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EZRA POUND'S ITALIAN CANTOS: COLLAPSE AND RECALL

by

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Abstract

EZRA POUND'S ITALIAN CANTOS: COLLAPSE AND RECALL

An Electronic Presentation with Textual Companion

by

Patricia A. Cockram

Advisor: Professor Louis Menand

This is a two-part dissertation: an electronic, multi-media CD-ROM edition of Pound's Italian cantos; and a paper which serves as a textual companion and explains my theoretical approach to this material. The CD-ROM documents the themes discussed in the paper: the connections between the Italian Cantos and Pound's other poetry, specifically the break they indicate in Pound's own aesthetics and the recuperation of his poetics in the *Pisan Cantos*, and the similarities between the aesthetic Pound saw in Fascism and the kind of poetry he created in the *Cantos*. The decision to present part of the material in an electronic format and part in a printed one is based on the nature of each element. The CD-ROM enables a closer and more rapid scrutiny of the supporting materials, alternative versions, and explanatory notes furnished for a difficult and controversial text with multiple sources. On the other hand, the theoretical and editorial questions would be tedious to read on screen and are best expressed in print.

The Italian Cantos are not widely known and have received little critical attention. They appeared in the American and British editions of *The Cantos* for the first time in 1986, but without English translations. They lend themselves to textual analysis because of their complicated and changing relationship to the rest of the text of the *Cantos* and the documentation they provide of Pound's Fascism. In fact, evidence has surfaced recently that links these Cantos—and others like them, drafted in Italian but never completed—to the *Pisan Cantos*. The significance is in that connection and in the break these two poems represent in the *Cantos,* a rupture that may have made possible the genesis of the *Pisan Cantos.*

The CD-ROM allows the reader to experience these issues of aesthetics and ethics. Pound's poetry is particularly suited to an electronic format because of the complex network of allusions and intertextuality that he called his "ideogrammic" style. Section 9 of this paper describes hypertext and explains how Pound is an ideal subject for this project, both because much of his poetry works like hypertext and because such deeply allusive and densely interconnected texts can be experienced to advantage in a hypertext format. A final section describes the CD-ROM, and the Appendix explains how the electronic document works and how to view it.

Acknowledgments

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My gratitude to Mary de Rachewiltz for recording the Italian Cantos and for her encouragement is boundless. I thank also the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for their warm and efficient assistance, and all the Pound scholars who have preceded me, Ronald Bush, A. Walton Litz, and Timothy Redman in particular. Finally, for their guidance and encouragement I thank David Greetham, Joan Richardson, William Kelly, and my thoughtful and thorough reader and adviser, Louis Menand.

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1. Introduction

The CD-ROM that accompanies this paper is a prototype which documents the themes I discuss here: the connections between the Italian Cantos and Pound's other poetry, specifically the break they indicate in Pound's own aesthetics and the recuperation of his poetics in the *Pisan Cantos,* and the similarities between the aesthetic Pound saw in Fascism and the kind of poetry he created in the *Cantos*. The CD-ROM is a hypermedia edition and partial variorum of the two Cantos Ezra Pound completed in Italian with some sections from the *Pisan Cantos*, for which Pound received the Bollingen prize for literature in 1949. The decision to present part of the material in an electronic format and part in a printed one was based on the nature of each element. The CD-ROM enables a closer and more rapid scrutiny of the supporting materials, alternative versions, and explanatory notes I furnish for a difficult and controversial text with multiple sources. On the other hand, though I have written a great deal of explanatory material for the CD-ROM, the theoretical and editorial questions behind it would be tedious to read on screen and are best expressed in print.

The Italian Cantos are not widely known and have received little critical attention. They appeared in the American and British editions of *The Cantos* for the first time in 1986, fifteen years after Pound's death, but without English translations. In 1995 a New Directions edition included an English translation of Canto LXXII alone. This is the

translation I present on the CD-ROM, despite its flaws, because it is based on one done by Pound. I provide notes to explain the gaps and mis-translations and my theories about why Pound may have rendered these Cantos as he did. For Canto LXXIII, the translation is my own. These Italian Cantos lend themselves to textual analysis because, although they are less compelling artistically than almost any other poetry Pound wrote, they have a complicated and changing relationship to the rest of the text of the *Cantos*, and they provide documentation of Pound's Fascism. In fact, evidence has surfaced recently that links these Cantos—and others like them, drafted in Italian but never completed—to the *Pisan Cantos,* which have sometimes been acclaimed as evidence of Pound's rejection of Fascism. The significance of the Italian Cantos is in that connection and in the break these two poems represent in the *Cantos,* a rupture that may have made possible the genesis of the *Pisan Cantos.* Many critics now recognize that these Cantos contribute additional evidence of the Fascism in the *Pisan Cantos,* but none has acknowledged the importance of the break. The disjunction they represent was a low point for Pound, aesthetically as well as morally, in light of which the *Pisan Cantos* may be seen as a return to the focus of his life's work.

The CD-ROM allows the reader to experience the issues of aesthetics and ethics discussed here. Pound's poetry is particularly suited to an electronic format because of the complex network of allusions and intertextuality that he called his "ideogrammic" style. The Italian Cantos, though less ideogrammic, are complicated by language and allusion, especially topical political references, that make them good candidates for electronic presentation. Section III of this paper examines the Fascist aesthetic and its apparent similarities to the poetics Pound was developing, partly responsible for his

attraction to Mussolini's movement, and Section IX includes a discussion of hypertext, provides background on electronic texts in general, and explains the distinctions between Pound's poetry and some of the non-linear works of other Modernists—distinctions that make Pound an ideal subject for this project, both because much of his poetry works like hypertext and because such deeply allusive and densely interconnected texts can be experienced to advantage in a hypertext format. A final section describes the CD-ROM, and the Appendix explains how the electronic document works and how to view it.

2. Background of The Italian Cantos

In January and February of 1945, near the end of World War II, when Ezra Pound's financial and political circumstances were desperate, two poems he had written in Italian appeared in an obscure newspaper, *La Marina Repubblicana.*[1] The first one, titled *"Presenza di F.T. Marinetti,"* was a twenty-seven-line tribute to Marinetti excerpted from a poem of almost two hundred lines. The other, published two weeks later, was one hundred nine lines and was titled: "*Canto LXXIII: Cavalcanti: Corrispondenza Repubblicana.*" These are the two poems we now know as the "Italian Cantos"; they were numbered 72 and 73 in Pound's notebooks, and the second of them carried this numbering as part of its title in the newspaper. After Pound's arrest in May, 1945, these Cantos disappeared. People knew of their existence, but they were not included in the *Cantos* and were not in print anywhere else. In 1973 Pound's estate issued a limited edition of the Italian Cantos only slightly different from the version that finally appeared in the *Cantos* in 1986.

Ronald Bush has recently shown that Pound had created drafts for subsequent Cantos in Italian which, like the two published ones, have a distinctly Fascist tone. The notebooks in which he composed what would have been at least two more Italian Cantos are part of the papers of Pound's lover and companion, Olga Rudge, who died March 15, 1996, and they are now available at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Like Cantos LXXII and LXXIII, the sketches in these notebooks, numbered consecutively after the two known Italian Cantos but never developed, contain many Fascist references. As Bush has noted, much of the material in them forms the

framework around which the more poetically dense *Pisan Cantos* were executed. These findings give additional support to the view that the *Pisan Cantos* are themselves strongly fascistic (1997, 169-211).

We do not know when the Italian Cantos were begun; they were drafted in an Italian "*Calligrafia*" notebook, of the kind used by schoolchildren. There are dates on four pages inside the notebook and another number that may be a date. All these dates refer to January 12 or January 13, but they are deep inside the notebook, on pages where Pound was composing Canto LXXIII and the later Cantos. We do know that at least Canto LXXII was composed some time in December, possibly shortly after Marinetti's death on December 2, because on one of the typescripts of Canto LXXII, a marginal note in pencil reads: "Dec 26/27." The notebook, on the cover of which Pound wrote in pencil, "draft - Cantos Italian," contains twenty pages, worked mainly in pencil. Pound composed on the recto pages and wrote notes to himself on the facing verso pages. Some of these notes are clusters of words ending with the same group of letters, attempts to find rhymes for parts of the poem. When he got to the end of the notebook, Pound turned it over and began writing in the other direction. There is an image on the CD-ROM of one of these pages, on which part of the draft of Canto LXXIII collides with and overlaps a section going in the other direction, intended for a later Canto.

In addition to the "*Calligrafia*" notebook, numerous loose manuscript pages—some of them backs of envelopes or concert programs—and a later holograph notebook with a partial translation of Canto LXXII, there are nineteen typescripts of Canto LXXII and at least ten of Canto LXXIII. Some of these are incomplete, and others are carbon copies, but all are different, for the notes on copies of a typescript differ from those on the

original. Most of the marginal notes on these Cantos were made by Pound or his daughter, Mary, who corrected his eccentric Italian as best she could. Except for the one pencilled-in date, Dec. 26/27, none of the typescripts is dated. It would appear, then, that the two Italian Cantos and many lines that would later be translated into the *Pisan Cantos* were composed between December, 1944, and the end of January, 1945.

It is evident from the *Calligrafia* notebook and the few dated typescripts that the twenty-seven lines that appeared in the *Marina Repubblicana* January 15, 1945 were extracted from the longer poem, rather than Canto LXXII having been expanded from the published version. Whether these two Cantos were commissioned or Pound volunteered them, however, even the longer version of Canto LXXII appears to have been written as a propaganda poem, as does Canto LXXIII, whereas the drafts for later Cantos resemble more closely the poetry one finds in the *Pisan Cantos.* They are not as focussed on the events of the war, even though they were written in the same period; their characters are not limited to Fascist heroes or those to whom they can be compared; and they are more allusive and contain more languages. Pound may have started the first two Italian Cantos as propaganda, in a moment of doubt and dread, but he seems to have been seduced by the process of writing poetry again, for the drafts of the other Cantos are more poetically similar to the work he would produce in Pisa.

The editor of the *Marina Repubblicana*, Ubaldo degli Uberti, had apparently offered the American poet an opportunity to publish some poetry, something that had become progressively more difficult by the last days of the war, in part because Pound was no longer as welcome a presence as he had once been in journals published in the Allied countries and in part because paper was scarce in Italy during the war. With two

small exceptions noted below, it had been five years since Pound had published new poetry: in 1940 both Faber and Faber in London and New Directions in New York had brought out *Cantos LII- LXXI*, and at the end of 1940 Faber and Faber had issued *A Selection of Poems*, none of which was new. In the same five-year period, Pound had worked intensively on his translations from Confucius, and he would publish *Chiung Iung: l'asse che non vacilla* shortly after the Italian Cantos came out. His other publications during this time primarily concern politics and economics.

Are the Italian Cantos then a departure or a return? Or, as Hugh Kenner suggests in *The Pound Era* (469n), are they merely a break? Pound was certainly not abandoning politics in writing these Cantos, for they are among his most political poetry. Nor was he quite returning to the aesthetics of his previous work, for these Cantos have few formal similarities to the epic poem that surrounds them. How can we integrate them into Pound's oeuvre? Are they simply an aberration? A rougher patch in an already turbulent sea?

The Italian Cantos do represent a return for Pound in two senses. They are a return to poetry and to two of his masters, Dante and Cavalcanti: in each of the poems he imitates the voices and some of the stylistic devices of these two medieval Italian poets. Canto LXXII draws on Dante's *Commedia* thematically by dramatizing encounters with a collection of medieval heroes and modern Fascist figures, from Ezzelino da Romano to F.T. Marinetti, who speak in Italian dialects that tell the reader where they are from, and consequently. who they are, just as the souls in Dante's work identify themselves by their accents or dialects.[2] But since Pound is in effect already in hell—the hell of war—the spirits visit him. Pound adds another layer of significance, however, by having the

medieval ruler Ezzelino of Romagna use the modern Romagnolo dialect, the dialect of Mussolini, giving him, in effect, Mussolini's voice.[3] This can be heard as well as shown in the CD-ROM, which includes sound files to illustrate the pronunciation of the dialects Pound writes.

These two Cantos are possibly the most Fascist of Pound's work. In them Pound's characters spout phrases and terms that were codes for Fascists, and both poems glorify Fascist heroes and exploits. Their main interest is their relationship to the *Pisan Cantos*, which were completed a short time later, during the six months Pound was incarcerated at Pisa in 1945. Critics who have written about these poems have generally been concerned with either their textual significance or their political import. Ronald Bush, to whom I owe a great debt for his excellent articles on the newly-recognized connections between these Cantos and the *Pisan Cantos,* has looked at them primarily through the lens of textual scholarship. Now that we have Bush's research, it is even more clear that the Fascism seen in these Cantos extends itself into the *Pisan Cantos* in ways that may not have previously been recognized. Massimo Bacigalupo and Robert Casillo have both provided annotated translations and critical articles which are of great value, even to scholars of Pound who know Italian. The work of both these critics is primarily interpretive, but though both are interested in showing the extent to which Fascism colored Pound's poetry, Casillo concentrates on this aspect almost to the exclusion of any poetic analysis and mis-translates some of the Italian.[4] He also sees the tone of these Cantos as triumphant and optimistic because of recent Axis successes, but Casillo himself writes that "desperation motivates Pound's notion that Marinetti might metamorphose himself into a panther" (1992, 101). Barbara Eastman's "The Gap in the

Cantos," written before the Italian Cantos were incorporated into printed editions, approaches them primarily in terms of textual scholarship. She does examine some of the formal elements that make these two poems interesting as poetry and comes closest of any critic I know of to attempting an aesthetic analysis of these two poems.

This paper examines the aesthetic questions posed by the *Italian Cantos*. Rarely does the aesthetic exist in isolation from the ethical vision of the artist, and in Pound's work the connection is extremely profound and complicated. These Italian Cantos fit into Pound's aesthetic, and therefore into his ethical outlook, differently from his other poetry, and the use they make of the multiple aesthetics and philosophies of Fascism that Pound adapted to his poetry places them in discord with the rest of the *Cantos*.

Hugh Kenner has called the gap left by the Italian Cantos a "fault line."[5] This is a reference to their absence, since the Italian Cantos were not part of the *Cantos* when Kenner wrote *The Pound Era* in 1973. Readers were aware of their absence because the numbering of the *Cantos* stopped after LXXI and skipped to LXXIV, the first of the *Pisan Cantos*. Even after their inclusion in the American and British editions of the *Cantos* in 1986, Kenner's term remained true in two important senses: first, these Cantos, written in Italian, have continued to be inaccessible to many readers—a translation of Canto LXXII, based on a hasty one done by Pound, was included in the 1995 New Directions edition, but none is included for Canto LXXIII.[6] Second, and more importantly, they constitute an aesthetic and ethical "fault line" in that they point to a crucial period in Pound's poetry and thought, one in which he had, it seems, to fail before taking the next step. I contend that the Italian Cantos signal a breakdown in Pound's

ethics and aesthetics during the time of their composition, and that they provide material evidence of this collapse.

These two Cantos, more than any of Pound's other poetry and particularly more than the rest of the *Cantos*, are artistically and philosophically at odds with Pound's other writing, prose or poetry. That is, they are in conflict with his own aesthetics and ethics. Furthermore, they are in conflict with each other. The light they throw on the *Pisan Cantos*, then, shows the *Pisan Cantos* as a sort of recuperation of aesthetics and ethics—not, as some critics contend, a repudiation of Fascism, but rather a recovery of ethical and aesthetic equilibrium within the socialist, Fascist, Platonist, Confucianist dialectic Pound had defined for himself.

3. Pound's Aesthetics and Fascism

The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life

—Walter Benjamin

Pound's attraction to Fascism was primarily aesthetic. This is not surprising considering that he identified deeply with the artists of Italy, past and present, and that, with very few exceptions, Italy's young artists, too, embraced the party. Mussolini's movement depended on spectacle. This was the aspect of Italian Fascism that Hitler most appreciated and consciously imitated. Mussolini may not have had the artistic pretensions of Hitler, but he was a master of spectacle, and he recognized the usefulness of the arts in establishing a new nationalist spirit. In *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris,* Ian Kershaw writes that Hitler admired Mussolini's style; he was impressed by "the Fascist legend of a heroic 'seizure of power.'"[7] Mussolini invented himself and the mythology that surrounded him, as many of his closest advisers and supporters were shocked to discover in the last days of the regime, when it became apparent how little substance there was to his program.

Fascism was, however, more than mere spectacle where the arts were concerned, and this was one of the aspects of the movement that appealed to Pound. The Fascist regime actively and materially supported artists and, at least in the early years of the regime, did so with no restrictions on style or content. This acceptance of artistic diversity, the regime's tolerance—and indeed support—for the most outré avant-garde art, impressed even the critics of Fascism. The government's program of artistic inclusiveness swept all the artistic movements into the Fascist camp, politicized them, and used them for propaganda purposes, frequently without the artists' awareness of

having been co-opted.[8] Mussolini himself made pronouncements about the "new Italian art," which would be invigorated by the modern but draw its power from Italy's glorious classical past. The art exhibit of 1932, *La Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, was initiated by Mussolini himself and included work by painters, sculptors, architects and film-makers of all political and artistic factions. The opening was attended by futurists as well as members of the old guard. Fermi, Marinetti, Pirandello, Bontempelli, Ojetti, and Piacentini (all members of the Academy) were present. Mussolini gave the opening speech, whose similarities to Pound's 1934 *Make it New* are not so astonishing when one considers that this issue was at the core of the debate on Fascist art:

> *Far cosa d'oggi, modernissima dunque, e audace, senza malinconici ricordi degli stili decorativi del passato.* (qtd. in Golsan 246)

This can be translated as:

> Make it new, and therefore ultramodern, and bold, with no melancholy reflections of the decorative styles of the past.

It is not difficult to see how such rhetoric attracted Pound, who imagined Mussolini as a modern art patron like Malatesta or the Holy Roman Emperor Frederic II, who was also one of Dante's heroes.

In the later years of the War, when adherence to the Fascist cause was dwindling and doubts about the War mounting, the State became a less tolerant patron. The second and third Fascist exhibits, the *Mostra Fascista*, showed evidence of this strain, as the art became more didactic and less daring, but Pound seems not to have noticed. Pound saw Mussolini, who was a capable writer, an accomplished violinist, and a gifted public speaker, as a fellow artist; and he was even convinced that Mussolini intended to put into

effect economic programs like those advocated by Major C. H. Douglas, an assumption based on illusion rather than evidence.

The Fascists also funded and patronized the Venice Biennale, which was recognized internationally as one of the most prestigious venues for new art, a sponsorship that lent cultural legitimacy to the party without diminishing the Biennale, and because the regime maintained its inclusive policy, the cream of Italy's young artists participated. The renovation of the façade undertaken by the party, instead of arousing alarm, seemed to fit with the open-minded vitality and modernity many people thought they saw in the early Fascist government. But a closer look at the changes reveals something more sinister. As Marla Stone writes of the original façade:

> The preexisting Venice Biennale facade [sic] built in 1914 stood in a heavily ornamented new-Renaissance style that utilized classical orders, decorative marble motifs, and two towers. . . . [It] was composed of four modified Corinthian pilasters surrounding a door, above which appeared the works *Pro Arte,* and a large brass relief of the lion of Saint Mark, Venice's patron saint and symbol. (205)

The towers were rococo and gave the building a strange, if symmetrical, proportion; the façade was indeed fussily ornamented; and the cornice was curved. The new façade is clean and modern. The towers are gone, and the front is straight. Stone describes it thus:

> Ornamentation disappeared, reduced to linear form. . . This facade, declared the government-run architecture journal, is "modern and synthesizes a motif of classical flavor." It has four simple columns under a linear, non-ornamental pediment. The inscription *Italia*, in large marble sans serif lettering, replaced *Pro*

> *Arte*. The winged lion of Saint Mark now shared the facade with the Fascist symbol, the imperial eagle grasping a *fascio littorio*[9]. The central theme of the facade has become Italy, not *arte* or Venice. (205-6)

The absorption of classical elements into a strong, clean façade was a stroke of genius. As Stone explains, "Aesthetically and iconographically, the old facade spoke to pre-Fascist elites through historically loaded referents" (206), while the new façade spoke of openness and inclusion. The Fascist dictatorship thus successfully appropriated the strong, emerging art movements of the time, Futurism and Modernism, without alienating those artists who still looked to the past. Pound was as inclined as Marinetti to adopt any new thing in art, but like many in Italy, he also approved of the regime's respect for the country's glorious history. While Germany and Communist Russia both fettered the arts with patriotic themes and populist realism, Italy embraced the most exciting movement of the day, Modernism, a movement of which Pound considered himself not just a member but a founding father.

The regime not only became the primary collector of art and offered the largest prizes available to Italian artists; it provided physical evidence of its involvement in the arts and of the value it accorded them. Pound knew many of the artists working in Italy at the time. In the CD-ROM there are images of some of their work, including a photograph of a futuristic bust of Mussolini, on which the artist had written a dedication to Pound "with Futurist sympathy."

Pound's primary motivation remained aesthetic, but this did not preclude a strong inclination towards economics and politics; in fact, he saw them as related. Pound's move towards an obsession with politics and economics occurred while he was writing

for A.R. Orage's *New Age* in London between 1917 and 1920. When he began writing criticism for the *New Age* he was a relatively apolitical aesthete, and Orage teased him both privately and in print about his failure to take an active role in the political and economic issues of his day. It was at the *New Age* that Pound was introduced to Major C. H. Douglas's work on Social Credit, edited and serialized by Orage for the journal, and these theories would form the basis for Pound's economic philosophy. Before his association with the *New Age,* Pound's writing contained no overt anti-Semitism.[10] Orage was apparently not anti-Semitic himself, but because he was thoroughly non-judgmental in his editorial policy, a great deal of anti-Semitic material found its way into the pages of the *New Age*, and some of the writers with whom Pound associated there were openly anti-Semitic. Redman writes:

> Starting in 1912, the paper advocated what [Wallace] Martin terms 'an ingenious synthesis of political Socialism and industrial Syndicalism.' . . . A mix of socialism and syndicalism was precisely what Benito Mussolini was inventing in Italy at about the same time, and it is easy to see why Pound, through Odon Por, would later find in Fascism many congenial and already familiar ideas (18).

Besides Douglas, T.E. Hulme was undoubtedly an important influence on Pound during this period. Hulme was translating the French philosopher Henri Bergson and syndicalist Georges Sorel[11] into English. Pound does not seem to have read any of their works and mentions them dismissively as interests of Hulme's[12] but probably absorbed some of their ideas from him, as he often picked up bits and pieces from his friends. It was from Hulme, in fact, that Pound seized upon the ideas about art and language that would form the basis of Imagism, and one could argue that Pound's famous exhortation to "make it

new" derived from Hulme as well. In this atmosphere, Pound may have already begun to slip into the monomaniacal paranoid fixation that would taint his life and reputation. Nevertheless, however apolitical Pound may have been on his arrival at the *New Age*, he had been raised by his father Homer on a substantial amount of unconventional economic theory. Pound had also shown some early poetic interest in public affairs. His first published poem, below, which appeared in the *Jenkintown Times-Chronicle,* 7 November 1896, concerned the presidential election, which William Jennings Bryan, a congressman from Illinois and the Democratic nominee, had just lost to McKinley:

> There was a young man from the West,
> He did what he could for what he thought best;
> But election came round;
> He found himself downed,
> And the papers will tell you the rest.
> Aged 11 years E.L. Pound, Wyncote

Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic national convention had advocated "free silver," a popular cause among Democrats and Populists, silver miners, and indebted Southern farmers. Free silver would have put more money in circulation by allowing the government to mint silver coins, which would in turn have enabled the farmers to pay off their debts with inflated money. Major Douglas praised Bryan for his recognition of the inequalities caused by the gold standard, which left all economic power in the hands of bankers. Douglas's recognition of this American icon of Pound's youth encouraged Pound's belief that these were universal economic truths, much as Fascist

rhetoric would later resonate with what he had gleaned from Douglas and Hulme. As indicated by his juvenile limerick, Pound already knew something about the gold and silver standard arguments. Following a brief period as head of the Land Office in Hailey, Idaho, around the time of Ezra's birth, Homer Pound worked at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia, and Ezra's memories of his visits to the Mint were a source of awe even in later life. Humphrey Carpenter has described Pound's excitement about his father's work at the Mint, where "it seemed to Ezra that his father's skill in thus measuring the quality of silver, merely by eye, was 'an aesthetic perception, like the critical sense'" (17).

In 1917, when Pound started working for Orage at the *New Age,* he had lived in England for fewer than ten years and was still more of an American abroad than an American expatriate. His apparent lack of interest in British politics was hardly an indication of a complete indisposition towards public policy, given the vehemence with which he later applied himself to the subject, a vehemence due in part to his anger over the loss of many close friends during the First World War, the avant-garde sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska and Hulme among them. It is true that he was swept up in the aesthetic issues of a time when so much was happening in all the arts; he was furiously involved in art, music, and literary criticism, in addition to writing poetry. On the other hand, as Pound's estimate of his father's assaying skills indicates, he perceived a connection between his father's skill and aesthetics, and such associations would remain dominant for the rest of his life. The correlation Pound saw between politics and aesthetics, and between ethics and aesthetics were undoubtedly a major aspect of his attraction to Fascism.

It may have been because of the way Pound looked at politics, through the lens of aesthetics, that he saw Fascism as a logical alternative to both socialism and capitalism. The Fascists themselves successfully presented their program as apolitical, the situation in Italy having become hostile to politicians. Italians, already predisposed towards mistrust of authority by centuries of occupation and corruption, both papal and political, were dissatisfied with their king, Vittorio Emmanuele III, a weak and indecisive figure, whom many felt was responsible for the loss of their imperial lands. Pound was not simply trying to resolve economic and political problems through art, as Michael North contends in *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound* (vii), but was in fact evaluating economic and political situations mainly according to their aesthetics and their effects on art, which is not the same thing. For Pound art and politics were inevitably linked, and it is in this that Pound, more than Eliot or even Yeats, is most clearly heir to an earlier generation of aesthetes even as he broke with them in the execution of his art. Regardless of his avant-garde poetics, Pound's romantic attachment to the courtly ideals of Dante and the Provençal poets and the heroic traditions of Greece and Rome, and his exaggerated faith that aesthetics could be used as a measure of the ethical makeup of a society enabled him to disregard the shameful repressions of Mussolini's regime. He explained Cavalcanti's concept of *virtù,* as he understood it, in the introduction to his edition of Cavalcanti's poetry:

> *La virtù* is the potency, the efficient property of a substance or person. . . . Each thing or person was held to send forth magnetisms of certain effect. . . . It is a spiritual chemistry, and modern science and modern mysticism are both set to confirm it. (*Rime,* 40)

This approach of imposing modern technology on ancient mystical thought was used by the Fascists, too. Fascism appealed to Pound in part because he took Italian Fascist thinking for an aesthetic, and it was indeed more image than substance. Mussolini promoted a depiction of himself as a reincarnated ancient Roman. Fascist thinking did in many ways pretend to represent an aesthetic; it conflated the political and the aesthetic, the national and the aesthetic, and the sexual and the aesthetic. Much of it was also inconsistent, as was Pound's, and I will not attempt to solve every inconsistency; Hannah Arendt, Umberto Eco, and others have shown that it is part of the nature of Fascism to set up ideals, whether naively or cynically, that are in direct conflict with its practice. There was no single, unified theory that could constitute a Fascist aesthetic, because Fascism was in fact inclusive and expansive where art was concerned and encouraged experimentation, something no other totalitarian regime would do. Although some of the styles considered fascistic were also favored by the communists, there were many characteristics that were unique to Italian Fascism. Some works of art managed to manifest differently the characteristics shared by the Fascists and the socialists; others are almost indistinguishable from Russian formalist art, which was strongly influenced by Italian Futurism. All totalitarian art, however, seems to tend towards the monumentalism that characterized the works of German and Italian architects and sculptors. A penchant for didacticism unites the Fascists and communists, as well. And like the French syndicalist Georges Sorel, the Fascists embraced a poetics of violent heroism. The Italian futurists and vorticists were, however, more prone to formal experimentation than Soviet or Nazi artists, and at the same time, the *novecentisti* were, like Pound and Eliot, both more interested in retaining the links to classicism and more dismissive of nineteenth-

century aesthetics than their totalitarian counterparts on the Left or Right.

Even those aspects of the aesthetic that were shared with the Left could still be considered Fascist. There is something totalizing about the heroic scale of Fascist monuments and edifices: their phallic forms occupy the eye to the exclusion of all other images. Fascist buildings are characterized by massive columns and towers that dwarf the other elements of the structure, as well as any structure near them, and their massive surfaces are primarily erect; scale is distorted vertically. Fascist sculpture, too, tends to magnify vertical mass, forcing the eye to strain upward, obscuring everything in the vicinity. Similarly, the impression Fascist art gave of transgressing boundaries, its propensity for layering of detail, for an aesthetic based on the accretion of images, and its deliberate aggressiveness overwhelm the senses of even an ideologically resistant audience. Each of these aesthetic elements found some counterpart in Pound's poetics. The Fascist emphasis on hard, vital art, free from ornamentation, appealed especially to Pound, because it conformed to his own aesthetic of what was good and beautiful in language and art. In the same way, the Fascist regard for order comprised an aesthetic value for Pound, for whom formal considerations often took precedence over content. Even the ethical aspect of order, especially as seen in Confucianism, was consistently expressed by Pound in terms of aesthetics.

Because Pound's ethics seem to have as much to do with aesthetics as with issues of justice and politics, he misinterpreted the Fascists' aims, imagining that they were identical to his own. While they politicized aesthetics, Pound aestheticized everything: what was good for art was good for the world. He was not naïve enough to think that art could save the world, but he did feel that one could recognize in the art of a country and

time the quality of its government. He also felt that a system that commodified art would also commodify work. He defined usury as the sin of making money from money, rather than from production, and he condemned laissez-faire capitalism as well as Jewish bankers for this sin. For Pound debt was evil, not because it entrapped the debtors, but because it was infinitely inflationary and would therefore require an endless series of wars to keep the flow of capital moving. Pound's conviction that war was caused by credit misused, by money used to create money rather than to create life, led him to accept the Fascist propaganda asserting that Jewish bankers and arms manufacturers were responsible for both World Wars, and to conclude that Roosevelt and Churchill, because they entered the war, were partners in the conspiracy. It became a refrain in his poetry not unlike the string of corrupt popes Dante tortures in his hell, along with the money-lenders to whom the popes were indebted for their power. From Pound's point of view, capitalism and usury meant that the farmer would be squeezed out by large agricultural businesses, the craftsman replaced by the factory, and the artist forced into a commodity market. Canto XLV, the so-called "Usura Canto," lists the sorts of skills and works of art that would be lost or would never have existed *with usura:* the pride of the craftsman who signed a pillar of the San Zeno church, "Adam made me"; all the great frescos, worthless in a commodity culture because they cannot be removed from the walls and sold; the well-made peasant home; good grain. These political principles and aesthetics had become connected for Pound, but even if he had found no parallels between Italian Fascist art and his own aesthetic, he might still have supported a regime that appeared to make a special place for art and poetry. Even in light of this attraction, however, the Italian Cantos are problematic aesthetically and morally.

4. The Break

Pound published *A Draft of Cantos LII-LXXI* with Faber and Faber in January, 1940. It would be the last publication of new Cantos in English for eight and a half years, until the appearance in July, 1948, of the *Pisan Cantos*, written during six months in 1945 while he was imprisoned in Pisa. In the intervening years, Pound concentrated primarily on prose, much of it propaganda and most of it in Italian; in 1940, for example, he published approximately sixty-five pieces, some of them short articles or letters to newspapers. In the five years between the 1940 *Draft of Cantos LII- LXXI* and the Italian Cantos, Pound published hundreds of items but seems to have written very little poetry.[13] According to his plan for the tripartite structure of the *Cantos*, which he based on Dante's *Commedia*, he should have been beginning his Paradise section with Canto LXXII. This section would have depicted what Robert Casillo calls the "earthly paradise of an Italian Fascist utopia" ("Fascists of the Final Hour," 98). In 1939, after he finished the first seventy cantos, Pound wrote, "I've got my time cut out now for positive statements. My economic work is done (in the main). I shall have to go on condensing and restating, but am now definitely onto questions of BELIEF" (*SL*, 238). It is evident from this statement that Pound considered his economic work part of the task of his poetry, but events had made his plan unworkable. Pound said in a 1962 *Paris Review* interview with Donald Hall, "It is difficult to write a paradiso when all the superficial indications are that you ought to write an apocalypse. It is obviously much easier to find inhabitants for an inferno or even a purgatorio" (56).

The two poems Pound did write during the war period are worth noting, however, for one of them shows the direction he might have taken in the *Cantos* had the paradise continued to seem possible, and the other conforms to the direction he did take. The first was the short poem below, which Pound sent to his friend Katue Kitasono on March 12, 1941 for inclusion in the Japanese journal *VOU.* In the letter to "Kit Kat" in which the poem appears, Pound introduces and annotates it thus:

Lines to go into Canto 72 or somewhere:

Now the sun rises in Ram sign.
With clack of bamboo against olive stock
We have heard the birds praising Janequin
and the black cat's tail is exalted.

The sexton of San Pantaleo plays "è mobile" *on his carillon*
"un' e due . . . che la donna è mobile"
in the hill tower (videt et urbes)
And a black head under white cherry boughs
precedes us down the salita.[1]
The water-bug's mittens[2] *show on the bright rock below him.*

[1] Italian for stone path in hills.

[2] If I were 30 years younger I would call 'em his boxing gloves. I wonder if it is clear that I mean the shadow of the "mittens"? and can you ideograph it; very like petals of blossom.

> All of which shows that I am not wholly absorbed in saving Europe by economics. (348)

Indeed, this is a jollier Pound than we will encounter again. Many of the themes look back to earlier and more optimistic lines, and some of the motifs, such as the ram and Janequin's birds,[14] will reappear later in the *Cantos,* but we will never again find this tone. Both Eastman and Bacigalupo have reasonably seen this poem as a sign that Pound did intend to go forward with a *paradiso.* But less than a year later, still unable to produce any quantity of poetry, he appears to have been sinking back into his obsession with economics, as the other poem from the period shows. It is a fragment that was published in January, 1942 in *Vice Versa,* Harry Brown's New York journal, under the title "CANTO PROCEEDING (72 circa), " which now appears in the *Cantos* as "Addendum for C." It is a forty-two line rant on usury dedicated to "O.R." (Olga Rudge).[15] According to Eastman, Pound rejected it for the "Drafts and Fragments" section of the *Cantos* but must have changed his mind since he corrected the proofs (419-20). Clearly, the *paradiso* envisioned in the earlier version was, as Eastman says, "already dissolving" (419).

