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POUND'S MYTH OF PROVENCE AND ITS BEARING ON EARLY *CANTOS*

Fiona Penelope Bannister

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to elucidate one facet of what is termed Pound's "myth" as it operates in the *Cantos*, by evaluating his approach to twelfth-century Provencal material and related historical sources, as it is reflected in some of his early writings, both prose and poetry, and by focusing in particular on certain of the early *Cantos*. In the first chapter, the poet's interest in the troubadour sensibility is shown to be linked with his peculiar view of Neoplatonism; the outcome being a blend of paganism, Christian and non-Christian Neoplatonism and "*Provencalism*", *all of which contribute* to a mythical vision of the ideal, of which Provence is a part.

Chapter 2 examines the effect of Pound's fascination with the troubadours' work on his own early poetry. *The Provencal aesthetic is* seen to operate as a rich source of ideas which shapes his emerging poetic, and stimulates a corresponding need to revitalize his use of language in order to express this developing vision.

In Chapter 3, consideration is given to the way in which the Provencal material is linked with, and given further resonance by, Pound's interpretation of Eleusinian ritual. Pound perceives a common emphasis on the positive effects of human love, and deduces a pattern connecting these cultural phenomena, expressing it poetically by means of mythical, imaginative symbolism of light and fertility.

The final chapter looks at the way in which he demonstrates this notion of the endurance or persistence of certain qualities and values as emotional correlatives of language. Canto 8 is discussed in detail as a paradigm of Pound's method *of creating image patterns which approximate* human experience, orchestrating the past and the present within his mythopoeic structure, to convey his sense of the religious or ideal dimension of existence.

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By focusing on Pound's tendency to mythicise various eclectic sources of historical learning which he possessed, in an effort to arrive at an ideal, paradisal vision for the modern world, this dissertation attempts

to emphasise the value of Provence as an element in the creation of Pound's "myth" in the early cantos and, by implication, in the *Cantos* as a whole.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, *unaided work. It is being* submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

(Name of candidate)

24th day of January, 1989.

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2.0 PREFACE

The title of this dissertation reflects my understanding of a puzzling situation in which Ezra Pound, channelling his creative energy into what he called "an epic", which he defined as "a poem including history",[1] proceeded to comment upon and to *connect and conflate certain historical* events in a manner which could never be considered merely historical. This apparent paradox underlying Pound's *Cantos* raises questions about *his attitude to history and it also* calls for an investigation of what I have called his "myth". This term is used throughout this study in connection with the Provence material and its bearing on early *Cantos*, and it would be as well to clarify the sense in which it is applied at the outset.

The word "myth" is applied in the context of Pound's use of imaginative symbolism to convey his sense of ultimate things, of the ideal, or religious dimension of existence. It is applied, in other words, to describe the non-literal or ahistorical extension of Pound's insights beyond an exclusively historical domain. William Righter has pointed out that the modern usage of the word "'myth' has *certain affinities with the* 'spirit of the age', of nation and tribe, as well as with forms of belief more poetic than literal",[2] and this evaluation corresponds closely with *Pound's attempts in the Cantos to distill the essence* of the *past*, to find its true nature, to tell "the tale of the tribe",[3] in poetic form.

Pound's borrowing of the above phrase from Kipling reveals his perception of the task of a poet in writing a modern verse epic. By insisting on the poet's archival function, the task of recording history, Pound was revealing a mind which had been trained in the scholarly discipline of Romance language and had a great fascination with historical data and documentation. It was Pound, after all, who delved into archives and copied out sections of manuscripts, the result being that much of the text of the *Cantos* consists of historical documents which Pound wanted to be

aired and read once again, and appreciated for the information they contained. He felt that in sticking to the "givenness" of the historical facts, by relaying the document itself, he could allow the voices of the past to speak for themselves and, in so doing, "... Pound believed he... [*was fighting*] ... the 'historical black-out', a universal conspiracy to destroy, suppress, and subvert vital documents ...".[4] It is important to emphasise that, in Pound's attempt to bring the past alive in the *Cantos*, to preserve its *relevance for the contemporary world*, his material is often rooted in history, but the method with which he approaches the past veers away from the inductive argument based on undisputed fact to which a scholar of history adhers. This does not mean that *Pound*, in ignoring scientific methods, is deliberately propagating falsehoods - a restricted sense of the word "myth" - and to read his *Cantos* as pure fiction or complete invention is to misunderstand his intention. As he says in this work:

> This is not a work of fiction
> nor yet of one men:
> (99/708)[5]

This quotation can be read as a distillation of Pound's "historical *sense*" *in that it reveals* two of the most important aspects of his attitude to history. Firstly, because of Pound's commitment to history, and because he wanted to render its texture "more truly"[6] (exactly the opposite of pure fiction), *as befits an authentic and absolutely sincere record of* the past, he evolved what he called the "ideogrammatic method" of presenting images. Christine Froula has termed this method his "poetics of the fragment",[7] and Clark Emery presents Pound's *historical method in* detail:

> In this study of history, the effort . . . to recapture the intensity of life being lived, and, instead of bringing history to the reader, to bring the reader into history. That is, the reader will not witness an event as an accomplished fact but will seem to be a participant in the event. He will therefore often receive fragmentary information, thus being as confused or ignorant or misled as the original actors.... On the other hand, though pressed into

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> the action, he will simultaneously maintain his perspective as reader and will be able to draw inferences from startling juxtapositions of apparently divergent times, persons, places, events, ideas.[8]

Pound intends each fragment of the past to recall and reactivate every other fragment, creating a palimpsestic form "to embody a changing experience of history".[9] And, in keeping with his desire for historical *authenticity*, the line "nor yet of one man"(99/708) reflects his belief that an articulation of the truth is not possible by one voice only; hence his abandoning of a controlling narrative voice in his search for a cross-cultural, *multidimensional view of history in the Cantos*. Pound effaces himself, and the voice of the poet becomes many voices or personae. For example, in canto 8, the voice of the poet, or Pound, and Varchi, the Italian historian commissioned by Cosimo de Medici, *debate the motives* behind the assassinations of Giovanni Borgia and Alessandro de Medici. Pound's voice is thus modulated so that no one voice dominates the poem. As Kuberski points out, "*The Cantos*...provide an articulate procession of selves, subjects, languages, topoi and times, retaining only the creating self, the body writing".[10] It is apparent therefore, that the writer of the *Cantos* perceives himself not so much as a creator, but as an interpretative agent responsible for keeping open what Philip Furia calls "the lines of ... transmission" from the past, "... making it new, again, in the present".[11]

This process of unearthing written materials so that they may be understood - in effect "translated" from their original languages into a modern context - is illustrated in canto 20, in which Pound makes use of an incident in which he consulted the German philologist and author of a Provencal dictionary, Emile Lévy, about the exact meaning of a word. The word was found by Pound in Canello's edition (1883) of one of Arnaut Daniel's poems, in the Ambrosian Library in Milan.[12] In canto 20, Pound asks Lévy "'...what do they mean by *noigandres*?"(20/89), giving us the original manuscript version of the word. The scholar mulls over this word, "...Noigandres! —NOIgandres!/... —'Noigandres, —eh, *noi*gandres,"(20/89-90). Terrell informs us that Lévy subsequently "emended the manuscript text to read 'd enoi gandres'", and provided a translation into English.[13] In the canto, Pound gives his own version of

Arnaut's original, *"d'enal ganres"(20/90), but does not* offer any translation into English, so that he "in effect lets the reader devise his own",[14] by means of the context in which the word occurs. Pound thus *circumvents* the problem of pinning down meaning in translation by allowing the word to speak directly for itself.

So Pound's interest in resuscitating the past reflects an attitude to history that can seem almost objectivist, due to his obsession with documents. However, his aim was to discover intra-historical links, echoes and recurrences in a vision that is taken from history, but which forms what I have called a "myth". I do so because Pound, in an effort to perceive recurrent patterns within the matrix of the archival record or document, has arrived at something that goes beyond historical fact. It seems justifiable to use the term "myth", because, *in discerning the essence*, the archetypal form, Pound is liberating these ideas from the constraints of time and space, transforming them into ideals, which are *enduring and timeless*.

In his preface to *The Spirit of Romance*, Pound states that "All ages are contemporaneous",[15] a statement which highlights the problem which faces us at this point: to what extent can Pound be said to mythicise history? William Righter provides a general discussion of the mythopoeic process, which relates very closely to my interpretation of Pound's method:

> The discoverer of a figurative logic has juxtaposed another imaginative world to that of process: the model of the world of myth, however richly figured in its structural features, however ingenious the discovered homologues, projects through those very structuring *features the outlines of a sublime fiction.... The step* is beyond history into structure, beyond the randomness of things into an order whose turbulent fragments are never stilled, yet which nevertheless enables us to envisage the totality which contains the movement, which in setting us beyond history sets us beyond time.[16]

Certainly, Pound does reject to some extent the historian's analysis of data, the sequential consideration of a train of events (a "process"), yet in doing so he gains the freedom to conjure up a non-factual response to history, which yet simultaneously cleaves to the gritty factuality of *its sources*. It becomes a fictitious, non-literal account taken from history, or, as I have called it, a "myth". Michael Bernstein considers that "This desperately precarious balancing act, in which the world's history is *fictionalized, appropriated with all the thematic license* and willful patterning of art, only so that it can re-emerge in the (fictional) text as 'valid' history, constitutes Pound's basic solution to the problem of a modern verse epic".[17] Indeed Pound considered that, *without recognition* of the pattern formed by the echoes of repetition, any analysis of history, by which he meant the course of human affairs, is invalid. Pound's *Cantos* include history, incorporating it within the archetypal and the mythical and so going beyond the historical context, going beyond time into timelessness by means of a process of fusing the sequences of history into larger mythic patterns of the timeless. The problem with this approach is that the "codes", as Bernstein calls them, of historical analysis and "mythological, intuitive insights" are opposed. "If either code begins to displace the other, the poem as a whole risks fragmentation or intellectual incoherence".[18]

The unity of the *Cantos* as a whole has often been questioned, and it is clear that Pound's "conversion" of history into myth presents numerous problems in this respect. Pound himself conceded late in his life that he had perhaps failed in his objective - to write a modern verse epic, that is, a continuous narrative embodying a conception of history. When one considers the magnitude of the task he set himself, and the fact that he began work on the poem with a Modernist awareness of the fragmentation of the modern world by the erosion of belief in any controlling system of order, it seems almost impossible that he could have succeeded. Although this vision of the modern world is essentially negativist, it is offset by Pound's firm belief in the necessity of understanding the past and of learning from it. His optimism surfaces in "the creation of an ideal through the accumulation of fragments",[19] fragments of the past which, because of their enduring properties have survived the passage of time. As George Bornstein puts it, "the ecstatic moment [is isolated] from an

orderly continuum".[14] Hence the splintered modern paradise which he reveals in the Pisan *Cantos*:

Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel

but spezzato apparently
it exists only in fragments ...
(74/438)

The Provence material and its related themes form an important part of Pound's modern paradisal vision. The preliminary history-myth excursus which I have been engaged on in this preface may help to give a controlling context for the discussion of this facet of the total myth of the *Cantos*, though it is not without its difficulties. Most of these involve finding the links which existed in Pound's mind between Provence, which he had studied as a scholar, and other eclectic elements of historical learning which he possessed, such as Neoplatonism and Eleusinian ritual, and then deducing the relationship of the sum of these parts to the whole, which as I understand it, is a vision of the ideal, in Pound's mind. And that ideal, pervading to a greater or lesser extent the whole of the *Cantos*, is an ideal of light and fertility as opposed to darkness and various forms of perverse life-denial, typified by usury and its effects on man's relation to society and to the Cosmos.

