

7; Vincent Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (New York, 1993), pp. 156-63. For 'steel over steel', 'ply over ply' and cognates, compare 'ply over ply' (Canto IV), 'leaf over leaf' (Canto XXIII), 'bough over bough' (Canto XXIX), 'pipe against pipe' (Canto XL), 'slop over slop' (Canto XLI), 'cloud over cloud' (Canto LXXIX), 'light over light', 'filth under filth' (Canto XCI), 'phase over phase' (Canto XCVII), etc., and see e.g. Terrell, *Companion*, I, p. 13, Makin, pp. 254-5; for origins, Christine Froula, *To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Pound's 'Cantos'* (New Haven & London, 1984), p. 45. For pard and panthers in their earliest poetic settings see e.g. Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjaceslav V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans; A Reconstruction and Historical Analysis of a Proto-Language and a Proto-Culture*, trans. Johanna Nichols (2 vols, Berlin, 1995), I, pp. 420-27; for the medieval and theological overtones of 'clear' see e.g. Werner Hensellek and Peter Schilling (eds), *Specimina eines Lexicon Augustinianum* (Wien, 1977), Lieferung 11, s.v. 'claritas, -atis' (pp. 1-6). For 'The flash of waves under prows' there is a good snapshot of the gondola repair shop at San Trovaso, Venice, c.1908, in Peter Ackroyd, *Ezra Pound and his World* (London, 1980), p. 15; the 'silver beaks rising and crossing', no doubt seen brightly against the dark swell of the canal-water lapping 'the white forest of marble' around them, are later recalled at the close of Canto XXIX, where cypress has mutated to pine before melting in air.

The trembling shaft of compass between Hermes and Athena acknowledges obliquely a tension within these epiphanies between the Apollonian and Dionysiac elements; Odysseus returns to Venice as to a latterday Ithaca, wavering between the cool wisdom of Athena and the darker duplicities of Hermes. In his 1934 review for *The Criterion* of Binyon's translation of *The Inferno*, Pound notes 'a crime and punishment motif to the *Odyssey*, which is frequently overlooked' (*Literary Essays*, p. 212); Pound's version of the Ulysses story is marked from the beginning by a sense that Odysseus is, like Malatesta and others, a strong adventurer taking many short cuts with justice and maybe against it: the Homeric world 'a world of irresponsible gods, a very high society without recognizable morals, the individual responsible to himself' (*Guide to Kulchur*, 1938, p. 38); see Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 125-34 and Philip Kuberski, 'Ego, Scriptor: Pound's Odyssean Writing', *Paideuma*, 14 (1985); and on Pound's own liberties with Renaissance history see also Marjorie Perloff "No Edges, No Convexities": Ezra Pound and the Circle of Fragments', in her *The Poetics of Indeterminacy* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 180-9, as well as (more decisively), Lawrence S. Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture; Text, History, and the Malatesta Cantos* (Chicago and London, 1991), as amplified in his "'All I Want You to Do Is to Follow the Orders": History, Faith, and Fascism in the Early Cantos', in Lawrence S. Rainey (ed.), *A Poem Containing History; Textual Studies in 'The Cantos'* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1997), pp. 63-114. This tremblancy is capable of being actively valorised as part of an hermeneutic method, a dialectic which brings humour and opposition and low craft into high places; see J.-M. Rabaté, *Language, Sexuality and Ideology in Ezra Pound's 'Cantos'* (Houndmills, 1986), pp. 269-74. Hermes/Mercury was the 'patron of thieves' who took down Yeats's 'Lake Isle' a peg or several (*Poetry*, VIII, September 1916; *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 128; *Poems and Translations*, ed. Sieburth, p. 294); as Rabaté puts it, 'Apollo's sun needs the help of crafty Hermes to illuminate intelligence' (p. 271). Yeats in turn borrowed a line from Canto XXIII, 'With the sun in a golden cup',

and incorporated it into his refrain for 'Those Dancing Days are Gone', a song-lyric included in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933); see *Collected Poems*, ed. Richard Finneran (London, c.1989), pp. 266-7, 461, 470.