The notebooks in which Pound was working attest to the fact that he was making notes for poetry, but either because he was suffering a dry spell or because he was expending most of his energy on his political writing, no more of it became poetry until 1945. Another possible explanation is that he was undergoing a period of doubt. As Casillo points out, by the time the Italian Cantos were written, Pound's circle of intimates was limited to his family and Italian friends. His letters to his family were often written in Italian, not only to his daughter Mary, who was a native speaker, but to both Olga and

Dorothy. He was almost entirely isolated in a Fascist world, and the Fascist dream was evaporating. Mussolini was no longer *Duce* of the Republic but conducted a German-supported government in exile from Salò; the Nazis had taken over Rome; Badoglio had signed an armistice surrendering to the Allies an Italy occupied by the Germans; and the Fascist movement itself seemed to be failing. Casillo writes:

> the Italian *Cantos* mark the permanent interruption of Pound's paradisal hopes by World War II while pointing in theme and form toward the Pisan *Cantos*, where the politically emarginated Pound draws inward and contemplates the collapse of Fascism (99).

It is the turning inward, at odds with all the Cantos preceding them, that Casillo sees as pointing toward the even more personal *Pisan Cantos.*

It was in this atmosphere that lines 9-35 of Canto LXXII appeared in *La Marina Repubblicana.* Marinetti, Pound's rival in the early days of Futurism and Vorticism but later a Fascist friend, had volunteered to go to the front, despite his age, and had recently returned and then died, at age 68, December 2, 1944. The editor of *La Marina Repubblicana*, Ubaldo degli Uberti, was undersecretary of the navy in the Salò government and was also an old friend of Pound's from his Radio Rome days.[16] According to Lawrence Rainey, it was because he had learned that Pound was about to publish a new segment of the Cantos that Uberti, knowing paper was at a premium and poetry almost impossible to publish, offered Pound a place in the journal (1997, 4). But the piece could also have been solicited as propaganda, perhaps even as an homage to Marinetti. There is no evidence that Pound had any significant amount of poetry written at this time, and the poem certainly glorifies the Fascist effort. In the segment published

in the *Marina Repubblicana*, the only spirit who visits Pound is Marinetti. It seems likely, therefore, that Uberti might have requested it and that Pound, out of both loyalty and need, may have complied. Ironically, it is conceivable too that such a request may have helped Pound return to poetry and to some aspect of his earlier style, for he modeled this poem on Dante.

The following month, the full text of Canto LXXIII appeared in the same Fascist newspaper under the title *Canto LXXIII: Cavalcanti - Corrispondenza Repubblicana.* Here it is even more clear that the work may have been solicited, since it is a version of a propaganda fable that the Fascists had earlier published in the *Corriere della Sera* (Rainey, 1997, 5). In Pound's version, the Medieval poet Guido Cavalcanti relates to Pound his encounter with the spirit of a young Italian girl who has just died. She tells him her story, a simple tale of heroism: meeting a group of Canadian soldiers who asked her for directions, and having been raped earlier by some of their compatriots, she had agreed to show them the way but led them instead to a field in which her brother had laid land mines, and where they were all killed, her heroic self included. The connection to Cavalcanti in this poem is only partly thematic, though Cavalcanti was known to have written some political poems. It is, however, a stylistic homage in its attempt to imitate the formal aspects of Cavalcanti's "*Donna Mi Priega,*" one of Pound's poetic talismans.

The simplistic nature of both of these poems is completely out of keeping with Pound's style both before and after this period; this could be an indication of many things: that he was writing them on demand, or that he was dejected or demented, or that he was simply out of practice. The first explanation seems most likely, considering the extraordinary sophistication, complexity, and beauty of the *Pisan Cantos*, completed the

following summer under even worse conditions. Eastman contends that while the Italian Cantos are out of keeping with the poetic beauty of Pound's earlier Cantos, they do match them in intensity. For her, the break in the *Cantos* occurs with Canto LII. She writes:

> [the paradiso design] might have carried over the structural clarity of the History Cantos' epic sweep into the projected final volume from Canto 72 to the end. The complete absence of lyric invention from Cantos 52 to 71 is so definitive a break with the evolving pattern of the work, which to that point had interwoven epic with lyric song, that it must be taken as an explicit indication that, in Pound's words of 1940, 'with Cantos 52/71 a NEW thing is'. (416)

If one looks at Pound's entire oeuvre, however, it is evident that it does not evolve; it proceeds by leaps. The change Pound had made in the twenty Cantos published in 1941 was not so much a break as a breakthrough; he had finally fully developed the ideogrammic method that later gives the *Pisan Cantos* their density and power. While some of the content of these previous twenty poems is difficult to accept as subject matter for poetry, the lyric invention is there, and it is new. That new method may or may not have been influenced by Fascism, but it is marked by many of the characteristics associated with Fascist aesthetics. This is the aesthetic that distinguishes the *Pisan Cantos* and much of the rest of the poem, and it is discussed in detail below. Ironically, the Italian Cantos, so overtly Fascist in tone and content, do not conform to this aesthetic that surrounds them.

5. Aesthetics of the Italian Cantos[17]

Hugh Kenner's term "fault line" for the Italian Cantos indicates what now appears to be a more consequential rupture than Kenner may have intended, a sign of ethical and aesthetic breakdown. There is no doubt that Pound was disturbed by the way the war was turning out by the end of 1944. Italy, and the Fascist party in particular, was in trouble. Although most people recognized by this time that the war was about to end, the Mussolini faction at Salò refused to admit defeat. The propaganda machines of both sides in the war were at full throttle, and Mussolini was calling for a *riscossa*—renewal, military turnaround, or revival—a term that would appear prominently in Pound's Canto LXXIII. American planes leafleted towns in Northern Italy, describing the atrocities being committed by the Nazis, but as Pound's daughter Mary has told me, no one believed such stories. There were tales, too, of American atrocities, one of which claimed that the Americans were child-killers who dropped from their airplanes objects designed to appeal to children, pens and toys, that contained explosive devices or deadly bacteria. No one knew what or whom to believe. There was a desperate solidarity among those who had remained loyal to Mussolini, but many had defected after he was ousted from the government and the official party. Many others had previously gone along with the Fascists purely out of fear; now that the movement was in trouble, they were freer to express themselves. Those loyal to both sides had to be extremely careful, however, because Italy was now occupied partly by the Allies and partly by the Germans. Even after the armistice, one could not be sure who was in control of a region. As the Americans took their time moving up the peninsula, waiting for assurances that the

country would not swing to the left after the war, the Germans still held much of the North. It was in these times that the Italian Cantos were written.

Bacigalupo regards the Italian Cantos as comical in their overwrought and often eccentric Italian and their propagandistic bombast, and he claims that Pound may have exaggerated the Fascist rhetoric to convince Mussolini of his loyalty to the cause. This is not implausible; Pound had attempted to communicate with Mussolini, with only partial success. He had tried to see Mussolini in early 1932 but had been politely rebuffed by his private secretary, Chiavolini, who suggested he write to the *Duce*. He did write, listing the quirky issues he wanted to discuss, and was ignored. At the end of 1932, he sent Mussolini the script for a film on the birth of Fascism, on which he had collaborated with its Italian author, and he again requested an audience, this time saying that he had information on how to respond to criticism of Mussolini in the American press. He finally was granted a short audience on January 30, 1933, and gave or sent Mussolini a copy of *A Draft of XXX Cantos,* which the *Duce* pronounced *"divertente," amusing*, which seems to have satisfied Pound. He tried to contact Mussolini several times later, again with no success. He did continue to send him articles and other items, including these Italian Cantos. Nonetheless, they may have been solicited as propaganda, beginning with the occasion of Marinetti's death. Bacigalupo's interpretation could in fact support this thesis. He explains the difference between these Cantos and the Hell Cantos (14 and 15), which are also imitations of Dante:

> he is not so much the visitor of other-wordly parts as the seer whom ghosts seek out as an instrument to communicate with the living in a time of national emergency. (1984, 71)

The national emergency pertains to more than the military reverses Italy had suffered. Robert Casillo notes that Pound, like Marinetti, was concerned that the Fascist leadership was losing its vigor, aging and ossifying. Fascism had been touted as a vigorous movement, a movement of youth, a movement of "making it new." Pound and Marinetti were no longer young; Mussolini himself was not young. Perhaps the *riscossa* had as much to do with renewal of the youthful energy of the party as with military defeat. Certainly one of the themes of Canto LXXII would confirm this: Marinetti asks Pound for his body so that he may go on fighting, and Pound responds that his body is "already old," suggesting that Marinetti take some young, cowardly fool's body and thus make a new hero. Pound continued to produce propaganda materials of all sorts, but always on his own offbeat terms—aside from his radio texts, he prepared posters with Confucian and Fascist sayings on them—but even he may have had some doubts in those final days about Mussolini's ability to revive the glorious Italy of the *quattrocento*. Furthermore, although Pound was isolated from most evidence of the violence associated with the Fascists, he cannot have been completely unaware that it existed. His celebration of aggression in art had never included approval of physical violence or of war; this was one of his big arguments with Marinetti. There can be no doubt that Pound throughout his poetry and prose opposed war. Now, in the midst of the second vast international war of the century, he found himself part of a movement that glorified war. His praise of heroes notwithstanding, Pound was still a pacifist at heart.

The Italian Cantos, then, especially Canto LXXIII, are apparently at odds with Pound's ethics. There is no inconsistency in his praise of heroes and his criticism of war. He had opposed Marinetti's endorsement of war as "the only hygiene" but admired his

courage in enlisting, at an advanced age, to protect his fatherland and uphold the regime in which he, and Pound, believed. What is inconsistent is the glorification of real physical violence in Canto LXXIII, and it is in this way that the two Italian Cantos are in conflict with each other, for while Canto LXXII praises military heroes, it does not explicitly promote violence.

Aesthetically, too, these two poems are very different from Pound's other Cantos. Although they ostensibly imitate the styles and themes of Dante and Cavalcanti, they do not fit the structural patterns Pound had by this time developed for his poetry; they are much less complex than the other Cantos. Yet they cannot be seen as imitations or homages, for they are not as poetically sophisticated as Pound's translations. If one looks at these two poems as a moral and aesthetic lapse, the *Pisan Cantos* can then be seen as a recuperation.

6. Canto LXXII

Presenza

The title of this Canto evokes the presences Dante calls up in the *Commedia,* and it also recalls the response a soldier makes to a roll-call, *presente,* which Marinetti's ghost shouts twice in this poem. Bacigalupo interprets this Canto as Pound's own "act of allegiance—*presenza*—to the Salò regime" (1984, 72). Casillo suggests that, since Pound sent both these Cantos to his daughter Mary on the feast of the Epiphany, the word *presenza* has religious connotations, evoking "the idea of the apparition of flamelike spirits" (102). But the most noteworthy sense of *presenza* here, noted also by Casillo, is its connection to Fascist mythology: it was traditional among the Fascist *arditi* troops to answer loudly for their fallen comrades when their names were called in the roll, in the belief that their spirits would be summoned and they would somehow become manifest. All these interpretations could have been present for Pound at the same time, but the evocation of a Fascist martyr applies convincingly to the first published version of this poem as a twenty-seven-line tribute to the writer and Fascist theorist F.T. Marinetti, whose death December 2, 1944, followed a long tour of duty on the Russian front. The use of *presenza* for this Canto, therefore, functions as both an answer—Pound's own presence—and a calling forth.

In that early publication and the much longer original version, which was issued in a limited edition by Pound's estate in 1973 and now appears in the *Cantos,* Pound's guide is Dante. He uses some of Dante's phrases and stylistic devices, including a close approximation of *terza rima.*[18] As Bacigalupo shows, there are also many passages where Pound slips into the hendecasyllable line that is typical of both Dante's and

Cavalcanti's (and of most post-classical and pre-Modernist Romance-language) poetry, but he does not adhere to it throughout. Three spirits visit the narrator, called to presence, one assumes, by the poem's title. The first is Marinetti, a poet, leader of the Futurist movement, and ardent Fascist, who notwithstanding his advanced age, had enlisted to fight in World War II, a gesture Pound admired for its heroism in spite of his own opposition to the war.[19] The second, Manlio Torquato Dazzi, was a poet and a friend of Pound's. In 1914 Dazzi had published his translation into Italian of Albertino Mussato's Latin text *Eccerinus*, a play based on the life and exploits of the medieval Ghibelline leader Ezzelino da Romano, who appears in Dante's *Inferno,* and whose sister, Cunizza, was also an important figure for Pound and for Dante.[20] And finally, the third spirit is Ezzelino himself. In typical dantesque fashion, Pound seems to have condemned all three to hell, though in the case of Ezzelino, this was unnecessary, since Dante had already placed him there. Marinetti is allowed to say, "I don't want to go to Paradise; I want to continue to fight," suggesting either that Pound might have considered putting him in heaven or that, having just died, Marinetti does not yet know his fate. But just as Dante placed many of those he admired in the *Inferno* then cleverly had the spirits accuse themselves of their sins, Pound takes the opportunity to criticize his friend; Marinetti admits his "error" of praising war, which is evidently enough to send him to hell.

Here the similarities to Dante—and to Pound too—begin to fade, though Pound quotes words and phrases from the master throughout. Bacigalupo has noted the bare simplicity of the language (as well as Pound's linguistic errors and infelicities), but he also recognizes that Dante, too, used very simple syntax and vocabulary. He contends that Pound chose the Dantesque form for practical reasons:

> Considered in terms of Pound's intention to communicate to a new Italian audience, the Dantesque form is expedient for several reasons: it is relatively familiar to the reader, it allows the poet to introduce himself explicitly as a follower of the national bard and as holding certain distinct political, historical, and aesthetic beliefs, and it makes for cogent story-telling—another unusual feature in the poem. Those were not, to Pound at least with his suspicious name and nationality, the days for ambiguity. (1984, 71-72)

This was hardly Pound's first imitation of Dante, but two of Bacigalupo's points are worth examining closely here. It is possible that this Canto and the one following it might have been requested by Uberti for propaganda purposes, or it is conceivable, as Bacigalupo believes, that Pound was simply attempting to solidify or clarify his position with the Fascists during a period of uncertainty and danger. He sent copies of both these Cantos to Mussolini. Perhaps he still held out hope that the regime would triumph and that Mussolini would allow him to be his poet-philosopher. It is also noteworthy that this is a cogent narrative. This is not unlike Dante, but it is unlike Pound. Furthermore, it is a first-person narrative. However autobiographical the material may have been that Pound slipped into his poetry, it was never a consistent linear narrative, and it was never overtly personal. Here, as in many earlier Cantos, the first person language is not so much a personal narrative as a "mask" of Dante. In this it is reminiscent of the "Hell Cantos," but it is a far less powerful imitation of Dante. The *I* of the *Cantos* has been an observer, slightly less actively involved than the narrator of Dante's *Commedia*. In Canto LXXII the narrator is more of a presence than in earlier Cantos. Like Dante, he questions the spirits: "Who are you?" He dismisses Marinetti: "Come back and talk to us when you

like." He criticizes Dazzi: "Have you come here to lull me the verses you translated...?" And he is gripped by a detached iron-like hand. Still, he is more observer than character. But when this technique carries over into the *Pisan Cantos,* the narration does become personal, for the first time in the *Cantos.* Pound's short second voyage to the underworld may therefore have been more important than these Cantos would indicate on their own merits.

Barbara Eastman also recognizes the similarity of this Canto to the Hell Cantos, but in her estimation, the "emotional pitch" of both the Italian Cantos and Cantos XIV and XV causes "consequent damage to the poem's music" (424). This assessment does not recognize the poetic power of the Hell Cantos, however, nor does it adequately account for the lack of emotional intensity in the Italian Cantos. Cantos XIV and XV, descendants of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and precursors to XLV, the "Usury" Canto, are overwhelming in their aggressive movement. No iambics here; they are all trochees and spondees, with the occasional dactyl—forward-driving meters full of the energy and power to push us along the short lines. What was Pound without anger? The Hell Cantos are furious and dynamic, emotionally and poetically. One could choose any passage in Canto XIV as an example:

> And the betrayers of language
>
> . . . . . n and the press gang
>
> And those who had lied for hire;
>
> the perverts, the perverters of language,
>
> the perverts, who have set money-lust

Before the pleasures of the senses

howling, as of a hen-yard in a printing-house,

the clatter of presses,

the blowing of dry dust and stray paper,

foetor, sweat, the stench of stale oranges,

dung, last cess-pool of the universe,

mysterium, acid of sulphur,

the pusillanimous raging;

plunging jewels in mud

and howling to find them unstained;

sadic mothers driving their daughters to bed with decrepitude,

sows eating their litters,

and here the placard ΕΙΚΩΝ ΓΗΣ,[21]

and here: THE PERSONNEL CHANGES (XIV:26-43)

If one compares this passage to any part of Canto LXXII, on the other hand, it is evident that *Presenza* has no such fire. Something has indeed damaged the poetic music, but it is hardly the "emotional pitch," for that too is less intense here than in the Hell Cantos. LXXIII seems more sad and wistful than angry. The most intense sections are those spoken by Ezzelino, the last of the characters to appear. We find harsh language and some sharp political criticism, as well as hyperbolic praise for Fascist heroes, but none of Pound's usual dramatic spark. The Canto begins with angry words, but they are somehow devoid of passion:

Purché si cominci a ricordare la guerra di merda
Certi fatti risorgeranno. Nel principio, Dio
Il grande esteta, dopo aver creato cielo e mondo,
Dopo il tramonto vulcanico, dopo aver dipinto
La roccia con licheni a modo nipponico,
Cacò il gran'ururaio Satana-Gerione, prototipo
Dei padroni di Churchill.

If one begins to remember the shit war
certain facts will resurface. In the beginning God
the great aesthete, having created heaven and earth,
and after the volcanic sunset, having painted
the rocks with lichen in the Japanese style
Excreted the great usurer Geryon, prototype
of Churchill's bosses. (LXXII. 1-7)

Canto LXXII is intended to recall Dante poetically as well as politically and thematically. Bacigalupo, measuring them according to the Italian hendecasyllabic system of Dante, finds many of them to be longer, often as long as fifteen syllables, but Pound heard rhythms musically, and his lines are not as different from Dante's if one measures them by their rhythmic accents. Pound also attempted to mimic Dante's *terza rima*, interlocking tercets that are almost impossible to achieve in English. The first lines contain some of the most obvious rhymes of this Canto, the rhyming dactyls of *vulcanico, nipponico,* and *prototipo*, followed by a line that falls completely flat and is impossible to rhyme: "*dei padroni di Churchill.*" This despised English name lands heavily in the midst of the Italian, as it does when Pound repeats it in Canto LXXIII. Much of the poem does not include any rhyme, but there are two sections where Pound uses a rhyme scheme that, while different from Dante's *terza rima*, recalls it by linking end-rhymes that are three or four lines apart.

Egli non pose fine

Al verso.

Perché tutta l'aria tremò, e tuttal l'ombra

Con sconquasso

E come tuono che la pioggia ingombra

Saettava frasi senza senso. Finché con scrocchio

. . . (80-86)

The end-rhyme in this section, *ombra / ingombra,* is actually spaced like *terza rima,* though it lacks the interlocking three-line scheme of Dante, which would also require a rhyme between *sconquasso / scrocchio* and one more word. *Senso* and *verso* are near-rhymes, and while *sconquasso* and *scrocchio* do not rhyme, they have a similarly rough sound in Italian, a nod to Dante, which may be the only reason Pound used these words, since they add little to the sense. Pound means to introduce Ezzelino, who speaks after these lines, with a great deal of drama. The air trembled, as it does so often for Dante, and with a *sconquasso*, a crash or huge quake, the voice flung (*saettava, struck* or *shot,* as with arrows) senseless words. Then with a *scrocchio,* which Pound translates as a grinding sound, the narrator hears a great cry. We are treated to the fearsome fury of Ezzelino at having been mis-translated as a "son of the devil" by Dazzi,[22] but the over-dramatization and odd vocabulary leave us more bemused than apprehensive. Farther along in the poem, Ezzelino says:

Furia la guerra antica in Romagna,

Lo sterco sale sino a Bologna

Con stupro e fuoco, e dove il cavallo bagna

Son marocchini ed altra immondizia

Che nominar è vergogna,

Sì che il sepolto polvere s'affascia

Nel profondo, e muove, e spira,

E, per cacciar lo straniero, agogna

A tornar vivo. (43-51)

Here Pound comes closer to *terza rima*, where *Romagna / bagna* are separated by one line that ends with *Bologna*, a similar sound, which rhymes with *vergogna* and *agogna*, each separated by two lines rather than Dante's one. It is significant that Pound omitted some of these lines in his translation. He could not render his pun on the name of the town Bagnacavallo, which in Italian he renders as "where the horse bathes," a bit of kenning[23] harking back to his translations from old Anglo-Saxon, but there is no such reason for having omitted the lines that translate as "There are Moroccans and other garbage / shameful to name." It is a possible reference to the multi-racial troops the Allies brought with them into Italy. Pound made this translation under pressure from Olga, and completed it in haste; it contains many infelicities, but the omission of these lines cannot have been accidental.

In the section below, Ezzelino criticizes the Donation of Constantine—also condemned by Dante, who did not know, as Pound did, that the emperor's supposed "gift" to the Papacy was a forgery. This passage draws an obvious parallel with Vittorio Emmanuele's "betrayal" of the regime, a theme that recurs later in this Canto, and here Pound manages six hendecasyllable lines of real *terza rima*:

Se mai l'imperatore quel dono fece,

Bisanzio fu madre del trambusto,

Lo fece senza forma e contro legge,

Scindendo sé da sé e dallo giusto;

Né Cesare se stesso mise in schegge,

Né Pietro pietra fu prima che Augusto

Tutta la virtù ebbe e funzione.

Chi dà in legge è solo il possidente,

E 'l caso ghibellin ben seppe il fiorentino. (106-14)

Still, as Bacigalupo notes, there is something lacking poetically throughout the Canto. The Italian is stilted in many places, contrived in others, and the meter is often forced or flat. The inversions Pound uses—for example in the passage above—for which English equivalents are difficult (one might translate line 114 "and the Ghibelline cause well the Florentine knew"), are archaic even in Italian; they are used purely in imitation of Dante, but the Florentine's poetic influence is not enough to give life to this Canto. This, and the fact that both of these Cantos are strikingly unlike Pound's usual work, would tend to support Bacigalupo's thesis that they are meant to show Pound's connection to Italian culture and to legitimize his right to address the cause.

This Canto is simplistic thematically, as well, though less so than the one that follows it. The opening is a reprise of Pound's argument that usury is the cause of all wars. The "aesthete god" whose excretions brought us this evil is the corrupt, Hebraized Christian god, not a "fellow aesthete," as Bacigalupo puts it in "The Poet at War" (73).[24] After this sinister beginning, Pound is visited first by the spirit of Marinetti, who asks Pound for his body so that he may continue to fight (the same "shit war," one must presume). It is a rather silly conceit, given Pound's age, which he points out to

"Tomaso." Uncharacteristically, the pacifist Pound advises him to take the body of some stupid, cowardly young man "to make another hero." This suggestion that Marinetti should indeed continue to fight is another indication that this poem represents some kind of breakdown. Later, Pound does have Marinetti admit his errors: glorifying war and not learning the classics:

E, dopo quel grido forte, mesto aggiunse:	and after that shout he added sadly
"In molto sequii vuota vanitade,	"I followed vain emptiness in many ways,
Spettacolo amai più che saggezza	loved show more than wisdom,
Né conobbi i savi antichi e mai no lessi	And knew not the Ancient sages
Parola di Confucio né di Mencio.	nor read Confucius & Mencius
Io cantai la guerra, tu hai voluta la pace,	I sang war, and you wanted peace.
Orbi ambidue!	Both of us blind, me to the inner things
all'interno mio mancai, tu all'odierno."	you to the things of today."

(LXXII.33-40)

Pound promises Marinetti a place in the *Cantos*—"Leave it to me; I'll give you a place in my song"—but barely gives him a chance to speak. Marinetti cries out "*Presente,*" as he had when he first appeared; he admits his errors in the lines above; and then, in an obvious imitation of Dante's style, speaking partly with himself and partly with someone else (who turns out to be Dazzi), Marinetti's shade dissolves and another appears from the shadow, spouting a line from the *Eccerinus*, the Latin play Dazzi had translated into Italian. Mimicking the rough way Dante speaks to the damned souls in the *Inferno*, Pound asks him if he has come to "lullaby me with the verses you translated twenty years ago to reawaken Mussato." Many of Pound's Italian neologisms are laughable, as Bacigalupo notes, and some are even incomprehensible, but *ninna-*

nannarmi (from *ninna-nanna,* a lullaby) is one that works rather well; the sound has a mocking sing-song quality that shows disdain. Pound and Dazzi were friends, and Dazzi, who was still alive when this Canto was written, had given Pound a copy of his translation in 1927. Pound criticizes it here, and his next visitor—Ezzelino himself—rails against it for the depiction of this strong anti-Papist, and relative of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederic II, as a tyrant. Pound had been actively trying to have Mussato translated by Peter Wigham, though as Ezzelino says, Mussato's text itself showed him as a tyrant (Dasenbrock, 1991, 253 n.28). Pound dismisses Dazzi, saying, "You and Marinetti are a pair; you both loved to excess. He the future, you the past." Marinetti returns briefly with a fragment from a Fascist speech, probably of Pound's invention, and ends with a shout that takes us back to the *presenza* theme of the Canto: "We will return!" Dazzi reappears with another line from his translation, "Were I less than a bull," which, in accordance with the *presenza* theme, brings Ezzelino himself to presence.

Ezzelino is a handy character for making the connection between the present Fascist cause and Dante's politics. As a Ghibelline, he stands for the same opposition to Papal corruption that Pound knew Dante believed in. In Ezzelino's time, the early thirteenth century, the Guelph faction, with the support of a rich and corrupt Papacy, was fighting for the control of the Italian city-states against the Ghibellines and for their autonomy from the Holy Roman Emperor. Ezzelino, like Dante after him, favored unity based on a shared vernacular language and order under the rule of the Holy Roman Emperor. This is a crucial concept for Pound, who favored a united Europe. He marked twice in Dante's *De Monarchia* the passage describing virtue and unity as the two keys to

a good government. By Dante's time, the Guelphs had won control but had split into two further factions, the Blacks supporting the Pope and the Whites the emperor, which is how Pound is able to ally Dante, a White Guelph, with the Ghibellines. The voice roars "Guelph calumny!" at poor Dazzi, who is never heard from again, and Ezzelino then goes on to list the many atrocities of his era, making an obvious link with events of the present war. The opening phrase of his rant carries a loaded modern meaning, however, for there was an anti-Fascist group in Italy in the late 1930s that called itself the Guelphs.

Pound-as-narrator thinks at first that the voice belongs to Malatesta, and Ezzelino continues to rage, now conflating Papal villains from the past with the despised current Pope, Pius XII, "worthy followers of Peter the denier, fattened by usury and excellent contracts." After he states that these popes hate Farinacci, an extreme hard-line Fascist some of whose heroic exploits were apocryphal, because he sees through their game, Ezzelino chants a long list of Fascist heroes, "to name only the generals," then returns to the theme of the popes. Despite its subject matter, the list is one of the places in this poem where Pound is able to manage something interesting with meter, by arranging the names for maximum effect. The narrator again asks the voice who he is, and he responds, "I am that Ezzelino who didn't believe/The world was made by a Jew." Bacigalupo takes this as an indication that Ezzelino "like Pound, did not accept Scripture" (1984, 76), but Casillo argues convincingly that it refers back to the "Hebraized" version of Christianity

Pound had frequently criticized. At the end of the Canto, Ezzelino thunders, "the will is ancient but the hand is new," evoking both the material hand with which the narrator tells us he is held; the missing hand of Farinacci, claimed falsely to have been lost in the war; and

the dream of a renewal of Italy, a political "making it new." Ezzelino closes with a promise that the regiments and banners will return where the skull, a symbol used by Fascist squads, sings. The meter of these last lines drops to an anti-climactic double-dactyl.

This poem is a straightforward, linear narrative, in a style reminiscent of Dante and replete with allusions that require a thorough glossary, but it is not at all similar to the work Pound had been doing or to the Cantos he would subsequently write. The previous twenty Cantos are as complex visually as they are poetically and intellectually. They are interlaced with images and Chinese ideograms, with phrases in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, as well as phonetically-spelled Chinese, with conversations both quoted and imagined, call-and-response line placements, economic and political theory, and—most important amid all Pound's angry hectoring—humor. Even the Cantos written in captivity in Pisa and in Pound's grim room at Saint Elizabeths have humor. The tone of this Canto, however, is thoroughly gloomy, perhaps befitting an homage to someone who has just died. But what are we to make of it now that it has become a long evocation of heroic spirits, at least one of whom is still alive? The elegiac quality of the longer version suggests mourning for the entire Fascist project, and the poetic poverty is surely symptomatic of some sort of collapse. Not only has Pound not begun a *paradiso,* he has gone back to hell—or rather, hell has come to him. This is not unreasonable, since in Pound's cosmology, adopted from the Greeks and reinforced by the Christian mythology expressed by Dante, one must descend into the underworld to acquire knowledge, understanding, redemption. It was the only way Odysseus could find his way home, the only way Dante could find his way out of the "dark wood" of error.

We must ask then why Pound is going back now. Where are we to imagine him on his "periplum" of the mind? While we could take this Canto as an indication that all of Europe (and America too, no doubt) was in "error"—and Pound evidently felt he had the responsibility to save it—it may also be an admission of doubt on his own part, a sign that his ship has sailed off course, been seduced by a mirage. This is not a suggestion that Pound had changed his mind about what he believed; his economic and political ideas would not change. But he may have begun to suspect that Mussolini was not the enlightened leader he had imagined him to be, especially now that the leading lights of moderate Fascism had found him to be lacking and removed him from power.[25] Pound was thoroughly capable of willfully ignoring the reality of the political situation, but the flat tone of this poem and the return of the hell theme suggest that something is amiss. "I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity," Pound wrote in 1913 (*Literary Essays*, 9). We do not find here the allusions, the accretion of images and details, the luxury of language and the multi-lingual quality of the Cantos that precede these or those that follow. If we take Bacigalupo's thesis that the simplicity of the narrative and the awkward language and poetry are Pound's attempt to appeal to the Italian public, then we must conclude that Pound was breaking his own most cherished rules of aesthetics.

7. Canto LXXIII

Cavalcanti: Corrispondenza Repubblicana

This Canto appeared February 1, 1945 in the *Marina Repubblicana*. There is no special occasion that we know of, but it followed by only two weeks Pound's homage to Marinetti, which, unlike this poem, was not identified in the newspaper as one of the *Cantos*. Canto LXXIII consists of an encounter with the spirit of Cavalcanti and is written in imitation of his style.

Like Dante, Guido Cavalcanti was a key poetic and political figure for Pound. Fifteen years Dante's senior, he was the first great master of vernacular Tuscan poetry. Cavalcanti and Guido Guinicelli, compatriots and contemporaries, were largely responsible for acquainting Dante with the vernacular poetry of the Provençal poets, which had come to them through Pier della Vigna via the Sicilian School and Sordello; but unlike Dante, they were in favor of making a clean break from the past. Despite his intense fervor for the primacy of the vernacular, Dante had never been willing to give up the influence of the Latin poets. It is for this reason that when Dante the pilgrim meets his friend's father, Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, in Hell and is questioned about why Guido is not taking the same tour, Dante responds by saying, "Perhaps because your Guido held him who guides me [Virgil] in disdain" (*Inferno* X.63). In this sense, then, Cavalcanti was to Marinetti as Dante was to Pound.

Cavalcanti's wife was the daughter of Farinata degli Uberti, that fierce spirit Dante places next to Guido's father in the *Inferno* (and an ancestor of Pound's friend Ubaldo degli Uberti, who arranged for the publication of these two Cantos). Guido apparently had a reputation as a lover, and his love poetry was highly regarded by Dante.

Pound had translated all of Cavalcanti's poetry and considered him Dante's artistic equal. Because of the connection Pound drew between love and intellectual power, he also thought it important that when Guido was fifteen, Cunizza da Romano, recognized by Dante as a symbol of transcendent physical love, may have spent a night at Cavalcanti's home in Florence. Like Dante, Cavalcanti was a White Guelph, meaning that his faction was anti-Papist, more Ghibelline than Guelph. In his introduction to *Rime*, Pound relates that Corso Donati, of the Cerchi faction, is said to have tried to assassinate Cavalcanti on a pilgrimage but notes that this may have been a fiction. Cavalcanti did, however, apparently attack Donati later in the streets of Florence, initiating a brawl that led to the exile of the leaders of both factions. Thus, before his own exile, Dante had to vote, as a prior of Florence, to send Cavalcanti, the father of Tuscan poetry, to his. Cavalcanti caught malaria at Sarzana, returned to Florence, probably with Dante's aid, and died in 1300.

Barbara Eastman contends that Pound was attracted to Cavalcanti's "taste for bloodshed" as well as his lyric gifts," though she recognizes that Canto LXXIII is the only one to condone violence. (424) One could argue that the poet who railed against war in the "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" sequence might have changed his mind after years of flirting with Fascism, but this would not account for Pound's return to the anti-war theme after Canto LXXIII. Canto LXXVIII, for example, ends with the following lines:

there
are
no
righteous
wars

And Canto LXXVI, written still in 1945, ends with a line which comes directly out of Dante's *De Monarchia*:

> woe to them that conquer with armies
>
> and whose only right is their power (483).

As Eastman writes, "The transformation is sudden and short-lived, for it occurs only between the two Italian Cantos themselves" (424). Indeed, this break is significant, for even Canto LXXII does not glorify war; it merely praises the brave heroes who have fought for the cause. Here, however, we have an outright glorification of violence, and of self-destruction as a justifiable means for the destruction of other lives. In this Canto Pound somehow brings himself to celebrate the killing of twenty Allied soldiers, but they are Canadians, not Americans. As noted earlier, the plot of this Canto, supposedly narrated to Pound by the spirit of Cavalcanti, was a common bit of propaganda that had been circulated to the press by the Fascists. While Pound was certainly capable of egregious naiveté, the artless style and theme of this narrative are uncharacteristic.

Pound translated Cavalcanti's ballads, *canzoni*, and sonnets several times and published at different intervals three versions of most of the poems. He also compiled a comprehensive critical edition in Italian of the works of Cavalcanti, *Rime,* with essays in Italian and English discussing the variant readings and including facsimiles of many manuscript pages. He probably knew Cavalcanti better than anyone of his time. The radical restructuring of Pound's poetry that would culminate in the twenty Cantos preceding the Italian Cantos had its genesis when he began retranslating Cavalcanti's sonnets and ballads in 1928. Pound had long been sensitive to the rhythmic differences between

southern European and English poetry; in 1910, for example, he wrote in *Make It New*, "Another prevalent error is that of dealing with Italian hendecasyllables as if they were English 'iambic pentameter'" (*LE*, 169). Dante, he said, used the hendecasyllabic line more effectively than Cavalcanti. Pound quoted an unnamed Italian critic explaining that "Dante's hendecasyllables were composed of combinations of rhythm units of various shapes and sizes and that these pieces were put together in lines so as to make, roughly, eleven syllables in all" (*LE*, 169). But though Pound recognized the problem of dealing with the Italian hendecasyllable as if it were iambic pentameter, he had found it difficult to avoid. As Donald Davie writes, "It was an error into which he had fallen himself in his version of 1912" (1982, 106). In the later versions of 1928-1932, Pound began to break the line, a technique familiar to all readers of the *Cantos*. Cavalcanti's "*Donna mi priegha*," on which Canto LXXIII is modelled, begins as follows:

DONNA mi priegha
perch'i volglio dire
D'un accidente
che sovente
é fero
Ed é sí altero
ch'é chiamato amore
SICCHE chi l negha
possa il ver sentire
Ond a'l presente
conoscente
chero
Perch' i no spero
ch om di basso chore
. . . . . .