The central thrust of this study, to be found in chapters 3 and 4, has been limited to discussion of the pertinent sections of cantos 1-30 and 36, with brief comment on cantos 39, 47 and 74. I found it valuable to include a preliminary discussion of some of Pound's early poems, written before he began the *Cantos* because, in them, we first see his scholarly training in Provencal material bearing fruit as poetic expression at a time when he was emerging as a theorist of Imagism. Some criticism, such as *The Spirit of Romance* is also examined because it reflects his preoccupation with Provence, pagan ritual (later pinpointed as the Eleusinian Mysteries), and Neoplatonism, and associated themes of light and re-birth, thus forming an important part of the argument that he put forward concerning archetypal patterns and echoes in the *Cantos* as a whole.

So, *while the scope of this dissertation has* been intentionally limited to earlier writings, it suggests by implication a bearing on something central to what I have called Pound's "myth" in the *Cantos* as a whole. *This* wider implication is important because, just as it is extremely difficult to appreciate poems or sections of Pound's poetry in isolation, so too is it difficult to grasp one facet of the myth without understanding something of how the whole structure operates. Accordingly, this study focuses in detail on one facet of Pound's "myth" - on the synchrony of elements of Provencal troubadour creativity, Eleusinian ritual and Neoplatonism - and, by virtue of this approach, says something about the mythical dimension of the whole poem and hence about Pound's personal and heterodox religious *Weltanschauung*, with its passionate interest in

> ... what sort of things endure, and what sort of things are transient; what sort of things recur; what propagandas profit a man *or his race; ... upon* what the *forces,* constructive and dispersive, of social order, move ...[21]

It should be noted that the author, while not equipped to address the problems and niceties of translation from Provencal into English, has been guided by the scholarly work of other critics in this respect. Owing to the fact that this dissertation seeks to establish why Pound was moved to include Provencal poetry in his own work, as opposed to the accuracy of this usage, it is felt that secondary sources are perfectly adequate for this purpose.

The author thanks Professor A G Woodward for his help and encouragement as supervisor of this dissertation.

Financial assistance rendered by the Human Sciences Research Council towards the cost of this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed or conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not to be regarded as those of the Human Sciences Research Council.

Owing to difficulties presented by American computer keyboards, the French word "Provencal" appears in the text without the cedilla, which indicates pronunciation.

3.0 FOOTNOTES - PREFACE

1. Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays* (ed) T S Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968.) p.86.

2. William Righter, *Myth and Literature* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.) p.9.

3. A phrase borrowed by Pound from Rudyard Kipling, *to be found in* "Literature" in *A Book of Words*, Volume 32 of *The Writings in Prose and Verse* (New York, 1928.) pp.3-4. Pound's use of the phrase is to be found in *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1952.) p.194.

4. Philip Furia, *Pound's Cantos Declassified* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984.) p.1.

5. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975.). All subsequent quotations are from this edition, with the canto number first, followed by the page number.

6. Christine Froula, *To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Pound's Cantos* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1984.) p.14.

7. Ibid. pp.14-15.

8. Clark Emery, *Ideas Into Action: A Study of Pound's Cantos* (University of Miami Press, 1958.) p.94.

9. Froula, *To Write Paradise*, p.15.

10. Philip Kuberski, "Ego, Scriptor: Pound's Odyssean Writing", *Paideuma*, Volume 14, 1985, p.36.

11. Furia, *Pound's Cantos Declassified*, p.13.

12. Carroll F Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 1 (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1980.) p.81.

13. Ibid. p.81.

14. Ibid. p.81.

15. Ezra Pound, *The Spirit of Romance* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1970.) p.8.

16. Righter, *Myth and Literature*, p.126.

17. Michael André Bernstein, *The Tale o the Tribe: Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.) p.74.

18. Ibid. p.24.

19. Stuart Y McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972.) p.147.

20. George Bornstein, *The Postromantic Consciousness of Ezra Pound* (University of Victoria, 1977.) p.51.

21. Ezra Pound, *Patria Mia* (Chicago: R F Seymour, 1950.) p.68.

4.0 CHAPTER 1

Pound's Legacy from Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

No one has ever claimed that Pound's life-long study of Medieval literature was exclusively scholarly, least of all the poet himself. Yet, while his methods in part, and many of his conclusions could seem unacceptable to historians, many critics have considered his feeling for history to be sound.[1] Ultimately, Pound's perceptions are tested within his poetry, where they either do or do not work within the medium. In this imaginative context, his ideas are not rigorously examined by the reader against known facts and found wanting, but are considered for their value within the broader scope of human experience. In Pound's poetry, therefore, one is afforded an experience of a "mythical" interpretation of given facts which embodies the poet's sincere (though not always logical) convictions about the past and, by extension, about the present, too.

One of these convictions is Pound's perception of some kind of religious awareness within the work of the troubabour poets, an inclination on their part towards the world of the spirit. Although much of Pound's theorizing was relatively original, Makin points out that he was operating in a context of renewed interest in "the world of spirit in general", and was in contact with G R S Mead's esoteric circle.[2] Pound's sensitivity to this vague notion led him to qualify his ideas and to pinpoint these elements as being of heterodox origin. It is this conclusion which will be explored extensively in this dissertation , in an attempt to *elucidate* Pound's perception of the Provencal aesthetic. This chapter will introduce the aspects of Christian and non-Christian Neoplatonism which Pound found inspiring in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, and which contributed towards the myth which he built around this aesthetic.

Pound perceived "pagan" elements across a broad spectrum of Medieval writing: within the work of the mystical theologian, Richard of St Victor, in the Christian Neoplatonic metaphysicians , Erigena and Grossetesta

and, as mentioned above, in the poetry of the troubadours. He concluded, in the essay "Terra Italica":

> ...some non-Christian and inextinguishable source of beauty persisted throughout the Middle Ages maintaining song in Provence...[3]

What exactly he meant by "source of beauty" is the focus of a later chapter. In the meantime, a consideration of the "non-Christian" matter leads us inevitably to the tradition in whose shadow the Middle Ages began - that of Neoplatonism.

It is of the utmost importance to clarify at the outset Pound's position in relation to Plato's philosophy, and to distinguish between Platonism and Neoplatonism. Pound responded to this body of philosophy in a characteristic manner, by endorsing certain elements of Platonism enthusiastically, and opposing others as emphatically. For example, he rejected completely that form of Gnosticism which was drawn in part from a pessimistic interpretation of Platonism and which focused on the world as being inherently evil. In his *Timaeus*, Plato describes the beauty and harmony of the Cosmos, distinguishing between the two worlds which *constitute this entity*: that of the world of Becoming, of ordinary perception and appearance, and that of the world of Being, of ideas or Truths, which he places outside the temporal world, and on which the world of appearances is modelled. It is the inherent dualism of these two spheres that *made a Gnostic interpretation of Platonism possible*. Gnosticism was the extremist version of the religious syncretism that dominated the very early Christian centuries. Though the Church fathers attacked this dualist form of religion as a Christian heresy, "it appears to have preceded Christianity,"[4] for which reason it is not surprising to learn that St Augustine (354-430 AD) succumbed initially to a belief that the world could be explained as "a dualism of good and evil".[5] Pound opposed the Gnostic obsession with evil which, in broad terms, consisted of "a radical rejection of the world as being at best a disasterous accident and at worst a malevolent plot".[6] This kind of radical pessimism about the world is at odds with Pound's optimistic religiosity, if one can call it that. At any rate, while Pound cared little

for orthodox mystical thinkers, he did share their belief in an order, a belief which [illegible] the alien Gnostic God, who exists remote from the world, but who compensates for its imperfections by His innate goodness, irreconcilable with the Creator who triumphs over Evil. To summarize, one can say that Pound utterly rejected the form of otherworldly mysticism which was but one of the developments of Platonic theory.

What Pound did accept from the Neoplatonic tradition, gleaned from his reading of Erigena, Grosseteste, Richard of St Victor and others, was the concept formulated by Plotinus (205-270 AD) and expressed by means of what *Harold Bloom calls "an extraordinary trope or figure* of speech, 'emanation'".[7] Emanation is a process out of God, a pantheistic doctrine in terms of which God is everything and everything God. There is, therefore, a hierarchical chain of being linking the Divine Intelligence with Anima Mundi, a system which makes the dividing line between God and His creatures, or the Creator and the uncreated (in the Christianized version of the Neoplatonic scheme), very fine. So fine, in fact, that "God lost His separate identity",[8] which is why Erigena (c. 800-877 AD) was considered to be opposed to the dogmas of the Roman Church, and was condemned posthumously in 1225 as a heretic by Pope Honorius III.

At the centre of Pound's adoption of the idea of immanence is a kind of religious awareness coupled with what could be called, in the broadest terms, a search for truth. Pound's dislike of the spiritualistic Platonic epistemology and ontology has already been touched on, and it would not be accurate to couch his "search for truth" in any strictly Platonic terms. What attracted Pound to the pagan theology was, in the main, the use of certain imagery. He isolated and employed these images which he perceived in the works of Erigena and Richard, who had themselves borrowed from the Neoplatonist tradition. *These images and Pound's* application of them will be discussed in more detail later, where they will be explored as an important part of Pound's Provencal myth and of his general assertion of human potential.

It is perhaps inevitable that Pound's interest should have been aroused by the works of the Medieval theologian John the Scot, otherwise known as Erigena. At a time when most scholars were concentrating their en-

ergies on imitating and preserving the heritage of the past, Erigena *stands out as an original* thinker, an innovator.[9] Erigena's thinking was based on "the application of Christian concepts to a Neoplatonic system".[10] He was able to achieve this synthesis due to his knowledge of Greek, *unusual at a time when the Latin culture reigned supreme.* While St Augustine had succeeded in Christianizing Neoplatonism, Erigena attempted to provide Christianity with a Neoplatonic foundation, which is quite another matter. He trod a very hazardous *path in terms of or*thodox Christian theology. His sophisticated pantheism was exploited by the Albigensian heretics[11] and he became something of an outcast from the Church as a result ("So they dug up his bones in the time of De Montfort. 83/528).[12] This supposed fact on its own would have been sufficient to attract Pound to Erigena, for he saw himself as a rebel in society, apart from the mainstream of popular thinking.

