Structural principles in the cantos of Ezra Pound

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STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLES IN THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND

by

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W. C. S.
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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a search for some element which functions or was meant to function as a unifying principle in The Cantos of Ezra Pound. It is obvious that The Cantos contain a tremendous variety of forms and an even more varied mass of subject matter. The problem to be examined is does some unifying principle exist in The Cantos? If it does is it a thread of narrative or plot, a logical or psychological progression from topic to topic, or a form or mould cast over all the material in an attempt to achieve a coherent whole? In other words, has Pound attempted a unified work or only a rambling, disjointed thing?

One of the first critics to attempt to answer these questions was R. P. Blackmur in an essay dated 1933, the year in which "A Draft of XXX Cantos" was first published. Blackmur had long been interested in The Cantos and had written to Pound asking about them as early as 1924¹, a year before the first sixteen cantos were published in Paris by the Three Mountains Press. Pound replied to a second letter from Blackmur in 1952:

Dear Mr. Blackmur: Stray bits of curiosity re unfinished work have no general utility. Or at least very slight utility.²

². Ibid., p. 198.
Thus Blackmur's answers to the questions posed by this paper were based on the first thirty cantos alone, and on the assumption that these cantos are typical of the entire poem.3

Blackmur finds an attempt to draw these cantos together by way of a kind of planned fragmentation:

This deliberate disconnectedness, this art of a thing continually alluding to itself, continually breaking off short, is the method by which the Cantos tie themselves together.4

Blackmur judges The Cantos to be "a ragbag of what Mr. Pound thinks is intelligent conversation about literature and history."5 He can find no theme, no logical or emotional development in the poem.6 The material is connected only because Pound has put it in the same poem just as the rag in a ragbag are connected only because someone has stuffed them into the same bag.

Three years after Blackmur's study of Pound, Alan Tate published the second, important, early critical work on The Cantos. Although "Eleven New Cantos, XXXI - XLI" had been published in 1934, he, too, confines his study to the first thirty cantos and reached conclusions very similar to Blackmur's. Tate describes The Cantos as "rambling talk."7

4. Ibid., p. 140.
5. Ibid., p. 137.
6. Ibid., p. 136.
At least each Canto is a cunningly devised imitation of a casual conversation in which no one presses any subject very far. The length of breath, the span of conversational energy, is the length of a Canto. The conversationalist pauses; there is just enough unfinished business left hanging in the air to give him a new start; so that the transitions between the Cantos are natural and easy.  

To state the method of The Cantos is that of a "many-voiced monologue."  

Although Pound published more cantos in 1937 and again in 1940, most critics ignored his long poem until the government's charge of treason focused attention on him in 1945 and again in 1949 when the Bollingen Prize for Poetry given him for "The Pisan Cantos" forced critics to examine more than the first thirty of the now published eighty-two cantos. 

Since the war and especially since 1949, a great many critics have published a great number of reviews and studies of The Cantos in various magazines. One of the most valuable of these studies is James Blish's summary of "what has been learned to date about the essential content and method of the Cantos:"  

The poet guided by maps on which only the outlines have been filled in (the periplum), sets forth upon an Odyssey through time, in search of events and actions worthy enough to be incorporated into a live tradition. These islands in time are to be organized in a hierarchy of economic, aesthetic, and moral values, corresponding roughly to the

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

organization of the Divine Comedy; and, in order to enter into each rather than observe it from the outside, the voyageur will assume a series of masks or personae.\textsuperscript{11}

Two more extensive studies have been made and published since Blish's essay. The first to appear was The Poetry of Ezra Pound, by Hugh Kenner. Kenner finds the major unifying principle of The Cantos in the following lines from Pound's translation of Ta Haiô: The Great Digest, one of the Confucian Stone-Classics:\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{quote}
The men of old wanting to clarify and diffuse throughout the empire that light which comes from looking straight into the heart and then acting; first set up good government in their own states; wanting good government in their states, they first established order in their own families; wanting order in the home, they first disciplined themselves; desiring self-discipline, they rectified their own hearts; and wanting to rectify their hearts, they sought precise verbal definitions of their inarticulate thoughts (the tones given off by the heart); wishing to attain precise verbal definitions, they set to extend their knowledge to the utmost. This completion of knowledge is rooted in sorting things into organic categories.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Using these lines, Kenner, by a process which I do not fully understand, arrives at the conclusion that "the unity of the Cantos is Pound."\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Abrid.}, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{13} Confucius, \textit{The Great Digest and The Unwobbling Pivot}, trans. Ezra Pound (New York, 1951), pp. 30-31. The bracket is Pound's. Throughout this paper all punctuation in quoted material is that of the author quoted unless noted otherwise.
\textsuperscript{14} Kenner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 38.
\end{flushright}
The latest, long study of *The Cantos* is Harold H. Watts' *Ezra Pound and The Cantos* published in 1952. Watts answers the questions posed by this paper by focusing on Pound as a reformer of society. The poem is "a series of calculated and violent juxtapositions effected in the interest of perfectly comprehensible ideas." The first step in grasping the structure of *The Cantos* is recognition of Pound's purpose in writing it and "perception of how [that purpose] shapes and directs the unrolling poem." Once the reader sees why Pound is writing the poem's unity becomes apparent.

Blackmur, Tate, Blish, Kenner, and Watts are but a few of the critics and reviewers who have written on *The Cantos*. For the purposes of this paper they are the most significant since they have worked on *The Cantos' structure*. By adopting a new method of examining *The Cantos*, a new perspective on its structure, this paper will attempt to support, expand, or, wherever necessary, contradict the work of earlier critics.

When the initial confusion caused by the juxtaposition of materials taken directly or indirectly from so many times and places subsides in the reader's mind, or the reader at least


17. Hugh Kenner attacks this view in his review of Watts' book, "Gold in the Gloom," *Poetry*, LXXXI, 2 (November, 1952), 127-132, and as could be expected, Kenner finds Watts going astray because he has not realized the importance of Pound's Confucian translations which Kenner calls in his review "the best possible handbook to the *Cantos*.
becomes acclimated to the seeming chaos of substance and form, certain cantos and groups of cantos stand out against the heterogeneous background as definite groupings of subject matter. Some of these cantos are further set off from the surrounding ones by the extended use of one or more techniques, such as the archaic diction of Canto XLIV or the autobiographical framework of Cantos LXXIV through LXXXIV, "The Pisan Cantos." Thus the task of seeking out a unifying principle in The Cantos falls into two parts: to establish and examine, first, groupings of cantos according to subject matter or ways of handling subject matter and, second, devices which appear intended to unite these groupings into one coherent work. By using this method in its search for a unifying principle in The Cantos, this paper will attempt to make clear the problems which Pound has met in writing his long poem and the ways in which he has tried to overcome them.
CHAPTER I

SUBJECT MATTER GROUPINGS IN THE CANTOS

The discussion in this chapter is limited to definite areas of subject matter no smaller than the individual canto. The second chapter will discuss those cantos which do not fall into these areas. The type of subject matter contained in the groupings makes possible their classification as historical cantos, epic cantos, usura cantos, modern cantos and one grouping which Pound has named "The Pisan Cantos." This chapter will treat these groupings in this order.

I

A brief survey of the historical cantos shows that material has been taken from the pasts of three countries, Italy, China, and the United States. The cantos containing this material make up a very large portion of the poem as a whole; out of the 536 pages of the poem which have been published so far, 215 pages are definite groupings of historical material. These groupings are Cantos VIII through XI on Sigismundo Malatesta, Canto XXXII and Cantos LXII through LXXI on John Adams and his period, Cantos XLII and XLIII on the founding of the bank of Siena, Cantos XLIV and L on Tuscany under the Grand Duchy of the house of Lorraine, and Canto XIII and Cantos LIII through LXI on the history of China from the early Chou Dynasty to 1736 A. D. (See chart number I.) These cantos are set off from the surrounding cantos by their treatment of a definite subject and from the other groupings of subject matter by their focus on historical material.

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GROUPINGS OF HISTORICAL SUBJECT MATTER IN THE CANTOS

CHART I

Cantos:

Sigismundo
China
John Adams
Bank of Siena
Tuscany under the House of Lorraine
Cantos VIII through XI are typical of Pound's method of historiography as exhibited in all the historical cantos, so they have been selected for a detailed examination. As has been previously noted these cantos deal with Sigismundo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini. A summary of Malatesta's career drawn from sources other than The Cantos will facilitate a discussion of the same material as handled by Pound.

Sigismundo was born in 1417, one of three sons, all illegitimate, of Pandolfo, Lord of Rimini. Pandolfo died just as the Malatesta were beginning to gain power and was succeeded by his brother, Carlo Malatesta, whom Pope Martin V forced to relinquish all but the original estate of the family. Carlo died in 1429, and the inheritance passed to the three brothers, who by this time had been legitimised by Martin V. However the brothers' inheritance of Rimini was threatened by outside forces, and since the eldest brother, Galeotto, had become fanatically religious and refused to attend to worldly affairs, the task of keeping Rimini in the control of the Malatesta fell to the next oldest, Sigismundo.