In quella parte
dove sta memoria

(*Rime*, 170)

Cavalcanti is not easy to imitate. He uses complicated word play and breaks the line into rhythmic segments, and his lines and stanzas interlock, leaving the reader no place to rest. Pound determined the placement on the page of the Italian text quoted above in the hope that the reader would see the fragmentation that is evident if one reads the Italian version aloud. "Rhythm is perhaps the most primal of all things known to us," Pound wrote in his introduction to *Rime*:

> As for the verse itself: I believe in an ultimate and absolute rhythm as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence. It is only, then, in perfect rhythm joined to the perfect word that the two-fold vision can be recorded. (*Rime,* 43)

Although the *Cantos* are full of Greek metrical patterns, it was in translating Cavalcanti that Pound managed to free himself from the tendency toward iambic pentameter. In addition to Cavalcanti's importance in nudging Pound toward experimentation with meter and internal sound combinations, he provided Pound, especially in "*Donna mi priegha,"* additional confirmation of what he believed he saw in the Provençal poets, the celebration of a mystical component in physical love. Pound identified this concept in Propertius and encountered it again when he translated Remy de Gourmont's *Natural Philosophy of Love*, whose idea was that there was a correlation between coitus and intellectual energy. It is a theme that runs through the *Cantos* and accounts for the prominence of Aphrodite and Dionysus and of figures like Johannes Scotus Erigena, who

tried to retain the celebrations of fertility from Greek religion that had been combined with Christianity in its early years.

Pound had quoted part of "Donna mi Priegha" as an homage to Cavalcanti in Canto XXXVI, of which Kenner writes, "having made a language in which it was possible to write the *Cantos* he is free to use in the *Cantos* a scrap of translation as an emotional peg, a way of marking out a zone of feeling" (1985, 132). Such a "scrap," then, is no longer strictly a translation; it becomes one of Pound's "luminous details." Pound valued Cavalcanti for his lyricism and for his "precise interpretive metaphor" (*LE*, 162); these influences found their way into his own poetry, but his great debts to the master are in meter and metaphysics.

Canto LXXIII, *"Corrispondenza Repubblicana,"* is an imitation of Cavalcanti's "Donna mi Priegha," of which a few lines are quoted above. But it is important to note in what ways Pound imitates and where he departs from Cavalcanti. The broken line, which one finds throughout the *Cantos*, is indeed present in Canto LXXIII. Pound begins with an introductory stanza, setting the scene, which is reminiscent of Dante more than Cavalcanti: it describes sleeping and waking in "the dark air," "*l'aere perso,*" a phrase taken from Dante's canto V, the Francesca and Paolo canto:

E poi dormii	And then I slept
E sveglandomi nell'aere perso	And waking in the evil air
Vidi e sentii	I saw and heard,
E quel ch'io vidi mi pareva andar a cavallo,	And that which I saw seemed to go on horseback,
E sentii:	And I heard:

(LXXIII.1-5)

We are still with Dante, poetically as well as thematically. The lines are shorter than Dante's or Cavalcanti's, but the rhyme scheme is Dante's. Pound does not break the line until he begins to quote the spirit who visits him in this Canto (Cavalcanti, as we will later learn):

"A me non fa gioia
Che la mia stirpe muoia
infangata della vergogna
Governata dalla carogna
e spergiurata.
Roosevelt, Churchill ed Eden
bastardi ed ebreucci
Lurchi e bugiardi tutti
e il popolo spremuto in
tutto
ed idiota!"

It gives me no joy
That my line should die out
smeared with shame
Governed by carrion
and perjured.
Roosevelt, Churchill and Eden
bastards and jew-boys
Polluted liars, all of them
and the populace bled in every
way
and idiotic!

(LXXIII.6-15)

Pound's spacing is actually more extreme than can be shown in this format and more closely approximates Cavalcanti's in "*Donna mi priegha.*" He explains the advantage of this rhythmic pattern in "The Other Dimension," one of the English essays in *Rime:*

> The danger of a canzone composed entirely in hendecasyllabics is that of going heavy. Dante avoids it in Donne ch'Avete without using inner rhymes. Here Guido employs them. . . . I have managed to print the Donna mi Prega in such a

> way that its articulations strike the eye without need of a rhyme table. . . . 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. (22)

Pound points out in the essay that it is virtually impossible to do what he has described, not because there are not enough rhymes in English but because "the english [sic] two-syllable rhymes are of the wrong timbre and weight." They either "have extra consonants at the end, as in *flowing* and *going;* or they go squshy; or they fluff up as in *snowy* and *goeth"* (23). In the opening fifteen lines of Pound's own Italian canzone, quoted in two sections above, there are five end rhymes, one of which, *sentii*, repeats once. There are approximately six internal rhymes, depending on how strictly one defines a rhyme, which in Pound's case should probably not be very rigid. Some, like the internal *infangata, Governata,* and final *spergiurata* are incontestably cavalcantesque. The poem begins in a strong imitation of Cavalcanti; it looks and sounds like his style, but despite Pound's continuation of Cavalcanti's pattern of broken lines, the poem begins to lose its voice to the rhetoric of the story. We may be able to accept rhyming *tutti* with *tutto,* but if *spremuto* is meant as an internal rhyme, it would not be very convincing to an Italian reader; the double consonant changes the sound too much. Pound is unable to find Italian rhymes for the English names—or for *cavallo* which he needs for its pun with Cavalcanti. *Idiota,* however, might be loosely construed as a rhyme with the three words ending in *ata.*

The next segment, "*Morto che fui a Sarzana / aspetto la diana / della riscossa,*" contains a compelling forward-moving internal rhyme and another important word for which Pound fails to find a rhyme. *Riscossa* can be translated as *reconquest,* but it can also mean an *awakening, arousal* (especially in a military sense), *revenge,* or *return.* It was the term used by the Fascist government at Salò, as already noted, for their program to revitalize the movement, which by this time had lost its control to the Germans and many of its followers to good sense. (Despite the precarious position in which it placed him, Pound continued openly to support Mussolini and the new Salò government, but he mentioned Mussolini and the party less frequently by name in his many short articles in Italian newspapers and wrote nothing about the *Duce's* removal from office by the Grand Council or his arrest.) In this Canto Pound is making the same sort of conflation of the medieval hero cult and Fascist mythology that he made in Canto LXXII between the Italy of Ezzelino and that of World War II. Pound has Cavalcanti say, in the first line quoted above, "Having died at Sarzana, I await the reveille of the reconquest," even though Pound well knew that Cavalcanti returned in 1300 from his exile at Sarzana and died in Florence. My only explanation for this apparent lapse is that he wanted the sound for the rhyme, not excessively eccentric for Pound.

After the opening seventeen lines, the rhyme scheme becomes less and less dependable. The narrative takes over, and melopoeia loses out to logopoeia. Bacigalupo's claim that in much of Pound's poetry rhythm is secondary to syntax is not tenable in general, but it is true in the case of this poem. Visually, the poem looks like Cavalcanti's verse—and some of the lines are indeed hendecasyllablic—and Pound has made a valiant attempt to approximate Guido's complex rhyme schemes, but the

fragmentation of many of these lines seems arbitrary and is not even respectful of syntax. And the rhythm is irregular and at times awkward. The lines below are not atypical of the whole poem:

Passai per Armino
ed incontrai uno spirito gagliardo
Che cantava come incantata
di gioia!
Era una contadinella
Un po' tozza ma bella
ch'aveva a braccio due tedeschi
E cantava,
cantava amore
senza aver bisogno
d'andar in cielo.

I came by way of Arimino
and I met a hardy spirit
Who was singing as if possessed
by joy!
she was a peasant girl
A little stout but pretty
who had a German on each arm
And she was singing,
singing of love
without need
of going to heaven.
(439)

The doubling of *cantava/incantata* is an imitation of Cavalcanti's technique of creating internal rhymes with two different forms of the same word, but here the two are either too close together or not far enough apart. The effect in this case is an unintentional tongue-twister, as is much of this poem. The couplet that follows is a rather predictable rhyme; if one adds the diminutive *-ella* to any feminine word, it will rhyme with *bella*. The word *contadinella* itself is metrically cumbersome, creating with its article four weak syllables in a row. Pound describes the girl as *tozza*, stocky, which may be intended to convey his respect for robust Italian peasantry.

The ending of this Canto is militaristic rhetoric at its most redundant, from a line that cries out "Gloria della patria!" to a repeat of *riscossa.* Cavalcanti says he has returned from the *terzo cielo,* the third ring of heaven,[26] to see this rebirth in Romagna. Romagna, the locale of this fable, is also the birthplace of Mussolini, whose Romagna accent Pound imitates in Canto LXXII. The last lines, "Ma che ragazza! / che ragazze, / che ragazzi, / portan il nero!," which are spoken by the spirit of Cavalcanti, do not rhyme, and the ending, despite its exclamation point, is hardly climactic. It translates; "What a girl! / what girls, / what boys, / they wear the black!" Pound has managed to keep up the broken-line format throughout, and there are occasional internal rhymes and alliterative passages, but the poem does not have the poetic qualities or emotional intensity usually found in both Cavalcanti and Pound. The tone is desperate and insincere, hardly a plausible motive for Cavalcanti to have descended from heaven.

The clear depiction of emotion, which Pound finds so compelling in Cavalcanti, is missing in this Canto. "Than Guido no psychologist of the emotions is more keen in his understanding, more precise in his expression," Pound wrote in his introduction, "we have in him no rhetoric, but always a true delineation" (*Rime,* 39). Canto LXXIII is more rhetoric than poem, and the subject-matter, besides being uncharacteristic for Pound, is embarrassing in its crudeness. While one can argue that Pound has made some fairly complex allusions and connections in this canto, as in LXXII, there is nothing remotely resembling the complexity, lyric power, musicality, or intellectual vigor of the rest of the *Cantos.*

Pound was an exile, like Dante, like Cavalcanti. It had, of course, been his choice to live in Europe and settle in Italy, and he had willingly embraced Mussolini's

movement; he did so, however, not as an immigrant to Italy but as an American who had always admired Italian art and culture. He had been to America only twice since leaving for London in 1908, and following the United States' declaration of war, he no longer had the option to return. After the news of Pearl Harbor, in fact, Pound told his family that he had tried to get passage to the United States. It is not clear if or why he was unable to leave; he may have decided that his family situation was simply too complicated.[27] However, he never considered himself anything but an American. "I don't have to *try* to be American," he wrote Eliot in 1939. "Am I American? Yes, and bugger the state of the country, the utter betrayal of the American Constitution, the filth of the Universities." (qtd. in Carpenter, 557). His position was similar to Dante's: while he felt estranged from his home and angry about its politics, he never identified himself as anything but American and always criticized U.S. policy as a citizen. He hoped that the Fascist movement would rejuvenate Europe economically and provide a model for the United States to get back on the "right" track as well. His anger against America was based on his conviction that his country had drifted away from its original ideals. When he was questioned by U.S. intelligence agents[28] after his arrest in Genoa, he wrote in his official statement that after the 1943 formation of the new German-backed Salò party:

> Mezzasoma let me go to Milan since I told him that even if Italy fell I must go on with my own economic propaganda, that is, my observance of the money clause in the United States Constitution which my grandfather had fought for in 1878, saying the same things I was saying. (Pound and Spoo, 63)[29]

There are many small indications that Pound may have been disenchanted with the new republic at Salò. He refused, for example, to continue to broadcast for the German-run

regime. During the hearings on his fitness to stand trial, he stood up and shouted, "I never did believe in Fascism, God damn it; I am opposed to Fascism" (Carpenter, 749), and he was even reported to have repudiated Mussolini. Of course, this could have been a political maneuver, but Pound was famously inept at gauging his own political risks. He sometimes changed his mind and admitted his errors, but more often than not he stood by them, even to his detriment. His intention to act as his own counsel is an example of just how out of touch he was; he was confident that if he could explain his interpretations of Adams, Jefferson, and Confucius, the court would see that he had been acting to save the U.S. Constitution, rather than as a traitor.[30]

Pound had his own idea of who Mussolini was, an idea he clung to even when the real *Duce* proved to be something else. It was a mythology based on heroic characters from literature and history and on Pound's fusion of the righteous leaders depicted in the writings of Dante and Confucius, and this mythology depended on an idealistic hope that was absurdly naive. It is not a denial of his approval of Fascist dogma to suggest that the "enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent / shoulders" with which Pound begins the *Pisan Cantos* is a lament not just for the defeat of Fascism but for its failure to live up to the ideals he had imagined it stood for. The dream was his own. During one of his sessions with a psychiatrist at Saint Elizabeths, he would say with tragic grandiosity, when asked how he accounted for his extreme fatigue, "all of Europe is on my shoulders" (Pound and Spoo, 25). When Donald Hall interviewed him for the *Paris Review* in 1963 and asked if his return to Europe after his release from Saint Elizabeths had been a disappointment, Pound responded:

> Undoubtedly. Europe was a shock. The shock of no longer feeling oneself in the center of something is probably part of it. Then there is the incomprehension, Europe's incomprehension, of organic America. There are so many things which I, as an American, cannot say to a European with any hope of being understood. Somebody said that I am the last American living the tragedy of Europe. (59)

As much as Pound was "in the center" of the world of literature in the early part of the century, he was never more than a marginal figure to the Italian Fascists, useful but not necessary. He was not a member of the party; his understanding of Fascist policy was whimsical at best; and his own theories were probably no more intelligible to Italian bureaucrats than to the American authorities. In 1940, after his first few live radio broadcasts, the Italians became so suspicious when he said something at the end of his talk that was not in the script, "simply a repeat of a main point," that they ordered him to record his talks on disks for later broadcast (Pound and Spoo, 61).

Pound had always accepted the limitations the Italians placed on his freedom to broadcast as necessary for his own and their protection, but under the Salò regime the restrictions were being decided upon by Germans. It is not possible to know exactly what his attitude was toward Mussolini and Fascism at this point, but it is evident that here, in the Italian Cantos, Pound is unable to "make it cohere." There is a sense in which the Italian Cantos, the least complex and allusive of Pound's poetry, are also the most contrived. The poet who believed intensely that art was the measure of a society's economic and cultural virtue could not write a bridge from the Purgatorial Cantos, the middle forty Cantos ending with Canto LXXI, in which he had outlined the necessary

steps a society must take to reach the terrestrial paradise he envisioned, with art and economics in heavenly concord, to what was left of Europe and his ideals.

In these most Fascist of Cantos, there is, ironically, no evidence of the Fascist aesthetic that so appealed to Pound or of the ideogrammic style of all his later work One must wonder if this is because they were written in haste, or if they no longer carry the vitality of Fascism in their heart. One could argue that Pound was out of practice writing poetry, but the *Pisan Cantos,* written under worse conditions and with fewer resources, put the lie to that. It is the Italian Cantos that are an anomaly. At this point Pound's doubts overwhelmed him. The "enormous tragedy" was his passionate belief in something that had never existed. He had invented a mythology of Fascism even more fantastic than the one the movement had created for itself, and its collapse was a breakdown from which the *Pisan Cantos* would be the recovery.

8. Pisa and Recovery

The controversy over awarding Pound the Bollingen Prize for literature for the *Pisan Cantos* had nothing to do with the poetry. Nor were the politics of the man locked up in Saint Elizabeths ever in dispute. The question was whether or not the committee could reward one in light of the other, and it is a question still being asked. Donald Hall writes of this controversy, "I have never found it difficult to split poem from poet" (1992, 189). And yet, if any poet is present in the work, it is Pound. It is the very intensity of Pound's conviction that gives the poem its power, and that is what appears to be lacking in the Italian Cantos. With the *Pisan Cantos* Pound is defeated but defiant. The highly allusive, ideogrammic texture of these poems cannot be explained merely by the fact of his incarceration or his realization of the possibility of imminent death; they are a return to the style he had developed in the twenty Cantos preceding the Italian Cantos, and that return began several months before his arrest, as the notebooks in which he was working in December, 1944, attest. In 1998, when Pound's daughter Mary recorded the Italian Cantos for this project, I asked her how she accounted for the difference in their poetic character, and she said that she thought Pound probably intended to revise them. But though Pound did revise them heavily, as he did all his work, the form of the Italian Cantos remained essentially the same.[31] Furthermore, the notebooks in which he was working on both the Italian Cantos and the material in Italian that would later contribute a basis for the *Pisan Cantos* let us see that these other Italian poems, even in early drafts, were already more sophisticated poetically. The Italian Cantos stand out and stand alone.

The notes for subsequent Cantos, which would eventually form large parts of the *Pisan Cantos,* are still in the narrative mode established by the Italian Cantos. They are not ideogrammic as the *Pisan Cantos* would be; but they are multi-lingual, even though written in Italian, and they contain some of the themes that had always been important to Pound. While there are a few sections in which Pound again attempts *terza rima,* and the narrative and many of the references carry forward the Dante mask found in Cantos LXXII and LXXIII, in the main these drafts look quite different from both the Italian Cantos and the *Pisan Cantos*. In other words, though the Italian Cantos may have provided the impetus to return, it is these drafts, not the Italian Cantos, that constitute a transition back to Pound's earlier poetic inclinations. An example can be seen in a fragmented section in which Basinio, Malatesta's court poet, anachronistically encounters Cunizza:

ombra son' <ombra e> già ombra fui quando scrissi

l'Isoteus

flos collegit rerum
<Flaminio. Augurellus.
Basinio>
ombra che seppe il greco –
ed ebbi ragione – e di ragione non si vive
<né> senza sostanza. né senz'ira

Tu sei perché amasti (Bush, 1997, 91-93)

Bush translates these lines as:

I am a shade <shade and> was already a shade when I wrote

the Isoteus

flos collegit rerum [?]

a shade who knew Greek
and I was right and one does not live by reason
nor without substance nor without anger
you are because you loved (1997, 91-93).[32]

Pound has returned to the universal themes of light and dark, Hellenism, and love. Fascism has not been left behind, but it is no longer the whole surface and subtext of the poem. *Ombra fui* is an inverted paraphrase of Virgil's cryptic response to Dante in the beginning of the *Inferno*: "*Non omo, omo già fui.*" He tells Dante, "not man, but man I once was." Bassinio says he is not a shade but was when he wrote the Isoteus. It is not clear what Pound means by this—that Bassinio was not completely alive, not completely himself when he wrote the Isoteus, perhaps. If so, we might infer that Pound was a shade when he wrote the Italian Cantos.

One of Pound's principal subjects that returns in this draft is the importance of love, sexual love. Cunizza, who appears throughout the *Cantos* as a symbol of pagan—and therefore natural—love, had been mentioned in passing in Canto LXXII, but here she is a character. *Ira, anger,* is a possible reference, as in Canto LXIII, to another of Pound's heroes, John Adams, who wrote that "the mind must be agitated with some passion, either love, fear, hope, &c, before she will do her best" (Terrell., 277),[33] an exhortation Pound obviously took to heart. A longer section, continuing the encounter with Cunizza, eventually became part of Canto LXXVI. Here are some lines from the notebook entry for February 12 1945 that appear in Bush's analysis:

In un triedro del oliv[e]to m'apparve
ed ella: Tiranno lo chiamano
~~non~~ ma non tradiva i suoi
gran mio fratello
negus vezer mon bel pensar no val

At a triedro of an olive grove she
appeared to me
and she: they call him tyrant
~~not~~ but he did not betray his own
my great brother
negus vezer mon bel pensar no val[34]

(1997, 97)

Already in these sketches in Italian Pound has returned to his habit of referring to emblematic personalities and quoting Provençal, Latin, and other languages, but the passage, like most in the notebooks, is still narrative and still reminiscent of Dante. After many typescripts and revisions in Italian that were never published, these lines are recalled and interwoven with others to appear in Canto LXXVI:

the sun in his great periplum
leads in his fleet here
sotto le nostre scoglie
under our craggy cliffs
alevel their mast-tops
Sigismundo by the Aurelia to Genova
by la vecchia sotto S. Pantaleone
Cunizza qua al triedro,
and la scalza, and she who said: I still have the mould

Some of the lines here[35] come from other parts of the draft, and the reference to S. Pantaleone recalls the priest in Pound's pre-war attempt at a different Canto LXXIV. He put great effort into pulling together all the elements that would constitute his fanciful notion of an ideogram; it was the method he began in Cantos LII to LXXI, and he returns to it at Pisa. None of Pound's many revisions of the Italian Cantos yielded such complexity as we find here.

The *Pisan Cantos* are not unique in their incorporation of foreign language, bits of music, ideograms and other visual materials; they are a continuation of what Pound began in the twenty Cantos he published in 1940, and this approach carries over into the sections that follow the *Pisan Cantos*, as well. Because of the break represented by the Italian Cantos, however, we can see them as a recovery of Pound's poetic voice. And because they are so personal that recovery might appear repentant, which would be a misreading. The *Pisan Cantos* represent a restoration of Pound's earlier ethical system, with all its prejudices intact. However flawed the moral vision of the *Pisan Cantos* may be, it is not compromised like the ethical system that allowed Pound to espouse violence in Canto LXXIII and violate his poetics and convictions in both the Italian Cantos.

The *Pisan Cantos* return to pacifism, but Pound does not reject his anti-Semitism; for him it is of a piece with his opposition to war. In keeping with that pacifism, he was also opposed to capital punishment. For example, a prisoner who was executed at the DTC[36] is mentioned several times, beginning in Canto LXXIV: "Till was hung yesterday/for murder with rape and trimmings" (p.444) and in Canto LXXVII as "St. Louis Till" (p.487). Although Pound rarely calls attention to his own suffering, he uses it in Canto LXXXIII to argue against the death penalty:

Nor can who has passed a month in the death cells
believe in capital punishment
No man who has passed a month in the death cells
believes in cages for beasts (550).

The most significant return in the *Pisan Cantos* is to the ideogrammic style, in which a line may not relate to the one following but is meant to be held in memory until another familiar part of the theme recurs. With this delayed accretion of sounds and ideas, Pound strove to create an effect something like what he imagined the function of the Chinese ideogram to be.

It is possible to see the Italian Cantos as parallel to what happened in Italian art during the Fascist era. In the confident early days of the regime, artists were allowed—even encouraged—to be experimental. The government sponsored exhibits, gave prizes, and purchased more than half the art presented at the many regional and national exhibits. No restrictions were placed on style or content, and the excitement generated by the first Fascist exhibit, in 1932, the *Mostra Fascista,* despite its massively aggressive character, was due to this freedom. By 1937, the time of the second *Mostra,* there were still no artistic restrictions, but the organization of the exhibit became more oriented towards propaganda. The third and last *Mostra,* in 1942, was a disaster. By this time the regime had begun to require certain subjects for the art presented at all Italian exhibits, and the quality of the art suffered as a consequence. Although no one placed any restrictions that we know of on Pound until the Germans took over the radio, the two Italian Cantos are like that late Fascist art, forced into conformity with an external discipline, one of artifice rather than art, more in concert with the regime than with principles of aesthetics. The

Pisan Cantos are powerful because they return to the aesthetic and ethical place from which Pound had arguably intended to enter his *paradiso*. Paradise is no longer possible, but, finally, poetry is.

9. Why Hypertext

There is a perception among many who write about hypertext, Robert Coover and J. David Bolter among them, that almost anything non-linear qualifies as a hypertext. Some of the authors most often cited to illustrate this view are Joyce, Stein, Cortazar, and Sterne, and many of these cases are certainly precursors, attempts to do something similar to what hypertext now does. According to Bolter, "In all modern fiction, there is a tension between the linear experience of reading and the structure of allusion and reference." (135) Regarding *Finnegans Wake,* he writes, "Joyce's narrative strategy is too complex and too dynamic for the medium of print." Bolter contends that if it were computerized, one could map the network of references and become an "ideal" reader (137). While this view leans toward an insupportable assumption that modernists like Joyce and Pound would have been writing hypertexts if the technology had been available, it is true that what they were doing attempts some of the same effects one now sees in hypertext. There are several possible explanations for this revolutionary break with aesthetic tradition, for this apparent attempt at something which had not yet been invented.

The importance of the machine age is not to be underestimated; it made possible—indeed inescapable—a different attitude towards the perception and organization of work. This change in perception influenced many artists, among them Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, both of whom became fascinated with the notion of clusters or nodes of energy as an organizing principle for aesthetic elements. The desire to depict motion was a powerful motivating force in Italian Futurist painting, but experimentation with perspective was pervasive in all the arts. For Pound, as much as for

Picasso or Prokofiev, the examination of elements in relation to each other was crucial in leading to a break with traditional methods of representation.

There was also an unprecedented cross-pollination of genres, perhaps influenced by Russian formalism, which, though it would not be translated for another sixty years, undoubtedly slipped into Western culture through the back door of the Paris Opera and the avant-garde art galleries. This genre-crossing was particularly important among the visual and musical arts and literature, especially in Paris, where Pound spent the early 1920s. The *Ballets Russes* and Stravinsky were obliterating both the narrative line in dance and the melodic line in music; Stein and Cézanne were discussing composition in terms of arrangements of masses of equal weight; and Picasso was designing sets for Diaghilev. There was also, even before the rise of Fascist movements in Europe, a desire, especially in France, Italy, and Germany, to find an art that would be total. In Italy this approached the level of a search for a new religion, a quest that had Mussolini's enthusiastic approval. This totalizing urge led to both exhilarating new currents in art and literature and an atmosphere in which Fascism might develop. Finally, most Modernists had an acute awareness of great political and social change, including an intense discomfort with *laissez-faire* and democratic regimes; this led some of them towards the Left and many, like Wyndham Lewis, Remy de Gourmont, and Pound, to the Right. This intense reaction found its way into the aesthetics of many who professed to be apolitical as well as those who did not; its most famous and tragic example was Pound.

The writing engendered by these multiple and inter-acting influences is often considered by critics and early enthusiasts of electronic writing, such as J. David Bolter and George Landow, to be hypertext, not just because it is non-linear, but because the

content is contingent on form, or in some cases is constituted *by* the form, and because the structure is fluid and discernible. Of course, any good literature is bound to contain non-linear elements, to require the reader to hold some formal element or information in memory while moving ahead. The difference between the effort of short-term memory required to get to the end of a Henry James sentence or a passage in Proust and that needed to get through *Ulysses* or *The Sound and the Fury*, however, is the requirement that the reader submit to simultaneity and trust that the work will, at some point, cohere. As with electronic hypertexts, many Modernist works may be read from a different perspective each time, and re-reading them means experiencing individual elements from different perspectives and in relations that change or develop with each reading. Interactivity is inevitable in such works. As in hypertext, the reader of much Modernist and post-modern literature is called upon to supply the links, the map, that makes the modernist textual space perceivable as a unity. And the links will not be supplied in the same way by each reader or by the same reader every time.

Because of their incorporation of so much material that is outside the text, that must be supplied by the reader, and that refers to or elicits other media, many Modernist works lend themselves to multimedia technology, and Pound's *Cantos* are a prime case. What Pound and a few of his contemporaries saw was that fragments of poetry, sound, image, and allusion could be held in the mind like notes in a chord and layered with other material in a sort of fugal pattern to make something that is inclusive of many meanings and methods and makes a comprehensible meaning of its own. Many of the Chinese characters Pound places throughout the poem rhyme or pun with the text alongside; similarly, the Greek words, whether spelled correctly or not, were calculated by Pound to

make visual or aural puns with the text. These musical, linguistic, and visual elements are not decorative or illustrative like the work of the pre-Raphaelites by whom Pound was influenced early in his career. They are inseparable from the poem; they are the poem. This accretion of visual, tonal and conceptual elements, which Pound variously described as "fugal" and "ideogrammic," is what makes hypertext exceptionally useful for examining Pound's work.

There is a hidden element of control in hypertexts, and the false sense of absolute freedom that the reader is encouraged to adopt in encountering them, is suggestive of both the experience of reading poetry like Pound's and the Fascist myths of artistic freedom that appealed to Pound. Hypertexts give the appearance to the untrained reader of being completely unhinged and unbounded, when in fact, like Fascist and other totalitarian art, they are overwhelmingly structured. Like the epic form favored by Pound, hypertexts transcend and transgress borders, leading the reader to feel that they are boundless, endless, and free of constraints. In fact, however, works like the *Cantos* and electronic texts require an intensity of involvement and active participation that can ultimately lead the reader into complicity with the text. This does not mean that electronic texts are fascistic, but they often inadvertently affect the reader in the same way the works we consider most representative of Fascism do. The misleading sense of freedom and control the reader has in moving through hypertexts is in some ways analogous to Fascist rhetoric, with its ubiquitous terminology of freedom and power. While the ability to determine where and how one will move through such massive work seems to offer endless possibilities, the reader's resistance to the flaws in a highly politicized work, for example, or one of questionable accuracy, is overwhelmed.

The aim of the CD-ROM that accompanies this text is neither to mislead nor to overwhelm; it is to make the multidimensionality and the multiple media of these works manifest. The "reader" of this CD-ROM should ideally become a "player," constantly choosing a dimension or moving between dimensions, always aware of the parallel texts, translations, or supporting materials that are present in other dimensions at the same time he is experiencing the one that he has chosen, in much the same way that an experienced reader of Pound's *Cantos* perceives, deduces, and compiles the accretion of visual, auditory, and verbal material that accounts for the overlapping clusters of significance in the overall work.

The electronic document presented here is a hypertext: it includes not only linked texts that offer explication and commentary, but sound recordings that provide the pronunciation of the Italian and, where they occur, of other languages, and visual files that range from biographical images and images of art to which Pound refers in his text to facsimiles of original versions and of early publications of some of these and other pertinent documents. It is intended to make the multi-media aspects of the poetry apparent, and the multi-media format was chosen also to make this work more accessible; it can enable a far more sophisticated level of comprehension than most readers and students are able to achieve alone. And because the various media can be present during the reading, it represents the multiple facets of the text in a way that closely approximates a well-versed reader's experience of the poetry. It makes manifest, for example, the way Pound uses foreign language to pun and rhyme, both visually and aurally, with the English text. It provides access to material that is impossible to illustrate in a linear format: the musical form, interlocking allusions, and Chinese ideograms, which are a key

part of the work, not only in their visual presence but in the way they relate to the material in the English text and emphasize its shape.

10. The CD-ROM

The CD-ROM is the principal element of this presentation. It does not supplant the text of these Cantos; it supports it. It is comprised of over three hundred files that relate in some way to the Italian Cantos, the *Pisan Cantos,* or to Pound and his influences. There are six main sections, all accessible from the opening page by clicking on buttons or titles: a biography of Pound with links to a page of dates and to pages for people important to Pound; an explanation of the structure of the *Cantos* and of some of the themes behind the poem; a section about the Italian Cantos, which includes textual history and analysis, as well as links to pages for people or events instrumental to the creation of the poems, facsimiles of the first publications, and images of manuscript and typescript pages; a short explanation of how the CD-ROM works, which includes permissions and copyright information; and the two poems. The primary texts on the CD-ROM are based on the New Directions 1995 edition. Each of the poems is presented with an English translation alongside. In the case of Canto LXXII, this translation is based on Pound's own, an unfinished interlinear scribble, which was edited by a committee of scholars for the 1995 New Direction edition of the *Cantos.* It is presented, despite its flaws, but with links to pages that explain these flaws or omissions in this translation and give alternative versions. The translation for Canto LXXIII is my own.

The sound files that accompany the poems are in Italian and were recorded for this project in the CUNY-TV studio by Mary de Rachewiltz, Pound's daughter, who has been reading her father's poetry in public for at least forty years. She tends to falter in the recording in the same places where the poems seem to lose their momentum, their melopoeia, a futher indication that the Italian Cantos are exceptional for Pound. In

addition to these two large sound files, I have created my own recordings to accompany the words and phrases and proper names in the glossary. Many of these glossary pages include images—art work, photographic portraits, maps, and manifestos—as well as sound files. Pound never recorded the Italian Cantos, but I provide recordings of him reading short passages from his other poems that relate to the Italian Cantos. The presentation begins with music of Vivaldi, because Pound, with his companion, the American violinist Olga Rudge, revived Vivaldi's music, which had not been performed for many years and was almost unknown, and which was physically crumbling in a library in Venice. Pound and Rudge copied Vivaldi's music over by hand, saving it from extinction, and organized concerts to present his music at Rapallo, where Olga was accompanied by the young American composer and pianist George Antheil.

The CD-ROM has been produced in two formats, one of which accompanies this text. It was initially created in HTML (hypertext markup language), a programming language descended from SGML (standard general markup language). The difference between them is one of degree; SGML encodes elements at a more comprehensive level than HTML, making possible extremely complex searches that cannot be done in HTML. This final version of the CD-ROM is in ISO 9600, the standard CD-ROM format. There is another format, Joliet, which is more flexible for the creator of the CD-ROM but is not compatible with all browsers. This CD-ROM can be read by any kind of computer, Apple or PC, on any browser.

There are two reasons for choosing to produce a CD-ROM rather than to publish this material on the Internet: a CD-ROM cannot be altered by the reader, and its contents are, therefore, relatively protected from copyright infringement; and sound, graphics, and

video images are more rapidly accessible on CD-ROM and are of far superior quality than on the Internet. Although the Internet offers obvious advantages, especially in terms of cost and ease of access for the user, as well as breadth of distribution, the many visual and audio files in this presentation would make it prohibitively time-consuming to download. Furthermore, if there is a final edition for public distribution, the CD-ROM can eventually be encoded with parameters for readers at different levels, so that a more sophisticated reader need not look at every allusion and a beginning student of the poetry need not be overwhelmed by textual commentary. One great advantage of this technology is that, while one can target a particular audience with the encoding, the CD-ROM itself need not be limited to one group.

The four main types of links in the CD-ROM are:

- *Textual notes* discuss the many versions of the typescripts of these cantos and the notebooks in Pound's hand. I make several of these typescripts available as facsimiles.
- *Explanatory notes* include links to visual images alluded to in the text as well as to sound and video segments that bring many of these allusions to life. There are images of some of the art to which Pound refers and of other art that was important to Pound.
- *A glossary* is particularly important with Pound, who used many archaisms and foreign words and phrases, often, as mentioned above, to pun or rhyme. There are links from the glossary entries to the same recordings to which one can link from within the text.

- *Bibliographic references* are available for all quotations by clicking on either the quotation itself or the quotation marks. Where it is necessary to provide page numbers, the bibliographic reference is separate from the main bibliography but links to it; where only the publication information is required, the link goes directly to that part of the bibliography.

