence. On the one hand there is the circle, perfectly centred by God, which reflects itself in the perfect work of art; on the other, there is the tree, which explored "in all its byways and branches" reveals itself but a part "of some greater thought tree," and cannot find its proper

expression in a completed work of art. Pound did not yet hold the belief that since following the tree's byways and branches mimicks the mind's movement, artistic kinesis provides the best way to trace the path of man's divine spark.

B

The Circle

It is not surprising, therefore, that the metaphor of the circle characterized Pound's comments about art during the 1908-1915 period. Dante's Commedia was the model Pound wanted to emulate in his own long poem, and he compared its formal perfection to that of the circle in The Spirit of Romance (1910). What is more suprising is the detailed way in which he compared its geometrical implications to those of a mathematical equation. Pound claimed that the four levels of meaning in the poem (i.e., the literal, the allegorical, the anagogical, the ethical) could be compared to the formula $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, which expresses:

1st. A series of abstract numbers in a certain

relation to each other.
2nd. A relation between certain abstract numbers.
3rd. The relative dimensions of a figure; in this case a triangle.
4th. The idea or ideal of a circle.

Thus the Commedia is, in the literal sense, a description of Dante's vision of a journey through the realms inhabited by the spirits of men after death; in a further sense, it is the journey of Dante's intelligence through the states of mind wherein dwell all sorts and conditions of men before death; beyond this, Dante or Dante's intelligence may come to mean "Everyman" or "Mankind," whereas his journey becomes a symbol of mankind's struggle upward out of ignorance into the clear light of philosophy . . . In a fourth sense, the Commedia is an expression of the laws of eternal justice; "il contrapasso," the counterpass, as Bertran calls it or the law of Karma, if we are to use an Oriental term. Every great work of art owes its greatness to some such complexity. (SR, 127-28).

Art becomes as explicable as a mathematical formula for the circle. Similarly, two years later, in "The Wisdom of Poetry"(1912), Pound made an extended comparison between what "the analytical geometer does for space and time" and what "the poet does for the states of consciousness":

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

the boundless ether.

> As the abstract mathematician is to science so is the poet to the world's consciousness. Neither has direct contact with the many, neither of them is superhuman or arrives at his utility through occult and inexplicable ways. Both are scientifically demonstrable. (SP,332).

The poet seeks to create absolute equations in his art, to create a "magic circle," but he does so in scientifically demonstrable ways, and his work may have practical results, like a road or a bridge; hence, Pound went on to compare the poet's function to that of two mathematicians whose abstract computations, undertaken "for no cause other than their pleasure in the work" led to the wireless telegraph.

And two years later, Pound published "Vorticism" in the Fortnightly Review (September 1914), using the formula for the circle developed earlier to explain the kind of dynamism implied by "vorticism." Using the idiom of analytical geometry, Pound says, "one is able actually to create":

> The equation $(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2$ governs the circle. It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any circle and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits. It is the universal, existing

> in perfection, in freedom from space and time . . . . It is in this way that art handles life. The difference between art and analytical geometry is the difference of subject-matter only. Art is more interesting in proportion as life and the human consciousness are more complex and interesting than form and numbers . . . .
>
> Great works of art contain this . . . sort of equation. They cause form to come into being. By the "image" I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about a, b, and c, having something to do with form, but about sea, cliffs, night, having something to do with mood.
>
> The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node, or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing.[10]

That is, the formula for the circle provides an analogy for a dynamic complexity in art, a vitality springing out of the artist's ability to condense life and "the human consciousness" into an artistic vortex.

Even from this brief sketch of Pound's use of the equation for the circle, we can see his thoughts about it evolving. That is, Pound's concept of artistic perfection changed during this period; it became an important duty of art to represent the vitality of "life and the human consciousness" rather than to reflect the perfect formal unity of the cosmos. Not only Pound's concept of art, but his concept of the universe had begun to shift in emphasis

from stasis to kinesis.

But prior to 1914, Pound was less attracted to Browning's view of shifting realities of the universe in Sordello than to Dante's vision of its formal perfection in the Commedia. In his earliest projections of the shape of his long poem, composed around 1904, he planned to develop it in three sections, each with its own metre and its own mood: the first in terzine, having to do with emotion, . . the second in pentameters, having to do with instruction; the third in hexameters, having to do with contemplation.[11] He gradually dropped such rigid guidelines, and such a formal correlation between technique and manner of treatment, but the fact that he should have even seriously considered it is astonishing when one looks at the unprogrammatic form of the Cantos.

However, as late as 1911 we can find other evidence of his interest in highly structured works in "Redondillas, or Something of That Sort," where he cites the Ethics of Baruch Spinoza. He mentions Spinoza only in passing within the text of the poem, but includes three quotations from his work in the appended notes, which provide an insight to Pound's thought at this time:

> "The more perfection a thing possesses the more it acts, and the less it suffers, and conversely the more it acts, the more perfect it is."
>
> "When the mind contemplates itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and it rejoices in proportion to the distinctness with which it imagines itself and its power of action."
>
> And another passage . . . where he defines "The intellectual love" of anything as "The understanding of its perfections."[12]

Obviously, Pound had read the Ethics with considerable interest. The first quotation equates perfection with creative energy, the second equates joy with the distinctness of mental vision (foreshadowing Imagisme), the third equates love with creative analysis. It is not necessary to labour the point of how precisely these selections reflected Pound's attitude to art, particularly with regard to the necessity to add detailed knowledge to inspiration. He never valued artistic serendipity: e.g., "Here error is all in the not done,/all in the diffidence that faltered" (canto 81). Though his own mind jumped about--selectively--he greatly admired works of the opposite kind: cogent, sequential, carefully reasoned.

The occurrence of these citations in "Redondillas" does seem completely out of place, however, since it

rambles from one thought to the next, whereas Spinoza's Ethics obeys rigid structural guidelines set out with mathematical precision, so that initial axioms are followed by postulates, proofs, etc. Pound's attraction to the book can be explained by the fact that Spinoza, like Dante, attempted a "synthesis of the whole of reality" in his work, preceived the cosmos as Pure Act, and man as moving through this unifying pattern guided toward harmony by the enlightening power of divine reason. As T.S. Gregory puts it, Spinoza conceived of God as a verb, rather than a noun:

> Whereas in common speech, the word God ranks as a noun so that theologians will make Him the subject or object of quite ordinary predicates with astonishing facility, Spinoza thinks of God rather as a verb and of all existent things a modes of this activity. The world is not a collection of things, but a conflagration of Act whose innumberable flames are but one fire.[13]

Pound shared this syncretic vision of the cosmos as interacting forces, as shown in his admiration for Fenollosa's The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry, which celebrates active verbs as the key to understanding natural processes. Since for Pound, too, the universe consisted of interrelated activies rather than "things," his concept of stone alive, tree alive, mind alive, harmonized with the thought of both Fenollosa and

Spinoza.

This brief review of some correspondence of thought between Pound and Spinoza makes it easier to understand why he offered the philosopher as a"world prescription" for the 1910's in "Redondillas":

> If you ask me to write world prescriptions
> I write so that any may read it:
> A little less Paul Verlaine,
> A good sound stave of Spinoza,
> A little less of our nerves
> A little more will toward vision (CEP,218-19)

Pound's reference to a good sound "stave" emphasized the music, the harmony, he heard through the mathematical structure of the Ethics. But more than this, he chose to recommend Spinoza rather than Descartes, for example, because he provided an example of a mind capable of constructing a synthesis of reality--rather than an analysis. As we have seen in "To R.B.," Pound aspired to achieve a similar synthesis in his long poem, while admitting his current inability to do so: "I ramble as ever,/thought half-cut from next thought--/Two radii ill seen are blurred to one."

By 1912 Pound had isolated a further aspect of

Spinoza's thought, that of the necessity to free the intellect from set ideas and conventions. Pound related this concept to art's function:

> Poetry, as regards its function or purpose, has the common purpose of the arts, which purpose Dante most clearly indicates in the line where he speaks of:
>
> "That melody which most doth draw
> The soul unto itself."
>
> Borrowing a terminology from Spinoza, we might say: The function of an art is to free the intellect from the tyranny of the affects . . . to strengthen the perceptive faculties and free them from ideas, conventions; from the results of experience which is common but unnecessary, experience induced by the stupidity of the experiencer and not by the inevitable laws of nature . . . Poetry is identical with the other arts in this main purpose, that is, of liberation; it differs from them in its media. (SP,330)

Significantly, Pound titled this essay "The Wisdom of Poetry," to emphasize the bond in his mind between art and <u>ideata</u>. " A work of art need not contain any statement of . . . philosophical conviction," he says in <u>Patria Mia</u> (1913), "but it nearly always implies one."[14] A poem necessarily appeals to both intellect and emotions.

Thus, having defined words as the poet's "essentials to thought," he goes on to say that

> the Art of Poetry consists in combining these

> "essentials to thought" . . . with that melody of words which shall most draw the emotions of the hearer toward accord with their import, and with that "form" which shall most delight the intellect. By "melody" I mean variation of sound quality, mingling with a variation of stress. By "form" I mean the arrangement of the verse, sic into ballades, canzoni, and the like symmetrical forms, or into blank verse or into free verse, where presumably, the nature of the thing expressed or of the person supposed to be expressing it, is antagonistic to external symmetry. Form may delight by its symmetry or by its aptness. (SP,330)

When the poet achieves an emotional correlation between the melody of his poetry and its subject, and an intellectual correlation between the form of his poem and its subject, his art mimics the universal harmony and possesses an interior harmony which reflects man's innate perception of divine order within the cosmos.

The key element in this formulation is Pound's comment that form may delight by its symmetry or by its "aptness". His previous comments on form had stressed the need for symmetry in art; indeed, Canzoni contains experiments in dozens of symmetrical forms emphasizing his willingness to put his theories into practice. However, he had also experimented in early volumes with form which delights by its aptness, as in "La Fraisne" where it would be hard to argue that these disrupted lines fail to express Mirault's psychological state accurately:

Once there was a woman . . .
. . . but I forget . . she was . . .
. . . I hope she will not come again. (ALS, 16)

Clearly, the use of a symmetrical form in these lines would be antagonistic to the nature of Mirault's keen sense of loss. "La Fraisne" shapes forces into intelligible patterns which, though different from those of a canzone, are equally effective. The patterns resemble those of the human mind set free from convention rather than the symmetry and order of the cosmos. The most significant trend in Pound's poetry from 1904 to 1912 is his abandonment of symmetrical forms which reflect his earliest notions of the order of the cosmos, in favour of assymetrical forms which attempt to reflect a less stylized notion of cosmic harmony. He moves away from Dante's Commedia and toward Browning's Sordello as a model. At the same time, he can be seen moving away from a notion of art as a magic circle or sphere which orbits in splendid isolation from the human world, and toward the concept of the universe as the great tree Yggdrasil, which can never be known in its entirety, and so must be reflected in an art that follows the human mind as it searches to extend its understanding of universal coherence. While this movement away from a stylized view of the universe and of

art was not completed until 1921, it was well underway by 1912. Hence in "Redondillas" he complained of the deadly boredom instilled by predictable, conventional metre in a long poem: "O Virgil, from your green elysium / see how that dactyl stubs his weary toes". (CEP,220)

The ultimate purpose of art remained constant for Pound throughout this development, however: To draw the human mind into harmony with God, or as he later termed it, the supreme intelligence of the universe. Thus, in Guide to Kulchur (1938) he says that "the worship of the supreme intelligence of the universe is neither an inhuman nor bigoted action", and goes on to discuss the relation of art to this absolute:

> Art is, religiously, an emphasis, a segregation of some component of that intelligence for the sake of making it more perceptible.
> The work of art (religiously) is a door or a lift permitting a man to enter, or hoisting him mentally into, a zone of activity, and out of fugg and inertia.
> (GK,189-90)

Here, unlike his earliest statements, Pound considers art to deal with some component of the supreme intelligence of the universe, not with its entirety. Art selects, segregates, representative aspects of this governing,

organic intelligence to make it more perceptible. When the artist succeeds, he is lifted into a zone of activity - not into a static paradise, but into a state of boundless energy. This dynamic state of mind "is paradisical and a reward in itself . . . perhaps because a feeling of certitude inheres in the state of feeling itself. The glory of life exists without further proof". (GK, 223-24).

In this chapter we have examined Pound's theory of art, in terms of the themes and techniques of his early poetry and criticism and have found that he vacillated between the examples of Dante and Browning in his search for a form for his long poem, between kinesis and stasis. In Gaudier-Brzeska, he said that his bust by Gaudier was most striking two weeks before it was finished: "It was perhaps a kinesis, whereas it is now a stasis"; it had a titanic energy: "I do not mean that he was wrong to go on with it. Great art is perhaps a stasis. The unfinished stone caught the eye. Maybe it would have wearied it". (GB,104). Pound had a religious admiration for both kinds of great art, which he never entirely relinquished, but although he was suffused with admiration for Dante's achievement, he came to realize that his own genius was fundamentally kinetic. Hence the wistfulness with which he looked back on his early theory of absolute rhythm in 1921,

when about to abandon his allegiance to his cherished metaphysical absolutes, as demonstrated in his earliest poetry and criticism:

> Perhaps every artist at one time or another believes in a sort of elixir or philosopher's tone produced by the sheer perfection of his art; by the alchemical sublimation of his medium; the elimination of accidentals and imperfections. (LE,442)

II

ARCHITECTONICS

Pound's technical choices reflected his notion of the moral function of the poet. This chapter sets forth those architectonic principles in Pound's early work which illustrate the philosophy underlying his constant attempt to write a long poem and which point toward the method of XVI Cantos.

Pound set out to write a long poem from 1904, and to model his effort on the most sublime of philosophic epics: "The first thing was this: You had six centuries that hadn't been packaged. It was a question of dealing with material that wasn't in the Divinia Commedia".[1] Between 1902 and 1911 he wrote dozens of unpublished poems, among them many of up to one hundred lines - some of which have been quoted from in Chapter One. Unpublished letters written during this period show that he thought of his volumes of poetry as illustrations of a syncretic vision, unified by a coherent aesthetic philosophy. Both long poems and letters attest to his early interest in major form. His art reflected, therefore, from its inception, a

concern to provide an overall structure for individual perceptions. As stressed in the first chapter, this aesthetic bias stemmed from a holistic philosophy that viewed inclusiveness as characteristic of the creative mind in search of knowlege, beauty, wisdom.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Pound most admired those poets who have given to the variety of human experience a similar coherence. In his essay "On Virtue" (1911), he listed four poets "in especial virtuous", who "represent four distinct phases of consciousness":

> Homer of the Odyssey, a man conscious of the world outside him . . . Dante, in the Divinia Commedia, man conscious of the world within him; Chaucer, man conscious of the variety of persons about him, not so much of their acts and the outlines of their acts as of their character, their personalities . . . Shakespeare, man conscious of himself in the world about him . . . (CP, 29-30)

The connection Pound makes between virtue and these major attempts to present human consciousness prepares us to discern a religious motivation behind his lasting attempt to write a long poem. Recognition of this religious attitude toward the writing of a long poem contributes greatly to an appreciation of the Cantos.

A

The Cycle of Noh Plays

To illustrate the nature and importance of this religious element to Pound we can usefully consider the basis of a formal connection Pound sees between three works: The Commedia, a cycle of mystery plays, and a cycle of Noh plays. A holistic vision based on a religious attitude to life unifies each of these entities. The first hint of the importance of this element in major works of art comes as a throw-away during Pound's summation of the importance of the Commedia in The Spirit of Romance (1910).

> The Divinia Commedia must not be considered as an epic; to compare it with epic poems is usually unprofitable. It is in a sense lyric, the tremendous lyric of the subjective Dante . . . The Commedia is, in fact, a great mystery play, or better, a cycle of mystery plays. (SR, 153-54)

Pound picked up on the central significance of the religious element in these mystery plays for major works of art while editing Japanese Noh plays five years later, in 1915, when he pointed out that the plays of the Greek dramatists, Shakespeare, and the writers of Noh drama, each had "an independent growth from miracle plays--the first

from the plays of the worship of Bacchus, the second from the plays of the worship of Christ, the third from the plays of the worship of Shinto deities and of Buddha".[2] Here, Pound points to a religious component in each culture which provided a common basis for works otherwise and traditionally considered to be separate. The overall coherence which he noted in the major works of Homer, Dante, Chaucer, and Shakespeare, in 1911, are by 1915 found to be present as well in the individual works of the Greek dramatists and the writers of Noh. Pound's critical eye was habitually syncretic: his creative eye likewise.

His detailed comments on the undetected principle of unity which binds together the cycle of Noh plays alert us to the possibility of a similar element in his own early work. Even scholars of the Noh theatre, Pound said, have been blind to a religious attitude which unifies and binds together individual Noh plays.

> They have not understood the function of the individual plays in the performance and have thought them fragmentary, or have complained of their imperfect structure. The Noh plays are often quite complete in themselves; certain plays are detachable units, comprehensible as single performances, and without annotation or comment. Yet even these can be used as part of the Ban-gumi, the full Noh programme. Certain other plays are only "formed and intelligible when considered as part of such a series of plays. Again, the texts or libretti of certain other plays, really

> complete in themselves, seem to us unfinished, because their final scene depends more upon the dance than on the words. (CNPJ, 6)

Perhaps Pound's comments on the final scene depending on a dance for completion connect with the sheet of paper he handed Hugh Kenner on the lawn of St. Elizabeth's, "bearing sixteen idograms, 'for the last canto".[3] At any rate, Pound's interest here in the relationship between individual artistic units and major form is clearly relevant to the structure of the Cantos.

Most important to our discussion of Pound's development of major form, however, is the unifying principle behind the Noh cycle of plays, or "Ban-gumi". Speaking of the principle, Pound notes that tradition dictates that specific kinds of plays be arranged in a set order, to achieve a definite response from the audience. Remembering that the Noh "tradition" arises from the "plays of the worship of the Shinto deities and of Buddha", we will discern a strong religious element in this arrangement, which Pound sets forth by quoting from the "secret book of Noh"..

> A "Shugan" must come first. And Shugen, or

contratulatory pieces, are limited to Noh of the Gods (that is, to pieces connected with some religious rite), because this country of the rising sun is the country of the gods . . . In praise of them we perform first this Kami-No.

The Shura, or battle-piece, comes second . . . to . . .defeat and put out the devils we perform the Shura. (That is to say it is sympathetic magic).

Kazura, or Onna-mono . . . come third. Many think that any Kazura will do, but it must be a "female Kazura", for after battle comes peace, or Yu-gen, mysterious calm, and in time of peace the cases of love come to pass. Moreover, the battle-pieces are limited to men; so we now have the female piece in contrast like in sic and yo . . .

The fourth piece is Oni-No, or the Noh of spirits. After battle comes peace and glory, but they soon depart in their turn. The glories and pleasures of man are not reliable at all . . . Here are shown the struggles and the sins of mortals, and the audience, even while they sit for pleasure, will begin to think about Buddha and the coming world . . .

Fifth comes a piece which has some bearing upon the moral duties of man . . . This fifth piece teaches the duties of man here in this world as the fourth piece represents the results of carelessness in such duties.

Sixth comes another Shugen or congratulatory piece, as conclusion to the whole performance, to congratulate and call down blessing on the lords present, the actors themselves, and the place. To show that though the spring may pass, still there is a time of its return, this Shugan is put in again just as at the beginning. (CNPJ, 9-11)

Such a cyclical structure reflects a coherent vision of life. The "Ban-gumi" begins and ends with a play in praise of the gods, the "Shugen", in order to call down blessing

both on those present "and the Place". XVI Cantos possesses a similar cyclical structure, beginning with Odysseus returning from one war and ending with the commencement of another. It would be dangerous to press parallels too far, but praise of the gods (canto two), battle-pieces (Malatesta versus Pope Pius II), peace after battle (Aphrodite's emergence at the end of canto one), the transience of life (canto five), and emphasis on the moral duties of man (Confucius in canto thirteen), are all elements common to XVI Cantos and those listed in "the secret book of Noh". Pound's elements are not ordered as simply as those of the "Ban-gumi", but it could be argued that their rhythmical arrangement has the merit of catching the flux of life in a less "literary" fashion. As demonstrated in Chapter Six, the attempt to avoid all conventional literary artifice provided the major breakthrough whereby Pound arrived at a satisfactory kinetic structure of XVI Cantos, in 1921. The fact that all the elements of the "Ban-gumi" are set into rhythm within XVI Cantos implies that Pound may also have taken over the concept of unifying his long poem with a coherent philosophy. We know that he considered the possibility of following the use of a single image to provide unity in a Noh play in his long poem; why should he not also have considered this kind of structure?

Pound's comparison of the Japanese to the Western traditions with regard to their respective treatment of life provides a further clue to the influential nature of the Japanese Noh. His praise of the Noh theatre's ability to present a proportioned presentation of life stresses again that its particular power comes from being closer in touch with the religious antecedents of art than the Western tradition. In the Noh theatre we do not find a separation between aesthetics and a coherent philosophy of life. "The Noh", he says,

> holds up a mirror to nature in a manner very different from the Western convention of plot. I mean the Noh performance of the five or six plays in order presents a complete service of life. We do not find, as we find in Hamlet, a certain situation or problem set out and analyzed. The Noh service presents, or symbolizes, a complete diagram of life and recurrence . . . As the tradition of Noh is unbroken, we find in the complete performance numerous elements which have disappeared from our Western state; that is, morality plays, religious mysteries, and even dances - like those of the mass - which have lost what we might call their dramatic significance. (CNPJ, 11-12, my emphasis)

Again, Pound stresses the potential viability of a religious attitude to provide coherence to major literary form. In 1914 he praised Joyce for not stuffing life into "neat little diagrams". Here, a year later, he praised "the complete diagram of life and recurrence" in the Noh.

To present a "complete service of life" - note the religious connotation - is to avoid fragmenting literature and one's philosophy of life. Worship for the cohesive powers of the life-force clearly underlay Pound's appreciation of the cycle of Noh plays. As we have seen, Pound discerned such religious celebration of the life force inspiriting the Divinia Commedia, the Greek plays, Shakespeare's plays, and the Japanese Noh theatre, providing an overall emotional unity to extended treatments of the human condition. Pound's unshaken confidence in this force can be gauged by precisely those lines in Drafts and Fragments which have been too often only understood in the negative sense:

> i.e. it coheres all right
> even if my notes do not cohere.
> (canto CXVI)

B

A Lume Spento

The attempt to present such a "complete service of life" lies behind Pound's earliest experiments with major

form, including his organization of volumes of poetry. For instance, having had A Lume Spento privately printed in Venice in 1908, Pound sent a copy to William Carlos Williams. In answer to a number of criticisms in Williams' reply, Pound at one point showed that he thought his book, far from being too gloomy, was too sunshiny:

> If you mean to say that A.L.S. is a rather gloomy and disagreeable book, I agree with you. I thought that in Venice. Kept out of it one tremendously gloomy series of ten sonnets - a la Thompson . . . which are poetically rather fine in spots. Wrote or attempted to write a bit of sunshine, some of which - too much for my critical sense, - got printed. (SL, 5)

Pound already shows an awareness of the need to balance opposing elements within the book. Hence he points to spots of sunshine within the book, and defends the inclusion of "The Decadence": "'Vana.' "Chasteus.' 'Decadence'-- writ in plural; even if not it is answered and contradicted on the opposite page". That is, the gloom of "The Decadence" ("We see Art vivent, and exult to die") does not express Pound's personal gloom - it is written in the plural -- and is contradicted by the "sunshine" of "Redivivus", "Li Bel Chasteus", and "Vana" ("And little red elf words crying 'A Song'"). Pound created opposing moods and set them into juxtaposition within his first volume;

this is one slight indication that he was thinking about architectonics from the beginning of his career, and that his first principle was to establish contradictory moods and emotions within an overall structure. Ten years later, in 1918, remembering his early difficulties in this regard, he offered the results of his labour to Marianne Moore:

> For what it is worth, my ten or more years of practice, failure, success, etc. in arranging tables of contents, is a votre service. Or at any rate unless you have a definite scheme for a sequence, I would warn you of the very great importance of the actual order of poems in a booklet. (I have gone right and gone wrong in this at one time or another and know the results.) (SL, 143)

And when Pound sent a packet of poems to Violet Baxter Jordan on October 24, 1907, which were to appear in A Lume Spento, he explained why he was sending more than originally inteded: "One can hardly get a system of Philosophy into one letter; ergo you will have, if you want it, to take the hodge podge as it comes." In the same letter he reveals that he is only interested in art and ecstasy, "ecstasy, which I would define as the sensation of the soul in ascent, art as the expression and sole means of transmuting, of passing on that ecstasy to others"[4] (p. 109). That is, for the young Pound art expressed a system of philosophy which did not deal with social concerns such

as economics. Pound's stress on this "actual order of poems in a booklet" merits further study, first in Exultations, the Canzoni.

C

Exultations and Canzoni

Pound wrote an unpublished letter to Violet Scott Jordan Baxter in September 1911, two years after the publication of Exultations (Oct. 1909). This letter provides us with solid evidence that Pound carefully arranged a group of poems in that volume to achieve an overall effect, and that the volume was an early attempt to present "a complete service of life". The letter is in defense of the poet's right to present sexual passion. Unlikely as it seems today, the poem in question is "Pierre Vidal Old":

> And conquered! Ah God! conquered!
> Silent my mate came as the night was still.
> Speech? Words? Faugh! Who talks of words
> and love?!
> Hot is such love and silent,
> Silent as fate is, and as strong until
> It faints in taking and in giving all[5]

Pound's defence is startling: "The position of the poem is "sic, in?) a series of exultations should be noted." He elaborates:

> Thus. Night Litany - Awe in the presence of beauty. Sandalphon - The joy of submission to an uncomprehended supreme power & wisdom.
>
> Altaforte - Strife & Love of strife for strife's sake. & if you will love of Blood.
>
> Vidal - sexual passion. The Goodly Fere - love of strength.
>
> What I mean by its position in the series - incomplete tho' the series still is - is that the collection as a whole should give a more or less proportioned presentation of life. Each poem is in some extent the analysis of some element of life, set apart from the rest, examined by itself. The only question to answer is "Do I present these things honestly? or do I try to persuade the reader to accept a false set of values."
>
> The rottenest morality that an artist can have is that snivelling "idealism" which tries to pretend that life is something more prudish than gord made it.(YC)

This valuable letter provides undeniable evidence that his overall attempt was to give "a more or less proportioned presentation of life" in the collection as a whole, long before he began a similar attempt in the Cantos. Pound's apology for the fact that this series lacks completeness marks Exultations as an early stage of his development. Later, the open-ended format of the Cantos reflected Pound's mature belief that any attempt to present life is necessarily incomplete; one can never fit life into "neat

little diagrams". Pound's definition of artistic morality makes plain that sexual passion must be part of any attempt to give a proportioned presentation of life. Realizing this helps us to appreciate the moral bias behind the vitriol of later poems such as "To a Friend Writing On Cabaret Dancers" ("Until the last slut's hanged and the last pig disembowelled"), which was an attack on the dishonest presentation of sex in sugar-coated terms: "The rottenest morality that an artist can have."

That Pound deliberately followed a master-plan to present a proportioned presentation of life in his writing even prior to 1911 is further demonstrated by his introduction to the series "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" in The New Age (December 7, 1911). Both his critical prose and poetry up to Canzoni, he said, were part of his attempt to set forth a syncretic vision of life.

> I am more interested in life than in any part of it . . . One more word of the plan I have followed in (my prose writing). I have, if you will, hung my gallery, a gallery of photographs, of perhaps not very good photographs, but the best I can lay hold of.
>
> In The Spirit of Romance I attempted to present certain significant data . . . of certain poets . . . to make a sort of chemical spectrum of their act. I have since allowed it to impinge on my poetry in Canzoni, which is a great fault in the eyes of those critics who think I should be more interested in the poetry which I write myself than in "fine poetry as a whole".
>
> Personally, I think the corpus poetarum of more importance than any cell or phalange, and shall continue in sin. (CP, 23-24)

Here again we see the inclusive tendency, the attempt to present a "chemical spectrum" overriding the importance of the individual poem. Since Pound specifically mentions Canzoni, it may be worthwhile examining the way Pound hung his "gallery of photographs" in it, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of his editorial priorities.

Writing to his mother from Sirmio in April 1910, Pound could scarcely contain his pride that "the greatest of living poets" has praised his work:

> News comes from London that Yeats has been saying nice things about me . . . to the effect that "there is no younger generation (of poets). EP is a solitary volcano." "If he writes rhyme like an amateur he writes rhythm like a master." Well, he hasn't seen the later work where we begin to consider whether we'll rhyme or not. (YC)

The "later work" referred to the three canzoni printed in The English Review of January 1910 ("Canzon: the Yearly Slain", "Canzon: The Spear", "Canzon (To be Sung Beneath a Window").[6] And the stimulation for these experiments with rhyme? The full title of the first canzone was "Canzon: the Yearly Slain. Written in reply to Manning's 'Kore'". This title did not refer to the only poem which stimulated Pound's competitive spirit. In Frederick Manning's Poems

(1910) we find:

Canzone

To Dorothy Shakespear

. . .

Through the bare woods she came, and pools of light
Were darkened at her coming; and a moan
Broke from the shuddering boughs, and all the fleet
Leaves whirled about her passage, with the throng
Of her lamenting ghosts, who cried regret,
And passed as softly as the bats that flit
Down silent ways, beneath the clouded skies.

. . .

Wherefore, though in the cold I wait my plight,
And wander through the hoary woods, alone,
Hunted, and smitten of the wind and sleet,
Among these rooted souls, I would not wrong
The intense white flame of beauty mine eyes met
And married for a moment: in this pit
My blinded soul feeds on her memories.
Go, thou my song! Tell her, though weeping, yet
Her face is mine: such joy have I in it

I cannot shut the splendour from mine eyes.[7]

The fifteen pounds paid to Pound by The English Review in March 1910 for three canzoni paid his way to Italy, and Sirmione, where Dorothy and Olivia Shakespeare visited him

in April and May.[8] They brought him the news of Yeats' praise. Pound inscribed a copy of Provenca "Mistress Dorothy Shakespeare", and dedicated its final section ("Canzoniere: Studies in Form") to Olivia and Dorothy Shakespear.[9] How natural it is that Canzoni (July 1911) should have begun with a canzone written in reply to one by Manning, jousting poetically for Dorothy's favour.

"Canzon: the Yearly Slain" uses the form of Daniel's "Sols sui qui sai lo sobrafan quem sortz" to puncture Frederick Manning's idealized portrait of eternal love. It claims ironically -- with reference to what Pound had learned at Sirmione of Manning's relationship to Dorothy? -- that love vanishes soon after the lady disappears from the lover's sight: 'Love also is the Yearly Slain'" (Canzoni, 3).

And the volume ends with "Au Jardin", as Witemeyer and McDougal note a riposte to Yeats' "The Cap and Bells". Pound's poem considers the relationship between the poet and the lady he praises. Whereas the jester in Yeats' poem "first gives his heart and soul to the lady and, failing to gain her attention, finally presents her with his cap and bells - a clear phallic image", Pound's poem states unequivocally that he desires a relationship "that will

transcend mere sexuality".[10]

Pound's placing of these rebuttals of his contemporaries, Manning and Yeats, at the beginning and end of Canzoni, emphasizes his sense of the difference between his attempt to present "a proportioned presentation of life" on the one hand, and Manning's idealistic sentimentality and Yeats' prudish treatment of sexuality on the other. Moreover, Pound's two poems display his eagerness to compete with his contemporaries both in technical matters and in the honest presentation of life -- a lasting and profound element in Pound's writing. Pound's canzoni attempt to surpass Manning's and to respond to Yeats' criticism of his ability to rhyme. By answering the rhymes of "The Cap and Bells":

> "I have cap and bells," he pondered,
> "I will send them to her and die";
> And when the morning whitened
> He left them were she went by.
>
> She laid them upon her bosom,
> Under a cloud of her hair,
> And her red lips sang them a love-song
> Till stars grew out of the air[11]

with the free verse of "Au Jardin", however, Pound underlined his determination to go beyond Yeats' mastery of

rhyme and to explore new modes of poetic organization.

> I loved a love once,
> And, may be, more times,
> But she dances like a pink moth in the shrubbery.
>
> Oh, I know you women from the "other folk,"
> And it'll all come right,
> O'Sundays.
>
> "The jester walked in the garden."
>
> Did he so?
>
> ("Au Jardin")

But finally Pound's technical competitiveness is not the most important thing. For the art of poetry called for a preeminently truthful presentation of life, not Manning's nineteenth century romantic idealism, nor the early Yeats' maudlin treatment of the lady with her "red" lips, "bosom", and "cloud" of hair. While no one would claim Canzoni marks Pound's achievement of "a language to think in", it does at least indicate a remarkable clarity of purpose. The attempt: to arrange "a gallery of photographs", taken directly from life, in distinction to pictures like Burne-Jones' Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, where Elizabeth Siddal's eyes "teach / Cophetua to raphsodize" (Mauberley). In 1917, Pound went on to experiment with ways of avoiding rhapsody in art, and published an essay titled "The Camera

is Freed From Reality" in Vortographs and Paintings by Alvin Langdon Coburn. By this time he had gone even further than the attempt in Canzoni to hang a gallery of realistic photographs.

Canzoni, stimulated by Pound's love for Dorothy Shakespear, sought to present this personal passion in a gallery of photographs of the Lady from Apuleius to Heine. The subject was not the Lady, however, but Beauty. Pound had been aware for a year and a half that this was among the tackiest challenges a poet could face. Writing Williams in October 1908, he had compiled a "list of facts on which I and 9,000,000 other poets have spieled endlessly"--among them, these two:

> 2. Young man's fancy. Lightly, heavily, gaily, etc.
> 3. Love, a delightsome tickling. Indefinable etc. etc.
> A) By day, etc. etc. etc.
> B) By night, etc. etc. etc. (SL, 4)

Now he was aware that Canzoni might not have overcome the challenge to make this subject interesting. Hence, in a note deleted at the proof stage he pleaded for tolerance:

> I ask you to consider whether it be, not a (sic) more difficult to serve that love of Beauty (or, even of some particular sort of Beauty) which belongs to the

> permanent part of oneself, than to express some sudden emotion or perception which being unusual, being keener than normal, is by its very way of being, clearly defined or at least set apart from those things of the mind among which it appears.[12]

Pound was uneasy about Canzoni's attempt to serve that "particular sort of Beauty" which "belongs to the permanent part of oneself". The kind of beauty he had in mind can be garnered from a glance at a group of his earlier poems which he reprinted in Canzoni.

Immediately following the canzoniere sequence which leads off the volume comes a group of five poems selected from A Lume Spento: "Era Mea" -- a translation of the Latin epigraph to "Donzella Beata", "Threnos", "The Tree", "De Aegypton" and "li Bel Chasteus". Why did he choose to include only these poems, and to place them all together? The obvious answer is that they all celebrate a variety of rare and delicate perceptions of beauty, which fits in with the overall tone of the volume, i.e.,

> I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
> Of the sky, and the wind thereof is my body (De Aegypto):
>
> . . .
>
> No more desire flayeth me,

No more for us the trembling
At the meeting of hands.

Lo the fair dead! (Threnos);

. . .

I have been a tree amid the wood
And many a new thing understood
That was rank folly to my head before. (The Tree);

. . .

We could not see the great green waves
Nor rocky shore by Tintagoel
From this our hold,
But came faint murmuring as undersong,
E'en as the burghers' hum arose
And died as faint wind melody
Beneath our gates. (Li Bel Chasteus);

. . .

Mistress mine, in what far land,
Where the myrtle bloweth sweet
Shall I weary with my way-fare,
Win to thee that art as day fair,
Lay my roses at thy feet? (Era Mea)

That is, these poems were carefully selected by Pound to fit in with the tone of Canzoni, not merely because he happened to like them. They do not represent the typical note in A Lume Spento: think of "Mesmerism" ("But God! what a sight you ha'got o' our innards"), "La Fraisne" ("Aie-e! 'Tis true that I am gay"), "Cino" ("Bah! I have sung women in three cities, But it is all the same"). Pound's selection of the softer note for inclusion in

Canzoni indicates a conscious attempt to establish, as a tradition in his own work, the attempt to serve that love of a particular sort of beauty "which belongs to the permanent part of oneself". The fact that critical attention paid to Pound's early poems generally rivets only on the vigorous note of poems like "Sestina: Altaforte" ("Damn it all! all this our South stinks peace!"), supports his perception that it is easiest to appreciate some emotion which, "being unusual, being keener than normal, is by its very way of being, clearly defined or at least set apart from those things of the mind among which it appears".

In his note, Pound goes on to say that the form of the canzone provides a means of expressing the intensely subjective love of beauty in a public manner. "The canzone is to me rather a ritual, the high mass, if you will, of poetry, than its prayer in secret." The ritualistic arrangement of words, the subtle blending of polyphonic rhymes, render, for Pound, the canzone a public altar at which the poet can best worship Beauty. And as we shall see in Chapter Four, the liturgic cadences of the sequaire of Goddeschalk provided Pound with another service or religious inspiration for giving his poetry a subtle kind of unity, four years later. If Canzoni fails to express

the most permanent part of Pound intensely enough, perhaps the comparative homogeneity of the volume is to blame. Certainly Pound's attempt here is not that of A Lume Spento, where gloomy poems are "answered and contradicted on the opposite page by sunshiny ones". When arranging Cathay four years later -- another gallery of photographs, from the Chinese this time -- Pound inserted "The Seafarer" in the middle to act as a fulcrum and point of contrast. Canzoni is the most homogenous of Pound's volumes of poetry, and therefore outside the main thrust of his development of major form, which is usually characterized by dramatic counterpoint.

We can, however, observe the birth of his later comparative method in the sequential poem which ends Canzoni, "Und Drang". This provides the only harsh notes in the volume. Whitemeyer has noticed the crucial importance of this series to Pound's development of major form.