Meanwhile 'the light not of the sun' glitters by repeat moments in the gloom as gold gathers the light about it, which glows from within a darkness we have already glimpsed as an earlier isolated moment in Canto XI; only on reaching Canto XXI do we then discover that these glittering fragments are in fact *tessereae*, pieces of mosaic glass cube, and that Pound is remembering specifically the mausoleum (A.D. 450) of Galla Placidia at Ravenna in north-eastern Italy, where the vaulted roof is patterned in deepest blue mosaic offset by hundreds of star-motifs in brilliant light-reflecting gold ('Under the blue-black roof, Placidia's, ...'); these closely concentric orbits around the interior of the dome remind of a 'paradiso terrestre' and remind also that much of Dante's *Commedia* was composed in Ravenna. Thus the method of composition by mosaic fragments is by progressive disclosure given a literal setting, the luminous detail catching gleams of light in the manner of the Metro poem but gradually by repetition taking up an historical and locational context, in this case the Byzantine commemorative and hieratic image-making techniques still visible in the churches of Ravenna; see, briefly, Peter Makin, *Pound's Cantos*, p. 162, and David Kadlec, *Mosaic Modernism; Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture* (Baltimore, Md, c.2000); and for fuller description and colour reproductions, Giuseppe Bovini, *Ravenna Mosaics ...* (Greenwich, Conn., 1956), esp. pp. 7-13, also Ernst Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making; Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), pp. 53-6 and plate 98 and John Lowden, *Early Christian & Byzantine Art* (London, 1997), esp. pp. 106-11 & pl. 63. Lowden observes, of the mausoleum, that if the viewer stands in the centre and looks vertically upwards, 'the primary focus of the decoration is thus paradise' (p. 111). Recall here the final lines of the *Inferno*: 'tanto ch' i' vidi delle cose belle / che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo; / e quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle' ([we climbed up] 'so far that I saw through a round opening some of the fair things that Heaven bears, and thence we came forth to see again the stars'); we meet this same constellated order, differently approached, at the conclusion to the *Paradiso*.

The artificers of these jewel-boxes of light purposefully set the gilded cubes at very slightly varied tilts to the plane surface, so as to catch and differently reflect the ambient luminosity as the viewer shifts position; there is thus a narrative of movement by which the composite image is assembled, by overlay and retroflection. Within an even larger narrative of recuperation these are the Byzantine monuments at Ravenna that Sigismundo Malatesta ransacked for choice building materials ('marble, porphyry, serpentine') so that his *Tempio* at Rimini (also still there in place) could by fierce cultural montage shore up fragments from the luminous past, gathering and holding light from the gloom of neglect; see esp. Cantos IX-X, *passim*, and Adrian Stokes, *The Critical Writings*, ed. Lawrence Gowing (3 vols, London, 1978), Vol. I, 'Pisanello' [1930], quoting from Canto X on p. 20. Further on Stokes see Richard Read, 'The Unpublished Correspondence of Ezra Pound and Adrian Stokes; Modernist Myth-Making in Sculpture, Literature, Aesthetics and Psychoanalysis', *Comp. Crit.*, 21 (1999), 79-127; also *Paideuma*, 27 (1998), 69-92. Galla Placidia is recollected both from Pisa (Canto 76) and much later still (Canto 110), shewing

that Pound (mistakenly) believed the tomb to have been destroyed during the war.