All the above links permit the reader to connect to further levels of explication but also allow for immediate return to the poem. The text is primary throughout, and I encourage the use of the CD-ROM along with a written copy of the *Cantos*. In addition to making far more material available than is feasible in a single printed format, this CD-ROM is intended to make it possible to apprehend this material with minimal interruption of the reading.

Notes

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[1] Lines 9-35 of what we now know as Canto 72 were published on January 15, 1945 in the *Marina Repubblicana;* Canto 73 appeared in the same newspaper on February 1.

[2] Throughout the *Commedia,* Dante and Virgil encounter souls who either recognize them by their accents or are identified by Dante in the same way. When Dante encounters Farinata degli Uberti in the Circle of the Heretics, for example, Farinata hears him speaking with Virgil and greets him "*O Tosco," Oh, Tuscan.* (*Inf.* X.22)

[3] The CD-ROM points out the other parallels between this character and Mussolini. For example, Ezzelino was a leader of the Ghibelline faction, who were the descendants of the Imperial nobility and were loyal to the Holy Roman Emperor. Their opponents, the Guelphs, were the newly rich middle-class who tended to be puritanical and anti-intellectual and who were supporters of the Church and the popes. Although Dante came from the Guelph class, by the time he was born in 1265, the Guelphs were firmly in power and had split into two factions. As a White Guelph, Dante was a moderate, but he preferred the Emperor to the Church. One reason he condemned usurers so vehemently in the *Inferno* is that he felt that it was the money-lenders, mostly from Florence and Venice, who had swarmed through northern Europe wherever Jews were expelled, whose money had corrupted the popes and enriched the bourgeoisie, causing much of the strife in Italy. The resonance of these ideas for Pound is evident throughout the *Cantos* but is especially clear here, where he makes a hero of Ezzelino.

[4] This is not entirely due to his lack of expertise; Pound's neologisms are hard enough in English, but in Italian some of them are as opaque to native-speakers as to us. Still, the translation of "*aere perso*" as *lost air* misses the connection to Dante, whose phrase this is. See p. 46, above.

[5] In Kenner's note regarding the Italian Cantos, he writes:

> And never published. The gap left by their absence has now become part of the poem: a fault line, record of shifting masses (469n).

[6]The 1995 New Directions edition includes a translation of Canto 72, based on one Pound did at Olga's urging, but there is still no translation of Canto 73. Furthermore, whether it was because of his awareness of the political danger these Cantos then posed for him or because he wrote the translation in haste, Pound omitted certain phrases and altered the sense of others in ways that affect the impact. Although it provides the primary translation for Canto 72 on the CD-ROM, there are links to alternate translations of those passages and written explanations of the significance of these changes or omissions.

[7] Cited in Kramer, 88.

[8] see Jeffrey T. Schnapp, "Epic Demonstrations: Fascist Modernity and the 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution," in Golsan, *Fascism, Aesthetics, and Culture,* and

Marla Stone, "The State as Patron: Making Official Culture in Fascist Italy," in Affron and Antliff, *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy.*

[9] In classical Rome, a *lictor* was a functionary who carried fasces when attending a magistrate in public appearances. The Fascists seized on the Roman symbol of the sheaf of wheat, no single blade of which could stand alone, but which, in unity, had power. Unity and power were often linked in Fascist rhetoric.

[10] "Patria Mia," the earliest published example of Pound's anti-Semitism, appeared in nine installments in the *New Age* in 1912. By then he had published much poetry and many translations, but his only prose to appear in print had been art, music, and literary criticism.

[11] Mussolini claimed that Sorel was an important influence for him: "I owe most to Georges Sorel. This master of syndicalism by his rough theories of revolutionary tactics has contributed most to form the discipline, energy and power of the Fascist cohorts." (24) The combination of syndicalism and violence was very successful for the Fascists, at least for a time.

[12] Dorothy was interested and attended some of Hulme's lectures on Bergson; Pound referred to Hulme's interest in Bergson as "crap" but he did go to at least one of the lectures and found Hulme interesting.

[13] They include, for the period of 1940 to 1945 alone, *Italy's Policy of Social Economics 1930/1940 by Odon Por*, translated by Pound from the Italian (1941); *Carta da visita* ("Visiting Card," 1942); *L'America, Roosevelt e le cause della guerra presente* ("America, Roosevelt, and the Causes of the Present War," 1944); *Oro e Lavoro* ("Gold and Labor," 1944, published in English in 1952 as *Gold and Work*); "*Introduzione alla natura economica degli S.U.A.* (Introduction to the Economic Nature of the U.S.A.," 1944, published in English in 1950 as *Money Pamphlets*); *Testamento di Confucio* ("Confucian Testament," 1944, translated by Pound as *Ta Hio, the Great Learning*); *Orientamenti* (a collection of political and economic essays, 1944); *Jefferson e Mussolini* (a rewriting of his 1935 *Jefferson and/or Mussolini*), 1944; and *Chiung Iung: l'asse che non vacilla* (1945) (Gallup 64-73). In addition to these books and pamphlets, Pound published nearly two hundred articles and short essays, mostly in Italian; he reprinted a few short poems but published no new poetry (Baechler et al. 1-245).

[14] Canto LXXV, constituted primarily by the violin line of Janequin's *Chant des Oiseaux,* (470-71).

[15] Pound had apparently planned a section of the *paradiso* in honor of Olga.

[16] Uberti was killed by a sniper's bullet, according to Eastman, on the "eve of the War's end" (426). He had met Pound in 1934 after seeing an article Pound had written supporting the Fascist cause, and they remained friends. He was a descendant of Farinata

degli Uberti, who appears with Guido Cavalcanti's father in the Dante's *Inferno.* See also Pound's Canto LXXIII. Uberti is the "Ubaldo" or "admiral" immortalized in Cantos 77 (490), 78 (500), and 89 (617).

[17] The full texts of these Cantos can be seen with a side-by-side translation on the accompanying CD-ROM.

[18] In the margin of a typescripts on which Pound had made corrections to improve the rhyme scheme, he wrote in pencil "in rime terza."

[19] Canto XCII: "And ministri went to the fighting line / as did old Marinetti."

[20] Cunizza, who was married to an ally of her brother's, was seduced away from her husband by the Italo-Provençal poet Sordello, who was responsible for bringing vernacular poetry into Italy from Provence and was immortalized by a favorite poet of Pound's, Robert Browning. Sordello eventually left Cunizza, but she supposedly lived a long and happy life. Dante placed her in the Paradise of Venus. Pound admired her also because of her spirit and because she supposedly freed all her slaves. He also liked the fact that she had supposedly spent a night at the home of Guido Cavalcanti, his other medieval poetic master.

[21] "picture (or image) of the earth"

[22] Ezzelino has been vindicated by history, but Dazzi's translation is faithful to Mussato, who depicted Ezzelino as a tyrant.

[23] Kenning was a form of metonymy used in old Anglo-Saxon, in which the sea, for example, would be called "the whale's road." Pound had studied Anglo-Saxon and translated many works from it. One of his early successes (and failure, by some accounts) is a loose translation of the old Anglo-Saxon poem, "The Seafarer."

[24] Bacigalupo revised this view somewhat in his 1991 annotated translation, describing the lines "At the beginning, God..." as a rewriting of Genesis (9).

[25] In a rancorous ten-hour meeting on July 25th 1943, the Fascist Grand Council voted 19 to 7 to adopt Count Grandi's proposal that the Duce should go to the king and ask him to reassume control of the military. Failing to grasp the leaders' intent, Mussolini objected, "You are asking me to cut off my head." He did not realize how literally true this was, for it had already been agreed with the king, difficult as it was to persuade Vittorio Emanuele to make a decision of any sort, to have Mussolini arrested after their regular Monday audience the next afternoon. Badoglio took over the military, and his "imperial majesty" pronounced himself in control of the country and the war effort. The arrest took place shortly after 5 p.m. on the 26th, and the Italian public was notified on the radio at 10:45 that night. In a rare display of prudence, Pound seems to have published nothing about these events at the time.

[26] Pound evokes Dante, whose third ring of paradise is the heaven of Venus, the heaven of souls motivated by love. Guido Cavalcanti was known as a lover and a writer of love poems, all of which Pound translated, many of them three or four times. It is Pound who places Cavalcanti in the *terzo cielo,* in imitation of Dante. When Dante as character encounters Guido's father, Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, in *Inferno* X, he does not acknowledge Cavalcanti's death, as the events in the *Commedia* were supposed to have happened earlier, in order that Dante might "predict" events that had already happened.

[27] Pound's parents, Homer and Isabel, had moved to Rapallo in 1928. In 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked, Homer was in the hospital with a broken hip. Besides Homer and Isabel, Pound had to consider his British-born wife, Dorothy, as well as his companion Olga Rudge and their daughter Mary. While Dorothy had an American passport through her marriage to Ezra, and Olga was presumably still an American citizen, Mary was not. Pound never explained whether he tried to get passage for everyone or not, and Olga claimed it was always a "mystery" to her. In any event, he may have decided it was simplest for everyone to stay.

[28] Frank Amprim, of the FBI, was in charge of Pound's case. He was assisted by Ramon Arrizabalaga of the 92nd Infantry Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC).

[29] In their notes on the facing page, Pound and Spoo write:

> *money clause*] EP quotes this passage from the U.S. Constitution in his *Introductory Text Book* (1939): "The Congress shall have the power; To coin money, regulate the value thereof and of foreign coin and to fix the standards of weights and measures." (62)

and:

> Thaddeus Coleman Pound (1832-1914) . . . . was elected four times to the Wisconsin State Assembly (1864-1869), and in 1870 and 1871 he served as lieutenant governor of the state. In 1876, the year he became a Republican congressman, he put through the Chippewa Falls and Western Railway and got legislation through to build a railway line west of Marinette and north of Green Bay . . . During his years in Congress he originated bills to aid the American Indians and to promote female suffrage. (62)

Thaddeus printed his own money for his lumbering company. Pound kept some of these bills, which he occasionally showed or sent to people. He sent Roosevelt a postcard he had printed himself with a photograph of a 'banknote' of his grandfather's with the message, "Lest you forget the nature of money/ i;e; [sic] that it is a ticket" (Carpenter, 523).

[30] Olga remained convinced that if he had been able to speak on his own behalf, the court would have seen the light. Fortunately for Pound, his friends and Dorothy prevailed. Eliot wrote to him, "do exactly as your lawyer tells you to, and only talk when he wants you to talk. It must be a lawyer who is prepared to read all your works and try to understand them. Ez, you are <u>not</u> good at explaining to the simple-minded" (Pound and Spoo, 86).

[31] I have counted 19 typescripts, in addition to the notebooks, of Canto 72 alone. Some of these are carbon-copies, but they include different marginal notes by Pound or Mary, who did what she could to correct his Italian.

[32] The question mark and brackets are Bush's; my translation would be: "youth (or time?) gathers all things."

[33] (II.87-88).

[34] *Negus* is not clear. It could refer to the title used for Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia, who appears in Canto 80. The rest of the line is Provençal, roughly "to see my lovely thought does not matter."

[35] "I still have the mould" is one of these. In a section of the Italian notebook manuscript, Pound recounts an incident in the life of Caterina Sforza, whom he admired for her great courage. After her husband was murdered at Forlì, she boldly escaped her enemies, but they followed her to her castle and tried to coerce her by threatening to murder her children. "Do with them what you like," she replied, lifting her skirts, "I still have the mould."

[36] DTC: Disciplinary Training Camp. This prison camp, relocated from North Africa to Pisa after the armistice, was for U.S. military personnel who had been court-marshalled. Those who were not guilty of capital crimes were allowed to undergo a year of gruelling training, 14 hours a day, in order to be re-admitted to their ranks.

Pound was in the "death cells," a series of wire cages with concrete floors. Because of a miscommunication about his threat to national security, his cage had been reinforced with airstrip steel. He was exposed to the elements all day and had spotlights trained on him at night. He was not allowed a bed or furniture, and no one was permitted to speak to him. After he collapsed three weeks into this regimen and spent some time in the infirmary, he was moved to a tent in the medical compound. He was also allowed, against the rules, the use of a typewriter and became the official scribe for illiterate prisoners, who called him "Uncle Ez."

Appendix

How to View and Use the Electronic Document

This electronic text must be viewed with a browser and works best in Netscape or Opera. For the uninitiated, browsers are used to navigate the internet and read and collate the material that is presented there, but one does not need to be on-line to read a hypertext with a browser; in the case of this document, in fact, it would be a waste of telephone and Internet-connection time. The browser reads the codes in hypertext that tell it what color the background of the page should be, where a picture belongs, how big it should be, and how the text around it must behave. The code tells it where to find a file when you follow a link, and it opens the sound file when you click on the sound icon. The CD-ROM will include a browser to enable the reader to open and read the document.

This presentation comprises over three hundred files, some of which are text and others pictures or sound. A simple page like the first one you will see, with a color background, a picture of Pound and a button you may click to go forward, is made up of four files, one for each of these elements. The code tells the browser what picture to use, where to find it, what size it should be, and where to put it on the page. If I had forgotten to include the file for the picture, or the indication of how to find it, or if the reader's browser could not read this particular picture format, a blank space or an error message would appear where the picture should be, with a little icon to indicate that it is a picture.

Sound files are optional and must, therefore, be clicked on by the reader to begin. It is possible to encode the CD-Rom for the sound to begin automatically when a page is opened, but this leaves the viewer fewer options. On those screens that include sound, for

example, you will see a little icon  . If you have sound on your computer, click the icon, and you will hear a recording (larger files will take some time to begin). Sound will automatically stop if a link is followed.

From the HOME page on, you need only follow the links. Many links connect from both a button and a word, and you may choose either one. All pages, except those few that are linked only to another link, include a button that will take you home, as well as buttons to take you back where you came from. (The browser's *Back* button will do the same.)

If you should lose your way, you may always return to the HOME page and follow the links again, but part of the point of this presentation is that you will not experience the poem the same way each time you encounter it here, you will never follow the same path as another reader, and you will never know if you have seen all the links.

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EZRA POUND'S ITALIAN CANTOS

EDITED AND PRESENTED BY PATRICIA COCKRAM

TO BE USED TOGETHER WITH HER TEXTUAL COMPANION:

EZRA POUND'S ITALIAN CANTOS: COLLAPSE AND RECALL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1999

Ezra Pound

THE

ITALIAN CANTOS

Edited and Presented by

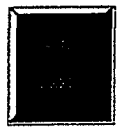
Patricia Cockram

Read by Mary de Rachewiltz

BIOGRAPHY **OF EZRA POUND**

ABOUT THE CANTOS

ABOUT THE ITALIAN CANTOS
AND THE *PISAN CANTOS*



VIEW CANTO LXXII

VIEW CANTO LXXIII

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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About this CD-ROM

This presentation is a prototype. The material included is not intended for distribution or for duplication. Except for the poems themselves, quotes from Pound and others, and the translation of canto LXXII, which is based on Pound's, all the texts, translations and errors in this presentation are mine. This version is designed as a sample for a much larger project which will be programmed to enable users with different degrees of familiarity with Pound's work to determine the level at which they will encounter it. It is intended to open the *Cantos* for the beginning student, to provide textual information for the textual scholar, and to add a new dimension to the experience of those already acquainted with Pound's work. I have begun with the Italian Cantos, but envision an eventual expansion to include the *Pisan Cantos* and perhaps more.

You may follow any path you choose through this network of related materials. At the end of every linked text, you will have the option to return to the home page which provides links to other paths, return to the previous document, and in some cases, go to a related document. All links, with the exception of images, are highlighted. Many of the images provide links too, however, and this can be seen by placing the cursor on the image.

There is a glossary of all proper names, allusions, and foreign words and expressions. For foreign words and phrases, I have also created a recorded pronunciation guide, which can be heard by clicking on the sound icon:  , or on a highlighted word. There are also various kinds of notes to which one may link, including historical references, textual notes, and explications. All bibliographic material is hidden but may be accessed by clicking on a "Bibliography" link at the bottom of each major section. For quotes, you may link to the bibliographic entry by clicking on the quote or the quotation marks.

The Italian text of Cantos LXXII and LXXIII is presented side by side with the English. In the larger version, the user will be able to choose either this option or one in which the Italian and English will be overlapping, allowing the reader to click on either version to bring it to the foreground while still seeing the other version in shadow, as a sort of palimpsest. In this version, the glossary links are highlighted in both Italian and English versions. You may click on either one to link to the glossary or to an image.

My gratitude to Mary de Rachewiltz for recording the Italian Cantos and for her encouragement is boundless. I thank also the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for their warm and efficient assistance, and all the Pound scholars who have

preceded me, Ronald Bush, A. Walton Litz, and Timothy Redman in particular.

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York 1999

Ezra Pound: a Biography

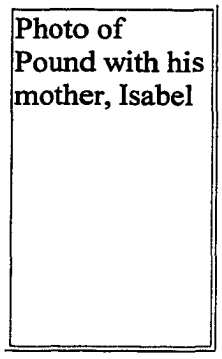
Photo of Pound at 30

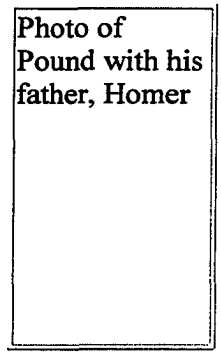
See also Dates

1885 - 1972

Ezra Pound was born October 30, 1885 in Hailey, Idaho. Although he has been considered a mid-Westerner, and often played the part, his parents, Homer and Isabel, pictured with the young Ezra below left and right, were both from the Northeastern United States, and they returned there with Ezra when he was still an infant. He grew up in Pennsylvania, first in Philadelphia and then Wyncote, a suburb his parents chose, according to Pound, when they became distressed at the number of immigrants coming into Philadelphia.

Pound's parents encouraged his artistic and intellectual development, and by the age of fifteen, when he entered the University of Pennsylvania, he had already toured many of the capitals of Europe with one of his aunts and had developed strong tastes in art and literature. In 1913 he wrote:





I knew at
fifteen pretty
much what I
wanted to do.
. . . I resolved
that at thirty I
would know
more about
poetry than
any man
living. . .

Pound with his mother, Isabel, above,

and with his father, Homer.

At the University of Pennsylvania, Pound met William Brooke Smith, a seventeen-year-old art student at a nearby school, who introduced Pound to the work of Oscar Wilde and the aesthetes. Brooke Smith died of tuberculosis in 1908, and Pound dedicated his first book of poetry, *A Lume Spento*, to his "first friend." In 1921, Pound wrote to William Carlos Williams:

> [he] avoided a very unpleasant era of American life by dying of consumption to the intimate grief of his friends. How in Christ's name he came to be in Phila.--and to know what he did know at the age of 17-25--I don't know. At any rate, thirteen years are gone; I haven't replaced him and shan't and no longer hope to. (SL, 165)

In 1902, Pound's second year at the University of Pennsylvania, he met

William Carlos Williams, who was a first-year medical student and later both a doctor and a poet. Despite many differences of opinion and poetic theory, they remained friends throughout their lives.

Pound spent the following two years at Hamilton College in upstate New York, where he studied romance languages, old Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Provençal and took second prize in French.. It was during this period that he discovered his attraction to Dante and the Provençal poets, began many of his translations and wrote his first poetic homages to Provençal poets. Here too he met many of the professors with whom he would correspond throughout his life.

After his graduation from Hamilton College in 1905, he returned to the University of Pennsylvania for his Masters in romance languages, which he completed in 1907. During this period he met and became "unofficially engaged" to Hilda Doolittle, whom he nicknamed "Dryad" and later, when they met again in London, called "H.D."

The summer after receiving his Masters, Pound travelled in Europe, returning in the fall of 1907 to take the position of instructor of romance languages at Wabash College in Indiana. His tenure there lasted only four months, however, as he was dismissed for apparently harboring a showgirl in his room. He seems to have left Wabash with no regrets, however, and returned to Italy, now a permanent expatriate.

In June of 1908, he published his first book of poetry, *A Lume Spento* (*With Tapers Quenched*) in Venice. In the fall he went to London and soon published *Personae* and *Exultations* with Elkin Mathews of Vigo Street and placed his "Ballad of the Goodly Fere" in the *English Review,* edited by Ford Maddox Heuffer (later Ford) . He joined T. E. Hulme's Thursday night poetry group and taught a course in Romance literature at the London Polytechnic, out of which came his study of the development of southern European literature, *The Spirit of Romance*. Through Olivia Shakespear, who took a liking to the young American, Pound was able to meet Yeats, with whom Mrs. Shakespear had been romantically involved in the 1890s, and become one of his circle. Mrs. Shakespear's daughter Dorothy also developed a strong interest in Pound, which he eventually reciprocated by persuading her father to allow them to marry in 1914.

The London years were extremely active ones for Pound. It was during this period that he made most of his most important friendships, including those of Wyndham Lewis, with whom he would collaborate on the Vorticist movement and its journal, *Blast*, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and the French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, whose theories about art strongly influenced Pound. Gaudier's premature death in 1915 in the

French trenches at the age of twenty-three was a defining event for Pound, whose memoir about him, published the following year, makes it clear how important an influence Gaudier was.

It was also during this period that Pound met the widow of the Oriental scholar Ernest Fenollosa and convinced her that he was the right person to finish her husband's translations of several Chinese poets. Pound had recently become interested in Asian art and literature and was soon captivated by the poets whose work he translated.

As he became familiar with Confucianism, he judged it superior to Taoism, in that it encouraged active involvement in the world. The ideal of a great ruler who could be influenced by a philosopher poet, espoused by both Confucius and Plato, may partly explain why Pound was later so strongly attracted to Mussolini.

Chinese literature gave Pound a further push towards non-linear poetry. After translating the poetry of Arnaut Daniel, he had developed a desire for a poetry that would work fugally. He saw that a series of sounds could be held in auditory memory and form a sort of chord in the mind. Later, under the influence of Gaudier-Brzeska, he had become interested in a poetry that would work sculpturally, that would involve forms in relation. In Imagism and Vorticism, he experimented with these concepts; the Chinese ideogram finally gave him a framework for the kind of multi-dimensional poetry we find in the later cantos. See also About the Cantos.

In 1919 Pound published the first three cantos and *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, among other works, and the following year he published *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly*, *Umbra*, and his annotated edition of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*.

Ezra and Dorothy soon left London for Paris, where Pound was able to meet many of the artists and writers he admired, including Brancusi, Picasso, Bracques, and Cocteau. During this period he helped T.S. Eliot re-write the *Waste Land* as we know it today and also met the American expatriate Sylvia Beach, owner of Shakespeare and Co. in Paris, whom he was able to persuade to publish James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

In 1924, the Pounds left Paris and settled in Rapallo, Italy. Shortly thereafter, Pound met and fell in love with the American expatriate violinist Olga Rudge, to whom he remained attached for the rest of his life and with whom he fathered a child, Mary, in 1925. Pound and Rudge organized concerts and were responsible for saving the music of Vivaldi, which they painstakingly copied from crumbling manuscripts that were in danger of extinction. In 1926 Dorothy gave birth to a son, Omar, who was sent to live in England. For the next two decades, Pound divided his time between his two families and worked on his *Cantos*.

With the approach of World War II, Pound became ever more concerned that the United States would become involved in what he considered (partly because of his experiences and his great losses in World War I) an immoral war. At the same time, he had become enamored of the social credit philosophy of Major Douglas, as well as with the aesthetics of Fascism. In the late 1930s he wrote articles in favor of Fascism and was also active in trying to dissuade the U.S. from entering the coming war. He wrote and broadcast a series of programs on Radio Rome which were critical of the British and American position. Once war was declared and he was cut off from most of his sources of income, as were both Dorothy and Olga, this activity became even more compelling, as it was one of the few methods of earning a living still open to him.

In May of 1945, at the end of the war, Pound was arrested at Olga Rudge's small house in Sant'Ambrogio, where he and Dorothy had been forced to move during the war. He was taken to Pisa to the U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Camp, a camp intended mainly for military personnel accused of criminal activity. There he was imprisoned in a cage, exposed to the elements and illuminated by spotlights at night.

After a complete collapse, Pound was kept for a short time in the camp infirmary and was later given a tent instead of a cage and was allowed to use a desk in the infirmary to continue writing his poem. It was here that the *Pisan Cantos* took shape.

November 17, 1945 the American authorities transported Pound to the United States to be tried for treason. He was judged to be insane, and on December 21 he was committed to Howard Hall at St. Elizabeths Hospital (a Federal hospital for the criminally insane), where he remained for the next thirteen years. He continued to write, both polemic and poetry, but was not the same man on his release that he had been when arrested. In 1949 he won the Bollingen Prize for the *Pisan Cantos*, which had recently been published by Faber and Faber and by New Directions the previous year.

After his release in 1958, he returned to Italy, first to Brunnenburg, then to Venice, where Olga Rudge had a small house, and there he spent the rest of his days. He died November 1, 1972 and was buried in Venice's San Michele Cemetery. Olga Rudge, who died in 1996, is buried next to him.


Home


Biblography

Ezra Pound - Important Dates

1885

Born on 30 October in Hailey. Left at eighteen months to return East with parents.

1887-1901

Childhood in Philadelphia and Wyncote, Pennsylvania.

1901

Entered University of Pennsylvania in Arts and Science (Courses in: English language and composition, public speaking, algebra, solid geometry, plane trigonometry, German grammar & reading, Livy, Horace, American colonial history, government.)

Met William Brooke Smith, a seventeen-year-old art student at a nearby school, who introduced Pound to the work of Oscar Wilde and the aesthetes. Brooke Smith died of tuberculosis in 1908, and Pound dedicated his first book of poetry, *A Lume Spento*, to his "first friend."

Summer in England and Venice.

1902

University of Pennsylvania. (Added Weston to name) Courses: English composition, 19th century English novelists, ethics, logic, constitutional history of the United States, comparative governments, foreign relations of U.S., Civil War & reconstruction, and Latin: Catullus and Tibullus, Horace, Propertius and Ovid, Virgil and Lucretius.

Met William Carlos Williams, a first-year medical student.

1903-04

Hamilton College (Stryker was president). Studied German with Brandt, English and Anglo-Saxon under Ibbotson, and French, Italian, Spanish, and Provençal with William Pierce Shepard. Wrote 'Motif,' later retitled 'Search' and included in *A Lume Spento*.

1904-5

Studied: Old English, German, French, Provençal, Spanish, physics, analytic geometry. Wrote 'Song' and 'To the Dawn' (see 'To Kathor,' published in 1914) published in ALS. Discovered Dante and the middle ages. Published a translation of 'Belangal Alba' in the Hamilton literary magazine and worked on 'S-ie-us quier,' tenzon by Giraut de Bornelh. Received Ph.B. and took second prize in French. Met Viola Baxter.

1905-7

Returned to the University of Pennsylvania for his Masters. Studied: Spanish drama (Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, etc.), Spanish literature, Old French, Provençal, and Italian, and Martial, Catullus & Tacitus (later claimed his search for clarity and hardness in verse began with Martial and Catullus) Received Masters. Fellow in Romance languages. Met Hilda Doolittle (the imagiste poet H.D.) and became "unofficially engaged." Wrote *Hilda's Book.*

1906

Had already translated Peire Bremon and written the first lines of *A Lume Spento.*

1906-7

traveled in Spain, Italy, Provence, then became instructor at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana (four months).

1907-8

Travelled to Italy after dismissal from Wabash.

1908

Published *A Lume Spento* in Venice in June. Went to London in the fall.

1909

Published *Personae* and *Exultations* with Elkin Mathews, Vigo Street, London. Published "Ballad of the Goodly Fere" in *The English Review*, edited by Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford). Met Yeats through Olivia Shakespear (mother of Dorothy). Taught a course in Romance literature at the London Polytechnic Joined Hulme's Thursday night poetry group.

1910

Published *The Spirit of Romance* and *Provença* and began his translation of de Vega's *El Desprecio Agradecido.*

London Exhibition of Post-Impressionists organized by Roger Fry.

1911

Published *Canzoni.* Began contributing to the *The New Age* ("The limbs of Osiris" and "Patria Mia").

1912

Published *The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* and *Ripostes*, for which Dorothy Shakespear designed the cover.Contributed to *The New Freewoman* (later called *The Egoist* and to *The Little Review.* Became the foreign editor of *Poetry.* Prepared a small book of translations of Arnaut Daniel (not published).

Roger Fry's second Post Impressionist show.

1914

Marriage to Dorothy Shakespear. Edited anthology *Des Imagistes.*

1914-15

Wyndham Lewis started quarterly *Blast*, with Pound contributing.

Met T.S. Eliot.

1915

Cathay. Published "Exile's Letter" in *Poetry* in March and 'Near Perigord' in Dec.

Gaudier-Brzeska killed in action in France.

1916

Lustra, Gaudier Brzeska: a Memoir, Noh, or Accomplishment. Proposed to Iris Barry a translation of Catullus & Propertius.

1917

Published first three cantos in *Poetry* - later withdrawn.

1918

Pavannes and Divisions (prose).

1919

Published *Homage to Sextus Propertius* and *Quia Pauper Amavi.* Privately published the fourth canto.

1920

Hugh Selwyn Mauberly, Umbra, and Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,* edited and annotated by Pound.

1921

Poems 1918-21 containing 'Homage to Sextus Propertius, 'Homage à la Langue d'Oc,' 'Moeurs Contemporaines,' and 'Hugh Selwyn Mauberly'. Cantos IV through VII.

Edited T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

Published his translation of Remy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love.*

1922

James Joyce's *Ulysses*

1923

Indiscretions ('autobiography').

1924

Moved to Rapallo, Italy.

Published *A Draft of XVI Cantos for the Beginning of a Poem of Some Length.*

1925

Selected Poems

Maria (later Mary de Rachewiltz) born to Olga Rudge and Pound on July 9.

1926

Personae: Collected Poems

Omar Shakespear Pound born to Dorothy September 10.

1928

Ta Hio.

Draft of the Cantos XVII through XXVII published in London.

1930

A Draft of XXX Cantos published in August.

1932

Guido Cavalcanti Rime (bilingual edition by Pound) published in January by Edizioni Marsano.

1934

Eleven New Cantos (XXXI-XLI)

1937

The Fifth Decad of Cantos and *Polite Essays.*

Pound's *Confucius, Digest of the Analects* published by Scheiwiller.

1938

Carta da Visita written in Italian (Worgl money incident which shows up in the *Pisan Cantos*).

Guide to Kulchur published in London (Laughlin published it as *Culture*).

1940

Cantos LII-LXXI

1943

Pound indicted for treason but not arrested.

1945

Published Italian translation of Confucius *Unwobbling Pivot* (burned after Italian liberation because '*asse*,' *pivot*, was assumed to refer to the Axis). Arrested and imprisoned in the Army Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa (early May - 17 Nov.) Wrote the *Pisan Cantos* in the camp. Taken to the United States in November, tried, judged insane, and on December 21 committed to Howard Hall at St. Elizabeths Hospital (a Federal hospital for the criminally insane).

1946-7

Sections of the *Pisan Cantos* published in various journals.

1948

The *Pisan Cantos* published by New Directions.

1949

The Pisan Cantos published in London Faber and Faber.

Bollingen Prize for the *Pisan Cantos*.

1953-4

New Directions and Faber and Faber published *The Translations of Ezra Pound* and *The Literary Essays*.

1955

Section: Rock Drill (cantos LXXXV-XCV)

1958

Pavannes and Divagations published in England.

Pound released from St. Elizabeths May 7.

1959

Thrones pub by Scheiwiller in Italy and New Directions in America (cantos XCVI-CIX)

1960

Thrones published by Faber and Faber.

1964

Confucius to Cummings, (Pound's anthology with Marcella Spann).

1967

Selected Cantos (chosen by Pound).

1972

Nominated unanimously by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for the Emerson-Thoreau medal for lifetime achievement in poetry. Voted down. Died in Venice 1 November and was buried in the San Martino Cemetery.

[redacted] Return to Pound Biography

[redacted] Home

"How I Began" *P.P's Weekly*, London, 6 June 1913, 707, qtd. in Baechler et al, 147.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A Lume Spento

This title, which Pound translated as *With Tapers Quenched*, and which he dedicated to his friend William Brooke Smith, comes from Dante's *Purgatorio* (III, 132), where Dante refers to the premature death of Manfred, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. Frederick's reign was important to Dante and to Pound as an example of what good government should be. He was a polyglot multi-culturalist, and his court in Sicily was a haven for poets and artists of every kind; it was here that the first vernacular literature of Europe, the poetry of Provence, took root in Italy and ultimately found its way to Florence and Dante. Both Piero delle Vigne, the Florentine poet and statesman who appears among the suicides in Dante's *Inferno*, and Sordello, the Provençal poet who was encountered by Dante in Purgatory, and who was the subject of a book-length poem by Browning, were at Frederick's court.

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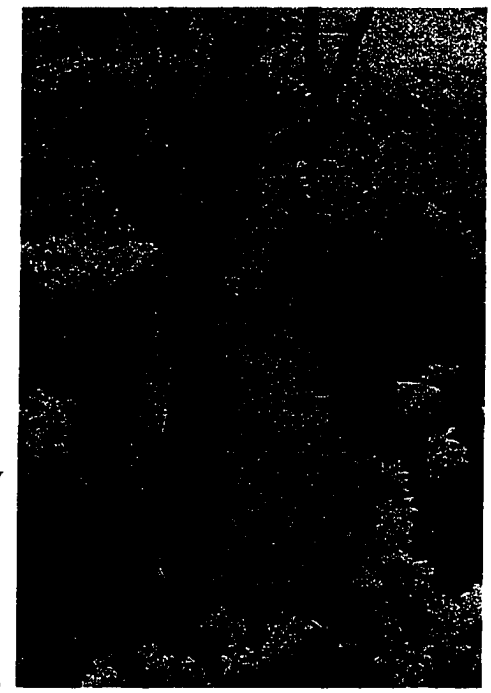
William Carlos Williams

1883 - 1963



Williams was a nineteen-year-old freshman medical student at the University of Pennsylvania in 1902 when he met Pound. Pound was only seventeen but had been at the university for two years. They were introduced by a music student with whom Williams had tried to make friends and who thought that since Williams and Pound were equally eccentric, they might get along. They did have in common an interest in the arts that went beyond their studies. Like Pound, Williams had traveled in Europe, sang and acted, and was on the fencing team . He had studied in Geneva; he played the violin; and he also wrote poetry and showed it to Pound, who "was not impressed. He was impressed with his own poetry; but then, I was impressed with my own poetry, too, so we got along all right."

Williams became a doctor and practiced in the area around his hometown of Rutherford, New Jersey. He wrote poetry, fiction, and drama, as well as criticism and autobiography. He and Pound agreed about the aims of Imagism. "No ideas but in things" became one of Williams's key phrases, as did "Ask the fact for the form." He disagreed with Pound and Eliot that one could find a new poetry only by going away from America. In his introduction to his long philosophical poem *Paterson*, he wrote that the "poet's business . . . [is] not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal." He stressed this with a quote from John Dewey: "The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds."