> Pound's subject is the contrast between past and present, between visionary clarity and eviscerated confusion, between civilization and chaos. His formal structure consists of an aggregation of separate units, locally unrelated but contributing in each case some new dimension to the total meaning of the sequence. It is a dialectic structure which juxtaposes conflicting values between poems and within poems, working toward clearer definitions without arriving at a definite

> synthesis. Within the structure, we encounter a variety of moods and voices, ranging from the lyric and exalted to the ironic and casual. In all of these respects, "Und Drang" anticipates Pound's later and more famous sequence poems: Propertius, Mauberley, and The Cantos. It is Pound's characteristic long poem in embryonic form.[13]

The sequence consists of twelve poems, the first six of which were dropped after republication in the American edition of Lustra (1917). These six, as McDougal notes "depict the moral confusion of the pre-war world" while the last six stress "the applicability of medieval values to the contemporary world, as an antidote to the conditions chronicled in the first six poems."[14]

As can be seen from these critical summaries, "Und Drang" juxtaposes conflicting values in a way which is diametrically opposed to the homogenous organizing principle of Canzoni as a whole. Although the twelve sections of"Und Drang" vary greatly in length ("Elegia" having 26 lines, "The Altar" 4), tone (biting irony in "Au Salon", pure adoration in "The House of Splendour"), and subject matter (the modern world in the first six poems, the medieval world in the last six), they are united by the fact that most of them utilize a decasyllabic line. The sequence is balanced too.

In the first half the poet "laments" -- no other word will do -- the partial vision of his contemporaries.

> How our modernity
> Nerve-wracked and broken, turns
> Against time's way and all the way of things,
> Crying with weak and egoistic cries!
>
> All things are given over,
> Only the restless will
> Surges amid the stars
> Seeking new moods of life,
> New permutations.
>
> See, and the very sense of what we know
> Dodges and hides as in a sombre curtain
> Bright threads leap forth, and hide, and leave
> no pattern. (V)

The attempt of the Aesthetes to seek "new moods of life, / New permutations", to "fix the last fine shade", is to lose sight of the overall pattern. It leads to a "poetry of nerves" and egoism.

The result of this "tradition" is that the modern poet who has not lost sight of the overall pattern is "out of step with his time". His conviction of the integrity and coherence of the universe is attacked from every side of society.

> Confusion, clamour, 'mid the many voices

Is there a meaning, a significance?

That life apart from all life gives and takes,
This life, apart from all life's bitter and life's sweet,
Is good. (II)

Again, awful poetry results from Pound's deepest convictions. In this half of the sequence Pound deals with society for the first time; the uneasiness with which he does so here became established as a hallmark of his poetry. The poem stands as a milestone on Pound's road to dealing extensively with society.

The second half of the sequence points to the radiant world of Provence as an antidote to modern skepticism. Here Pound is much more confident. As Whitemeyer notes, the "bright threads" which "leave no pattern" in the fifth section are "restored into a meaningful tapestry"[15] in "The House of Splendour":

T'is Evanoe's,
A house not made with hands,
But out somewhere beyond the worldly ways
Her gold is spread, above, around inwoven;
Strange ways and walls are fashioned out of it. (VII)

And in section eight ("The Flame") Pound asserts that this

coherent vision remains possible because the world does cohere in meaningful fashion:

> There is the subtler music, the clear light
> Where time burns back about the-eternal embers.
> We are not shut from all the thousand heavens:
>
> . . .
>
> Sapphire Benacus, in thy mists and thee
> Nature herself's turned metaphysical,
> Who can look on that blue and not believe? (C, 48-49)

Pound's irritation with the shallowness of contemporary society intrudes again in section IX ("Au Salon"), providing a startling contrast to "The Flame". This poem's satire is directed not so much at modern triviality as at the poet who is willing to accept trivialities as an integral part of his life:

> I suppose, when poetry comes down to facts,
> When our souls are returned to the gods
> and the spheres they belong in,
> Here in the every-day where our acts
> Rise up and judge us;
>
> I suppose there are a few dozen verities
> That no shift of mood can shake for us;
>
> One place where we'd rather have tea
> (Thus far hath modernity brought us)
> "Tea" (Damn you!)
> Have tea, damn the Caesars,
> Talk of the latest success, give wing to some scandal,
> Garble a name we detest, and for prejudice?

Set loose the whole consummate pack
to bay like Sir Roger de Coverley's
This our reward for our works,
sic crescit glori mundi. (C, 50-51)

Finally, of course, "Und Drang" failed because the cozy tearooms of London could not adequately counter-balance the triune azures of the Lago di Garda in Pound's own mind; one senses that impatience with triviality was less interesting to Pound than love of the beautiful. The opposition set up is not dynamic enough, perhaps because Pound's poetry seems written out of duty rather than passion when it "comes *down* to facts," when he deals with society.

The contrasts within "Und Drang" reflect the indecisions of Pound's own mind. The sequence presents the modern poet as threatened by a loss of self in indolent languor, on the one hand, and by a loss of direction, purpose, amid the cacophony of modern society, on the other hand. Wishing to pursue truth and beauty, he finds himself in *und drang*, a state of acute stress, caused by his position amid the "many voices" of the undirected mob. Also paralyzing *directio voluntatis* are the hypnotic effects of love, the elusiveness of certainty, and the ranking by society of deed before thought, and thought before vision, in order of importance, e.g.:

> The deed blots out the thought
> And many thoughts, the vision;
> And right's a compass with as many poles
> As there are points in her circumference,
> 'Tis vain to seek to steer all courses even,
> And all things save sheer right are vain enough.
> (C, IV, 45)

Against this, the sequence puts forward positive elements: the unsought vision, the experience of timelessness, a sense of profound spiritual affinity with magic places like Lake Garda, traces of beauty which remain in the memory, an inherent certitude of the beauty of life. The poet teeters between subjective and objective reality in the sequence. He faces two dangers. He may fall into acceptance of the superficiality which characterizes the modern world, or he may lapse into a romantic dream-world totally disconnected from present-day reality. The sequence, and consequently Canzoni itself, ends with Pound maintaining a shaky balance. This false "resolution" is typical of Pound's sequential poems from "Und Drang" right down to the Cantos, with the exception of the Homage.

But the form of "Und Drang" provided Pound for the first time with a fitting expression for the quick movement of his mind. As we have seen, it balances the modern world against the medieval, beauty against ugliness, triviality

against substance. And though the burden of the sequence as a whole is to express the love of beauty which provides the theme of Canzoni, it does so by contrast, not by the accumulation of homogenous examples.

The structure of Canzoni is roughly chronological, moving from 11th century Provence to 20th century England. It opens with a group of canzoni and sonnets reprinted from Provenca (1910), which are modelled on specific poems by Dante, Arnaut Daniel, Jaufre Rudel and other troubadour poets, and which celebrate Beauty in pre-Raphaelite diction, as in this stanza from "Canzon: The Spear," modelled on the form of stanza used by Rudel in "D'un amor de lonh."15

> My love is lovelier than the sprays
> Of eglantine above clear waters,
> Of whitest lilies that upraise
> Their heads in midst of moated waters.
> No poppy in the May-glad mead
> Would match her quivering lips' red
> If 'gainst her lips it should be laid.
> (C, 4)

The group of poems reprinted from A Lume Spento mentioned earlier follow the canzoniere sequence, dealing with moments out of time. Following this group are a

number of excellent original poems, including "Prayer for his Lady's Life, "Blandula, Tenulla, Vagula," "Maestro di Tocar," "Aria," and the very beautiful "Speech for Psyche in the Golden Book of Apuleius":

> All night, and as the wind lieth among
> The cypress trees, he lay,
> Nor held me save as air that brusheth by one
> Close, and as the petals of flowers in falling
> Waver and seem not drawn to earth, so he
> Seemed over me to hover light as leaves
> And closer me than air,
> And music flowing through me seemed to open
> Mine eyes upon new colours.
> O winds, what wind can match the weight of him! (C, 22)

Here Pound is very close to the organic rhythm of "The Return," as he manages to convey Eros' tactile aetheriality, a being both like and unlike a god and a man. Significantly, this poem is written in free verse, as are most of the best poems in Canzoni, and not in the strict format of the canzone.

Within this group of original poems Pound interspersed a number of translations, including "La Nuvoletta," "The Golden Sestina: From the Italian of Pico della Mirandola," "Rome: From the French of Joachim du Bellay," and "Her Monument, the Image Cut Thereon: From the Italian of

Leopardi." These poems, like the "Victorian Eclogues" which follow them, take for their subject the passing of beauty. "Her Monument, the Image Cut Thereon," for instance, begins:

> Such wast thou,
> Who art now
> But dust and rusted skeleton.
> Above the bones and mire,
> Motionless, placed in vain,
> Mute mirror of the flight of speeding years,
> Sole guard of grief
> Sole guard of memory
> Standeth this image of the beauty sped.
> (C, 28)

Again, Pound focuses on remembered beauty rather than present desolation; the poems are elegiac, but not despairing.

As mentioned, original poems follow these translations, which are in turn followed by the parody "Song in the Manner of Houseman" and "Translations From Heine." "Und Drang" ends the volume. "Song in the Manner of Houseman" does add a welcome new note to the volume:

> O WOE, woe,
> People are born and die,
> We also shall be dead pretty soon
> Therefore let us act as if we were
> dead already.

The bird sits on the hawthorne tree
But he dies also, presently.
Some lads get hung, and some get shot.
Woeful is this human lot.
Woe! woe, etcetera . . .
(C, 38)

Pound's parody of the pessimism which sees no beauty or joy in life, provides a welcome new note but this occurs rather late in the volume.

The "Translations From Heine" show Pound in complete command of sound and a light-hearted irony which he does not explore again until the Homage, after which, in Mauberley, it becomes bitter. In section five, the delicate trills of choir boys sharply accentuate the thickness of the narrator's voice, and the syrupy female emotions:

The mutilated choir boys
When I begin to sing
Complain about the awful noise
And call my voice too thick a thing.

When light their voices lift them up,
Bright notes against the ear,
Through trills and runs like crystal,
Ring delicate and clear.

They sing of Love that's grown desirous,
Of Love, and joy that is Love's inmost part,
And all the ladies swim through tears
Toward such a work of art. (C, 40)

The humour, irony, and clarity of this poem and of the sequence as a whole, masterfully lightens the tone of Canzoni.

The long verse narrative, "Redondillas, or Something of That Sort," was removed by Pound from the volume at the proof stage. Like "Und Drang," it shows Pound's technical problems with writing a long poem to be related to his inability to discover a suitable way of handling contemporary society. And, as in "Und Drang," he sets up the lack of a coherent philosophy as the greatest flaw in the modern age, and the gravest obstacle to the poet wishing to write a long poem:

> We ever live in the now
> it is better to live in than sing of.
>
> Yet I sing of the diverse moods
> of effete modern civilization.
> If you ask me to write world prescriptions
> I write so that any can read it:
> A little less Paul Verlaine,
> A good sound stave of Spinoza,
> A little less of our nerves
> A little more will toward vision.16

Spinoza's certitude, determination, and optimism seemed natural antidotes to the poetry of "nerves" of the Aesthetes and Decadents, of whom Pound had written in 1909:

Great God, if these thy sons are grown such thin ephemera,
I bid thee grapple chaos and beget
Some new titanic spawn to pile the hills and stir
This earth again.17

No doubt Pound's perception of this need for a more potent belief to be offered the modern world motivated his plan to write a book in 1911 analysing the history of philosophy from Richard St. Victor to Pico della Mirandola. (YC)

The conflict between his love of Beauty and his hatred of modern society, which later became a permanent element in Pound's poetry, appeared in the opening lines of "Redondillas":

I sing the gaudy to-day and cosmopolite civilization
Of my hatred of crudities, of my weariness of banalities,
I sing of the ways that I love, of Beauty and delicate
savours.

In this "surfeited age" the poet needs "keen weapons for speaking," but the poem reveals Pound's nervous awareness that neither mind nor technique are yet ready:

Behold how I dabble in cosmos.
Behold how I copy my age,
Dismissing the great men with a quibble.
I know not much save myself,
I know myself pretty completely.

I prefer most white wine to red,
Bar only some lordly Burgundy.

A poem which recommends Spinoza in one breath, and white wine in the next, does not display the texture necessary to a major poem.

Pound is aware of something wrong with his technique as well:

I don't like this hobbledy metre
but find it easy to write in,
I would sing to the tune of "Mi Platz"
were it not for the trouble of rhyming.

and

This hobbledy-hoy
is not my own private invention,
We are the heirs of the past,
It is asinine not to admit it.
O Virgil, from your green elysium
see how that dactyl stubs his weary toes.

The poem's perpetual jog-trot rhythm distorts the sensibility--extremely delicate, concerned with nuances of perception and individual philosophy--Pound was attempting to convey. It is also out of keeping with his quick changes of thought, which demand equivalent changes of

metre. Pound should have known himself better than to attempt to use such a consistent pattern. Writing to his mother in February 1910 about his relief at having finished The Spirit of Romance, he had said:

> My mind, such as I have, works by a sort of fusion, and sudden crystalization, and the effort to tie that kind of action to the dray work of prose is very exhausting. One should have a vegetable sort of mind for prose. I mean the thought formation should go on consecutively and gradually, with order rather than epigrams. (YL, 23/2/10)

Pound's mind coruscated, never plodded dutifully along. It demanded a more flexible metre than that of "Redondillas." His metaphor for poetry in "The Serious Artist" (1912) reflects this capacity for quick movement: "Poetry is a centaur. The thinking, word-arranging, clarifying faculty must move and leap with the energizing, sentient, musical faculties." (LE,52). The problem with "Redondillas" is that it plods like Hudibras' nag, doesn't leap like Pound's centaur.

The best moments in the poem come when Pound registers subjective perceptions of Beauty, and disappear whenever he speaks about contemporary society:

They tell me to "Mirror my age,"
God pity the age if I do it,
Perhaps I myself would prefer
To sing of the dead and the buried.

"Redondillas" is a "statement of being" which registered Pound's awareness that his philosophic differences with his age, as much as his technial limitations, prevented him from interpreting it in a long poem. Pound finds nothing in society, negative or positive, strong enough to balance his subjective perception of beauty. This remained the crux of his difficulty in writing a long poem until he discovered the theme of usury, which provides heavy counterpoint in the Cantos.

To recapitulate, we have seen how the attempt to present "a complete service of life" motivated all Pound's experiments with major form to 1911, particularly with regard to the organization of A Lume Spento and Exultations. We have also seen that when he attempted to lessen the emphasis on dramatic counter-point of opposites, as he did in Canzoni--apart from "Und Drang"--vitality diminished. Although Pound habitually made retrospective criticisms of earlier works, he picked out Canzoni for more criticism than any other volume.

His doubts about the volume were first registered as early as the note in which he pleaded for tolerance in his attempt to present "that love of Beauty" which belongs to "the permanent part of oneself." And by the autumn of 1921, as he was about to make the most significant breakthrough of his career, Pound had come to think of Canzoni as completely dead: "A work of art made to please the artist my be comic . . . but it will not be dead. It will not have the distinguishingly moribund character of a review in the "Times," or of the poems in my volume Canzoni."19

Perhaps the reason Pound cut "Redondillas" from Canzoni was because he felt that he had not managed to treat society as well as his subjective appreciation of beauty. But in that case, why did he not drop those equally weak sections dealing with society in "Und Drang," especially since he did drop them after 1917? Perhaps because in "Und Drang" they were needed to balance the sections dealing with the radiant medieval world, which are generally good poems, and Pound felt Canzoni needed some such counterpoint of opposites. After 1917 they were no longer needed, for he had begun intensive work on the Cantos.

Canzoni marks an important turning point in Pound's development, away from this purely personal, subjective note and toward an attempt to deal with society. The birth pangs of this effort are registered in "Und Drang" and "Redondillas," both of which represent initial failures to counterpount the worlds of subjective beauty and external ugliness successfully within a long poem. But the sequential form of "Und Drang" provided a more fitting expression for Pound's mind than the narrative continuity of "Redondillas," and pointed toward the method of organization in XVI Cantos. This poem therefore represents the most important advance of all Pound's experiments with architectonics during the 1908-11 period.

PART TWO:

EXPERIMENT (1912-1919)

> *Tick* is a humble genesis, *tock* a feeble apocalypse; and *tick-tock* is in any case not much of a plot. We need much larger ones and much more complicated ones if we persist in finding out "what will suffice."
>
> --Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*

III

ABSOLUTE RHYTHM

While Pound's Imagist stage has been extensively discussed, his experiments with visual rhythms have gone unnoticed.[1] This is odd, because we would expect that someone experimental enough to leave the sonnet for the canzone might also be experimental enough to leave the purely aural field of rhythm for related visual experiments. In Part One we examined Pound's early attempts to present a "complete service of life" in his early long poems and carefully arranged volumes of poetry to demonstrate the ubiquitousness of his attempts at major form. In this chapter we will follow Pound's attempts to achieve this goal of inclusiveness through the Imagist stage.

Lawrence Binyon's The Flight of the Dragon: An essay on the theory and practice of art in China and Japan: (1911)[2] provides the essential clue to Pound's imagist experiments. The fact that Pound insisted on the enormous importance of this work when he reprinted sections from it in Blast No. 2 and Gaudier-Brzeska shows that he was

conscious of its influence himself. Critics have not touched on its significance to Pound's development.

A

Rhythmic Vitality

In his essay, Binyon quotes the Six Canons laid down by Hsieh Ho in the sixth century as the critical tests of painting. The first of these is most relevant to Pound:

> 1. Rhythmic Vitality, or Spiritual Rhythm expressed in the movement of life.
> 2. The art of rendering the bones of anatomical structure by means of the brush.
> 3. The drawing of forms which answer to natural forms.
> 4. Appropriate distribution of the colour.
> 5. Composition and subordination, or grouping according to the hierarchy of things.
> 6. The transmission of classic models. The first of these canons is the all-important one; for the others are concerned rather with the means to attain the end which the first contains.

Uncertain whether the full significance of the first canon comes through in these words, Binyon offers alternatives:

> Mr. Okakura renders it, "The Life-movement of the Spirit through the Rhythm of things": or, again, one might translate it, "The fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things."
>
> At any rate, what is certainly meant is that the artist must pierce beneath the mere aspect of the world to seize and himself to be possessed by that great cosmic rhythm of the spirit which sets the currents of life in motion. We should say in Europe that he must seize the universal in the particular; but the difference in expression is characteristic.
>
> (Binyon, p. 14)

To "seize the universal in the particular," as Binyon puts it, is exactly what Pound attempted in his imagist poems. Binyon's essay likely provided the theoretical spark for Imagism. The fact that the Six Canons apply to the visual arts seems to fit perfectly with this theory.

The important thing to note here is the breadth and scope of the theory that helped give birth to Imagism: imagist poems were never conceived as tiny fragments. Rather, they aimed to express "the fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things." Pound's statment in 1918 of the three principles of Imagism owes much to the Six Canons:

> 1. Direct treatment of the "thing" whether subjective or objective.
> 2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of metronome. (LE, 3)

The second tenet of Imagism advocates compression, particularity, as did Binyon when he recommended that the artist seize the universal in the particular. The third tenet: "to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase" also shares common ground with Binyon's explanation of the concept of "Rhythmic Vitality."

The most important insight for Pound in the Six Canons was that rhythm provides the "secret" vehicle for the artist to put his audience in touch with life:

> Art is not an adjunct to existence, a reduplication of the actual; it is a hint and a promise of that perfect rhythm, of that ideal life. Whatever rhythm is, it is something intimately connected with life, perhaps the secret of life and its most perfect expression . . . Not till the poet discovers his rhythm is he able to express his meaning.. (Binyon, p. 19)

Pound's "Credo" (1912) picked up and echoed this belief in the transcendent qualities and functions of rhythm:

> Rhythm--I believe in an "absolute rhythm,"a rhythm,

> that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.

When Pound talked of rhythm from this point on, he was not thinking of it as the product of a sensibility limited to counting and comparing the number of beats per line of verse. He was thinking of it as an absolute: "the artist must pierce beneath the mere aspect of the world to seize and himself to be possessed by that great cosmic rhythm of the spirit which sets the currents of life in motion."

To be put in touch with the rhythmic vitality of the life force was to unite energetically with the divine. In March 1913 Pound spoke of this experience as the hallmark of imagism:

> An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time . . .
> It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. (LE, 4)

The image does not present a static emotion: it unlocks

quick movements of the mind and emotions. The importance of rhythm as well as imagery to the imagist poem can be seen in "In a Station of the Metro," for instance:

> The apparation of these faces in the crowd :
> Petals on a wet, black bough
> (Poetry, April 1913)[3]

where the spacing provokes a rhythm mimetic of Pound's visually interrupted sight of the faces at La Concorde. Here, meaning inhabits the gaps, or "negative space", betweeen the words. We explore the spaces between the image clusters--each reader in his own way. Of his attempt in such poems Pound said in 1914: "One is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective . . . darts into a thing inward and subjective." (GB,89). Writing with "rhythmic vitality" in this way frees one from the restraints of time, creating a trance-like union with the divine spirit. The care is in the rhythm with which the visual images are ordered and presented.

Pound's imagist poems attempt to reflect a rhythmic process of subjective perception that is in harmony with the divine rhythms of the objective universe. And this subjective perception is individual for every reader, even

though the poems deal with the matter of external reality, because each man's perception of reality is unique and subjective: "A man's rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable."

Twenty-five years later than "In a Station of the Metro," Pound elaborated on the technique, particularly the way images juxtaposed in correct cadence can energize the readers mind:

> If le style c'est l'homme, the writer's blood test is his swift contraposition of objects. Most hokkus are bilateral.
>
> The foot-steps of the cat upon
> The snow:
> Plum-blossoms.
>
> May seem to the careless peruser to be only bilateral two visual images; but they are so placed as to contain wide space and a stretch of colour between them. The third element is there, its dimension from the fruit to the shadow in the foot-prints. No moral but a mood caught in its pincers.
>
> The waves rise
> And the waves fall but you
>
> (this is a hero's monument in Nippon)
>
> Are like the moonlight: always there.
>
> Another dimension. From dead thesis, metaphor is distinct. Any thesis is dead in itself. Life comes from metaphor and metaphor starts TOWARD ideogram. (SP, 422-23)

Clearly, Pound had continued to build on his 1913 discovery for 25 years. The plum-blossoms hokku sets spring and winter into dynamic, reflective interplay.

The round shape of a cat's snowy pawprints suggests plum blossoms; the purple colour of the mature summer fruit echoes the dark shadows cast by the indentations in the snow. The absence of the living cat provides a plangent analogy for spring's disappearance, through the visual image of a dim trail of paw prints disappearing in the distance.

The second hokku correlates masculine heroism and feminine veneration. The image of a young widow looking at the moon is not present, but may appear in your mind when contemplating the poem. If this happens, you may suddenly see a visual analogy between the woman looking at the moon, and the same woman longing for the dead hero. Pound termed this complex and dynamic type of fusion imagisme.

The moon's permanence, its inviolate, immortal beauty, contrasts with the flux of waves, and of the human emotion under tidal influence--the juxtaposition stimulating the experience of human loss. Both the mimetic rhythm of the

verse, and the mental rhythms that a consideration of numerous possible relations between the images stir in one, point to Pound's conscious artistic use of the awareness that rhythm "is something intimately connected with life, perhaps the secret of life and its most perfect expression," found in Binyon's essay.

By April 1912 Pound extended his concept of rhythm to expressly include languages of the mind that use no words. "It is nonsense," he says in "The Wisdom of Poetry,"

> to consider words as the only "essentials to thought"; some people think in terms of objects themselves, some in pictures, diagrams, or in musical sounds, and perception by symbolic vision is swifter and more complex than that by ratiocination.(SP, 329)

Clearly, "pictures" or images in themselves did not command the major portion of Pound's attention during the imagist period. Rhythm did. For the art of poetry consists of finding appropriate rhythms and shapes for a given experience:

> The Art of Poetry consists in combing these "essentials to thought," these dynamic particles . . . with that melody of words which shall most draw the emotions of the hearer toward accord with their import, and with that "form" which shall most delight the

intellect.

By "melody" I mean variation of sound quality, mingling with a variation of stress. By "form" I mean the arrangement of the verse, sic into ballades, canzoni, and the like symmetrical forms, or into blank verse or into free verse, where presumably, the nature of the thing expressed or of the person supposed to be expressing it, is antagonistic to external symmetry.

(SP,330)

Thus from the outset of the imagist period Pound considered form to be the accurate external tracing of an internal flow of energy: not a shell imposed from without but a rhythmic pattern arising from within. To succeed in this was to create a perfect pattern, to make an "equation of eternity."

All artists, he said in Gaudier-Brzeska, are indissolubly united by "this unending adventure towards 'arrangement', this search for the equations of eternity." (GB,122). The imagist poet explores one kind of "arrangement," searches in one of many possible ways for such equations of eternity. This was hardly a trivial attempt, and the imagist poem, as Pound conceived it, was hardly a trivial form. It worked dynamically, "composed in the sequence of the musical phrase"; it was not static. Rhythm is fundamental; Binyon called the first of the Six Canons "the all-important one; for the others are concerned rather with

the means to attain the end which the first contains" (Binyon, p. 13). It was fundamental as well to Pound's experiments with major form during the Imagist period, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter. Pound's interest in organic rhythm, kinetic form, gradually drew him away from his early attraction to the quality of stasis in art.

The search in art for "equations of eternity" was part of Pound's attempt to discover cosmic rhythms of perception beyond the world of mass production and conformity. The imagist poem refines our sensibilities. Philosophically, it awakens us to the coherence of the vital universe, to our kinship "to the tree and the living rock" (SR, 92). Thus in 1912 Pound compared the function of the poet to that of the analytic geometrician, both of whom deal with absolute laws "unbounded, loosed from the accidents of time and space," and found that both provide, for the initiated, "a door into eternity and the boundless ether." (CSP,332). Pound's phrasing here echoes that of his doctrine of the Image, which he says "gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art"(LE, 4). Clearly there was a link between the limited purposes of poetry generally, the

attempt to put man into touch with the divine--in Binyon's words, "to seize and himself to be possessed by that great cosmic rhythm of the spirit which sets the currents of life in motion" (Binyon, p. 14). Hence Pound's assertion in October, 1914: "The only true religion is the revelation made in the arts."[4] Such a revelation would be induced primarily through the poet's handling of rhythm.

Pound's favorite image for the connection between the rhythmic vitality of the universe and that of a poem was the rose in the steel dust. The patterns pre-exist, are organic, and known by their beauty; the job of the artist was to bring them into cognizance. Hence Pound's constant experiments; why copy the form of sonnet or canzone once its patterns have been fully appreciated? Most importantly, Pound enthused less over final patterns than the process whereby they come into being, the rhythmic movement from imperceptibility toward the tangible. Hence the strong stress on metamorphosis running through all his poetry--"The Tree" stands first in his Collected Shorter Poems.

This kind of rhythmic movement (chaos stirring toward order), is manifested in "The Return", praised by Yeats as "the most beautiful poem that has been written in free

form, one of the few in which I find real organic rhythm."[5]

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

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

Gods of the winged shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
sniffing the trace of air!

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

Slow on the leash,
pallid the leash-men!

Ruthven maintains that the poem is about "the pagan gods who, vigorous in antiquity, have managed to survive only as shadows of their former selves,"[6] but the poem cannot be tied to one meaning. It focusses on the aftermath of a conflict between godlike vigour, confidence, and some much greater force. Those who return are totally baffled, their inability to make sense of their experience reflected by

the rhythm; preoccupied, their wandering minds guide wandering footsteps: "See, they return, one, and by one, / With fear, as half-awakened." Organic rhythm is a very different thing, as Binyon had pointed out in 1911, from "a mere mechanical succession of beats and intervals" (Binyon, p. 15). The revelation which art aims at cannot be achieved using the most flagrantly predictable rhythms.

Organic rhythm is not limited to "The Return" among Pound's imagist poems; it animates them all, even "Fan-Piece, for her imperial lord," perhaps the least likely-looking candidate;

> O fan of white silk,
> clear as frost on the grass-blade,
> You also are laid aside. (CSP, 118)

In Binyon's essay Pound had read: "Just as a man's language is an unerring index of his nature, so the actual strokes of his brush in writing or painting betray him and announce either the freedom and nobility of his soul or its meanness and limitation. Personality, in the Chinese view of art, counts enormously" (Binyon, p.14). The courtesan's reticent, uneffusive language reflects her noble personality. Her contrast between the fan of silk

(casually handled, although delicate) and the green grass-blade covered by frost, invites a comparision between the indoor warmth of acceptance and chilly exclusion. Like her precise observation of details, the scrupulously delicate rhythm indicates nobility of character. Even the line-breaks underline the care with which nobility expresses personal emotion, each line set out with a rhythmic precision of expression too innate for agonizing loss to disrupt.

From these examples, then, we can see that the imagist poem arranged a cluster of rhythmic perceptions that set off echoing rhythms within the mind. It presented an equation of eternity through universal rhythms composed in "the sequence of the musical phrase." Such phrases may be brief; their validity depends only on the accuracy with which they stimulate the mind's movement. Perfect form, as Pound now considered it, resulted when the unmechanical rhythms of language correlated with the subtle rhythms of the processes of nature; then the artist had achieved "the fusion of the rhythm of the spirit with the movement of living things."

B

Image and Epigram

While the imagist poem aspired to "Rhythmic Vitality," its primary relevance to Pound's development of major form lies in his attempt to combine it with the epigram. Consequently, the sequential poems of the imagist period which counterpoint image and epigram, or the cult of beauty and the cult of ugliness, point more directly toward the organizing principles of the Cantos. Two factors lie behind the importance of these sequential poems. First, as we saw in Chapter II, Pound reacted with irritation and disgust to society, but more positively to "beauty;" the sequential poem allowed him to segregate these two moods within a single poem, and in this way to build up a complexity of texture impossible using the imagist poem alone. In this sense, these sequential poems built on the principle of counterpointing opposites first explored in A Lume Spento. Second, if the rhythms of the imagist poem reflected Pound's notion of a harmonious relationship between man and the cosmos, the epigram reflected the impatient, disharmonious rhythms of Pound's attitude to the trivialities of modern society. By attempting to yoke these rhythms into a single poem, Pound showed that he felt

a reconciliation possible in art between his perception of the organic orders of the cosmos, and his perception of aimless orders of society, "und drang." Although he failed at this time in the attempt to create a major form out of these materials, the sequential poems point toward the ultimate success of XVI Cantos in yoking the "cults of beauty and ugliness."

In his 1913 essay "The Serious Artist," (LE,41-57) Pound defined the cult of beauty as the art of cure: "it is the hygiene, it is sun, air and the sea and the rain and the lake bathing." The cult of ugliness, on the other hand, "is the art of diagnosis." During the 1912-14 period, Pound expressed these cults in the imagist poem and the epigram, respectively, but insisted that the two kinds of writing have something in common: "The cult of beauty and the delineation of ugliness are not in mutual opposition" (LE, 45).

The cult of beauty is a constant in Pound's poetry from the beginning, while the cult of ugliness enters his poetry only once he began to deal extensively with contemporary society, in "Und Drang" and "Redondillas" (1911). The nature of the origin and developement of the cult of ugliness in the imagist period therefore helps us

understand Pound's eventual choice of a major form.

In October 1912, Pound sent Harriet Monroe a batch of seemingly harmless poems titled "Contemporania." These included "The Garret," "The Garden," "Dance Figure," "Commission," "A Pact," and "In a Station of the Metro." "I don't know that America is ready to be diverted by the ultra-modern, ultra-effete tenuity of Contemporania," he told her. (SL,11). In December he sent her additional poems for the series, "which ought to appear almost intact or not at all," and attempted to settle her fears about their reception by saying "we're in such a beautiful position to save the public's soul by punching its face that it seems a crime not to do so. (SL, 13).

America was not ready to accept such treatment. "Contemporania" appeared in the April 1913 edition of Poetry. Perusers of this issue did not find therein the kind of poetry they expected, such as the following gem of Georgian banality offered by Aldington as typical:[7]

A little seed best fits a little soil,
A little trade best fits a little toil:
As my small jar best fits my little oil.

Instead, they were punched senseless:

Round one: O generation of the thoroughly smug
and thoroughly uncomfortable,
I have seen fishermen picknicking in the sun,
I have seen them with untidy families,
I have seen their smiles full of teeth
and heard ungainly laughter.
And I am happier than you are,
And they were happier than I am;
And the fish swim in the lake
and do not even own clothing.
(Salutation)

Round two: Go, my songs, to the lonely and the unsatisfied,
Go also to the nerve-wracked, go to the
enslaved-by-convention,
Bear to them my contempt for their oppressors.
Go as a great wave of cool water,
Bear my contempt of oppressors. (Commission)

Round three: Here they stand without quaint devices,
Here they are with nothing archaic about them.
Observe the irritation in general:
"Is this", they say, "the nonsense
that we expect of poets?"
"Where is the Picturesque?"(Salutation the Second)

To Pound's surprised delight, his poems raised dust among the critics. William Rose Benet ruffled his feathers:

> Mr. Pound's final jape has been too much for most of his admirers of the three really good poems which he once wrote. He now seems to delight in placing himself in the cheapest of categories . . .
> Is there no way of preventing youth from hanging itself in its own ego?[8]

And Wallace Rice, also writing for The Dial , exclaimed against this heretic who threatened poetry itself by "destroying the conventions of rhyme and rhythm."[9]

A few critics championed "Contemporania," notably Floyd Dell of the Chicago Evening Post Literary Review, whose editorial of April 4, 1913 began:

> Ezra Pound, we salute you!
> You are the most enchanting poet alive.
> Your poems in the April Poetry are so mockingly, so delicately, so unblushingly beautiful that you seem to have brought back into the world a grace which (probabaly) never existed, but which we discover by an imaginative process in Horatius and Catullus.[10]

"Dell is very consoling. It's clever of him to detect the Latin tone" Pound wrote Monroe on April 22, from Sirmione (SL, 19).

Pound reacted to the critical furor immediately, probing with typical aggressiveness further into the exposed nerves. By October, he had written a new series of poems, which he sent to Alice Coburn Henderson:

> I wonder if Poetry really dares to devote a number to my new work. There'll be a howl. They won't like it. It's absolutely the last obsequies of the

> Victorian period. I won't permit any selection or editing. It stands now a series of 24 poems, most of them very short . . . There'll probably be 40 by the time I hear from you. It's not futurism and it's not post-impressionism, but it's work contemporary with those schools and to my mind the most significant that I have yet brought off . . . I guarantee you one thing. The reader will not be bored. He will say ahg, ahg, ahh, ahh, but-bu-bu-but this isn't Poetry. (SL, 23-24)

Poetry didn't dare. Fifteen of Pound's softer poems were picked from this bunch for inclusion in the November number: "Ancora," "Surgit fama," "The Choice," "Gentildonna," and the two sequential poems "Lustra" and "Xenia." Pound resigned as Foreign editor in November, partly because of Monroe's resistance to printing Hueffer and partly, no doubt, because she refused to print his more provocative poems. On December 8, he withdrew his resignation pending the general improvement of the magazine. On May 23, 1914, he gave Monroe permission to omit poems likely to have the magazine suppressed, but insisted that she not make them "into a flabby little Sunday school lot like the bunch in the November number." Pound's poetry did not appear again in Poetry for nine months, until August 1914.

The kind of poem Monroe resisted during this period

can be imagined by those appearing in the December 1913 issue of Smart Set. At any rate, they seem to be the kind of poem which would cause the reader to say, "ahh, but-bu-bu-but this isn't Poetry."

> She had a pig-shaped face, with beautiful colouring,
> She wore a bright, dark-blue cloak,
> Her hair was a brilliant deep orange color
> So the effect was charming
> As long as her head was averted.[11]

> Why does the horse-faced lady of just the unmentionable age
> Walk down Longacre reciting Swinburne to herself, inaudibly?
>
> . . .
> Why does the really handsome prostitute approach me in
> Sackville Street
> Undeterred by the manifest age of my trappings?[12]

Having got a reaction by punching the public's face once, Pound punched again, harder. Inevitably, the escalation of conflict led to his exclusion from "the world of letters."

The climax of this conflict came with the publication of two numbers of Blast in June 1914 and July 1915. In 1914 Pound contributed this epigram:

> The New Cake of Soap
>
> Lo, how it gleams and glistens in the sun
> Like the cheek of a Chesterton. (CSP, 108)

And in 1915 he contributed a satire on Rupert Brooke's "ninety Petrarchan sonnets" in the "style Victorien de la 'Georgian Anthology'":

Our Contemporaries

When the Tahitian princess
Heard that he had decided,
She rushed out into the sunlight and swarmed up
  a cocoanut palm tree,

But he returned to this island
And wrote ninety Petrarchan sonnets.[13]

Unfortunately, this poem, though written before Brooke's death in the Dardenelles, did not appear till after it. Brooke's English friends and editors, who idolized him, were not amused. Harold Monro, editor of the Georgian Anthologies, was particularly upset. "The first year of the war knocked my intake gally-helly," Pound writes his father in 1918: "the second year I got back to 50% of pre-war gate receipts" (YC). In his own mind, the social disapproval of his satires and this fall in his income were causally connected. His reaction to this pressure toward conformity appears in a poem from Blast No. 2: "Et Faim Sallir Les Loups Des Boys":

I will cling to the spar,

Washed with the cold salt ice
I will cling to the spar--
Insidious modern waves, civilization, civilized hidden
    snares.
Cowardly editors threaten: "If I dare"
Say this or that, or speak my open mind,
Say that I hate my hates,
    Say that I love my friends,
Say that I believe in Lewis, spit out the later Rodin,
Say that Epistein can carve in stone,
That Brzeska can use the chisel,
Or Wadsworth paint;
                Then they will have my guts;
They will cut down my wage, force me to sing their cant,
Uphold the press, and be before all a model of literary
    decorum.
                Merde!
Cowardly editors threaten,
Friends fall off at the pinch, the loveliest die.
That is the path of life, this is my forest.
                (July 1915, p.22)

By this time Pound was not only using satire to attack prudery in modern society, but to defend himself against economic blacklisting. The cult of ugliness had now become in part a defense mechanism, a way of reacting to social disapproval.

"It is clever of Dell to detect the Latin tone" he told Monroe, confirming the Roman satirists' influence. This pleased attitude differs from the long diatribe he wrote against Martial in 1904, which ended:

> Yet let me cease my reading ere the stench grow stronger
> O Martial prince of frauds. (YC)

As late as January 1907 he told Felix E. Schelling that "since the study of Martial there is nothing I approach with such nausea and disqust as Roman life (Das Privatleben)" (SL, 3). Between 1904-07 and 1913, satire became Pound's normal reaction to contemporary Georgian society. Why?