Erigena plays an important part in Pound's thinking, something that ought not be overlooked despite the fact that he is mentioned only occasionally and in a very condensed way in the *Cantos*. His ideas are *included in an area* explored by Pound which is characterized by ambiguity: a perceived dimension in which religious beliefs overlap, cultures intermingle and meaning is obscured. Pound perceives that some of these *beliefs are of necessity concealed, but that they nevertheless* persist underground. For Pound, Provence and the troubadour poetry are at the centre of this subterfuge. This myth, in which pagan undercurrents persist into twelfth-century (Christian) *Provence, includes Erigena:*

> Civilization went on....
>
> A conspiracy of intelligence outlasted the hash of the political map....Erigena [persisted] in Provence....[13]

In *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound links Erigena with the Eleusinian mysteries, which, in terms of the Poundian myth, are the pagan origin of recurrent "intelligence" which distinguishes twelfth-century Provence and the early Renaissance. These pagan rites were essentially secret and concealed, *their meaning* withheld from common view. They thus form, according to Pound, part of the tradition of privy knowledge which embraces

Erigena, and which makes it "quite useless" for Pound "to *speculate on* Erigena in the market place".[14] William Tay points out that what probably led Pound to connect Erigena with Eleusis was the similarity between *Pound's perception of "Eleusinian energy"*, based on the renewal of life and "the harmonious unity between man and nature",[15] and Erigena's "concept of resurrection", reflected in recurrent renewal within nature (for example, the setting of the sun, the death of the seed and the life of the plant).[16]

In Canto 36, Pound places Erigena within a conceptual structure, "a continuous cultural stream that produced the balanced part of the Western 'paideuma'".[17] Erigena's significance in terms of this tradition of positive flow of illumination or knowledge is highlighted by means of a polarization: people and ideas are separated out into camps, positively and negatively aligned, for and against Pound's system:

Eriugina was not *understood in his time*
"which explains, perhaps, the delay in condemning him"
And they went looking for Manicheans
And found, so far as I can make out, no Manicheans
So they dug for, and damned Scotus Eriugina
Authority comes from right reason,
never the other way on"
Hence the delay in condemning him
Aquinas head down in a vacuum,
Aristotle which way in a vacuum?
Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu. (36/179-180)

Erigena is opposed by the orthodox Church and Pound uses his purported dictum "Authority comes from right reason"[18] *to undercut the authority* of Aquinas and Aristotle and their reliance on logic. His wisdom is seen to mystify and, most importantly, to persist and endure. Whereas *Aquinas' and Aristotle's ideas* go nowhere, Erigena's are distilled by Pound into the Latin line: "Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu." ("Sacred, sacred, the illumination in coitus."). To Pound's mind, Erigena and Cavalcanti were concerned with sex as a revelatory experience,[19] as an illumination of and key to certain mysteries which were not normally

accessible to human intelligence. Pound therefore affiliates Erigena with engagement of the senses and, in doing so, strengthens the *link* between the pagan mysteries and the Provencal "feeling" in the *Cantos*. It would seem that the most significant element in Erigena's work from Pound's point of view is a certain focus of attention: "the emphasis in his thinking was on the beauty of human life".[20] This emphasis stems from what Erigena meant when he called nature a 'theophany': it is the revelation of God through creation.[21] The idea is essentially Neoplatonist in origin, and Pound was surely correct to sense an element in Erigena's emanationist doctrine which could be incorporated into his own syncretic neo-pagan religiosity.

In one of Pound's prose works he provides a commentary on what is one of his favourite ideas, expressed in the line "Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu":

> Paganism included a certain attitude toward; a certain understanding of, coitus, which is the mysterium.[22]

This "attitude" includes "the proper sacramental *awareness* of the correspondence....between impregnation and knowledge of divine Forms",[23] according to Sharon Mayer Libera. If one takes this suggestion a step further, this purported Neoplatonist view of sexuality equates coitus with a moment of vision, revelation or illumination, all of which refers to knowledge of the divine, expressed by images of emanatory Light. This Neoplatonic "worship of the gods"[24] exercised a huge attraction upon Pound's poetic sensibility and is explained by Libera in terms of what these Neoplatonic ideas had to offer the poet:

> ...an intellectual rationale to the heightened emotional states in which the artist intuits form and brings forth a formed work of art.[25]

So it is that Pound anchors his sense of the sacred, of a world of the spirit, in the Neoplatonic metaphor of light, which in turn is linked to his idea of sacred, illuminatory coitus. In a sense, Pound is setting out his own variations within a tradition deriving from Neoplatonism and from

mystical theologians such as Erigena, Robert Grosseteste and Richard of St Victor and poets such as the troubadours, Cavalcanti and Dante. There were, of course, many others involved in this process, but these are the authors of works to which Pound was drawn, men who play a part in Pound's mythopoeia. It should be noted that within the tradition referred to above, there were naturally differences in opinion, variations *upon a theme*. *For example*, Erigena sees the creation of things as a process of "emanation of essence from God in the form of light, whereas Grosseteste proposes the radiating movement of Light from God as the principle of creation".[26] What Pound selected was the essential idea, a body of imagery backed by a powerful conceptual structure.

When including Erigena in the *Cantos*, Pound tends to borrow directly from his work, allowing him to speak for himself, as it were. His entrance is often accompanied by a line from his *De Divisione Naturae*: "Omnia quae sunt lumina sunt" ("Everything that exists is light").[27] This is an example of one of the ways in which Pound brings the procession of voices from the past, some from the very distant past, closer to the reader in the twentieth century. On a less obvious level, this method reveals something important about Pound: that he himself felt very close to these "voices". It could be argued that the sincerity of this conviction validates his use of esoteric, sometimes obscure sources in his poetry, a factor which some critics have claimed makes his work totally inaccessible. The issue of Pound's so-called "historical sense" has been touched on already in the Preface, and it seems pertinent at this stage to draw attention to the way in which Pound promulgates his sense of a ubiquitous light or wisdom in the *Cantos* by drawing in a most direct way upon history. Pound held a strong belief that much could be learnt from the lessons of history if one could get to the bottom of what actually happened, as distinct from an acceptance of mere surface facts. He felt the modern disbelief in and disjunction from human history to be the fault of some kind of conspiracy amongst historians and scholars, and he wanted to set the record straight by means of poetry:

> Given a free hand with the Saints and Fathers one could construct a decent philosophy, not merely a philosophism. This much I believe. Given Erigena, given St Ambrose and St Antonino, plus

time, patience and genius you cd. erect inside the fabric something modern man cd. believe.[29]

This statement certainly reflects a desire on the part of Pound for historical truth. While being careful not to overstate the case, it could be said that foremost of the attractions of Neoplatonic thought for Pound is the inherent search for truth and the emphasis upon the value of and need for enlightenment. Bearing in mind that Pound loathed the dualistic potential of Platonic philosophy, it seems nevertheless in keeping with his nature that he would have been drawn to an emanative type of Neoplatonism.

It is because the impulse towards truth expressed in the *Cantos* is central, yet so difficult to illustrate clearly, that one has to be on the lookout, as one is when reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for "signposts" which help us to understand the poet's patterns of thought. Richard of St Victor (d. 1173), like Scotus Erigena, is one such signpost in the *Cantos*. Akiko Miyake, in an unpublished PhD dissertation,[29] has given a wonderfully lucid account of the Ricardian tradition in relation to Pound's development as a poet. The main thrust of this critic's argument concerns the degree to which Pound's imagist doctrines are rooted in this tradition, and these ideas will be most useful when imagism is discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis. At this stage, however, of most value is Miyake's clarification of three areas which form the foundation of Richard's thought and which clearly influenced Pound's thinking: *ratio*, imagination and love. Evidence that Pound was attracted to Richard's work is to be found dotted about in his prose works. In *Spirit of Romance* we read:

The keenly intellectual mysticism of Richard of St. Victor fascinates me...[30]

Praise indeed, coming from someone who had little sympathy for men of the church as a rule. Perhaps Pound approached the twelfth-century ascetic with Dante's words in mind:

....of Richard who in contemplating was more than man.[31]

Certainly, it was Dante who made Pound aware of many of the historical figures who were to activate his thinking. He pays tribute to his mentor with the words, "Dante was my Baedeker in Provence".[32]

A discussion of the epistemology of the prior of the Abbey of St Victor in Paris in the context of this dissertation is vital, because he represents on the one hand a *perpetuation of the Neoplatonic tradition*, inherited from St Augustine, and, on the other hand, he provides a key for understanding the poetry written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[33] He therefore straddles religious boundaries and Pound finds in his work some of the connections that bridge pagan and Christian interpretations of the celestial and terrestrial realms, and that support his preoccupation with the sometimes ambiguous nature of the twelfth-century Provencal ethos.

Richard's thought has its roots in the Platonic search for truth, a source which he came to know through St Augustine. Augustine agreed with the Platonists on the question of the source of knowledge, that is, God, "the light of our understanding",[34] and that the means to attain this knowledge is reason or *ratio*. In other words, "Augustinian epistemology indicates reason, as the Word of God within, illuminating *the exterior objects which* the mind takes in with will".[35] However, Augustine also qualified this formula by insisting on the participation of faith which guides and corrects *ratio* in attaining a vision or knowledge of God. Faith in God is the same as love of God, and therefore, what is not loved cannot be known. *Richard's thinking follows St Augustine's* in that it reinforces the cooperation between man's *ratio* and his love of God.[36] What is uniquely Richard's in his epistemology is his development of the method of contemplation which, in his terms, is a "mode of knowing, a way of considering every kind of knowledge, from sense objects to the Being of God".[37] Contemplation, which brings into harmony man's reason, working with love of God, and the divine reason, gives birth to "the specific faculty of seeing the invisible".[38] This faculty is imagination.