Williams's books of poetry include *Collected Poems*, published in 1934, *Pictures from Brueghel*, published in 1963, for which he won a Pulitzer Prize, and *Paterson*, Book I of which was published in 1946 and Book V in 1958. A collection of critical essays, *In the American Grain* was published in 1925.

As Pound became more embroiled in European politics, tensions developed between him and Williams, but Williams always felt great affection for Pound and respected his work, and Pound reciprocated these feelings. Williams was one of many writers who worked to save Pound's life when he was accused of treason in 1945 and who lobbied for his release from the mental hospital thirteen years later.

Ede, S.M. *Savage Messaiah.* New York: Outerbridge, 1971, 7.

Joyce, James. *Ulysses.* New York: Random House, 1986, 115.

Longenbach, James. *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism.* New York, Oxford: OUP, 1988.

Olson, Charles. *Charles Olson and Ezra Pound: An Encounter at St. Elizabeths.* New York: Paragon, 1991, 45.

Rosenthal, M. L. *William Butler Yeats: Selected Poems and Three Plays.* New York: Macmillan, 1986, xviii.

William Carlos Williams: *I Wanted to Write a Poem.* Beacon Press, 1958, 5.

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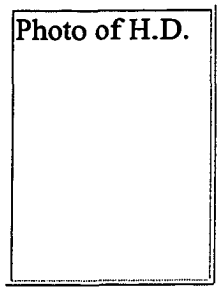
Hilda Doolittle, H.D.



1886-1961

Hilda Doolittle was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and met Ezra Pound in 1905, when he was working on his Masters in romance languages at the University of Pennsylvania. She was eighteen and he a year older. He called her "Dryad," which is how she would sign later letters to him. She and Pound were "unofficially engaged," but her father, a prominent astronomer at the University of Pennsylvania, never approved of Pound. She studied at Bryn Mawr for two years, where she was a classmate of Marianne Moore's.

She was gravely disappointed at Pound's departure for Europe in 1908. When she visited him in London in 1911, he helped her rework her poem "Oread" in the British Library and signed it "H.D., Imagiste." She apparently never liked the name but continued to use it as her signature. In London she met and married Richard Aldington, who was one of Pound's associates and who shared her enthusiasm for Greek antiquity, an enthusiasm which differed from Pound's mainly in degree, but for which he teased them both. In 1918 she gave birth to a daughter, Perdita, whose father was Cecil Greg. After her break-up with Aldington, H.D. became involved with Winifred Ellerman, the illegitimate daughter of an English shipping magnate, who was a writer several years younger than H.D, and who referred to herself as "Bryher." Their romance was apparently brief, but their friendship lasted to the end of H.D.'s life.

H.D. continued to write and publish poetry, fiction and memoirs. Her books of poetry include the early *Sea Garden*, in which "Oread" appeared, *Trilogy*, and her last, *Helen in Egypt*. She wrote several novels, including *Hermione*, *Asphodel*, and *The Gift*, some of which are recognizably autobiographical, and memoirs, including *Tribute to Freud* and *End to Torment*, about her relationship with Pound. Although their relationship was often strained and endured periods of alienation, she kept up a correspondence with Pound until her death.

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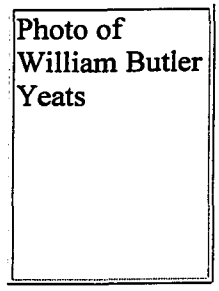
William Butler Yeats

1865 - 1939



Yeats was that rare writer who successfully spanned more than one literary period. He began as an Edwardian heir to the pre-Raphaelites and refashioned himself, first as a symbolist and then, partly through his association with Ezra Pound, as a Modernist. Although he wrote and published poetry in the 1880s, he did not publish his first collection, *Poems*, until 1895, when he was thirty. He revised his work dramatically and continually. His heroic poem "Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea," for example, was originally published in 1892, in a version much different from the one in current collections, revised in 1933. Although he retained his tendency to use conventional metre and rhyme schemes, by the time of his later work, he was able, as M.L. Rosenthal put it, to "make a slight distortion or variation--an off-rhyme or grammatical ambiguity--count for a great deal." When they met in 1909, Pound considered him the greatest poet writing in English.

Much of Yeats's early poetry is romantic and fantastical, integrating themes from ancient Irish mythology and folk tales, as well as references to his failed early love affair with the actress and political radical Maud Gonne. It includes poems such as "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and "Who goes with Fergus?" Later poems include "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Second Coming." He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. In his final period, he wrote the long poetic sequence *The Tower*, published in 1928.

From 1913 to 1916 Yeats and Pound spent three winters at Stone Cottage in Sussex. Pound was to have served as Yeats's secretary, but he had recently acquired Fenollosa's papers and was working on his translations of Noh drama. Yeats read the translations and was greatly influenced by them. The two poets became collaborators, both considering their time together extremely important for their subsequent work. It was here that Modernism began to take form: Yeats introduced Pound and Joyce, and Pound introduced Eliot and Yeats.

In 1917 he discovered that his wife of four months, Georgie Hyde-Lees, was able to do what he called "automatic writing," and he afterwards included in his poetry much of the material she provided him. He retained an interest in the occult throughout his life and wrote a book called *A Vision* which described the complex mysteries of the universe and the spirit world, as communicated to him by the voices his wife heard while sleeping, in which "all events, past and future, are

present at once in the mind of God." He was a supporter of Madame Blavatsky's theosophical movement, satirized by Joyce in the seventh chapter of *Ulysses*.

Yeats lived in Sligo and was active in Irish politics; he was a Senator and a school inspector, and with Lady Gregory founded the movement to revive Irish language and theatre. His political thoughts often find their way into his poetry, but never in a way that diminishes its universal appeal. He visited Pound in Rapallo, and their friendship continued, mostly by letter, for the rest of Yeats's life.

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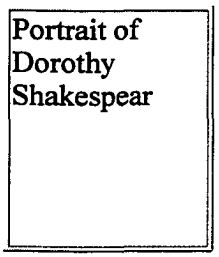
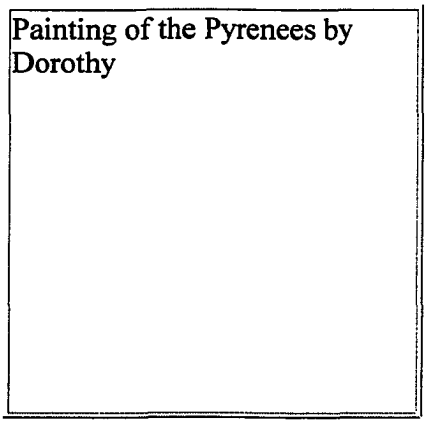
Dorothy Shakespear

1886 - 1973


Portrait of Dorothy Shakespear

Dorothy Shakespear was the daughter of a London solicitor, Henry Hope Shakespear and Olivia Shakespear, who was a novelist and art patron and had been romantically involved with William Butler Yeats. It was through Dorothy's mother that Pound met both Dorothy and Yeats himself.


Painting of the Pyrenees by Dorothy

Dorothy was educated in England and spent a year studying in Geneva, where she learned to speak French. She was a painter of talent, but her temperament was probably more attuned to romantic than modernist art. Through Pound's influence, however, she became a Vorticist painter of some note and designed notices and book covers for the Vorticist cause, including the cover for Pound's *Ripostes*, below.

One of her paintings appears at right.

Dorothy married Pound in 1914, and they continued to live for the next few years in England. After a brief period in Paris, they settled in Rapallo, Italy in 1924. Dorothy's life with Pound was fairly tranquil until he met and fell in love with the expatriate American violinist Olga Rudge. In July of 1925, Olga gave birth to Pound's daughter, Mary, and in September, 1926, Dorothy had a son, Omar. Pound maintained affectionate relations with both families, but his heart was clearly with Olga and his daughter, which, according to their friends, caused Dorothy considerable, if quiet, pain.

Cover of Ripostes

During the Second World War, when it was increasingly difficult for the Pounds to have access to their money from England and America, they were forced to move into Olga's small house in Sant'Ambrogio, a situation which was difficult for all.

When Pound was arrested and sent to Saint Elizabeths hospital for the criminally insane in Washington, D.C., Dorothy gained control of his affairs, but after his release in 1958, he chose to go to the home of his daughter in the Italian alps. Dorothy went with him, but appears to have become increasingly withdrawn. Finally, when Pound was old and ill and Dorothy too frail to care for him, she left for England, where she died in 1973, while Pound remained with Olga, mainly in her small house in Venice, until his death.

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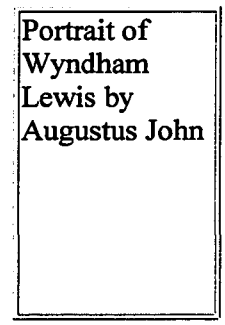
Percy Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Novelist

1882 - 1957


Portrait of Wyndham Lewis by Augustus John

Lewis was born in Nova Scotia but moved to London with his mother as a small child. He studied at the Slade school of art, where he met many other artists, including Augustus John, the painter of the portrait at right. He was introduced to Pound by Laurence Binyon in 1909. He was an innovator in both art and fiction. He exhibited with the First and Second Camden Town Groups and in Roger Fry's Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, published stories in the English Review and *The Tramp* and wrote one of the early modernist novels, and one of the most aggressive, *Tarr*.


Image of the advertisement for *Blast*

Lewis was the creative force behind the Vorticism movement, to which both Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska contributed, and founded its journal, *Blast*.

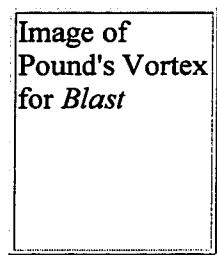
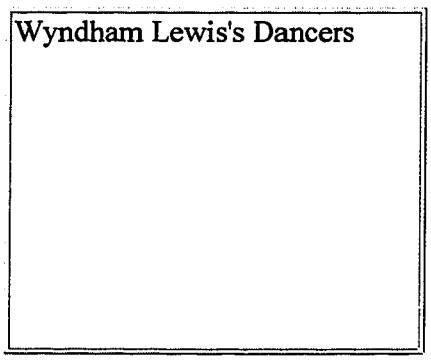
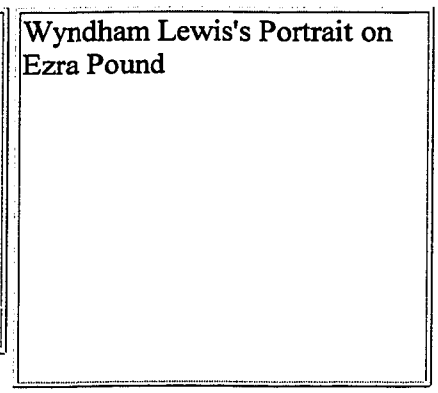


Image of Pound's Vortex for *Blast*

Below left, Lewis's painting, the *Dancers*, which he signed "Wyndamatuers," and right, one of his portraits of Pound.


Wyndham Lewis's Dancers


Wyndham Lewis's Portrait on Ezra Pound

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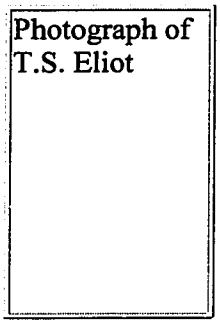
T. S. (Thomas Stearns) Eliot



1888 - 1965

Eliot was from a well-to-do Saint Louis family with ties to the Northeastern United States. He studied philosophy at Harvard, where he wrote his Ph.D. thesis on F.W. Bradley, but moved to London in 1914 and never returned to America to defend it. He became a British subject in 1927. When Pound met him in London in 1914, he considered Eliot already an accomplished poet.

Like Pound, Eliot wrote for periodicals, but he also held an executive position in a London bank for many years. His early work was published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf. Pound was extremely helpful to him, as well as to Joyce, in getting his work published and also had an important influence on Eliot's poetry. Pound's revisions to the *Waste Land* were extensive and important. He tried to enlist the Woolfs and others to set up a fund to enable Eliot to leave his bank position and dedicate himself to poetry. Eventually Eliot moved to Faber and Faber, where as editor he was often in a position to help fellow poets like Pound.

Eliot's early works of poetry include *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), *Poems* (1920), and *The Waste Land* (1922). Eliot's later poetry includes *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and *Four Quartets* (1935-42). He was also an important critic and playwright. His play include *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *The Cocktail Party* (1950). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948

Despite many differences of opinion, Pound and Eliot were artistically compatible and had great affection and respect for each other. Eliot was one of the many writers who tried to save Pound when he was arrested for treason and who were active in securing his release from Saint Elizabeths.

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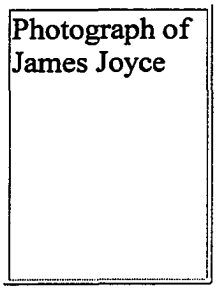
James Joyce

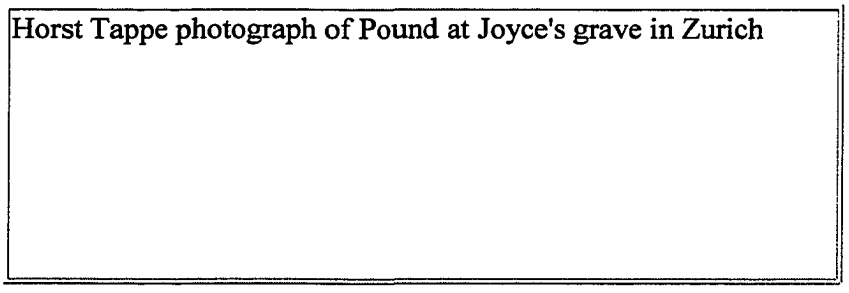

Photograph of James Joyce

1882 - 1941

Joyce was born and educated in Dublin but left Ireland with his wife Nora in 1902 and lived the rest of his life in France, Italy, and Switzerland. *Dubliners*, his collection of short stories, which the original Irish publisher was afraid to publish because Joyce had used the names of real people and places in Dublin, was published in London in 1914. His first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, was written in Zurich, where he lived during World War I. Published in 1916, this partly autobiographical work introduced Stephen Daedalus, who would later appear as a key character in Joyce's ground-breaking novel *Ulysses*. More important, it established Joyce as an innovative new writer, whose use of language was unique and would become even more so with his later work.

Ulysses, written between 1914 and 1921, is as linguistically original as his *Portrait* but structurally more complex. It uses Homer's *Odyssey* as a framework and, like such oral epics, has a fluid, non-linear form that depends for continuity in part on repetition. Pound read chapters as Joyce sent them to him, and although he was critical of many aspects of the work, he was responsible for its publication by Sylvia Beach, in France, where it appeared on Joyce's fortieth birthday in 1922. It was banned in the U.S. for obscenity until 1933. *Finnegans Wake*, published in 1939, is even more linguistically complex than *Ulysses*.

Joyce was always impecunious and often unwell. Pound helped him whenever possible, and when Joyce began losing his sight, Pound took it upon himself to raise the money for his eye operation. Joyce died in Zürich in 1941 and is buried there.


Horst Tappe photograph of Pound at Joyce's grave in Zurich

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska

Photograph of Gaudier with the marble from which the head was sculpted

1891-1915

Born in France, the French sculptor Henri Gaudier, shown here with the piece of marble from which he sculpted the bust of Pound below, earned his first scholarship at fourteen and studied in London, Orleans, Nuremberg, and Munich. Back in Paris, he met a depressed Polish writer, Sophie Brzeska, twenty years his senior, with whom he lived for the rest of his short life. He attached her name to his and often referred to her as his sister. In 1911 he met Ezra Pound, who championed his work and wrote a memoir of him after his death. He was a founder with Wyndham Lewis and Pound of the Vorticist movement. Gaudier died in the trenches in France in 1915. He was twenty-three. Charles Olson, after interviewing Pound in 1946 suggested: "Gaudier's death is the source of his hate for contemporary England and America." In Canto XVI, Pound writes:

> and they killed him
>
> And killed a great deal of sculpture.

The great English sculptor Henry Moore said that Gaudier, "made me feel certain that in seeking to create along paths other than those of traditional sculpture, it was possible to achieve beauty."

Photo of the Hieratic Head on black ground

Many examples of Gaudier-Brzeska's work can be seen at the Tate Gallery in London, the *Musée d'Art Moderne* at the Pompidou Center in Paris. His Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound, right, and at its inception, above, is part of the Nasher Collection, a private collection in Dallas, Texas.

> There are few things more difficult than to appraise the work of a man suddenly dead in his youth; to disentangle "promise" from achievement; to save him from that sentimentalizing which confuses the tragedy of the interruption with the merit of the work actually performed.
>
> --Ezra Pound. *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir.*

Red stone dancer, from the Tate Gallery in London

Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound, right, Red Stone Dancer, above left, and Cat, below. To view a larger version of the Hieratic Head, click on the image.

Bas-relief of cat from the Pompidou Center

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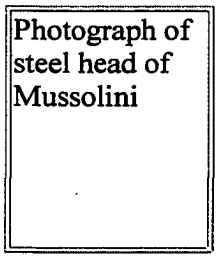
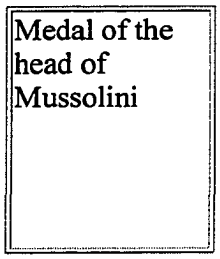
Benito Mussolini

1883-1945

Italian Fascist leader and dictator. Mussolini began as a Socialist but broke with the party to support Italy's entry into the First World War. In 1919 he organized his nationalistic followers, who wore black shirts as uniforms and practiced terrorism in armed groups. In 1921 he was elected to Parliament and founded the National Fascist party. When the Fascists marched on Rome in October of 1922, the Italian king, Vittorio Emmanuele III, called on Mussolini to form a government. He gradually created a dictatorship that was both nationalistic and imperialistic, but part of its appeal was its populist rhetoric. (This aspect of Mussolini's government, and an economic policy that appeared to support agricultural and artisan autonomy, appealed to Pound.


Photograph of steel head of Mussolini

Furthermore, Mussolini was active in promoting the arts, and Pound felt that such a leader could be influenced by right-thinking intellectuals like himself. In a sense, he saw Mussolini as the kind of ideal ruler that both Plato and Confucius, two of Pound's heroes, had sought). At left is a photograph of *Effigy of the Duce*, a head of Mussolini in steel, inscribed to Pound by the sculptor, Ernesto Michahelles Thayaht, with the dedication, "To Ezra Pound with futurist affection." The artist dated it "Florence March 1931-9" (1931 was the ninth year of the Fascist regime). **Click on the image to see a larger version.**


Medal of the head of Mussolini

The medal at right, designed by Thayaht for the First Congress of Professionals and Artists in 1930, is an example of Mussolini's brilliant tactic of attaching his image to those groups most likely to oppose a dictator: Italy's artists.

Now called *Duce*, leader, Mussolini ended parliamentary government in 1928. Under his leadership, Italy conquered Ethiopia in 1935-1936 and occupied Albania in 1939. He signed an alliance with Nazi Germany in 1939, but Italy lost many World War II battles in Greece and North Africa. His government was not inherently anti-Semitic like the Nazis, but as he lost power in the alliance, Italy was forced to conform to the German policy and sent many of its Jews to the death camps in Poland and Germany. When it became apparent that the Allied invasion of Italy was imminent, many members of the Fascist party switched sides, and large numbers of those who had never supported the Fascists now had the courage to openly revolt. The Fascist

Grand Council, led by the Duce's trusted friend and lieutenant Dino Grandi, dismissed Mussolini, and King Vittorio Emmanuele III had him imprisoned. But the Germans rescued him and set up a puppet government at Salò in Northern Italy, where they made him ruler. On the German collapse in 1945, Mussolini was captured by Italian partisans, tried, and executed. His body and that of his mistress, Clara Petacci, were hanged upside down in Piazza Loreto in Milan, an event to which Pound alludes in the opening of the *Pisan Cantos*.

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Olga Rudge

1895 - 1996

Olga Rudge was an American concert violinist, born in Youngstown, Ohio but educated almost entirely in Europe, where she was living when Pound met her. He covered one of her London concerts for *The New Age* in November of 1920 and introduced her to the American composer George Antheil in Paris in 1923.

Her mother had been a famous singer, and her father was an industrialist, who seemed not to mind supporting his wife and children while they lived the lives of artists abroad.

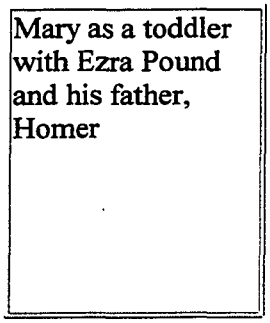
Pound found in Olga the fire he had missed in Dorothy. Although he never abandoned his sense of obligation to his wife and her son Omar, he and Olga became lovers and remained romantic and and intellectual companions to the end of his life.

In 1925, Olga gave birth to a daughter, Mary (now Mary de Rachewiltz), who was partly raised by a peasant couple in the Italian Tyrol. During World War II, when the Pounds were unable to receive their money from England, Ezra and Dorothy were forced to leave Rapallo and move in with Olga in her small house at Sant'Ambrogio, nearby. After Pound's release from Saint Elizabeths mental hospital, he returned to Italy and lived first with his daughter Mary at Brunnenburg Castle in the Italian Tyrol, then with Olga in her small house in Venice, where he died.

Pound was not insensitive to the efforts Rudge put into his career. Their daughterMary says that when she was a child, her father once scolded her for not behaving responsibly enough with her little flock of sheep, pointing out: "Your mother works very hard so that I can pursue my writing." Rudge lived her last days with her daughter at Brunnenburg. Late in her long life, according to Mary, she looked out the window from her room in the Brunnenburg castle at the Alps and the valley below and said, "I have always been surrounded by beauty."

Mary de Rachewiltz

1925 -



Mary as a toddler with Ezra Pound and his father, Homer

The daughter of Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge, Mary was raised, according to Pound's beliefs, partly by a peasant family in the Austro-Italian Tyrol. As she grew older, Pound and Rudge became more involved in her education, and Pound came to see her as his literary heir. She was sent to a convent school in Florence, but spent much of her time with her parents. Pound especially wanted her to learn translation, and he worked with her extensively, particularly in translating his own works into Italian.

She is seen here at right with her father and her grandfather, Homer Pound, and below left as a mature woman.

She was married to the late Boris de Rachewiltz and lives in Brunnenburg Castle in the Italian Tyrol, where Pound lived for a time after his release from Saint Elizabeths Hospital. She is the author of several books of poetry and memoirs, including *Discretions*, a memoir of her father, and has translated the *Cantos* into Italian.

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F.T. Marinetti (Filippo Tommaso)

1876 -- 1944

(Pound misspelled *Tommaso* as *Tomaso*, as have many critics. Marinetti himself used only his initials.)

Marinetti was an Italian playwright, novelist, and poet, founder of the Futurist movement, which flourished from 1909, when he published his Futurist Manifesto in *Le Figaro*, below, until the 1930s, when Fascism overpowered it and Marinetti became one of its champions. In addition to writers, the movement included artists and architects. In their celebration of the machine and speed, and their many attempts to represent speed, motion, airline flight, and views of the land taken from the air, the Futurists prefigured the Cubists and may well have influenced them.

Marinetti wrote numerous *manifesti* for the Futurist cause. Pound heard him speak in London but disapproved of him, because Marinetti advocated the destruction of the past, including libraries and museums. He even wrote that love and sex should be abolished and that man should become more like a machine.

With the rise of Fascism, Marinetti, like many of the Futurists, became a follower of Mussolini. He wrote Fascist *manifesti* and voluntarily enlisted in 1942 and went to war. He died a war hero in 1944.

Pound wrote canto LXXII shortly after Marinetti's death; he appears here as one of several spirits who visit Pound in this Dantean episode. By this time, the Fascists had fallen and Mussolini was leading a government in exile at Salò. Pound had changed his opinion of Marinetti because of his active and heroic participation in the cause, and Pound's celebration of Marinetti's heroism was intended to help revive the Fascist effort, though in typical Dantean fashion, he uses this canto also to criticize Marinetti's ignorance of the ancients.

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About the *Cantos*

The following are some hints on reading Pound's Cantos. Pound was greatly influenced by many writers and thinkers: Homer, Dante, Cavalcanti, Villon, Chaucer, Ovid, Shakespeare, Catullus, Confucius, Li Po, John Adams, Browning, among others. It was almost inconceivable to him that anyone would not have read them. He quotes from them throughout his work, especially from *The Metamorphoses*, *The Odyssey*, and *La Divina Commedia*. He drew on this material because of either the ideas expressed or the tonal or visual mode of expression. There are two keys to the structure of the Cantos: first, Dante's *Commedia* provides a formal and thematic framework: a series of cantos grouped in three sections into which the source material fits as significantly as the sinners do into Dante's. The groupings of cantos correspond to Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*, but resemble the *Commedia* also in that they constitute an epic poem written in criticism of the poet's society. This aspect of the *Cantos* has been very well described by James Wilhelm in *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement*.

The second key is from music, which contributes, like the Chinese ideogram discussed below, to the multi-media quality of the work. Pound occasionally described the structure of the Cantos as "fugal." There are numerous themes which work as variations or the same theme in a different voice, and virtually all of Pound's themes return. Like many modernists, Pound was interested in multiple voices; he also wanted to give a sense of a third dimension on the page the way painters like Picasso were trying to do on canvas, to make his poetry sculptural. The multiple voices can be read as simultaneous, but in counterpoint, not harmony. He claimed that the foreign language quotes were not meant to confuse, but rather as "underlining" of things that are there in the English text. Finally, Pound's own advice is best: "Skip anything you don't understand and go on till you pick it up again."

A second important influence for the *Cantos* comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. Pound was attracted to Greek ideals of heroism. As an expatriate, he must also have felt a connection to Odysseus, and he uses the expression "periplum of the mind" both in the *Cantos* and to describe them.

Finally, Pound was also influenced greatly by Chinese poetry and by the philosophy of Confucius. He became interested in Chinese poetry early in his career in London, when there was great general interest in Asia. He managed to persuade the widow of the sinologist Ernest Fenollosa to ask him to complete the translations of Chinese poetry for which Fenollosa had managed to complete only a literal guide. Eventually, Pound began work on Confucius, to whom he refers throughout the Cantos by his Chinese name, Kung, and found himself taken with Confucian

thought. There is in the *Cantos* a calculated tension between Confucianism, with its active involvement in the temporal world as a means to redemption, and the more passive Taoism. When Pound uses the word "process," often ironically, he is translating "tao," more commonly understood as "the way." His belief in an active rather than contemplative life was also undoubtedly a factor in his admiration for Mussolini, whom he believed to be the kind of leader who would allow himself to be influenced by a poet-philosopher--the kind of leader sought by both Confucius and Plato. Besides the attraction of Chinese thought, Pound discovered a device--the Chinese ideogram-- that was at once imagistic and sculptural, and which he began incorporating into his poetry.

The *Cantos* begin, in imitation of classical Greek poetry, *in media res*, but here Pound is not only imitating Homer, but his great master, Dante, who began his *Commedia* in the middle, as well. Pound begins, audaciously, with the word "and." The first canto is a creative translation of book eleven of the *Odyssey*. And like Dante and Odysseus, Pound begins his journey to redemption by travelling to the world of the dead.

The second section (purgatory) constitutes the search for redemption or correction of error. This also involves, in Pound's words, "the 'repeat in history'" and "the 'magic moment' of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidian into 'divine or permanent world.' Gods, etc." Much of this section is crammed with philosophic, political, and economic theory (John Adams, Aristotle, C.H. Douglas).

Pound's idea was for an earthly *Paradise*, one that would be redemptive but not religious. He had developed a complicated idea of the connection between sexuality and mental creativity that borrowed from the Greek Dionysian cult and from the Eleusinian mysteries as well as from Remy de Gourmont, whose *Physique de l'Amour* Pound had translated as the *Natural Philosophy of Love*. He had even become convinced that the Provençal poets were the recipients and potential transmitters of this philosophy. For more on this aspect of Pound's thought and work, see Leon Surette's *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*.

Pound published his first three cantos in *Poetry* in 1917 and the fourth in 1919, the same year he published his *Homage to Sextus Propertius*. He had probably begun working on the Cantos around 1915 and worked on them for a good part of the following fifty years.

The early segments, along with the *Propertius* series and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* marked the end of his life in England and of his earlier style of poetry. In the late 1930s, following a long poetic dry spell, he wrote cantos LXXII and LXXIII in Italian. For more about the Italian Cantos, go to the section of this document about Canto LXXII and the other Italian Canto and the *Pisan Cantos:*

Pound was to have begun his Paradise section when he was arrested and locked in a 6-foot square wire cage at the American Army Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa, exposed to sun, rain, bright night lights, ants, etc. Needless to say, it colored his paradise, and much of that landscape has found its way into the *Pisan Cantos*: the peak he jokingly named Mt.Taishan for the sacred Chinese mountain, a pair of smaller hills he called "Helen's breasts," the names of fellow prisoners, the hard dirt (*chthonia gea Mater*, "nether earth Mother" p. 449) on which he slept after he was moved to a tent in the medical compound following his collapse from exposure, the tower of Pisa he could see through the line of prison laundry on a clear day. As Pound said, "It is difficult to write a paradiso when all superficial indications are that you ought to write an apocalypse."

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Guido Cavalcanti

1250-1300

Like his friend Dante, Cavalcanti was born in Florence, Italy, of an upper-class Guelph family. He was fifteen years older than Dante and was extremely influential on the younger poet's work, but he was more violently active than Dante, which eventually led to his exile. Dante was a prior of the city and was necessarily involved in sending Cavalcanti into exile, a fate he himself later suffered, and he always revered Cavalcanti as a poet and philosopher. Cavalcanti had studied the methods of the Provençal poets with his friend Guido Guinicelli and had supposedly also met, at the age of fifteen, Eccelino's sister Cunizza, whose flight from her husband with the Italian-Provençal poet Sordello was the subject of Browning's *Sordello* and who was immortalized by Dante and placed in the Heaven of Venus. Cavalcanti was, in fact, a vernacular Tuscan poet before Dante. Unlike Dante, he had the good fortune to return to Florence to die in August of the year in which Dante set the fictitious voyage of his *Commedia.*

Pound was interested in Cavalcanti as much for his philosophy as for his poetry. He regarded Cavalcanti as an heir to the Greek philosophers and especially as an interpreter of Aristotle. Pound translated Cavalcanti's sonnets and ballads on three different occasions: in 1912, he published *Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti*; between 1927 and 1929, he finished a version that the bankruptcy of the publisher prevented from seeing the light; and finally in 1932, he published *Guido Cavalcanti Rime*, a critical compilation of Cavalcanti's poems in Italian with commentary in both Italian and English by Pound. Pound revised his translations many times and referred to them, quoted from them, and imitated them in several of his *Cantos,* including canto LXXIII. Pound's translations and imitations of Cavalcanti influenced his own poetry and helped him resist the pull of the English iambic pentameter tradition.

Cavalcanti's name means "horseman" or "riding a horse." Guido's father, Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, and his father-in-law, Farinata degli Uberti, appear together among the heretics in canto X of Dante's *Inferno,* where Dante placed them for their adherence to Epicureanism.

Return to Canto LXXIII

Ezzelino III da Romano (also Ezzolino, Eccelino, Eccerinus, and Azzolino)

c1194 - 1259

Early thirteenth-century Ghibelline nobleman and military leader, Count of Onara, who died in prison in 1259. Ezzolino was famous for his cruelty and fierceness in battle. He was an ancestor of both Sigismundo Malatesta and Cesare Borgia, and was an ally of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederic II, one of Pound's and Dante's heroes because of his patronage of the arts and his rational leadership. His life and exploits were described in the *Eccerinus*, written in Latin by Mussato in the early fourteenth century and translated into Italian by Pound's friend and contemporary, Manlio Torquato Dazzi. Ezzelino's sister, Cunizza, was seduced away from her husband by the Provençal poet Sordello.

Pound would have known of Ezzelino from several sources besides Dazzi's translation: Dante referred to him as Azzolino and placed him in hell for violence against his neighbors (*Inf.* XII.110) and placed his sister Cunizza in the heaven of Venus; Browning mentions Ezzelino in his *Sordello*.

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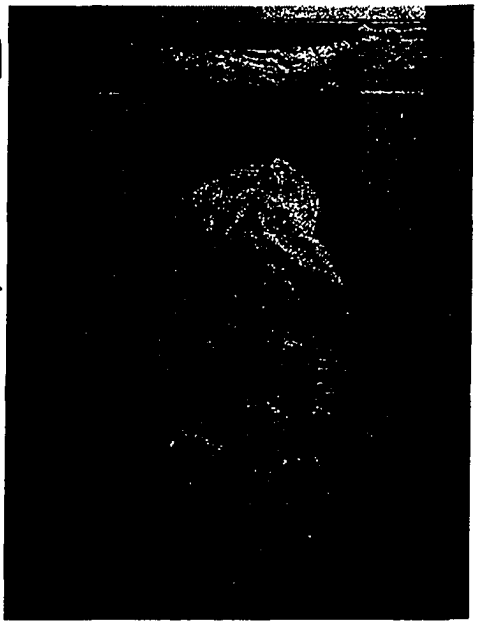
Home

Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta

1417 - 1468



Malatesta ruled the Rimini area and was a patron of the arts and a bitter enemy of the papacy. He had converted a church on his property to a pagan temple dedicated to love and in particular to his mistress, the "divine" Ixotta degli Atti. The *Tempio Malatestiano*, a detail of which is shown at right, also housed the tomb of the Greek scholar Gemisthus Plethon.

Sigismondo was descended from Gianciotto Malatesta, a hunchback who killed his wife, Francesca da Rimini, because of her love affair with his brother, Paolo. All of them appear in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Sigismondo is depicted at prayer in the fresco below by Piero della Francesca.

Back to Ezzelino

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Home

Gemisto/Gemisthus Plethon

c. 1355 - 1450
Byzantine Neoplatonist philosopher who promoted Greek learning in the West. His ashes were entombed in the Tempio Malatestiana, a pagan temple to love that Sigismundo Malatesta had created (out of a church) in honor of his beautiful wife, Ixotta. Pound mistakenly believed that the temple had been destroyed by Allied bombs.

See also Malatesta.

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HOME

Borgia

The Borgia were a rich and powerful Guelph family of northern Italy, who flourished during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, long after Ezzelino's death. They included two popes and several children of popes, including the notorious Cesare (1476-1507), who was brilliant and cruel, and his sister Lucrezia (1480-1519), who was a patron of the arts. He is undoubtedly one of the Guelphs Ezzelino is speaking of in the previous lines. He allied himself with King Louis XII of France and overran Romagna, and he engineered an ambush similar to that suffered by Ezzelino's brother. (See also the entry on "Guelph calumny"). Cesare may have killed his older brother, and almost certainly disposed of his sister Lucrezia's second husband, Alfonso of Aragon, and is thought to have been Macchiavelli's model for the *Prince*.