The theme of the influence of economics on the artist escalates along with Pound's use of satire. By the time he felt the pinch of economic blacklisting in the first year of the war, Pound was ready to change his earlier views of the irrevelance of economics to the artist. That is, a concern with economics predates Pound's meeting with Major Douglas in 1919, and even his loss of income through blacklisting in 1915. In The Spirit of Romance (1910) he mused on how far artistic creation depends on financial prosperity:

> If one were seeking to prove that all that part of art which is not the inevitable expression of genius is a by-product of trade or a secretion of commercial prosperity, the following facts would seem significant. Shortly before the decline of Portugese prestige, Houtman, lying in jail for debt at Lisbon, planned the

> Dutch East India Company. When Portugal fell, Holland seized the Oriental trade, and soon after Roemer Visscher was holding a salon, with which are connected the names of Rembrant, Brotius, Spinoza, Vondel (born 1587) "the one articulate voice of Holland," Erasmus, and Thomas-a-Kempis. (SR,221)

And in 1911 he elaborated on this connection between art and trade in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris":

> When in Burkhardt we come upon a passage: "In this year the Venetians refused to make war upon the Milanese because they held that any war between buyer and seller must prove profitable to neither," we come upon a portent, the old order changes, one conception of war and of the State begins to decline. The Middle Ages imperceptibly give ground to the Renaissance. A ruler owning a State and wishing to enlarge his possessions, could under one regime, in a matter opposed to sound economy, make war; but commercial sense is sapping this regime. (SP, 22)

At this stage, "commercial sense" and "sound economy" provided a luminous detail by which a state of civilization such as that of the Renaissance could be recognized. Peace and artistic productivity were seen by Pound to flow inevitably from a healthy, capitalist, economy.

By October 1914, however, Pound trembled on the verge of his later belief that the economy of Georgian England

had become diseased. This now seemed a critical flaw to the artist who saw that he must be free from economic worries to create "untellable beauty":

> Nothing but a love of perfection, or of "God," or of "the untellable beauty," or something of that sort, will make a human being into the sort of person one wishes to meet. And nothing but such love, plus some reasonable chance of seeking that perfection, or that "God" or that "untellable beauty," will keep said human being a bearable companion.
>
> The "love" is, I suppose, "innate," or an "accident," or a "predestination," or whatever one likes to call it; the "chance of seeking" is, I suppose, the concern of man's economic and legislative faculties. One gets bored with "economists" and all their gallery, because they keep harping on the "chance" and because they want to prescribe <u>what</u> one shall do with it.[14]

Pound's boredom with economics began to disappear after he felt the economic pinch himself in 1914-15, and noticed how it impinged on his creative efforts. The clue to how he would attempt to incorporate economics into his poetry, however, was already there. Although Kenner says <u>Mauberley</u> (1919) is "Pound's first work to contain the word 'usury'"[15], "Octave" was printed in <u>Canzoni</u> (1911):

> Fine songs, fair songs, these golden usuries
> Her beauty earns as but just increment,
> And they do speak with a most ill intent
> Who say they give when they pay debtor's fees.

> I call him bankrupt in the courts of song
> Who hath her gold to eye and pays her not,
> Defaulter do I call the knave who hath got
> Her silver in his heart, and doth her wrong. (C, 15)

This early song points to how Pound was later able to reconcile the cult of beauty and economics. Kenner has noted, in this regard, that the first sixteen cantos "march straight from Homer's time, and Aphrodite bedecked in gold, to the World War which came about because gold was misapprehended" (PE, 408). Both the vocabulary and the association between gold and beauty were established as a tradition in Pound's work before 1919, when he began to turn his attention fully to the relationship between the individual artist and social economics. He already knew that it was possible to graft his new concern with economics onto the cult of beauty.

Pound took a while, however, to fully realize that the "commercial sense" of the Renaissance was no longer operative. As late as August 1912, he wrote his father to ask: "What's the matter with Wilson? Of course I don't mind T.R. if he really means to smash the trusts, tarriff, express costs, ect." (YC). It was not until four years later that he began to rail against Wilson, as in

"L"Homme Moyen Sensuel," for instance:

> An art! You all respect the arts, from that infant tick
> Who's now the editor of The Atlantic,
> From Comstock's self, down to the meanest resident,
> Till up again, right up, we reach the president,
> Who shows his taste in his ambassadors:
> A novelist, a publisher, to pay old scores,
> A novelist, a publisher and a preacher,
> That's sent to Holland, a most particular feature,
> Henry Van Dyke, who thinks to charm the Muse you pack her in
> A sort of stinking deliquescent saccharine. (CSP, 256)

America is "an intellectual and artistic desert," Pound wrote his father in October 1916. "AND no one has yet shot Woodrow Wilson" (YC).

A further stimulus to study economics came when Elkin Mathews' printer refused to set up a number of poems in Lustra. Lawrence's The Rainbow had been suppressed in 1915, and he was unable to get Women in Love printed. "You know I finished a novel, Women in Love, which I know is a masterpiece," Lawrence wrote Edward Marsh on January 5th, 1917,

> but it seems it will not find a publisher. It is no good, I cannot get a single thing I write published in England. There is no sale of the books that are published. So I am dished.
>
> I know it is no good writing for England any more. England wants soothing pap, and nothing else, for its

> literature; sweet innocent babe of a Britannia! Therefore I have got to get out some way or other.
>
> Do you think they would let me go to New York? I know I could make a living there.[16]

With these signs around him, Pound saw an age of repression contrary to all he had been working for loom over the horizon. He saw the law of censorship, passed in the interests of national security, being misapplied in support of prudery. Reacting with typical energy, and with John Quinn's help, he arranged for an uncensored version of Lustra (1917) to be privately printed in America. He began to think that it might well behoove the poet to turn his attention to the role of economics, to ensure that such a constriction of the poet's ability to communicate his thought would not arise again. But at this time his thoughts on economics did not express themselves through his poetry.

And before economics? How could Pound turn his negative emotions about social prudery and repression into poetry, whose expression of "a positive" distinguished it from prose? This is the weakness of his epigrams and satires, the cult of ugliness, in the 1912-14 period. He despised above all the triviality of the period. But what

can one usefully select to symbolize this? In "Und Drang" he had tried attacking "tea rooms." In "Amities" he castigated frequenters of moderate "chop-houses." He found both a dead end:

> The mind aching for something that it can honour under the name of "civilization," the mind, seeing that state afar off but clearly, can only flap about pettishly striking at the host of trivial substitutes presented to it.[17]

And yet his anger at the contemporary state of letters in England was very real. "Possibly a hyper-aesthesia," he wrote Edgar Jepson in May 1917,

> but I find no other word but ". . . "; the sensation of being thrust head downward up to the chin into the mire of an open privvy which comes upon me at the mention of the house of Murray, the Bookman, Seccombe, Chesterton, the whole order of these things.
>
> New Statesman conveys a dryer, a more dusty feeling. Certain people have felt this sort of thing about "life," I feel it about contemporary "litterchure," gensdelettres, etc.
>
> Poetry gets out of reach of the stench . . ..
>
> (SL, 112)

His response was to attack targets which represent this "litterchure," such as The Times. In his article "Wyndham Lewis" (The Egoist, June 15, 1914), he held up for

ridicule a selection from The Times "Poets, like Pierrots, indeed, in the days of their youth should think no longer than a minute at a time, at any rate while with pen in hand." "The really vigorous mind," Pound said, might be able to erect this kind of banality into a symbol of the state of mind which The Times represented, "which is a loathsome state of mind, a malebolge of obtuseness" (SL, 234). A mere five days later he answered his own challenge with the publication of "Salutation the Third" in Blast No. 1:

> Let us deride the smugness of "The Times": GUFFAW!
> So much for the gagged reviewers,
> It will pay them when the worms are wriggling in
> their vitals
> . . .
> HERE is the taste of my BOOT,
> CARESS it, lick off the BLACKING.[18]

Pound was not entirely successful here; his delineation of ugliness was too ugly, unleavened by wit. Though this was certainly not the "Picturesque" that we "expect of poets," neither did it possess the Olympian authority of The Dunciad.

"I am not at all sure," Eliot wrote of Pound in The Athenaeum (1919), "that, even with Martial behind it, the

modern satirical vein is of permanent importance." Putting his finger--for once--directly on Pound's pulse, he observed that his satires often "irritate in a way in which good poems should not irritate; they make you conscious of having been written by somebody; they habve not writter themselves."[19] Perhaps the extremity of Pound's reaction to contemporary trivia is, finally, the most baffling aspect of his work.

At any rate, Pound was still prepared to defend his anger seven years later, in 1922, when writing to Felix Schelling:

> Honestly, I think Lustra has done a work of purgation of minds, meritorious as the physical products of Beecham. Being intemperate, at moments, I shd. prefer dynamite but in measured moments I know that all violence is useless (even the violence of language . . .) However, one must know an infinite amount before one can decide on the position of the border line between strong language and violent language.
> (SL, 181-82).

For Pound, at least, the cult of ugliness was a necessary part of the attempt to purge society of triviality.

We have traced Pound's attitude to society from 1912 to 1916, and seen it move from relatively good-humoured

satire toward diatribe. We have also seen Pound's attention turn increasingly toward the relation between economics and the artist, under the pressure of finding himself economically blacklisted following the publication of Blast No. 1. It seems likely that this first-hand experience underlies Pound's subsequent examination of the relation between invidious economic policies and war. The opposition between subjective beauty and social ugliness, which developed into a staple of Pound's poetry, achieved its first full formulation during the imagist period. It is not suprising, therefore, to find that Pound's experiments with major form during this time attempted to incorporate these two attitudes--the cults of beauty and ugliness--within single sequential poems.

C

The Sequential Poem

Pound published six sequential poems in 1913 and 1914: "Lustra" and "Xenia" in Poetry (Nov. 1913); "Zenia" in Smart Set (Dec. 1913); "Salvationists," "Amities," and "Ladies" in Poetry (Aug. 1914). Of these, "Zenia" best

illustrates the nature of Pound's attempt to overcome the limitations of imagism, its homogeneity, by counterpointing it with the epigram.

"Zenia" builds a dynamic by counterpointing the cult of beauty with the cult of ugliness throughout the eleven sections.[20] Thus the sarcastic "Epitaph" follows the gentle "Alba":

II

As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

III

(Epitaph)

Leucis, who intended a Grand Passion,
Ends with a willingness-to-oblige.

By juxtaposing imagist poems and epigrams within the framework of a sequential poem in this way, Pound kept the reader alert. While the first poem dealt with the economic limitations of the artist's life, the last presented one of its (non-economic) advantages:

I

Who am I to condemn you, O Dives,
I who am as much embittered
With poverty

As you are with useless riches?

IX

"It rests me to be among beautiful women.
Why should one always lie about such matters?

I repeat:
It rests me to converse with beautiful women
Even though we talk nothing but nonsense.
The purring of the invisible antennae
I find both stimulating and delightful."

If the imagist poem and epigram are thought of as contrasting colours, "Zenia" can be considered an attempt to present a broad range of hues within a single composition. How does this relate to Pound's attempt at major form? In 1922, he wrote Schelling: "The first 11 cantos are preparation of the palette. I have to get down all the colours or elements I want for the poem" (SL, 180). And as early as May 1914, Pound had written to ask his mother to send him the names of "a carefully selected scale" of seven colours he had acquired earlier from Whiteside (YC). "Zenia"'s counterpoint aimed at variety and range rather than homogenous unity.

Forrest Read has discriminatingly noted Pound's "belief that personality could give a sort of unity to apparently different poems, or that a collection of

different elements could be held together by the force of the creative mind, one formal principle of The Cantos. In this respect, Read noted that Pound referred to Lustra not by title, but by a monogram for his personality, i.e., "£".[21] And as we saw in the first part of this chapter, for Pound, rhythm pre-eminently expressed personality, as he had learned from his study of Binyon's The Flight of the Dragon. Thus the counterpointing of image and epigram in the sequential poem suggests that here Pound explored a new kind of rhythmic counterpoint between the cults of beauty and ugliness, which later became an important part of the method of the Cantos.

The structure of another of Pound's sequential poems of the imagist period, "Xenia," reinforces this theory. It originally appeared in seven sections (The street in Soho The cool fingers of science delight me, A Song of the Degrees/III-V,Ite, Dum Capitolum), but was broken up when reprinted in the Collected Shorter Poems. It begins with an unusual poem which is part image, part satire:

> Out of the overhanging gray mist
> There came an ugly little man
> Carrying beautiful flowers.

And which ends with these lines:

> Know then that I loved you from afore-time,
> Clear speakers, naked in the sun, untrammeled.

As Ruthven points out, its original arrangement progressed from "the 'gray mist' of the cancelled first section to the sunlight of 'Dum Capitolium Scandet', from an art of shadowy evocation ('the crepuscular spirit') to an art of clearly defined contours."[22] And also, it might be added, from a consideration of contemporary ugliness and mutability (Soho, flowers) to the eternal clarity of art. While this orderly progression contrasts with the dynamic counterpoint in "Zenia," both poems add the tone of the epigram to that of the image. Why Pound deleted the first two sections of the poem and hid this principle of organization we don't know; we do know that he was making such formal experiments with extended form in the imagist period.

At the very basis of the ordering principle of Pound's sequential poems of the 1912-14 period, then, lay the rhythmic tension between image and epigram, the artist and society, the cults of beauty and ugliness. This dramatic

counterpoint represented Pound's major advance, during the imagist period, toward major form. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the imagist poems expressed cosmic rhythms, and in this sense joined with Pound's early poems, which sought to reflect the essential coherence of the cosmos. The epigram differs from this attempt, reflects the harsher rhythms of Pound's personal impatience with society. From 1916 onward, tension between the cults of beauty and ugliness lay behind every one of Pound's experiments with major form.

IV

TONE

A

War Poems

Pound wrote only three poems dealing with the war, perhaps because, like many others, he wanted to ignore it. The first, "1915: February," was apparently extremely passionate: "I think it has some guts, but am perhaps still blinded by the fury in which I wrote it, and still confuse the cause with the result," he wrote Mencken (SL, 51). But Mencken too wanted to ignore it, and a a matter of principle refused to print a single word about the war in Smart Set, including Pound's poem. Indeed, if the only record left of the 1914-19 period were the files of the Smart Set we would not have a single indication that there had been a war at all.[1]

The second poem, "The Coming of War: Actaeon", viewed the war indirectly, from a subjective perspective:

An image of Lethe,
     and the fields
Full of faint light
     but golden,
Gray cliffs,
     and beneath them
A sea
Harsher than granite,
     unstill, never ceasing . . . (CSP, 117)

While this poem described the mood of a non-combatant, Pound's third poem on the war, "Poem: Abbreviated from the conversation of Mr. T.E.H.," dealt with the conflict directly. It was compiled from Hulme's talk "when he came home with his first wound in 1915," and first appeared in Catholic Anthology, later being reprinted in Umbra. Here the war becomes, for an instant, very real:

Over the flat slope of St. Eloi
A wide wall of sandbags.
Night,
In the silence desultory men
Pottering over small fires, cleaning their mess-tins:
To and fro, from the lines,

Men walk as on Piccadilly,
Making paths in the dark,
Through scattered dead horses,
Over a dead Belgian's belly.

The Germans have rockets. The English have no rockets.
Behind the line, cannon, hidden, lying back miles.
Before the line, chaos:

My mind is a corridor. The minds about me are corridors.
Nothing suggests itself. There is nothing to do but
     keep on.[2]

The most obvious reason for the development of this new, non-dramatic poignancy was the death of Pound's closest friend, Gaudier-Brzeska, at Neuville St. Vaast, on June 5, 1915. Hume's death in September, 1917, was an added blow. And of the death of Remy de Gourmont in later 1915 Pound said simply, "the world's light is darkened. . . . He is as much 'dead of the war' as if he had died in the trenches" (SP, 390). The deaths of these friends seemed more than a personal loss to Pound, it seemed a loss to civilization.

And, not surprisingly, in one who made such vast claims for art, Pound believed even during the first year of war that "the arts are the only things worth keeping up."[3] As the war continued into the second year, however, Pound began to blame the holocaust--not on economic conspirators, as he was later to do--but on individual artists. They had not opened international lines of communication between people, and had thus contributed to mutual suspicion and dislike. American artists, Pound said, had been particularly negligent:

> Ultimately, the impression of national character or national honesty is a <u>literary</u> impression. If we find a body of writers in any country setting down their beliefs and impressions in clear words that conform to fact as we know it or find it, we begin, without fuss or ebullition, to have a quiet amity or respect for that nation.

> Whenever I meet an interesting man in either England or America he invariably tells me things which he "is not allowed to print." (This is not a matter of war censorship; I am aiming no shaft at that very necessary board.) . . . And the result of it? . . . That private letters from America are interesting and that printed writing is not . . .. Until there is an exact correspondence between what the man says to his friend in private and what he writes in his book or his paper <u>there is not literature</u>, and there is no firm basis for alien friendship and acquaintance.[4]

That is, Pound did not see it as the artist's duty to take sides in his writing in the political conflict. This would be inappropriate, not only because "this war is possibly a conflict betwen two forces almost equally detestable. Atavism and the loathsome spirit of mediocrity cloaked in graft" (SL, 46), but because the artist no longer shared concerns with any other class:

> <u>"Il admettait trois aristocracies, la noblesse, le clergé et la littérature</u>," wrote Renan of a certain suave cleric. . . . We no longer respect the class, we respect the individual of it. The time when one might have looked on any sort of clergy as an "aristocracy" is so long gone that one can only look upon the idea as a quaint sort of bric-a-brac. There remains an aristocracy of the creative arts and an aristocracy of inventive science.[5]

And the function of this isolated aristocracy of the creative arts was, Pound wrote in <u>Gaudier-Brzeska</u>, to "keep

alive the creative, the intellectually-inventive-creative spirit and ability in man" (GB, 109)--especially in a time of mass production, mass propoganda, mass slaughter.

Consequently, Pound's writing during the war took the form of keeping the "intellectually-inventive-creative spirit and ability in man" alive. In 1915, particularly, he threw himself into creative effort, not only writing "Provincia Deserta," "Near Perigord," "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour," and Cathay, but also beginning the Ur-cantos. All these works were linked by Pound's attempt to celebrate the human personality as it reacted to various kinds of stress--an obvious side-effect of war--or as it attempted to create a literary paideuma that would provide an alternative to the less positive aspects of contemporary "civilization." Though the content of these experiments had nothing to do with World War I, their tonality was exactly appropriate to the war years. Pound's growth in the area of expressing poignancy and reticence during this time was to show its strength later, in the Cantos.

B

Poignancy

1. The Litany

Seeking a model for the celebration of personality in the past, Pound turned to the Latin poets of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, such as Goddeschalk, whose sequaire, Pound had noted in "Psychology and Troubadours" (1912), marked the first celebration of the divinity of the human personality.

In this sequaire, Pound says, "we see a new refinement, an enrichment, I think, of paganism. The god has at last succeeded in becoming human, and it is not the beauty of the god but the personality which is the goal of love and the invocation" (SR, 98). In 1915, Pound said Remy de Gourmont's distinctive style had been influenced by his study of Goddeschalk:

> In poetry as in prose de Gourmont has built up his own particular form . . . . His own mode began, I think, with the translation of the very beautiful "sequaire"

> of Goddeschalk in Le Latin Mystique. This he made, very possibly, the basis of his "Livre de Litanies", at least this curious evocational form, the curious repetitions, the personal sweeping rhythm, are made wholly hiw own, and he used them later in the "Les Saints de Paradis", and last of all in the prose sonnets. (SP,388)

To Pound, the "effective indirectness" of the "incomparable" rhythm in a poem like the "Litanies de la Rose" must come to life "in audition, or in the finer audition which one may have in imaging sound. One must 'hear' it, in one way or another, and out of that intoxication comes beauty." Pound differentiated the mental rhythms which the poems causes to arise in the mind from de Gourmont's prose sonnets, which "rise out of natural speech, out of conversation" (MIN, 188),.

The rhythms of the "Litanies de la Rose" have a liturgical aroma:

> Rose hyaline, couleur des sources claires jaillies d'entre les herbes, rose hyaline, Hylas est mort d'avour aimé tes yeux, fleur hypocrite, fleur du silence.
>
> Rose opale, ô sultane endormie dans l'odeur du harem, rose opale, langueur des constantes caresses, ton coeur connait la paix profonde des vices satisfaits, fleur hyypocrite, fleur du silence.
>
> Rose améthyste, étoile matinale, tendresse épiscopale, rose améthyste, tu dors sur des poitrines dévotes et douillettes, gemme offerte à Marie, ô gemme

sacristine, fleur hypocrite, fleur du silence.

Rose cardinale, rose couleur du sang de l'Eglise Romaine, rose cardinale, tu fais rêver les grand yeux des mignons et plus d'un t'épingla au noeud de sa jarretière, fleur hypocrite, fleur du silence.

Rose papale, rose arrosée des mains qui bénissent le monde, rose papale, ton coeur d'or est en cuivre, et les larmes qui perlent sur ta vaine corolle, ce sont les pleurs du Christ, fleur hypocrite, fleur du silence.

Fleur hypocrite,
Fleur du silence. (MIN, 192)

The unexpected spacing of the repetitions ("Fleur hypocrite,/ Fleur du silence") intoxicate one when read aloud, as does the Mass. But the object of veneration is not God; it is a more sensuous and opulent source of beauty. Pound's 1912 translation of the <u>sequaire</u> of Goddeschalk points out that it is not the plastic beauty of the god but "the <u>personality</u> which is the goal of the love and the invocation". (my emphasis) Thus the love occurs between two "person"-alities - though one of the is "divine", the other human. De Gourmont appropriates the liturgical rhythm to celebrate human love. In Goddeschalk's <u>sequaire</u> the liturgical rhythm conveys the feeling of veneration discussed by Pound:

The Pharisee murmurs when the woman weeps, conscious of guilt. Sinner, he despises a fellow-in-sin. Thou, unacquainted with sin, hast regard for the penitent, cleansest the soiled one,

loved her to make her most fair.

She embraces the feet of the master, washes them with tears, dries them with her hair; washing and drying them she anointed them with unguent, covered them with kisses.

These are the feasts which please thee, O Wisdom of the Father!

Born of the Virgin, who disdained not the touch of a sinner.

Chaste virgins, they immaculately offer unto the Lord the sacrifice of their pure bodies, choosing Christ for their deathless bridegroom.

O happy bridals, whereto there are no strains, no heavy dolors of childbirth, no rival mistress to be feared, no nurse molestful!

Their couches, kept for Christ alone, are walled about by angels of the guard, who, with drawn sword, ward off the unclean lest any paramour defile them.

Therein Christ sleepeth with them: happy is this sleep sweet the rest there, wherein true maid is fondled in the embraces of her heavenly spouse.

Adorned are they with fine linen, and with a robe of purple; these flowers are his chosen food.

He leapeth, and boundeth and gamboleth among them.

(SR, 98-99)

Clearly, de Gourmont's "Litanies" pick up Goddeschalk's sensuality as well as his incantory rhythms. Pound's original work during 1915, particularly the Ur-cantos, built on the concept of using this kind of evocational liturgical rhythm to celebrate personality. And since the connection between this sweeping personal rhythm and the expression of personality bears directly on Pound's development of the long poem, it will be worthwhile to inquire into de Gourmont's concept of the nature and origin of the sequential poem.

2. The Latin Sequences

In Le Latin Mystique du Moyen Age, de Gourmont speaks of the Latin sequences originated by Notker Balbus and developed by Goddeschalk in the eleventh century, and further developed by St. Hildegard and Thomas A Kempis, as possessing a magical or mystical quality.

> Il s'agit du'une forme de la poésie latin spéciale aux dixième et onzième siècles; prolongée jusgu'au douzième par sainte Hildegarde et d'autres, repreise tout à la fin du moyen age par Thomas à Kempis, lequel en fit le principe occulte qui régit le style de son Imitation et de ses autres traités mystiques.
>
> C'est un psaume de dix à trente versets, le plus souvent, auquel des allitérations, des recherches de mots, des rimes et des assonances finales ou intérières donnent seules un air de poème.[6]

The strange musicality of these sequences supplied their mystic quality, a fact attributable to the fact that the monks who composed them were musicians as well as priest: ´Notker était musicien, composait ensemble les phrases verbales et les phrases vocales ainsi, sans nul doute, Wipo et presque tous les séquentaires.[7] The development of the form in the Abbey of St.-Gall, where the daily masses were intoned, led to a sensitivity to the proper junctures between word and music; the term ´sequentia´ implies this

musical and religious heritage:

> C'est là sans doute qu'à ces occasionalles compositions fut donné le nom de séquences. Pourquoi? L'ont-elles emprunté à la rubrique qui suit immédiatement le graduel, Sequentia sancti evangelii, ou sequala, c'est-à-dire suite, suite de notes on ne sait à cette heure ce sont des proses, et déjà, anciennement, on les dénommait prosa our proscula. Plus généralement et en science de liturgie, on les considè re comme des interpolations au texte de la messe, comme des tropes (Trope, throphi); les recueils spéciaux de séquences, quelques furent conservées, s'appelaient tropaires, trophaires.[8]

The relationship between this kind of experiment with sound values and contemporary troubadour experiments with motz e son struck Pound forcibly. In "Psychology and Troubadours" he speculated on the likelihood that the reverence for personality in the sequaire may have been further developed by the troubadours to praise, not the human qualities of God, as in Goddeschalk's sequence, but the divine attributes of the human personality. Troubadours such as Arnaut Daniel were educated, like Goddeschalk, in abbeys where they might have picked up the reverence for personality from the incantory rhythms and tone of the sequaire.

At the dawning of this new impulse toward respect for the individual human personality, Pound reasoned, the

troubadours adapted this form to celebrate the Lady. Hence, a religious form and impulse attended the birth of Romantic love - which is characterized by its treatment of women as distinct personalities rather than as chattels: "Courtly Love is . . . responsible for the 'democratization' of relations between men and women, inasmuch as not social position but intrinsic worth determined the mutual acceptability of the partners according to the courtly code".[9] And this conjunction of form and content, Pound thought, might provide a model of how to express this sense of the value of individual personalities in the modern age, when all individual values were endangered:

> With such language in the cloisters, would it be surprising that the rebels from it, the clerks who did not take orders, should have transferred something of the manner, and something of the spirit, to the beauty of life as they found it, that souls who belonged, not in heaven but, by reason of their refinement, somewhat above the mortal turmoil, should have chosen some middle way, something short of grasping at the union with the absolute, nor yet that their cult should have been extra-marital? Arnaut was taught in cloister, Dante praises certain "prise de romanzi" and no one can say precisely whether or no they were such <u>prose</u> for music as the Latin sequence I have just quote. Yet one would be rash to affirm that the "passada folor" which he laments at almost the summit of the purifying hill, and just below the earthly paradise, was anything more than deflection. (SR, 99-100)

That is, the troubadours had chosen to sing of human

personality rather than, like Dante and the clerks who took orders, man's relationship to the godhead. For Pound, this choice ranked the troubadour, in Dante's terms, "just below the earthly paradise". As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Pound had been moving in this direction: towards the creation and celebration of a paradiso terrestre.

Hence, since the sequential poem marks the beginning of the concept of the personality as divine, it seems likely that Pound would have looked very closely at its form. He had read in de Gourmont that these sequences represented a new cycle, independent of the Latin ode:

> Inauguration d'un cycle nouveau, absoluement indépendant de l'ode latine, les séquences de Notker ont, en elles-mêmes, la valeur de poèmes presque toujours originaux, mais compact et noirs, froids, rarement lyriques, si ce n'est aux courtes phrases interjectionelles qu'il lance parfois en débutant, telles que de lourdes notes de psalterion.
> (Gourmont, p. 110).

In 1913 Pound noted "in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base" (LE, 6-7). It seems he may be thinking of the effect of "de lourdes notes de psalterion".

Similarly, the interjection of lyrical passages in the

Cantos seems to owe something to the interjection of short lyrical phrases within the sequential poems of the early Renaissance. And in an 1914 essay--significantly entitled "The Prose Tradition in Verse"--Pound showed that he was much preoccupied with importing this new kind of musicality into poetry:

> Since Dante's day - and indeed his day and Casella's saw a re-beginning of it - "music" and "poetry" have drifted apart, and we have a third thing which is called "word music". I mean we have poems which are read or even, in a fashion, intoned, and are "musical" in some sort of complete or inclusive sense that makes it impossible or inadvisable to "set them to music". (LE, 376)

The reference to poems which are "intoned" calls Goddeschalk to mind once more. It seems probable that, seeking to write a long poem, Pound would be attracted to the possibility of using the Latin sequences as a model to attain a musical element of "some sort of complete or inclusive sense", in order to provide his poem with an emotional, if not structural, unity. Significantly, he wrote Amy Lowell in Oct. 1913: "When you branch off into narrative ..... etc. etc. ..... My unity is an emotional unity, but I don't want to pre- and pro-scribe" (YC).

We can see, then, that Pound's admiration for de Gourmont's litanies stemmed from their ability to express reverence for personality in a new kind of rhythm, modelled on the "curious evocational form, the curious repetitions, the personal sweeping rhythm, of the Latin sequences. Submerged in the flux of war, Pound saw the role of art as its ability to lift man's spirit "out of the realm of annoyance into the calm realm of truth, into the world unchanging, the world of fine animal life, the world of pure form" (BG, 127). Not surprisingly, he was attracted to Goddeschalk, whom de Gourmont describes as "plutôt un imaginatif, un invétéré visionnarie qui conte apres le graduel les rêves divins qui ont visite ses méditations". (Gourmont, p. 122).. The worship of personality which Pound saw as the motivation behind the form and as carried by the rhythm, of the Latin sequences, provided him with a model for his attempt to celebrate individual values in wartime. The tone, the evocational aspect, the personal sweeping rhythm, the sense of personality of the sequential poem, and of de Gourmont's "Litanies", seemed to him to suggest a way of recapturing this devotional attitude to the human personality, and with it a way of expressing with full poignancy the spectre of men at war.

3

Pattern Units

Under these rhythmic influences Pound wrote a flurry of long poems in 1915: "Provincia Deserta", "Exile's Letter", "Near Perigord", "Vilanelle" The Psychological Hour", the Ur-cantos. Linking all these experiments with long poems was the attempt to substitute a subtle, large-scale rhythm for mechanical unifying devices. This attempt enlarged on Pound's experiments in his imagist poems to "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase", discussed in Chapter III. Hence, in January 1915 he defended vers libre as the only possible expression of certain emotions or energies:

> One "discards rhyme", not because one is incapable of rhyming neat, fleet, sweet, meet, treat, eat, feet, but because there are certain emotions or energies which are not to be represented by the over-familiar devices or patterns; just as there are certain "arrangements of form" that cannot be worked into dados.(SP, 345).

He was working toward the notion of larger form held together by a method other than the mechanical repetition of a rhyme or image at regular intervals. Speaking of imagism

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in poetry, he says that it "may be reinforced by a suitable or cognate rhythm-form and by timbre-form", but is careful to point out that he is not referring to a mechanical pattern, but rather to large-scale subtle ones: "By rhythm-form and timbre-form I do not mean something which must of necessity have a 'repeat' in it. It is certain that a too obvious 'repeat' may be detrimental". (SP,347) Surely he had in mind here de Gourmont's unpredictable spaced repetitions in the "Litanies de la Rose" ("fleur hypocrite, fleur du silence").

Using a metaphor drawn from the visual arts, he distinguished between a "pattern-unit" and a picture in terms of their use of the repeat. The moment the pattern-unit becomes predictable it cannot be repeated without losing its effectiveness. It is "so simple that one can bear having it repeated several or many times. When it becomes so complex that repetition would be useless, then it is a picture, an 'arrangement of forms'". (SP,344) The pattern unit is not the same as the repetition of a single geometric form. In this kind of pattern, "the invention was merely the first curleycue, or pair of them. The rest is repetition, is copying". (SP,344) Society was yoking individual personalities into battalions; Pound wished to reject this standardization in his art.

To copy is not to keep alive the creative-inventive spirit of man. In January 1915 Pound told Harriet Monroe: "My propaganda for what some may consider 'novelty in excess' is a necessity" (SL, 48). And in March he added: "You constantly think I undervalue élan and enthusiasm. I see a whole country rotted with it, and no one to insist that 'form' and innovation are compatible" (SL, 55-56). Throughout 1915, he experimented with forms which are unified by something less predictable than the regular repetition of pattern units, whether of sound or image.

This can be seen in a seventy-six line poem sent to Harriet Monroe for Poetry, which she chose not to print. "From Chebar" eschews rhyme and regular stanzas in presenting Pound's vision of art. And yet repetition of phrases, that vary throughout in a manner reminiscent of de Gourmont's "Litanies de la Rose", and of "Provincia Deserta", provide unity of tone:

Before you were, America!

I did not begin with you,
I do not end with you, America.

You are the present veneer.
If my blood has flowed through you,
Are you not wrought from my people!

. . .

I did not begin aboard "The Lion,"
I was not born at the landing.

. . .

There is no use your quoting Whitman against me,
His time is not our time, his day and hour
were different.

The order does not end in the arts,
The order shall come and pass through them.

The state is too idle, the decrepit church is too idle,
The arts alone can transmit this.
They alone cling fast to ghe gods,
Even the sciences are a little below them.
They are "Those who demand the perfect,"
They are "Not afraid of the dark,"
They are after you and before you.

They have not need of smooth speeches,
There are enough who are ready to please you.

It is I, who demand our past,
And they who demand it.

It is I, who demand tomorrow,
And they who demand it.

It is we, who do not accede,
We do not please you with easy speeches.[11]

The unpredicabtly spaced repetitions of phrases and words in this poem (i.e., They are... They are... They are... They have... There are; It is I... And they... It is I... And they... It is we... We do not), avoid "a too obvious 'repeat'." And when Pound says: "The order does not end in the arts, / The order shall come and pass through them", we can detect his movement away from expressing this order,

this universal coherence, in precisely symmetrical terms. He has achieved a way of reflecting the cosmic organizing principle in a long poem. However, the formal resolution of the poem differentiates it from XVI Cantos in an interesting manner. The last three stanzas move from the counterpoint of "I" and "they" (i.e., "It is I, who demand tomorrow, / And they who demand it") to a grammatical resolution (i.e., "It is we, who do not accede, / We do not please you with easy speeches") which at once links Pound with "the arts", and separates their common purpose from that of society. The rhythm in these stanzas, too, yokes the writer with arts, resisting together the will of society. No similar resolution occurs in XVI Cantos - an indication that by 1924 Pound had moved even further away from desiring to reflect coherence in an easily descernible manner.

How do these comments on form connect with our discussion of large-scale rhythmic effects? Pound twice quoted from Binyon's The Flight of the Dragon in 1915:

> Our thoughts about decoration are too much dominated, I think by the conception of pattern as a sort of mosaic, each element in the pattern being repeated, a form without life of its own, something inert and bounded by itself. We get a mechanical succession which aims at rhythm, but does not attain rhythmic vitality.[12]

As Pound's final contribution to both Blast No. 2 and the first edition of Gaudier-Brzeska, Binyon's insistence that there may be organic rhythm of image and pattern as well as of sound, reflect the strength of Pound's desire to break the restriction of "mechanical succession" during 1915. He had already experimented with an incantory rhythm that owed a great deal to de Gourmont's "Litanies de la Rose", of course, in the 1912 poem "The Alchemist":

> By the bright flame of the fishing torch
> Remember this fire.
> Midonz, with the gold of the sun, the leaf of the poplar,
> by the light of this amber,
> Midonz, daughter of the sum, shaft of the tree, silver
> of the leaf, light of the yellow of the amber,
> Midonz, gift of the God, gift of the light, gift of the
> amber of the sun,
> Give light to the metal.
> (CSP, 86)

Just as "From Chebar" avoids mechanical succession of sound, "The Alchemist" avoided such predictable repetition both of image and of sound.

Modelling his creative work on the theory of the Chinese writers and artists pointed to by Binyon in 1911, and on that perceived by de Gourmont in the sequaire of Goddeschalk, Pound strove to prove that "'form' and

innovation were compatible". Binyon's warning about the danger of mechanical repetition of pattern-units, combined with de Gourmont's experiments with the incantory rhythms of the "Litanies", provided Pound with guidelines which he used in his own attempts at major form, and the expression of a creative personality. It was the experience of loss, separation, or unfulfilled desire for such personalities that Pound's poems of these years explored; therefore, the tone of poignancy predominated.

C

Reticence

1

Natural Speech

Yet de Gourmont's influence on Pound did not stop with awakening him to the ability of incantory rhythm to produce a sense of the divinity of personality in the listener. Speaking of de Gourmont in Make it New, Pound praised this quality, but went on to add: "The Sonnets in prose are different; they rise out of natural speech, out of

conversation" (MIN, 188). And in Pound's memorial essay of 1915, "Remy de Gourmont", he praised these prose sonnets as "among the few successful endeavours to write poetry <u>of our own</u> time". (SP, 388.) In them, Pound said, de Gourmont has "solved the two thorniest questions".

> The first difficulty in a modern poem is to give a feeling of the reality of the speaker, the second, given the reality of the speaker, to gain any degree of poignancy in one's utterance.
>
> That is to say, you must begin in a normal, natural tone of voice, and you must, somewhere, express or cause a deep feeling. (SP, 388)

That is, de Gourmont, here received praise not for his evocation of the divinity of personality through sweeping musical rhythms, as in the "Litanies", but for his establishment of a realistic speaker through natural speech rhythms in the prose sonnets.

Pound admired the fact that de Gourmont "has not been driven even to an exotic speaker. His sonnets begin in the metropolis. The speaker is past middle age" (SP, 389). Pound went on to give selections from the sonnets to demonstrate how one is led from the "natural tone of the writing, the scientific dryness",

´C'est une belle chose qu'une tête de femme, librement inscrite dans le cercle esthétique...´

´Je sculpte une hypothèse dans le marbre de la logique éternelle...´

Les épaules sont des sources d'ou descent la fluidite des bras..."

into sudden direct statement of feeling, "the poignancy". That is, just as one is intent "and wholly off guard, comes, out of this 'unpoetic', unemotional constation", this passage:

"Les yeux se font des discours entre eux.
Près de se ternir...les miens te parleront encore,
ils n'emporteront pas bien loin ta réponse,
Car on n'emporte rien, on meurt. Laisse-moi donc
regarder les yeux que j'ai découverts,
Les yeux qui me survivront." (SP, 389)

De Gourmont's prose sonnets, Pound said, are "the triumph of skill and reality" (SP, 390). They convey the sense of being spoken by a real person.