At the age of thirteen he saved Rimini, himself leading his men to victory, while his unwarlike (brother) was offering up prayers in the church. At fifteen he defeated that experienced condottiere, Federico Montefeltro of Urbino, in the field.\(^{22}\)

Sigismundo and his younger brother, Domenico, more commonly known as Malatesta Novello, were knighted by the Holy Roman Emperor, Sigismund, on his return from his coronation in Rome in 1433, and by Sigismundo's eighteenth year he had already become an experienced condottiere.\(^{23}\)

...he took part in all the wars in Italy for the next thirty years, first in the service of one signoria, then of another, making war in between times on his own account against his life-long rival, Frederigo, Duke of Urbino.\(^{24}\)

Sigismundo's many political and military alliances present a confused and shifting picture which can only be suggested in this summary:

1442 He married Polissena, the daughter of Francesco Sforza, with whom he was allied in the service of the Venetians.

1445 In alliance with Alfonso V of Aragon he entered the service of the Pope against Sforza, who had thwarted

\(^{22}\). *Collison-Morley, op. cit.*, p. 49. It should be pointed out that *Collison-Morley confused Sigismundo's uncle, Carlo, with his brother, Galeotto. I have taken the liberty of changing uncle to brother in the quoted passage because Carlo died when Sigismundo was only twelve. However with this correction the passage is in agreement with the other sources I have used and is an excellent statement of Sigismundo's exploits as a boy.

\(^{23}\). *Drummond, op. cit.*, p. 106.

his attempt to gain possession of the cities of Pesaro and Fosembrone.

1448 Alfonso hired him to make war against Florence, but when the Florentines offered him better terms, he broke his contract with Alfonso, kept the money Alfonso had paid him, and went over to the Florentines.

1449 He began building the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini. He besieged Cremona for the Venetians but was forced to withdraw by a superior army sent by Milan.

1450 He was sent to help Milan by Venice but was defeated by Sforza.

1452 He entered the service of Florence against Aragon.

1454 He led the army of Siena in an unsuccessful campaign against the Counts Pitigliano.

1457 He was attacked by Frederigo d'Urbino and Giacomo Piccinino at the instigation of Alfonso.

1459 He was forced to ask Pope Pius II to make peace between him and the Frederigo-Piccinino alliance, which the Pope did on terms unfavorable to Sigismundo.

1460 He began hostilities against the church.

1461 He joined the Angevin cause against King Ferrante, who was supported by the Pope, and defeated the papal troops. He was excommunicated and burned in effigy in Rome.

1462 Frederigo d'Urbino, leading the papal army, defeated Sigismundo; four months later Sigismundo's son, Roberto, was defeated at Fano after a long siege.
1463 He appealed to the Venetians for help but was refused, so he was again forced to sue the Pope for peace on the Pope's terms.

1464–65 He led the unsuccessful campaign against the Turks in Morea.25

Sigismundo returned from Morea broken in body and fortune and asked the new Pope, Paul II, for help, which was refused. In a last spurt of defiance, he journeyed to Rome with the intention of stabbing the Pope, but he failed because of his ill health and the Pontiff's well armed cardinals. He died in 1468.26

Sigismundo's private life is buried under a mass of conflicting reports. All sources do agree that he was married three times, the last marriage being to his concubine, Isotta, who was the most important woman in his life, and that he had a daughter and at least one illegitimate son. However, his relations with his immediate family are a source of many violent contradictions among historians:

Sigismundo Pandolfo Malatesta killed three wives in succession, violated his daughter, and attempted the chastity of his own son.27

Other sources add charges of rape and murder:

In 1446 he conceived a passion for the young wife of a German count. When she refused to have anything to do with him, he attacked her


26. Ibid., p. 113.

and her escort one night as she was passing through Fano with such vigour that she herself was killed in the affray, whereupon, according to some accounts, he violated her corpse while still warm.28

This is but one view of Sigismundo though, for other sources deny these charges, attributing them to the personal hatred between Pius II and Sigismundo and "to the Propaganda of the Church that was out to despoil him of his possessions."29

Although Sigismundo's political and military career is a confused and tragic tangle of changing alliances and his character is the subject of much discussion, his place as one of the great patrons of art is granted him by all. The erection of the Tempio Malatestiano, for which he commissioned Leone Battista Alberti to design the facade, heads his accomplishments in the arts; this has been called the first important work of the great architect.30 Then in 1465 Sigismundo brought back from the unsuccessful campaign against the Turks the remains of Gemisto Plethon and placed them in a sarcophagus close outside his church with this epitaph:

These remains of Gemistus of Byzantium, chief of the sages of his day, Sigismundo Pandolfo Malatesta, son of Pandolfo, commander in the war against the Turks in Morea, induced by the


29. Drummond, op. cit., p. 106. A more complete attempt to refute these charges can be found in Edward Hutton, Sigismundo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of the Rimini, (New York, 1906). Pound also attempts to whitewash Sigismundo, sometimes by denying these charges, sometimes by simply ignoring them.

mighty love with which he burns for men of
learning, brought hither and placed within
this chest. 1466.31

Sigismundo surrounded himself in Rimini with poets,
artists, and philosophers, and while in Rome, he was the close
companion of the humanist, Poggio Bracciolini. But he was not
contented with being only the companion of artists and scholars;
his poems to Isotta show that he was a skillful poet, and the
humanist, Antonio Campanio, after staying briefly with Sigis-
mundo at the Rocca in Rimini was "as much impressed by his
host's knowledge of philosophy as by his generosity. 32

This sketch of Sigismundo contains the basic stuff of
Cantos VIII-XI, but in the poem these facts appear in a very
different manner. Pound's aim is to combine history and poetry
but he does not wish merely to make history into poetry at the
expense of truth. His goal is factual art. This aim, and
the difficulty of accomplishing it, is suggested in the open-
ing lines of Canto VIII.

These fragments you have shelved (shored)
"Slut!" Bitch!" Truth and Calliope
Slinging each other sous les lauriers.33


32. Collison-Morely, op. cit., pp. 50-52. The quoted
passage appears on page 51.

33. Ezra Pound, The Cantos of Ezra Pound (New York, 1948),
Canto VIII, p. 28. Sections of The Cantos have been published
as follows:
1925, "A Draft of XVI Cantos for the Beginning of a Poem
of Some Length."
1928, "A Draft of Cantos XVII to XXVII."
1933, "A Draft of XXX Cantos."
1934, "Eleven New Cantos, XXXI-XLI."
1937, "The Fifth Decade of Cantos."
1940, "Cantos LII-LXXI."
1948, "The Pisan Cantos," LXXIV-LXXXIV.
Thus Canto VIII, the first of the four Sigismundo Cantos, opens with Truth and the muse of epic poetry not on the best of terms, a situation which foreshadows many critics' claims that the historical sections of The Cantos are neither history nor poetry. However, such judgments do not fall into the scope of this chapter, for regardless of these claims, definite groupings of historical materials which Pound has attempted to turn into poetry do exist in The Cantos. To locate and examine these and other groupings as the necessary first step in a search for some unifying principle in the poem as a whole is the sole purpose of this chapter. An evaluation of Pound's method of historiography as well as other techniques which will be mentioned must wait until the final chapter of this paper.

A Japanese student in America on being asked the difference between prose and poetry said: Poetry consists of gists and piths.34

This passage from Pound's A. E. C. of Reading is especially true of the poetic historiography exhibited in The Cantos. In the Sigismundo cantos there is no attempt at a complete biographical or historical statement. The reader finds only the important fact which suggests the whole event; these cantos are history told in suggestive essences, a record which presents the piths, the essential facts of Sigismundo's life.

My text for quotation is a collected edition which duplicates the 1933 through 1948 editions even in pagination. The poem when finished will probably contain one hundred or one hundred and twenty cantos. (Paige [ed.], op. cit. pp. 180,350.)

embedded in the gists, compressed evocations of Italy in the fifteenth century.

The use of quoted material, usually from contemporary documents, is an excellent example of Pound's attempt to present the piths and gists of history rather than either an exhaustive coverage or a superficial summary of Sigismundo's career. Instead Pound has chosen only those fragments of records which either were significant in Sigismundo's life or make his life significant to Pound. A brief catalogue of the material quoted by Pound in these four cantos brings his use of the gists and piths of history clearly into focus. The following items are listed in the order in which they appear.

**Canto VIII**

1. A translation of a letter dated April 7, 1449 from Sigismundo, who was then in the service of Venice fighting Cremona, to Johanni of the Medici in Florence. In it Sigismundo is making arrangements for a certain painter to enter his court to do frescoes in the Tempio when the mortar in the wall dries.

2. A translation of an entry from the register of the Ten of the Bailey in Florence, dated August 15, 1452. It commissions him and his army to enter the service of the Florentines.

3. A translation of a few lines from a love poem written by Sigismundo to Isotta.35

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35. The complete text of this poem can be found in Hutton, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-215.
4. A translation of a letter from Sigismundo to Johanni di Cosimo probably written in 1450 since it tells of his being rehired by Venice.36

Canto IX

5. A quotation in translation probably from a document by Broglio concerning the betraying of Sigismundo by Sforza in the affair over Pesaro and Fessembrone. This was probably written in 1445 when the affair occurred.

6. A legal document in translation certifying that Sigismundo had bought and paid for over two hundred ox-carts of marble which he was accused of stealing from Saint Apollinare in Ravenna and which was used on the Tempio.