Back to Ezzelino

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Home

Torquato Dazzi . . . Mussato

Pound's friend Manlio Torquato Dazzi had translated into Italian Albertino Mussato's Latin text *Eccerinus*, a play based on the life and exploits of the medieval leader Ezzolino da Romano, also called Eccelino, who appears in Dante's *Inferno*, and whose sister, Cunizza, was also an important figure for Pound and for Dante.

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Home

Cavalcanti, Guido. *Rime.* Pound, Ezra, Translator and editor. Genova: Marsano, 1931.

Back to Cavalcanti

or to bibliography

About Cantos LXXII, LXXIII and the *Pisan Cantos*

In early 1945, Pound published two poems in a small, obscure Fascist newspaper, *La Marina Repubblicana*. Twenty-seven lines of Canto LXXII appeared January 15, 1945, under the title *"Presenza di F.T. Marinetti;"* two weeks later, February 1, 1945, the same newspaper published *"Canto LXXIII: Cavalcanti: Corrispondenza Repubblicana."* Pound also sent these Cantos to Mussolini at his new Fascist headquarters in exile at Salò. He may have offered them to the regime as propaganda literature, or they may even have been commissioned. In either case, they are the first poetry Pound published since the issue of Cantos LII-LXXI in 1940. These so-called "Italian Cantos" are interesting for many reasons. They were omitted from the *Cantos* until the 1986 New Directions edition, which included them in an appendix and without translations. In the interim, they were published together in a small private edition by Pound's estate in 1973, a year after his death. An English translation for Canto LXXII, adapted from an incomplete one made by Pound, was finally included in the 1995 New Directions edition of the *Cantos*. But even in the earlier editions, since Pound had not renumbered the *Cantos*, the Italian Cantos retained a textual reality by their absence, the numbers skipping from LXXI to LXXIV, the first of the *Pisan Cantos*.

Until recently it was thought that there were only two Italian Cantos, LXXII and LXXIII. We now know that there were others, written in Italian, which formed a foundation of the *Pisan Cantos*, for which Pound won the Bollingen Prize for literature in 1949. In 1993, Olga Rudge, Pound's companion of some fifty years, sent her papers to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, where the bulk of Pound's papers already reside. Among Rudge's papers are the notebooks in which Pound was working out these Italian Cantos. In addition to investigating the genesis of the published versions of Cantos LXXII and LXXIII, one can find material in Italian, some of it numbered consecutively after these two and containing much of the material that has found its way into the *Pisan Cantos*.

Many critics have noted that the eleven *Pisan Cantos*, written in the U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Center--the detention camp at Pisa where Pound was held pending his trial for treason--and first published as a group in 1948, have a more elegiac style and include more personal and topical material than his earlier Cantos. Some have tended to see this change as reflecting a shift away from fascism, as indicating even remorse. We now know that many passages that appear in the *Pisan Cantos* were drafted in Italian as part of a series of Fascist poems. In addition to the notebooks, there are typescript pages for some of these drafts. Two of these pages, one of which is marked "74," are reproduced here.

One may now conclude, therefore, that the *Pisan Cantos* were written largely from memory--in English this time, and with the incorporation of some topical and local material from the camp at Pisa. (Ronald Bush has recently documented this

material and its connection to the *Pisan Cantos*). These findings raise the question of what one does with this material, which could be read as a variant of what we now regard as the *Pisan Cantos*, or as a fair copy of part of them, and they give new weight to the Italian material presented here.

During the years between 1940 and 1945 Pound had been writing articles for Italian journals on politics, economics, and art, but he seemed unable to write more than fragments for his epic work. These Italian Cantos mark a return to poetry, however propagandistic. **Canto LXXII** begins in obvious imitation of Dante's *Inferno*, but since Pound is already in the hell of war, the three spirits he evokes (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Manlio Torquato Dazzi, and Ezzelino) visit him. It is not by accident that Pound overlaps the appearances of modern and medieval figures. These two Cantos were published at a time when the Fascists were trying to revive their movement from Salò, and Pound's evocation of both medieval and Fascists heroes is meant to do its part for the cause. **Canto LXXIII** is written in imitation of Guido Cavalcanti, and works as a ballad and folk tale--and as propaganda. Indeed, in Canto LXXIII Pound uses Cavalcanti's word *riscossa, resurgence*, a term Mussolini had appropriated for the Salò effort, in an attempt to reignite the youth of Italy and resuscitate the Fascist cause.

There are many different texts of the Italian Cantos. Among the Pound and Rudge papers at The Beinecke Library, are numerous manuscript fragments for both these Cantos on loose pieces of paper, torn envelopes and the backs of concert programs, and in a holograph notebook; there are nineteen typescripts of Canto LXXII and almost as many for Canto LXXIII. Some of these typescripts are carbon copies, but they are all different because of the corrections or marginal notes on each. Most of the typescripts were done by Pound, but there are some done by his daughter Mary and Olga Rudge. The corrections are mainly in Pound's hand, but there are notes and questions in the margin by Mary, who corrected Pound's Italian. An early typescript of Canto LXXII on cheap, newsprint-quality paper shows two sets of corrections, one in black ink and the other in pencil. Later typescripts incorporated some of these corrections or made changes not noted here. A final version was used for an interlinear translation; it is a ten-page document, of which one page can be seen here. Pound finished only through part of page 8, ending with "to make the more fair cyprian weep.'

Canto LXXIII has fewer variants and was published in only one version, the one that appears here. The typescripts have fewer corrections, and there are only ten that differ from one another. Most of the corrections seem to have been worked out in the notebook. What appears to be the earliest typescript of Canto LXXIII has a date in pencil on page 2.

The Italian text presented here is from the New Directions 1995 edition, and the English text of Canto LXXII is the translation, adapted from Pound's own, in the

same edition. I have made links to explain sections where Pound's translation differs significantly from the Italian or omits phrases. The translation of Canto LXXIII, and all translations other than that of Canto LXXII, are mine. There are bibliographic links from all quotations.

View facsimile of original publication of Canto LXXII

View facsimile of original publication of Canto LXXIII

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Home

Published in January, 1945

The section of the poem originally published in the *Marina Repubblicana*, reproduced here, corresponds roughly to the beginning of Canto LXXII as we know know it, with the omission of eighteen lines. In introducing the poem, Pound's friend Ubaldo degli Uberti refers to it as the "concluding lines of 'Presenza.'" Uberti's introduction reads:

> The name of Ezra Pound is well known to our readers, who admired and pondered in our first issue the eternal maxims of Confucius, which he translated for us. Ezra Pound, American, but a friend of Fascist Italy in the highest and purest sense of the word, is a poet who would almost have us forget, as if they were the work of a younger self, the deep and delicate verses that made him the leader of a movement, and the sonnets he crafted according to the rules and with standard spellings, and now he has made a place for himself among the scholars of the English-speaking nations, and beyond, with his *Cantos*, which are, I would say, revolutionary not only in content but in form, and which I unfortunately could not bring with me to the North, or I would give you a taste. A sincere friend of Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, he understood the great soul of this literary innovator and patriot, and he could not have failed to feel great pain at the premature end of the poet who used to say--and he put it into action -- that anyone who sang of heroes -- Marinetti's last canzone was dedicated to his comrades of the *Decima Mas* -- should fight.
>
> On the death of Marinetti, Ezra Pound's winged thoughts relive a conversation that, though it never occurred, certainly could take place if the Omnipotent One, whom Pound calls the "great aesthete," permitted at least to the souls of the great to return and make contact with us, who are still fighting and who are struggling to keep going amid mud and destruction, to help us hold our heads high so that we will not drown.
>
> Ezra Pound is no longer concerned with rhyme, and he sings with a rhythm that is sometimes soothing and sometimes hammering, and he is not afraid to use our language, the value and significance of whose words he knows deeply, and it does not matter if once in a while he forgets the exact spelling of a word or some other subtlety.
>
> Here is the conclusion of:
>
> "PRESENZA"

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The image at right is a facsimile of the piece as it appeared January 15, 1945 in the *Marina Repubblicana.*

Presenza di F. T. Marinetti

di Ezra Pound

Il nome di Ezra Pound è ben noto ai nostri lettori, che nel numero 1 di quest'anno hanno ammirato e riflettuto sulle massime eterne di Confucio che egli ha tradotto per noi. Ezra Pound americano, ma amico dell'Italia fascista nel senso più alto e più puro della parola, è un poeta che ora vorrebbe quasi far dimenticare, come trascorsi di gioventù, i suoi versi delicati e profondi che ne fecero un caposcuola, i suoi sonetti intessuti a regola d'arte con ortografia ortodossa, e si è ora imposto tra gli studiosi delle nazioni anglioparlanti, e fuori, con i suoi «Cantos» rivoluzionari, sarei per dire, non solo nella sostanza, ma anche nella forma, che purtroppo non ho potuto portare con me al Nord, per potervene dare qualche saggio. Legato di sincera amicizia con Filippo Tomaso Marinetti ne aveva compresa l'anima grande di letterato rinnovatore e patriota, e non poteva non sentire dolore per la prematura fine del poeta che diceva — e poneva in alto — che chi cantava gli eroi — l'ultimo canto di Marinetti è stato dedicato ai camerati della Decima Mas — doveva combattere.

In morte di Marinetti, Ezra Pound con alate pensare ha rivissuto un colloquio che, non avvenuto, avrebbe certo potuto avvenire se l'Onnipotente, che Pound chiama «il grande esteta», permettesse almeno alle anime dei grandi, di tornare a prendere contatto con noi, che ancora combattiamo e ci arrabattiamo nel fango e nella distruzione, per aiutarci a mantenere la testa alla per non essere sommersi.

Ezra Pound non si preoccupa più della rima e canta con un ritmo ora suadente ora martellante e non teme di usare la nostra lingua, di cui conosce in profondità il valore e il significato delle parole, e non importa se qualche volta si scorda una precisa ortografia o qualche altra sottigliezza.

Ecco la conclusione della:

«PRESENZA»

Dopo la sua morte mi venne Filippo Tomaso dicendo:
«Bè, io sono morto,
ma non voglio andare in Paradiso, voglio combatter ancora;
voglio il tuo corpo, con che potrei ancora combattere».
Ed io risposi: «E' già vecchio il mio corpo, Tomaso,
e poi, dove andrei? Ne ho bisogno io del corpo.
Ma se vuoi ancora combattere, va, piglia qualche giovinotto,
pigliati qualche giovinotto imbelle ed imbecille
per fargli un pò di coraggio, per dargli un pò di cervello,
Per dare all'Italia ancor un eroe fra tanti,
così puoi rinascere, così diventar pantera,
Così puoi conoscere la bi-nascita, e morire una seconda volta,
Non morir vecchio a letto
anzi morir a suono di battaglia.
Per aver Paradiso,
Purgatorio già hai fatto
Dopo il tradimento, nei giorni del Settembre Ventuno
nei giorni del crollo,
vai, vai a farti di nuovo eroe.
Lascia a me la parola,
Lascia a me ch'io mi spieghi
ch'io faccia il canto della guerra eterna
Fra fango e luce,
addio Marinetti!
Tornaci a parlar quando ti sembra.»
«PRESENTE!»

u. d. u.

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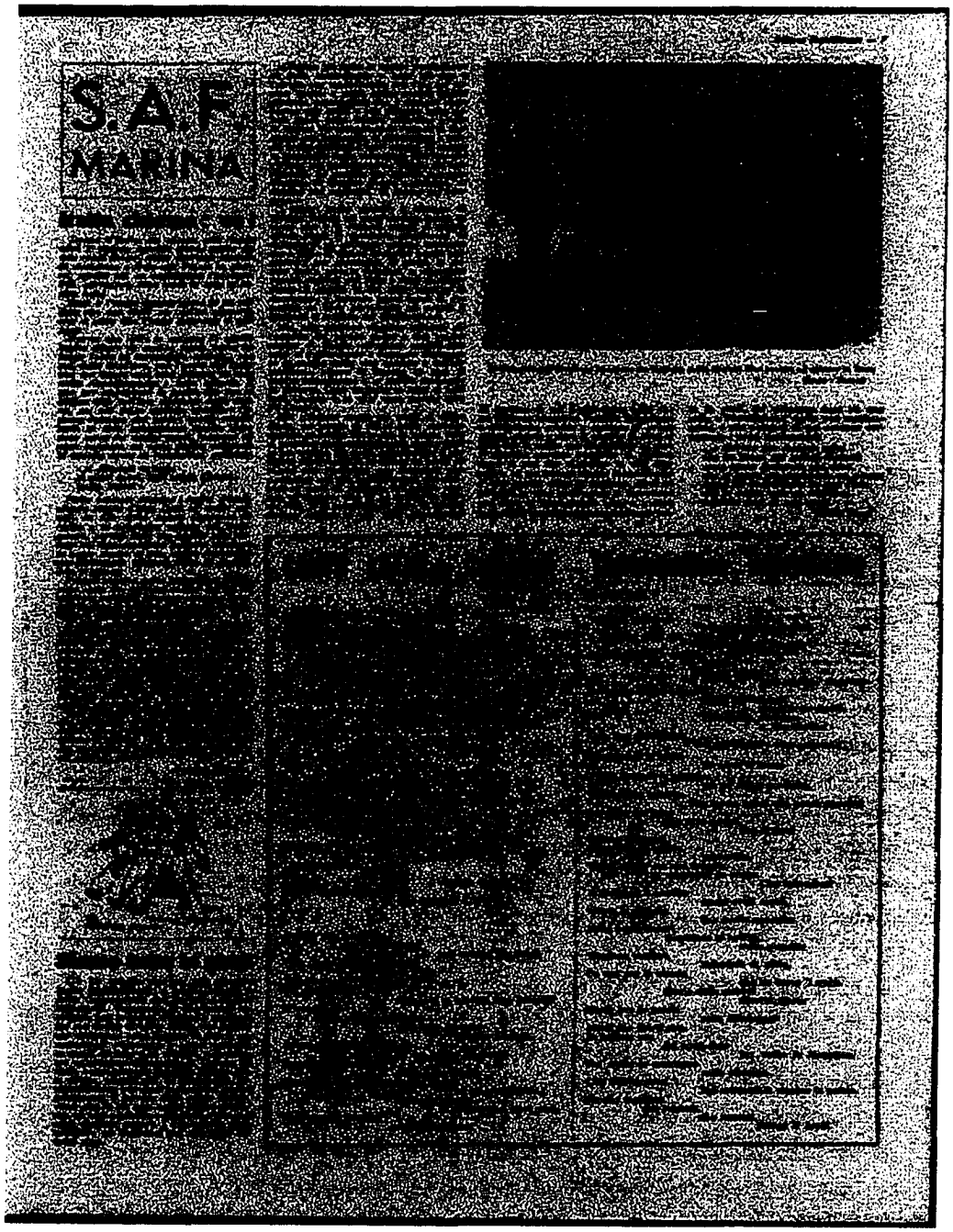
Page 7 of the *Marina Repubblicana*, 1 February 1945



Pound's Canto LXXIII appears at bottom right. At top right is a photograph of young Italian soldiers with the caption "Commander Borghese inspects a unit of the Mas Division, ready to go to the lines."

On the left, two articles call Italian women to action. Both are replete with phrases exhorting sacrifice for honor and glory, ironically recalling Pound's irate repudiation in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* of the use of such sentiments in the first World War:

These fought in any case,

and some believing,

pro domo, in any case. . .

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" not "et decor" . . .

walked eye-deep in hell

believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving

came home, home to a lie,

home to many deceits,

home to old lies and new infamy;

usury age-old and age-thick

and liars in public places.

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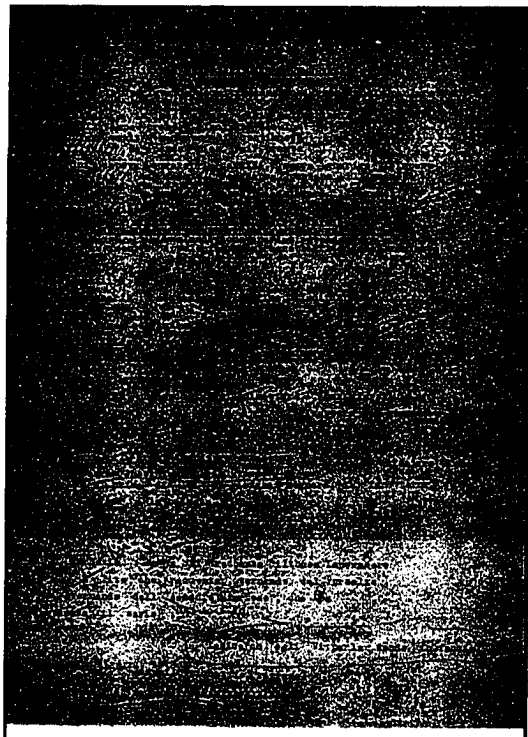
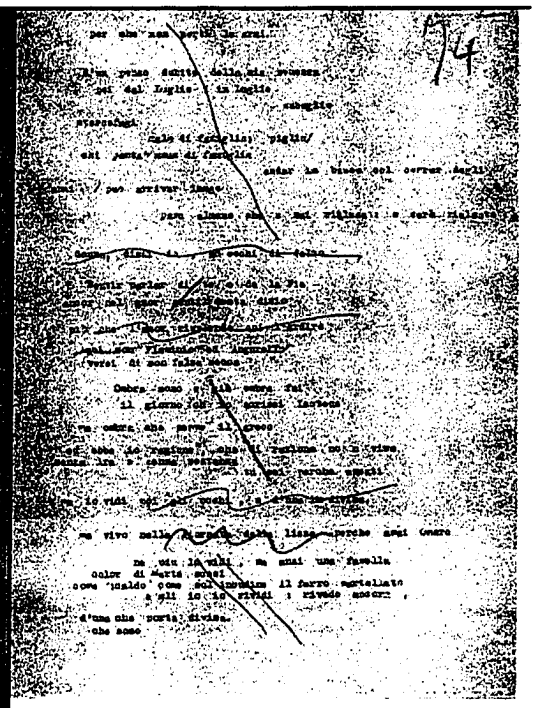
These pages were typed on cheap, newsprint-quality paper and are very yellowed. They are from two different typescripts. The one on the right is cited by Ronald Bush in "Towards Pisa," his study of the connections between the Italian Cantos and the *Pisan Cantos.* The lighter notes are in pencil, and the darker ones are in black ink. To see either typescript magnified, click on the image.



Some of the same themes found in Canto LXXII
appear here, which may explain why Pound deleted
so much of this draft.



The second of the two lines marked for deletion with
a wavy line at the bottom of the page above, beginning,
"*ma vivo nella giornata della lizza,*"
"but I live in the days of the lists," are taken from
the notebook page reproduced here.

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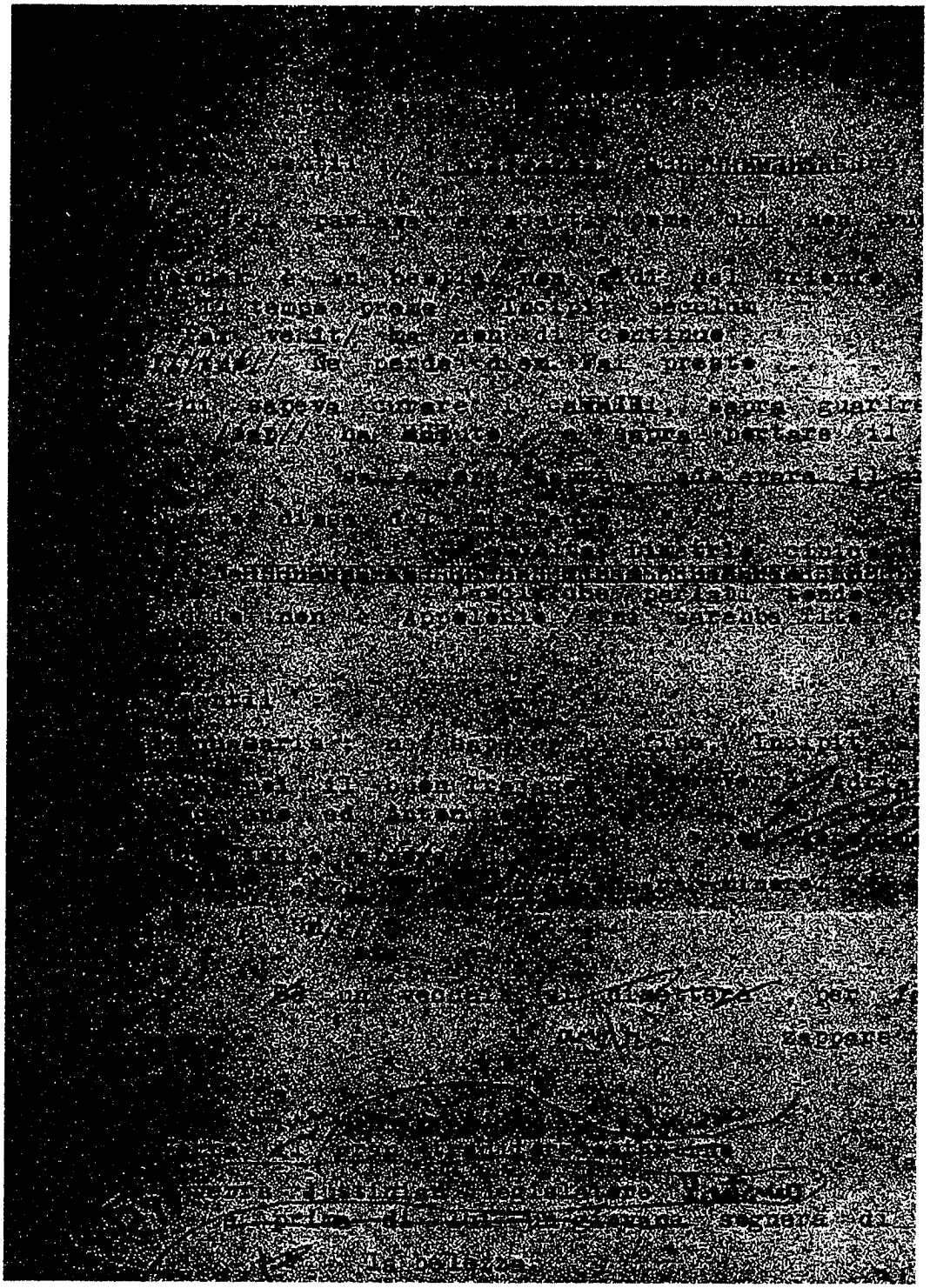

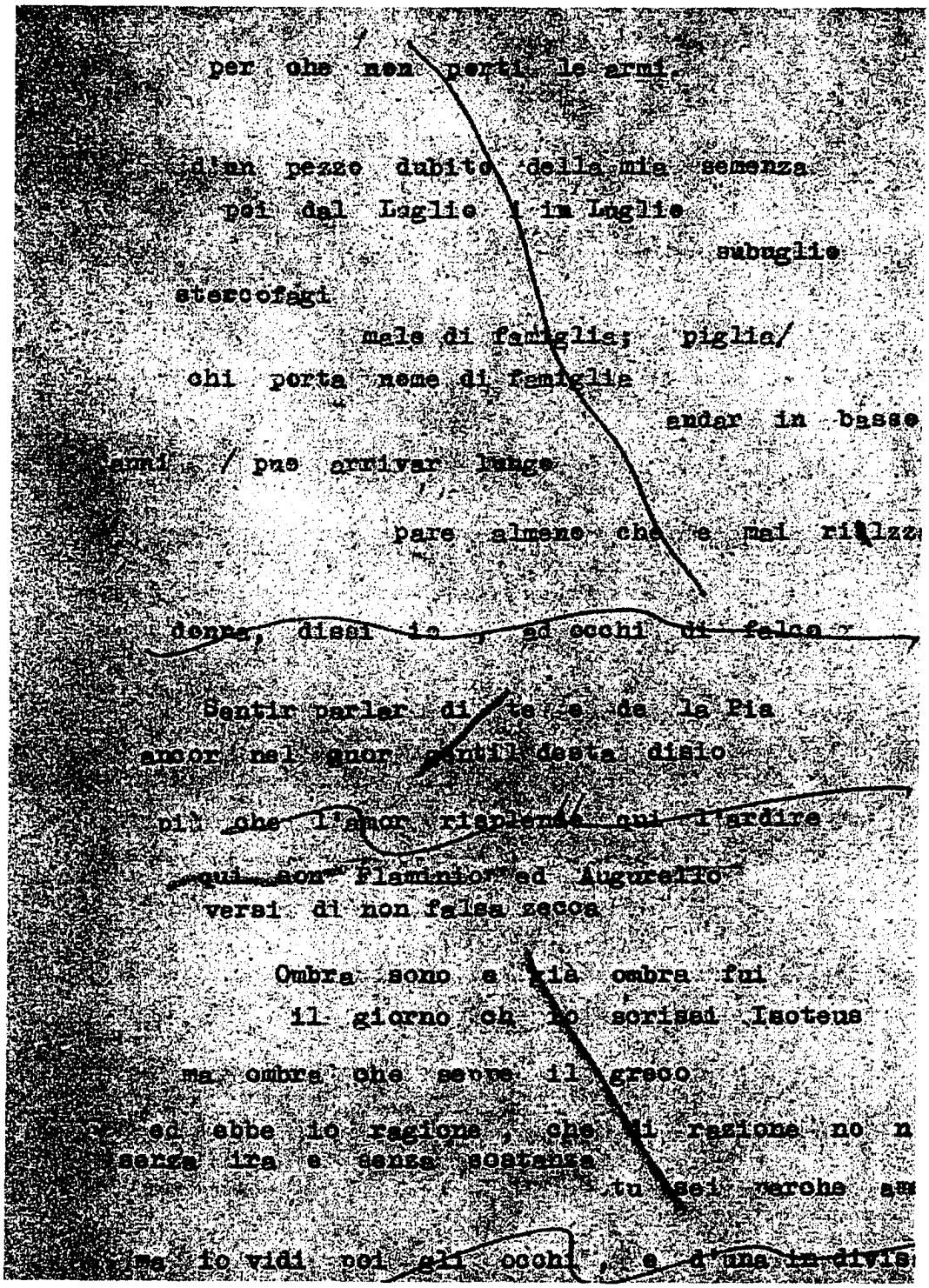

per che non porti le armi.

di un pezzo dubito della mia semenza.
poi dal Laglio in Laglio
subuglio
stercofagi
male di famiglia; piglia/
chi porta nome di famiglia
andar in basso
anni / può arrivar lunge
pare almeno che e mai rizz
donne, disse io, ad occhi di falco
Sentir parler di te e de la Pia
ancor nel cuor gentil desta disio
più che l'amor risplende qui ardire
qui non Flaminio ed Augurello
versi di non falsa zecca
Ombra sono e già ombra fui
il giorno ch'io scrissi Isoteus
ma ombra che serve il greco
ed ebbe io ragione, che di razione no n
sperge ira e senza sostanza
tu sei perche am
ma io vidi poi gli occhi, e d'una in divis

Cunizza

Cunizza da Romano, sister of the Ghibelline leader Ezzelino, was seduced away from her husband by the Italian (later Provençal) poet Sordello. Dante placed her in the Paradise of Venus. Pound approved of her for this reason and also because she was reputed to have freed her slaves.

Back to Cavalcanti

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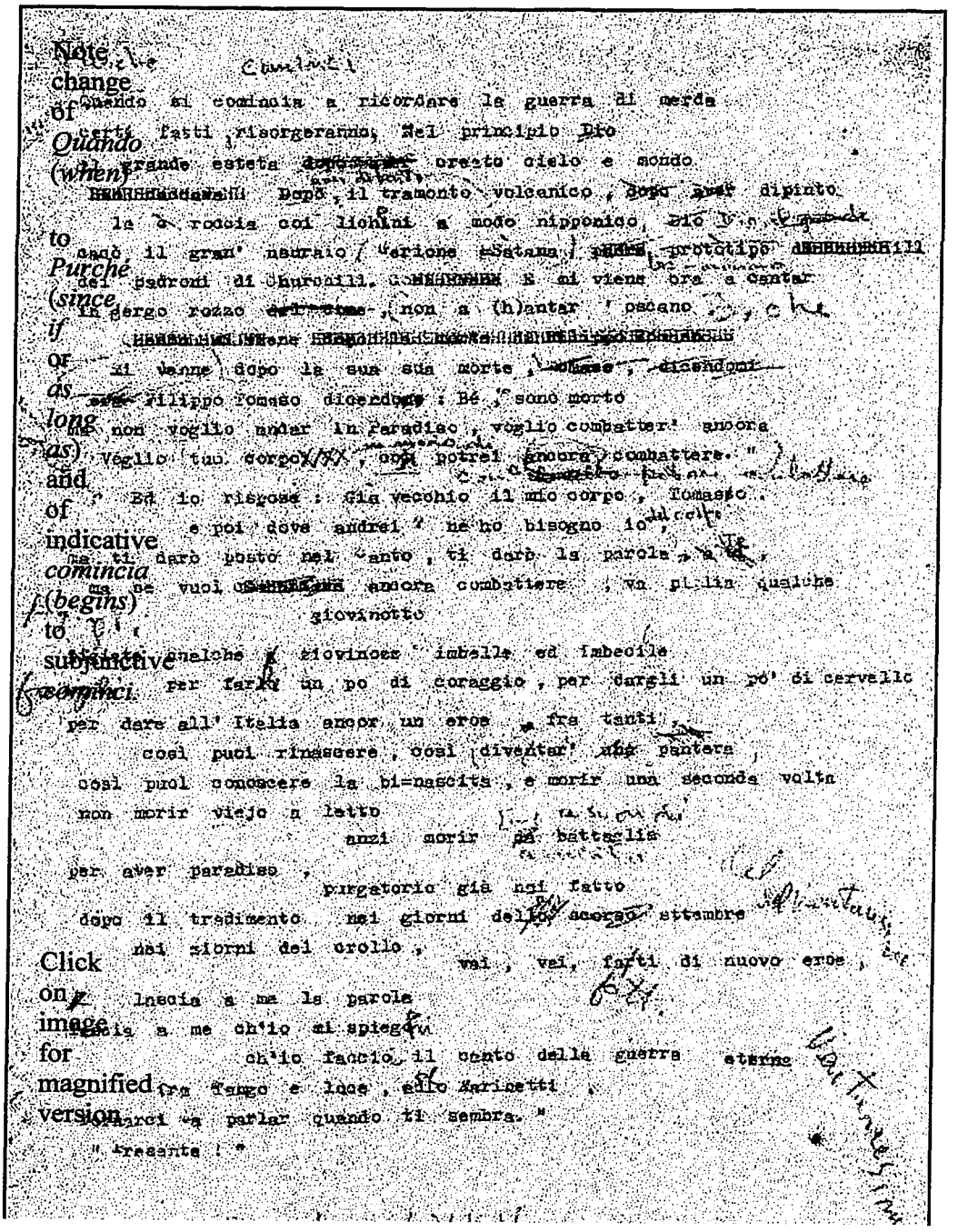
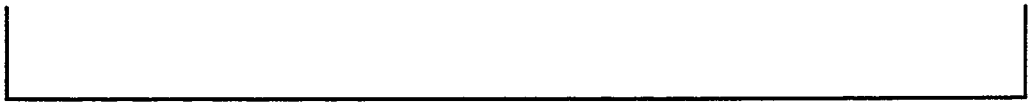
This early typescript of Canto LXXII shows corrections that are incorporated in later versions.



Note change of *Quando* (*when*) to *Purché* (*since if* or *as long as*) and of indicative *comincia* (*begins*) to subjunctive *cominci*.

Click on image for magnified version.



The
note
at
the
bottom
reads:
"Canto
LXXII:
verses
from
the
beginning"

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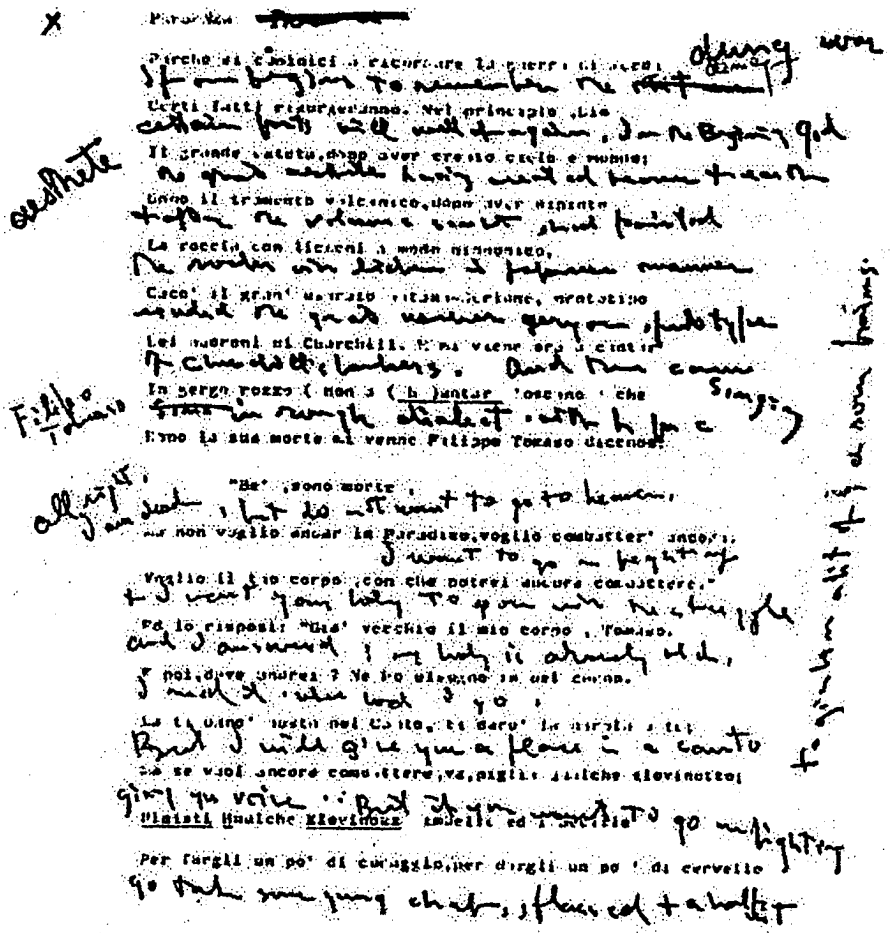
Quando si comincia a
certi fatti risorgera
il grande esteta dop
Dopo
la roccia coi
cacò il gran' usurai
dei padroni di Church
in gergo rozzo dei c
Mi venne dopo la
Filippo Tomaso d
ma non voglio andar
Voglio tuo corpo
Ed io risposé :
e poi dove
ma ti darò posto nel

This is the opening section of a triple-spaced transcript of Canto LXXII, apparently made by James Laughlin, with Pound's interlinear translation and marginalia. The typescript is ten pages and includes all of Canto LXXII. Another, a three-page clean typescript of Canto LXXIII, was apparently done at the same time. Pound's translation stops about a third of the way down page 8 at "*a far piangere la Ciprigna bella*," "to make the fair Cyprian weep." Note changes such as *dung* for the more accurate *shit*.