"Exile's Letter" demonstrated Pound's attempt to duplicate de Gourmont's success in his prose sonnets. It too begins in a natural tone of voice:

Now I remember that you built me a special tavern
By the south side of the bridge of Ten-Shin.
...
Intelligent men came drifting in from the sea and from
the west border,
And with them, and with you especially
There was nothing at cross purpose,
And they made nothing of sea-crossing or of mountain-
crossing,
If only they could be of that fellowship,
And we all spoke out our hearts and minds, and without
regret.
And when I was sent off to South Wei,
smothered in laurel groves,
And you to the north of Raku-hoku,
Till we had nothing but thoughts and memories in
common. (CSP, 144)

And it ends with the expression of "deep feeling":

And if you ask how I regret that parting;
It is like the flowers falling at Spring's end
Confused, whirled in a tangle.
What is the use of talking, and there is no end of
talking,
There is no end of things in the heart.
I call in the boy,
Have him sit on his knees here
To seal this,
And send it a thousand miles, thinking. (CSP, 146)

In October 1915 Pound picked "Exile's Letter", along with "Prufrock", as a "particularly notable" piece of work for the year (SL, 64). Although its narrative structure differentiates it from de Gourmont's prose sonnets, its

rhythms resemble those of the "Litanies", and its natural tone of voice leading to the expression of deep feeling reveals the influence of the sonnets. Inddeed, the expression of poignancy through a natural tone of voice, and conversational cadences, is typical not only of "Exile's Letter", but of Cathay as a whole.

Pound's appreciation of the prose sonnets as "the triumph of skill and reality" has its parallel in his attitude to Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, which he prized for the realistic way it presents life. Pound had read it by January 1914, and following its publication by Grant Richards on June 15, he reviewed it for The Egoist (15 July, 1914). He chiefly admired the way Joyce avoids formal conventions when describing slices of life. Like de Gourmont, Joyce is "a realist", presents believable people and real-life situations:

> He does not believe "life" would be all right if we stopped vicisection or if we instituted a new sort of "economics". He gives the thing as it is. He is not bound by tiresome convention that any part of life, to be interesting, must be shaped into the conventional form of a "story". Since de Maupassant we have had so many people trying to write "stories" and so few people presenting life. Life for the most part does not happen in neat little diagrams and nothing is more tiresome than the continual pretense that it does. Mr. Joyce's "Araby", for instance, is much better than a "story", it is a vivid waiting. (LE, 400)

Pound's long poems of 1915, particularly the Ur-cantos - as we shall see in Chapter V--attempted to meet this challenge of Joyce's prose realism: to avoid "neat little diagrams" in the presentation of life, and to present realistic characters.

2

Compressed Narrative

Pound's dissatisfaction with the loose construction of his longer narrative poems, such as "Redondillas", led to his experiments with more condensed forms during the Imagist period. Now Pound became aware that he shared this urge toward the condensation of narrative not only with Joyce, but also with contemporary writers of narrative verse:

> Francis Jammes, Charles Vildrac and D.H. Lawrence have written short narratives in verse, trying, it would seem to present situations as clearly as prose writers have done, yet more briefly. Mr. Joyce is engaged in a similar condensation. He has kept to prose, not needing the privilege supposedly accorded to verse to justify his method. . . . Mr. Joyce's more rigorous selection of the presented detail marks him, I think, as belonging to my own generation, that is, to the "nineteen-tens", not to the decade between "the nineties" and to-day. (LE, 401-02)

Pound was particularly enabled to appreciate this accomplishment in prose, having junked two novels and what was presumably a short story and based on de Maupassant, titled "Necklace" (YC, #88).

Stimulated by the challenge of Joyce's achievement in 1915, Pound wrote "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour", which is an attempt to condense Vildrac's treatment of a situation in his verse narrative, "Visite". The significance of this attempt is brought home when Pound praises "Visite" for using "one fifth of the words that a good writer of short stories would have needed for the narrative" (SP, 338). By his own standards of computation, "Villanelle" used less than one tenth of the words that a good writer of short stories, such as de Maupassant, would have needed. Pound provided a prose translation of "Visite" in his review of Vildrac in "the Approach to Paris",(SP, 336 ff) which begins:

He was seated before his table,
His dreams indolently marked out
Within the domain of his lamp
And he heard against his window
The fragile attacks of the snow.

And suddenly he thought
Of a man whom he knew
And whom he had not seen for a long time.
And he felt an oppression in his throat,
Part sadness and part chagrin.

He knew that this man was without pride
Either in heart or in word
And that he was without charm
Living like the trees
Isolated, on a barren plain;
He knew that for months
He had been promising this man
To visit him,
And that the other
Had thanked him gently for each one of these promises
And had pretended to believe it.

When Vildrac's narrator finally pays his visit he finds the man and his companion suspicious of his motives for coming, expecting an ulterior purpose, and this kills any possibility of communication. Unable to break the spell, he gets up to go. Suddently understanding his gesture of friendship, the man and women strive to keep him, but in vain:

They stood up before him
Betraying a childish need
Of skipping and clapping their hands...
He promised to come again.
But before reaching the door
He set clearly in his memory
The place that bordered their lives,
He looked carefully at each object
Then at the man and woman also,
Such fear did he have at the bottom of his heart
That he would never come back.

After his translation Pound points to what he finds

excellent in Vildrac's poem. His comments make plain that he finds it competitive with the best modern prose (he is not yet fully aware of Dubliners.) Even more importantly, they show that Pound is already speculating on how to improve upon Vildrac's achievement, that is, on narrative verse:

> I have been told that this is sentiment and therefore damned. I am not concerned with that argument. I dare say the poem makes a poor showing in this rough and hurried translation; that point is that M. Vildrac has told a short story in verse with about one fifth of the words that a good writer of short stories would have needed for the narrative. He has conveyed his atmosphere, and his people, and the event. He has brought narrative verse into competition with narrative prose without giving us long stanzas of bombast.
>
> You may make whatever objection you like to genre painting. My only question is: would it be possible to improve on M. Vildrac's treatment of a given situation?
>
> (SP, 368, my emphasis.)

"Villanelle: The Psychological Hour" was Pound's immediate reply to this 1913 challenge "to improve on M. Vildrac's treatment of a given situation." It is roughly half as long as "Visite," treating Vildrac's "given situation" in the condensed manner typical of Pound's mature style.

Pound's main alteration of Vildrac's situation was to replace the visitor with a man waiting for friends to fulfil their promise to visit him. He preserved Vildrac's

characters: two men and a woman, the emphasis on a promise to visit ("twice they promised to come," "But they promised again: 'Tomorrow at tea-time'"), and the bad weather as a background to the emotion:

> So much barren regret
> So many hours wasted!
> And now I watch, from the window,
> the rain, the wandering buses. (CSP, 177)

And he implied a plot which does more than bring narrative verse into competition with narrative prose; it shows Pound developing a condensed style which re-established what he feelt was the undoubted superiority of poetry: its ability to evoke condensed emotions unexpectedly:

> In the verse something has come upon the intelligence.
> In the prose the intelligence has found a subject for its observations. The poetic fact pre-exists.
>
> In a different way, of course, the subject of the prose pre-exists. . . . Yet I think this orderliness in the greatest poetic passages, this quiet statement that partakes of the nature of prose and is yet floated and tossed in the emotional surges, is perhaps as true a test as that mentioned by the Greek theoretician. (LE, 53-54, my emphasis.)

The aim in poetry is to toss deep emotions up out of quiet statement. The narrator in "Villanelle," as in de Gourmont's "Prose Sonnets," causes a deep emotion to arise out of a natural tone of voice. Thus "Villanelle" ends:

> Now the third day is here--
> no word from either;
> No word from her nor him,
> Only another man's note:
> "Dear Pound, I am leaving England."
> (CSP, 178)

Pound was not sure whether he had accomplished sufficient poignancy in "Villanelle." "I think I have missed fire" he told his father in a letter written just before Christmas in 1915. "I wanted to convey the <u>'sense - the feel' that something critical is happening to someone else at a distance</u>. It is a perfectly definite emotion. I have however only succeeded in giving the impression that I was disappointed by their absence" (YC). He worried that the poem's emotion is too personal and does not achieve a more universal validity. Since the poem was quite obviously written out of concern for friends in the front-line trenches, this flaw was a crucial one in Pound's eyes.

In the same letter, he discussed his attempt to achieve a subtle kind of repeat through recurrence of theme--a

staple in the Cantos. He also inserted three lines which do not appear in the original version of the poem published in Poetry (December 1915). The reason he gives for inserting these lines is to prepare the reader for the end of the poem; we can see from this how carefully he balanced the need for clarity with the desire for compression:

> Villanelle is the name of an old verse with rhymes & a refrain. I wanted the effect of a recurrence of theme and meant "Vilanelle" to mean generally the feel fo the vilanelle form in a modern subject. I think I have missed fire. I wanted to convey the "sense--the feel"that something critical is happening to someone else at a distance. It is a perfectly definite emotion. I have however only succeeded in giving the impression that I was disappointed by their absence. It's not good enough. The 2 opening lines of second paragraph of division I, ought to be expanded and made to dominate the rest. As it is they pass unnoticed & the end isn't sufficiently prepared for. We must have another try at it. . . . Perhaps you could jack up the villanelle if you insert after the words "Diverse forces" the lines
>
> "How do I know?
> Oh, I know well enough
> For there is something afoot."
> As for me
> I had over-prepared, etc.
> (YL, ibid. Pound's emphasis)

Pound's comments show that "Villanelle," like Cathay, draws on the past to cast light upon the present, and to put suffering into a historical context. He was trying to

graft the old French form onto a modern subject (psychology); thus the title "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour." At the same time, he wrestled with his ultimate challenge: how to master the trick of the unnoticed repeat. How to attain rhythmic vitality. His refrain is crafted: "Beauty is so rare a thing / So few drink of my fountain," repeated once only to establish its harmonies in the mind. Then the subtle repeat: compacted, the phrase means something different: "Beauty would drink of my mind." "Organic rhythm," Yeats had said of "The Return." Here it is again, <u>with</u> a transformation of meaning; no mechanical succession. Ringing the changes, Pound slips in another structural device:

> I had over-prepared the event . . .
> I had laid out just the right books,
> I had almost turned down the pages . . .
> I had over prepared the event . . .

As he would later say of such devices,

> some minds take pleasure in counterpoint
> pleasure in counterpoint (canto LXXIX)

This way lay mastery.

Like Joyce's "Araby," "Villanelle" is "much better than a 'story', it is a vivid waiting." Here Pound avoided the "neat little diagrams" of narrative. As well, "Villanelle" answered the challenge of de Gourmont's prose sonnets. "The first difficulty in a modern poem," Pound said in praising their success, "is to give a feeling of the reality of the speaker, the second, given the reality of the speaker, to gain any degree of poignancy in one's utterance" (SP, 388). This comment was published in the Fortnightly Review on December 1, 1915. "Villanelle" was published in Poetry the same month. Pound was responding to the challenge, both of Vildrac's Visite" and de Gourmont's prose sonnets, with the short stories of Joyce, de Maupasant, and the sequaire of Goddeschalk in the background! To keep the creative-inventive spirit of man alive. Where else can one find a comparable reverence for tradition, scholarship, creativity, energy, concern for humanity, during World War I?

"Near Perigord" was published along with "Villanelle" in Poetry (December 1915). It was Pound's first major attempt at the sequential poem. Behind it lay "Zenia," "Zenia," "Und Drang." It showed a way out of the impasse

of narrative. Mechanical successions of metre, rhyme, image, disappear. No longer was the long poem to be plagued by the early problem: "I don't like this hobbledy metre / but find it easy to write in" ("Redondillas"). Indeed, Pound considered it the ultimate in free verse.[13] And with this success another: the discovery of how to use scenery to highlight personality.

3

Scenery

On the first of December, 1915, Pound wrote to Harriet Monroe warning her about the kind of nature poetry she was printing:

> Remember that poetry is more important than verse free or otherwise. Be glad you have a reckless competitor in N.Y. (Others) to keep you from believing that scenery alone and unsupported is more interesting than humanity. Really geography IS not the source of inspiration. Old Yeats pere has sent over such a fine letter on that subject. I hope to print it sometime, or see it printed.
> (SL, 67)

And by May, 1917, he reprinted it in his edition of Jack Yeats' Letters:

> The taste for scenery has this advantage over the taste for human nature; the heart is not bruised. Yet since scenery is never absurd as are poor mortals, neither is there laughter nor genial pity. We love scenery principally because the feelings it creates are tranquil and easily controlled, so that we can enjoy our full measure of self-content; dealing with human nature the poet cannot be the superior person nor can he be proud.[14]

Both "Provincia Deserta" (Poetry, March 1915) and "Near Perigord" humanize geography in Yeats Sr.'s sense. Like "Villanelle," they show Pound responding to the successes and challenges of other artists.

In any case, geography, although it comes to be of major importance to Pound's long poems for the first time in 1915, is firmly placed as a background to human emotions. Pound had been aware of this aspect as it exists in troubadour poetry--scenic description providing the introduction and backdrop to the poem--for a few years. It was natural, therefore, that he follow this lead in a poem on; the troubadour Bertan De Born.

Like all of Pound's important poems in 1915, "Near Perigord" highlighted the importance of individual creativity and personality. De Born is the subject of two

sections; Maent joins him in the third. The poem presents a question: What was the motivation behind de Born's love song to Maent? The poem explores this problem, but does not attempt to stuff life in;to "neat little diagrams." In a note originally printed with the poem Pound raised the connection between geography on the one hand, and romance and politics on the one hand, and romance and politics on the other:

> As to the possibility of a political intrigue behind the apparent love poem we have no evidence save that offered by my own observation; of the geography of Perigord and Limoges. I must leave the professional tacticians to decide whether Bertran's proclivities for stirring up the barons were due to his liver or to "military necessity." When he did not keep them busy fighting each other they most certainly did close in upon him--at least once.[15]

This possibility is explored in section one:

> How would you live, with neighbours set about you--
> Poictiers and Brive, untaken Rochecouart,
> Spread like the finger-tips of one frail hand;
> And you on; that great mountain of a palm--
> Not a neat ledge, not Foix between its streams,
> But one huge back half-covered up with pine,
> Worked for and snatched from the string-purse of Born-
> The four round towers, four brothers--mostly fools:
> What could he do but play the desperate chess,
> And stir up old grudges? (CSP, 172)

The geographical personification ("one huge back half-covered up with pine") expresses de Born's character, the strength and solidity of the palm contrasted with the "finger-tips of one frail hand" belonging to "four brothers--mostly fools." De Borns charcter infuses the countryside near Perigeux.

The second section, fictional recreation, sets the composition of his poem high in Hautefort's tower; beneath, "the ribbon-like road lies, in red cross-light, / Southward toward Montaignac":

> And the green cat's-eye lifts toward Montaignac.

"Ribbon" not for the road only, but to foreshadow Maent as well; "red cross-light" and "green cat's-eye" for the opposing passion and jealous calculation in his character--a complex study in psychology. The tangled roads symbolize communication problems between people as well as places.

The third section presents another dimension of de Born's character.. As originally printed, it began:

> I loved a woman. The stars fell from heaven.
> And always our two natures were in strife.

Pound immediately deleted these two lines as unnecessary prose statement. "Glad you like the Perigord poem," he writes his father in December, 1915, the month of the poem's

publication:

> You will improve it considerably if you blot out the first 2 lines of part III (p. 118). Begin that section with "Bewildering etc." . . . The lines are unnecessary & detract a good deal from the vividness of that part of the poem. (YC #406)

As Ruthven notices, Pound's revision indicates that he was "in the process of abandoning concatenation as a structural device in favour of the bolder juxtapositions of the ideogrammic method."[16] The decasyllabic line of all three sections, the focus on de Born's personality, the switching from images of medieval Provence to 1915 speech rhyths, carry the overall rhythm of the poem. In the third section de Born's personality emerges as only capable of uniting with Maent's at intense intervals. The nature of their relationship was finally "bewildering," and geography reinforces this:

> Bewildering spring, and by the Auvezere
> Poppies and day's eyes in the green email
> Rose over us; and we knew all that stream,

And our two horses had traced out the valleys;
Knew the low flooded lands squared out with poplars,
In the young days when the deep sky befriended.

From this idyll to separation. Maent's mistrust of de Born's mind, juxtaposed with her passionate attration; to his soul, his hands:

and then the counter-thrust:
"Why do you love me? Will you always love me?

But I am like the grass, I can not love you."
Or, "Love, and I love and love you,
And hate your mind, not <u>you</u>, your soul, your hands."

A complex narrative plot line implied in four lines of dialogue. Maent's character is like grass: sensuous, unthinking: "She who had nor ears nor tongue save in her hands." The ultimate implication: a lack of trust. Female intuition counterpoints male plotting: "And always our two natures were in strife." And the geography? It personifies de Born: the poem might be titled "Near Bertran de Born" "Near Perigord" sets up an "organic rhythm" between scenery and human personality that avoids neat little sketches of human life, and places them in dynamic interrelation through a scenic background that personifies

them so strongly that it seems to speak for them. And always, Pound emphasizes "human" nature.

Throughout 1915, Pound rejected the notion of writing war poems, and instead experimented with extending the range of poetry to the point where it could deal with human emotions as creatively, selectively, and vividly as the prose of masters like Joyce. "Villanelle" and "Near Perigord" were part of this effort. His greatest successes were to develop a new poignancy and reticence of tone, to develop the concept of a subtle "repeat" as a method of unifying a long poem, to bring geography into the poem as a reinforcement of human personality, and to compress a narrative story line into a vivid sketch of situation at one point in time. The overall attempt: to weave "luminous details" into major form.

V

Texture

A

Language and Imagery in the Ur-Cantos

Pound's language underwent a dramatic and permanent shift with the publication of canto four by the Ovid Press on October 4, 1917--just two months after the publication of the third Un-canto in Poetry (August 1917). Earlier, Pound's personality provided the main unifying device in long poems such as "Redondillas" (1911):

> I would sing . . .
> . . .
> I would sing . . .
> I sing . . .
> I would write . . .
> I would sing . . .
> I don't like . . .
> I would sing . . .

The dominance of the first person singular, together with the use of the future conditional, had reflected his

uncertainty about how to structure his long poem. In "Provincia Deserta" (1995), he had moved a step further, writing from experience rather than future expectations, in the past tense:

> I have walked . . .
> I have crept . . .
> I know . . . (CSP, 132)

The first Ur-canto (June 1917), two years later, retained the focus on the author but reverted to the future conditional, again expressing Pound's uncertainty about the direction of his major work:

> But say I want to, say I take . . .
> Let in your quirks and tweeks, and say the thing's
> an art-form . . .?[1]

Pound took the critical step between June and August, when the third Ur-canto appeared. Although he introduced his translation from Homer with a personal reference ("I've strained my ear for . . . And cracked my wit on . . ."), once he got fully into it the first-person mask slipped off Pounds' face and onto Odysseus':

And then went down to the ship,
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and
. . .
Then sat we . . .
Came we then . . .
I dug . . .
Then prayed I . . .
. . . And I cried in hurried speech . . . .

By the publication of canto four in October, the authorial voice no longer provided the subject of the poem, but was rather almost subject <u>to</u> what it perceived. Things have a reality independent of the narrator:

Palace in smoky light,
Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary-stones,
ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows;
The silver mirrors catch the bright stones and flare,
Dawn, to our waking, drifts in the green cool light;
Dew have blurrs, in the grass, pale ankles moving.
Beat, beat, whirr, thud, in the soft turf under the
apple trees,
Choros nympharum, goat-foot with pale foot alternate.[2]

Here Troy's destruction, and Cadmus' expedition to found Thebes, juxtapose with images of growth to show cultural fertility arise from destruction. The dream-like juxtapositions receive no explanation. No commentary intrudes to talk "about" the experience.

The decision to reserve the first person singular for personae such as Cadmus and Odysseus, rather than for himself, marks the birth of Pound's mature cantic style. The author's persona no longer provides the unifying focus for the long poem; instead, ccoherence arises from the sense of a coherent artistic intelligence behind the surface texture selecting and arranging the subject matter. The consistency of the rhythm and movement of the language itself personifies the persona.

Pound's reason for diminishing the importance of the authorial voice provided in his 1963 translation of the Marquise de Boufflers' "air: Sentir Avec Ardeur", throws a spotlight on this rejection of the authorial first person in a long poem:

> You need not always narrate;
> cite; date,
> But listen a while and not say: "I! I"
> Want to know why?
>
> The ME is tyrannical;
> academical.
> Early, late
> Boredom's cognate mate
> in step at his side
> And I with a ME, I fear,
> yet again!
>
> Say what you will in two
> Words and get thru!
> Long, frilly
> Palaver is silly.[3]

The evolving context of the line "Gods float in the azure air" through the 1915 period demonstrates how Pound achieved growing vividness by applying this rule to himself:

In the first Ur-canto, the vision arises out of a welter of authorial speculations on Browning's concept of major form and his method of composition:

> So you worked out new form, the meditative,
> Semi-dramatic, semi-epic story,
> And we will say: What's left for me to do?
> Whom shall I conjure up, who's my Sordello,
> My pre-Daun Chaucer, pre-Boccaccio,
> As you have done pre-Dante?
> Whom shall I hang my shimmering garment on;
> Who wear my feathery mantle, hagoromo;
> Whom set to dazzle the serious future ages?
> Not Arnaut, not de Born, not Uc St. Circ who has writ
> out the stories.
> Or shall I do your trick, the showman's booth, Bob
> Browning,
> Turned at my will into the Agora,
> Or into the old theatre at Arles,
> And set the lot, my visions, to confounding
> The wits that have survived your damn'd Sordello?
>
> (Or sulk and leave the word to novelists?)
> What a hodge-podge you have made there!--
> Zanze and swanzig, of all opprobrious rhymes!
> And you turn off whenever it suits your fancy,
> Now at Verona, now with the early Christians,
> or now a-gabbling of the "Tyrrhene whelk."
> "The lyre should animate but not mislead the pen--
> That's Wordsworth, Mr. Browning. (What a phrase?--
> That Lyre, that pen, that bleating sheep, Will Wordsworth!)
> That should have taught you avoid speech figurative
> And set out your matter
> As I do, in straight simple phrases:
> Gods float in the azure air . . . .
> (Poetry, June 1917, 117-18)

When revised soon after for its appearance in Lustra (1917), the twenty-eight lines of introductory matter were slashed to four:

> Worked our new form, meditative, semi-dramatic,
> Semi-epic story; and what's left?
> Pre-Daun Chaucer, Pre-Boccaccio? Not Arnaut
> Not Uc St. Circ.
> Gods float in the azure air.

Pound dropped the explanatory narrative, as extrinsic to his real matter. And by A Draft of XVI Cantos[4] (1925) the vision was moved to canto three, in a different context entirely:

> And the lit cross-beams, that year, in the Morosini,
> And peacocks in Kore's house, or there may have been.
> Float:
> Gods float in the azure air
> (XVI Cantos, 11)

Finally, for our received text of the passage, Pound dropped even the transitional "Float":

> And peacocks in Kore's house, or there may have been.
> Gods float in the azure air. (III, 11)

These alterations focus the reader's attention on the experience of the immediate vision rather than authorial speculations, so that the final version of the line is less immediately comprehensible, though more vigorous and muscular, and possesses a more assured tone. Pound finally highlighted the vision, not his own idiosyncracies.

This growing focus on the vision during succesive rewritings reminds us that as early as September 1914, he had considered the possibility of unifying his long poem around a central image:

> I am often asked whether there can be a long imagiste or vorticist poem. The Japanese, who evolved the hokku, evolved also the Noh plays. In the best "Noh" the whole play may consist of one image. I mean it is gathered about one image. Its unity consists in one image, enforced by movement and music. I see nothing against a long vorticist poem.[5]

As we saw in Chapter II, the structure of the full Noh program of five or six plays to present a "complete service of life had earlier influenced Pound's concept of major form; here he considered the usage of one image to achieve unity within an individual play. His intention at one point was to pattern his long poem with images of growth (the 'plot' was to be that of Takasago, the Noh play about sacred

pine trees)."[6]

But Pound found this means of achieving unity through "one image, enforced by movement and music," increasingly unworkable. In March 1917 he wrote to Joyce that he had "begun an endless poem, of no known category." This was only three months before the appearance of canto one in Poetry. He went on to say that the visual element may have gotten rather out of hand, describing his poem as

> phanopoeia or something or other, all about everything. . . . Probably too sprawling and unmusical to find favour in your ears. Will try to get some melody into it further on. Though we have no ombra and ingombra to end our lines with, or poluphloisbious thallassas to enrich the middle feet.[7]

Pound's dissatisfaction with the sprawling form of the Ur-cantos, and its lack of unity, points out his inablility to locate a single unifying image, or sequence of images.

Pound does talk a good deal about the visual element in the Ur-cantos, and presents a number of images, even if none of them acts as a catalyst. In canto one, for example, he calls Sordello Browning's attempt "to paint . . . the half or third of your intensest life"--as though visual art was

foremost in his thought - and ends the canto with an exclamation about the potential of such a method:

> Barred lights, great flares, new form, Picasso or Lewis.
> If for a year man write to paint, and not to music --
> O Casella! (Poetry, June 1917, 121.)

Similarly in canto two, Pound recounts coming upon a sudden sense of the reality of Joios' personality in a

> blue and gilded manuscript
> Decked out with Couci's rabbits,
> And the pictures twined with the capitals.
> (Poetry, July, 180)

As if to stress this element, canto one begins with a decorated initial letter, which anticipates the greater complexity of the initials in XVI Cantos (by Henry Strater), Cantos 17-27 (by Gladys Hines), and XXX Cantos (by Dorothy Shakespeare Pound). The absence of these often beautiful scenes "twined with the capitals" in subsequent editions indicates Pound's decision to concentrate attention on the linguistic element of his work after 1930.

Similarly, the second Ur-canto ends with a story of an

artist from the mid-West sent by his father to Paris to study. After "Ten years of Julian's and the ateliers" and some success he returns to Indiana and his family, reduced to painting "the local drug-shop and soda-bars," or a flea-bitten sheep to hang over the local doctor's mantlepiece, but enriched by his experience, "dreaming his renaissance." Pound dedicated his Ur-cantos to this artist: "Take my Sordello!" (Poetry, July, 188).

While visual imagery dominates in canto one, and anecdotes fill two, canto three primarily concerns itself with language. Having given his version of John Heydon's vision near the beginning of canto three, for example, Pound quickly moved away from this visual emphesis to a consideration of Heydon's use of language:

> "I have seen John Heydon."
> Let us hear John Heydon!
> "Omniformis
> Omnis intellectus est -- thus he begins, by sprouting
> half of Psellus.
> (Then comes a note, my assiduous commentator:
> Not Psellus De Daemonibus, but Porphyry's Chances,
> In the thirteenth chapter, that "every intellect is
> omniform") (Poetry, August, 248-49)

"Let us hear John Heydon." Quoting Heydon in the original Latin, Pound provides an infallible index to Heydon's

character--for a man's rhythm is "his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable" (LE, 9). Here Pound employs direct quotes to reveal personality. The spoken phrase, or tag, becomes a direct link, like having someone on the telephone, between the man of the past and the present reader.

Similarly, later in the canto, Pound differentiates Browning's emphasis on personality in his poetry from Valla's emphasis on society, as expressed in language:

> Ha! Sir Blancatz,
> Sordello would have your heart to give to all the princes;
> Valla, the heart of Rome,
> Sustaining speech, set out before the people.
> "Nec bonus Christianus ac bonus Tullianus."

Valla translates the heart of an entire tradition for the reader, not the heart of a single person princely elite. And again, as with Heydon, direct quotation conveys Valla's reverence for Tully's thought which in this way becomes part of the tradition.

To emphasize that English has taken over from Latin the role of a lingua franca, Pound translates Valla's remarks on

Rome:

> "More than the Roman city, the Roman speech"
> (Holds fast its part among the ever-living).
> "Not by the eagles only was Rome measured."
> "Wherever the Roman speech was, there was Rome,"
> Wherever the speech crept, there was mastery
> (Poetry, August, 250)

A translation from Homer follows, as though to emphasize Pound's determination to use his long poem to exceed the glory of Latin and Greek in English. "I believe language has improved," Pound wrote Iris Barry in August 1916, "that Latin is better than Greek and French than Latin for everything save certain melodic effects." (SL, 95) And, no doubt, English better than French, and American better than English.

First, however, he pays tribute to Andreus Divus' Rennaissance translation, by providing a literal translation from the Latin: "Down to the ships we went, set mast and sail, / Black keel and beasts for bloody sacrifice." This homage completed, he makes his own re-creation from the Latin:

> I've strained my ear for -ensa, -ombra, and -ensa
> And cracked my wit on delicate canzoni --

> Here's but rough meaning:
> "And then went down to the ship, set keel to breakers,
> Forth on the godly sea;
> We set up mast and sail on that swart ship,
> Sheep bore we aboard her, and our bodies also
> Heavy with weeping. (Poetry, August, 251)

Here, "rough meaning" recalls Pound's complaint in his letter to Joyce that "we have no ombra and ingombra to end our lines with, "that English lacks musicality. It also points to the priority he had decided to give clear speech in his poem despite Browning's example, in Sordello, of convoluted syntax that "follows the builder's whim." The fact that Pound later chose to begin his major poem with his own translation from Divus in rough "Anglo-Saxon" speech, shows not only his desire to maintain and extend a tradition of grafting the best from earlier cultures onto modern ones, but also his desire to shift the focus on phanopoeia in the Ur-cantos onto language itself, onto its denotative component rather than its musical qualities. His long poem was eventually to centre not around a central image but around the potential for the clear expression of meaning offered by modern English. In 1915, however, the implementation of this decision was still eight years in the future.

We have seen how the Ur-cantos progressed from the use of the authorial "I" to its use by various personae, and from a focus on phanopoeia to a focus on language, including the voices of many characters other than the author. These experiments allowed Pound to thicken the texture of his poetry by taking the burden of unifying the poem off the personality of the author and letting various personae speak in their own voices.

B

The Homage as Narrative

The clearest progression from the Homage to Sextus Propertius (1917) through Mauberley (1920) to XVI Cantos (1925) was the dispensing with obvious structural frameworks. Pound moved from the use of a narrative framework (the Homage), to the presentation of an implied argument by example or illustration (Mauberley), to the use of recurrent motifs (XVI Cantos), in order to unify his long poem. This movement toward a less obvious framework for the long poem marked a movement away from conventional literary forms toward what Pound conceived of as more natural, organic modes of organization. Increasingly, Pound

emphasized the texture of words on the page, and their unpredictably spaced repetition, rather than large symmetrical patterns of development. He moved away from literary frameworks toward an emphasis on natural patterns of recurrence.

This pattern can be seen in embryonic form in the Homage. For while Pound used Propertius as a central character "to hang my shimmering garment on," he suppressed narrative links between and within individual sections of the poem, and in this way focussed the reader's attention on the linguistic texture of the poem. We do not enjoy the Homage so much for its plot, as for what its language tells us about Propertius' character. Over the next six years Pound moved much further in this direction.

As an introduction to a discussion of the structure of the Homage it will be useful to quote from Pound's essay "Henry James," which appeared in the Little Review of August, 1918. Following James' death in 1916, Pound read the entire canon over a two-year period. The Homage was begun in late 1916 and completed the following year, so Pound was reading James while composing his poem on Propertius. In his review Pound says that "the supreme reward for the artist" who has spent years developing his

craft comes when the

> momentum of his art, the sheer bulk of his processes, the (si licet) size of his fly-wheel, should heave him out of himself, out of his personal limitations, out of the tangles of personal heredity and of environment, out of the bias of his early training, of early predilictions, whether of Florence, A.D. 1300, or of Back Bay of 1872, and leave him simply the great true recorder. (LE, 299-300).

As we saw with regard to canto four, Pound too was involved in ridding himself of personal limitations, dispensing with the purely personal "I" in his writing. Here he reveals his desire to emulate James by overcoming his own prediliction for "Florence, A.D. 1300" (i.e., Dante). He had spent years perfecting the short imagist poem and epigram, and begun to write longer poems like "Near Perigord" in 1915; it is likely that he now felt his "fly-wheel" had achieved sufficient momentum to propel him through the construction of a longer poem.

In this respect, it is significant that Pound went on in his review to mark the way James develops away from the short sentence, away from the plot, toward an emphasis on texture. As James matured, Pound notes, there ensued a growing

> discontent with the short sentence, epigram, etc. in which he does not at this time attain distinction; the clarity is not satisfactory to the author, his donnée being radically different from that of his contempories. The "story" not being really what he is after, he starts to build up his medium; a thickening, a chiaroscuro is needed, the long sentence; he wanders, seeks to add a needed opacity, he overdoes it, produces the cobwebby novel, emerges or justifies himself in Maisie and manages his long-sought form in The Awkward Age. (LE, 304)

This describes Pound's own development, away from the "epigram," away from "the story," towards a building up of his medium, the "long sentence" or long poem, toward a thickening of his art. There seems little doubt the Pound's review of James development stimulated his desire to break through into major form, a desire registered by his composition of the Homage, MauberleyI, and the Cantos.

The major question he faced was what kind of form to use. It seems natural that he should look to adapt the narrative methods of contemporary novelists like Henry James. Indeed, he says as much to Felix Schelling in a 1922 letter, where he speaks of Mauberley as "a study in form, an attempt to condense the James novel" (SL, 180). But the narrative elements of plot and character development are much more obvious, less condensed, in the Homage. These elements are worth glancing at. Section I, the first of

twelve in the sequence, introduces Propertius' reasons for preferring the lyric mode to that of the epic. Section II shows Propertius in a comic light as he tries unsuccessfully to interest himself in writing about war. Section III introduces Cynthia as someone for whom Propertius risks death, while Section IV shows him realize but ignore her inconstancy. Section V combines the themes of the previous four sections, as Propertius mocks the bombastic component of epic, and compares its literary stimulus unfavorably with that of his own poetry: "Neither Calliope nor Appolo sung these things into my ear, / My genius is no more than a girl." Section VI warns Cynthia of the finality of death, which comes even to lovers. Section VII shows Propertius at the summit of his happiness, as he recollects their nights of love-making. In Section VIII, Propertius pleads with Jove to spare Cynthia's life, and Section IX ends with her recovery. In Section X, Propertius visits Cynthia after a night on the town, only to find her sleeping alone, angred by his lack of attention. In Section XI, Propertius tells Cynthia that her consequent attempt to avoid him is futile, and that, despite her encounters, he will forgive everything. Section XII recounts Propertius' discovery of Cynthia's affair with Lynceus, writer of bombastic epics, and asserts his willingness to make verse in Cynceus' fashion, "if she should command / it." Propertius

willingness to write even epic poetry -- at Cynthia's command -- ties the theme of epic poetry together with his love affair very neatly. Throughout the poem he has reversed the traditional priorities to assert the pre-eminence of the lyric mode over the epic.

It is clear from even this sketchy and superficial paraphrase that the Homage possess a rudimentary plot line as well as character development. Such devices to provide a sense of unity were gradually phased out by Pound in Mauberley and XVI Cantos, as he moved further away from a reliance on traditional methods of achieving narrative unity.

Although the Homage possesses these unifying elements, it experiments with ways of condensing narrative. Pound's use of the "cut" between individual sections of the poem is perhaps the clearest indication if his attempt - a technique already used six years earlier in "Und Drang", and developed further in "Xenia", " Zenia", and "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour". Hence, Section II ends with "Mistress Calliope" (the muse of epic poetry) demanding that Properties write epic:

Thus Mistress Calliope,

Dabbling her hands in the fount, thus she
Stiffened our face with the backwash of Philetas the Coan,[9]

while Section II jumps to a more welcome kind of message, from Cynthia:

Midnight, and a letter comes to me from our
mistress:
Telling me to come to Tibur, At once!!

Similarly, Section VI ends with Propertius' reminder to Cynthia that time is short for both of them:

In vain, you call back the shade,
In vain, Cynthia. Vain call to unanswering shadow,
Small talk comes from small bones,

while Section VII begins with joyful eagerness:

Me happy, night, night full of brightness;
On couch made happy by my long delectations.

And while Section XI ends with a statement of eternal devotion to Cynthia, despite her flagrant self-advertisement

as a prostitute: "Though you walk in the Via Sacra, with a peacock's tail for / a fan," Section XII leaps to Propertius' surprise at the news of her infidelity with Lynceus: "Who, who will be the next man to entrust his girl / to a friend?" As in imagist poems like "Fan-Piece", a whole range of experience - not explicitly stated - is implied in the interval. The ubiquity of this kind of cinematic break between sections elevates it to a method.

And just as abrupt breaks occur between sections, so within them Pound disrupts logical patterns of syntax, in this case often to characterize Propertius by reflecting his habitually disjointed thought-patterns. In Section III, for example, Cynthia's demand that Propertius come at once is not grammatically tied to the image which follows:

> Midnight, and a letter comes to me from our
> mistress:
> Telling me to come to Tibur, <u>At</u> once!!
> "Bright tips reach up from twin towers,
> Anienan spring water falls into flat-spread pools."
> What <u>is</u> to be done about it?
> Shall I entrust myself to entangled shadows,
> Where bold hands may do violence to my person?

The method is inexplicable, illogical, but effective. The images burst out of the surrounding narrative, as welcome as

a moment of passion to a mind engaged in bookkeeping. The method provides a terrifically economical and apt revelation of Propertius' lecherous but wimpish personality, and marks a real advance in Pound's ability to dispense with unneded aspects of narrative continuity, to shift the reader's focus of attention from larger structures onto the texture of the poem.

In a similar manner, Pound's trick of juxtaposing English latinate diction with Latin tags--e.g., "And my ventricles do not palpitate to Caesarial ore rotundos" (V) --provides an economical and humorous means of exposing both Propertius' modernity, and the similarities between Augustan Rome and Georgian London, in a very condensed way; Pound fits Propertius' tongue very neatly into his own cheek.

Pound employes the resources of logopoeia in this manner throughout the poem, to create a sense of the interpermeation of personal and public concerns. The linguistic texture of the poem thus becomes of supreme importance, so that ultimately, Propertius' character is conveyed to us not so much by what he does as by what he says. And what he says is not merely that he has had an affair with Cynthia, but that the lyric is better than the

epic because it arises out of creative desire, not out of the wish to please a Caesar--or even a Muse:

> Neither Calliope nor Apollo sung these things into my ear, my genius is no more than a girl. (V)

Properties' infatuation with Cynthia leads naturally to his infatuation with lyric poetry; therefore, the texture of the poem, its language, reflects this interrelationship. Propertius' subjective concerns counterpoint a defense of the lyric mode.