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Pound speaks of Richard's *De Praeparatione Animi ad Contemplationem* (usually called *Benjamin Minor*), a work which deals with the preparation

of the soul for contemplation, in glowing terms. He calls it a "luminous treatise".[78] The attraction for Pound was *twofold. First of all, he was* stimulated by the imagery Richard used, and secondly by that which the language described: the invisible, the ineffable ideal. By means of Miyake's paraphrase of the *Four Degrees of Passionate Love* (*De IV Gradibus Violentae Caritates*, a short treatise on the method of contemplation and the mystical life written not long before he died), we are given an idea of the power and beauty of Richard's language:

> ... a soul in Richard's treatise first admits God, and with God it enters into itself for self-knowledge. *Darkness covers the throne* at once, and the soul agonizes in the effort to see through the cloud in the first stage. In the second stage of love, the eye of the soul opens to see 'what the eye has never seen and what the ear has never heard.' In the third degree, the soul, absorbed into light, is drawn straight through the depth of light towards God, forgetting all the exterior things till it loses consciousness, passing itself entirely to God. Having thus experienced death, the soul will return now in the fourth degree, entirely resurrected as a new man.[79]

In spite of the fact that Richard uses Biblical language, from which Pound was by inclination alienated, the mystic's words cut through to the heart of one of Pound's chief concerns: expr ssion of the ideal, of that which is invisible. He commented on a passage by Richard of St Victor on "the splendours of paradise":

> They are ineffable and innumerable and no man having beheld *them can fittingly narrate them or even remember* them exactly.[80]

Richard's images of light and of heaven accord with Pound's desire to create a poetic apprehension of the world of the spirit, of transformation and renewal, of paradise. Most often, it is the imagery of light that he uses to delineate his most magical and heightened passages in the *Cantos*, and this can be directly attributed to the influence of authors within the Neoplatonic tradition.

In the *Cantos*, Provence functions as a mythopoeic paradise, contrasted with the chaos of the contemporary world. The Provencal ethos *is aligned* with renewal of life and creativity, at the core of which is the complex human phenomenon of love. We have already noted that Richard of St Victor provides the key to understanding the twelfth-century poetry by showing that the vision of paradise can only be attained by love. Miyake points *out that across a broad spectrum of ascetics, courtly* love poets and romance writers, love was the focal issue.[42] Pound was aware that the nature of love within this idiom did not remain fixed, and that it tended to shift, according to its context. "Pound seems particularly attracted to the in-between realm where the sacred and profane loves esoterically intermingle",[43] an observation which bolsters his conviction that a pagan eroticism forms the cornerstone of the troubadours' impulse towards clarity of vision and wisdom.

Another powerful contributory figure in the development of Pound's theory of Medieval prefigurations o. the pagan cult of Amor in Provence is to be found in Remy de Gourmont. His work and, until his death in 1915, his encouragement, was a source of inspiration for the young Pound, living in London, but already looking to Paris as the cultural vortex of the Western world. By all accounts, Gourmont was an enigmatic *man, a ground-breaker,* although something of a recluse.[44] His heyday as the doyen of Symbolism in the 1890's had passed by the time he attracted the attention of Pound and his contemporaries, yet he still possessed a magnetism that earned him a place as Pound's mentor for some years, especially between 1912 and 1922. *Pound discovered Gourmont in* 1912, during Imagism's formative period. And to be sure, Gourmont was to have considerable influence on the young poet's development of the ideogrammic method, chiefly by means of his "dissociation of ideas" which was the "blasting apart received ideas, of disintegrating inert blocks of clichés....his investigations into the divorce between words and things (or as he put it, between ideas and images)".[45] Within the scope of this dissertation an analysis of Gourmont's instigations in the field of "the role of the unconscious in literary creation",[46] is impossible. What follows will focus instead on Gourmont's input in terms of Pound and Provence. His role in this matter shifts from that of one who endorses

and confirms convictions to that of an instigator, all the while an invaluable help to Pound in his approach to the troubadours.

One could say, by way of an introduction to this partnership of ideas, that Pound and Gourmont shared a range of interests, which included the troubadours, Cavalcanti and Dante. Pound's thoughts in these areas had already begun to take shape when he read *Gourmont's Le Latin mystique: Les Poetes de l'antiphonaire et la symbolique au moyen age* (1889) and he adduced this work to "demonstrate the various medieval Christian prefigurations of the pagan, neo-Platonic cult of Amor in Provence"[47] in his essay "Psychology and Troubadours", first delivered as a lecture in 1912. Gourmont's work on the Latin liturgists and poets of the Middle Ages was, in Pound's words, the rediscovery of "a great amount of forgotten beauty, the beauty of a period slighted by philological scholars".[48] In doing so, he "confirmed Pound's intuition that his early work on the music of Provencal poetry was not merely antiquarianism, but might potentially serve as the basis of a modernist poetics".[49] Pound wrote many glowing reports about Gourmont's contribution to modern culture, but the credit for revealing forgotten beauty must be read as one of the most significant; beauty counts for a great deal in Pound's world. It is a civilizing agent. He considered that, *collectively speaking, Gourmont's works* constituted "a portrait of the civilized mind".[50] Pound also rated the French philosopher as one of the rare "open writers",[51] an opinion which highlights what is perhaps their greatest affinity. It can be illustrated by juxtaposing two quotations concerning their respective attitudes to *history*:

> ...no works are definitive....every century must reshape them in order to be able to read them.[52]
>
> All ages are contemporaneous.[53]

As Richard Sieburth points out, the first passage cited above demonstrates Gourmont's belief in an "active concept of tradition", not a process of mere imitation, not a disowning of the past, but a reinvention of the past "in light of the present". He explains that "History, for the idealist Gourmont, was an a priori construction like any other". He

further concludes that the "dynamic interplay of present and past tended ... to collapse the distinctions between the two".[54] This mirrors Pound's belief in the contemporaneity of past and present, a "historical sense" which is fleshed out in his vision of repetitive patterns and cycles, expressed by his use of "repeats in history" and "subject rhymes" in his poetry.

It is this shared approach to past human experience, perhaps best described as creative insight, which unites both men in an effort to link the troubadour and the pagan worlds. To this end, Pound penetrated the works of men such as *Erigena, Grosseteste and Richard of St Victor;* Gourmont singled out a man such as the eleventh-century liturgist Goddeschalk. Gourmont, in *Le Latin mystique*, describes the monk as a "man of imagination, an inveterate visionary who recounts....the divine dreams that have visited his meditations....".[55] One is immediately reminded of Richard, and of his emphasis on the imaginative power of the mind, on the value of contemplation, and on the appropriation of the invisible. Pound, stimulated by Gourmont, came to admire one vision of Goddeschalk's in particular. This ecstatic, erotic vision is addressed to Christ and sensually evokes his love for Mary Magdalen.[56] Pound translated it from the Latin in his essay "Psychology and Troubadours". This is how it begins:

> The Pharisee murmurs when the woman weeps, conscious of guilt.
>
> Sinner, he despises a fellow-in-sin. Thou, unacquainted with sin, hast regard for the penitent, cleansest the soiled one, loved her to make her most fair.[57]

In this passage, Pound perceived what he called "a new refinement, an enrichment....of paganism".[58] That is to say:

> ...Christ's love for Mary thus not only proved the survival of (Ovidian) pagan tradition (the god as fertility symbol, descending to earth in metamorphosis to seek union with mortals) but also

provided a significant prefiguration of the 'mediumistic function or cult of Amor' among the troubadours.[59]

Sieburth points out that for Gourmont and Pound the last phrase of Goddeschalk's vision, quoted in translation above, is the very kernel of the sequence - "Amas ut pulchram facias" - and he further submits that *this phrase would become "a permanent* touchstone for Pound".[60]

There is certainly no question that the concept of love as an ennobling force lies at the centre of what Pound called "chivalric contemplation", a combination of the courtly topos and *mysticism (in particular the mysticism* of Richard , the importance of whose concept of "contemplation" for Pound has been demonstrated). The troubadours' art, Pound suggests, was an eloquent expression of the magnitude of love as desire and emotion, energies which must needs be shaped and harnessed by means of ritual, in the pursuit of wisdom. This is only to scratch the surface of the troubadour love ethic, but it suffices at this point to demonstrate the affinities that exist between Gourmont and Pound. For example, it has been said that "No theory of Gourmont influenced modern art more than this belief in the preeminence....of sensibility over intellect,"[61] a statement which instantly communicates an alliance between Pound and Gourmont. Pound repeatedly declares himself to be on the side of feeling, of those dominated by emotion. Of Gourmont's poetry he says:

> He has worn off the trivialities of the day, he has conquered the *fret of contemporaneousness...and we come on the feeling,* the poignancy, as directly as we do in the old poet's...[62]

Though the poets he refers to here are Greek, he reserves the same critique for the Provencal poets, who are party to what he *calls* an "aristocracy of emotion".[63] Pound declares of Gourmont's fiction in general that "Sex, in so far as it is not a purely physiological reproductive mechanism, lies in the domain of aesthetics".[64] This was in itself a very useful reinforcement of Pound's own ideas, but he found in *Lettres a l'Amazone* a central message that had far-reaching implications for his medieval paideuma. This message was as follows:

... the conception of love, passion, emotion as an intellectual instigation...[55]

That Amor is the highest form of intellect was clearly a belief shared by *Pound and Gourmont*.

Gourmont's *Physique de l'amor: Essai sur l'instinct sexuel* (1903), ostensibly a textbook of biology, but also a critique of various contemporary sexual taboos, was translated by Pound in 1922 as "The Natural Philosophy of Love". The importance of this work for Pound lay in the exposing of social, and in particular, religious hypocricies for precisely what they are. The young Pound had already observed that there existed a conflict between two basic kinds of religion: the repressive kind and the kind which asserts what he calls "the life-force".[56] It has been noted earlier in this discussion that he was drawn to a form of Neoplatonism which was based on the idea of divine immanence, and which expressed godliness and divinity in terms of apprehensible beauty and light. To return to his distinction between two types of worship, one can see that Neoplatonism falls into the category which endorses regeneration of the human psyche. Pound in fact asserts that this "life-force" had its roots in a pagan celebration of life. And paganism "not only did not disdain the erotic factor in its religious institutions but celebrated and exalted it, precisely because it encountered it in the marvellous vital principle infused by invisible Divinity into manifest nature".[57] This passage makes it clear that Pound's understanding of the sexual phenomenon was not only as part of the aesthetic domain, but also as

...a source of wisdom and a source of understanding of the world.[58]

He senses within the troubadour work (especially that of Arnaut Daniel) an active pursuit of wisdom, an instinct which espoused what has been described as:

...a reaching towards the fulfillment of all the faculties, a creativity based on belief in the abundance of nature; versus, on the

other hand, a reaction from the lack of this faith, an instinct to grab and hoard, to avoid the light because it is too risky.[59]

At this point, it is possible to see that for Pound, the troubadour poetry demonstrated what Richard of St Victor's *Benjamin Minor* had done: that the pursuit of wisdom and enlightenment, "the fulfillment of all the faculties", is in fact an act of love. As Peter Makin so succinctly puts it:

> *In coitu inluminatio*; the rite was love-making and the result was illumination.[60]