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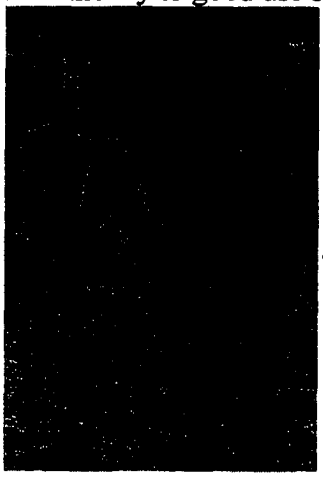
James Laughlin

October 30, 1914 - November 12, 1997

American publisher and writer, who founded New Directions, the publishing house that first published Pound, Williams, Eliot, and most of the important *Modernists. At the age of* twenty, disillusioned with Harvard, Laughlin took the advice of the poet and translator Dudley Fitts, who had been one of his teachers at Choate and went to Rapallo, Italy to study poetry with Pound, who convinced him that his talents lay in recognizing and appreciating good literature and persuaded him to put his family's steel money to good use supporting the worthy writers who were his friends.



Laughlin kept Pound's books in print, whether they sold or not, for which Pound was grateful. But New Directions also published a much material that Pound did not approve of, a practice he referred to as "great deal of sewage to float a few boats."

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Home

E se tu credi a simile pastocchia
Ogni carotta puo' ben farti cinco.

Il bel Adonide morì d'un porco
A far piangere la Ciprigna bella.

Se feci giocattolo della ragione

Direi ch'un toro da macello,

O dal zoologo,vale un piccione;

Chi delle favole prende piacer e gioia

Dira' che l'animale non fa la religione.

Un volo falso fa piu' al mondo boia

Che i miei scatti tutti. Ragna,ragnaccia !

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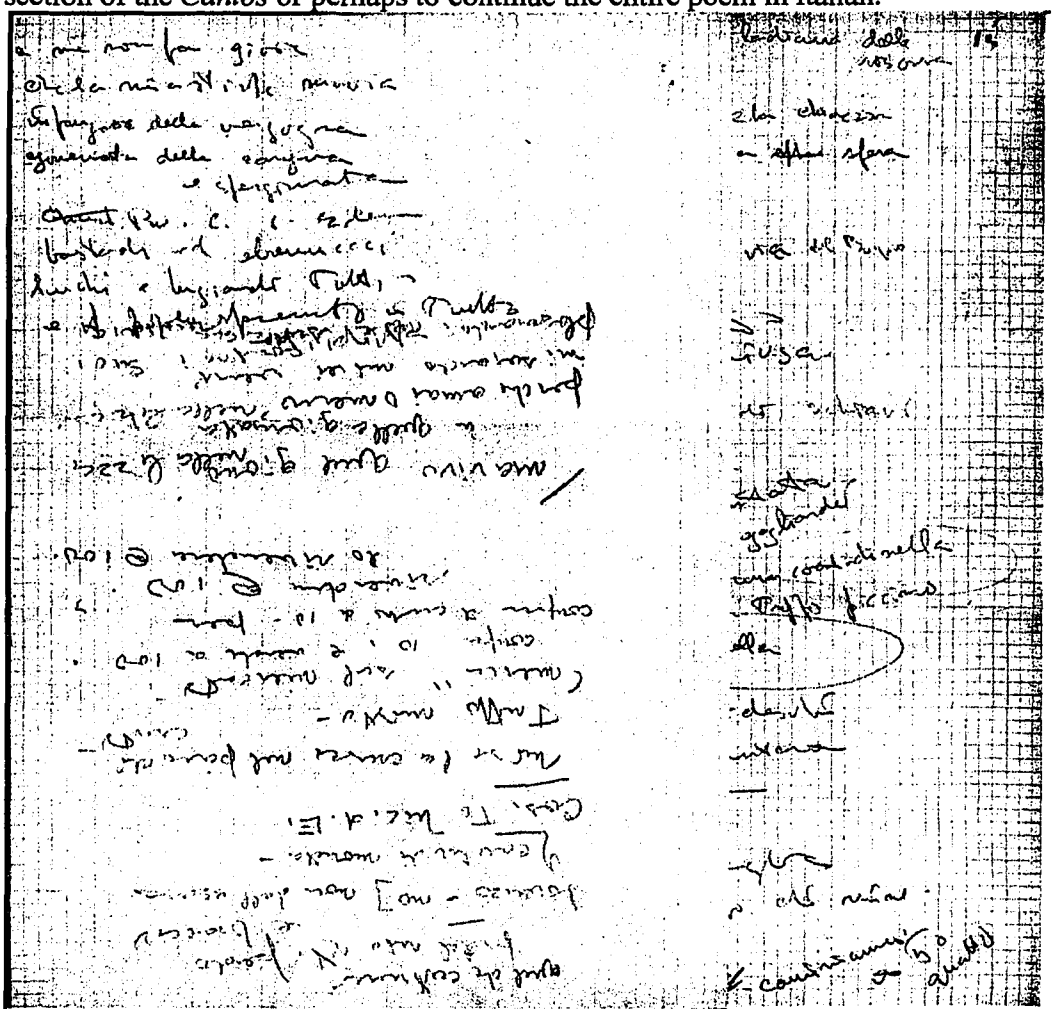
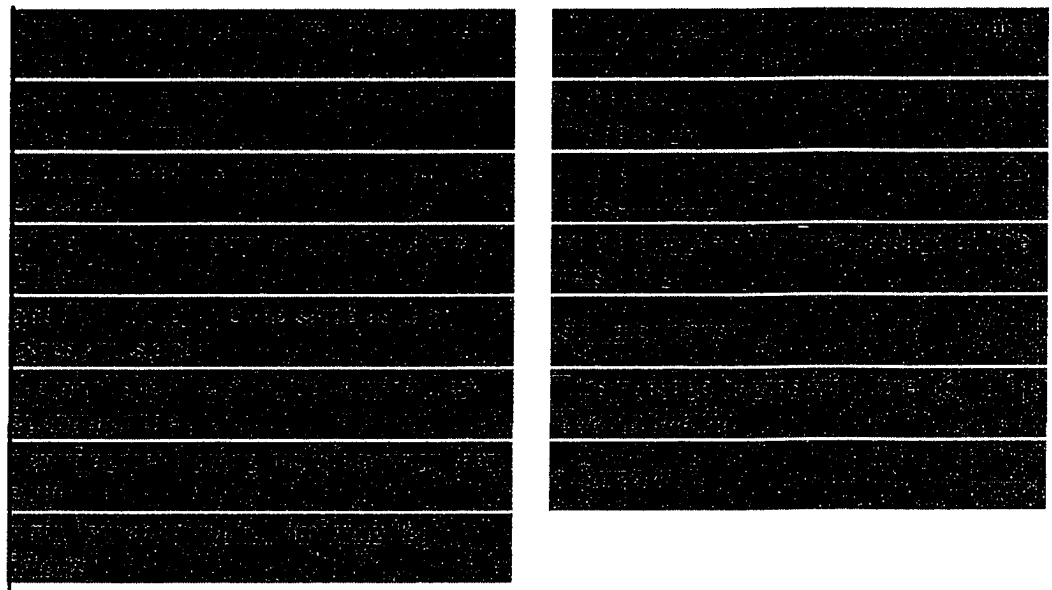
to Canto LXXII

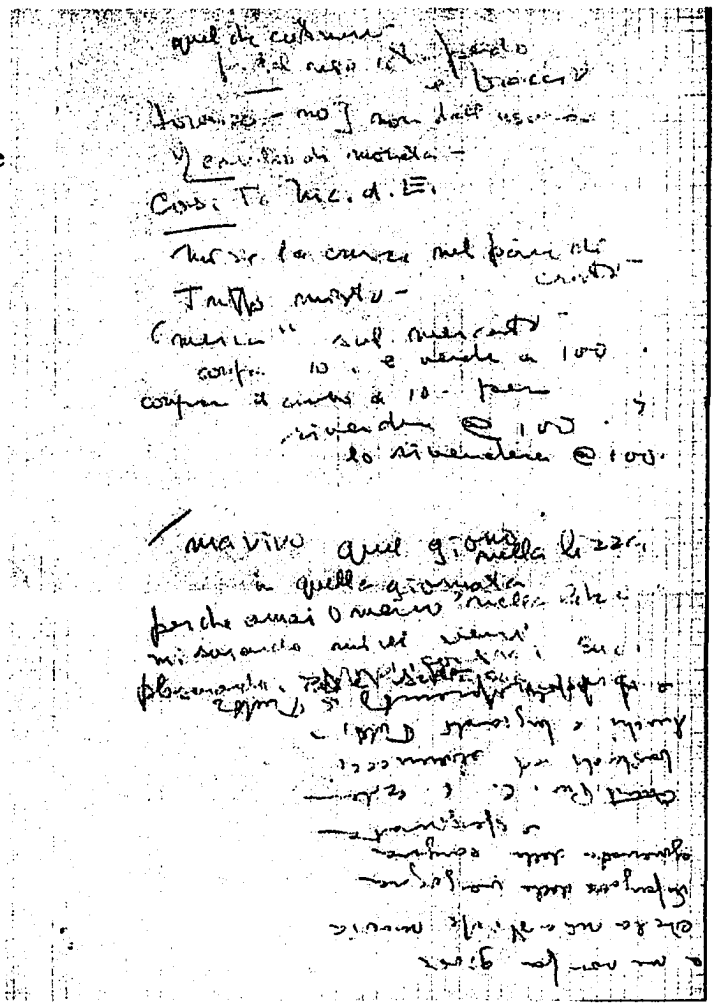
These pages, from a notebook in which Pound was apparently working between December, 1944 and early spring, 1945, give us an idea of how he composed his poetry, but they also show the genesis of what later became the *Pisan Cantos.* Both pages show early drafts of Canto LXXIII, but upside down on the verso page, left, is a draft, also in Italian, for a later Canto. To turn the verso page over, click here or on the page itself. Pound numbered these drafts consecutively with the two known Italian Cantos. We can, therefore, assume that he intended to create an Italian section of the *Cantos* or perhaps to continue the entire poem in Italian.





Return to About the Italian Cantos

Home



Working backward through the notebook, upside down, Pound was now on recto 14, or -- if he numbered the pages continuously after turning the notebook over -- page 26. This fragment concerns usury. The abbreviated name is Niccolò d'Este (1384-1441), powerful but peaceful ruler of Ferrara, Modena, Parma, Reggio, and Milan. He is mentioned in earlier Cantos but does not appear in the *Pisan Cantos*. The section in unclosed parenthesis in the middle of the page reads:

(merci" sul mercato

compra [a?] 10 e vende a 100.

compra il [cento?] a 10 per

rivendere @ 100.

lo rivender @ 100.

(merchandise" on the market

buy [at?] 10 and sell at 100.

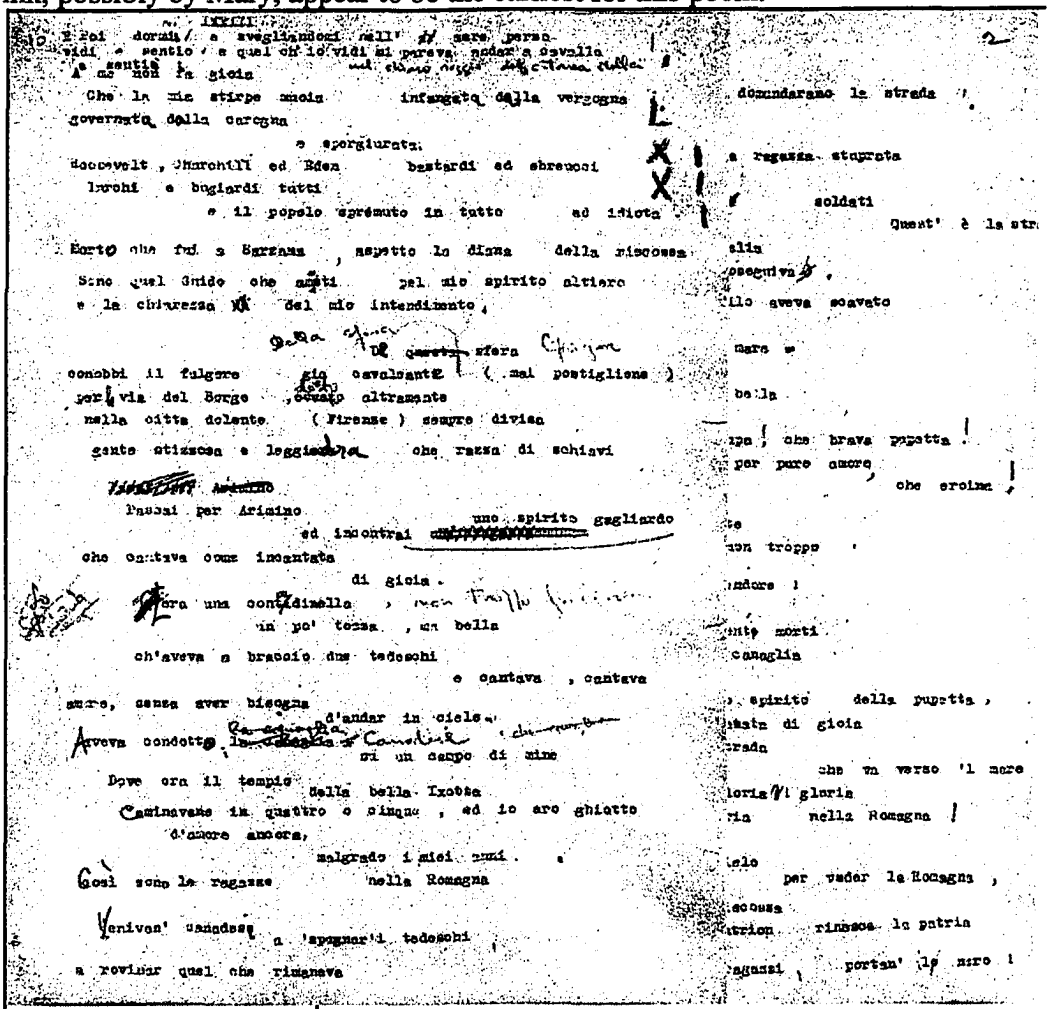
buy the [hundred?] at 10 to

re-sell at 100.

re-sell it at 100.

[redacted] Back

These two typescripts of Canto LXXIII, corrected in pencil by Pound and in black ink, possibly by Mary, appear to be the earliest for this poem.



Note the date in pencil in the margin of the typescript at right.

Back to "About the Italian Cantos "

To Canto LXXIII

Home [redacted]

E Poi dormii / e svegliandomi nell' aere
vidi e sentio / e quel ch' io vidi mi pareva anda
e sentiè
me non fa gioia

Che la mia stirpe muoia infangata d
governata dalla carogna
e spergiurata,
Roosevelt, Churchill ed Eden bastardi e
larchi e bugiardi tutti
e il popolo sprémuto in tutto

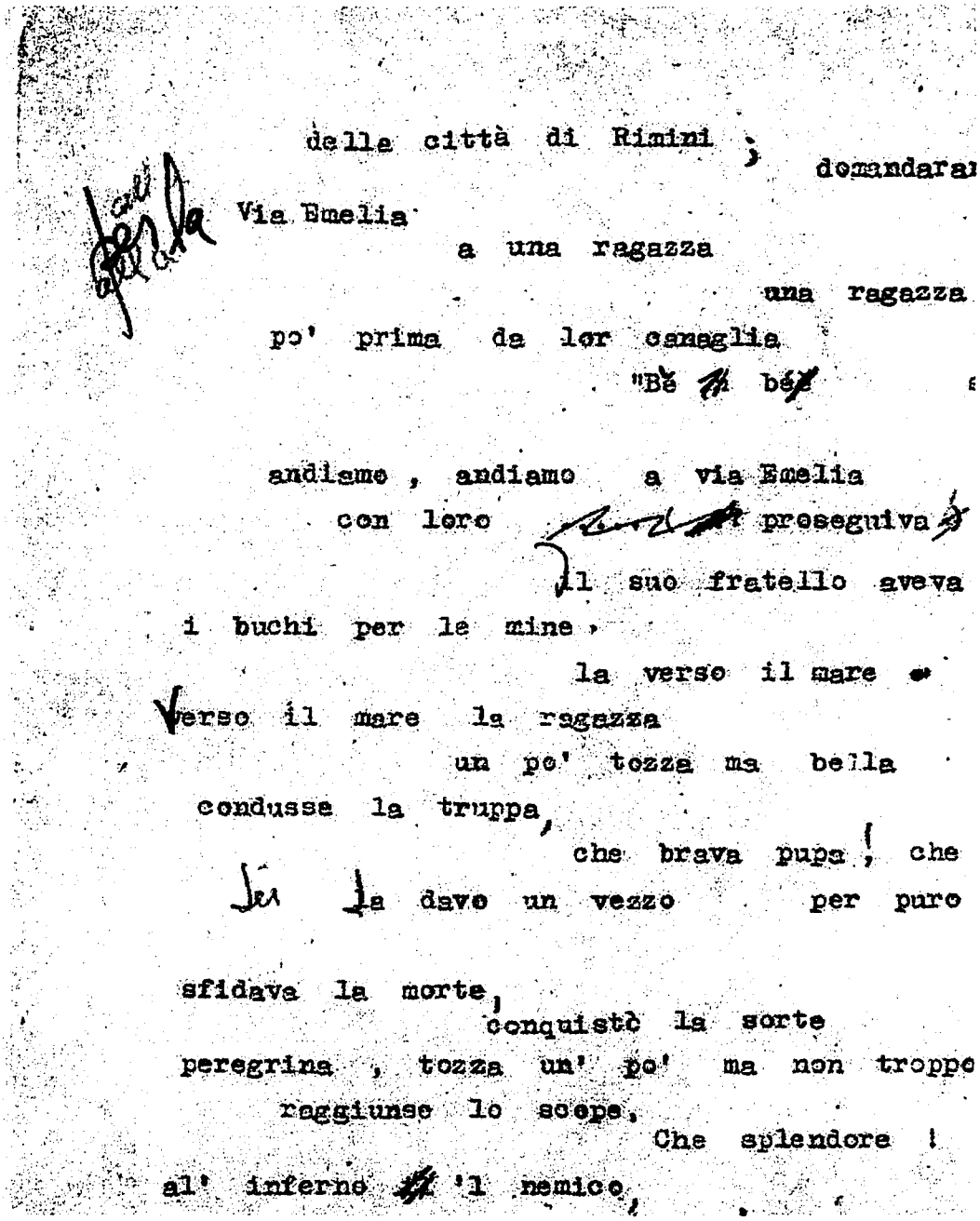
Morto che fui a Sarzana, aspetto lo dian
Sono quel Guido che amàti pel mio sp
e la chiarezza del mio intendimento.

conobbi il fulgore già cavalcant
per via del Borgo, svelto altramente
nella città dolente (Firenze) sempre di
gente stizzosa e leggiadra che razza

Passai per Arimino
ed incontrai una
che cantava come incantata
di gioia.

era una contadinella, un po' tozza, ma bella
ch'aveva a braccio due tedeschi
e car

The lighter markings are in pencil in Pound's hand. The correction "*per la*" in black ink over "*alla*" in pencil (more idiomatic for *toward* than *alla, to*) was possibly made by Mary.



delle città di Rimini ;
domandarai
Via Emelia
a una ragazza
una ragazza
po' prima de ler comeglia
"Bé bé
andiamo , andiamo a via Emelia
con loro proseguiva
il suo fratello aveva
i buchi per le mine ,
la verso il mare
verso il mare la ragazza
un po' tozza ma bella
condusse la truppa,
che brava pupa ! che
la dave un vezzo per puro
sfidava la morte,
conquistò la sorte
peregrina , tozza un' po' ma non troppo
raggiunse lo scopo,
Che splendore !
al' inferno 'l nemico,

Ezra Pound

CANTO LXXII

Presenza

Purché si cominci a ricordare la guerra di merda
Certi fatti risorgeranno. Nel principio, Dio
Il grande esteta, dopo aver creato cielo e mondo,
Dopo il tramonto vulcanico, dopo aver dipinto

La roccia con licheni a modo nipponico,

Cacò il gran'usuraio Satana-Gerione, prototipo
Dei padroni di Churchill. E mi viene ora a cantar'
In gergo rozzo (non a (h)antar 'oscano) ché
Dopo la sua morte mi venne Filippo Tomaso dicendo:
Be', sono morto,
Ma non voglio andar in Paradiso, voglio combatter' ancora. Voglio il tuo corpo, con cui potrei ancora combattere."

Ed io risposi: "Già vecchio il mio corpo, Tomaso
E poi, dove andrei? Ne ho bisogno io del corpo.
Ma ti darò posto nel Canto, ti darò la parola, a te;
Ma se vuoi ancora combattere, va; pigla qualche giovanotto;
Pigiate hualche ziovanozz' imbelle ed imbecille
Per fargli un po' di coraggio, per dargli un po' di cervello,

Ezra Pound

CANTO LXXII

Presence

If one begins to remember the dung

certain facts will well up again.

In the beginning God

the great aesthete having created heaven and earth
& after the volcanic sunset, had painted
Exuded the great usurer Geryon, prototype
of Churchill's bankers. And there came singing
Filippo Tomaso in rough dialect, with h for c
"All right, I am dead, but I do not want to go to heaven,
I want to go on fighting

& I want your body to go on with the struggle."

And I answered: "my body is already old,

I need it, where wd. I go?

But I will give you a place in a Canto
giving you voice. But if you want to go on fighting
go take some young chap, flaccid & a half wit
to give him a bit of courage and some brains

Per dare all'Italia ancor' un eroe fra tanti;

Così puoi rinascere, così diventare
pantera,
Così puoi conoscere la bi-nascita, e
morir una seconda volta,
Non morir viejo a letto,
anzi, morir a suon di battaglia
Per aver Paradiso.
Purgatorio hai già fatto
Dopo il tradimento, nei giorni del
Settembre Ventunesimo,
Nei ziorni del crollo.
Vai! Vai a farti di nuovo eroe.
Lascia a me la parola.
Lascia a me ch'io mi spieghi,
ch'io faccia il canto della guerra eterna
Fra luce e fango.
Addio, Marinetti!

Tornaci a parlar quando ti sembra."

"PRESENTE"

E, dopo quel grido forte, mesto
aggiunse:

"In molto seguii vuota vanitade,

Spettacolo amai più che saggezza
Né conobbi i savi antichi e mai non lessi
Parola di Confucio né di Mencio.
Io cantai la guerra, tu hai voluta la pace,

Orbi ambidue!

all'interno mio mancai, tu all'odierno."
E parlava a me

In parte solamente, né al vicino,

Una parte di sé con sé dialogava
E non di sé il centro; e da grigia
La sua ombra si fe' più grigia
Finché un altro tono della gamma

to give Italy another hero among so
many
Thus to be reborn & thus become a
panther
& so to know the second birth, & die
a second time
Not old in bed,
but die rather to sound of trumpets
& come to Paradise.
You have already done Purgatory

In the time of the collapse

Go make yourself a hero again.
& leave the talking to me.
And let me explain,
sing of the eternal war
between light and mud.
Goodbye Marinetti
Come back and talk when you want
to."
"PRESENTE!" and after that shout
he

added sadly

"I followed vain emptiness in many
ways,
show more than wisdom,
and knew not the Ancient sages
nor read Confucius & Mencius
I sang war, and you wanted peace.
Both of us blind, me to the inner
things
you the things of today
and he spoke to me
neither wholly to me, nor to the next
man
But a part of him talked to himself
and not to its center
and his shade grew grayer
Until another note of the scale

Uscì dalla diafana del cavo vuoto:

"Vomon le nari spiriti di fiamma."
Ed io:
"Venisti tu Torquato Dazzi a
ninna-nannarmi i versi
Che traducesti vent'anni or sono per svegliar Mussato?
Tu con Marinetti fai il paio
Ambi in eccesso amaste, lui l'avvenire

E tu il passato.

Sovra-voler produce sovra-effetto

Purtroppo troppo, egli distrugger volle
Ed or vediamo le rovine più che nel suo voler."
Ma il primo spirito impaziente
Come chi porta notizia urgente

E non sopporta affare di minor urgenza

Riprese, ed io riconobbi la voce di Marinetti
Come sentita Lungotevere, in Piazza Adriana:
"Vai! Vai!
Da Macallè sul lembo estremo

Del Gobi, bianco di sabbia, un teschio

CANTA

E non par stanco, ma canta, e canta:

—Alamein! Alamein!
Noi torneremo!
N o i t o r n e r e m o ! —"
"Lo credo." diss'io,
E mi pare che di codesta risposta ebbe pace.
Ma l'altro spirito tornò al suo ritornello

Con:

came from the hollow emptiness.

"The nostrils vomit spirits of flame."

And I said: "Torquato Dazzi
have you come?
sing a lullaby of the verses you translated
20 years ago to wake Mussato.
You making a pair with Marinetti
You wanting the past too much, he the future
Too much eagerness shoots past the mark
He wanted to clear away too much
and now we see more destruction than he wanted."
Then the first spirit impatiently
As if the news were urgent
& would not be bothered with matters of less importance
went on, & I recognized Marinetti's voice
As I had heard it in Piazza Adriana, Lungotevere.
"Go on! Go on!"
From Macale, on the far edge
of "Gobi," where a white skull sang from the white sand

Not seeming weary, but sang and went on singing
""Alamain! Alamain!"
we will return
Return
I said, I believe you
and that answer seemed to quiet him.

But the other spirit came back with the refrain

"poco minor d'un toro" . . .

(che è verso dell'Eccerinus

Tradotto dal latino).

Egli non pose fine

Al verso.

Perché tutta l'aria tremò, e tutta l'ombra
Con sconquasso
E come tuono che la pioggia ingombra
Saettava frasi senza senso. Finché con scrocchio
Come nello scafo sommerso quando il raggio lo trova
ed in ogni caso gran pena,
Udii in strido crepitar':

"Calunnia Guelfa, e sempre la loro arma

Fu la calunnia, ed è, e non da ieri.
Furia la guerra antica in Romagna,
Lo sterco sale sino a Bologna
Con stupro e fuoco, e dove il cavallo bagna

Son marocchini ed altra immondizia

Che nominar è vergogna, moroccan.htm
Sì che il sepolto polvere s'affascia

Nel profondo, e muove, e spira,

E, per cacciar lo straniero, agogna
A tornar vivo.

Di sporco vidi io parecchio ai miei tempi,
La storia dà esempi a serie sporca
Di chi tradì città o una provincia

Ma quel mezzo-feto
Tutta l'Italia vende' e l'Impero!
Rimini arsa e Forlì distrutta,
Chi vedrà più il sepolcro di Gemisto

"Were I less than a bull"
A verse from the Ecerinide translated from the Latin)
but did not finish
the verse
because all the air trembled and the shadows
trembled as with
a collapse
As thunder shaking the rain,
blazing phrases without sense shot thru the rain,

A grating noise inside the submarine

when the beam strikes it.
I heard the spirit as if in torture.
Guelph slander, they have always used calumny,
The dung flow has got to Bologna
as in the old war thru
Romagna

Rape and fire as far as Bagnacavallo.

[There are Moroccans and other
garbage
Shameful to name.]
The buried dust, unlids itself
in the depths, and moves and breathes
and suffers in trying
to drive out the foreigners
and come to life again.

And I saw many in my time

made of dirt.
& history shows them
in a dirty series
Who betrayed city and province
Who sold Italy and the Empire
Rimini burned and Forlì destroyed.
Who will see Gemisto's sepulchre

Che tanto savio fu, se pur fu greco?
Giù son gli archi e combusti i muri
Del letto arcano della divina Ixotta . . . "

"Ma chi sei?" clamai
Contra la furia della sua tempesta,
"Sei tu Sigismundo?"
Ma egli non m'ascoltò,
Furiando:

"Più presto sarà monda la Sede

da un Borgia che non da un Pacelli.
Figlio d'usuraio fu Sisto
E tutta la loro combutta
Di Pietro negator' degni seguaci,
D'usura grassi e di ottimi contratti!

Ch'or vengon' a muggirvi che Farinacci

Ha mani rozze, perché è mangia-foglia.

Ha *una* mano rozza, ma l'altra ha dato,

Così avendo onore cogli eroi,

Tanti ne sono: Tellera, Maletti,

Miele, de Carolis e Lorenzini,
Guido Piacenza, Orsi e Pedrieri,
E Baldassarre, Borsarelli, e Volpini,
Per nominare solo i generali.
Fiol' di banchiere fu Clemente, e nato
D'usuraio il Decimo Leone . . . "
"Chi sei?" clamai.
"Io son quell'Ezzelino che non crede'
Che il mondo fu creato da un ebreo.

Se d'altro scatto io fossi reo

poco t'importa ora.

Mi tradì chi il tuo amico ha tradotto.

the arches down and the walls
of the "divine Ixotta's" resting place
and its symbolic designs burnt out."
& I cried out:
"Who are you"
Against the fury of the whirlwind.
"Are you Sigismundo"?
But the presence did not listen
but in rage shouted:
"A Borgia would be more
likely than a Pacelli
to houseclean,
Sixtus was son of a usurer
and all their gang
from Peter the denier
and all followers of fattened usury
& come groaning to you that Farinacci
Has rough hands, because he has seen thru the swindle.
He has one rough hand and has given the other
and for that is honoured by the heroes.
There are lots of them: Tellera, Maletti,
Miele, de Carolis and Lorenzini,
Guido Piacenza, Orsi & Predieri,
& Baldassarre, Borsarelli, & Volpini
to name only the generals.
Clement was son of a banker
And Leo decimo son of usurer."
I said: "Who are you?"
"I am that Ezalino who didn't believe
the world was made by a jew,
and other outbreaks, that don't matter now,
& was betrayed by the man who betrayed your friend
i.e. Mussato who wrote that I

Cioè Mussato, che ha scritto
Ch'io son fiol d'Orco,

E se tu credi a simile pastocchia

Ogni carota può ben farti ciuco.

Il bello Adonide morì d'un porco

A far piangere la Ciprigna bella.
Se feci giocattolo della ragione

Direi che un toro di macello,

O dal zoologo, vale un piccione;

Chi di favole prende piacere e gioia

Dirà che l'animale non fa la religione.

Un solo falso fa più al mondo boia
Che i miei scatti: tutti! Ragna, ragnaccia!
Cavami quella belva dal suo buco,
Se non è questa:
Bestia umana ama la pastoia?
Se mai l'imperatore quel dono fece,

Bisanzio fu madre del trambusto,

Lo fece senza forma e contro legge,
Scindendo sé da sé e dallo giusto;

Né Cesare se stesso mise in schegge,

Né Pietro pietra fu prima che Augusto
Tutta la virtù ebbe e funzione.

Chi dà in legge è solo il possidente,

E 'l caso ghibellin ben seppe il fiorentino."

E come onde che vengon da più d'un trasmittente

Sentii allora

Le voci fuse, e con frasi rotte,

E molti uccelli fecer' contrappunto

was the son of the devil,
and if you believe such nonsense
you are a donkey that will follow any carrot
dangled before your nose
or that the fair Adonis was killed by a boar
To make the more fair Cyprian weep
If I made a toy of reason
I would say a bull for slaughter is worth a pigeon;
One taking pleasure in fables
Will say religion doesn't depend on the animal.
One single falsehood does more in a murderous world
Than all my outbreaks.
Spider . . . Spider!
Get that beast out of its hole.
If it isn't this:
The human beast loves its fetters?
If ever the Emperor made that gift
Byzantium mothered the commotion,
He did it without form, illegally,
Severing from himself & justice;
Caesar didn't split himself to fragments
Peter was no rock before Augustus
had all the powers and functions.
The possessor only can be legal giver.
And the Florentines understood the Ghibelline case.

Confusion of voices as from several transmitters, broken
phrases,
And many birds singing in counterpoint

Nel mattino estivo,

fra il cui cigolar

In tono soave:

"Placidia fui, sotto l'oro dormivo."

Suonava come note di ben tesa corda.
"Malinconia di donna e la dolcezza" . . .

cominciai

Ma io ebbi la pelle convulsa

Fra le mie spalle,

e il mio polso preso
In sì ferreo laccio

che muover non potei

Né mano né spalla, e ad afferrare il polso

Io vidi un pugno

e non vidi avambraccio
che mi tenne come chiodo in muro;
Mi crede insulso chi non ha fatto la prova.
E poi la voce che prima furiava,
Mi disse feroce, dico feroce, ma non ostile

Anzi era paterna quasi, come chi spiega

In mezzo di battaglia che deve far un giovan' poco esperto:
"La voglia è antica, ma la mano è nuova.

Bada! bada a me prima ch'io torni

Nella notte.

Dove il teschio canta
Torneranno i fanti, torneranno le bandiere."

In the summer morning
and through their twitterings a suave tone:

"I was Placidia, and slept beneath the gold."

"Woman's melancholy and gentleness,"
I began (to say), then
My skin tensed between my shoulder blades, and my
wrist
seized in such an iron grip
That I could move neither wrist nor shoulder

And I saw a fist grasping my wrist
but saw no forearm.

Holding me fast as a nail in the wall.
This sounds foolish to anyone who has not been thru it.

Then the voice that had been raging

said fiercely but not unfriendly, paternal rather
as one in midst of battle guiding an inexperienced youth
"The will is old but the hand is new,
Listen to me before I turn back into the night
Where the skull sings:
The regiments and the
banners will return."

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Home

Dung, *merda*

literally, shit

Pound's use of such a harsh term was not typical of his language; in fact, he criticized Joyce for his excessive scatology. Here he is imitating the Fascist technique of using rough language in order to show one's boldness of spirit. There is, however, a precedent for Pound in Dante, who did not generally use scatological language, but was known for using harsh or evocative language where appropriate, and who uses the term extensively in *Inferno* XVIII, where the condemned souls are immersed in excrement .

Return to canto LXXII

Home

God, the great aesthete, *Dio, il grande esteta* 

"Aesthete" here is not a compliment; Pound was severe in his criticism of the decorative tendencies of the previous era, and of the Judeo-Christian religion, which he felt had created an unnatural separation between the spiritual and the physical. This was one of the reasons he was so attracted to the ancient Greeks. He also thought that the *culte de l'amour* of the Provençal poets continued this tradition and represented a possible connection between them and the Greeks.

Return to canto LXXII

Home

Satana-Gerione/Geryon

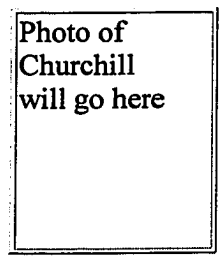
The three-headed monster Geryon, slain by Odysseus, was used by Dante to carry the travellers (Dante and Virgil) from the seventh circle, where they have encountered the usurers and other "sinners against nature" to the eight circle, the Malebolge, where the fraudulent are punished. (*Inf.* XVI-XVII).

Pound, therefore, associates Geryon with usury and fraud. Because he was convinced that the war (WWII) was created deliberately by Jewish bankers and arms dealers, he calls them Churchill's (and elsewhere Roosevelt's) bosses.