7. A series of translated fragments from at least eight letters found in Sigismundo's mail pouch by the Sienese when they intercepted it to see if he was corresponding with the enemy. The letters included a letter from the architect, Matteo Nuti, concerning work on the Tempio; a letter from Giovanni Alvise, the son of a carpenter, Luigi Alvise, working on the Tempio; a letter about marble to the architect, Battista Alberti; a letter from Isotta concerning an affair between Sigismundo and a young girl; a letter from Leonardo da Palla concerning a pony which Sigismundo had given his son and other domestic matters; a letter from his son thanking him for the pony; the first line of a letter from his court poet;

36. The variations in spelling of Johanni and other names are by Pound himself.
and a letter from his secretary concerning the progress on the construction of the Tempio. These letters are all to Sigismundo, and all probably were written in December of 1454. Sandwiched between these eight letters are fragments on details of the construction of the Tempio; I have not seen these identified.

Canto X

8. An excerpt in translation from a letter from Count Pitigliano mocking Sigismundo's position as leader of the demoralized Sieneese army. It is dated November 17, probably of 1454.

9. The order in Latin from Pius II demanding that an effigy of Sigismundo be constructed and burned. This was probably written in 1461.

10. A fragment listing the church's charges against Sigismundo, part in Latin, part translated. This was probably written by the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli in the year 1461.

Canto XI contains no quoted records long enough to be catalogued.

The effect of Pound's use of carefully chosen excerpts of documents as the gists and piths of history is well summed up in the lines which Pound wrote concerning the intercepting by the Sieneese of the letters listed here as item 7.

That's what they found in the post bag
And some more of it to the effect that
he "lived and ruled."38

37. Drummond, op. cit., p. 111.
38. The Cantos, IX, p. 41.
A second passage from the A. P. C. of Reading makes clear another condition which Pound must meet in turning history into poetry. "Literature is news that STAYS news."

One obvious implication of this statement is that not all history is fit subject matter for poetry but only that which has a lasting significance. There is no doubt that Sigismundo meets this requirement for Pound.

The Tempio Malatestiano is both an apex and in verbal sense a monumental failure. It is perhaps the apex of what one man has embodied in the last 1000 years of the occident. A cultural "high" is marked.

In a Europe not yet rotted by usury, but outside the then system, and pretty much against the power that was, and in any case without great material resources, Sigismundo cut his notch. He registered a state of mind, of sensibility, of all roundness and awareness.

And later in the same chapter,

All that a single man could, Malatesta managed against the current of power.

However, for history to be "news that STAYS news" it must be more than the gists and piths of significant events. It must be brought alive in the telling; hence the dramatic sense of presence throughout the historical cantos. For instance, the diction in the translations is fitted to the nature of the subject matter, as in the note from the register of the Ten of the Bailey:

39. p. 29


41. Ibid.
and because the aforesaid most illustrious Duke of Milan Is content and wills that the aforesaid Lord Sigismundo Go into the service of the most magnificent commune of the Florentines For alliance defensive of the two states, and the fragment of Sigismundo's love poem:

"Ye spirits who of olde were in this land Each under Love, and shaken, Go with your lutes, awaken The summer within her mind, Who hath not Helen for peer Yseut nor Batsabe."42

Or the diction is fitted to the imagined character and mood of the original writer, as in the letter from the carpenter's son:

"Sence to-day I am recommended that I have to tel you "my father's opinium that he has shode to Mr. Genare "about the valts of the cherch"44.

or the disgusted account of Sforza's treachery:

"that Messire Alessandro Sforza is become lord of Pesaro through the wangle of the Illus. Sgr. Mr. Fedricko d'Orbino Who worked the wangle with Galeaz through the wigging of Messer Francesco, Who waggled it so that Galeaz should spell Pesaro to Alex and Fossambrone to Feddy;"45

Throughout the historical cantos Pound attempts to make the material appear authentic and vital by using an idiom which would impress the modern reader as best fitted to the character of the speaker or writer being presented and then sprinkling the diction with archaic phrases.

42. The Cantos, VIII, p. 29.
43. Ibid., p. 30.
44. Ibid., IX, pp. 37-38.
45. Ibid., IX, pp. 34-35.
Pound's method of narration in the historical cantos is also shaped by his attempt to dramatize his material. The narration in the Sigismundo cantos is almost always in the first person. Although the narrator is never definitely identified, several lines point to his being Sigismundo's brother, Malatesta Novello.

And the Emperor came down and knighted us

And old Sforza bitched us at Pesaro

So they burnt our brother in effigy

Malatesta Novello does not, however, fit all the references the narrator makes to himself.

And we sit here. I have sat here
For forty-four thousand years,

Consequently it is impossible to single out any one person as the narrator of this section of The Cantos.

More important than the narrator's identity is the conversational quality of the narrative; it seems closer to spoken than written language.

And the Venetians sent in their compliments
And various and sundry sent in their compliments;
But we got it next August;
And Roberto got beaten at Fano,
And he went by ship to Tarentum,
I mean Sidg went to Tarentum
And he found 'em, the anti-Aragons
busted and weeping into their beards

46. Ibid., p. 34.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., X, p. 45.
49. Ibid., XI, p. 50.
50. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
Just as the previously quoted lines on the post bag describe the effect on the reader of Pound's use of documents, the following lines, which Pound puts into the mouth of an acquaintance of Sigismundo in Rome, describe the effect of the narrative method used in these cantos:

Yes, I saw him when he was down here
Ready to murder fatty Barbo, "Formosus,"
And they wanted to know what we talked about?

Both of ancient times and our own; books, arms,
And of men of unusual genius,
Both of ancient times and our own, in short the usual subjects
Of conversation between intelligent men.\footnote{52}

The second grouping of historical material to be discussed is formed by Cantos XLII - XLIII, which are focused on the founding of the Monte dei Paschi, the bank of Siena. The techniques used in handling this material are the same as in the Sigismundo cantos; that is, although the narrative is impersonal, more like a lecture than a conversation, the language is that of speech, and there is proportionately more quoted material than in Cantos VIII through XI. Extraneous material creeps in briefly with an eight line reference to politics in 1918 at the beginning of Canto XLII, an account of the preparation of the Carroccio for Siena's horse race which still resembles a medieval pageant, and a few miscellaneous items from the Sienese public archives.\footnote{53} However, only the World War I reference is completely extraneous, and it is placed at

\footnote{51} See above p. 18.

\footnote{52} The Cantos, XI, p. 51. The ellipsis is mine.

\footnote{53} Drummond, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 114-115.
the beginning of Canto XLII before mention of the main topic, the bank of Siena, while the Carroccio reference and the items from the public archives do deal with Siena in the years 1622 through 1749, the years covered by Pound's discussion of the bank of Siena.

Lines near the beginning of Canto XLII make obvious Pound's reasons for considering the founding of the Monte dei Paschi historical material significant enough to become poetry.

a species of bank - damn good bank, in Siena.54

And a "good bank" to Pound is very important as a symptom of a healthy culture.

Cantos XLIV and L form two small groupings of historical material. They are brief treatments of the careers of Pietro Leopoldo and his son, Ferdinando III, Grand Dukes of Tuscany. Canto XLIV utilizes translated documents embedded in conversational narrative, just as employed in the previously discussed historical cantos. Canto L also uses this technique, but its subject matter includes any history contemporary with Pietro Leopoldo and Ferdinando III. However, the focus is still definitely on these two men.

Revolution' said Mr. Adams' took place in the minds of the people in the fifteen years before Lexington'. That would have been in Peter Leopold's time.55

Contemporary fragments of history are placed in the framework of the lives of these two men throughout this canto. The canto also contains several references to Pound's source for this

54. The Cantos, XLII, p. 3.

55. Ibid., L, p. 40.
material, the *Storia civile della Toscana* (Florence, 1850) by a historian very much interested in economics, Antonio Zoli.  

"Pardon our brief digression" saith Zoli: America is our daughter and Vashnnonton had civic virtues, and Leopoldo meant to cut off two thirds of state debt.  

Pound makes explicit the contemporaneity of these references with the main topic. This aspect of subject matter is the only difference between this canto and the other historical cantos, its focus on Tuscany in the late seventeen hundreds making it a definite subject matter grouping. 

The social and economic reforms effected by Pietro Leopoldo and Ferdinando III make them for Pound "news that STAYS news."

The real history went on, 1760 to 1790 in Tuscany with the work of Pietro Leopoldo and Ferdinand III of Habsbourg-Lorraine, wiped out by the Napoleonic flurry.  

Pietro Leopoldo and Ferdinando III cut down taxes. Taxes are infamy. 

These subject matter groupings, Cantos VIII through XI on Sigismundo, Cantos XLII and XLIII on the bank of Siena, and XLIV and L on Pietro Leopoldo and Ferdinando III, are Pound's only extensive application in *The Cantos* of poetic historiography to Italian history. Other persons and events from Italian

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history are referred to, but they do not form definite subject matter groupings handled extensively in this way.