This formula serves both to clarify the troubadour position objectively and *to focus attention on what is essential* to Pound's distillation of the troubadour credo. One could further reduce the formula thus: rite-Eros-illumination. The parts of this conceptual structure are balanced and interdependent. If one removes any one of the three concepts, the structure disintegrates. Without sexual love there is no need for ritual and therefore no illumination; without enlightenment, ritual and love have no purpose; without ritual, sex cannot lead the way to upliftment of the spirit. Ritual, or rite, is clearly fundamental to fulfillment of all the faculties in terms of Pound's understanding of troubadour ideology. He was fascinated by ritual and the weight which it imparts to concepts, words and images. This fascination is manifest in many ways, and ought to be seen as part of what has previously been termed, somewhat loosely, his "religiosity", a feeling for what is sacred, shielded from the common view: *that which is essentially invisible. One of the manifestations* of this interest in rite is Pound's belief in the power of detailed nomenclature, of what he calls "naming over" to create an apprehension of the invisible, or at least an atmosphere in which the ideal can be apprehended. His essay "Psychology and Troubadours" makes this belief quite clear. To return to Pound's comment, quoted in part on page 25, on a passage from Richard of St Victor on the splendours of paradise:

> They are ineffable and innumerable and no man having beheld them can fittingly narrate them or even remember them exactly. Nevertheless by naming over all the most beautiful things we know

we may draw back upon the mind some vestige of the heavenly splendor.[71]

Pound wrote this essay shortly after he first read Gourmont's *Litanies* and *Fleurs de jadis*.[72] It may be assumed, therefore, that Gourmont helped to *develop Pound's ideas about the power of incantation*. The appeal of these poems for Pound appears to have been their liturgical cadences, the incantatory rhythm and the fact that Gourmont had made use of the technique of "naming over" in order to invoke beauty. Referring to *Litanies de la Rose*, Pound clarifies their appeal:

... the sheer naming over of beauty ... the procession of all women that ever were has passed before you.[73]

Pound seems to be suggesting that in Gourmont's poem, all women become the one ideal woman, the goddess of beauty. In "Psychology and Troubadours", he develops the idea of conjuring a goddess:

I suggest that the troubadour ... progresses from correlating all these details for purpose of comparison, and lumps the matter. The Lady contains the catalogue, is more complete. She serves as a sort of *mantram*.[74]

Pound's use of the term *mantram* is interesting. The term originates in the most ancient of Hindu Scriptures, written in Sanskrit, the sacred Indian language. His use therefore demonstrates not only an eclectic cultural vision on the part of Pound, but also a remarkable insight into the troubadour art. He perceives that the Lady, the topos of the courtly troubadour poet, is the means by which that poet can focus not only on physical, but also on spiritual desires and aspirations. The Lady becomes representative of the divine order, the means by which the poet can perceive a higher realm, which is pervaded by that heterodox neo-pagan religiosity to which Pound was drawn.

It is not difficult, in the very brief and possibly simplistic account given in the paragraph above, to detect a disjunction between worship of a god and worship of a human being. It would most certainly seem

that the troubadour art is an area in which "the sacred and profane loves esoterically intermingle".[75] So dangerously close was the association between divine love and Eros in their poems, that troubadour poets found it necessary to employ what is known as "trobar clus" or the hidden style, to shield themselves from censure. This hermetic style involved the use of ambiguous words, esoteric images and incantatory rhythms. Pound was fascinated by the idea of the poem as an incantation, a ritual, a rhythmic arrangement of words and images that together have the power to invoke. In 1912 he wrote a poem, which was only published in 1920, called "The Alchemist, Chant for the Transmutation of Metals". It bears "the unmistakable imprint of Gourmont's use of rhythm units both in his *Litonies* and *Fleurs de Jadis*".[76] By combining Gourmont's "quantitative rhythm"[77] with repetitive use of imperatives, a catalogue of metals and plants and of the names of women, Pound probably hoped that he would achieve something like an incantation, a formula. The effect of the chanting of over forty women's names certainly is one of fusion into a single image of woman. In addition, Pound repeatedly gathers them all under the name "Midonz", a Provencal name which "troubadours often used for their ladies, whose associations are with words meaning 'my lord'".[78] Given this ambiguity, one's impression of the poem shifts slightly to accomodate a notion of not simply a chant, but a prayer. "*The Alchemist*" therefore represents a very early attempt by Pound to bring to life the troubadour art, assisted by his mentor Remy de Gourmont. The following chapter will explore in much greater detail the influence of the Provencal ethos upon the development of Pound's early work. For the moment, one may conclude that those elements which Pound selected from troubadour poetry and infused into his own are of no little importance in understanding Pound's work as a whole. It is extremely difficult to generalise about Pound's *Weltanschauung*, but careful observation of his handling of Provencal material and the web of interrelated ideas associated with Provence allows one a glimpse of his mythical vision as it is expressed in the *Cantos*. One can elucidate only certain of his beliefs, one of which is a firm conviction that certain troubadour poems contain "the seed of the visionary interpretation of the universe....".[79]

In the chapter which follows, the focus will be on Pound's handling of Provencal material in his early poetry, before he began to write the *Cantos themselves*. *Chapter 3 will show in detail* how this material was given further resonance in the early *Cantos* through being linked with his understanding of the Eleusinian mysteries, which he in turn linked with the aspect of Neoplatonism that is explored in this chapter. It is by detecting these links and tracing the conceptual development which allows them to work as a structure of ideas underlying certain of Pound's *Cantos*, that one may grasp one important facet of Pound's vision of the ultimate, ideal dimension of existence, a vision which I have earlier described as being essentially mythical in nature, while taking care to emphasise its indebtedness to historical contingency and esoteric learning.

5.0 FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 1

1. Notably, Peter Makin, *Provence and Pound* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978.) pp.253-54.

2. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.242.

3. Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965* (ed) William Cookson (London: Faber & Faber, 1973.) p.58.

4. Harold Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975.) p.20.

5. Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought* (Penguin, 1958.) p.33.

6. A H Armstrong (ed) *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1967.) p.166.

7. Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism*, p.19.

8. Leff, *Medieval Thought*, p.127.

9. Ibid. pp.32-33.

10. Ibid. p.63.

11. William Tay, "Between Kung and Eleusis: *Li Chi*, the Eleusinian Rites, Erigena and Ezra Pound", *Paideuma*, Volume 4, 1975, p.46.

12. Carroll F Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 2 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984.) p.459. According to Terrell, it was not Erigena, but Amaury de Bene who was dug up.

13. Ezra Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1952.) p.263.

14. Ibid. p.145.

15. Tay, "Between Kung and Eleusis", p.54.

16. Ibid. p.50.

17. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.202.

18. Johannes Scotus Erigena, *De Divisione Naturae* (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*). Pound set great store on this dictum, quoting it in several places in the *Cantos*. In *Guide to Kulchur* (p.164) he says "Civilized Christianity has never stood higher than in Erigena's 'Authority comes from right reason'" ("*Auctoritas ex vera ratione processit, ratio vero nequaquam ex auctoritate*").

19. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 1, p.143.

20. James J Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound* (Orono: University of Maine, 1982.) p.34.

21. Leff, *Medieval Thought*, p.68.

22. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.70.

23. Sharon Mayer Libera, "Casting His Gods Back to the NOUS: Two Neoplatonists and the Cantos of Ezra Pound", *Paideuma*, Volume 2, 1973, p.362.

24. Ibid. p.368.

25. Ibid. p.355.

26. Tay, "Between Kung and Eleusis", p.48.

27. See Canto 74/429 and Canto 83/528.

28. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p.76.

29. Akiko Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis: Ezra Pound's Assimilation of Chinese Culture in Writing the Cantos I-LXXI* (Duke University, 1970.) pp.71-85.

30. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.22.

31. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise X, ll 130-32, translated by Geoffrey L Bickersteth (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981.).

32. Pound, *Selected Prose*, pp.292-93.

33. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, pp.76-77.

34. *De Trinitae*, XII, 22, cited by Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.72.

35. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.72.

36. Ibid. p.75.

37. F C Happold, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology* (Penguin, 1977.) p.241.

38. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.75.

39. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.148.

40. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, pp.74-75.

41. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.96.

42. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.77.

43. Ibid. p.77.

44. Gourmont suffered from a facially disfiguring disease.

45. Richard Sieburth, *Instigations: Ezra Pound and Remy de Gourmont* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1978.) p.18.

46. Ibid. p.4.

47. Ibid. p.12.

48. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.384. Later he reaffirmed that Gourmont "never abandoned beauty" (*Selected Prose*, p.387).

49. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.37.

50. Pound, *Literary Essays*, p.344.

51. From letters to Cummings, Houghton Library, quoted by R Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.27.

52. Remy de Gourmont, *Promenades philosophiques*, 2nd series (Paris: Mercure de France, 1908.) p.42.

53. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.6.

54. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.55.

55. Remy de Gourmont, *Le Latin Mystique: Les Poete de L'antiphonaire et la symbolique au moyen age* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1892.) p.121.

56. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.39.

57. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.98. Sieburth points out that Pound "probably used Gourmont's French version as a crib" (*Instigations*, p.39).

58. Ibid. p.98.

59. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.42.

60. Ibid. p.39.

61. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.144.

62. Pound, *Selected Prose*, pp.389-90.

63. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.90.

64. Pound, *Literary Essays*, p.341.

65. Ibid. p.343.

66. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.95.

67. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.55.

68. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.245.

69. Peter Makin, "Pound's Provence and the Medieval Paideuma: An Essay in Aesthetics", *The London Years 1908-1920* (ed) Philip Grover, (New York: AMS Press, 1978.), p.45.

70. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.245.

71. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.96.

72. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.36.

73. Quoted by Sieburth in *Instigations*, p.35, from *The Approach to Paris II*, p.578.

74. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.97.

75. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.77.

76. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.33.

77. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.149.

78. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.170.

79. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.79.

6.0 CHAPTER 2

Pound's Early Poems and the Troubadours

Most literary critics would probably agree that a close reading of any given poet's juvenilia would in some measure assist the understanding of his subsequent work. The poetry of Ezra Pound is no exception to this rule, and the time spent reviewing his early poems is very rewarding in terms of an *elucidation of the Cantos, mainly because Pound's early* scholarly training in Romance languages had endowed him with a certain amount of historical knowledge which ignited his interest in twelfth-century Provence and the troubadour poets at a very early stage of his career. He began studying Provencal under William Shepard, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Hamilton College,[1] in 1904. He remained fascinated by Provencal poetry, and his affinity with the troubadour "feeling", and associated themes of light and fertility, can be seen to play an important part in the shaping of his poetic vision, as a recurrent motif which illuminates not only the individual canto, but the larger context of the *Cantos*, too.