This is difficult, for while the particular element of Properties' personality that Pound wished to reveal is his humour, his love of "tying a blue ribbon in the tails of Virgil and Horace" (SL, 178), he also wanted to make a perfectly serious case for the supremacy of the lyric mode. It is difficult to be humorous and serious at the same time. How Pound approaches this problem can best be seen by comparing two sections of the poem, which present these facets of Propertius' character. In the first of these, at the end of Section I, Propertius makes a serious defense of the "genius" of lyricism; in the second example, taken from the end of Section XII, Pound submerges a humorous sexual pun beneath the serious surface of the passage in order to

prevent us from ignoring the subjective basis of Propertius' defense of the lyric mode.

Taking a close look at the linguistic texture of these two passages, we note first that the ending to Section I is elegiac in tone, and that Propertius speaks without a trace of irony:

> Happy who are mentioned in my pamphlets,
> the songs shall be a fine tomb-stone over their beauty.
> But against this?
> Neither expensive pyramids scraping the stars in their route,
> Nor houses modelled upon that of Jove in East Elis,
> Nor the monumental effigies of Mausolus,
> are a complete elucidation of death.
>
> Flame burns, rain sinks into the cracks
> And they all go to rack ruin beneath the thud of the years.
> Stands genius a deathless adornment,
> a name not to be worn out with the years. (Sullivan, P. 119)

Looking more closely, we notice the care with which this passage is constructed. The fire which eradicates the pretentious houses, pyramids, and effigies, and the rain which sinks into the cracks in the newly scorched earth, flares and hisses in the "r"s and "s"s of the final five lines. The spondees on "Flame burns", "rain sinks", and

"rack ruin", act like a battering-ram, the recurrent thump of which the "th" sounds of "beneath the thud of the/years" mimick. With complete artistry, Pound reverses these connotations in the final two lines, so that the opening spondee, "Stands genius", replaces the concept of falling with that of standing, the destruction of fire with the creativity of genius. Similarly, the "th" sound is appropriated for the positive concept "deathless", while the anapestic metre: "of the/years", disrupted by the line-break, transforms itself in the final line to flow with perfect assurance: "a name not to be worn out with the years". Like a phoenix, "lyric" genius arises out of flame and ashes in the final two lines, triumphant and eternal.

Pound's careful use of language here emphasizes the sincerity of Propertius' belief in the importance of the lyric mode. Pound thus establishes a concern with broad social issues as an important element in his character. But the ending of Section XII presents us with a counterpoint to this, for although the cadences here too are elegiac, Pound inserts a reference to the element of schoolboy sexuality in Propertius' character:

> Varro sang Jason's expedition,
> Varo, of his great passion Leucadia,
> There is song in the parchment; Catullus the highly

indecorous,
Of Lesbia, known above Helen;
And in the dyed pages of Calvus,
Calvus mourning Quintilia,
And but now Gallus had sung of Lycoris.
Fair, fairest Lycoris --
The waters of Styx poured over the wound;
And now Propertius of Cynthia, taking his stand among these. (Sullivan, 171)

At the very moment of Propertius' apotheosis as lyric poet in the poem, Pound slips in a sexual pun ("taking his stand") - which rhymes with that in the title of the poem - in order to prevent the reader from neglecting the whimsical, playful, and professedly sexual, mainsprings of Propertius' infatuation with the lyric mode. He hides the pun beneath the surface of the poem, just as this element of Propertius' poetry had been hidden from scholarly eyes.

We have seen that plot and character development provide an overall framwork for the Homage, and glanced at how Pound attempts to counterpoint the serious and comic elements of Propertius' character within the texture of the poem. Other critics have dealt with how Pound adapted Propertius' poetry to his own purposes in similar ways. J.P. Sullivan, for instance, has brilliantly illustrated the way in which Pound highlights the similarities between Propertius' attitude to the Empire and his own (Sullivan,

pp. 58ff.), while more recently, Mark Turner has shown in detail how Pound changes Propertius' main proposition, "The mental state of the love poet; the poet as lover", into a different main theme, "The cultured poet versus the Empire".[8] But it may be worthwhile to glance here at a further technique used by Pound to achieve unity of texture, as well as of theme, in the poem. This technique consists of using a distinctive speech pattern to characterize Propertius, one which uses, not mechanical repetition, but repetition with variation: e.g.,

> Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy,
> and the dance into Italy (I);
> Alba, your kind, and the realm your folk
> have constructed with such industry
> Shall be yawned out on my lyre--with such industry. (II)
>
> When, when, and whenever death closes our
> eyelids,
>
> Moving naked over Acheron
> Upon the one raft, victor and conquered together,
> Marious and Jugurtha together,
> one tangle of shados.
>
> . . .
> One raft on the veiled flood of Acheron,
> Marius and Jugurtha together. (VI);
>
> Me happy, night, night full of brightness (VII);
>
> Persephone and Dis, Dis, have mercy upon her (IX);
>
> Light, light of my eyes (X)
>
> Escape! There is, O Idiot, no escpe (XI);
>
> Who, who will be the next man to entrust his girl (XII).

Through this characteristic speech pattern, Pound makes Propertius' voice instantly recognizable, conveys a distinct personality. The cadences are lyrical not narrative. They function musically rather than to advance the plot, contribute less to paraphrasable meaning than to emotional unity. Despite the symmetrical framwork of the Homage and its narrative progression, Pound is already deeply involved in establishing the overriding importance of texture as an ancillary means of achieving unity in his long poem.

One other important link between the Homage and Pound's later long poems may be discerned in the placement of Section VII. It presents the peak of Propertius' happiness with Cynthia; the other sections lead towards and fall away from this moment. It acts as a minature of the poem as a whole; its language evolves from the expression through disrupted rhythms of incipient nervousness about impending joy ("Me happy, night, night full of brightness"), to affirmative cadences indicative of a mature affair:

> Hers will I be dead,
> If she confer such nights upon me,
> long is my life, long in years,
> If she give me many,
> God am I for the time.

Highlighting the middle section of a long poem, using it as a fulcrum, represents an imporant stage in Pound's experiments with providing a structural framwork for the long poem. It is not found, for instance, in "Redondillas", or in "Und Drang", where the first half of the poem is balanced against the final six sections. Pound first uses the technique when he places "The Seafarer" in the middle of Cathay. It occurs again in XVI Cantos, with the insertion of the four Malatesta cantos, while the Pisan cantos occupy a similar position in the Cantos. And as the symmetry of the Homage suggests the cyclical nature of passion, so in XVI Cantos Pound uses the same technique to suggest the cyclical nature of war (canto one begins with Odysseus returning from one war, while canto sixteen ends with the commencement of another). But in the later poems Pound dispenses with even the vestige of literary framework found in the Homage, relying on thematic recurrence and consistency of texture to carry the burden of unifying the long poem.

C

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley: Texture as Structure

While the Homage has a definite narrative framwork,

Pound's next attempt at the long poem, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (1920), is much less obviously structured. Nevertheless, Pound organized it according to principles of logical argument, even if these principles are not immediately apparent. The Ode which opens Part I presents the thesis that EP's attempt to "resuscitate the dead art/Of poetry"[9] has failed while Sections II-XII provide supporting illustrations of the social conditions which make such a failure understandable. As a counter-argument, or antithesis to this, "Envoi" stands at the end of this sequence to show that EP's powers cannot be so easily written off.

Part II develops a parallel argument. In Section I Mauberley is presented as "Pisanello lacking the skill/To forge Achaia", while Sections II-IV provide illustrations of those character weaknesses which lead "To his final / Exclusion from the world of letters". As in Part I, "Medallion" stands at the end of the sequence to show that Mauberley's powers too, while not equal to EP's have been underestimated. Thus, by balancing the critical mode against the poetical mode in Parts I and II, Pound advances the argument that there is more creative potential in the age than the critics show the ability to appreciate.

But there is a further twist to this argument. Like the critics, Pound is critical of EP and Mauberley, but not because he is blind to their accomplishments. By restricting themselves to the specialties of melopoeia and phanopoeia respectively, EP and Mauberley have made a fatal mistake: shifted priorities away from meaning. Pound himself makes no such mistake in Mauberley, which presents a very meaningful argument in expertly handled language. This reading of Pound's intention explains his ambiguous use of "thou" in "Envoi", which can refer to either to the woman or the song; the lyric mode sacrifices referential clarity. Significantly, this interpretation harmonizes with the evolving emphasis on language apparent in Pound's revisions of the Ur-cantos. Read in this way, Mauberley argues that modern poetry must move beyond the expression of purely lyrical or visual subjects toward more didactic concerns. The fact that the argument of the poem is left for the reader to discover indicates that Mauberley represents the second stage in Pound's movement (begun in the Homage) away from using obvious structural framworks for his long poem.

Keeping this overall argumentative structure in mind, we can move to a consideration of the texture of the poem, in order to see how not only Pound's concept of structural framworks, but also his attitude to society, has changed

since writing the Homage. The direction of this change can be seen immediately by comparing the opening of the Homage:

> Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas,
> It is in your grove I would walk,
> I who come first from the clear font
> Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy,
> and the dance into Italy.

with the opening of Mauberley:

> For three years, out of key with his time,
> He strove to resuscitate the dead art
> Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"
> In the old sense. Wrong from the start--

Bitter irony has supplanted lyrical cadences, emphasizing Pound's growing sense of the futility of the attempt to establish a secure place for the lyric voice within the superficiality of contemporary society.

As inexorably as a death-march, Mauberley sets forth in sequence the intolerable social bias facing the artist:

> The tea-rose, tea-gown etc.
> Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
> The pianola "replaces"
> Sapphos's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations;
Caliban casts out Ariel.

. . .

Faun's flesh is not to us,
Nor the saint's vision.
We have the press for wafer;
Franchise for circumcision.

Rhymes punch the staccato rhythms down, like coffin-nails; free expression has no place in the social system. In place of the swinging dance rhythms of the Homage, rhyme precisely confines each line as tightly as society does the artist.

Pound's scathing irony marks the end of his willingness to compromise; he sees nothing amusing in the artist's position. The element of play in the Homage disappears completely in Mauberley. Kenner's comment that the earlier poem represents "Pound's triumph of logopoeia, the fruit of a creative exasperation he never regained (his later exasperations yielded invective)",(PE, 288) emphasizes the significance of this change in attitude.

As one indication of this change, consider the smouldering, passionate resentment which flares under

these lines:

> Some quick to arm
> some for adventure,
> some from fear of weakness,
> some from fear of censure,
> Some for love of slaughter, in imagination,
> learning later . . .
> some in fear, learning love of slaughter;
>
> Died some, pro patria,
> non "dulce" non "et decor" . . .

The Allied offensive of the second battle of the Somme began July 1, 1916. On the first day there were 150,000 casualties; on the second, 110,000 - the scorn behind the two words "Died <u>some</u>" flares up in the light of these statistics.

As in the <u>Homage</u>, the loss of passion symbolizes the dehumanization of every aspect of society: "Even the Christian beauty / Defects--after Samothrace"--this being a location for the celebration of phallic rites of the Cabiri deities. The perversion of sexual passions leading up to the war, and beyond it, provides a thematic link between Sections VI and XII. In "Yeux Glauques" Victorian affairs of passion are indicted, in "Siena me fe" warmed-over memories of the wanly licentious Nineties are drawn out of M. Verog "Among the pickled foetuses and bottled bones"

where they have been shelved. "Brennbaum 'The Impeccable'" takes refuge from life in stiff propriety, and "Mr. Nixon" in thinking of people as objects: "The hardest nut I had to crack / Was Mr. Dundas". Section X sees passion relegated to a pig farm in the country, where Ford the stylist took shelter from social disapproval with his "uneducated mistress". Meanwhile, here opposite, the "Conservatrix of Milesian", living in the suburb of Ealing, succeeds because

> No instinct has survived in her
> Older than those her grandmother
> Told her would fit her station. (XI)

And this Victorian prissiness is carefully preserved in Georgian London, wehre the poet finds his coat insufficiently fashionable to stimulate in the Lady Valentine "A durable passion" (XII). The irony behind this sketch becomes evident when we realize that the Lady Valentine is modelled on Pound's memory of the Lady Diana, as described by Gordon Craig, son of Ellen Terry, in the <u>English Review</u> of August, 1911:

> The Lady Diana, who was a very grand person in Society, looked up the meaning of the word "choreography" and took a party to the Russian ballet.

> "It's something new", she said, "Choreography they call it but personally I think this Cleopatra ballet rather tiresome". And her friends mostly agreed. One person defended the work and pointed out that the neglect of Augustus John's portraits for those of the academic painters emphasized a general disregard for the arts. "I don't understand". And the Lady Diana turned upon him her famous Luini smile.[10]

Thus the "Luini smile" is associated for Pound with style rather than substance, and with "a general disregard for the arts"; significantly, this Lady provides the inspiration for Mauberley's "Luini in porcelain" in "Medallion".

Having set forth the general ambience of this passionless society, Pound provides a specific example of its effect on the artist in the "Mauberley" sequence. Mauberley's escape from society's demands is not to Propertius' whorish Cynthia; art is his mistress. His capacity for passion completely anaesthetized, he sees the lady's colour "Tempered as if / It were through a perfect glaze". Interpreting life through the terms of an emaciated art, he drifts out of the picture:

> And his desire for survival,
> Faint in the most strenuous moods,
> Became an Olympian <u>apathein</u>
> In the presence of selected perceptions.

And not only is Mauberley's passion anaesthetized, but his ability to handle language as well. Lack of passionate direction of the will, of directio voluntatis, is signalled in Pound's work by language that is similarly undirected, as in the early poem "La Fraisne":

> Once there was a women...
> ...but I forget...she was...
> ...I hope she will not come agian.
>
> ...I do not remember...
>
> I think she hurt me once but...
> That was very long ago. (ALSO, 16)

The description of the aesthete in Section II of the "Mauberley" sequence shows a similar linguistic drift, conveying Mauberley's inability to raise the energy required to make sense of his situation:

> Drifted...drifted precipitate,
> Asking time to be rid of...
> Of his bewilderment; to designate
> His new found orchid...
>
> To be ceratin...certain...
> (Amid aerial flowers)...time for
> arrangements--
> Drifted on
> To the final estrangement

In order to contrast his own ability to handle language with Mauberley's diffidence, Pound passes judgment on the aesthete in the third section in cadences as waterproof and compacted as Mauberley's own are loose and directionless:

> Incapable of the least utterance or com-
> position,
> Emendation, conservation of the "better
> tradition,"
> Refinement of medium, elimination of
> superfluities,
> August attraction or concentration.
>
> Nothing, in brief, but maudlin confession,
> Irresponse to human aggression,
> Amid the precipitation, down-float
> Of insubstantial manna,
> Lifting the faint susurrus
> Of his subjective hosannah.

Each phrase involves a pair of parallel concepts, e.g., utterance-composition, emendation-conservation, refinement-elimination, attraction-concentration, confession-irresponse, precipitation-down-float, insubstantial-subjective. But the effect is not one of redundancy or tautology, so carefully is the language handled. The assurance of movement in these lines is obvious, but it should be noted that their triumph comes in the fact that the music never obscures the meaning. Unlike both EP and Mauberley, Pound

uses the full resources of the language.

The main contrast in the poem, between Pound's own ability to handle language on the one hand, and EP's lyricism and Mauberley's aesthetic uncertainty on the other, is highlighted in "Envoi" and "Medallion", which end the first and second halves of the sequence.

"Medallion" illustrates the strengths and the shortcomings of the art of the pure aesthete. Like the first two Ur-cantos, it accentuates the techniques of phanopoeia, rather than those of melopoeia. But since, as we have seen, Pound's progress between 1917 and 1920 was largely away from visual toward musical values, and away from both of these towards an emphasis on meaning, "Medallion" appears to represent an approach that Pound himself had begun to grow away from three years previously.

Moreover, "Medallion" stands as the work of a minor artist incapable of rendering "the whole man" that Browning had portrayed in Sordello:

> Not the full smile,
> His art, but an art
> In profile. (I, 128)

Mauberley's inspiration is one of serendipity, of casual browsing "in the opening / Pages of Reinach". The repetition in the line, "His art, but an art" contrasts sharply with the variety of parallelisms in "The Age Demanded" (i.e., "Incapable of the least utterance or composition"), indicating Mauberley's lack of inventiveness when compared with that of E.P.

And although "Medallion" possesses a rhythm that suits the kind of restricted art it presents, the imagery of the poem restricts itself to tracing the bounding-lines of the lady's face:

> The sleek head emerges
> From the gold-yellow frock
> As Anadyomene in the opening
> Pages of Reinach.
>
> Honey-red, closing the face-oval,
> A basket-work of braids which seem as
> if they were
> Spun in King Minos' hall
> From metal, or intractable amber;
>
> The face-oval beneath the glaze,
> Bright in its suave bounding-line as,
> Beneath half-watt rays,
> The eyes turn topaz.

The first quoted stanza sketches in the gold gown cutting across the singer's neck; the second draws in the gold

braids which frame the rest of her face. The third stanza opens with renewed emphasis on the bounding-line of her face--as yet, we have no clue to her character or personality. In the final line we hear, rather than see, that her eyes are turning a translucent yellow associated with silicate of aluminum-- she is undergoing metamorphosis into a form of mineral life, as opposed to the metamorphosis into vegetative life (cf. "The Tree.")

The fact that we see both the lady's eyes in the final line indicates that Mauberley has overcome his earlier limitations of creating "an art / In profile", but light does not emanate from within; it is conferred by dim "half-watt rays". In troubadour poetry, McDougal tells us, "the light that emanates from the lady defines her whole being, and serves as a source of illumination (both literally and figuratively) for those who come into her presence . . . Love emanates from her glance . . . and all men become powerless in her presence" (McDougal, p. 76). In "Medallion", however, the lady's personality does not radiate outward; it is enclosed by a "basket-work" (cf. casket) of metallic braids that smother expression. Moreover, unlike the "magic amber" of "Envoi" in which the lady's beauty is preserved for future ages, this lady's charms are hardened beneath "intractable amber".

"Medallion", then, does not represent a triumph of Mauberley's art so much as the necessarily still-born product of out-dated aestheticism. The alchemy of the last line is not that of a stone statue coming to life, but of a personality turning into metal--and though gold is beautiful, no one who knows Pound could believe that he would place the value of any metal above that of the individual personality.

If "Medallion" represents one beautiful dead-end for the modern poet, "Envoi" too has its limitations. If "Medallion" gathers around a single image, "Envoi" gathers around a single rhythm. It provides, as Kenner says, "A time tunnel clear back to Sappho's rose and Chaucer's 'Go litel bok', a self-interfering pattern 'from which, and through which, and into which' rush Waller's roses, Lawe's music, Raymond Collingnon's singing, other times' diction, and ours; an art of the Vortex, by and large hopeless here, where energies have failed."(PE, 288). But although it represents the assimilation of a lyricl tradition that has been completely "understood", the fact that it is isolated at the end of a sequence of poems which illustrate the argument that contemporary social conditions are antipathetic to the creation of artistic masterpieces, emphasizes Pound's reluctant awareness that the full

energies of modern art cannot be expressed within the lyric mode. "Envoi" illustrates the kind of lyrical poetry which might have written under ideal conditions, had the social conditions mentioned in the poems which precede it not pertained; in this sense it is less a lyric than an elegy. Like phanapoeia, lyrical melopoeia is an insufficient mode in which to express the modern sensibility, Pound thinks, because it tends "to lull, or to distract the reader from the exact sense of the language" (LE, 26).

The lady in "Envoi" offers no resistance to the process of capturing her beauty in song, utters no "profane protest" such as that in "Medallion". Hence Pound presents the aural tradition as a time capsule in which beauty may hibernate through a cultural winter. The cadences of this lyric contrast with the end-stopped, stultifying verses of "Medallion" as though to emphasize song's ability to keep the tradition alive:

> Tell her that sheds
> Such treasure in the air,
> Recking naught else but that her graces give
> Life to the moment,
> I would bid them live
> As roses might, in magic amber laid,
> Red overwrought with orange and all made
> One substance and one colour
> Braving time.

Red roses overwrought with orange amber stand as a metaphor for beauty's permanence. This metaphor reflects Pound's syncretic vision, his admiration for the attempt to get "all forms into one form", that is, to produce "an elixir" through "the sheer perfection of art". The beauty of this metaphor surpasses that of Mauberley's poem and, combined with an unmatchable melody, approaches as nearly as possible perfection of form--an attempt limited only by the age's inability to appreciate such beauty, to sustain it, and to allow it to grow. It possesses the strange, frozen beauty of a petrified forest.

In order to appreciate the full significance of "Envoi" to Pound's development of major form during the late 1910's it is necessary to put it into the context of his interest in music during this time. On December 6, 1917, just four months after the appearance of the third Ur-canto in Poetry, Pound published his first article on music in the New Age, under the pseudonym William Atheling. This series continued at intervals until January 6, 1921.[11]

On January 1, 1918, he wrote to Harriet Monroe that he was about to engage in "some more work on sound", because "the vers libre public are probably by now as stone blind to the vocal or oral properties of a poem as the 'sonnet'

public five or seven years ago to the actual language" (SL, 127). In the same month he wrote Margaret Anderson that he desired "to resurrect the art of the lyric",

> I mean words to be sung, for Yeats' only wail and submit to keening and chaunting (with a u) and Swinburne's only rhapsodify. And with a few exceptions (a few in Browning) there is scarcely anything else since the time of Waller and Campion. AND a mere imitation of them won't do. (SL, 128)

By 1920, however, Pound's definition of melopoeia became more clearly defined: "there are three kinds of melopoeia, that is to say, poems made to speak, to chant, and to sing" (LE, 167). Mauberley contains all three kinds of melopoeia, carefully zoned, with "Envoi" obviously being meant to be sung.

The limitations of lyricism had become clear to Pound during the writing of Mauberley, as he realized that the modern poet, unlike the troubadours, could not afford to sacrifice meaning for melody. In his 1920 essay on Arnaut Daniel he noted:

> The Provencals were not constrained by the modern literary sense. Their restraints were the tune and the rhyme-scheme, they were not constrained by a need for certain qualities of writing, without which no modern

> poem is complete or satisfactory. They were not competing with De Maupassant's prose. (LE, 115)

And as early as March 1918, before writing Mauberley, Pound criticised Swinburne for "having neglected the value of words" because he was chiefly "intent on their value as sound" (LE, 292).

It seems clear from the above quotations that Pound used "Envoi" in Mauberley to act as a reminder that the lyric impusle by itself was not enough to reanimate modern poetry. Coming as it does after the poems made to be spoken and chanted in the first half of the sequence, it was meant to indicate that the modern poet cannot restrict himself to one mode of expression, and must concern himself more with meaning than with sound.

This belief contrasts sharply with his early notion of centering poems around absolutes, as expressed, for example, in his preface to the translations from Guido Cavalcanti in 1910: "I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor." Classical archaeologists have demonstrated the possibility of reconstructing entire temples based on the mathematical principles of harmony enunciated by Pythagoras, from the

proportions of a few extant pillars; in much the same way, Pound believed it possible "to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form--fugue, sonata, I cannot say what form, but a form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we a little more skill, we could score for orchestra". This belief explains the relationship in Pound's mind between the single image (e.g., "absolute metaphor") or the single perfect phrase (e.g., "absolute rhythm"), and major form. While "Medallion" forms around a single image, and "Envoi" around a single melody or rhythm, neither poem implies around itself the "major form" that is Mauberley. In other words, Pound has moved away from his earlier theory in his practice of poetry; he no longer seeks unity in a single metaphor or rhythm. The way is open for a new experiment.

Hence, by the autumn of 1921, Pound recalled his earlier theory in terms which indicate that he no longer adhered to it:

> In the preface to my Guido I have tried to express the idea of an absolute rhythm, or the possibility of it. Perhaps every artist at one time or another believes in a sort of elixir or philosopher's tone produced by the sheer perfection of his art, by the alchemical sublimation of his medium; the elimination of accidentals and imperfections. (LE, 442)

From 1904 to 1921, the key to writing a long poem had seemed to Pound to lie in the "elimination of accidentals and imperfections", leading to a perfect image, or an absolute rhythm, capable of implying around it, or causing to grow up organically, a "perfect form". This theory of major form germinating out of a single seed was replaced in early 1922 with the theory that major form must arise out of the accumulation of vast numbers of "wild shots" that end by expressing "a personality", as we shall see in the next chapter. The organization of Mauberley provided a stepping-stone in this direction.[12]

In this chapter we have seen how the Ur-cantos explored ways of unifying the long poem through images, character, and language. We have also seen how the Homage, while possessing a narrative framework, supplemented this unifying element with the use of distinctive cadences to characterize Propertius, and with the use of counterpoint to highlight the similarities between private and public concerns. In Mauberley, we have seen Pound move further away from obvious frameworks in his long poem, and towards a new emphasis on meaning, as he employed a subtle structure of argument to point out the absence of positive values in modern society, and the unsuitability of both phanapoeia or melopoeia in themselves. Neither the

open-ended structure of the Ur-cantos, however, nor the symmetry of the Homage, nor the didactic element of Mauberley, provided Pound with a usable structure for a really long poem. His major advance toward major form during this period lay in his development of an increasingly complex linguistic texture that was capable of capturing the reader's interest without relying on a conventional literary framework.

PART THREE:

ACCOMPLISHMENT (1920-1925)

All excellent things are as difficult as
they are rare.

--Spinoza, Ethics

VI

A DRAFT OF XVI CANTOS: SOME FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Pound made the single most important breakthrough of his career in early 1922: He structured his final "long poem". He had been stuck on this problem since 1919; as Myles Slatin notes, "The writing of VII took three weeks; on December 13, 1919, Pound announced it to his father: 'done cantos 5, 6, 7, each more incomprehensible than the one preceding it' . . . Unexpectedly, here the poem stopped; no further reference to the composition of the Cantos seems to have been made until 1922: some three years later".[1] This chapter explores the influences which led to Pound's breakthrough, using his critical essays in the Little Review and the Dial to illustrate the way in which he arrived at his final decision.

The importance with which Pound himself viewed the critical theories he enunciated during this period can be gauged from his letter to R.P. Blackmur on March 26, 1925--a mere two months after the publication of XVI Cantos:

> There is the question of whether the eight Dial

> letters, which I happen to have reread this A.M. are more useful than Paulito's recollection of having sat on Sarah's lap.
>
> There is also the point that has not been raised: i.e., whether I haven't outlined a new criticism or critical system. I don't propose to go back over my printed stuff, volumes, etc. and detach this. But there is material for an essay, or a Ph.D. thesis, or a volume. (SL, 198-199)

Since Pound viewed critical theory as valuable only when it led to creative work, his enthusiasm for his critical system stemmed directly from the sense that his theories had helped him to structure XVI Cantos. We will therefore elucidate important aspects of his critical writings before moving on to a discussion of the poetry of XVI Cantos in Chapter VII.

At the earliest stage, Pound thought of emulating Dante's Commedia by dividing his poem into three sections: "the first in terzine, having to do with emotion . . . the second in pentameters, having to do with instruction; the third in hexameters, having to do with contemplation." By the time Pound constructed Exultations (1909), he had already adopted a less stylizized mode of organization, arranging individual poems so as to give "a more or less proportioned presentation of life". He had extended this experimentation during the Imagist period, by counterpointing image and epigram to obtain a higher

velocity in the presentation of various moods and facets of life. From 1915, he had experimented with the use of liturgical rhythms, following de Gourmont and Goddeschalk, in order to avoid "mechanical succession which aims at rhythm, but does not achieve rhythmic vitality" in the construction of longer poems. And in the Ur-cantos, the Homage, and Mauberley, he had progressively refined his use of language to the point where the long poem no longer relied on conventional literary framework to sustain interest; the texture of the poem rather than plot or character development had come to be of paramount importance.

All these experiments pointed toward a long poem which would be self-propelling, sulf-sustaining, and which would attempt to keep the reader's interest alive by avoiding conventional modes of repetition and symmetrical structure. That Pound was conscious of the obvious dangers of this approach can be seen in his comment in 1934 about the Commedia: "Dante, in taking up narrative, chucked out a number of MINOR criteria, as any writer of a long poem must in favour of a main virtue" (LE, 203). In chucking out narrative as a framework for his own long poem, Pound remained true to the wish he expressed to John Quinn in January, 1917, when just beginning his "really LONG, endless

leviathanic" poem: "I have always wanted to write 'poetry' that a grown man could read without groans of ennui" (SL, 103). Pound found predictable repetition boring, just as he was bored by predictable plot lines, and for this reason was willing to take the risk of obscurity.

Yet he found it difficult to discover a suitable organization for his long poem. He was tugged in two directions. As late as 1920 he was still drawn to the quality of stasis he admired in Dante's Commedia, while at the same time his own writing style and personality were leading him irrevocably toward kinetic form. His decision in early 1922 to follow his own nature stands out as the most significant of his career.

It seems that Pound's composition of XVI Cantos was strongly influenced by his recognition, as recorded in articles written during 1921 and 1922, that he could only express his ideas in a kinetic form. We can most easily trace his vacillation between the qualities of stasis and kinesis in two of these articles, where he associates the quality of stasis with an abstract sculpture of Constantin Brancusi, and the quality of kinesis with a small monograph by the artist Francis Picabia, titled Pensées sans language; poème. Pound read this work at a moment in his

career when he was ready to organize his poem in an unconventional manner, and it provided him with one indication that conventional literary frameworks might not be the prerequisite for major form he had previously thought them to be.

As well as dealing with Pound's attitude to Brancusi and Picabia, this chapter glances at ways in which Pound's notion of the proper tone and subject matter for his long poem was influenced by James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, and Major Douglas. In this way, and without any pretense to the comprehensive treatment which Ronald Bush has provided, I mean to suggest something of the complexity of the cluster of influences which underlies the organization of XVI Cantos. The chapter begins with a brief consideration of ways in which Joyce and Eliot, by breaking through into major form in 1921, in Ulysses and the Waste Land respectively, stimulated Pound to renew his attempts to cast his poem into shape. Pound's comments on their work are then used to illustrate his determination to follow up their negative assessments of the era with a more integrative, positive approach. Following this discussion, I go on to examine Pound's enthusiasm for the whimsical arrangement of Picabia's Pensées sans langage; poème in terms of his growing disbelief in the ability of

conventional literary structures to adequately reflect the hurrying ideation of the modern artist. In the conclusion to the chapter, I go on to show how Pound's entusiasm for Major Douglas' economic theory related directly to his rejection of the notion of artistic perfectability and the existence of a "philosopher's stone". If one no longer believes that pure art can reify society, then one is forced to adopt a different means of expression. Since Pound associated perfect symmetry of form and the quality of stasis with "pure art", his decision to model XVI Cantos on Picabia's method of organization rather than on that of Brancusi provides the formal reflection of an important philosophical choice. Pound abandoned the notion of art as a magic cirle because he became aware that society was in desperate need, and because he wished to construct positive remedies.

A

Ulysses

The preliminary stimulation for Pound's changing concept of how to structure his long poem came from the completion, in 1921, of Ulysses and The Waste Land. In December 1917, three months after the third Ur-canto was

published in Poetry, Pound received the first chapter of Ulysses. Immediately, he sent it on to the Little Review with an eulogistic note, which Margaret Anderson quoted from in her January announcement that Ulysses would be serialized:

> It is, I believe, even better than the Portrait. So far it has been read by only one critic of international reputation. He says: "It is certainly worth running a magazine if one can get stuff like this to put in it. Compression, intensity. It looks to me rather better than Flaubert".
>
> This announcement means that we are about to publish a prose masterpiece.(P/J, 129-130)

As Forrest Read says, Pound "was 'Ulysses editor' for more than three years" following the publicatio of its first chapter in the Little Review of March 1918 (P/J, 130). He continued to receive chapters episode by episode until 1921, when the magazine was enjoined from printing further sections because of the obscenity in "Nausikka". That is, Pound knew the work intimately.

But his thoughts about the novel did not come to head until he had a chance to read it in its entirety following its completion on his birthday, October 30, 1921. The importance which Pound attributes to Joyce's accomplishment

can be gauged from the fact that he concocted an entirely new calendar which dates the end of an era from the completion of this work: "The Christian era came definitely to an END at midnight of the 29-30 of October (1921) old style."[2]

Pound's jubilation at Joyce's accomplishment stemmed from his relief that the stables had been cleanet at last, leaving him "free to get on with my own preferred job" (P/J, 11). He had attempted his own analysis of contemporary society in Mauberley; increasingly, he felt that poetry should abandon this satirical, analytical function to prose, and concentrate on positive values. As early as 1918, he had noticed in Joyce's Portrait the prevalence of the cult of ugliness: "On almost every page of Joyce, you will find . . . swift alternation of subjective beauty and external shabbiness, squalor, and sordidness. It is the bass and treble of his method" (LE, 412). And he had justified Joyce's registrations of disgust:

> I have yet to find in Joyce's published works a violent or malodorous phrase which does not justify itself not only by its verity, but by its heightening of some opposite effect, by the poignancy which it imparts to some emotion or to some thwarted desire for beauty. Disgust with the sordid is but another expression of a sensitiveness to the finer thing. There is no perception of beauty without a corresponding disgust.
> (LE, 415)

However, although Pound defended Joyce's method in Portrait in May, by August 1918, having read several of the early chapters of Ulysses, he came to have second thoughts about the necessity for "malodorous" phrases. In a footnote to his essay "Henry James", which he spent two years preparing to write, he states with complete conviction, that whereas most good prose arises from "an instinct of negation", poetry is "the assertion of a positive, i.e., desire". If Pound could say this about the prose of Henry James, he was most certainly aware of its applicability to Joyce as well:

> Most good prose arises, perhaps from an instinct of negation; is the detailed, convincing analysis of something detestable; of something which one wants to eliminate. Poetry is the assertion of a positive, i.e. of desire, and endures for a longer peiod. Poetic satire is only an assertion of this positive, inversely, i.e. as of an opposite hatred.
>
> This is a highly untechnical, unimpressionist, in fact almost theological matter of statement; but is perhaps the root difference between the two arts of literature.
>
> Most good poetry asserts something to be worth while, or dams a contrary; at any rate asserts emotional values . . .
>
> Poetry=Emotional synthesis, quite as real, quite as realist as any prose (or intellectual) analysis.
>
> (LE, 324)

"Poetry=Emotional synthesis" recalls Pound's comment to Amy Lowell in 1913: "My unity is an emotional unity, but I

don't want to pre- and pro-scribe" (YC).

As we saw in chapter one, Pound's vision is essentially syncretic; by 1918 he had come to distinguish this emphasis on emotional synthesis in poetry, from the intellectual analysis of prose.

This helps to explain his growing impatience with prose, with what he comes to term Joyce's "excremental obsession", as he continued to receive chapters of Ulysses. His June 10th, 1919 letter to Joyce concerning "Sirens" makes this clear:

> Caro mio: Are you sending this chapter because you feel bound to send in copy on time . . .?
> 1. you have got some new effects
> 2. It is too long
> 3. One can fahrt with less pomp & circumstance
> (3a. gallic preference for Phallus--purely personal--know mittel europa humour runs to other orifice.--But don't think you will strengthen your impact by that particular. . . .
> Abnormal keeness of insight O.K. But obsessions arseore-ial, cloacal, deist, aesthetic as opposed to arsethetic, any obsession or tic shd. be very carefully considered before being turned loose. (P/J, 158)

Pound came more and more during this period to distinguish hiw own phallic imagination from Joyce's concern with the excremental, as Read has noticed (P/J, 146). At the same

time, a corresponding division between prose and poetry, already formulated, became clearer. Pound's preference for poetry as the expression of a desire, leading to "emotional synthesis", and his "gallic preference of Phallus", relfect his integrative creative, and holistic philosophy.

B

The Waste Land

Like Pound, T.S. Eliot read the latter part of Ulysses in manuscript during the spring of 1921, and found it "truly magnificent".[3] As with Pound, it stimulated his creative urge, and by May 9th his own "long poem" was partly on paper.[4] The Waste Land, like Ulysses, had an enormous influence on Pound's development of XVI Cantos. Although Pound had seen parts of Eliot's poem by July, 1921, the major portion of it was not completed until Eliot visited Lausanne for treatment of his nerves around November 21, 1921.[5] By the 24th of December, scarcely one month later, Eliot received this letter of congratulations:

> Complimenti, you bitch. I am wracked by the seven jealousies, and cogitating an excuse for always exuding my deformative secretions in my own stuff, and never

getting an outline. I go into nacre and objects d'art.
(SL, 169)

Pound's self-criticism centers around his inability to get an outline in his poetry and its "mother of pearl" texture. He most likely has Mauberley in mind here, for he termed the work "short poems" in a letter to his father dated April 1920 (YC), implying that he did not think of it as an exceptionally well-ordered work. But he was surely also thinking of the original versions of Cantos I-VII which were currently appearing in the Dial--although as we have seen, Pound had stopped composing them with the completion of canto seven in 1919--for these were completely re-ordered with the publication of XVI Cantos in 1925.

Pound was mainly impressed with the realism of Eliot's poem, a fact which can be most clearly seen in these rather self-pitying, almost Eliotic, lines from a poem enclosed with his letter of congratulations:

E.P. hopeless and unhelped

Enthroned in the marmorian skies
His verse omits realities,
Angelic hands with mother of pearl
Retouch the strapping servant girl,

The barman is to blinded him
Silenus bubbling at the brim,
The glasses turn to chalices
In his fumbling analysis
And holy hosts of helenists
Have numbed and honied his cervic cysts
Despite his hebrew eulogists.[6]

Pound laments his mythopoetic tendency to transmute reality into myth: the barman becomes Silenus, the cocktail glasses become chalices. The mundane becomes marvellous. Enthroned in "marmorian skies", a state of aestheticism cut off from reality, he could only admire Eliot's achievement of realism from a distance.

Pound's burgeoning impatience with his own lack of accomplishment came into stark focus in his letter to Agnes Bedford later in the same month, December, but the energy of his language seems to herald the awakening of his creative powers:

> OhCHRRRIST, the whole morning gone, and nothing done toward immortality..... given a valet, a secretary, an errand boy and a business manager, I might be decently run, capitalised, bonded, bottled, decanted, etc.
>
> Have come to that time of life--also a stenodactyllo.
>
> The failing mind with difficulty correlates the waning muscular action. (YC)

Pound's energies did not diminish in the face of Eliot's achievement; two months later he wrote to Quinn: "About enough, Eliot's poem, to make the rest of us shut up shop. . . I haven't done so."[7]

For by this time Pound had, surprisingly, begun to write cantos again--canto eight was published in the Dial in May 1922--and he did not stop until he had finished XVI Cantos in 1924. And after this almost all his creative energies went into the composition of his long-sought long poem. When included in XVI Cantos, the original canto eight was renumbered canto two; like The Waste Land it deals with myth, but the differences between the two works are helpful in our attempt to understand the motivation behind Pound's renewed burst of creativity.