Comparable realignments of energy are performed by repeats through inversion or transformation, as the directed will of a classical epic quest in Canto I, making protective libation to darker forces, is deflected in Canto II by lower-deck demotic speech ('To Naxos? Yes, we'll take you to Naxos, / Cum' along lad. '); which is then followed by radical transformation ('god-sleight') into a beast-world of sacred animals twisting and turning in their shadows. [For details of the textual history, here, see Ezra Pound, *Variorum Edition of 'Three Cantos'; A Prototype*, ed. Richard Taylor (Bayreuth, 1991), pp. 66-99; and further, Richard Taylor, 'Towards a Textual Biography of *The Cantos*', in Willison (Ian) *et al.* (eds), *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 223-57, and his 'The Texts of *The Cantos*' in Ira B. Nadel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 161-87.] We shift by metamorphic parallel from light to dark, Apollo to Dionysus (Zagreus), first of many such theme-rhymes; compare Nietzsche: 'Apollonian intoxication alerts above all the eye so that it acquires power of vision. The painter, the sculptor, the epic poet are visionaries par excellence. In the Dionysian state, on the other hand, the entire emotional system is alerted and intensified; so that it discharges all its power of representation, imagination, transfiguration, transmutation, every kind of mimicry and play-acting, conjointly. The essential thing remains the facility of metamorphosis' (*Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale [London, 1968], p. 73). See also Joseph N. Riddel, "'Neo-Nietzschean Clatter"--Speculation and/on Pound's Poetic Image', in I.A. Bell (ed.), *Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading* (London, 1982), 187-220, esp. p. 198. On Eliot and Nietzsche see Stan Smith, *The Origins of Modernism; Eliot, Pound, Yeats and the Rhetorics of Renewal* [Hemel Hempstead, 1994], pp. 129-31, 255-6.

For a complementary method of reading by text vocality and the rhythms of sound structure, consider first Eliot's instincts about the 'auditory imagination' and his hesitation also over its siren charms. Concluding his case against Arnold in 1933 he writes: 'What I call the "auditory imagination" is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense . . .' ('Matthew Arnold', in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism; Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* [London, 1933], pp. 118-9). Incantation is thus pre-rational and recuperative, so far below the strata of conscious meaning that strong appeals to it provoke a vigilant unease: 'I am not suggesting that Milton had no idea to convey which he regards as important: only that the syntax is determined by the musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow actual speech or thought' ('Milton I' [1936], in *On Poetry and Poets* [London, 1957], p. 142; see also Ronald Bush, *T.S. Eliot; A Study in Character and Style* [New York, 1983], pp. 74-8, and more extended discussion in J.P. Riquelme, *Harmony of Dissonance; T.S. Eliot, Romanticism, and Imagination* [Baltimore, 1991], pp. 80-91).

For Pound the auditory powers of poetic language are an instrumental part of intelligence and understanding, rather than lying deeper down below them; Pound frequently asserted his belief in 'absolute rhythm' and composition 'in the sequence of the musical phrase' (*Literary Essays*, e.g. pp. 9, 3), but this is more a performance model--overall he will prefer to remember a sentiment like Thomas Campion's, in his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie ...* (1602): 'The eare is a ratioll sence and a chiefe judge of proportion' (Campion, *Works*, ed. W.R. Davis [London, 1969], p. 294). For text vocality in *The Cantos* start from W.B. Yeats, 'Speaking to the Psaltery', *Monthly Review*, CL (1902), reprinted with additions in his *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), pp. 13-27 (and see also, for connections with Arnold Dolmetsch, who had re-invented this quasi-medieval instrument, R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life; I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* [Oxford, 1997], pp. 257-80; and then Pound's 'The Serious Artist' (*The Egoist*, 1913), reprinted in *Literary Essays* (pp. 41-57); read Donald Davie, *Pound* ([London], 1975), Chap. 5: 'Rhythms in the Cantos'; and refer to Christopher Middleton, 'Ideas about Voice in Poetry', in his *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher; Essays* (Manchester, 1983), 69-79. For side-echoes, Basil Bunting, '1910-20', in Peter Makin (ed.), *Basil Bunting on Poetry* (Baltimore, Md, 1999), pp. 118-33.

'The light now, not of the sun': for 'now' as the instant of paradisaal suspense, observe the grammar of participial construction and appositional phrase-building, off-set to make a rhythmical culmination; the pointing-words ('now', 'there', etc) are ranked in parallels to counterpoint epic narration with erotic theophany. On the part played by the prosodic design of verse-line indentation see John Steven Childs, *Modernist Form; Pound's Style in the Early Cantos* (Cranbury, N.J., 1986), pp. 95-8 (not very clever); for larger time-control by pattern, see Makin, pp. 167-71, aptly quoting Kenner.