Pound's early poems, especially those discussed in this chapter, are valuable because they reveal his priorities, the things which mattered to him during the period 1908-1915. This was a time in which Pound broke new ground in methods of poetic expression: he began working within traditional modes, found them inadequate, and started to exper*iment, redefining poetic tradition and opening up new possibilities.* That Pound, the innovator and the Modernist, was both to succeed and to fail in his attempts to break out of the Nineties mould, is to be expected. Many of his early poems do fail to achieve what he set out to do, but this in no way detracts from Pound's innovation and his need to find his own form of self-expression.

Many of Pound's early poems make use of Provencal thematic material, and this is indicative of two things: he was so inspired by the troubadour themes that he both translated the poems into modern English

and borrowed characters and situations for his own work, and that he saw in the twelfth-century poetry the means with which to mould new forms of expression in the twentieth century. Whichever way one looks at Pound's early career, the Provencal matter is inextricably linked with his beginnings as a poet, and with his subsequent achievements.

Another point that helps to establish the value of Provence in terms of Pound's early work is the fact that "from the outset of his poetic career, he was preparing himself for the execution of his magnum opus".[2] This was, of course, the *Cantos*, which he began to compose in 1915.[3] A reference to the idea of a long poem has been deduced from his poem of 1908 called "Scriptor Ignotus" from the collection *A Lume Spento* in which Pound speaks of "that great forty-year epic/...Yet unwrit".[4] From this bibliographical account, one can see that Pound's interest in Provence, and the idea of the *Cantos*, are linked in some way. The notion that the Provencal aesthetic lies at the very genesis of the *Cantos* draws attention to an interesting phenomenon in Pound's development as a poet: his interest in the Provencal "experience", and his efforts to recreate its essence, acted as a catalyst, spurring him on to search for a form and a language which would express his feelings more accurately.

Pound's poem called "Histrion", from the collection published in 1908 under the title *A Quinzaine for this Yule* (but excluded from *Personae* of 1926), provides a very good starting point from which to examine this phenomenon. It highlights what is surely the key issue in this discussion of his early work: his perception of identity. Pound's understanding of a poet's identity lies at the heart of what he was trying to achieve as a poet. What attracted him to troubadour poetry in the first place was a quality which demonstrated to him that these poets "lived" their poetry, that their poems were a sincere expression of their emotions and ideas, and that they succeeded in finding a form with which to convey this emotion in the most effective way. This is what he meant when he resolved to know the "dynamic content" from the "shell", and to discern that part of poetry that was "indestructible and could not be lost in translation".[5] One could rephrase this notion by discriminating between poetry that is real and living and poetry that lacks substance and therefore does not endure, is in fact dead. Pound empathized (or

"Identified") with the troubadours, to the extent that he frequently assumes the persona of one such poet either in the form of an interpretative *translation* or by means of an imaginary, invented soliloquy. In this way, many of Pound's early poems give voice to poets who have long been dead, but who in his opinion, still "live", and, what is more, still have something to offer. Blackmur puts it this way :

> Mr Pound's work has been to make *personae*, to become himself, as a poet, in this special sense a person through which what has most interested him in life and letters might be given voice.[6]

It is clear that when reading Pound's poetry, one will encounter many voices, many masks of the self, each of whom will tell one something else about the person behind the masks. This concept is important, because it applies to almost all of Pound's work, and especially to that "articulate procession of selves ...",[7] the *Cantos*. The ubiquitous presence of masks and voices is something more than Pound searching for his own voice through the voices of others, however. It should be viewed in a wider context, in which Pound searches for identity in a world which is characterized by flux, a world in which the individual "like his age, has become fragmented, and thus Pound finds it difficult to select a single *persona* ...",[8] which can express only one point of view.

"Histrion" introduces the concept of masks of the self within a dramatic monologue:

> Thus am I Dante for a space and am
> One François Villon, ballad-lord and thief
> Or am such holy ones I may not write,
> Lest blasphemy be writ against my name;
> This for an instant and the flame is gone.
> (II 8-10)[9]

This process of projection of the self onto an object, of becoming one with an object, is extremely important in terms of Pound's perception of poetic expression. As Miyake says, "He must enter the object, whether the object be an Italian troubadour ... or an inanimate being ...",[10] for

Pound "cannot attain his being as a poet without entering into his object ...".[11] His poem, "The Tree", serves to establish this idea firmly:

> I stood still and was a tree amid the wood,
> Knowing the truth of things unseen before;[12]

Another of his early poems, *"Provincia Deserta"* expresses this vital connection between the poet and the object:

> I have walked over these roads;
> I have thought of them living.[13]

When Miyake speaks of Pound attaining his being as a poet, she refers to poetic integrity or sincerity, and the knowledge of the self, or "the truth about the poet's own self", as she puts it.[14] This critic sees Pound's search for the self as part of the formation of the Imagist dicta, which, she argues, was heavily influenced by the Ricardian tradition. According to this argument, Richard of St Victor's notion of contemplation (a mode of thought discussed in Chapter 1), the object of which is knowledge of the self, has been understood and interpreted by Pound as follows: the mind is "unified with the object".[15] Clearly, Pound is deeply concerned with the necessity of the poet finding what he calls *"La virtù* ... the potency, the efficient property of a substance or person".[16] Brooker clarifies this idea by explaining that it was this quality of "virtue" that Pound "attempted to carry over from past literatures and to discover in *himself* ... *the poets Pound chose to speak through were*, in his eyes, examples of established *virtù*".[17] It follows, therefore, that in speaking through other poets, Pound was simultaneously searching for himself and searching for that which is real, as these quotations suggest:

> In the 'search for oneself', in the search for 'sincere self-expression', one gropes, one finds some seeming verity.[18]

> I began this search for the real in a book called *Personae*, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem.[19]

While in "Histrion" we do not hear any other voice but Pound's, the "I" of the poem, we are made acutely aware of the possibilities of *projecting* onto the mind some other self, or "form":

> 'Tis as in midmost us there glows a sphere
> Translucent, molten gold, that is the "I"
> *And into this some form projects itself:*
> (II 11-13)

This strangely liquid and illuminative imagery creates an atmosphere which is distinctly dream-like in spite of the fact that Pound is exploring the possibility of apprehending a "reality". The resulting effect is in itself interesting, and it is worth tracing the pattern of thought which leads up to it. To begin with, the self relinquishes its form, as

> . . .the souls of all men great
> At times pass through us,
> And we are melted into them, and are not
> Save reflaxions of their souls.
> (II 2-5)

In this way, the form of the object is projected onto the self, and

> Thus I am Dante for a space and am
> One François Villon, ballad-lord and thief
> *(II 6-7)*

The mask falls away,

> This for an instant and the flame is gone.
> (I 10)

The end result of this rather esoteric process is the enduring of great men beyond their lifetimes:

> And these, the Masters of the Soul, live on.
> (I 18)

Pound chooses to express the source of knowledge, truth or reality by means of Neoplatonic light imagery, and in doing so, he echoes part of Richard of St Victor's treatise on the *Four Degrees of Passionate Love*. In the third degree of love, "the soul, absorbed into light, is drawn straight through the depth of light towards God, forgetting all the exterior things till it loses consciousness, passing itself entirely to God".[20] The parallel between Pound and Richard helps to demonstrate the complexity of the concept of a "persona" in Pound's work. He believes that the ultimate truth or reality (or the apprehension of the invisible, to put it another way), is accessible only to those who can "cease from all being for the time" (I 17), who are able to become one *with the* object and can therefore come into being or true knowledge of the self. A poet who can achieve this is one of substance, one who will endure through time. In Pound's words:

> Each age has its own abounding gifts yet only some ages transmute them into matter of duration.[21]

Stuart Y McDougal has stated that "Pound's ... modernization ... came through an *immersion in medievalism; he found the modern thought* through the remote and distant".[22] Certainly, Pound's approach to the past, and his awareness of patterns of thought and energy which he perceives as persisting through time, are central to his poetic expression. If "Histrion" suggests, in a rather hypothetical way, that the mask figure facilitates the flow of influence from one poet to another, then "Na Audiart" and "Piere Vidal Old" (from *Personae*) show Pound actually donning the mask of a troubadour. The result is a much more direct and vivid recreation of character, situation and feeling. Where Pound *has assumed the voice of another,* has in fact borrowed another's poem, the resulting work should be viewed not merely as a translation or imitation of the original, but as an attempt "to penetrate an alien sensibility and make it his own".[23] For in doing so, Pound hoped, above all, to revivify the feeling which he sensed within the troubadour work. The fact that he considered poetic emotion to be an index of poetic sincerity or integrity has already been mentioned; nonetheless, it is worthwhile underscoring Pound's admiration for those who create "real" poetry:

> Dante's vision is real, because he saw it. Villon's verse is real, because he lived it; as Bertran de Born, as Arnaut Marvoil, as that mad poseur Vidal, he lived it.[24]

Of course, Pound would have added another name to this list: the name of Arnaut Daniel, whose verses Pound describes as one of the "two *perfect gifts*" *of the twelfth century left to us.*[25] Pound translated many of the eighteen extant poems of Daniel, learning much about form, rhythm and musicality of verse from this exercise. He tried to capture the essentially joyful, playful approach to love in this Provencal poetry, all the while staying as close as possible to the *finely-wrought, sculpted* character of the work. Over and over again, in the chapter entitled "*Il Miglior Fabbro*" in *The Spirit of Romance* ("The Better Craftsman", Dante's description of Daniel from Canto 26 of "Purgatory", *The Divine Comedy*), Pound refers to the complexity and difficulty of Daniel's forms, suggesting that only such a master of the art of love-poetry could capture the aura of delicacy and "the absolute sense of beauty"[26] that surrounds such an emotion.

The conviction that troubadour poetry is real because the poets lived it, is part of Pound's fundamental belief that "emotion cannot be faked".[27] So whether the emotion in question is love of woman or love of war (in Bertran de Born's case, both), emotion was the quintessential element of the troubadour work in Pound's view. His problem, a dilemma which he resolved to a certain extent in his Imagist dicta, but only *haltingly in his own early verse* on Provencal themes, was the finding of a "suitable form and language to convey the experience of the Provencal".[28]

Donald Davie provides a perspective and *pinpoints the problem* by placing Pound within his age. His early poems use "romance language in the sense that it is the language of historical romances written in late-Victorian and Edwardian England; it is not a medium in which anything can be communicated forcefully, or crisply".[29] Makin supports this view by arguing that Ezra Pound, as a late Romantic, working within the mould of "standard post-Romantic search for heightened emotions",[30] was, to varying degrees, a failure as a poet. "Na Audiart" of 1908 is

a very good example of the disjunction between Pound's diction and the sensuality which he was trying to bring across. This version of Bertran's poem is about desire for a beautiful woman, about sex, in other words. Yet, as Makin points out, the poem "is as sexual as may be, but it is an early Yeatsian sex-in-the-head....Sex has been used to produce....the debased, Romantic idea of 'ecstasy' - meaning roughly *any heightened emotional* state that we can get away with calling 'spiritual'".[11] Certainly, the following lines seem to fall short of emotional intensity:

> Where thy bodice laces start
> As ivy fingers clutching through
> its crevices,....
> Having praised thy girdle's scope
> How the stays ply back from it; (II 3-5 and 14-15)

The chapter that follows will show how Pound's focus on the positive effects of human love, perceived in troubadour poetry, Eleusinian ritual and Neoplatonic doctrine, is developed from a vague notion in early work into a full-blown myth in the *Cantos*. It will be shown how Pound succeeds in his later work where he failed in earlier attempts to "bring across" feeling.