The first subject matter grouping taken from Chinese history is Canto XIII. This canto is devoted entirely to Kung (Confucius), mainly walking in a garden and talking to his companions. Canto XIII is marked by a stately, smooth flowing style; it has none of the roughness found so often in the other historical cantos:

And Tian said, with his hand on the strings of his lute
The low sounds continuing
after his hand left the strings
And the sound went up like smoke, under the leaves,
And he looked up after the sound.60

This canto seems to function as a forerunner for the large group of Chinese cantos which follow.

Cantos LII through LXI, eighty-three pages in the text, are the main body of Chinese material in the poem. In his index to this section of the poem, Pound has labelled Canto LII, Li Ki61 The canto, as the first cantos of several other subject groupings, begins with extraneous material, but the body of the canto is made up of translations from the Li Ki. The next nine cantos trace the subsequent history of China's government from 1766 B.C. to 1736 A.D. The treatment of the Jesuits by the Chinese, a short excursion into Japanese history, and the translation of the Confucian texts into Manchu furnish brief but not unrelated sidelights in this condensed history of the Chinese government.

60. **The Cantos**, XIII, p. 58.

61. Lin Yutang, **The Wisdom of Confucius** (n.p., 1943), p. 36, identifies the Li Ki as a "record of governmental system of early Chou Dynasty."
Pound's prose contains many statements of the importance of knowing Chinese history, especially as an example of the practical results which may be achieved by governing according to Confucian ideas.

The people who fail to take interest in Kung fail, I think because they never observe WHAT Confucian thinking leads to.

For 2,500 years, whenever there has been order in China or in any part of China, you can look for a Confucian at the root of it.62

This idea is what determines Pound's choice of material from such a large body of history and also explains why the Chinese cantos are "news that STAYS news."

The method of historiography is the same as that of the Sigismundo cantos, the only difference being a smaller proportion of document to narrative, possibly because Pound did not have access to as many Chinese documents which he considered significant as he did to Italian and American documents.

The largest subject matter grouping of American historical material follows immediately after the Chinese cantos, Cantos LXII through LXXI, eighty-three pages in the text. This grouping like the Chinese cantos is foreshadowed by a single canto appearing earlier in the poem, Canto XXXII. All these cantos are centered around John Adams and the early years of the United States government. It is interesting to find this grouping immediately following the Chinese cantos, for Pound has said that the most important lesson the United States

could learn from Chinese history is that the United States constitution was an innovation which should not be scrapped now for experiments which have been tried and have failed.63

John Adams has been praised again and again by Pound:

The tragedy of the U.S.A. over 160 years is the decline of the Adamses.64

Obviously Pound considers the early American government and John Adams fit subjects for the poetic historiography which was used earlier on Sigismundo Malatesta.

This examination of Cantos VIII through XI, XLII and XLIII, XLIV and L, XIII and LII through LXI, XXXII and LXII through LXXI has attempted to establish three points: each of these cantos or groups of cantos treats a definite, limited, historical subject; each of these historical subjects has a definite significance to Pound; each grouping of historical subject matter is handled with the same method of poetic historiography.

The next three classifications, which take up much less space in The Cantos, require only brief treatment in this study.

II

The second class of subject matter groupings to be examined is that of the epic cantos. The subject matter of these cantos is drawn from three epics, the *Odyssey*, the *Poema del Cid*, and the *Divina Commedia*.

The Odyssey cantos are Cantos I, XXXIX, XLVII, and the last four pages of Canto XX; although this last section is not


a complete canto, it merits inclusion because of its length.

Canto I relates the departure of Odysseus and his men from Circe's isle, the summoning of the dead by Odysseus, and his speaking with Elpenor and Tiresias.65

The section in Canto XX describes the lotus eaters. This description is interrupted briefly by a lament by the sailors who had been with Odysseus and had died. The poetry here is marked by the luxuriousness and exactness of the imagery.

Canto XXXIX is made up of the reminiscences of Odysseus, chiefly of Circe. It is written in the first person. Canto XLVII is very similar to Canto XXXIX in that it is a jumble of things concerning Odysseus, but it is centered on his descent to the dead. Cantos XXXIX and XLVII are the least definite of all the subject matter groupings.

The only subject matter grouping dealing with the Cid is Canto III. It starts with a brief reference to Pound in Venice, but moves to a description of the Cid being refused

65. This canto is a translation by Pound from Book II of a Latin version of the Odyssey by Andreas Divus Justinopolitanus published in 1538. The Latin text can be found in Ezra Pound, "Translators of Greek," Make It New (New Haven, 1935), pp. 138-141.

Lines such as:

Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean (Canto 1, p. 3) and

Swardest night stretched over wretched men there. (Canto 1, p. 3)

make this canto very reminiscent of the prosody of "The Seafarer" as translated by Pound.

May I for my own self's songs' truth reckon,
Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days
Hardship oft endured.

(Ezra Pound, "The Seafarer," Personae (New York, n.d.), p. 64.)
entrance at Burgos and being forced into exile. This canto also relates the Cid's tricking of two pawnbrokers with a trunk of sand. It ends with a reference to the murder of Ignez de Castro and with the image of a decaying wall.

Cantos XIV, XV, and the first half of Canto XVI form one of the most definite groupings in the poem. The first line of Canto XIV immediately sets the scene and prepares the reader for the following two and a half cantos:

Io venni in luogo d'ogni luce muto, (I came into a place void of all light.)

The line is borrowed from the Divine Comedy where it occurs just as Dante and Virgil pass Minos and enter the second circle, the beginning of hell. Cantos XIV and XV are Pound's modern adaptation of the Dantean hell where Pound has thrust politicians, financiers, betrayers of language, vice crusaders, slum owners, and Calvin, among others. What Pound's inferno lacks when compared with the exactness of classification found in Dante's, it more than makes up for in repulsiveness. At the end of Canto XV Pound is overcome by the filth and faints. When he regains consciousness, his guide, Plotinus, is gone, so he staggers alone through the hell mouth into purgatory and Canto XVI. It is impossible to say at the end of this grouping if Pound is in paradise or still in purgatory; the latter seems most probable. Because of the definite borrowings from Dante, these cantos are one of the most distinct subject matter groupings in the poem.

66. The Cantos, XIV, p. 61. The line is from Dante, Inferno, V, l. 28.
As can be seen, the epic groupings - Cantos I, XXXIX, XLVII, and four pages of Canto XX drawn from the Odyssey; Canto III drawn from the Poema del Cid; and Cantos XIV, XV, and the first pages of Canto XVI based on the Divine Comedy—are set off from the rest of the poem only by their focus on subject matter. They do not utilize any one technique as the historical cantos do.

III

Cantos XLV and LI, the usury cantos, are the third type of subject matter grouping. These two groupings differ from the other groupings in that they are the direct presentation of an idea, the degenerative effects of usury, while the others are focused on actions and only indirectly on the ideas which these actions express.

Canto XLV indicts usury on two charges: as a cause of degeneration in the crafts and arts, and as an interference with the natural fecundity of the earth and man. The canto presents these charges by listing examples of the effects of usury in a quite formal catalogue which abounds in archaisms and inversions.

Usura rusteth the chisel
It rusteth the craft and the craftsman,67

with usura, sin against nature,
is thy bread ever more of stale rags
is thy bread dry as paper,
with no mountain wheat, no strong flour68

67. The Cantos XLV, p. 24. Usury as Pound uses the word means more than the lending of money at exorbitant rates of interest; it is all the evils caused in a society by a lack of precise terminology.

68. Ibid., p. 23.
Usura slayeth the child in the womb
It slayeth the young man's courting
It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth
between the young bride and her bridegroom

CONTRA NATURAM

The second usury canto, Canto LI, opens with a juxtaposition of light and mud, a figure for society free from usury and society embedded in a usurous muck:

Shines
in the mind of heaven God
who made it
more than the sun
in our eye.
Fifth element; mud; said Napoleon

Without any break the canto launches into a restatement of most of Canto XLIV but in a terse, modern style:

Usury rusts the man and his chisel
It destroys the craftsman, destroying craft;

With usury...
the peasant does not eat his own grain

Usury kills the child in the womb
And breaks short the young man's courting
Usury brings age into youth; it lies between the bride
and the bridegroom
Usury is against Nature's increase.

The last half of the canto presents in contrast to the previously stated effects of usury examples of productivity, "That hath the light of the doer." The canto closes with a song by Geryone, the dragon which bore Dante and Virgil on its back down into Maleboge.

69. Ibid., p. 24.
70. Ibid., LI, 44.
71. Ibid., The ellipses are mine.
72. Ibid., p. 45.
Both Cantos XLV and LI are condemnations of usury and are set off from the rest of the poem by their concentration on this one topic. These usury cantos, like the epic cantos, are not set off by the consistent use of any single method of handling subject matter as the historical cantos are.

IV

Cantos XII, XIX, XXII, and XXVIII form a fourth set of subject matter groupings, the modern cantos. These cantos are a collection of glimpses of modern life - some humorous, some bitterly satiric, most probably fictitious.

Canto XII is made up of three anecdotes, Baldy Bacon's financial career, Jose Maria Dos Santos and the pigs, and "The Tale of the Honest Sailor." Baldy Bacon's story is typical of the anecdotes which make up the modern cantos. Baldy Bacon bought up all the centavos in Cuba and sold them at a profit when the demand for centavos became great enough.