In Pound's hands the mythic method did not deal with Eliot's images of sterility and waste, but rather constructed a world in which the mythical imagination--Acoetes' ability to recognize the god in Lyaeus--protects those who possess it from those who do not, like the "ex-convict out of Italy". To recognize the potency of this visionary world is to receive a special dispensation, i.e.,

And Lyaeus:
"From now, Acoetes, my altars,
Fearing no bondage,
fearing no cat of the wood,
Safe with my lynxes,
feeding grapes to my leopards,
Olibanum is my incense,
the vines grow in my homage."[8]

Not only did Pound reply to Eliot's poems by demonstrating the creative potential of myth, he also decided to group his cantos around a single creative, historic individual. He seems to have been in little doubt where to look for such a figure. In February 1922 he wrote: "our envy must be for the period when the individual city (Italian mostly) tried to outdo its neighbours in the degree and intensity of its civilization, to be the vortex for the most living individuals. Gli uomini vivoni in pochi."[9] A month later, on March 27, Pound and Dorothy left Paris for a three month trip to Italy ("trying a new slice, Perugia & Siena, the middle bit" (YC), during which time he collected a mass of material for the "Malatesta" cantos, which eventually became the pivotal point for XVI Cantos. These four cantos honour the creative potential in man, as though to emphasize the fact that a modern poem need not concern itself with enlarging on Eliot's bleak, negative vision.

Pound's decision on how to structure his long poem dates from this trip to Italy. Gradually the Italian city states of Rimini and Siena supplanted Paris in Pound's mind as perfect examples of the creative metropolis; at the same time, he began to explore past cultures for other examples of aesthetic and economic freedom and creativity.

Hence, Pound inserted a phrase echoing The Waste Land at the beginning of the first Malatesta canto, number eight: "These fragments you have shelved (shored)," to emphasize that his fragments of Malatesta's character are not shelved in testimony to the bleakness of a modern waste land, but rather shored up against the current of the time, just as despite the opposition of his society, Malatesta had been able to accomplish acts of creativity like the erection of the Tempio. It seems clear that Pound's motivation for writing XVI Cantos was to erect a positive literary monument on the foundations blasted clear by Joyce and Eliot.

Pound's discovery of Malatesta was the key to this effort. It seems likely that Pound conceived him as an antidote to Joyce's Leopold Bloom, for having finished centering XVI Cantos around Malatesta by late 1924, Pound wrote his father that he was looking for another such

"bhloomin historic character who can be used as illustration of intelligent constructivity"(YC). The qualification that this character be historic shows Pound responding to his earlier self-criticism of his verse for omitting "realities". Sigismundo was to be, like Bloom, "polumetis and a receiver of all things" (P/J, 195), but to be creative and constructive as well. For Bloom, Pound says in "Ulysses" (May 1922), is--unlike Sigismundo--"the basis of democracy; he is the main in the street...not our public but Mr. Wells' public...he is l'homme moyen sensual; he is also...the man who believes what he sees in the papers, Everyman, and 'the goat'" (LE, 403). If Mauberley is Pound's equivalent of Bloom--the sacrificial goat--Malatesta is an attempt to create a more constructive central persona.

Quite clearly, then, while Pound appreciated the accomplishments of Joyce and Eliot, he wanted his long poem to have more positive thrust then either Ulysses or The Waste Land. And although his first published reference to Eliot's poem in The New Age (March 30, 1922) described is as "a very important sequence of poems, one of the few things in contemporary literature to which one can ascribe permanent value",[10] it is certain that he was already fully engaged in the effort to build above Eliot's accomplishments.

For inspiration Pound turned, as in the first Ur-canto (1917), to the visual arts. In the fall of 1921 he contemplated publishing a book, Four Modern Artists, which was to deal with Picasso, Lewis (both mentioned in the earliest version of canto one), Brancusi, and Picabia. This book was never published, but from Pound's essays on Brancusi and Picabia in The Little Review and The Dial in the autumn of 1921, we can trace the sudden crystallization of his thoughts about the form his long poem should take.

The two essays on Brancusi and Picabia weigh the virtues of alternative concepts of form which Pound was considering for the structure of his long poem. By rejecting the use in his own poem of the formal symmetry which was the hallmark of Brancusi's work, in favour of the open-ended, assymetrical style adopted by Picabia, Pound made the most exciting decision of his career. Soon after, he began to compose at a furious rate, and within two years had shaped XVI Cantos. It will be worthwhile, then to consider the opposing concepts in greater detail.

C. Brancusi and Picabia: Stasis versus Kinesis

Pound's essay on Constantin Brancusi appeared in the Autumn 1921 issue of The Little Review. Although Pound

said he had known of Brancusi's sculptures for only "a few weeks", he was greatly excited by a concept of form embodied in Brancusi's abstract marble sculpture of a geometrical form--the ovoid. It appeared to Pound to live as free from all terrestrial gravitation, within the laws of its being, as the form of the analytic geometers; indeed Pound thought the ovoid seemed from some angles "ready to levitate" (LE, 444). Brancusi had accomplished, in Pound's eyes, the apotheosis of pure form, the perfect stasis.

Pound noted that Brancusi shared this goal with other artists: Dante believed in the "melody which most in-centres the soul", he said, while

> in the preface to my Guido I have tried to express the idea of an absolute rhythm, or the possibility of it. Perhaps every artist at one time or another believes in a sort of elixir or philosopher's stone produced by the sheer perfection of this art; by the alchemical sublimation of the medium; the elimination of accidentals and imperfections. (LE, 442)

In Brancusi's case, this search for perfection culminated with the creation of the marble ovoid, which provided the "master-key" to as much as Brancusi had found of "the world of form": it contains or implies "the triangle and the circle". Pound's circle metaphor alerts us to the

relationship between Brancusi's ovoid and Dante's Commedia, the perfection of which, as we saw in Chapter I, Pound also equated to that of the circle; Brancusi, like Dante, had achieved the perfect artistic statis. Even while Pound praised Brancusi, however, one can see him moving away from this belief in the viability of art which must be distilled from life, which deals in absolutes.

The problem Pound faced in incorporating this quality within his own poem was that whereas Brancusi could cut himself off from the world in his studio, leaving him free to create untroubled by the world, Pound's growing social conscience compelled him "to move about in a world full of junk-shops" (LE, 444), where the sense of perfect form seemed out of place.

That is to say, by the time Pound read The Waste Land in late 1921 he was ready to appreciate its treatment of "reality"; Brancusi's notion of perfect art required perfect social conditions for its composition, and Pound no longer believed that these pertained in his case. Small wonder that he finally rejected Brancusi's notion of formal perfection as a viable artistic goal. Pound became aware that for him, at any rate, art could not be cut off from life; consequently, he was ready to cast around for

alternative models. Picabia's notion of unconventional literary form provided him, at precisely the right moment, with one such model. Hence he finally gave up his long-held notion of employing a symmetrical form in his long poem, such as that used by Dante in the Commedia, in favour of a less stylized mode of organization.

This moment signalled a profound and lasting change in Pound's sense of priorities regarding the shape of his long poem. The great works of the European tradition that had served as early models for his concept of form: the Odyssey, Commedia, and Aeneid, share a formal structure, a stasis, that reflects a philosophic certainty with which Pound could no longer identify, just as he could appreciate, but not share, Brancusi's notion of ideal form. Casting round for a new model of literary structure appropriate to the new era and better suited to his growing sense of the inappropriateness of symmetrical modes of organization, he lighted on Francis Picabia's Pensées sans language; poème (1919), the structure of which is essentially kinetic.

While this 119-page monograph seems at first sight to be extremely capricious in terms of form and content, Pound marvelled at the interest in strikes up in the reader. His

appreciative review of this "poeme" appears in the Dial at a crucial moment of his development, October 1921. Including a number of quotations from Picabia's monograph, Pound's review began by saying that its form

> is very annoying to people who want literature to bulk up, and who believe that every time one has an idea one should embody it in a polite essay.
> Picabia has found a new way of leaving his card. "Dieu etait juif mais les catholiques l'ont roule."
> "I dreamt that my great great grandfather discovered America, but not being an Italian he said nothing about it to anyone." "Those who have given the dimension of the infinite as one metre are in error, the dimension of the infinite is exactly two metres cinquante." The photo of an autograph letter of Ingres. Neither the squibs nor the photo can be "considered as literature"; any more of course than could the Xenia, the little two line tags which Martial made for saturnalia presents, be "considered as literature", not at least, as long as there are only a few dozen, but an accumulation of such wild shots ends by expressing a personality, just as the Maxims of Rouchefoucauld, or the Livre de Diane expressed the personalities of their authors.
> This dispensing with literary mechanisms is perhaps the mark of extreme civilization.[11]

This total lack of connection between the quotations from Picabia seems to Pound a positive virtue. Pound appreciated the fact that, like Joyce in Dubliners, Picabia did not falsify life by presenting it in "neat little diagrams". Pound's reference to Martial's "Xenia" echoes the titles of the sequential poems he had written in 1913,

"Xenia" and "Zenia", where he first experimented with the agglomeration of "squibs" (imagist poems and epigrams). Here he seems to theorize that the poet might expand this technique to build a major poem. He accepts the validity of a literary work which "ends by expressing a personality". All conventional literary mechanisms can go by the board if the poet succeeds in holding the reader's interest by expressing his own personality through the selection and arrangement of material.

While we have seen in earlier chapters that Pound's earlier poems were often linked together in a seemingly random manner, it was demonstrated that an overall structure governs their selection and arrangement. In most cases this overall unity can be formally demonstrated. "Und Drang", for example, balanced the modern and medieval worlds in its two sections; "Xenia" progressed from darkness to light; the Homage was symmetrically arranged around section VII; Mauberley counterpointed "Envoi" with "Medallion". This progressive arrangement of snippets was not quite the same thing as Picabia's "wild shots", though it leaned in the same direction. Pensées sans langage; poème showed Pound that he needed to pay even less attention to conventional forms than previously. His review shows him bringing into cognizance, for the first

time, the notion that selection and ordering of material need pay no attention to convential literay forms. Earlier, Pound had explored recondite forms such as the canzone and the sequaire, which offered means of incorporating more diverse materials and perceptions into poetry than more popular methods; now he went beyond this point in his thinking, to accept the notion that any kind of arrangement chosen by an author might be justified in literary terms, even if it obeyed no "law" of formal integrity other than that affirmed by the fact of its existence. He had made a leap of faith, esthetically speaking, that implied complete confidence in authorial judgement.

Perhaps this is why he later found it difficult to provide a fully convincing account of his "method" in the Cantos. Picabia's work awakened Pound to the existence of a compatible literary tradition in which his projected long poem could be placed, encompassing the works of Martial, La Rochefoucauld, Remy de Gourmont, and Picabia, not to mention Mauberley and The Waste Land. This tradition was later carried further into the twentieth century by such works as Zukofsky's "A", Olson's Maximus poems, William's Paterson, Jones', Anethemata, Bunting's Briggflats, and the Cantos. It became, in fact, the major expressions of this

century's poetic sensibility. The method rejects "literary mechanisms" of a traditional kind in an attempt to express the full originality of the author's personality, not merely in subjective terms, but also with regard to what the author considers important in the worlds of economics, politics, and other contemporary issues.

The rationale behind this method was that the purpose of art is to reflect the nature of man's perceptions without reference to literary molds, and to reveal the incapacity of received notions of formal or syntactical completeness to mirror life truly, Hence, in his essay on Picabia he praised a novel of the American Natalie Barney, "who has published with complete mental laziness a book of unfinished sentences and broken paragraphs, which is, on the whole, readable".[12] And sixteen years later, Pound looked back even on Lewis' writing in Blast as cleaving too closely to the requirements of syntactical completeness. "The durable malady or limitation of the criticism in Blast," Pound says, "is not that it is broken and jabby; but that there still hangs about it a 'morning-after'. Lewis had escaped from the polite paragraph but the old inertia of momentum still led him to finish his sentences, often when the complete revelation of idea had been made in a single phrase" (SP, 426). These comments reveal a

critical shift in Pound's thoughts about major form, from stasis to kinesis.

That is to say, the syntactical incompleteness of the Cantos was part of Pound's effort to eliminate superfluities, such as the ending to a sentence, the "structuring" of a poem, and to mirror in the movement of language the kaleidoscopic movement of the mind. Picabia had participated in the attempt carried out by Pound and others, throughout the 1910's, to get out of the "nineteen hundred and eights (London) or the fin du siecle dixneuvieme (Paris) and leave a place free for Prufrock. I mean for a new decade to get started without cerements, without verbal ligatures still binding it to the world of my adolescence, of Lewis' adolescence" (SP, 429). It is therefore not surprising that Pound should have been influenced by his work.

Pound exchanged Brancusi for Picabia as a model much as one might leave the security of a citadel in order to fight more openly. The weapons he chose were the short, jabby phrase and jagged syntax of distilled perceptions. In Mauberley Pound had made his finest use of irony, which he termed the "last citadel of the intelligence"; in XVI Cantos he abandoned this covert, sophisticated means of

expression in favour of compressed, direct statement. In the Homage he had written his most successful defense of the aesthetic tradition; in XVI Cantos he enlarged this focus on esthetics to include the new dimension of detailed social consciousness--he was no longer content merely to dismiss the modern world, but attempted to analyse it in order to suggest remedies. "The symbolist position, artistic aloofness from world affairs is no good now", he says. "It may have assisted several people to write and work in the 80's but it is not, in 1921, opportune or apposite."[13] That is, Pound's poetry would no longer "omit realities".

D

Major Douglas' Economic Democracy

Significantly, the above comment was part of Pound's review of Major Douglas' Economic Democracy: if the esthete is to come down into the arena to fight he must get his hands dirty, confront major social issues like economics. The shock, indeed the outrage, which Pound experienced at this shift from aetheticism to social consciousness is conveyed by the violent metaphor he used to describe the book's

impact on him: "Don't imagine I find economics interesting--not as Botticelli or Picasso is interesting. But at present they, as the reality under political camouflage, are interesting as a gun muzzle aimed at one's own head is "interesting" when one can hardly see the face of the gun holder and is wholly uncertain as to his temperament and intentions."[14] From contemplation of pure form, Pound had turned to the contemplation of a mugger pointing a gun to his temple.

He had ample cause to fear this enemy, for as Eliot wrote Quinn on the 25th of January 1920, "the fact is that there is now no organ of any importance in which he can express himself, and he is becoming forgotten. It is not enough for him simply to publish a volume of verse once a year--or no matter how often--for it will simply not be reviewed and will be killed by silence."[15] Although Quinn responded by arranging for Pound's appointment as Paris correspondent of the Dial, both the Athenaeum and the New Age dispensed with his critical services in July 1920 and January 1921 respectively. And by March 1923 he was sacked by the Dial as well. Curiously, just as it had in the first year of the war, this erosion of Pound's fiancial security spurred him to a great creative effort, and his plan for XVI Cantos began to fall into place. Now,

however, he had the personal experience to make the study of economics relevant to his long poem, and a guide in Major Douglas.

Hence, in his "Paris Letter" of February 1922, Pound showed that he had become aware of the limitations inherent in such literary subjects as Henry James' portrayal of the "gentleman". He had once admired James' avoidance of the economic factor in his novels by making his chief characters financially independent; now he wondered if such aesthetic concentration on the subjective realities evaded important issues. Perhaps the new era demanded that the artist attempt to bring the really complex issues of the modern world into clear focus:

> The questions come, with the supposed increase in the general psychology, whether we don't want something with more wealth of motive, more largesse, more intelligence. . . . whether we haven't to turn to and build rather than scratch round for remnants and bric-a-brac.[16]

That is, there was little point in scratching around for examples of the "gentleman" (as Pound had done in "Moeures Contemporaines") when society was in desperate need of positive remedies.

When considering Pound's decision to include the study of economics in the poem, then, it is important to note its positive stimulus. What Pound noted as most important in his review of Economic Democracy for the Little Review in April 1920 was that it was well directed "toward a more humane standard of life; directed to the prevention of new wards, wars blown up out of economic villainies at the whim and instigations of small bodies of irresponsible individuals".[17] As noted in Chapter IV, Pound's dream of a new civilization was shattered by the deaths of Gaudier, Hulme, and de Gourmont during the war. His reaction was to immediately redouble his creative effort, to reaffirm the value of individual creativity amid the social holocaust. By 1920 he was ready to support the positive economic proposals set forth by Douglas which he thought capable of defusing the economic bomb ready to blow up into another war. Pound's "interest" in economics was unequivocally clamped to his belief in the value of a "more humane standard of life". He took up the study of economics not merely out of self interest, but out of his concern for society at large: "artistic aloofness from world affairs is no good now."

Hence, in the February 1922 issue of the Dial Pound differentiated between Brancusi's trust in the ability of

pure art to reify human nature and his own growing belief that to be effective as an artist he must first promote those conditions which make art possible, deal with the economic factor:

> I can still hear the pleasant voice of a hale, hearty chap, who was selling torpedo-boats to Russia back in 1912 or '13: "Peace? Nao, not while ye hav' two billions of money invested in the making of war machinery." That is about the size of it; and there is also the problem of usury, and mankind's incapacity to grasp the simple equation 6-6=1. In the face of which . . . Brancusi dreams of a perfect form which shall reveal the infinite beauty of the universe and bring a saeculum novum of super-Christian benignity and kindliness; and Paris perhaps remains the meeting point for those who have cast off the sanctified stupidities and timidities and are in defiance of things as they are.[18]

Seen in retrospect, the regret with which Pound rejected Brancusi's idealism is extremely moving. He incorporated this connection between usury and war into his poetry as early as canto eighteen:

> "Peace! Pieyce!! said Mr. Giddings,
> "Uni-ver-sal? Not while yew got tew billions ov money,"
> Said Mr. Giddings, "invested in the man-u-facture
> "Of war machinery." (XIII, p81)

Major Douglas' famous economic formula was thus grafted

onto Brancusi's single-minded focus on aesthetics, with the common purpose of improving social conditions. By early 1922 Pound had come to believe that the "saeculum novum of super-Christian benignity and kindliness" must be first prepared for by creating an enlightened understanding of economics.

However, although Pound rejected Brancusi's refined aestheticism, the concept of art as a magic circle which no contemporary social concerns entered, he accepted the creative spirit behind Brancusi's "difficult exploration toward getting all the forms into one form" (LE, 442). The attempt might deserve praise, even if it failed to reach all its creative objectives:

> Art very possibly ought to be the supreme achievement, the "accomplished"; but there is the other satisfactory effect, that of a man hurling himself at an indomitable chaos, and yanking and hauling as much as possible into some sort of order (or beauty), aware of it both as chaos and potential. (LE, 396)

It is important to note that this quotation comes from an essay written in 1928, three years after the publication of XVI Cantos and contemporaneous with the publication of A Draft of Cantos: 17 to 27. With these experiments behind

him, Pound had not lost faith in the effectiveness of his attempt to hurl himself at "an indomitable chaos" in order to yank it into some sort of order and beauty. Indeed, Pound went so far as to offer the generalization that "plot, major form, or outline should be left to authors who feel some inner need for the same; even let us say a very strong, unusual, unescapable need for these things, and to books where the said form, plot, etc., springs naturally from the matter treated. When put on _ab exteriore_, they probably lead only to dullness, confusion, or _remplissage_ or the 'falling between two stools'" (LE, 397-398). By 1922 Pound had completely freed himself theoretically if not yet in practice, from conventional notions of literary frameworks.

We have seen Pound develop away from Brancusi's notion of pure art under the pressure of a growing belief that the modern artist must deal with social realities. We have also seen him move to adopt a kinetic rather than static mode of expression, to deal with this new concern. We are now able to turn to _XVI Cantos_ to see how he put these theoretical developments into practice.

VII

XVI CANTOS: KINESIS

Since the publication of the first installment of what was to become Pound's life's work in 1925, readers and critics have tried to formulate its principles of organization. They have found this no easy task. The tentative nature of the title of this installment, A Draft of XVI Cantos of Ezra Pound: for the Beginning of a Poem of Some Length, affords one reason for this problem: the poem is presented as a draft, subject to later revision, and as only one part of a long poem. Nevertheless, some critics have professed to find vestiges of conventional literary form in the organization of this sequence. Hugh Kenner has been the most acute in pointing out that 'the volumes have always been structural units'[1] and that XVI Cantos possesses a 'relatively simple unity' which is outlined by the fact that canto one begins with Odysseus returning from a war in Homer's world, while canto sixteen ends with scenes from the first world war. He has also been able to divide the sequence into five groups: Overture (I-III), Phantastikon (IV-VII), Malatesta (VIII-XI), Moral Exempla (XII-XIII), Hell (XIV-XVI), and to

define its subject as "Vortices and their dissipation" (PE, 416-419). And more recently M.L. Rosenthal has noted the crucial importance of the Malatesta group, which serves as a fulcrum for the sequence.[2]

However, XVI Cantos strongly resists such attempts to reduce its principles of organization to a generalized law of formula; it defies all such categorizations. As argued in Chapter V, Pound's development throughout the late 1910's was away from such easily discernible structural frameworks toward an emphasis on texture. Speaking of William Carlos Williams' In the American Grain in 1928, Pound says: "Very well, he does not 'conclude'; his work has been 'often formless', 'incoherent', opaque, obfuscated, confused, truncated, etc.," but goes on to say that major form is also conspiculously lacking in the works of Homer, Aeschylus, Montaigne and Rabelais. Pound's conclusion from all this is that "the component of these great works and the indispensible component is texture; which Dr. Williams indubitably has in the best, and increasingly frequent, passages of his writing" (LE, 394-395). To discuss the texture of XVI Cantos in satisfactory detail would require a volume; in this chapter I merely wish to indicate some of the techniques which Pound uses to achieve consistency of texture in the long

poem, and to relate these to his earlier poetry. The most important of these techniques or principles is that of spreading out through the text recurrent elements--subject rhymes, for example--according to an unpredictable pattern.

A

Horizontal Chords

Chapter I discussed Pound's decision to stop writing sonnets and to begin writing canzone as indicating his wish to explore complicated patterns of thought and the subtle binding devices of polyphonic rhyme. In "Cavalcanti", Pound compared the two forms: "The sonnet occurred automatically when some chap got stuck in the effort to make a canzone . . . The canzone, any canzone, is obviously in intention a capalavoro, a consummation of metier" (LE, 168, 170). As we have seen, Pound progressed towards complexity, throughout the 1910's, using ever-subtler modes of unifying his volumes and individual poems, gradually dispensing with predictable patterns of repetition, working to master the trick of the unnoticed repeat in poems like "Villanelle: the Psychological Hour". But he did not forget the lesson he had learned from studying the canzone

and other Provencal metrical schemes. As late as 1920, writing of Arabian music in Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony, he noted how "as in the Provencal metrical schemes,"

> the effect of the subtler repetitions only becomes apparent in the third or fourth strophe, and then culminates in the fifth or sixth, as a sort of horizontal instead of perpendicular chord. One might call it a "sort of" counterpoint; if one can conceive a counterpoint which plays not against a sound newly struck, but against the residuum and residua of sound which hang in the auditory memory.
> (PE, p. 223)

That is, the effect of the subtler repetitions lies under the surface; it lingers, echoes in the auditor's ear. It takes time (space) for these to become apparent. This kind of counterpoint characterizes XVI Cantos.

For example, the phrase "In the gloom, the gold gathers the light against it," (XI, 51) recurs with altered lineation in canto seventeen (i.e., "'In the gloom the gold / Gathers the light about it'..." (XVII, 78). Having established this in the memory, Pound altered it slightly the next time he used it, in canto twenty-one ("Gold fades in the gloom,/ Under the blue-black roof, Placidia's." (XXI, 98), to make its connotations negative. A similar

progression occurs near the end of the Cantos: i.el, "The sky is leaded with elm boughs" (CVI, 755), "the sky's glass leaded with elm boughs" (CVII, 761), "Twilit sky leaded with elm boughs" (Notes for CXVII et seg., 801). Here again Pound used repetition with variation to achieve tonal flexibility. Four decades separate these two examples, indicating how sound Pound's methods were in XVI Cantos.

These are not the only kind of "rhymes" which hang in the auditory memory, however; XVI Cantos includes subject rhymes, characterizing cadences, thematic recurrences, and the like. These occur at irregular intervals, unlike the rhymes in the sonnet, canzone, and sestina, and thus go further to avoid the pattern of the metronone. Pound's technique was to set up patterns of recurrence--the theme of war, for instance--in which the pattern units varied while the paradigm remained constant, so that when Sigismundo Malatesta fights Pope Pius (X, 47) we remember the Cid breaking his way to Valencia (III, 12), and remember both Malatesta and the Cid when General Haig appears later in the sequence (XVI, 75).

The scheme for his long poem which Pound outlined to Yeats in 1928, and which the older poet found hard to comprehend, used groups of letters to represent thematic

rhymes, just as letters are used to represent the rhymes of a canzone or sonnet in metrical analysis. "There will be no plot," Yeats remembered Pound telling him,

> no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, medieval or modern historical characters. He has tried to produce that picture Porteous commended to Nicholas Poussin in Le chef d'oeuvre inconnu where everything rounds or thrusts itself without edges, without contours--conventions of the intellect--from a splash of tints and shades; to achieve a work as characteristic of the art of our time as the paintings of Cezanne, avowedly suggested by Porteious, as Ulysses and its dream association of words and images, a poem in which there is nothing that can be taken out and reasoned over, nothing that is not a part of the poem itself. He has scribbled on the back of an envelope certain sets of letters that represent emotions or archetypal events . . . A B C D and then J K L M, and then each set of letters repeated, and the A B C D inverted and this repeated, and then a new element X Y Z, then certain letters that never recur, and then all sorts of combinations of X Y Z and J K L M and A B C D and D C B A, and all set whirling together. He has shown me upon the wall a photograph of a Cosimo Tura decoration in three compartments, in the upper the Triumph of Love and the Triump of Chastity, in the middle Zodiacal signs, and in the lower certain events in Cosimo Tura's day. The Descent and the Metamorphosis--A B C D and J K L M--his fixed elements, took the place of the Zodiac, the archetypal persons--X Y Z--that of the Triumphs, and certain modern events--his letters that do not recur--that of those events in Cosmio Tura's day.[3]

This explanation repays close scrutiny. Notice first that Pound chose the full range of the alphabet to explain his

poem. Chapter II noted his desire to present a "complete service of life" in volumes such as A Lume Spento; here, by referring to the complete alphabet, not just a few letters, he seems to indicate that his tool kit for doing so will consist of the entire language. Had he used numbers -- instead of letters -- to explain his scheme, there would have been no need for recurrence of elements in varied patterns, since numbers are infinite. Next, notice that two themes predominate, each referred to by a group of letters: the Descent into Hades (A B C D) and the Metamorphosis (J K L M). In the same essay, Yeats says, Pound explained that when the poem of one hundred cantos was finished it would "display a structure like that of a Bach Fugue".[4] In "Cavalcanti", Pound said "The canzone was to poets of this period what the fugue was to musicians in Bach's time" (LE, 168). The recurrence of letters Pound used to describe the complex repetitions of his poem have a close affinity with the rhyme-scheme of the canzone. Consider Cavalcanti's "Donna mi Prega", for example, where "each strophe is articulated by 14 terminal and 12 inner rhyme sounds, which means that 52 out of every 154 syllables are bound into pattern. The strophe reverses the proportions of the sonnet, as the short lobes precede the longer. This reversal is obviously of advantage to the strophe as part of a longer composition.

. . . The strophes of canzoni are perforce symmetrical as the musical composition is only one-fifth or one-sixth the length of the verbal composition and has to be repeated" (LE, 168, 171). Canto sixteen repeats the Descent into Hades of canto one (A B C D), the Metamorphosis of canto two recurs in canto seventeen (J K L M), the phrase "So that" ends the first canto and begins the seventeenth, thus linking Pound's two main themes. And the letters X Y Z, which Pound said stand for archetypal persons, correspond to Odysseus, Malatesta, and Kung, in XVI Cantos. They represent the Triumphs of Love in History (we think here of Malatesta's Tempio), and correspond to the highest panel of Cosimo Tura's painting.

The point is that such correspondances relate to Pound's evolving notions of major form. Clearly Pound gave a great deal of thought to building an extremely complex form out of unpredictably spaced and varied repetitions. Certainly the description of the picture in which "everything rounds and thrusts itself without edges, without contours" applies equally well to the flux of the texture of XVI Cantos, and the definition of countours as "conventions of the intellect" harmonizes with Pound's wish to avoid conventional literary structures for his long poem. His quarrel with conventional forms was at the

bottom based on his dislike of predictability of any kind; hence his comment in 1928: "Form is, indeed, very tiresome when in reading current novels, we observe the thinning residue of pages, 50, 30, and realize that there is now only time (space) for the hero to die a violent death, no other solution being feasible in that number of pages" (LE, 396). Hence the significance of his scheme for the Cantos as explained to Yeats; elements were to recur, but at unpredictable intervals. And, as with the rhyme-schemes of Provencal and Tuscan poetry, these subject-rhymes or pattern-units were to be of the utmost complexity. The auditor is required to hold them in mind for long periods; the counterpoint does not play "against a sound newly struck". Pound created a "horizontal instead of a perpendicular chord".[5]

B

Horizontal Designs

Further evidence that horizontal arrangements characterized XVI Cantos can be found in Pound's unpublished letters to Bill Bird concerning the decorated capitals designed by Henry Strater for the volume. After

seeing the initials in proof Pound vigorously approved of those for cantos 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 16 in a letter dated April 17, 1924 (YC), and was happy with the rest, apart from that for canto four. Pound's disliked this capital's uphill, or vertical arrangement:

> Now that I have seen the 8 other excellent letters, I am not so dahn 'earted about it.
>
> But it is bad. The graduation of black and white for page is O.K. if you look at the page 20 ft. off. But the space in the design is XIX century and XIX century is rotten . . .
>
> It is this rotten uphill arrangement of perspective. Compare it with the distance arranged on the flat, level, in the other letters. I jumped H. for this in earliest attempts at design . . . As it stands he has made a bloody landscape--paysage--XIX cent. instead of a design. (YC)

Pound's suggested revisions to this capital letter involved de-emphasizing its vertical arrangement by cutting off the tail of the "P" and the scene of Procne falling from the window beneath the words "A black cock", deleting the scene of Diana and her hounds chasing the stag, and cutting out much of the detail within the loop of the "P" (YC #661). These revisions would have made the design much less rhetorical, less florid. Clearly then, Pound's preference for horizontal rather than vertical chords extended to visual as well as aural elements in XVI Cantos. The

decorated initials to XVI Cantos are nearly as complexly arranged as the elements in Pound's text represented by the letters A B C D or J K L M.

That is, the designs of the letters do not, as one might expect, picture only one section of the text. Rather each, with great complexity, counterpoints images from both past and present, myth and history. Take the relationship between the capital "E" and the text of canto seven, for example.[6] The design divides into quarters. In the first, on the top right hand side, outside the "E", a nude female bends her arm down a hill towards the water, where a drowning figure raises one hand in mute appeal, while rain falls. The corresponding portion of the text reads:

> And the life goes on, mooning upon bare hills;
> Flame leaps from the hand, the rain is listless,
> Yet drinks the thirst from our lips,
> solid as echo,
> Passion to breed a form in shimmer of rain-blur;
> But Eros drowned, drowned, heavy-half dead with tears
> for dead Sicheus. (VII, 27)

Eros' death is associated with the death of creative passion, of the "Passion to breed a form" in modern society. This portion of the design has a mythical subject, but one with contemporary significance. The next

canto picks up this theme and reverses it, dealing with Sigismundo, whose passion to breed a form resulted in the Tempio--a creative homage to Isotta. In this canto Eros has positive results.

The lower left side of the design to canto seven, also outside the "E", portrays a man being pushed off flaming battlements. This scene, where Lorenzaccio is praised for having more passion that the "big locust-casques", recalls Lorenzaccio's murder of Duke Allessandro in canto five, an association called to mind by the repetition of the Italian phrase used in the earlier canto:

> Lorenzaccio,
> Being more live than they, more full of flames and voices,
> Ma si morisse! (VII p.27)

This portion of the design derives from history, and makes a subject rhyme with the Descent to Hades in canto one.

In the bottom portion of the "E" a woman sits alone in a chair, decorously awaiting something or someone in an empty, modern room. Outside the door, an Odysseus-like figure (Aeneus/Pound?) steps from a raft carrying a naked woman. The text reads:

Square even shoulders and the satin skin,
Gone cheeks of the dancing woman,
Still the old dead dry talk, gassed out--
It is ten years gone, makes stiff about her a glass,
A petrification of air.
The old room of the tawdry class asserts itself;
The young men, never!
Only the husk of talk.
O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
Dido choked upo with sobs for her Sicheus
Lies heavy in my arms, dead weight
Drowning, with tears, new Eros (VII, 26-27)

Again, the illustration makes clear what the text implies, that Dido's passion and pain (her husband, Sicheus, was murdered for his treasure by her brother, Pygmalion) are preferable to the static security of the modern woman. This scene is taken from the present, but has a mythical component as well.

The fourth and most interesting scene occurs in the top half of the ´E´, where four men sit eating in a modern room above that in which the woman sits. On the wall is a picture of the burning of Troy, (its open gate: a vagina) and a barometer. Against the wall stand a piano and a sideboard. The men are the ´big locust-casques´, who

Bend to the tawdry table,
Lift up their spoons to mouths, put fork in cutlets,
And make the sound of voices. (VIII 27)

The passions symbolized by the burning of Troy are to them irrelevant: the heroic city's gate (enticing vagina) merely provides the subject for a wall decoration--not action. The barometer alerts us to the quotations from Flubert's Un Coeur Simple which lead off the canto:

> Un peu moisi, plancher plus bas que le jardin.
>
> "Contre le lambris, fauteul de paille,
> "Un vieux piano, et sous le barometre . . ."
>
> The old men's voices, beneath the colums of false
> marble,
> And the walls tinted discreet, the modish, darkish
> green-blue,
> Discreeter gilding, and the panelled wood
> Not present, but suggested, for the leasehold is
> Touched with an imprecision . . . about three squares;
> The house a shade too solid, and the art
> A shade off action, paintings a shade too thick.
> (XVI Cantos, P. 23)

Flaubert's precise analysis of modern declensions, and Pound's ability to read the cultural state of health by the thickness of line in painting juxtapose, emphasizing the lack of passion, of factive personalities, in modern society. The complex juxtapositions of elements from myth, history, and the present in the design of the initial capital to canto seven are consonant with, but do not duplicate, those in the text. Together, they combine to develop Pound's theme: the atrophy of the modern

sensibility when compared to elements of the past.

The beginning of the text of canto seven juxtaposes disparate voices from the past and present just as the design of the initial letter counterpoints scenes. Homer ("Ear, ear for the sea-surge;/rattle of old men's voices"), Ovid ("Si pulvis nullus erit . . ./Nullum tamen excute"), and Henry James

> And the great domed head, con gli occhi onesti e tardi
> Moves before, phanton with weighted motion,
> Grave incessu, drinking the tone of things,
> And the old voice lifts itself
> weaving an endless sentence (VII, 24),

are all presented as possessed of sufficient passion, even under the constraints of their respective societies, "to breed a form in shimmer of rain-blur". As in the design, the text counterpoints Pound's two main themes, the Descent into Hades (Homer) and Metamorphosis (Ovid) with a representative or achetypical figure from the modern day (Henry James).

Adding to the complexity of this presentation, in his text Pound celebrates the ability of poets like Bertran de Born and Dante to bring the past alive through visual

rendition:

> 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.
> (VII, 24)

The complexity of such arrangements is not random; Pound's effort in XVI Cantos was to create a linguistic texture and visual designs which eschew equally rhetoric and the "mere succession" of narrative. His method of doing so involved the use of extremely complex juxtaposition, not only within the text and design considered separately, but also between them.

Pound's horizontal chords do not follow the predictable repetitions of the pattern-units in a mosaic, but recur at irregular intervals and in varied forms and shapes, and with extraordinary complexity. And although I have likened their pattern of repetition to that of the canzone, there is one essential difference; namely, that the overall pattern is not as restricted, since the pattern-units do not have to reappear in a set order. They are limited only by the resources of Pound's ingenuity. The recurrence of elements in XVI Cantos, therefore,

follows the rhythm of a musical form like the fugue more closely than that of a metronome; elements recur--some more often than others--but their recurrence, though not random, is never predictable. That is to say, the texture of XVI Cantos is extraordinarily condensed and extremely complex, but gradually builds up a unity of effect through the device of irregular recurrence of main elements. As with his structuring of volumes like Exultations, however, this unity is easier to experience than to describe.

C

Rhetoric versus Aphorisms

Like its initial capitals, the linguistic texture of XVI Cantos is resolutely anti-rhetorical. We hear snatches of conversation, catch brief glimpses of the gods an goddesses, are exposed to a variety of experiences, but these are not built up into the attempt to persuade. In fact, it is often very difficult to comprehend the significance of various passages. In numerous instances the key to interpreting such passages lies in being able to decipher Pound's modulation of language. Take the ending of canto one, for example:

Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreus Divus,
In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.
And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away
And unto Circe.
Venerandum,
In the Cretan's phrase, with the golden crown, Aphrodite,
Cypri munimenta sortita est, morthful, orichalchi, with
Golden girdles and breast bands, thou with dark eyelids
Bearing the golden bough of Argicida. So that:
(I, 5)

Here the switch in languages is the stumbling-block. Hugh Kenner tells us that the Latin comes from the Second Hymn to Aphrodite in the Homeric Hymns, rendered by a certain Cretan and appended to Divus' book. He further points out that cantos 2, 23, 24, and 25 draw from other Hymns in this group. The purpose of Pound's quotation, he says, is to set up the theme of Aphrodite rising from the sea as the culmination of such an act of syncretism as canto one has performed, and to provide a historical overlay between Homer's age, the Renaissance, and our own age: "Our notion of the Renaissance alters when we hear those Hymns; so does our notion of the Hymns" (PE, 361).