Aware, perhaps, of the failure of "Na Audiart", Pound revised and reconstructed this poem in 1915, and called the result "Near Perigord". *This poem also represents an attempt to revitalize a past culture.* This time, however, Pound makes use of a discursive approach. Each of the three divisions of the poem constitutes a different treatment of the past. He examines the facts of Bertran de Born's life in the first part, posing a series of *questions about the past. These questions challenge both fact* and fiction, and they serve to bring the twelfth-century troubadour's life into sharper focus. It is as if, by presenting a variety of possible explanations for Bertran's action, Pound hopes to reveal a hard, psychological reality which will explain "the whole man" and which will "ravel out the story", in the words of the poem. This psychological analysis is part of an overall fragmentation, a division of reality into multifarious levels. In part two of the poem, for example, Pound resorts to sug-

gesting a "fictitious interpretation of the irreconcilable historical evidences",[32] by means of juxtaposing two scenes which contradict each other. Makin considers that Pound had two aims in writing "Near Perigord": one was to revitalize history by dramatic presentation of character and event, and the other was to create a poem which is mythopoeic, "since it sets out to go beyond the known facts; but it tramples all over these facts in the process".[33] In the light of this critic's opinion, "Near Perigord" is undeniably important in terms of Pound's later work in which much of his energy was directed towards the rendering of exact meaning, and in the pointing out of a pattern or a governing *process in the Universe, what he called "a sort of permanent* basis in humanity".[34]

A comparison of "Na Audiart" and the later "Near Perigord" is useful because it shows that while Pound may have reached some conclusions about modes of expression, his experiments with Provencal material were still not wholly successful. Makin considers that *"Near Perigord" fails, to a considerable extent,* because "you cannot create strong emotion with mere ideas",[35] which is to say that Pound had not yet resolved the disjunction between the twelfth-century experience as he perceived it, and the transposition of it into his poetry. His donning of masks "as a means of avoiding the self-conscious, self-pitying tone of much of Victorian poetry",[36] his choice of Bertran de Born as a paradigmatic figure, an example of an attitude to life which he greatly admired - none of this had yet succeeded in fusing successfully the form with the content in his work. A poem which approximates more closely his interpretation of this historical figure is "Sestina: Altaforte", a free version of Bertran's original in the form of a soliloquy spoken through the mask of the troubadour. It is a celebration of masculine energy, vigour, war, dynamic confidence and, above all, emotion. The combination of sounds, which are grouped into six stanzas of six lines each, in which line endings are the same but are in a different order, is extremely powerful. This form was invented by the troubadour Arnaut Daniel, and it allows for the recurrence of six line endings which are, *collectively, highly effective:* "music", "clash", "opposing", "peace", "rejoicing", and "crimson".

Pound has borrowed a form which gives the language emotive power and in doing so, he tries to reflect that which he felt to be at the heart of the Provencal ethos:

> The cult of Provence had been a cult of the emotions; and with it had been some, hardly conscious, study of emotional psychology.[37]

This firm conviction that emotion, like truth, will tell, that it "cannot be faked"[38] and that it can, therefore, be regarded as a measure of literary sincerity, brought Pound a long way towards the formulation of the Imagist dicta of 1913.

Pound's problem was how to present emotion in the most intense form possible. Images are the poet's tools, his means of expression, and Pound declared (in 1914) that "the author must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it....".[39] In the same article, he defines the image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time",[40] and in 1915 he wrote that "emotion is an organiser of forms" and that "emotional force gives the image".[41] One can at this stage conclude that:

> For Pound, then, the art-work is a formal structure whose components nevertheless are essentially psychological constituents: energy, emotion, idea.[42]

In *The Spirit of Romance* , Pound reveals a fascination with the Tuscan poets, in whose work he saw the transformation of sensual experience into intellectual perception, by means of what he calls "objective imagination".[43] So, whereas the troubadours' was a cult of the emotions, the Tuscans' was "a cult of the harmonies of the mind". According to Pound:

> The best poetry of this time appeals by its truth, by its subtlety, and by its *refined exactness*.[44] (my italics)

The words in italics are crucial, because they are synonymous with the key word in Pound's theory about technique: precision. This is a word which has complex ramifications, both in Pound's technical vocabulary and in his conceptual framework, and these will be discussed in detail in later chapters. For the moment, the word "precision" allows us to *focus our attention* on the three primary dicta for Imagism, issued by Pound in a publication of the journal *Poetry* in 1913:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' ...
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. ... to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome.[45]

What emerges most clearly from this programme is the need "to reproduce exactly the thing which has been clearly seen"[46] and the emphasis on a single concentrated image, which as has already been noted is described by Pound as "an intellectual and emotional complex". Pound's stipulation that the image must be honed, reduced to an explicit rendering of an idea or an emotion is complemented by his stipulation that the rhythm or arrangement of sounds must "bear the trace of emotion which the poem ... is intended to communicate".[47] Ultimately, then, Pound believes that good poetry depends upon the accurate rendering of emotion, which is why Makin considers that Pound's main contribution to the twentieth century "renaissance" in poetic expression is in creating characters and situations that are "more than just ideas". Makin, speaking of the *Cantos* in particular, wholly endorses their value as poetry, on the grounds that they reflect "communicated insights into human states of being".[48]

A natural consequence of his growth as a creative artist is Pound's diminishing reliance on a speaking mask, and his move away from the strict limitations of the highly compressed style of Imagism.[49] Yet, despite the fact that his presentation of Provencal matter may differ in the *Cantos* from the earlier poems, the impulse underlying his treatment of the past seems to remain constant. It is an impulse to define the real, true experience, to recognize the permanent value and to identify the recurring pattern which provides an order in an otherwise fragmented

world. Pound's commitment to history, which was governed by the belief that to understand the past and to learn from it was the only way to deal with the dislocation of the present, led him in writing the *Cantos* beyond history into a non-literal or mythical interpretation of certain historical elements. In the chapter that follows, attention will be turned towards an examination of the links which existed in Pound's mind between the ancient *Mysteries of Eleusis, the twelfth-century troubadour poetic,* and the High Middle Ages. These links enabled Pound to demonstrate a flow of energy through time, and it is this tendency to base his argument on historical data, while at the same time making claims which are historically and scientifically not verifiable, that characterises Pound's understanding.

7.0 FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

1. Noel Stock, *Life of Ezra Pound* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.) p.16.

2. John L Foster, "Pound's Revision of Cantos I-III", *Modern Philology* Volume 63, 1965-66 (University of Chicago Press), p.236.

3. Myles Slatin, "A History of Pound's Cantos I-XVI, 1915-1925", *American Literature* Volume 35, 1963-64, p.183.

4. Line 7 of "Scriptor Ignotus". The deduction is made by Myles Slatin in his article "A History of Pound's Cantos *I-XVI*, 1915-1925", p.183.

5. Stock, *Life of Ezra Pound*, p.12.

6. R P Blackmur in *Ezra Pound, A Critical Anthology* (ed) J P Sullivan (Penguin, 1970.) p.145.

7. Kuberski, "Ego Scriptor: Pound's Odyssean Writing", p.36.

8. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, p.149.

9. From *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound* (ed) Michael J King (London: Faber & Faber, 1976.), p.71.

10 Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.88.

11. Ibid. p.89.

12. From *Personae* in *Ezra Pound - Selected Poems 1908 - 1959* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975.) p.20. ll 1-2.

13. From a 1915 edition of *Poetry* (Chicago.).

14. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.89.

15. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p.77.

16. Quoted by Peter Brooker, *A Students' Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979.) p.31.

17. Ibid. p.31.

18. Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (Hessle, Yorks.: Marvell Press, (1916) 1960.) p.85.

19. Ibid. p.83.

20. See note 38, Chapter 1. The parallel demonstrated between Pound's "Histrion" and Richard's *Four Degrees of Passionate Love* lends noteworthy weight to Miyake's arugment concerning the influence of Ricardian tradition on Pound's Imagist doctrines.

21. "How to Read", in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (ed) T S Eliot, p.11.

22. Stuart Y McDougal in *Pound Among the Poets* (ed) G Bornstein (Chicago and London, 1985.) p.75.

23. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, p.141.

24. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.178.

25. Ibid. p.22.

26. Ibid. p.34.

27. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.85.

28. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, p.5.

29. Donald Davie, *Pound* (Fontana, 1975.) p.21.

30. Makin, *Provence ... Pound*, p.18.

31. Ibid. p.18.

32. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.119.

33. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.27.

34. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.92.

35. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.22.

36. James J Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound - The Epic of Judgement* (Orono, Maine: University of Maine Press, 1974.) p.34.

37. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.116.

38. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.65.

39. From the essay "Vorticism" in *Fortnightly Review* Volume 96, 1914, quoted in *Ezra Pound: A Critical Anthology* (ed) J P Sullivan, p.51.

40. Ibid. p.51.

41. From "As for Imagism", 1915, quoted in M H Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.) p.134.

42. Ibid. p.135.

43. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.116.

44. Ibid. p.116.

45. Quoted by Sullivan, in *Ezra Pound: A Critical Anthology*, p.48.

46. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.126.

47. Pound, "How to Read", in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (ed) T S Eliot, p.51.

48. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.28

49. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, p.158.

8.0 CHAPTER 3

The Troubadours and the Rites of Eleusis

Pound tends to "invent" history, manipulating the facts to meet his design, not because he wishes to depreciate the quiddity of the past, but for the opposite reason: he considers that a true understanding of history necessitates a proper degree of sensitivity in order that one may hear the voices from the past with the same clarity that they would have projected in their own time. So important is the past in Pound's view, that he saw his role in writing a poem "including" history as one of a transmitter, keeping open the channels of communication between the past and the present to facilitate an understanding of intrahistorical links. This chapter will examine the complexities arising from the links Pound perceives between two central phenomena in the early *Cantos*: the Eleusinian Mysteries and Provencal culture. These, according to Pound, are linked to each other in essence and feeling, notwithstanding the obvious chronological disjunction. This sounds vague, and indeed the notion is a vague one, but it is one in which Pound invested a great deal of energy, and many of his *Cantos* bear witness to the weight of his conviction. Apart from focusing on the early *Cantos* themselves, it will be necessary to examine and evaluate some of the most important issues that surround Pound's myth, questions that need to be answered, but which are inclined to lead one away from what really matters: the poetry. And although Pound seems to invite judgement and criticism from all sides in his attempts to justify his reasoning, it seems fair that, ultimately, the poetry be afforded the opportunity to vindicate the poet's beliefs. In the meantime, there is much about Pound's myth that needs clarification, and it is perhaps best to approach its starting point: the rites of Eleusis.