Baldy's interest
was in money business
"No interest in any other uv bisnis,"

This transaction caused Baldy to become very unpopular with the Cubans, so he returned to Manhattan and became an agent for an insurance company until the company folded.

Also ran up to 40,000 bones on his own,
Once, but wanted to "eat up the whole'r Wall St."75

Most of the anecdotes in the modern cantos are like the Baldy Bacon episode - short, colloquial, and concerned with

73. Ibid., XII, p. 55.
74. Ibid., p. 53.
75. Ibid., p. 54.
economics or politics in the early part of the twentieth century. However, some of these anecdotes are on art and some merely present a character, such as this passage from Canto XXVIII:

"Buk!" said the Second Baronet, "eh...
"Thass a funny lookin' buk" said the Baronet
Looking at Bayle, folio, 4 vols. in gilt leather, "Ah...
"Wu....Wu ... wot you goin 'eh to do with ah ...
"... ah read-it?"

Pound's concern in all of these anecdotes with telling a good story is shown by the dramatic technique used here. The only anecdote that seems to involve the poet personally appears in Canto XIX, where the narrator (this short section is in the first person) is told:

"But it's a question of feeling,
"Can't move 'em with a cold thing, like economics."

In short, the modern cantos are groupings of anecdotes told conversationally and set off from the rest of the poem as subject matter groupings by their concentration on life in the twentieth century.

V

One large grouping, "The Pisan Cantos," remains to be studied. Unlike the epic, usury, and modern cantos, this grouping, Cantos LXXXIV through LXXXIV, forms a relatively large portion of the poem, one hundred and fifteen of the total five hundred and thirty-six pages.

76. Ibid., XVIII, p. 139.

77. Ibid., XIX, p. 85.

78. Cantos LXXII and LXXIII have not been published. Unconfirmed rumors give two likely reasons: to avoid libel suits; because these cantos will not be intelligible until the poem is completed.
"The Pisan Cantos" are the only large grouping of personal subject matter in the published sections of the poem. Occasional glimpses of Pound speaking directly to the reader appear throughout The Cantos:

And if you will say that this tale teaches ... a lesson, or that the Reverend Eliot has found a more natural language...79

These passages, however, are no more than occasional asides throughout the first seventy-two cantos, and even with the addition of those sections of the modern cantos which are obviously personal, the amount of material that is directly personal is very slight up to Canto LXXIV.

Not all the subject matter in these cantos pertains directly to Pound; many references to the preceding cantos can be found, usually with a value judgment attached, in this grouping.80

79. Ibid., XLVI, p. 25.

80. These references to earlier cantos are one of the most troublesome aspects of the poem to the reader, especially when the lines being referred to were not emphasized on their first appearance. For example, these lines from Canto LXXVIII, p. 59,

So we sat there by the arena,
outside, Thiy, and il decaduto
the lace cuff fallen over his knuckles
considering Rocheoucaul
but the program (Cafe Dante) a literary program 1920
or thereabouts was neither published nor followed
are reference to and very enlightening expansion of the following lines from Canto XXIX, p. 145.

And another day or evening toward sundown by the arena
(les gradins)
A little lace at the wrist
And not very clean lace either...

Taken together the two quoted passages are definitely more meaningful than when they are apart, but they are separated by so much material in the poem and are so inconspicuous in context that there is very little hope the reader will make the necessary connection.
Fear god and the stupidity of the populace,
but a precise definition
transmitted thus Sigismundo
thus Duccio, thus Zuan Bellin or trasstevere
with La Sposa
Sponsa Cristi in mosaic till our time / deification
of emperors
but a snotty barbarian ignorant of T'ang history need
not deceive one.

Only in these cantos does Pound consistently make the significance of much of the material in the poem so explicit as in the above example.

Yet these statements of value are not the main reason for classing Cantos LXXIV through LXXIV as a grouping of personal subject matter. The autobiographical nature of these cantos is even more important. "The Pisan Cantos" are in essence a journal.

In April of 1945 Pound reported to advance units of the U. S. Army, was taken to Genoa for interrogation, and later removed to an internment camp at Pisa where he remained until November of the same year when he was flown to Washington, D.C., to be tried for treason. "The Pisan Cantos" were written in the camp at Pisa, and the poet's experiences there furnish an autobiographical framework for this section of the poem. These cantos are an almost equal mixture of scenes from life in the camp, Pound's memories of his earlier life and the earlier cantos, and statements in varied forms of what might be called Pound's personal philosophy.

81. Ibid., LXXIV, pp. 3-4

82. According to Russell, op. cit., p. 13, the only books which Pound had during his internment were the Bible and Prayer Book supplied by the camp and the two Confucian texts, the Ta Iîio and the Chung Yung. Apparently Pound did not have access to the previously written cantos.
Only Canto LXXV is devoid of any explicitly personal reference. The canto consists of only seven lines and the score of Gerhart Munch's transcription for violin of Clement Janequin's bird-song chorale. However, once the reader identifies the score and remembers Pound's comparing several times the birds sitting on the prison fences with notes on the music staff, Pound's inclusion of the score of a bird-song chorale no longer seems out of place in this often subjective journal of the prison camp.

4 birds on 3 wires, one on one
5 of 'em now on 2;
on 3; 7 on 4§

8th day of September

write the birds in their treble scale

three solemn half notes
their white downy chests black-rimmed
on the middle wire.

Pound's descriptions of the camp and its surroundings and his recording of incidents and bits of conversation from life in the camp provide an objectively autobiographical background for Cantos LXXIV through LXXXIV.

84. The Cantos, LXXIV, pp. 63-64. Seven lines are omitted.
85. Ibid., LXXXII, p. 103.
86. Ibid., p. 105.
and there was a smell of mint under the tent flaps
especially after the rain
and a white ox on the road towards Pisa
as if facing the tower,
dark sheep in the drill field and on wet days were
clouds
in the mountain as if under the guard roosts. 87

and Mr. Edwards superb green and brown
in ward No. 4 a jacent benignity,
of the Baluba mask: "Doan you tell no one
I made you that table." 88

This background is further established by scattered lines
which refer to the writing of "The Pisan Cantos":

As a lone ant from a broken ant-hill
from the wreckage of Europe, ego scripтор. 89

and that day I wrote no further. 90

and by Canto LXXXIV and parts of Canto LXXXII which are dated
as if they were entries in a diary.

Pound fills the framework, established by lines such as
have been quoted, with memories and ideas. The memories are
drawn from all of Pound's experience; the ideas are conclusions
drawn from this experience, Pound's philosophy of life. 91

87. Ibid., LXXIV, p. 6.
88. Ibid., p. 12.
89. Ibid., LXXXVI, p. 36.
90. Ibid., LXXXIV, p. 111.
91. Unfortunately Pound's philosophy seems impossible to paraphrase in a neat prose statement:

Premature to mention my "philosophy,"
call it a disposition. In another 30 years
I may put the bits together, but
probably won't.

(Paige ed.), The Letters of Ezra
Pound, p. 333.
In a letter to George Santayana dated December 8, 1939, Pound stated that Cantos LII through LXXI, the Chinese and American historical cantos, would be followed by a section dealing with his philosophy. Although "The Pisan Cantos" leave much to be desired as a systematic statement of a personal philosophy, they do stand out in the poem as a journal-like recording of Pound's thought during his internment at Pisa. This focus on Pound sets "The Pisan Cantos" off as a very definite subject matter grouping.

One more characteristic of all the subject matter groupings needs to be pointed out before beginning an examination of the relationships between these groupings. The examination of the historical cantos showed that each man or event treated had some special significance for Pound. The other subject matter groupings have significance in the same manner. The significance of the usury cantos and "The Pisan Cantos" is explicit in them. Each of the three sources of the epic cantos has been judged significant by Pound in his critical prose; of Odysseus he says, "I hope that elsewhere I have underscored and driven in the Greek honor of human intelligence;" he calls the Poema del Cid the finest of the medieval poems of action; and the Divine Comedy is praised throughout his prose as an indictment of usury. The significance of the modern cantos is made explicit early in The Cantos.

92. Ibid., p. 331.
"Beer-bottle on the statue's pediment!
"That, Fritz, is the era, today against the past,
"Contemporary." 95

This chapter has established that a very large amount of
The Cantos is grouped within the poem according to subject
matter and sometimes technique as well. (See chart number II).
Now that these definite groupings of significant matter have
been established, an examination of their relationships be-
comes possible.

95. The Cantos, VII, p. 25.
GROUPINGS OF SUBJECT MATTER IN THE CANTOS

Cantos:

1 3 8 12 13 14 16 19 20 22 28 32 39 41

42 43 44 45 47 50 51 52 61 62 71 74 81

CHART II

Historical Cantos
Epic Cantos
Usury Cantos
Modern Cantos
"Pisan Cantos"
CHAPTER II

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SUBJECT
MATTER GROUPINGS IN THE CANTOS

The search for a unifying principle in The Cantos becomes a search for relationships among the subject matter groupings. This chapter will attempt to seek out the manner in which these groupings are related: by examining Pound's prose for any illumination of The Cantos it may offer; by examining the heterogeneous cantos, those cantos which are not part of a subject matter grouping; and by examining those lines throughout the entire poem which directly or indirectly are comments on The Cantos.