2. And the rose grown while I slept,
 and the strings shaken with music,
 Capriped, the loose twigs under foot;
 We here on the hill, with the olives
 Where a man might carry his oar up,
 And the boat there in the inlet;
 As we had lain there in the autumn
 Under the arras, or wall painted below like arras,
 And above with a garden of rose-trees,
 Sound coming up from the cross-street;
 As we had stood there,
 Watching road from the window,
 Fa Han and I at the window,
 And her head bound with gold cords.
 Cloud over mountain; hill-gap, in mist, like a sea-coast.

Ezra Pound, from Canto XXIII. The commentary and source identifications in Terrell's *Companion* (Vol. I, pp. 92-5) shew this canto to be packed and interwoven with mythographic allusion. Barbara Eastman's study (*Ezra Pound's Cantos: The Story of the Text, 1948-1975* [Orono, Maine, 1979], pp. 64-5) shews

the Greek quotations to be riddled with error, despite efforts at correction. The idyllic *visio*, above, has many facets; there is an erotic adventure, within a painted bowre of blisse, goat-like with sexual provocation, and also a reposed sight of the horizon like a Chinese landscape framed in pluperfect remembrance. The 'arras / painted to look like arras' also appears in Canto XX. There was 'a trellis full of early roses' in 'Near Perigord' (*Poetry*, VII,3, December 1915; *Lustra* [1916]; *CSP*, p. 173, *Pers*, p. 151, *Poems and Translations*, ed. Sieburth, p. 304), recounting another dangerous liaison--see commentary in K.K. Ruthven, *A Guide to Ezra Pound's 'Personae' (1926)* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1969), pp. 177-84.

The man who might 'carry his oar up' suggests a previous mariner on his way to encounter Circe: 'To the cave art thou called, Odysseus' (Canto XLVII). 'We *here*' and 'the boat *there*', '*up from* the cross-street', '*at* the window'; these markers constrain the outer reference material inwards to the centre, just as the oar and the hill-gap dramatise the sexual theme. For the earlier use of such deictic markers, compare Canto II: 'Olive grey in the *near*, / *far*, smoke grey of the rock-slide, / Salmon-pink wings of the fish-hawk / cast grey shadows in water', and see Scott Hamilton, *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 39-40. Terrell cannot break the code of 'Fa Han', who is coyly surmised as 'a female acquaintance of Pound's' (p. 94). Makin relates the sexual theme in 'Near Perigord' to a larger courtly politics of the male principle; see Peter Makin, *Provence and Pound* (Berkeley, Cal., 1978), Part I (Chaps 1-3), and also Thomas E. Connolly, 'Ezra Pound's "Near Perigord": The Background of a Poem', *Comp. Lit.*, 8 (1956), 110-121.

Many years later, 'Cloud over mountain' is seen again from the confines of the Pisan imprisonment, and remembered, the phrase fully portative across shifted contexts by virtue of lacking all deictic markers, no doubt half-consciously imitating this same feature in the grammar of Chinese and the landscape of Chinese poetry; see Canto LXXIV, look back to Canto XXI ("Wind between the sea and the mountains"), and compare e.g. the setting of Wang Wei's 'Mt. Zhongnan', in Pauline Yu, *The Poetry of Wang Wei; New Translations and Commentary* (Bloomington, Ind., 1980, p. 170, ignoring idiotic editorial discussion). Makin is somewhat scornful of the way Pound is 'half-unconscious of grammatical systems in the languages from which he drew' (*Pound's Cantos*, p. 304), but has evidently not himself devoted much time to the study of Chinese grammar, even though his monograph was composed in Japan and with the assistance of Japanese scholars who might have instructed him, as an earlier generation of Japanese scholars had instructed Pound (see *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 136; *Poems and Translations*, ed. Sieburth, p. 247).

J.H. Prynne, last modified April 2006

PDF file created on 20 August 2007