Kenner thinks that Pound wishes to draw attention by means of such an overlay to the necessity for every creative era to build on past accomplishments, that Pound picks the Homeric Hymns out for special praise. This is

not why Pound inserts the Latin quotation. He wishes to establish in his first canto the theme that vortexes inevitably dissipate, that the very classical revival which led to the accomplishments of the Renaissance, for example, soon became overripe, awaiting correction by the next era. We know this from his comments in Gaudier-Brzeska, published the same year (1915) he began canto one:

> In Machievelli's prose we have a realism born perhaps from Valla's exactness and the realism of Homer, both coming to Machiavelli indirectly.
>
> And in the midst of these awakenings Italy went to rot, destroyed by rhetoric, destroyed by the periodic sentence and by the flowing paragraph, as the Roman Empire had been destroyed before her. For when words cease to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish. Rome went because it was no longer the fashion to hit the nail on the head. They desired orators. And, curiously enough, in the mid-Renaissance, rhetoric and floridity were drawn out of the very Greek and Latin revival that had freed the world from mediaevalism and Aquinas.
>
> Quintilian "did for" the direct sentence. And the Greek language was made an excuse for more adjectives. I know no place where this can be more readily seen than in the Hymns to the Gods appended to Divus' translation of the Odysses into Latin. The attempt to reproduce Greek by Latin produced a new dialect that was never spoken and had never before been read. The rhetoric got into painting. (G-B, 113-114, my emphasis)

Pound's attitude to the Homeric Hymns was explicitly stated in the third Ur-canto, where he had inserted these lines: "The thin clear Tuscan stuff/Gives way before the florid

mellow phrase," between his own translation from Homer and the quotation from the Homeric Hymn (Poetry, August 1917, p. 254). The final version of canto one, however, leaves the reader to deduce from the quality of the language itself the fact that it represents a declension of Renaissance values, the onset of floridity and rhetoric.

It is questionable whether any reader is sensitive enough to decipher the significance of these six Latin words without relying on Pound's prose statement for guidance. Therefore, in discussing the organization of XVI Cantos, it becomes essential to consider Pound's motivation for dropping such explanatory links as that provided in the Ur-cantos, for taking the risk of obscurity. Kenner has provided the clearest explanation for this aspect of Pound's work:

> Opposition to "rhetoric" is a far from simple position. In decrying the classical and renaissance cult of verbosity Pound's alignment is with the line of tirelessly moral aphoristic wisdom running from Seneca through Montaigne into the French Enlightenment . . . It is this tradition that opposes the Jonsonian spareness . . . to the lavish magniloquence of Marlowe. It is in this tradition that Bacon eschews the appearance of system in the delivery of knowledge, since aphorisms encourage men to enquire further. It is to this tradition, with is almost Confucian progression between empirical enquiry, private worth, and public benefit, that Pound may be said to belong.
> (Poetry of EP, p. 44. my emphasis)

In Chapter VI we noted Pound's enthusiasm in 1921 for Picabia's Pensees sans langage; poeme, despite the fact that its heterogeneous elements seemed almost randomly ordered, because of its vitality and avoidance of artifice, its kinetic structure. During the same period Pound frequented the Paris salon of Natalie Barney (de Gourmont's "Amazon"), and Richard Sieburth tells us that Pound "respected her mastery over the more succinct genres of French prose--the maxime, the pensee, the deftly etched portrait," and discerned in her "epigrammatic French those same qualities of clarity and concision, of torque and timing, which he so recommended in Voltaire, Flaubert, and Gourmont".[6] Pound's admiration for such aphorisms was lasting; he translated a series of Barney's aphorisms "On Writing and Writers" as late as 1962. That is, his preference for aphorisms over rhetoric, his insertion of the Latin tags in canto one, had to do with his wish to provide stimulation for thought in XVI Cantos by avoiding the appearance of system. All his early experiments with major form moved in this direction, toward a kinetic structure. As his horizontal chords tax the memory, his aphorisms exercise the mind.

D

The Procession

How such a kinetic structure works can best be seen by tracing the development of a single motif through XVI Cantos. One of the most interesting of these is that of the Procession. In this motif the main tension exists between individual and collective identies. For Pound, individuality was a major, perhaps the major virtue. Consequently, he showed respect for those cultures and societies which did not subsume individuality within larger groups. In XVI Cantos Pound used the Procession motif to trace the gradual improvement in the social estimation of individual values from classical Rome to the Renaissance, and the gradual declension of such values from the Renaissance to the present. Generally speaking, when individual identity can assert itself within the context of the Procession Pound meant for us to value that culture, and when individual identity is lost in thh group, or directed by a will other than its own, Pound meant to expose a weakness in that society.

In canto four, for example, Pound juxtaposed two opposing concepts of man's experience of communion with the

divine. In one case Danae waits alone for Zeus to visit her as a shower of gold; in the other case a modern crowd worships collectively, manipulated by the organizers of the religious Procession:

> Upon the gilded tower in Exbatan
> Lay the god's bride, lay ever, waiting the golden rain.
> By Garonne. "Saave!"
> The Garonne is thick like paint,
> Procession,--"Et sa'ave, sa'ave, sa'ave Regina!"--
> Moves, like a worm, in the crowd. (IV, 16)

Here Pound inteded to expose the element of superstitious hog-wash in modern religion, as he explains in an unpublished letter to his father:

> The worm of the procession had three large antennae, and I hope to develop the motive later, text clearly states that this vermiform object circulated in the crowd at the Church of St. Nicholas in Toulouse. Not merely mediaeval but black central African superstition and voodoo energy squalling infant, general murk and epileptic religious hog wash with chief totem being magnificently swung over whole. (YL).

The crowd in canto four is under the influence of a religion that has been corrupted by a large element of superstition. They are tricked into worshipping what seems in context to be a statue of Mary ("sa'ave Regina"), but

which Pound thinks is little more than the "chief totem" of a particularly backward society. Thinking that they worship one thing, they are tricked into worshipping something else; they express unfocussed desire. This misbegotten religious impulse directly contrasts with the expression of Danae's individual, personal sense of veneration toward Zeus. Here the individual touches valid religious impulses which stem from desire. The procession highlights the contrast between mythical and modern, between public and personal, experiences of the divine.

In canto five the wedding procession illustrates a similar loss of personal identity within a crowd, as Pound quotes from Catullus' wedding-hymn, "Collis O Heliconii":

> Weaving with points of gold,
> Gold-yellow, saffron . . . The roman shoe, Aurunculeia's,
> And come shuffling feet, and cries "Da nuces!
> "Nuces!" praise and Hymenaeus "brings the girl to her man."
> (V, 27)

In "Pshychology and Troubadours" (1912) Pound had said of this poem that it presents marriage "strictly on one plane; the bride is what she is in Morocco today, and the function is 'normal' and eugenic. It is the sacrificial concept" (SR, 96). Hence, although the worship of Hymenaeus in

canto five is not an illustration of unfocussed desire, as is the worship of the image of Mary in canto four, the wedding procession emphasizes the "sacrificial concept" toward the bride as a characteristic of Roman society. Catullus' hymn celebrates the god Hymenaeus rather than the godliness of the bride's personality. Pound had already explored some of the affinities between classical Rome and Georgian London in the Homage; here his use of the procession to symbolize the lack of concern for individual values in Rome anticipates his later use of the same motif in canto sixteen.

In canto nine Pound used the procession differently, to symbolize the ability of an individual to focus the energy of his society on some creative act. Here Sigismundo Malatesta organizes a procession of ox-carts to transport stone appropriated from a church in a neighbouring diocese to Rimini, where he uses it to construct the Tempio. That is, he takes the building material society has used to build a church in honour of the state religion, and uses it to erect a temple in homage to Isotta:

> Whose men, Sigismundo's, came with more than a hundred two wheeled ox carts and deported, for the beautifying of the tempio where was Santa Maria in Trivio where

the same are now on the walls.
. . .
grnnh! rrnnh, pthg.
wheels, plaustra, oxen under night-sheild. (IX, 36)

By building his Tempio on the foundations of the church of Santa Maria, Sigismundo signals his willingness to replace social with personal mores. His ability to defy society in this way is one reason why Pound uses his personality as the major focal point in XVI Cantos; working in the face of social opposition, Sigismundo was still able to work creatively. For a brief moment in history, individual values forcefully assert themselves.

In canto sixteen the procession demonstrates the swift declension in individual values in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The canto begins with images which set the tone for this loss of individuality. After cleaning off the "hell ticks" the narrator looks about him, and notes a lake in which bodies "mingled, like fish in a bin". Here and there he notes an attempt at individual creativity, an arm pointing upward clutching "a fragment of marble"--an obvious rhyme with Sigismundo's Tempio--but the arm of the modern creator is as doomed to sink beneath the surface of modernity as "trout, submerged by the eels" (XVI, 69). As a brief flashback to one of his two main themes, the Descent, the narrator descends from modernity

into the past, into Purgatory, through a "passage clean-squared in granite", deep into the earth where he sees Sigismundo "and founders, gazing at the mounts of their cities". In a transitional passage, he falls into sleep upon a plain, wherein he dreams of the nineteenth century army commander Galliffet leading the triple charge against the Prussians "for the honour of the army": "And they called him a swashbuckler" (XVI, 69,70).

This memory is of a war which still called for the exercise of individual virtues; initiative, courage, bravery. The next procession modulates into comedy, as another "swash-buckler" of the nineteenth century capable of preserving his identity is evoked. Lord Byron, wrapped in a scarlet cloak and carried home dead drunk by his porters, is mistaken by the "old Admiral" for a corpse. Unlike that of Sigismundo, however, Byron's procession is not associated with creative effort:

> And they saw a procession coming down through
> A cut in the hills, carrying something
> The six chaps in front carrying a long thing
> on their shoulders,
> And they thought it was a funeral,
> but the thing was wrapped up in scarlet,
> And he put off in the cutter
> he was a middy in those days,
> To see what the natives were doing,
> And they got up to the six fellows in livery,
> And they looked at it, and I can still hear the old

admiral,
Was it? it was
Lord Byran
Dead drunk, with the face of an A y n .....
He pulled it out long, like that:
the face of an ayn .....gel.

And because of that son of a bitch,
Franz Josef of Austria .....
And because tht son of a bitch Napoleon Barbiche .....
They put him on Hill 70, in a trench
dug through corpses
With a lot of kids of sixteen,
Howling and crying for their mamas,
. . .
And Henri Gaudier went to it,
. . .
And old T.E.H. he went to it. (XVI, 70, 71)

The comedy of Byron being 'dead' drunk anticipates the actual deaths of Gaudier and Hulme--like Byron, creative artists with tremendous gusto for life--in a war which no longer has its lighter, more human, comic sides. The procession which celebrates Byron's personality gives way quickly to a scene in which the living dig through corposes for safety. Unlike Sigismundo and Byron, who were able to dominate their society--though Byron less than Sigismundo--and whose creative will gave some element of human meaning to the processions with which Pound associates them, Gaudier and Hulme are swept under the general chaos of modern warfare, which cut short their creative potential.

Hence, the description of the Russian revolution given later in canto sixteeen stresses the way in which it was engineered by a few revolutionaries, who whipped up the undirected energy of the mob,

> That's the trick with the crowd,
> Get 'em into the street and get 'em moving
> (XVI, 74)

before directing them to a target. This aimless movement ending in destruction contrasts with the purposeful movement towards creativity of Sigismundo's carefully organized ox-carts. The depiction of the Russian mob also rhymes with the church procession of canto four, where the thin voices of a few leaders direct the many:

> The worm of the Procession bores in the soup of the crowd,
> The blue thin voices against the crash of the crowd.
> (Dial, January, 1924, 693)

This formless, directionless crowd had been anticipated in "Und Drang", the sequential poem in which Pound had first dealth with modern society: "Confusion, clamour, 'mid the many voices/Is there a meaning, a significance?" (C, p.

43). But by 1924 the danger is not seen to arise from social cacophony which distracts the poet's mind from contemplation of the beautiful, but rather from the whispers of those conspirators who manipulate society for destructive purposes. The conspiracy theory, which haunts Pound's later comments on economics, arose from his perception that individual personality could no longer provide a center for modern society--the oligarchy, whether of priests or revolutionaires, had usurped the role of the creative individual. Pound's use of the processional theme to illustrate this declension toward barbarism, away from individual values, in modern society, lies at the heart of XVI Cantos. Revolutionary riots, religious processions based on superstition, the aimless or destructive flux of modernity, all conspire against the expression of creative individuality.

E

The Compression of Narrative

Chapter IV demonstrated the way in which Pound compressed the narrative registered in Vildrac's "Visite" in his own "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour". And Chapter

V noted the fact that the Homage follows a narrative framework. When reading the first sixteen cantos through, one is struck not so much by their use of image, language, and characterization--all of which have their foundations in the early poetry--as by the amazing abundance of short, vivid narrative sketches. In canto one, for example, Elpenor tells how he met his death, and Odysseus is told the story of his future life in twelve words; in canto two, Acoetes relates his encounter with Dionysus; in canto three we hear of El Cid's ride to Valencia; in canto four an old man recalls the stories of Itys and Cabestan; in canto five, Poicebot's encounter with his estranged wife north of Spain is recounted; in canto six we hear of Eleanor of Aquitaine's trip to Acre; in canto seven Dido's love for Sicheus is evoked; cantos eight to eleven provide brief narrative sketches of various episodes in Sigismundo Malatesta's life; canto twelve tells how Baldy Bacon and Dos Santos made their fortunes by clever strategems, and also recounts the Tale of the Honest Sailor; canto thirteen shows how Confucius acted in various situations; canto fifteen tells of Pound's journey out of hell with the help of Plotinus; canto sixteen tells of Pound's descent to the paradiso terrestre, where the heroes sit by fountains gazing at the mounts of their cities, and recounts war memories of various participants. This sketchy and

incomplete summary of some of the tales in the poem indicates how numerous and varied they are. Pound includes only that portion of each story which strikes him as a luminous detail. He does not, as he had done in the Homage, provide the sequence with an overall narrative framework.

To see more clearly the procedure which Pound followed in compressing narrative, it will be useful to compare his version of Poicebot's encounter with his estranged wife in canto five (1921) with the story as he had given it eight years earlier with his translation of the razo of Miquel de la Tour in "Troubadours--Their Sorts and Conditions" (1913). The razo begins:

> The monk, Gaubertz de Poicebot, "was a man of births; he was of the bishopric of Limozin, son of the castellan of Poicebot. And he was made monk when he was a child in a monastery, which is called Sain Leonart. And he knew well letters, and well to sing and well trobar. And for desire of woman he went forth from the monastery. And he came thence to the man to whom came all who for courtesy wished honour and good deeds--to Sir Savairic de Mauleon--and this man gave him the harness of a joglar and a horse and clothing; and then he went through the courts and composed and made good canzos. And he set his heart upon a donzella gentle and fair and made his songs of her, and she did not wish to love him unless he should get himself made a knight and take her to wife. And he told En Savaric how the girl had refused him, wherefore En Savaric made him a knight and gave him land and the income from it. And he married the girl and held her in great honour. And it happened that he went into Spain, leaving her

> behind him. And a knight out of England set his mind upon her and did so much and said so much that he led her with him, and he kept her long time his mistress and then let her go to the dogs (malamen anar). And En Gaubertz returned from Spain, and lodged himself one night in the city where she was. And he went out for desire of woman, and he entered the alberc of a poor woman, for they told him there was a fine woman within. And he found his wife. And when he saw her, and she him, great the grief between them and great shame. And he stopped the night with her, and on the morrow he went forth with her to a nunnery where he had her enter. And for this grief he ceased to sing and to compose." (LE, 95-96)

In canto five, originally published in the Dial (August 1921), and left unchanged in later versions, this story is compressed into fifteen lines:

> And from Mauleon, fresh with a new earned grade,
> In maze of approaching rain-steps, Poicebot--
> The air was full of women.
> And Savairic Mauleon
> Gave him his land and knight's fee, and he wed the woman
> Came lust of travel on him, of romerya;
> And out of England a knight with slow-lifting eyelids
> Lei fassar furar a del, put glamour upon her . . .
> And left her an eight months gone.
> "Came lust of woman upon him."
> Poicebot, now on North road from Sapin
> (Sea-change, a grey in the water)
> And in small house by town's edge
> Found a woman, changed and familiar face;
> Hard night, and parting at morning. (V, p. 18)

Pound had ruthlessly cut out all unnecessary detail in his

compression of the prose razo, while at the same time charging each word with the utmost intensity; for example, the prose passage about the English knight: "And a knight out of England set his mind upon her and did so much and said so much that he led her with him, and he kept her long time his mistress and then let her go to the dogs (malament anar)" becomes in the poetic version:

> And out of England a knight with slow-lifting eyelids
> Lei fassar furar a del, put glamour upon her . . .
> And left her an eight months gone.

Not only had Pound reduced the number of words from forty-three to twenty-six but he had also vastly improved the inner dymanics of the story, especially with the supportive phrases "slow-lifting eyelids" and "put glamour upon her". The story of Piere de Maesac's elopment with the wife of Bernart de Tierci, which immediately follows this passage, is similarly handled. The point is that Pound utilizes the techniques of compressing narrative first handled successfully in "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour", and develops them further.

F

Direct Speech

Generally speaking, Pound's respect for characters in XVI Cantos can be measured by the amount of direct speech which they utter. However, a further distinction needs to be made, in that Pound did not value or trust utterances made only for public consumption by political leaders. In the early essay "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris", Pound wrote:

> If one wished an intimate acquaintenance with the politics of England or Germany at certain periods, would one be wiser to read a book of generalities and then read at random through the archives, or to read through, let us say, first the State papers of Bismarck or Gladstone? Having become really conversant with the eactivities of either of these men, would not almost any document of this period fall, if we read it, into some sort of orderly arrangement? Would we not grasp its relatio to the main stream of events (SP, 42-43).

That is, Pound believed that what political leaders say in private express their true feelings and the spirit of their age more than things said by them in public, or about them by commentators.

Hence Pound introduces Sigismundo Malatesta at the

beginning of canto eight through a private letter:

Frater tanquam
Et compater carissime; tergo
....hanni de
....dicis
....entia
Equivalent to:
Giohanni of the Medici,
Florence.
Letter received, and in the matter of Messire
Gianozio,
One from him also, sent on in form and with all due
dispatch,
Having added your wishes and memoranda.
As to arranging peace between you and the King of Ragona,
So far as I am concerned, it wd.
Give me the greatest possible pleasure,
At any rate nothing wd. give me more pleasure
or be more acceptable to me,
And I shd. like to be party to it, as was promised me,
either as participant or adherent.
As for my service money,
Perhaps you and your father wd. draw it
And send it on to me as quickly as possible.
And tell the Maestro de pentore
That there can be no question of
His painting the walls for the moment,
As the mortar is not yet dray
And it wd. be merely work chucked away
(buttato via)
But I want it to be quite clear, that until the chapels
are ready
I will arrange for him to paint something else
So that both he and I shall
Get as much enjoyment as possible from it,
And in order that he may enter my service
And also because you write me that he needs cash,
I want to arrange with him to give him so much per year
And to assure him that he will get the sum agreed on.
You may say that I will deposit security
For him wherever he likes.
And let him have a clear answer,
For I mean to give him good treatment
So that he may come to live the rest
Of his life in my lands--
Unless you put him off it--

And for this I mean to make due provision,
So that he can work as he likes,
Or waste his time as he likes
(affatigandose per suo piacere on no
non gli manchera la provixione mai)
never lacking provision
(VIII, 28-29)

The sincerity of Sigismundo's concern for the arts[8] is reinforced by the letter written to him by his foreman in charge of the construction of the Tempio in canto nine: "e.g., "'We have not begun putting new stone into the martyr chapel; first because the heavy frosts wd. certainly spoil the job; secondly because the aliofants aren't yet here and one can't get the measurements for the cornice to the columns that are to rest on the aliofants'" (IX, 40).

Later, in canto twenty-one, Pound grafted the Italian phrase quoted above into a letter written by Thomas Jefferson, where Jefferson, like Sigismundo, reveals a concern for the arts and the welfare of artists:

"Could you," wrote Mr. Jefferson,
"Find me a gardener
Who can play the french horn?
. . .
. . . In a country like yours
. . . where music is cultivated and
Practised by every class of men, I suppose there might
Be found persons of these trades who could perform on
The french horn, clarionet, or hautboy and bassoon, so

> That one might have a band of two french horns, two
> Clarionets, two hautboys and a bassoon, without enlarging
> Their domestic expenses. A certainty of exmployment for
> Half a dozen years.
> (affatigandose per suo piacer o non)
> And at the end of that time, to find them, if they
> Choose, a conveyance to their own country, might induce
> Them to come here on reasonable wages.
> (XXI, 97)

In this concise manner, and with reference in both cases to thoughts not expressed for purposes of public consumption, Pound drew attention to a private aspect of these men which he thinks marks them as suited to power. That Pound consciously sought out private utterances as a means of judging public personalities, is revealed in an unpublished letter written to his father in April 1924, asking for information about American Presidents: "I don't care a damn about their public eye-wash, I want facts indicative of personality . . . Did you pick up anything when you were in Washington or from T.C.P. that threw any light on Garfield, Arthur, G.C. or whomever happened before Garfield. Lincoln??" (YC).

Use of direct speech does not always indicate that Pound admires the speaker--one thinks here of Pope Pius II's rhetorical diatribe against Sigismundo in canto ten--but in such cases the speech is usually meant for public

consumption.[9] This technique is used rarely, however; usually Pound denies direct speeks to his villains. In canto seven, for example, although Pound refers to "Dry professorial talk" and the way in which "words rattle: shells given out by shells", he allowes no direct quotes.

Canto twelve affords an interesting modulation in the amount of direct speech uttered by various personalities that reflects Pound's evaluation of Jim X, Baldy Bacon, and church deacons. Although Baldy's trafficking in human misery and his cornering of the market in public centavos are presented as invidious, Pound had a residual weakness for his adventureous kind of capitalism. In "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" Pound had written: "Every man who does his own job really well has a latent respect for every other man who does <u>his</u> own job relly well; this is our lasting bond; whether it be a matter of buying up all the little brass farthings in Cuba and selling them at a quarter per cent advance . . ." (SP, 33). Consequently, Pound carefully points out that Baldy suffered personally: "By fever reduced to lbs. 108" and lost his ill-gotten fortune: "ran up to 40,000 bones on his own,/Once, but wanted to 'eat up the whole'r Wall St.'/And dropped it all three weeks later: (XII, 54). Here a snatch of Baldy's converstion is quoted, and earlier a few others are also included in Pound's text:

i.e., "'bring 'em in./Bring 'em to the main shack,' said Baldy"; "No interest in any other kind uv bisnis" (XII, 53). With regard both to his suffering and to his loss of fortune, however, Baldy differs from the "Deacons in churches, owning slum properties/Alias usurers in excelsis" who bore Jim X with "their hard luck stories", and who are not paid even the dubious compliment of being allowed to speak in their own voice, as Baldy is.[10] But of course it is Jim X, Pound's psudonym for John Quinn, who receives the ultimate compliment of recounting the Tale of the Honest Sailor in direct speech.

Similarly, in canto thirteen, Kung speaks at length:

> 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. (XIII, 59)

And if, in contrast to this canto, the Hell cantos seem "comic-like", to borrow M.L. Rosenthal's apt phrase, this is partly due to the fact that the malefactors are never quoted, only described. The "betrayers of language", the "perverts, perverters of language" (XIV, 61), are not

permitted by Pound to utter a single word in two cantos. Generally speaking, then, we can say that Pound's respect for characters in XVI Cantos can be readily measured by the amount of direct speech which he allows them to utter. Again, in this respect Pound picks up a technique already experimented with in the Ur-cantos, where Valla was quoted in the original Latin as a means of honouring his respect for tradition, as noted in Chapter V--Dante's compliment to Arnut Daniel in Purgatorio, XXVI serving as Pound's model.

A sidelight to Pound's evolving use of direct speech in the Cantos is afforded by an unpublished letter to his father written in November, 1924, explaining how to interpret cantos eighteen and nineteen:

> There ain't no key. Simplest parallel I can give is radio where you tell who is talking by the noise they make. If your copies are properly punctuated they shd. show where each voice begins and ends. . . You hear various people letting cats out of bags at maximum speed. Armaments, finance, etc. A "great editor," at least edt. of the world's best known news sheet, a president of a new nation, or one then in the making, a saleman of battleships, etc. with bits of biography of a distinguished financier, etc.
>
> Mostly things you "oughtn't to know," not if you are to be a good quiet citizen. That's all.
>
> (YL)

For the most part, such embarrassing cats are let out of the bag only after XVI Cantos, where direct speech is generally reserved for those Pound admires. In this respect it is interesting to note that the initial capital to canto nineteen, by Gladys Hynes, portrays a stage on which puppet-figures of a king, a general, and a politician, dance at the end of strings pulled by financiers concealed in the wings. There is nothing comparable to this blatant economic statement in the initials of XVI Cantos, indicating that Pound's concern with this social factor intensified after 1924.

G

Sigismundo Malatesta

The Malatesta Section (VIII-XI) is the pivot of XVI Cantos. Pound began his research on Sigismundo Malatesta in the spring of 1922, as noted in Chapter VI, and by May 1923 had come to use Malatesta's name as a synonym for XVI Cantos, as we see in an unpublished letter written to his father: "S'Oiseux [i.e., William Bird] is preparing de looks edtn. of Malatesta" (YC #636). Myles Slatin has noticed that by the summer of 1923 "the design of the poem

suddenly crystallized, perhaps partly as a result of the long and intensive labour which went into the Malatesta group;"[11] that it was the idea of centering his poem around this single personality which provided Pound with the key to completing XVI Cantos is revealed by a letter written to his mother in November 1924: "Am . . . ready for another long chunk; and trying to find some bhloomin historic character who can be used as illustration of intelligent constructivity. Private life being another requisite. S.M. amply possessed of both; but other figures being often fatally deficient" (YC). Pound's schema for the first thirty cantos, as presented by Hugh Kenner, shows that Nicholas Este occupied a central position in Pound's second installment of his long poem,[12] but he can scarcely have been the second illustration of intelligent constructivity for whom Pound was searching. As an unpublished letter to his father shows, Pound was more enthusiastic about Thomas Jefferson:

> He was probably the only civilized man who ever held the job. (Of course it is now accepted that Lincoln was J. Xt. & not human so I'm not counting him).
>
> Tyler, Harrison 1st, possibly Monroe. Might be the brighter spots in teh annals of national bad taste.
>
> I can't remember the names of a lot of 'em. There was a Johnny named Polk and two bums named Adams. (YC)

Pound revised his opinion of John Adams later and used his relationship with Jefferson as a main theme in the American cantos. His rejection of Lincoln as a subject because of his Christ-like image points to his desire to discover unrecognized merit. That is, Jefferson was to follow Malatesta as a model of intelligent constructivity around whom the American cantos would be arranged. The central position of the Malatesta section is therefore not accidental.

Using Pound's schema for the Cantos as described by Yeats, Malatesta is best represented by one of the letters X Y Z. He represents one of the highlights of individual accomplishment in history: "In the gloom, the gold gathers the light against it" (XI, 51). Yet Malatesta was not intended to serve as the focal point for the poem as a whole; he was not meant to serve Pound as Sordello served Browning. Pound rejected the notion of using a single personality in this way, whether it be Malatesta, Jefferson, or Adams. And even within XVI Cantos Malatesta does not stand alone; numerous creative personalities cluster around him. In this respct XVI Cantos blends together the technique of the Ur-cantos, in which numerous characters are assembled together without any one achieving dominance, and the technique of the Homage and Mayberley, where only major

personalities are highlighted.[13] Thhat is, Pound achieves a fusion of his earlier experiments with major form in XVI Cantos.

There is insufficient space here to go deeply into Pound's methods of characterization in the Malatesta cantos, but a few of his techniques may be glanced at. As we would expect from our discussion of other aspects of the sequence, these four cantos do not give a chronologically ordered presentation of Malatesta's life. Canto eight provides a brief survey or his character, and ends with a view of him doing a man's job at twelve years of age:

> And the dusk rolled
> to one side a little
> And he was twelve at the time, Sigismundo,
> And no dues had been paid for three years,
> And his elder brother gone pious;
> And that year they fought in the streets,
> And that year he got out to Cesena
> And brought back the levies,
> And that year he crossed by night over Foglia, and...
> (VIII, 33)

This open ending provided a means of grafting the canto onto canto ten, which begins ("And the poor devils dying of cold, outside Sorano"). Similarly, canto two ends with the single word "And...", while canto one begins "And then went down to

the ship;" in these ways Pound provides grammatical links between his two main themes: the Descent into Hades and Metamorphosis, and his main character, who, like Odysseus in canto one, is celebrated for his ability to act purposefully despite the harshness of his environment.

Canto nine begins with an account of Sigismundo's fortunes in "one year"--a modulation from "that year" in canto eight--that is designed to bring his endurance into clear focus:

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

The spondee, Pound's trademark, is freely used here to underscore Sigismundo's power. The repetition of the first three lines of "one year", followed by a variety of endings to these lines, recalls Pound's extensive experiment with the rhythms of the litany discussed in Chapter IV. There, liturgical rhythms were shown to be often associated with celebration of the personality, as in the <u>sequaire</u> of

Goddeschalk; use of similar rhythms to describe Sigismundo draws on these experiments.

The ending to canto ten provides an example of Sigismundo's qualities as a leader:

> And they came at us with their ecclesiasticla legates
> Until the eagle lit on his tent pole.
> And he sid: The Romans would have called that an augury
> E gradment li antichi cavaler romanj
> davano fed a quisti annutii,
> All I want you to do is follow the orders,
> They've got the bigger army,
> but there are more men in this camp. (X, 47)

Canto sixteen provides a later rhyme with this scene:

> So we used to hear it at the opera,
> That they wouldn't be under Haig;
> and that the advance was beginning;
> That it was going to begin in a week. (XVI, 75)

Unlike the comment on Haig, that on Malatesta is admiring, spoken by a comrade. The distinction between a collection of individual men fighting for a leader they respect, and an army, recalls the distinction between individuality and the faceless mob which provides the main theme in XVI Cantos. Sigismundo acts as a mantram for the individual values

which Pound opposes to collective values throughout XVI Cantos. In this respect XVI Cantos marked a departure from the technique of earlier poems such as "La Fraisne", "Redondillas", "L'Homme Moyen Sensuel", "Near Perigord", and the Homage. That is, by 1924 Pound's interest was no longer limited to individuals considered apart from society. He had become more interested in the recurrent conflict throughout history between intelligent constructivity and social forces productive of intertia and destruction.[14]

Despite Sigismundo's portrayal as a "man of ill star," like Odysseus in canto one, even his inability to complete the Tempio is presented by Pound as a triumph: "in the style 'Past ruin'd Latium'" (IX, 41). His chosen topics of conversation are also praised, for being

> Both of ancient times and our own; books, arms,
> And of men of unusual genius,
> Both of ancient times and our own, in short the usual subject
> Of conversation between intelligent men. (XI, 51)

But, just as in the Homage, the aspect of Malatesta's character Pound chose to present at the end of the four cantos was his sense of humour, as he made a pact with his

steward:

> And one day he said: Henry, you can have it,
> On condition, you can have it: for four months
> You'll stand any reasonable joke that I play on you.
> And you can joke back,
> provided you don't get too ornry.
> And they put it all down in writing:
> For a green cloak with silver brocade.
> (XI, 52)

The selection of this passage to end the Malatesta section indicates that Pound did not wish to celebrate Malatesta merely because he was creative, energetic, a patron of the arts, and a great political leader, but because he possessed as well the universally attractive attribute - a sense of fun.

In this chapter we have glanced at some of the techniques Pound used to give XVI Cantos unity with variety: e.g., the placement of the Malatesta section in the center of the poem; the use of direct speech as a characterizing device; the compression of motifs such as that of the Procession; the use of aphorisms to avoid rhetoric and to encourage the spirit of exploration in the reader; and the use of complex and varied juxtapositions, both in the designs and in the text, to counterpoint the worlds of

myth, history, and contemporary reality. Yet, such is the complexity of the texture of this poem, we have barely touched its surface. Its resources are virtually limitless. Nevertheless, we can see that with this first installment of his long poem Pound achieved a form that, while light-years in advance of his earlier attempts at major form, drew upon his earlier experiments and blended them together with new discoveries to consummate his twenty-year attempt to write a long poem.

XVI Cantos made no attempt to conform to conventional literary structures, discarded the requirement that a long poem possess a rigid framework, in favour of a chief virtue: that it be consistently entertaining and illuminating, while obeying no law except that generated by its own inner dynamics. These dynamics are built up through complex juxtapositions of disparate elements and through "horizontal chords" which the reader can never be sure have been fully resolved. Kinesis rather than stasis rules the development of XVI Cantos. Beyond this it eludes generalizations:

> If thou hast seen that mirror of all moments,
> That glass to all things that o'ershadow it,
> Call not that mirror me, for I have slipped
> Your grasp, I have eluded. ("The Flame")

CONCLUSION

> Repetition in music is both necessary as a mnemonic aid and desirable as a method of achieving balance. Literature, on the other hand, is through-composed, gaining its coherence through narration, action and characterization. The refrain in poetry could never be as relentless as it often is in music for the reason that it arrests the natural growth and development of the work. --Murray Schafer

The purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate that Pound's urge toward major form during the period 1904-1925 stemmed from and evidenced a very positive holism. The value of such a demonstration is that now, having realized this, we can go on to read Pound's work as a continuum, understanding that Pound's concern with major form was there from the beginning of his career, did not commence with XVI Cantos, Mauberley, the Homage, or even the Ur-cantos.[1] I have tried to show that Pound's early determination to write a long poem was motivated by a deep ethical desire--never lost--to "show men the way to try" to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the "patterned integrities" in the "vital universe" of "stone alive, tree alive"--and mind alive.[2]

In Part One, we saw that Pound was first attracted to

the notion of art as a perfect circle, a realm of perfect beauty. We also saw that he moved gradually away from this guiding metaphor, toward the concept of the "cyclical" arrangement manifested in the cycle of Noh plays, which present "a complete service of life", and towards the metaphor of the Vortex, into which, and through which, ideas constantly rush. We noted the main architectonic principle in early volumes like A Lume Spento and Exultations was to counterpoint a wide range of human thoughts and feelings so as to give a "proportioned presentation of life".

In Part Two, we saw that Pound extended the principle of counterpoint developed earlier to juxtapose the cults of ugliness and beauty and the values of the artist and society, within sequential poems like "Zenia", and that he paid particular attention to the use of "negative space" within short imagist poems like "In a Station of the Metro." We also noted that he experimented with the rhythms of the litany, as adapted by Goddeschalk and de Gourmont, to express individual values. These liturgical rhythms gave Pound a model of how to avoid mechanical, predictably spaced repetitions, and how to build up larger rhythms of mood. At the same time his experiments with compressing narrative--as in "Villanelle: the

Pshychological Hour"--taught him how to express deep feeling in a natural tone of voice, through emphasis on poignancy and reticence. We have also seen how Pound began to develop increasingly complex linguistic structures in the Ur-cantos, the Homage, and Mauberley, to replace conventional literary frameworks. The author's personality no longer occupied the forefront of the stage; whole cultures, like those of Augustan Rome and Georgian London, were set into dynamic juxtaposition within the long poem.

In Part Three, we saw Pound make the crucial decision to abandon stasis in favour of kinesis as the chief quality of XVI Cantos.[3] Pound no longer conceived of his long poem as a perfect circle, cut off from social realities. He absorbed social concerns like economics into the texture of his poem, not because he wanted to, but rather out of an ethical sense of responsibility: "the symbolist position of the artist as aloof from social concerns is no good now." He attempted to provide social remedies in his long poem. The long poem changed from a vehicle for personal expression (cf. "Redondillas"), to one expressing the sensibility of a person concerned with the ultimate destiny of his society. It had changed from a personal to a social "testament".

The reason for stressing the ethical basis to Pound's urge toward major form is that many critics have said that the Cantos consists of unrelated fragments, and that the best of these should be winnowed out and the rest discarded. They have said too that Pound's earlier poems are fragments--which Pound had the good sense (later lost) to present individually. This attitude does not conform to my own sense of the integral nature of Pound's aesthetic philosophy, which seems to me to provide a solid core connecting his earlier and later work. Consequently, I have tried to show that the early poems are arranged according to definite architectonic principles, and that these principles appear at every stage of his career during the period 1904-1925. I have attempted to demonstrate that these principles are based on Pound's holistic philosophy, his integrative vision, and that later affirmations such as that in Women of Trachis: "WHAT SPLENDOUR! IT ALL COHERES!" have a firm basis in his earliest writings--are certainly not, as some critics have thought, merely asserted without being felt.

This position requries further explanation, for critics of the Cantos have attacked the poem both for its lack of structure and for its lack of profound moral significance. D.S. Carne-Ross, for example, has attacked the structure of

this poem by pointing out that the earlier poetry lacks any concept of structural unity:

> Pound's earlier poetry gives no obvious indication that he was going to devote the greater part of his life to the "poem of some length" which is the Cantos . . . Moreover, his early poems are very fragmentary; most of them are short--the Imagist discipline which Pound did much to propogate incited to brevity--and even when they are longer, they are usually composed in a series of brief spurts.[4]

Carne-Ross is wrong in thinking that Pound was not working at major form from the beginning, as this thesis demonstrates. Many of Pound's early poems are long--a dozen or so of them up to one hundred lines in length--and if others have seemed fragmentary, this is often due to the fact that we have been previously unaware of the architectonic principles behind their arrangement into sequential poems or volumes. Pound's early poems cannot rightly be adduced in support of the contention that the Cantos lacks unity of structure--quite the reverse.

Pound's most able critic in many ways, Hugh Kenner, has defended the poem's unity in an ingenious fashion:

> Pound, quite consciously, never thinks of using two motifs, two blocks of rendering, except as parts,

> integral parts, of a larger rhythm of juxtaposition and recurrence. This balancing and recurrence of motifs is what holds together single cantos. It also holds together the entire work, the temporarily unfinished condition of which doesn't diminish the solidity of the portion existing, any more than the absence of a roof diminishes the interrelation of proportions among cathedral arches.[5]

The metaphor is a good one, as long as we remember that it is the quality of kinesis rather than stasis which Kenner is pointing out; it is not the cathedral, but the interrelationship between its proportions which provides the most apt paradigm for the Cantos. And what Kenner has asserted here, later criticisms such as Daniel Pearlman's The Barb of Time, Christine Brooke-Rose's A ZBC of Ezra Pound, and Donald Davie's Pound, have documented.