Pound's prose provides much support for considering The Cantos an attempt to define a complex idea in terms as concrete as possible. The Cantos are a definition of Pound's evaluation of modern civilization, an evaluation which involves also a diagnosis of the ailments of modern life and a compounding of a remedy for them:

There is no mystery about the Cantos, they are the tale of the tribe--give Rudyard credit for his use of the phrase.96

The task Pound has taken on in The Cantos is a constructive criticism of the whole of modern civilization.

This criticism is the complex idea which he wishes to define as exactly as possible, for Pound believes that inexact terminology and definition cause most of the problems in the

modern world. The cure is suggested in his translation from the *Analects* of Confucius with which he begins the *Guide to Kulchur*:

Tseu—Lou asked: If the Prince of Wei appointed you head of the government, to what would you first set your mind? Kung: To call people and things by their names, that is by the correct denominations, to see that the terminology was exact.97

Much of the apparent lack of coherence and clarity in *The Cantos* is caused by Pound's attempts to define precisely the large and complex idea which is the meaning of the poem. An examination of Pound's method of definition should show why this difficulty exists.

In his search for exact terminology, Pound found what he considered a defect in the method of definition used in Western culture from the Greeks to the present:

In Europe, if you ask a man to define anything, his definition always moves away from the simple things that he knows perfectly well, it recedes into an unknown region of remoter and progressively remoter abstraction.98

Any definition made in this way would be obviously only as exact as the abstractions from which it was made. Pound feels that this way of defining was satisfactory during the medieval period when language was carefully tended and the "general exactitude in the use of abstract terms" was high.99 However, modern language has lost those precise and clear abstractions:

97. Ibid., p. 16.
Consequently the method of definition to which people have become accustomed in Western civilization is no longer exact enough for Pound's purpose in The Cantos. He has to find some new method.

Just as Pound derives his emphasis on precise terminology from China, from Confucius and Chinese poetry, he draws on China and her language for his way of attaining this precision in English, the ideogrammatic method. The Chinese character, the ideogram, is a way of defining without generalizations or abstract statements; it is not a picture of a sound or group of sounds but of a thing or a group of things. Pound uses the word red as an example of the difference between the Western and the Chinese ways of defining. A European, if asked to define red, would say that red is a colour which is a vibration of a certain length which is a mode of energy and so forth, getting farther and farther from his or anyone's actual sense experience of red or what he really knows of the word.

In contrast to the European, the Chinese has his definition of red right in the character, itself, which means red. This character is composed of four very formalized pictures: a rose, iron rust, a cherry, and a flamingo. The definition is made of experienced particulars; abstractions or generalizations are avoided.

100. Pound, Guide to Kulchur, p. 50.

Pound has a complex generalization to communicate, but he lacks the terminology to communicate it exactly in an abstract statement.

"All knowledge is built up from a rain of factual atoms." Since Pound lacks the terminology to communicate "knowledge" adequately, he bombards the reader with a "rain of factual atoms" from which the reader may build the knowledge. Being unable to communicate the generalization, Pound communicates the particulars and hopes the reader will relate them. "The tale of the tribe" is the subject of the generalization, and the subject matter groupings are the most important particulars.

The ideogrammic method has one more attraction for Pound. It forces the reader to think:

On the other hand we also err in trying to FORCE abstract or general statement. We err in supposing that insincerity is peculiar to the man speaking. In nine cases out of ten we find an insincerity of the auditor, of the man who does not want to hear.

The ideogrammic method both makes possible exact communication of abstractions and furnishes a means of prodding the reader's mind:

The ideogrammic method consists of presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register.

This ideogrammic method, the particularized definition, is perhaps the most important unifying principle in the poem. The Cantos consists of a great mass of material much of which

103. Ibid., p. 128.
104. Ibid., p. 51.
is not explicitly related; the relating of the parts of the poem must be done by the reader. The reader constructs the unity and coherence of The Cantos by grasping the poem's meaning. Thus the unity of the poem exists only in the mind of the careful reader; the unity is the generalization which the reader makes from the materials of The Cantos. It is an idea implicit in the entire poem, as the philosopher's principle is implicit in the accumulation of his memory.

_Said the Philosopher: You think I have learned a great deal, and kept the whole of it in my memory?
_He replied with respect: Of course. Isn't that so? It is not so. I have reduced it all to one principle._

Pound's "one principle" can be expressed only in the several hundred pages of his poem. The "one principle," the idea, exists only in the mind of the reader; there, is the unity of The Cantos.

However, Pound runs into a problem caused by the nature of written language when he attempts to utilize the ideogrammic method as the unifying principle in his long poem. The ideogram in the Chinese character causes no difficulty because the parts of the character are co-existent, and, like the parts of a painting, may be perceived simultaneously. But when Pound attempts to create an ideogram out of words instead of formalized pictures, he is forced to put the words one after another,

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105. Ibid., p. 15.

106. In _The Poetry of Ezra Pound_, p. 38, Hugh Kenner states in his discussion of the ideogram that the unity of The Cantos is Pound. This statement is inexact since any careful reader may grasp the ideogrammic unity of The Cantos. Thus the unity of The Cantos is not just Pound but an idea in Pound's or any mind that knows The Cantos sufficiently well.
and in a poem as long as The Cantos, any possibility vanishes of the reader perceiving all of the ideogram simultaneously. Pound's attempt to create an ideogram out of written language is an attempt to achieve simultaneity in a medium limited to consecutiveness. An ideogram like a painting exists in space, a dimension which written language lacks. Consequently the parts of Pound's ideogram are recorded consecutively, but the poem can not be understood unless they are contemplated simultaneously by the reader.

An examination of the cantos which do not fall into one of the subject matter groupings shows that Pound is quite conscious of the difficulties to be met in using the ideogrammic method for a long poem. Pound realizes he must make the reader aware of the simultaneous existence of the whole poem before the ideogrammic unity of the poem can be grasped. The cantos not included in subject matter groupings and the lines commenting on The Cantos which are found throughout the poem include many devices intended to juxtapose the subject matter groupings in the reader's mind, to give the materials of the poem a simultaneous existence.

The heterogeneous cantos have another function in the poem which should be mentioned before discussing their part in juxtaposing the subject matter groupings. Pound uses the heterogeneous cantos as an opportunity to include subject matter which would be out of place in any of the subject matter groupings and which is not of sufficient extent or significance to form a separate grouping. For example, Pound includes in Canto XXXVI his translation of the Donna Mi Prega by Guido
Cavalcanti. Since Pound has written an essay of more than fifty pages on this poem, it is obvious that he attaches some significance to the poem and the poet, but for his purposes in The Cantos, Cavalcanti's canzone merits only two and one half pages; the canzone is important enough to be included as a part of Pound's ideogram, but for some reason it is not important enough to form a subject matter grouping, like Sigismundo or the Monte dei Paschi. One definite function of the heterogenous cantos is to form a catch-all for these odd bits of material which Pound wishes to include in The Cantos.

The most important function of these cantos is the juxtaposition of materials mentioned earlier. Each heterogenous canto is a mixture of new materials and materials from the various subject matter groupings. For example, the first half of Canto XL is made up of economic subject matter ranging from the Venetian bank of 1361, through Adam Smith, the United States civil war, the Rothschilds, to Mr. Morgan in 1907. The second half of the canto is an account of the voyage around 500 B.C. of the Carthaginian, Hanno, along the west coast of Africa.107

In this canto the transition, from economics to the voyage of Hanno, is made explicit:

One of which things seeking an exit.108

The "things" in this line are the economic subjects which directly precede it, and the "exit" which was for Hanno his

107. This account is probably a translation of the Periplus, a Greek translation of Hanno's own account in Phoenician of the voyage. Both the voyage and the translation of a translation bring to mind the Odyssey and Pound's translation of Divius rather than Homer in Canto I.

108. The Cantos, XL, p. 49.
voyage is for Pound and the reader his telling of it. Thus Canto XL indicates one relationship in The Cantos between economics, history, and the voyage of Hanno and indirectly of Odysseus.

Not all of the heterogeneous cantos make so obvious the relationships between the different materials found in them. Often Pound merely lists references to different subject matter groupings, apparently in the hope that the resulting jumble will force the reader to bring the subject matter groupings together in his mind; but occasionally Pound manages to achieve moments of poetic synthesis in the midst of an apparently chaotic mass of references to other parts of the poem and/or new material. An excellent example of a moment of poetic synthesis occurs in Canto XXVII where Greek mythology and modern history are for an instant fused together.

So that the Xarites bent over tovarisch.
And these are the labors of tovarisch;
That tovarisch lay in the earth,
And rose, and wrecked the house of the tyrants,
And that the tovarisch then lay in the earth
And the Xarites bent over tovarisch.

These are the labours of tovarisch,
That tovarisch wrecked the house of the tyrants,
And rose, and talked folly on folly
And walked forth and lay in the earth
And Xarites bent over tovarisch.