Return to canto LXXII

Home

Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill



1874 - 1965

Churchill was Prime Minister of Great Britain during World War II and was in large part responsible for the British (and American and Russian) entry into the War. It was partly this activity, and his involvement in liberal economics, that caused Pound to despise him.

Before becoming Prime Minister, Churchill had fought in several colonial operations. He had been elected to Parliament in 1900, was the first lord of the admiralty in World War I, and served in several cabinet positions in the Liberal government of Lloyd George, another of Pound's bogeymen. After the Labour victory in 1945, he became the leader of the opposition. He was elected prime minister again in 1951, was knighted in 1953, and retired in 1955. He was also a writer of history (including the multi-volume *History of the English-Speaking People*), biographies, and memoirs and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1953.

Return to Canto LXXII

Home

***gergo rozzo...(h)antar 'oscano*/rough dialect...(h)antar 'oscano**

"...with *h* for *c*..." This is an imitation of Tuscan dialect, particularly prominent in Florence, where hard *c* (*cantar*, sing) is softened to an *h* sound, and initial *t* sounds are often elided and slightly aspirated (hence, "*'oscano* for *Toscano*, Tuscan).

See also *Pigiate h*ualche *ziovanozz'*, where Pound imitates the Romagnolo dialect of Mussolini.

Return to canto LXXII

Home

F.T. Marinetti (Filippo Tommaso)

1876 -- 1944

(Pound misspelled *Tommaso* as *Tomaso*, as have many critics. Marinetti himself used only his initials.)

Marinetti was an Italian playwright, novelist, and poet, founder of the Futurist movement, which flourished from 1909, when he published his Futurist Manifesto in *Le Figaro*, below, until the 1930s, when Fascism overpowered it and Marinetti became one of its champions. In addition to writers, the movement included artists and architects. In their celebration of the machine and speed, and their many attempts to represent speed, motion, airline flight, and views of the land taken from the air, the Futurists prefigured the Cubists and may well have influenced them.

Marinetti wrote numerous *manifesti* for the Futurist cause. Pound heard him speak in London but disapproved of him, because Marinetti advocated the destruction of the past, including libraries and museums. He even wrote that love and sex should be abolished and that man should become more like a machine.

With the rise of Fascism, Marinetti, like many of the Futurists, became a follower of Mussolini. He wrote Fascist *manifesti* and voluntarily enlisted in 1942 and went to war. He died a war hero in 1944.

Pound wrote canto LXXII shortly after Marinetti's death; he appears here as one of several spirits who visit Pound in this Dantean episode. By this time, the Fascists had fallen and Mussolini was leading a government in exile at Salò. Pound had changed his opinion of Marinetti because of his active and heroic participation in the cause, and Pound's celebration of Marinetti's heroism was intended to help revive the Fascist effort, though in typical Dantean fashion, he uses this canto also to criticize Marinetti's ignorance of the ancients.

Return to Canto LXXII or to About the Italian Cantos

Home

ziovanozz' 

Pound is imitating the Romagnolo dialect of Mussolini. In Italian this word is *giovanotto*.

Several lines farther down, Pound uses another Romagnolo word, *ziorni*, for *giorni* (days).

Back to Canto LXXII

Home

pantera/panther

One of Pound's icons was and Dionysius (*Digonos* or διγονος), the twice-born, who was surrounded by leopards and panthers. Later, in the *Pisan Cantos*, Pound would make a connection between him and Mussolini. Canto LXXIV, the first of the *Pisan Cantos*, begins:

> The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent
>
> shoulders
>
> Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,
>
> Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano*
>
> That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock
>
> DIGONOS, διγονος , but the twice-crucified
>
> where in history will you find it?

There is a second meaning to panther in this later appearance, however, as it also evokes the *Panzers* of Hitler.

Return to Canto LXXII

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Dionysus, Dionysius, or *Digonos* (ΔΙΓΟΝΟΣ or διγονος)

Greek god of wine, called *Bacchus* in Rome. Dionysius was the issue of one of Zeus's many affairs with humans. His mother was the beautiful and gentle Semele. When Zeus's wife, Hera (*Juno* in Rome), discovered the affair, she went to Semele disguised as her sister and planted a doubt in her mind, suggesting that Zeus was not really a god. She persuaded Semele to make him prove he was a god by showing himself to her in all his divine splendor. Semele did not name her request until Zeus had promised to grant the one thing she asked. When she told him her wish, he tried to dissuade her but failed. He then diminished his glory as much as possible and did not show any of his terrors, but the sight was still so powerful that Semele was instantly burned to ashes. Zeus took the unborn child (called Zagreus before his rebirth and Dionysius afterwards) from her body and sewed him into his leg, where he was able to grow to maturity and be born anew. This is why Dionysius is referred to as the "twice-born."

A fertility cult arose around Dionysius, who, like Aphrodite, was important to Pound in part because of Pound's belief that there was a connection between physical love and creative or intellectual power. Dionysius's entourage included panthers and leopards, both of which appear often in the *Cantos*.

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Manes

c. 216 - 276

Persian philosopher, founder of Manichaeism, a synchretic, dualistic religion which combined elements of Zoroastrian, Christian, and Gnostic thought. Manes was executed at the request of the Zoroastrians.

The struggle between the light and darkness which characterized both Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism was part of what attracted Pound.

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Ben and la Clara

Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, whose corpses were hung by the Partisans upside down in Piazza Loreto in Milan.

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Settembre Ventunesimo/September of the (Fascist) year 21 

On September 8, 1943 (twenty-first year of the Fascist era), Badoglio signed the armistice with the Allied forces in Africa. Mussolini had already been forced by the Fascist council to resign on July 25th of that year. When he went to the king to resign and had been immediately arrested and imprisoned, first on an island off the northern coast of Sicily and later in the mountains, from where he was later rescued by the Germans and installed at Salò.

After the armistice, Italy was in a complete state of confusion. People who had never been partisans became staunch anti-fascists. The most problematic aspect of this period was that Badoglio had not taken into account the fact that Italy was occupied by the Germans. Virtually everyone was at risk. Italian soldiers removed their uniforms for fear of being taken prisoner by their former allies. Thugs suddenly became Partisans, not only claiming rewards for turning in people like Pound, but finding a convenient excuse for all sorts of criminal activities. Meanwhile, the Allies, who had promised Badoglio and the Italians liberation from the Germans, took over a year and a half to reach Milan. For Fascists and Partisans alike it was a time of fear and shame.

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Presente

This is a response to a military roll call, but it is also a part of Fascist mythology: the Fascist troops shouted "present" when the names of their fallen comrades were called, in the belief that their spirits would thus be made manifest.

Back to Ezzelino

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Confucio/Confucius, Mencio/Mencius

The Chinese philosopher-poet **Kung Fu Tsu**, whose work Pound had translated, and whose teachings became an important part of Pound's system of philosophy of religion and political action, had translated into Latin by **Mencius**, who latinized his name to *Confucius*. There is great debate in the West about the significance of the teachings of Confucius. He taught that each must act according to his nature, but he also taught personal responsibility and active involvement in the affairs of the world. Pound found this a much more appealing concept than the more contemplative Taoism. Many Chinese scholars assert, however, that the two philosophies were never in opposition but were complementary.

Pound's main criticism of Marinetti and the Futurists was their lack of appreciation for the wisdom of the ancients.

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Guerra/war

One of Marinetti's famous phrases was, "War is the only hygiene." Although he had come to appreciate Marinetti's heroism, Pound was opposed to war in general and did not agree with Marinetti's philosophy of destruction.

After losing many dear friends and respected artists in World War I, Pound wrote the following lines:

(Pound reading) 

These fought in any case,
and some believing,
pro domo, in any case. . .
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" not "et decor" . . .
walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy;
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.

from "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" IV

Selected Poems, 63

Pound's view of war did not change with his adoption of Fascist ideology. In the *Pisan Cantos,*, at the end of Canto LXXVIII, he wrote:

there
are
no
righteous
wars

from the *Cantos*, 497.

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Vomon le nari.../The nostrils... 

This is a line from the *Eccerinus,* a play by Albertino Mussato about the life of Ezzelino da Romano.

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Macallé/Makale

Ethiopian capital and fortress which had been surrendered by Italy in 1896 and was used by Mussolini as a propaganda tool to motivate the Italians to invade North Africa and recapture it. Macallé was invaded by Mussolini's troops in November of 1935, causing the League of Nations to impose economic sanctions on Italy.

Note: There is also a Macalle near the Gobi desert, but there was no Italian military activity there.

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Teschio/Skull

The *squadristi*, Mussolini's elite troops, used a skull insignia.

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Alamein

El Alamein was the site of the definitive battles of the Italian campaign in North Africa. The Axis troops, led by Rommel, were routed by the British, led by Montgomery and furnished with American tanks, against which the Axis troops were inadequate. The Italians retreated, and the war in North Africa was essentially over.

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Massimo Bacigalupo has pointed out correctly that Mussato's title for the work was *Ecerinis*; the Latin name of the character, Ezzelino III da Romano, was *Ecerinus*.

The New Directions 1995 edition prints the name of this work as *Ecernide*, purportedly translated thus by Pound. Pound certainly made mistakes in Italian, and his spelling was eccentric in any language, but the translation in his hand appears to read *Ecerinide*, which is the correct Italian translation of the Latin title. I have changed the translation in this document to reflect what I think Pound wrote: *Ecerinide*.

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Calunnia guelfa/Guelph slander

This is the voice of Ezzelino da Romano. During his life, in the thirteenth century, the conflict between Guelphs and Ghilbellines was at its peak. Ezzelino was a Ghibelline, which means that, like all the aristocracy, he favored the Holy Roman emperor over the popes. The Guelph party was made up of the newly enriched middle class, especially in centers like Florence, where banking had enabled them to accumulate enough wealth to threaten the old order. The Guelphs supported the papal party and used their alliances with the popes to oust many of the princes who ruled Italy's various regions and to set up their own local governments. Ezzelino's brother had been killed in a Guelph ambush.

Towards the end of the century (1265), Dante Alighieri would be born into a Florence that had already become Guelph, the Ghibellines of Florence having been defeated in 1250. The Guelph party itself was divided by now into *Bianchi* and *Neri* (White and Black parties). Dante was a moderate of the White faction, which was now opposed to the Papacy. His defense in *de Monarchia* of the idea of an imperial government, his opposition to the acquisition of territory by force, and his consistent criticism of the Papacy, made sense to Pound, as did Dante's condemnation of usury.

There is a second meaning here, however, as there was also a Guelph group active in opposing the Fascists during the late thirties.

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Romagna

The Romagna region in northern Italy was important to Pound because of Malatesta and the temple he built for his mistress at Rimini. It was also the home of Ezzelino, Sordello, and Cunizza, all key figures in Pound's mythology.

Most important, however, it was the region of Mussolini. Pound imitates Mussolini's Romagnolo accent in Canto LXXII, and in Canto LXXIII, he mentions the region three times. Since he also sent the Italian Cantos to Mussolini, it is not unlikely that the references were intended to flatter him.

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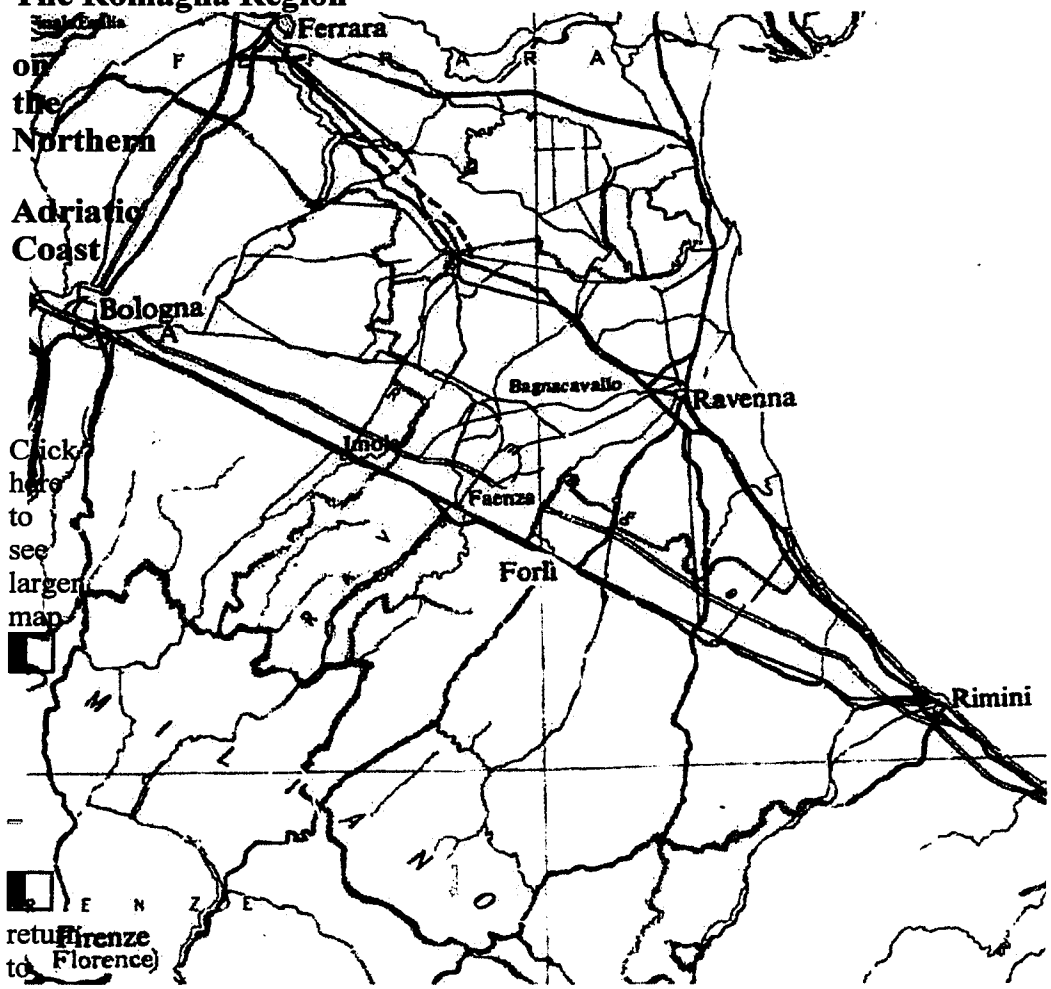
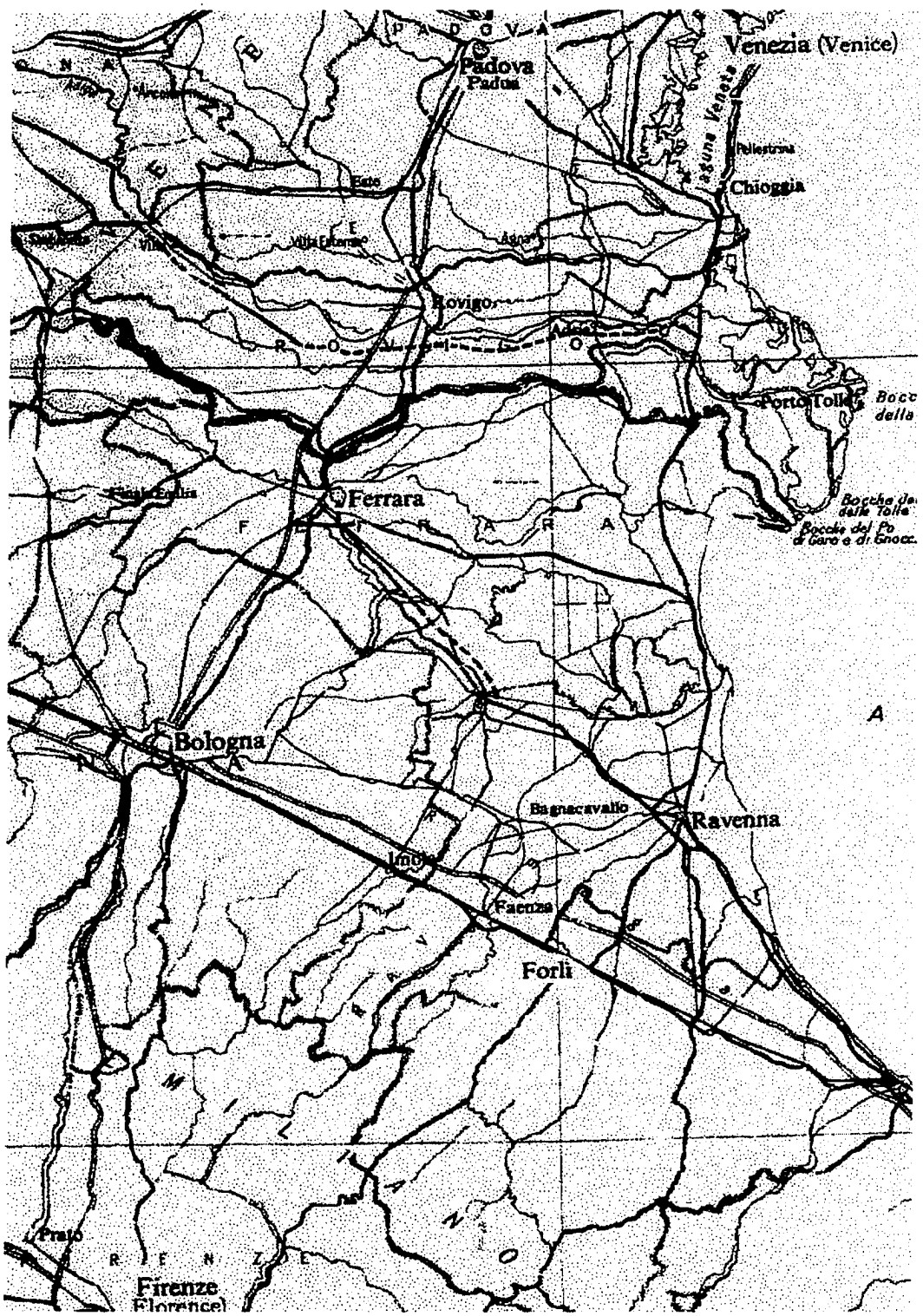
The Romagna Region on the Northern Adriatic Coast



Click here to see larger map

return to Romagna page



Dove il cavallo.../Bagnacavallo

Realizing that he cannot use his wordplay in English, Pound uses the name of the town, which means "Horse Bath." The phrase he uses in Italian, "where the horse bathes," works like old Anglo-Saxon *kenning*, in which a common word like "sea" is replaced by a metonymic phrase ("whale's road"). Pound had translated Anglo-Saxon poetry and knew the technique well.

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Marocchini/Moroccans

It is interesting that this phrase does not appear in the English translation. It reads:

> With rape and fire, and where the horse bathes
>
> *There are Moroccans and other garbage*
>
> Shameful to name.

This is Ezzelino speaking. It is unclear, however, what Pound means in giving him this phrase. There were Moroccans and Middle Eastern troops among those of the Holy Roman emperor, but they would have been used on the same side as Ezzolino's.
It is possible that Pound is referring to the Allied liberation of Italy, when the front lines were made up mainly of North Africans. The occupying Germans apparently massacred them by the thousands.

To see Pound's translation of this section, click here.

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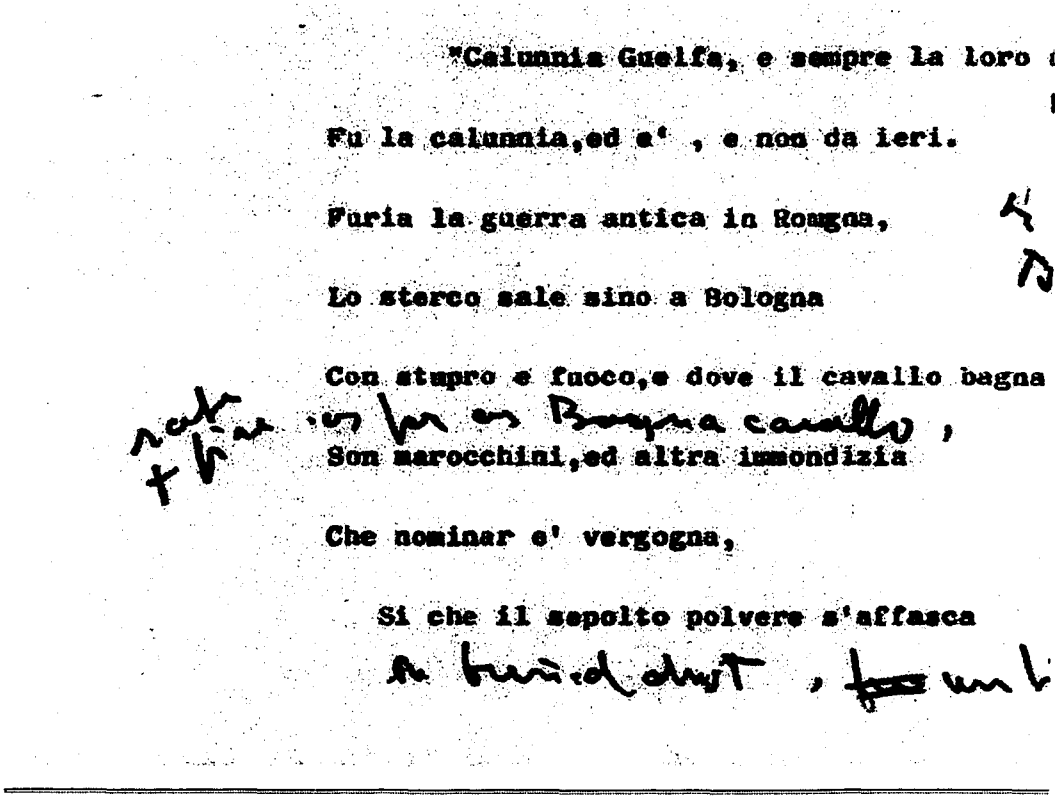
Below is a section of the translation showing the omission of two lines in English, from "*Son marocchini...*" to "*nominar è vergogna.*"



"Calumnia Guelfa, e sempre la loro

Fu la calunnia,ed e' , e non da ieri.

Furia la guerra antica in Romgna,

Lo sterco sale sino a Bologna

Con stupro e fuoco,e dove il cavallo bagna

Son marocchini,ed altra immondizia

Che nominar e' vergogna,

Si che il sepolto polvere s'affasca

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s'affascia

Pound translated this as "unlids itself," but there is much confusion about what he meant here.

Fasciare is to wrap or bind and comes from the same root as *fascia*, the bound sheaf that was adopted by the Fascists from an ancient Roman symbol. By adding a prefix from Latin *ad* or *ab*, Pound was probably trying to get across the idea of either binding oneself together or unbinding one's shroud.

In one of the nearly twenty typescripts of this poem, now at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Pound typed *s'affasia*, nonexistent in Italian, but he pencilled in the margin both *si fascia*, "binds itself" and *s'affasca*, which would be the subjunctive of the compound he made from *fasciare*, a reading that makes sense: the situation is so bad that the dust in the tomb is compelled to unwrap its bindings, or to pull itself together, and come back to life in order to fight.

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Mezzo-feto/Who betrayed

This is undoubtedly a double reference, and a particularly nasty one. Although Pound did not provide a translation for *mezzo-feto*, the line can be translated as:

"But that half-fetus sold all of Italy and the Empire."

While Ezzelino is probably referring to the Donation of Constantine, by which the Roman Church was supposed to have gained great wealth and temporal power, for which Dante put Constantine in hell, Pound, who would have known what Dante did not - that the Donation was a fraud - is referring to the Italian king, Vittorio Emanuele, who was extremely short, and who by this time had sold Mussolini to the partisans.

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Borgia

The Borgia were a rich and powerful Guelph family of northern Italy, who flourished during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, long after Ezzelino's death. They included two popes and several children of popes, including the notorious Cesare (1476-1507), who was brilliant and cruel, and his sister Lucrezia (1480-1519), who was a patron of the arts. He is undoubtedly one of the Guelphs Ezzelino is speaking of in the previous lines. He allied himself with King Louis XII of France and overran Romagna, and he engineered an ambush similar to that suffered by Ezzelino's brother. (See also the entry on "Guelph calumny"). Cesare may have killed his older brother, and almost certainly disposed of his sister Lucrezia's second husband, Alfonso of Aragon, and is thought to have been Macchiavelli's model for the *Prince*.

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Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII

1876-1958 

Pacelli was pope from 1939 to his death in 1958. Pius had been known even before his election to the papacy as an accomplished Vatican diplomat. During World War II, he tried to achieve peace by retaining relations with all parties. He was criticized by both partisans and fascists, by one side for his failure to speak out against Nazi atrocities, and by the other for having sheltered some of the turncoats responsible for the destruction of Mussolini.

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Sisto/Sixtus IV

1414–84

Sixtus was pope from 1471 to 1484. He was known for nepotism and was imbroiled in a dispute with the Medici family when he nephew tried to overthrow them in 1478. The Sistine Chapel, which he founded, carries his name. He did not oppose the Spanish Inquisition, but apparently harbored Jews from Spain.

See also Clement and Leo.

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Clemente/Clement

(c.1475–1534)

Pope Clement VII, Giulio de' Medici , was a member of the powerful Florentine Medici family. He was pope from 1523 to 1534 and had the distinction of losing power on three fronts: Martin Luther's revolt from the Church of Rome took place under his reign; he made a foolish alliance with Francis I of France against the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and was taken prisoner by his troops in 1527 and in 1529 crowned Charles emperor; he hesitated so long to decide to grant Henry VIII of England an annulment that Henry broke with Rome in 1534.

Pound was critical of the Medici, despite their patronage of the arts, because of their involvement in banking (and hence, usury). He was particularly critical of Clement because, although Pound did not particularly like the Roman Church, he felt that Protestantism was worse: it tended towards puritanism, devalued the arts, and concentrated its moral teachings on issues of sexual morality to the exclusion of issues of financial and political morality.

See also Leo and Sixtus.

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Decimo Leone/Leo X

1475–1521

Pound calls him the "Tenth Lion." Leo X, who was pope from 1513 to 1521, was a member of the powerful Florentine Medici family. He was named Giovanni de' Medici and was the son of Lorenzo. Like his father, he was a patron of the arts, notably of Raphael, who followed Bramante as architect of St. Peter's in Rome under Leo's patronage. He was unable to effect the reforms in the Church that might have averted the Reformation, which began when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses in 1517.
Pound criticized the Medici for their involvement in banking (usury) and considers all their relations tainted, but he was also critical of the Reformation and of those who allowed it to happen. See also Sixtus and Clement.

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Pietro negator'/Peter the denier

According to the evangelist Matthew (26:69-75), the Apostle Saint Peter was so afraid when Jesus Christ was about to be crucified that he claimed not to know him. The previous night, at the Last Supper, Christ had predicted that Peter would deny him, and Peter had been offended.

Saint Peter, whose original name was Simon, was renamed Peter by Christ and designated as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. In renaming Simon, Jesus said, "Thou art Peter (*Pietro, rock*), and upon this rock I build my church." Peter was, therefore, the first pope.

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Roberto Farinacci

1892 - 1945

Roberto Farinacci was a strong supporter of Mussolini and an early advocate of the Italian alliance with Germany. *Mangia foglia* "greenery eater" is a person who is not easy to trick. The reference to his hand is partly apocryphal. It is true that Farinacci had lost a hand, but he lost it in an accident before the war, not in battle, as Pound believed.

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Tellera...Volpini

Italian World War II generals.

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Tanti ne sono: Tellera, Maletti,
Miele, de Carolis e Lorenzin,
Guido Piacenza, Orsi e Pedrieri,
E Baldassarre, Borsarelli e Volpini,
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Pound takes the opportunity, through his character Ezzelino, to criticize the Judeo-Christian tradition. He was critical of two aspects of the tradition in particular:

1. He believed that Christianity, possibly as a result of its descent from Hebrew monotheism, had lost the organicism of earlier religions by separating the physical from the spiritual. He was especially drawn to ancient Greek religion, which included fertility rites and celebrated the physical as a manifestation of the spiritual. He took this idea to the extreme of believing that there was a direct connection between coitus and intellectual power.

2. As much as he hated the popes for their traditional corruption, Pound was even more angry about the Reformation, which further alienated humans from the sensual. He saw the reformed Christian religions as compartmentalizing morality and putting sexual pleasure entirely in the realm of the forbidden and, perhaps even more important, failing to condemn economic sins.

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tradotto/betrayed

Pound mis-translates himself here, probably in the interest of word-play. *Tradotto* (*translated*) comes from the same root as *betrayed* (*tradito*) and is close in sound in Italian.

What he means is that Ezzelino is angry with the translator, Dazzi, for translating accurately Mussato's depiction of him as a tyrant. He is therefore accusing the translator of betrayal for not betraying the original.

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Fiol' d'Orco/Son of the devil

Pound is imitating Venetian dialect, where *figliolo, son,* becomes *fiol'*. Orcus was the Roman god of the Underworld, also referred to as *Dis*. Pound makes him the devil, possibly because of Dante's use of *Dis* for the deepest level of hell.

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Ciprigna/Cyprian

Aphrodite, who was supposedly born on Cyprus.

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Se mai l'imperatore.../If ever the emperor...

This is a reference to a fabled document, the "Donation of Constantine," given by the Emperor in the fourth century to Pope Sylvester, who was said to have converted Constantine to Christianity and cured his leprosy. Ezzelino would not have known what Pound knew, that the donation was discovered in the fifteenth century to be a forgery. The document had supposedly stated that Constantine would rule the East (Byzantium) and cede temporal power to the Papacy in the West (Rome), which enabled the popes to acquire great material wealth.

Pound's phrasing here mirrors Dante's in the *Inferno*. In Dante's time, as in Ezzelino's, the Donation was still considered to be true, and he considered this disastrous for Christianity and humanity, as it fostered corruption in the Roman Church; the implications of economic power and corruption in Christianity were equally abhorrent to Pound, who felt that the Roman Church, and the Judeo-Christian tradition in general, had unnaturally separated the physical and the spiritual and had focused their moral criticism on sexuality and abdicated the responsibility to criticize economic immorality. Dante put Constantine in the hell of the simoniacs (*Inf.* XIX.115) for his contribution to the corruption of the Church and hence to the conflicts that were dividing Italy in his day.

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Ne Pietro pietra fu/Peter was no rock

Saint Peter, whose original name was Simon, was renamed Peter by Christ and designated as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. When he renamed Simon, Jesus said, "Thou art Peter (*Pietro, rock*), and upon this rock I build my church." Peter was, therefore, the first pope.

Pound says that Peter was not a rock before Caesar was Caesar, and that the temporal power of the Roman Church did not predate the power of the state. The gift to which he refers in the same section is the Donation of Constantine, decried by Dante as well for making the Church rich--and corrupt. Pound would have known what Dante did not, that the Donation was a forgery.

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Galla Placidia

388 - 450

Galla Placidia was a Roman Empress of the West. Her mausoleum was in Ravenna, a city famous for its mosaics. It was one of Pound's "sacred places." The mosaic stars in the ceiling of her mausoleum were gold.

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Teschio/Skull

The *squadristi*, Mussolini's elite troops, used a skull insignia.

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la città dolente

The sorrowful city

Florence. Dante uses this exact phrase twice, in *Inferno* 3.1 and 9.32. It refers to hell itself and especially to Dis, the lowest level of hell. Dante uses "real city" to refer to Purgatory, and "city of God" or "city of the blessed" for heaven. It is understood, however, that he is also alluding obliquely to Florence. Clearly, Pound means it only in this sense; he is not suggesting that Cavalcanti, who has come down from the Third Heaven, rode his horse through hell.

Pound has given Dante's phrase to Cavalcanti, who uses *dolente* frequently with other nouns, as does Dante. Whether the frequence with which they both use the word indicates an obsession with suffering or an acknowledgment of the pain of exile is not certain, but the word does provide a pleasing and uncommon rhyme in Italian with words like *gente*, people, and *mente*, mind.

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razza di schiavi

tribe of slaves

The Florentines. As with *città dolente*, Pound is indulging in a favorite technique: conflating the words or styles of two different artists. Although Cavalcanti was an impassioned political activist, his poetry is primarily devoted to love. It is Dante whose harsh judgments of his compatriots fill his poetry.

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Arimino

Rimini

Pound's choice Rimini, the center of the Romagna region, is meant to remind us of both the fifteenth-century ruler and art patron Sigismondo Malatesta and the twelfth-century Ghibelline leader Ezzelino, who was also from Romagna and fought on the side of Frederic II against the Papal forces. The same struggle between Imperial and Papal forces was still going on in Florence a generation after Ezzelino, and both Dante and Cavalcanti were caught up in it. It was the cause of their political problems and the exile of both poets.

Even more important, Mussolini came from Romagna. Pound sent him Canto LXXII, where he imitates Mussolini's Romagnolo accent, and Canto LXXIII, and he refers to the region three times here.

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Canadesi

Canadians

The violence in this Canto is out of character for Pound, but despite his anger at the Allies for "making war on Europe," he drew the line at writing a scenario in which Americans would be killed.

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il Tempio della bella Ixotta

the Temple of the beautiful Isotta

The Tempio Malatestiano, a church modelled on classical temples and suspiciously devoid of Christian imagery, was constructed by Sigismundo Malatesta in honor of beautiful mistress, Isotta, whose tomb is in the tempio.

Isotta, also referred to as "Isotta degli Atti" was from Rimini. She was Malatesta's mistress and later his third wife and bore him two sons, one of whom was murdered by his half-brother, Roberto Malatesta.

The Temple was symbolic for Pound of outstanding architecture and art, enlightened patronage, and the medieval and classical ideals of love.

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quel che rimaneva

to destroy what remained

Pound mistakenly believed that the Tempio Malatestiano had been destroyed by Allied bombs.

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Morti non morti son'

The dead are not dead

According to Fascist mythology, one could evoke the presence of the dead by saying their names. This is an important theme in Canto LXXII, where the call "presenza" brings various spirits to presence. Pound alludes to it here, after he has brought Cavalcanti to life.

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dal terzo cielo

from the third heaven

The third heaven of Dante's *Paradiso* is the heaven of Venus, the heaven of souls motivated by love. It is Pound who places Cavalcanti in the third heaven, because of his beautiful love ballads and sonnets, but also because of Cavalcanti's a reputation as a lover, hinted at here by his descriptions of the farm-girl.

In *Inferno* X, Dante the character mentions Cavalcanti to his father, Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, but because Dante the poet pre-dated his account in order to "predict" events that had already happened, he does not acknowledge Cavalcanti's death.

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la riscossa

Insurrection, counterattack, reconquest. Cavalcanti uses the word himself, but the more important connection is its use by the followers of Mussolini, by this time installed in his government in exile at Salò, to describe the movement that would revive Fascism.

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portan' il nero

wearing the black

Mussolini's followers wore black shirts as part of their uniform and were, therefore, called the "Black Shirts."

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Ezra Pound

THE

ITALIAN CANTOS

Edited and Presented by

Patricia Cockram

Read by Mary de Rachewiltz

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