But there is a deeper question to be dealt with: the question of whether the Cantos possesses profound moral significance. Critics have often been sidetracked here by their own obsessions with evil. Carne-Ross puts it this way:

> The Vision of Evil is perhaps the most searching test of a writer's quality. "What theme had Homer but original sin?" Yeats asked. What theme has all the most profound literature, of the past and present? But it does not appear in the Cantos..
>
> Their fundamental weakness is that they do not

> show any real religious comprehension. Lacking it, Pound has not been able to dispose of sufficiently powerful forces to move a mighty poem; he presents a vision of the good, which does not satisfy our deepest demands, checked and thwarted by an evil which is never radical enough.[6]

The question is easy to brush off when it comes from a hostile critic like Carne-Ross. It is less easy to ignore the measured probing of Pound's philosophical depths by a more knowledgable and sympathetic critic like G.S. Fraser:

> The truth of the Cantos . . . is that of a total waste, bitterness, and loss, which it is not really within human power to compensate or repair. It is something other than man himself that gives him strength to recognize, and to outface, the worst. "It was not man made courage, or made order, or made grace." Who was it then? This question, in the cantos still to come, seems to demand a more positive answer. There is something in the whole pattern of the poem that demands an encounter with the transcendental at a culminating point . . . We have had hell, and earth, and the earthly paradise, and a personal purgatory; of a truly supernatural paradise (not necessarily or very probably a Christian one) we must also have a glimpse.[7]

Carne-Ross and G.S. Fraser--as does Michael Bernstein--base their objections to the Cantos on a misapprehension of Pound's philosophy. While possessed of a faith in the ultimate cohesiveness and beauty of the universe, strong enough to last him through the Pisan

experience, Pound's philosophy is predominantly ethical, seeking to discover ways in which man can get greater joy out of the life set before him. For this reason he opposes the notion of Original Sin, which he considers to be a belief inculcated by a priestly caste to suppress the populace. He does not accept the notion of Pure Evil and is not attracted to a "supernatural" paradise--which admits after death only those who have spent their lives obeying instructions. Hence, writing to Denis Goacher in 1953, he said:

> E.P. prefers the term RELIGION to metaphysics. But at any rate makes it clear that he thinks the idea of original sin the damndest shit shat before Marx and Freud pissed in the soup of Europe. He has absolutely NO respect for anyone whatsodam who falls for that swindle. (SFL)

And in another letter of the same period, Pound told Goacher that Eliot's Anglican dogma had prevented him from understanding and appreciating Pound's less conventional mysticism:

> say to TSE's credit that LOATHING E.P.'s mind hating his confucianism or what was earlier considered neo-paganism, swinburnian romanticism, early singing cow-boy jocularity
>
> he has yet recognised the value of E.P.'s

criticism and prosody.

even when he didn't understand a damn word of what
E.P. was driving at, or why he wrote "Lustra"

E.P.'s neo-paganism turning out to be the catholic
mysticism a group of pre- Dantescans
naturally antipathetic
to utilitarians and anglicans. (SFL)

Pound's attitude to life was that it must not be lived according to narrow dogmas; man must have the courage to live fully, energetically, and ethically, now on "the barb of time." Pound celebrated life, but castigated those who would deny its proper expression in creative form:

I don't know how humanity stands it
with a painted paradise at the end of it
without a painted paradise at the end of it
the dwarf morning-glory twines round the grass-blade
(LXXIV, 436)

True paradise can be found within this life; in the grass-blade, in man's abiliity to appreciate the natural mysteries: "A man's paradise is his good nature"(XCIII, 632).[8]

Pound's directio voluntatis aimed to create a long poem in order to celebrate the human side of creation,

because man's creativity is analagous to that of the "supreme intelligence of the universe." For these reasons, Pound's decision to pursue larger forms was a precise indication of his constant belief in the integrity and coherence of the universe, of which man partakes. In Dante's landscape, the location Pound would most desire--and deserve--would be alongside Arnaut Daniel, (Purgatorio, XXVI) near the top of Mount Purgatory--just below the Earthly Paradise Pound spent his life celebrating. Here--walking over the green hills of Provence and Italy--Pound crafted his visions of perfection into a new language for poetry, as powerful as it is rare:

> To "see again,"
> the verb is "see," not "walk on"
> i.e. it coheres all right
> even *if* my notes do not cohere
> . . .
> A little light, like a rushlight
> to lead back to splendour.
> (CXVI, 796-798; my emphasis)

NOTES AND REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

[1] N. Christoph de Nagy, The Poetry of Ezra Pound: The Pre-Imagist Stage (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1968), p. 22.

[2] See John J. Espey, Ezra Pound's "Mauberley" (London: Faber, 1955); Thomas H. Jackson, The Early Poetry of Ezra Pound (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); Stuart Y. McDougal, Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972); J.P. Sullivan, Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964); Hugh Witemeyer, The Poetry of Ezra Pound, Form and Renewal, 1908-1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

[3] See Michael Andre Bernstein, The Tale of the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Ronald Bush, The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). Christine Brooke-Rose, A ZBC of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1971); Donald Davie, Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965); George Dekker, Sailing After Knowledge: The Cantos of Ezra Pound (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); Clark Emery, Ideas Into Action (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1958); Wendy Stallard Florry, Ezra Pound and the Cantos: A Record of Struggle (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980); Daniel D. Pearlman, The Barb of Time (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[4] Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound (London: Faber, 1951), p. 65.

[5] Peter Russell, "Introduction," in An Examination of Ezra Pound: A Collection of Essays (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950), p. 19.

[6] The Yale Collection contains a number of early letters of Pound to his parents and friends that support this contention. For example, a letter to his mother dated February 1908 indignantly berated the modern age for its sacrifice of "right mercy and justice" in terms that seem perfectly consonant with his language in the "Hell cantos": "I beg you not to think I praise Messire Dante Alighieri merely because he wrote a book most people are too lazy to

read and nearly all the rest to understand. Ecce homo. He fought in battles where he probably encountered much more personal danger than Mr. Roosevelt in Cuba. He also held chief office in his city and fought for clean politics and good government. Also he was a preacher who will rank with Campbell Morgan in extent of his influence and some centuries before Luther he dared put a pope in hell and pagan without its gates and prophesy the fall of the temporal and evil powers of Rome. He was incidentally a poet a lover and a scholar and several other trifles served to round out his character although it is not recorded that he was President of a U.S. steel trust or the inventor of pin wheels."

In a letter the next year (7/1/09), he tells his mother that his new tone in A Quinzaine for This Yule is excusable even if risque, because "In a man's complete work there should be something for every mood and mental need. Cf. Shakespeare. It is only the minor poet who fills merely one or two kinds of need." He goes on to point toward his ambition to write a major work, by saying, "The artist is the maker of an ornament or a key as he chooses.

In a letter dated January 1, 1910, he gives a humorous account of the epic he does not intend to write: "The art of letters will come to an end before A.D. 2000 and there will be a sort of artistic dark ages till about A.D. 2700. The last monument will be a bombastic, rhetorical epic wherethrough will move Marconi, Pierpoint Morgan, Bleriot, Levavasour, Latham Peary, Dr. Cook, etc. clothed in the Heroic manner of Greek imitation. Contending with mighty forces, as giants against god, with 'cubic resistence' and 'bull pressure' and with 'geographical societies of Denmark.' I shall write it myself if threatened with actual starvation. A mixture of MacCawley--at his worst--Cowley, and Dryden should take the public ear, with an occasional Kiplingesque dissonance or a flavour of cokney. Pardon: 'flyver.'" Clearly, Pound saw that a modern epic would be made ridiculous by the heroic characters it would have to choose from; this provides one strong reason why he would likely have preferred to call his major work a "long poem" than an "epic"--which weakens Bernstein's case for calling the Cantos a "modern verse epic."

[7] See Davie, pp. 23-24. "Au Salon" first appeared as section XI of "Und Drang" in Canzoni, and later in Personae (1926); it did not appear in Personae (1909). "Cino," "Na Audiart," "Mesmerism," and "Villonaud for This Yule" all appeared first in A Lume Spento (1908).

[8] That this vision owed a great deal to Whitman can be

seen in the early unpublished "Cosmopoliti E Tolerentiae Cano":

> The First Great Song of All The World Cosmopolite
> Of Tolerance I Sing
> For I have stripped off the bands of custom
> and the swaddling clouts of shame
> . . .
> . . . I being of no set and land bound country
> But of that country of the spirit wherein am I at one
> with them of the spirit
> Whose word I am: being of myself nothing
> A hollow reed thru whom is the song
> I AM THE VOICE OF "HOI POLLOI" CRYING IN THE SUN.

CHAPTER ONE

The mottos on page 9 are taken from Spinoza's Ethics and on the Correction of the Understanding, trans. by Andrew Boyle (N.Y.: Everyman's Library, 1970), p. 236, and from a letter by Pound to Viola Baxter Jordan in the Pound Archives at Yale, dated 1905.

[1] This strong religious component appears clearly in an early unpublished poem from Pound's college days, "Perierant Es," which was composed around 1902:

> The Gods of the North have fallen
> The Gods of the East have died
> The Gods of Greece are not
> Gone is their pomp and pride.
> . . .
> There is one God that liveth
> To Him we bend the knee. . .
> Gehova
> Rock of ages
> Lord of the night and day
> Thou alone are mighty.
> Hear us Lord, we pray.

[2] Pound's near worship of Dante has been excellently discussed in the little-known monograph by G. Giovanni, Ezra Pound and Dante (Utrecht: Dekker and Van De Vegt, n.d.). In an early unpublished poem in the Pound Archives, "I grasp the lyre where . . . ", Pound expresses his difference from Dante:

> I sing earth's heaven as the master
> songed of hell.

This clearly shows Pound's early intention to write a paradiso terrestre; the reference to earth's heaven reminds one of William Morris' long poem, The Earthly Paradise, which seems to have influenced the young Pound strongly; interestingly, critics have scarcely mentioned Morris in reference to Pound as an important early influence.

[3] Among the page-proofs to Canzoni at the University of Texas Humanities Research Centre. Reprinted in CEP, p. 213.

[4] Among the carbon copies of unpublished letters gathered by D. D. Paige for his edition of the Letters:

1907-1941 (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace, 1950). The later revised edition of this book, Selected Letters: 1907-1941 (N.Y.: New Directions, 1971) is hereafter cited as SL.

[5] A Lume Spento and Other Early Poems (London: Faber, 1965), p. 32. Hereafter cited as ALS. This edition adds material to the earlier A Lume Spento (1908). Additional early poems can be found in A Lume Spento, 1908-1958 (Milano: Vanni Scheiwiller, 1958).

[6] "M. Antonius Flaminius and John Keats: A Kinship in Genius," in Book News Monthly, 26 (February 1908), 445-47.

[7] Ibid., p. 447.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot (N.Y.: New Directions, 1968), p. 8. Hereafter cited as LE.

[10] "Three Cantos: 1," in Poetry, 10 (June 1917) p. 118.

[11] Gaudier-Brzeska (Hessle, Yorks.: The Marvell Press, 1960), pp. 91-92. Hereafter cited as GB. The original edition (1916) of this book incorporated a "Praefatio" which gives one of Pound's clearest statements of the first world war.

[12] Giovanni, pp. 8-9.

[13] "Redondillas, or Something of that Sort," in Poetry Australia (April 1967), p. 11. Hereafter cited as PAustralia.

[14] T.S. Gregory, ed., Spinoza's Ethics (N.Y.: Dutton, 1970), p. viii. Gregory's Introduction brings to mind numerous correspondences between Ezra Pound and Spinoza which could usefully be investigated. Pound's attraction to Spinoza's symmetrical form in the Ethics harmonizes with his attraction to Dante's Commedia; the equivalent attraction later in his career, around 1921, was to the sculptor Brancusi. While he could not approach the seamless conviction of the work of these men, Pound was strongly attracted to it.

[15] Patria Mia and the Treatise on Harmony (London: Peter Owen, 1962), p. 56.

CHAPTER TWO

[1] Donald Hall, "Ezra Pound" in Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, 2nd. Ser. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1963), p. 36.

[2] The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan (N.Y.: New Directions, 1959), p. 60. Hereafter cited as CNTJ.

[3] Hugh Kenner, "Drafts and Fragments and the Structure of the Cantos," in Agenda, 8 (Autumn-Winter 1970), p. 15.

[4] Ezra Pound, "Letters to Viola Baxter Jordan," ed. Donald Gallup, in Paideuma 1 (Spring and Summer 1972), p. 110. This letter is dated October 24, 1907.

[5] "Piere Vidal Old," in Collected Shorter Poems (London: Faber, 1968), p. 45. Hereafter cited as CSP.

[6] Noel Stock, The Life of Ezra Pound (London: Routeledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 83.

[7] Manning, Frederic. Poems (London: John Murray, 1910), pp. 33-35. Manning was one of Pound's closest friends in London, and probably introduced Pound to the Gilgamesh epic through a scene taken from it which appears in Manning's Scenes and Portraits (1909). This redaction involves a visit to the Land of the Dead which is phrased very similarly to Pound's language in canto one.

[8] Stock, Life, p. 86.

[9] Stock, p. 93.

[10] Stuart Y. McDougal, Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition (Princeton, N.Y.: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 100.

[11] Peter Allt and R.K. Alspach, ed. The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1968), p. 160.

[12] This note was deleted from Canzoni at the proof stages. It is held at the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.

[13] Hugh Witemeyer, The Poetry of Ezra Pound (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 103.

[14] McDougal, pp. 89-90.

[15] Witemeryer, p. 97.

[16] PAustralia, p. 8.

[17] "Revolt: Against the Crepuscular Spirit in Modern Poetry," in Personae (1909), pp. 53-54.

[18] "Historical Survey," in Little Review, 8, No. 1 (1921), 41.

CHAPTER THREE

[1] The unreliable state of Pound criticism of the imagist phase reveals itself in Loy D. Martin's observation that Pound "used Fenollosa's essay in his polemics; he was not influenced by it. . . .He appropriated the naive notion of the ideogram as 'picture-language' and discarded the remainder." "Pound and Fennollosa: the problem of influence," in Critical Quarterly, 20, No. 1 (1980), 57, 58. Martin is unaware of what Ronald Bush noticed, that in his original note to the Fennollosa essay--later deleted--Pound emphasized that it was "the general structure" of the essay that counted. (Bush, p. 69). Pound often deleted important elements in later publications, and his evolution cannot be studied without going back to the original publications

[2] Laurence Binyon, The Flight of the Dragon (London: John Murray, 1911). Pound was drawn to the Orient at this time. In an unpublished letter to his father dated Dec. 12, 1912, he said, "Am learning a bit about India from one K.M. Ghose a pupil of Tagore's. Also struggling with the bengali alphabet which seems to have about 125 letters that all look exactly alike." (YC) He did not begin his attempt to write Chinese until 1916: "I have this day written my first two sentences in Chinese, on a post card to Koume" (SL, 93).

[3] See K.K. Ruthven, A Guide to Ezra Pound's Personae (1926), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). Incredible as it may appear, "Metro" is almost never printed with its original spacing intact. The "negative spaces" are critical to its meaning. Not to see this is to miss much of Pound's excellence.

[4] "On the Imbecility of the Rich," in Egoist, 1, No. 20 (1914), 389.

[5] Richard Aldington, Life for Life's Sake (N.Y.: Viking Press, 1941), p. 111.

[6] As cited in Harriet Monroe, A Poet's Life (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1938), p. 305.

[7] Monroe, p. 303.

[8] Monroe, p. 310.

[9] Section V of "Zenia," in Smart Set, 41, No. 4

(1913), 47. Later reprinted in CSP as "The Rapture,", p. 252. Pound's experiments with colour were an intrinsic part of his life at this time. In a letter to his mother written in May of 1914, he asked, "I wonder if you have ever seen some paint tubes and brushes that I acquired ages since. The paint will be dried past utility I suppose, but I'd be very glad if you would copy the names on the tubes, the names of the colours, as they were a carefully selected scale which I have forgotten. If they are illegible you might get Whiteside to give you the list of his seven colour series."

[10] Section X of "Zenia," p. 48. Later reprinted as "Simulacra" in CSP, p. 124.

[11] "Our Contemporaries," in Blast, 2 (July 1915), 21.

[12] "On the Imbecitility of the Rich," in Egoist, 1, No. 20 (1914), 390.

[13] Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 317. Hereafter cited as PE.

[14] As cited in Edward Marsh, A Number of People (London: William Heinemann, 1939), p. 230.

[15] "Wyndham Lewis," in Egoist, 1, No. 12 (1914), 234.

[16] "Salutation the Third," in Blast, 1 (June 1914), 45. Reprinted, with alterations, in CSP, p. 165.

[17] T.S. Eliot, "The Method of Mr. Pound," in The Athenaeum, 4669, 24 (Oct. 1919), 1065.

[18] "Zenia" is reproduced in Appendix A as it originally appeared in Smart Set. Although it only drops section IV of the original, CSP totally mixes up the order of the other sections, which highlights the difficulty critics have faced when they have relied on this text for their study of Pound's development.

[19] Pound/Joyce, ed. Forrest Read (London: Faber, 1967), p. 14. Hereafter cited as P/J.

[20] See Ruthven, p. 224.

CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Letter to the author from Dr. Carl R. Dolmetsch, curator of the Smart Set papers at the College of William and Mary, Williamsbur, Viginia. Dr. Dolmetsch was unable to help me locate the poem Pound sent to Mencken, "February: 1915"--it would no doubt make fascinating reading.

[2] Umbra (London: Elkin Mathews, 1920), p. 125.

[3] "On the Imbecility of the Rich," in Egoist, 1, No. 20 (1914), 389.

[4] "American Chaos," in New Age, 17, No. 20 (1915), 471.

[5] Egoist, 390.

[6] Remy de Gourmont, Le Latin Mystique du Moyen Age (Paris: Cres et Cie, 1922), p. 109. Pound was introduced to contemporary French literature in Febrary 1912, as we can tell by an unpublished letter to his mother: "Flint, in return for being resurrected, has put me on to some very good contemporary stuff; Remy de Gourmont, de Regnier, etc."

[7] Gourmont, p. 129.

[8] Gourmont, p. 110.

[9] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. Frederick W. Locke (N.Y.: Frederick Ungar, 1965), p. iv.

[11] "Newly Discovered Poems of Ezra Pound," ed. James Laughlin, in The Atlantic, 238, No. 3 (1976), pp. 48-49.

[12] Blast, 2 (July 1915), 86.

[13] See Ruthven, p. 177.

[14] Ezra Pound, ed., Passages from the Letters of John Butler Yeats (Churchtown, Dundrum: The Cuala Press, 1917), p. 28.

[15] In Poetry, 7, No. 3 (1915), 146.

[16] See Ruthven, p. 183.

CHAPTER FIVE

[1] "Three Cantos: 1" in Poetry, 10 (June 1917), 113. Canto one took up pages 113-121 in this issue. Canto two was published in the July issue, pp. 180-188, and canto three in August, 248-254. Hereafter these cantos will be cited in the text simply by month and page number. All Pound's major poems of the period 1915-1920: The Ur-cantos, the Homage, and Mauberley, were first published in installment form, as were most of the first sixteen cantos. This caused contemporary critics to view Pound merely as a writer of short fragments.

[2] "The Fourth Canto," in Dial, 68 (June 1920), 689. References to the Cantos will cite canto and page number in the 1979 New Directions text.

[3] Hugh Kenner, ed., Translations (London: Faber, 1970), pp. 433-444.

[4] A Draft of XVI Cantos: for the Beginning of a Poem of Some Length (Paris: Three Mountains Press, 1925). Hereafter cited in the text as XVI Cantos, followed by page numbers to this edition.

[5] Appears as a "Note" in GB, p. 94.

[6] Hugh Kenner, "Drafts and Fragments and the Structure of the Cantos," in Agenda, 8, No. 3 (1970), 16-17. See also PE, pp. 283-284.

[7] P/J, p. 102. As Read noted, "Phanopoeia" was Pound's provisional title for his long poem, indicating that he was satisfied with the prospects for his imagist experiments at this time.

[8] J. P. Sullivan, Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), p. 115. Mark Turner, "Propertius Through the Looking Glass," in Paideuma, 5, No. 2 (1976), 244, 256.

[9] J. J. Espey, Ezra Pound's "Mauberley" (London: Faber, 1955), p. 119. All future quotations are taken from this text.

[10] Quoted from Patricia Hutchins, Ezra Pound's Kensington (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1965), p. 148. This quotation suggests that Jo Brantley Berryman is mistaken

when she argues that "the transient glories celebrated in 'Envoi's' verse are made permanent in 'Medallion's' portrait." (Paideuma, 2, 3), p. 398). Both women are unable to flower organically because the times are incapable of nourishing them.

11 As Murray Schafer has noticed in Ezra Pound and Music, Pound wrote Art Notices under the psedonym B.H. Dias for publication in the New Age during this period (i.e., Nov. 22, 1917-April 8, 1920). His musical criticism led him to try his hand at original musical compositions in the form of opera around 1920; his visual criticism led him to experiment with initial illustrated capitals for XVI Cantos.

12 Pound showed his sense of coming to an end of his experiments with shorter poems in a letter to his father dated April 1920: "Am sending you "Mauberley," my new poems . . . I don't want you to show it to people YET Because 1. I want the Dial to print cantos IV-VII, they probably want something of mine, and wd. certainly prefer short poems to the cantos. Therefore I want them to remain in ignorance of the fact that there are any short poems, until the cantos have had a full chance. If they see the short poems first, they wd. probably want to print them instead of cantos. It wd. get my name into the magazine, for less money, and in more convenient way. Therefore please lie low about "Mauberley" until you hear from me."

CHAPTER SIX

[1] Myles Slatin, "A History of Pound's Cantos I-XVI, 1915-1925," in AL, 35 (May 1963), 188.

[2] In "Note to Calendar," Little Review, 8, No. 2 (1922), 40.

[3] Valerie Eliot, ed., T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land (London: Faber, 1971), p. xx.

[4] Ibid., p. xxi.

[5] Ibid., xxii.

[6] These stanzas appear in the Yale Archives among the carbons used by Paige for his edition of the Letters. The fact that he suppressed these stanzas and others from his edition without noting the omission typifies the prudish protectionism that Pound texts suffer.

[7] Waste, p. xxii.

[8] "Eighth Cantos," in Dial, 72, No. 5 (1922), 508.

[9] "Paris Letter," in Dial, 72, No. 2 (1922), 192.

[10] Cited in Stock, p. 245.

[11] "Paris Letter," in Dial, 71, No. 4 (1921), 457-458.

[12] Ibid., p. 458. Pound's friendship with Natalie Barney, who was one of Remy de Gourmont's closest friends, extended from April 1913 to 1967. See Richard Sieburth, ed., "Ezra Pound: Letters to Natalie Barney," in Paideuma 5, No. 2 (1967), 279-299. Pound's 1962 translations of some of her epigrams as cited by Sieburth include the following: "The person who speaks 'against' has nothing to say. Why destroy when one can surpass? One limits oneself to what one attacks, and proves nothing thereby save one's limitations," and "There are also intangible realities which float near us, formless and without words; realities which no one has thought out, and which are excluded for lack of interpreters." These epigrams sound the tone of Pound's beliefs throughout his life with great clarity.

[13] Review of Credit Power and Democracy, in Contact, New York, [4] ([Summer 1921]) [1].

[14] Ibid.

[15] Waste, p. xix.

[16] "Paris Letter," in Dial, 72, No. 2 (1922), 191.

[17] Review of Economic Democracy in Little Review, 6, No. 2 (1920), 42.

[18] "Paris Letter," in Dial, 72, No. 2 (1922), 188.

CHAPTER SEVEN

[1] Hugh Kenner, "Drafts and Fragments and the Structure of the Cantos," in Agenda, 8, No. 3 (1970), 8.

[2] From a paper given at the International Ezra Pound Conference, University of Keele, September 1976.

[3] In J. P. Sullivan, Ezra Pound: A Critical Anthology (Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin, 1970), p. 100.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Pound's musical theories as explained by Murray Schafer greatly help us to understand Pound's thinking about the long poem at this time: "There are no two chords that may not follow each other, if the sequence of time intervals and durations is correct" (Music, p. 301). What this meant to Pound was that he could include disharmonious elements in the Cantos--like the "Hell cantos"--without damaging the tone of his overall structure, provided his sequence of intervals was correctly structured between cantos. This belief harks back to our comments on the importance of the spacing between words and phrases in the "Metro" poem, and the critical importance of "negative space" to a study of Pound's poetry.

[6] Appendix B contains copies of the initials to cantos four, seven, and nineteen.

[7] Richard Sieburth, ed., "Eara Pound: Letters to Natalie Barney," in Paideuma, 5, No. 2 (1976), 283.

[8] As Michael Harper points out in a brilliant essay, Malatesta "understands the nature of the artist and the conditions under which good work is produced; the painter will have a permanent income, guaranteed by money deposited with a third party of his own choosing, and it will not depend on what a later age has learned to call 'productivity.' Malatesta's way of dealing with his prospective protege contrasts favourably with the behavior of legendary and historical figures in previous cantos who treat other human beings as property to be bought, sold, and generally exploited." In "Truth and Calliope: Ezra Pound's Malatesta," PMLA, 96 (1981), 93.

[9] See Harper, whose essay sets the standard for discussion of Pound's use of historical sources: "The

'bear's-greased' Latin is a jumble that manifests a lack of discrimination, the absence of an ordering moral intelligence, and sensibility. These are general charges, heaped together by someone who does not trouble to distinguish truth from falsehood, the likely from the unlikely, but who simply gathers up whatever stones are at hand and hurls them haphazardly at the enemy." In "Truth and Calliope: Ezra Pound's Malatesta," PMLA, 96 (1981), 96.

[10] In an unpublished letter to his father dated January 29, 1924, Pound explained, "Baldy Bacon is F. S. Bacon. He visited us in Wyncote once or twoice. Also turned up in Paris last year 2 days after I had typed out that canto. There is a hell (2cantos) & war (one canto) & the honest sailor 1/2 of that canto. That you haven't yet seen--reserved for the book."

[11] Slatin, p. 191.

[12] See Hugh Kenner, "A Schema for XXX Cantos," in Paideuma, 2, No. 2 (1973), 201.

[13] As Michael Bernstein points out, this is where Pound differed from Joyce, who chose a single narrator to provide the major point of view for Ulysses. "Tactically, Pound's refusal to indicate a specific narrator enables him to create the illusion that it is History itself, not any one particular author, that is presenting the factual details of the poem, and it is fascinating to see a technique which in Flaubert is used to undermine the reader's confidence in any stable values, being applied in The Cantos with the contrary intention, that is, to increase the poem's positive valorizations." "Identification and its Vicissitudes: The Narrative Structure of Ezra Pound's Cantos," in The Yale Review 69 (1980), 547-548.

[14] See Harper's complex and interesting discussion of the relative importance of Malatesta's roles as creator and warrior (pp. 94-95).

CONCLUSION

[1] The point that Pound was consciously working at the Cantos from his first days as a poet is substantiated by his comment to Donald Hall: "I began the Cantos about 1904, I suppose. I had various schemes, starting in 1904 or 1905. The problem was to get a form--something elastic enough to take the necessary material. It had to be a form that wouldn't exclude something merely because it didn't fit." "Ezra Pound: An Interview," in The Paris Review, No. 28, p. 23.

[2] As Andrew Kappel has rightly pointed out, Pound used myth the way earlier major writers used Christianity: to point to shared values. "Myth has been so useful to modern artists because it provides an escape from the merely personal; as a being animated by myths, any man could claim, as any Christian could, for instance, in earlier epochs, to share (perhaps only unwittingly) in a universally valid vision of reality." This technique is "the result of the modern nostalgia for shared realities." In "The Reading and Writing of a Modern Paradiso: Ezra Pound and the Books of Paradise," 20th Century Lit., 27 (1981), 243.

[3] The concept of kinesis as a structuring principle of the Cantos originated in Pound's study of music. This dissertation has made the point that Pound concerned himself more with major form than with details of prosody from the beginning of his career. Stephen Adams points out that the same was true of Pound's attitude to music: "his ultimate concern was for the larger unit of rhythm, the unifying tempo." This is natural enough, since melody is to music what rhythm is to poetry--both shape time. In contrast, a chord of music presents a series of sounds simultaneously. Pound's major discovery about music provided him with the key to structuring the Cantos: "After the first stumbles and the instinctive sense that a form must contain UNEVEN elements, one suffers and learns that an even measure, if long enough, has room for all sorts of oddities and uneven figures and units." See Stephen J. Adams, "Musical Neofism: Pound's Theory of Harmony in Context," Mosaic, 13, No. 2 (1980), 60, 59.

[4] D.S. Carne-Ross, "The Cantos as Epic," in Peter Russell, ed. An Examination of Ezra Pound (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950), p. 134.

[5] Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound (N.Y.: New Directions, 1951), p. 280.

[6] Carne-Ross, pp. 151-152.

[7] G.S. Fraser, in Russel, pp. 180-182. Similarly, Michael Bernstein writes, "I am unable to discern any triumph of good over evil" The Tale of the Tribe, p. 107.

[8] But of course Pound's failure was to keep his good nature in balance. His own strongest feature--confidence in a simple and enduring coherence within the universe--had its darker side: an equally simple belief in the motivations for human actions and the shape of social structures. John Sauber has provide a service with his salutary discussion of this aspect of Pound's desperate search for simple solutions: "The Cantos are totalitarian and fascistic not only in such aspects as their praise of Mussolini or their anti-Semitism but in their basic ideology: in their paranoid interpretation of history, seeing in every event the signs of a 'usurocratic' conspiracy and the agency of the 'enemy'; in their concern for the unmasking of culprits; in their intense authoritarianism and elitism (inseperable from their paranoia--the truth is known to a privileged few, whose assertions are not to be challenged); in their 'aesthetic' view of politics, judging a leader by his vision, and viewing humanity as 'malleable mud' to be cast into a mould by its leaders and its artists; in their admiration for the inseparably associated virtues of the Will, of action, and of hardness (needed to carry out the vision of the leader)." "Pound's Cantos: A Fascist Epic," in J. Am Studies, 12, (1978), 21. Sauber's thoughtful criticism provides another reason why counterpoint played such a large part in Pound's life, but the Pound who, as a young man in Cordova, provoked the peasants in the market to pelt him with cabbages--through his affectedly aristocratic bearing and black cape--was only one of the two Pounds. Perhaps it was only possible for him to generate his vitality through his recurrent visits to the two extremes--and his creative vitality takes second place to no other poet.

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ZENIA

By Ezra Pound

WHO am I to condemn you, O Dives,
I who am as much embittered
With poverty
As you are with useless riches?

II

As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn.

III

(EPITAPH)

Leucis, who intended a Grand Passion,
Ends with a willingness-to-oblige.

IV

Come let us play with our own toys,
Come my friends, and leave the world to its muttons,
You were never more than a few,
Death is already amongst you.

V

She had a pig-shaped face, with beautiful coloring,
She wore a bright, dark-blue cloak,
Her hair was a brilliant deep orange color
So the effect was charming
As long as her head was averted.

VI

I join these words for four people,
Some others may overhear them.
World, I am sorry for you.
You do not know the four people.

VII

As a bathtub lined with white porcelain,
When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.

VIII

The bashful Arides
Has married an ugly wife,
He was bored with his manner of life,
Indifferent and discouraged he thought he might as
Well do this as anything else.

Saying within his heart "I am no use to myself,
Let her, if she wants me, take me,"
He went to his doom.

IX

All the while that they were talking the new morality
Her eyes explored me.
And when I arose to go
Her fingers were like the tissue
Of a Japanese paper napkin.

X

SIMULACRA

Why does the horse-faced lady of just the unmentionable age
Walk down Longacre reciting Swinburne to herself, inaudibly?
Why does the small child in the soiled-white imitation fur coat
Crawl in the very black gutter beneath the grape stand?
Why does the really handsome prostitute approach me in Sackville Street
Undeterred by the manifest age of my trappings?

XI

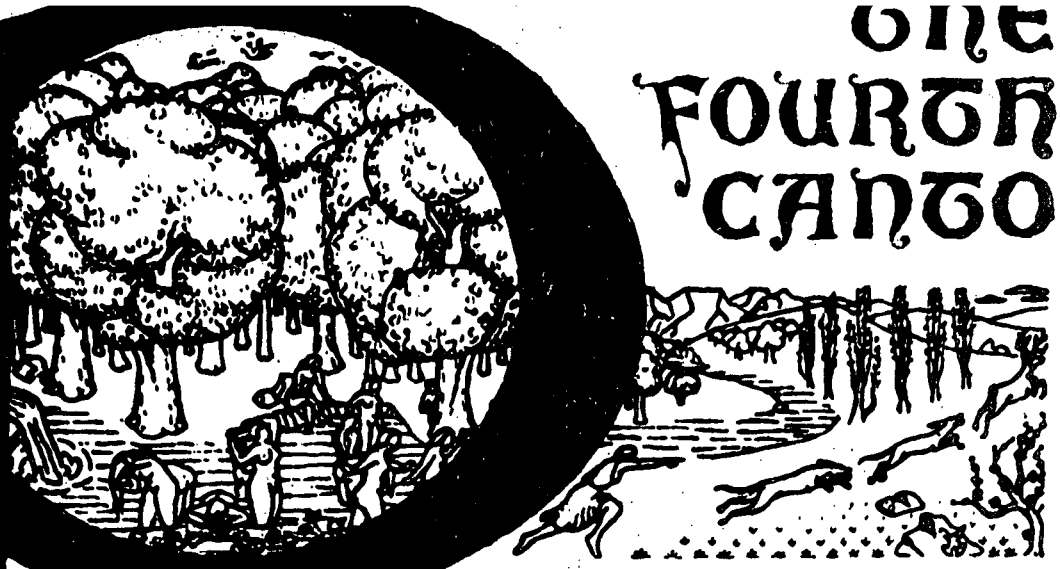
(TAME CAT)

"It rests me to be among beautiful women.
Why should one always lie about such matters?

I repeat:
It rests me to converse with beautiful women
Even though we talk nothing but nonsense,

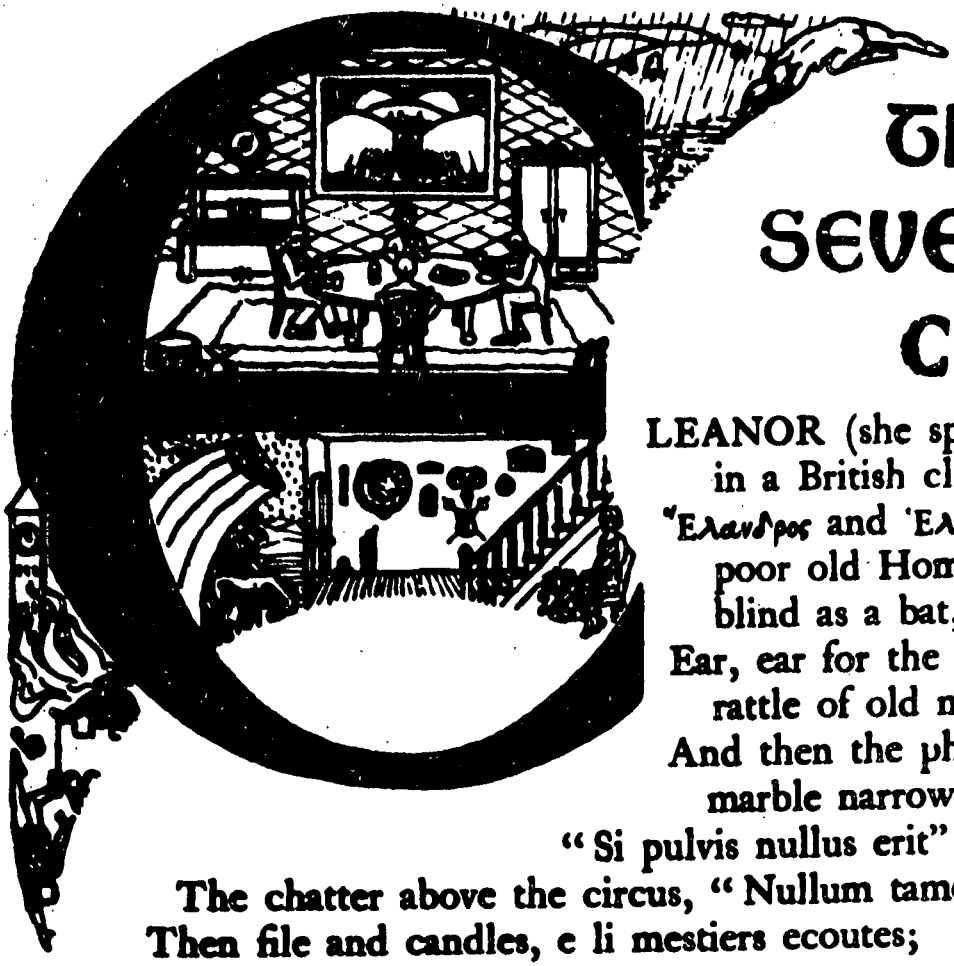
The purring of the invisible antennæ
Is both stimulating and delightful."

ONE FOURTH CANTO



PALACE in smoky light,
Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones,
ANAXIFORMINGES! Aurunculeia!
Hear me. Cadmus of Golden Prows!
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 nympharum, goat-foot, with the pale foot alternate;
Crescent of blue-shot waters, green-gold in the shallows,
A black cock crows in the sea-foam;

And by the curved, carved foot of the couch,
claw-foot and lion head, an old man seated,
Speaking in the low drone . . . :
Ityn!
Et ter flebiliter, Ityn, Ityn!
And she went toward the window and cast her down,
"All the while, the while, swallows crying:
Ityn!
"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish."
"It is Cabestan's heart in the dish?
"No other taste shall change this."
And she went toward the window,
the slim white stone bar
Making a double arch;
Firm even fingers held to the firm pale stone;
Swung for a moment,
and the wind out of Rhodez
Caught in the full of her sleeve.
. . . the swallows crying :



THE SEVENTH CANTO

LEANOR (she spoiled
in a British climate)
Ἔλαυδρος and Ἐλέπτολις, 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 erit"
The chatter above the circus, "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.

"Contre le lambris, fauteuil de paille,
"Un vieux piano, et sous le baromètre . . ."

The old men's voices, beneath the columns of false marble,
And the walls tinted discreet, the modish, darkish green-blue,
Discreeter gilding, and the panelled wood
Not present, but suggested, for the leasehold is
Touched with an imprecision . . . about three squares;
The house a shade too solid, and the art
A shade off action, paintings a shade too thick.

And the great domed head, *con gli occhi onesti e tardi*
Moves before me, phantom with weighted motion,
Grave incessu, drinking the tone of things,
And the old voice lifts itself
weaving an endless sentence.