And that tovarisch cursed and blessed without aim,
These are the labours of tovarisch,
Saying:
"Me Cadmus sowed In the earth
And with the thirtieth autumn
I return to the earth that made me.
Let the five last build the wall;

I neither build nor reap.
That he came with the gold ships, Cadmus,
That he fought with the wisdom,
Cadmus, of the gilded prows. Nothing I build
And I reap
Nothing; with the thirtieth autumn
I sleep, I sleep not. I rot
And I build no wall. 109

The use of "tovarisch" brings to mind the end of Canto XVI which deals with the Russian revolution. The tovarisch is associated first with the three Graces. Then he speaks as though he were one of the armed men who sprang up when Cadmus sowed the dragon's teeth, thus completing the poetic fusion of Greek myth with modern history. 110 This examination of poetic fusion can only attempt to point out how the synthesis occurs; the lines themselves must prove its existence.

Although these moments of complete synthesis are few in the poem, Pound often is able to draw together varied materials by using what he calls "subject rhyme. " 111 Pound uses "subject rhyme" in much the same way as the traditional poet uses sound rhyme except that the echo is not in the sound of a word or group of words but in their meaning. In the letter to his father in which he uses the phrase, "subject rhyme," Pound gives as an example the rhyme between Elvira on the wall and Helen of Troy which appears in Canto XX. 112 The Elvira on the wall--Helen of Troy rhyme is strengthened by the speeches of

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109. Ibid., XXVII, pp. 131-132.

110. These moments of synthesis do not occur often in the poem. However I am unable to say whether these moments are so few because Pound attempts synthesis only a few times, because he fails in the majority of his attempts at synthesis, or because I fail as a reader to perceive more of these moments.


112. Ibid.
the old, Trojan men watching Helen which appear earlier in the poem. In this example the similarity between Elvira and Helen on their respective walls is so obvious that Pound's reason for calling this association "subject rhyme" should be apparent. However, the rhyme is not always this close.

Canto II is an excellent example of "subject rhyme" in operation. The subject matter of this canto, like that of many other cantos, is arranged in a pattern of echoes and re-statement similar to a traditional rhyme scheme. Of course, this rhyme scheme does not include all the subject matter in the canto; it would be as absurd to require Pound to rhyme all the subject matter as to require any poet to rhyme all the sounds of all the words in his poetry. The rhyme scheme of Canto II can be examined by listing the subject rhymes, omitting all unrhymed material.

The body of Canto II is Acoetes relating to Pentheus the incident which brought him to worship Lyaeus, more commonly known as Dionysus. Acoetes had been the pilot of ship whose sailors attempted to kidnap a young boy. Acoetes tried to stop them but was ignored by the crew. The young boy turned out to be Lyaeus who changed the rebellious crew into fish and caused the boat to become covered with vines and lynxes.

Almost half the canto is devoted to this subject while the rest of the canto is mostly material which rhymes directly or indirectly with the Acoetes narrative. These rhymes are

113. Ibid., II, p. 6.

best pointed out by listing the rhyming subjects in the order in which they appear in the cantos:

Browning's "Sordello"

So-shu

Eleanor of Acquitaine

Homer

Helen and the old men on the walls of Troy

Tyro

Acoetes' narrative

So-shu

Tyro

Acoetes115

Proteus

The subject rhyme between the two poets is obvious;
Pound's prose re-inforces this rhyme since he praises both Homer and Browning for their narrative abilities.

So-shu and Tyro are presented in rhyming situations:

115. This fusion of So-Shu, Tyro, and Acoetes is another example of a moment of poetic synthesis in The Cantos.

And So-shu churned in the sea, So-shu also, using the long moon for a churn-stick... Lithe turning of water, sinews of Poseidon, Black azure and hyaline, glass wave over Tyro, Close cover, unstillness, bright welter of wave-cards, Then quiet water, quiet in the buff sands, Sea-fowl stretching wing-joints, splashing in rock-hollows and sand-hollows In the wave-runs by the half-dune; Glass-glint of wave in the tide-rips against sunlight, pallor of Hesperus, Grey peak of the wave, wave, colour of grape's pulp, (Canto II, pp. 9-10.)
- 52 -

So-shu churned in the sea.116
And by the beach-run, Tyro,
Twisted arms of the sea-god,
Lithe sinews of water, gripping her, cross hold,117

There is also a slight rhyme between the So-shu lines and the
Homer lines.

And poor old Homer, blind, blind as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea-surge, murmur of old men's
voices;118

These lines lead into the speech of the old men as they watch
Helen on the walls of Troy, and their talk of Helen rhymes
with the appearance of Eleanor of Aquitaine earlier in the
canto.

"Eleanor, ἑλένως and ἑλέπολις;119

The love scene of Tyro and Poseidon rhymes with So-shu,
as previously noted, with the sea-god combination of the
Acoetes narrative and is slightly associated with the Homer
lines because of Tyro's appearance in the Odyssey.120

Most of the rhymes of the Acoetes narrative have been
noted previously. Only the rhyme between the metamorphosis of

117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid. The Eleanor of this line is positively iden-
tified as Eleanor of Aquitaine in the following lines from
Canto VII, p. 24:

Eleanor (she spoiled in a British climate)
"Ελενώς and ἑλέπολις, and
poor old Homer blind
blind as a bat,
Ear, ear for the sea surge;
rattle of old men's voices.

120. Tyro appears in Book XI of the Odyssey. Odysseus
sees her spirit in the underworld.
the boat and crew and the Proteus reference which closes the canto needs to be mentioned. Here the rhyme is two-fold: the changing shapes of the crew with Proteus’ ability to change his shape, and sea setting of the Aeoetes episode with Proteus as the old man of the sea.

The basic subject rhyme in Canto II is the sea. All of the rhyming subjects, except Browning’s "Sordello" and Eleanor of Aquitaine, explicitly involve the sea, and both Browning and Eleanor are rhymed with subjects which involve the sea. The sea is present in So-shu, Homer, Helen, Tyro, Aeoetes, and Proteus, furnishing a subject rhyme which runs throughout the canto. Over this basic rhyme are the other rhymes which cement the canto into an involved series of subject rhymes. (See chart number III).

The main source of complexity in subject rhyme is the large number of elements from which the poet may choose his rhyme in a set of subjects in contrast to the limited number of possible rhymes in a set of sounds. For example, a poet may rhyme the words mole and soul; any word chosen to rhyme with soul, such as hole, will also rhyme with mole because the number of possible sound echoes is limited by the first rhyme. When subject rhyme is being used, this first rhyme does not limit the number of possible second and third rhymes. Pound rhymes Browning with Homer because they are both great narrative poets and then goes on to rhyme Homer and So-shu by associating both of them with the sea. Thus he can make two completely different subject rhymes with only three subjects because each subject contains several possible rhymes while a
RELATIONS THROUGH SUBJECT RHyme IN CHART III

ELEANOR

HELEN

BROWNING

HOMER

TYRO

ACOETES

PROTEUS

SO-SHU

SO-SHU TYRO ACOETES
sound contains only one possible rhyme. This technique, that of making more than one rhyme on the same subject, makes it impossible to write out a neat rhyme scheme of Canto II.

Subject rhyme does not occur only within the canto, for Pound often uses it to link canto to canto. For example, the sea imagery of Canto I rhymes with the swimmers in the sea in Canto II who in turn rhyme with the swimmers described by Poggio in Canto III. This technique is used throughout The Cantos to draw together subjects which are only slightly similar. It is another of Pound's attempts to yoke together the subject matter groupings into a unified ideogram of considerable proportions.

Thus the heterogeneous cantos exhibit several of these techniques intended to make the ideogrammic unity of the poem more easily apprehended. Through subject rhyme and moments of poetic synthesis, Pound attempts to force together some of the varied subject matter of the poem, but most often he is content to pack the heterogeneous cantos with a variety of material, new material and references to the subject matter groupings, and then hope that the reader will be jarred into at least seeking for a common denominator when he finds, for example, Thomas Jefferson and Sigismundo side by side.

The lines in which Pound comments on The Cantos form the last body of material to be examined in this chapter's search for attempts to yoke together the subject matter groupings. Even on a first reading certain parts of The Cantos stand out as the poet speaking as poet. These asides often seem designed
only to remind the reader that he is reading and that the poet is always behind the poem controlling and shaping it.

Keep the peace, Borso! Where are we?
"Keep on with the business,"121

Or another time . . . oh well, pass it.122

(That, I assure you, happened.
Ego, scriptor cantilenae.)123

And I have told you of how things were under Duke Leopold in Siena124

And he wrote
a poem on the Beauties of Mougden
and condensed the Ming Histories
literary kuss, and was Emperor
for at least 40 years.
Perhaps you will look up his verses.125

As a lone ant from a broken ant-hill
from the wreckage of Europe, ego scriptor,126

and to change the value of money, of the unit of money
METATHEMENON
we are not yet out of that chapter127

This list of lines from various parts of The Cantos contains only a few of the passages in which Pound, like some curious stagehand, can be seen peering over the set at the audience. Pound wants to make certain the reader is always conscious of The Cantos as an artifact in order for the jumble

121. The Cantos, XXI, p. 96.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., XXIV, p. 112.
124. Ibid., LII, p. 3.
125. Ibid., LXI, p. 86.
126. Ibid., LXXVI, p. 36.
127. Ibid., LXXVII, p. 46.
of fact and fiction, of time and place, which is the world of The Cantos to become acceptable to a literal minded reader. These lines are Pound's way of getting around the reader who demands a one for one correlation between art and life.

However, the most important comments on The Cantos are not as obvious as the lines just mentioned. These comments are usually indirect; that is, only occasionally is the connection between the Odysseus passages, for example, and the plan of the entire poem made explicit. In this most important group of lines commenting on the poem, Pound presents to the reader a point of view, a perspective to take towards The Cantos, which should draw the subject matter groupings closer together and thus make the ideogrammic unity of the poem more apparent.

The first element of the perspective offered the reader is to consider The Cantos as an account of a voyage. The idea of The Cantos as a voyage is introduced in Canto I with the sailing of Odysseus from Circe's isle and reappears throughout the poem in the many references to Odysseus, Hanno, and the other voyagers. By viewing The Cantos as a voyage whose landmarks are the subject matter groupings and whose goal is apprehension of the poem's ideogrammic unity, the reader becomes conscious of a purpose in the poem, of a sense of direction.

Ere thou come to thy road's end,
Knowledge the shade of a shade,
Yet must thou sail after knowledge
Knowing less than drugged beasts.128

128. Ibid., XLVII, p. 30.
Not until the "Pisan Cantos," when Pound believes his personal experience has become significant enough to form a subject grouping, does he explicitly associate himself with Odysseus.

\[ \text{O} \, \text{TIE}, \, \text{O} \, \text{TIE}? \, \text{Odysseus} \\
\text{the name of my family.129} \]

With Pound as a modern Odysseus and The Cantos as his and his reader's voyage after knowledge, the subject matter groupings can be seen to have a tenuous thread of narrative running through them.

In addition to proposing a perspective of The Cantos as a voyage, Pound proposes a perspective on the form of the voyage. The substance of the voyage, the subject matter of the poem, has been cast into a form borrowed from the Divine Comedy.

Under the portico Kirbe . . . .
"I think you must be Odysseus . . . .
feel better when you have eaten . . . .
Always with your mind on the past . . . .
Ad Orcum Autom Quisquam?
Mondum nave nigra porvenit . . . .
Been to hell in a boat yet?130

The voyage of The Cantos is through inferno, purgatory, and paradise. It is significant that Canto I presents not only Odysseus sailing from Circe's isle but also his calling up of the dead. Lines scattered throughout the poem place the voyage in the inferno, purgatory, paradise framework.

And if you will say that this tale teaches . . . .
a lesson, or that the Reverend Eliot has found a more natural language . . . . you who

129. Ibid., LXXIV, p. 3.
130. Ibid., XXXIX, pp. 44-45.
think you will
get through hell in a hurry. 131

By the "Pisan Cantos" the voyage has passed through what
Pound has variously referred to as hades, inferno, or hell.

How soft the wind under Taishan
where the sea is remembered
out of hell, the pit
out of the dust and glare evil 132

we who have passed over Lethal 133

Since the poem is not finished, a statement by Pound in
a letter to George Santayana is the only available evidence
that the voyage will end in paradise.

I have also got to the end of a job or part of
a job (money in history) and for personal ends have
got to tackle philosophy or my "paradise." 134

Some danger lies in attempting to draw too close a parallel
between The Cantos and the Divine Comedy. Although Pound
does take the inferno, purgatory, paradise framework from
Dante, he adapts it to his own purposes by adding other elements. Pound realizes the difficulties inherent in using the
Dantean structure for a modern poem.

Stage set a la Dante is not modern truth. It
may be O. K. but not as modern man's. 135

And we agree, je crois, that one can no longer
put Mr. Purgatory forty miles high in the midst of
Australian sheep land. 136

131. Ibid., XLVI, p. 25.
132. Ibid., LXXIV, p. 27.
133. Ibid.
This letter is dated December 8, 1939. Cantos LII through
LXXI were published in 1940; "The Pisan Cantos" in 1948.
135. Ibid., p. 293.
136. Ibid., p. 190.
Consequently, Pound makes no attempt to recreate the Dantean machinery. The inferno, purgatory, paradise framework is merely suggested throughout The Cantos, adding a second element to what might be called the overall metaphor of the poem, a voyage through inferno, purgatory, and paradise.

Pound adds a third element to the perspective on The Cantos he proposes to the reader. The voyage which The Cantos describe is a voyage through a vision. Although the "osmosis of persons," the metamorphosis of subject into subject which is the essence of the vision, first appears in the Acocetes narrative in Canto II, the first, explicit mention of the poem as vision does not appear until Canto V:

Topaz I manage, and three sorts of blue;
but on the barb of time.
The fire? always, and the vision always,
Ere dull, perhaps, with the vision, flitting
And fading at will.138

In these lines Pound characterizes The Cantos as a vision which he, as a very conscious technician not completely lacking in inspiration, has created. As was previously noted, Pound always keeps both the artist and the artifact before the reader. Possibly the only way to make a vision acceptable to a modern reader is by emphasizing it as only a poetic device, or so Pound appears to believe.

However, the most important aspect of the vision is that all its parts exist simultaneously. The consecutive appearance of the parts of the vision is caused by the poem being a

137. The Cantos, XXIX, p. 145.
138. Ibid., V, p. 17.
record of a voyage through the vision. The reader, the voyager, must move through the poem, the vision; but the reader moves, not the poem or the vision.

and saw the waves taking form as crystal,
notes as facets of air,
and the mind there, before them, moving,
so that the notes needed not move.\textsuperscript{139}

This idea of the vision existing all at once while the voyager moves through it, of the poem existing all at once while the reader moves through it, is one more attempt to meet the basic difficulty of the ideogrammic method when used in English. Pound attempts to force the reader into a realization of the essential simultaneity of \textit{The Cantos} by providing him with this metaphor of a voyage through a vision.

\begin{quote}
Lalage's shadow moves in the frescoe's knees
She is blotted with Dirce's shadow
dawn stands there fixed and unmoving.
only we two have moved.\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

By treating \textit{The Cantos} as a voyage through a timeless vision, Pound hopes to suggest to the reader the simultaneity of the poem, but he admits that the attempt is not always successful.

\textit{(Clock-tick pierces the vision)}.\textsuperscript{141}

\footnotesize
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, XXV, p. 119.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, I, p. 43.
\item \textit{Ibid.}, V, p. 18.
\end{enumerate}
CONCLUSION

The question posed at the beginning of this paper was, what is the unifying principle in The Cantos? Since definite groupings of subject matter were found in the poem, the question becomes, what are the relationships among these groupings?

The ideogrammic method was found to be the basic relationship between these groupings. They are related in much the same way as formalized pictures are related into an ideogram. The groupings are the particulars which when they are contemplated simultaneously form an idea, and this idea is the unity of The Cantos.

Although the ideogrammic method indicates the basic relationship among the groupings, it does not fully describe the unity of The Cantos, for this relationship is complicated by an important difference between an ideogram and The Cantos. An observer can apprehend the parts of an ideogram simultaneously, but a reader comes upon the subject matter groupings consecutively. Before The Cantos can function as an ideogram, Pound must make the reader aware of the poem’s essential simultaneity, and his attempts to give the poem this simultaneity form relationships among the groupings which are secondary to the ideogrammic relationship.

Material from different groupings is juxtaposed in the heterogeneous cantos in what usually seems a random fashion. But sometimes these varied references are related by explicit, transitional statements, by subject rhymes, or by moments of poetic synthesis. Pound suggests to the reader a perspective
towards *The Cantos* which emphasizes the coexistence of the groupings. Besides these relationships which I have found, Pound in a letter to his father suggests another, a fugal pattern,\textsuperscript{142} which I have not discussed because I feel an extended analogy with musical forms is an approach to *The Cantos* outside of the scope of this paper. All these devices create secondary relationships among the subject matter groupings, relationships intended to make the ideogrammic unity of the poem more easily grasped. By drawing the groupings together with these relationships, Pound hopes to overcome the problems inherent in using the ideogrammic method in a long poem.

I believe that Pound has successfully met these problems, but of course my opinion is based only on my own experiences in reading *The Cantos*. The two greatest obstacles to a successful reading of the poem are the necessity of keeping in mind over five hundred pages at once and unfamiliarity with the ideogrammic method. A reader who is willing to spend time reading and re-reading the poem, however, can surmount both of these obstacles. Consequently I believe that *The Cantos* are a success—if the reader is willing to devote the necessary time and energy to the poem.

But for the average reader the poem is chaos.

All of which is mere matter for ....rs and Harvard instructors unless I can pull it off as reading matter, singing matter, shouting matter, the tale of the tribe.\textsuperscript{143}


\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 294.
If judged by these standards, The Cantos are a failure, and there can be little hope that the last sixteen cantos will improve this situation.

The limited scope of this paper's inquiry does not do justice to many fine qualities in The Cantos. The strength of Pound's translations from the Odyssey, the exactness of the imagery describing scenes on the Mediterranean, the humor in many of the modern cantos, and above all the mastery of sound exhibited throughout the poem are but a few aspects of The Cantos whose success is beyond question. Most readers will be put off by the structural complexity of the poem and will find only moments of brilliant poetry, but after the careful reading which I believe The Cantos deserve, some readers will grasp the structural unity of the poem. Only then will they realize the extent of Pound's achievement.
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