Any approach to Pound's Eleusinian schema is bound to be tentative, and justifiably so, for this is one of the most difficult of his notions to pin down and to verbalize objectively. And, in the view of Leon Surette, who has made a detailed study of this aspect of Pound's work, the strictly

objective approach is the only one likely to succeed in this slippery and elusive area of the poet's thought. He stresses the need for critical detachment from what he calls "Pound's set of religious and historical assertions" and warns against any form of collusion between critic and poet.[1] Surette's appeal to cool heads and commonsense is supported by his insistence that critical research in this area of Pound's interests is incomplete: "the extent to which Pound himself was committed to these beliefs - and, indeed, the precise nature of them - is still a matter open to question".[2] Of the many valuable ideas to emerge from this review of Surette's, perhaps the most useful is the clear distinction that he draws between *concrete fact and fantasy*. *Pound's notions about* the Eleusinian mysteries are fictional constructs. This is not to say that they should not be taken seriously, but rather that there is little to be gained by trying to prove that Pound's mythicising was anything other than imaginative manoeuvering. As Wilhelm has said, "Pound, as a poet, *is* free to tread where critics, who have to summon documented sources, tend to fall flat on their faces".[3] Pound at times seems to take this poetic licence to the limit, but the way in which he incorporates his understanding of the Eleusinian mysteries in the *Cantos* vindicates this excess, and thereby gives a further resonance to the Provencal and Neoplatonic material. Exactly how he does this will form a major part of this chapter, for without the poetry, his theories would never have aroused so much critical interest.

In order that we may clarify Pound's proposal that a link of some kind existed between the pagan rites of Eleusis and a twelfth-century religious cult, which was in turn associated with the troubadours, it will be helpful to begin by examining those prose works in which, with a characteristic combination of evasiveness and pedantry, he hints at these beliefs. In *The Spirit of Romance* of 1910 Pound postulates an association between troubadour poetry and pagan rites:

> ... Provencal song is never wholly disjunct from pagan rites of May Day.[4]

Makin describes the essay "Psychology and Troubadours", in which this assertion is presented, as a "synthesis".[5] Certainly, it gives voice to

Pound's argument that an aesthetic and imaginative continuity existed across the centuries, an argument that relies upon a holistic approach to related phenomena, for, as Pound says, "in none of these things singly is there any specific *proof* ".[6] However, as Surette points out, there is as yet no mention of Eleusis[7] as the source of the elements of Provencal society which Pound broadly describes as "pagan". It is not until Pound wrote the essay "Credo" in 1930 that the connection is made openly between Eleusis and Provence:

> I believe that a light from Eleusis persisted throughout the middle *ages and set beauty in the song of Provence and of Italy.*[8]

What this statement attempts to reveal is a link between the cult of amor in Provence and the ancient Athenian mysteries.[9] Pound had already alluded to a religious cult in Provence in "Psychology and *Troubadours*", a cult which was opposed to the orthodox Catholic Church, a "close ring"[10] which he concedes may have been associated with Manichaeism (a dualist body of religious belief). The devotees of this cult, the Albigensians, believed by the Church to be heretics, were eliminated by what is known as the Albigensian Crusade, during which the Catholics succeeded in destroying courtly Southern French society, and in almost extinguishing the troubadour poetic tradition. Surette comments that the "notion of some connection between the Provencal singers of *gay savoir* and the Albigenses is ... a persistent if minority view ... But the further identification of this late Medieval complex of associations with the Mysteries is, so far as I can determine, peculiar to Pound".[11] If Makin and Surette are correct in their assertions that the idea of a persistent underground cult was one which Pound had been turning over in his mind for some years (see footnote 7), then the tone of his statement in "Credo" *should come as no surprise to the reader.* By 1930, it could be said that an intuition had become a belief.

Pound's essay of 1931-32 called "Terra Italica" contains his most detailed exposition of this belief:

For all its inclusiveness the new religion was for fifteen and more centuries troubled by heresies, mostly uninteresting and perhaps all of them traceable to some cult it had not included.

One cult that it failed to include was that of Eleusis.

It may be arguable that Eleusinian elements persisted in the very early Church, and are responsible for some of the scandals. It is quite certain that the Church later emerges riddled with tendencies to fanaticism, with sadistic and masochistic tendencies that are in no way Eleusinian.

It is equally discernable upon study that some non-Christian and inextinguishable source of beauty persisted throughout the Middle Ages maintaining song in Provence ...

And this force was the strongest counter force to ... asceticism....A great deal of obscurity has been made to encircle it ... The usual accusation against the Albigeois is that they were Manichaeans. This I believe after a long search to be pure bunkumb....

The best scholars do not believe there were any Manichaeans left in Europe at the time of the Albigensian Crusade. If there were any in Provence they have at any rate left no trace in troubadour art.

On the other hand the cult of Eleusis will explain not only general phenomena but particular beauties in Arnaut Daniel or in Guido Cavalcanti.[11]

This passage, then, enlarges upon what was only a suggestion in "Psychology and Troubadours": that Albigensianism, at least as Pound defines it, can be associated with Eleusis. The historical possibility that the spirit of Eleusis could have survived "unofficially, in the Langue d'Oc",[12] will be examined shortly. At this stage, we have been able to isolate a key idea in Pound's myth: that a religious cult was "behind"

the troubadour aesthetic. Another problem raised by the above passage from "Terra Italica" is that of the connection between the Albigensians, a religious sect, and the troubadour poets. Pound does not make this issue very clear, mainly, it would seem, because he had by this stage realized that if the Albigensians had been associated with Manichaeism, an ascetic, dualist religion, then there would have been no connection between them and the troubadours, who were definitely not ascetic. As Wilhelm puts it, "he saw that he would have to redefine Manicheanism in order to support it, and so he usually, and more successfully, linked the troubadour movement with the 'pagan rites of May Day', the rites of *Eleusis* ...".[14]

The nature of the society in which the troubadours flourished was a highly complex one, and needs to be examined carefully, but in the meantime, it is not really necessary to challenge Pound's assertion concerning the troubadours and the Albigensians, because Chapter 1 of this dissertation has already established that the early Middle Ages was characterized by an intermingling of Christian and Neoplatonic - and hence, in Pound's view, "pagan" - ideas. It is quite conceivable that the ambiguity of meaning in the words of the troubadours and the possibility of both sacred and profane interpretation are indicative of a heterodox point of view, though not necessarily an ascetic one. The Albigensian connection, however, remains a problem, if one takes into account Christopher Dawson's assertion that "There is little evidence that the Troubadours showed any active sympathy with the doctrines of the Albigenses",[15] and the fact that most historians seem to agree that the Albigensians did embrace Manichaeism. Rather than lingering on such questions, it is perhaps much more important to emphasize that Pound's cavalier treatment of admittedly controversial matters indicates that his *energies were channelled into the creation of a myth*, not a body of concrete fact. It matters not, therefore, whether Pound is right or wrong in his assertions, only that "Terra Italica" "can be taken as the shape of his whole myth of the 'Provencal' cult in his later years".[16]

So Pound hints that the cult of Eleusis persisted underground, an assertion based on what Heer has described as "the doctrines of love and eroticism peculiar to Provence"[17] reflected in the highly individualistic

troubadour poetry. A number of historians have considered the possibility of the survival of pagan culture from pre-Christian times into the early Middle Ages, and some agreement has been reached on this issue. In the context of a discussion of the twelfth-century troubadour culture, Dawson points out that "Provence was not then, as at the present day, in the middle of the European culture area, it was a border territory on the frontier of the oriental world".[18] This geographical division between Southern France and Northern Europe, it seems, gave rise to a fundamental schism of belief. The troubadour tradition of courtly literature and the nature of Provencal society represented a threat to the Catholic Church, which succeeded, by means of *the Albigensian Crusade* (1208-28), in undermining the entire Provencal culture. The massacre took place at Montségur, the stronghold of the Albigensians, and Pound remembers this in the *Cantos*:

> And went after it all to Mount Segur,
> after the end of all things,
> And they hadn't left even the stair,
> (23/109)

None of this brands the Provence of the twelfth century as heretical; what it does indicate is that at this point in its doctrinal evolution, Christianity was in turmoil. Friedrich Heer explains:

> ... the drastically altered Christianity which had emerged from *centuries of barbarization, after exposure* to late Roman, Celtic and Germanic influences, was now being confronted by a way of life and thought and worship so radical and fanatical that it came disturbingly close to reproducing the situation of the early Church.[19]

This way of life and worship, which threatened the mainstream orthodox Catholic Church, was Catharism, which was characterized by a "mélange of Gnostic and Christian elements".[20] According to Heer, Catharism had its roots in Gnosticism, which was Greek, and in Manichaeism, which originated in Persia and the Near East , and which was an essentially dualistic doctrine. Gnosticism, as was noted in Chapter 1, was based

on the belief in the potential of a pure spirit to communicate directly with the Good. The Gnostic idea of purity of spirit combined with the Manichean desire for liberation of the soul from the evil world to form Catharism ("*Cathari* in Greek means 'the pure").[23] It is easy to see why the orthodox Church objected to this mingling of Christian and non-Christian teachings and why it would have been concerned about a society which embraced them. In twelfth-century Provence, the courtly culture flourished in this climate of religious heterodoxy, and the fruit of this culture, the troubadour poetry, was nourished in an atmosphere which was essentially liberal. There seems to be sufficient evidence to support the idea that the Provencal nobility, and the Albigensians (practicing Catharism at Albi, the southern French bishopric), can be linked to each other, and even if there is no such watertight evidence, the elements that led Pound to intuit that there was a religious cult "behind" the troubadours can be detected without much difficulty.

Thus far, it seems that Pound agrees with the accepted historical view of the situation in twelfth-century Provence. However, Pound's and the historians' opinions diverge over the issue of Manichaeism. In "Terra Italica" he strongly refutes the idea that the Albigensians (in other words, the religious cult behind the troubadours, if one takes his argument to its supposed conclusion) had any connection with Manichaean dualist asceticism. Let us look once again at this complex passage, quoted at length on page 60, isolating the relevant section:

> It is equally discernable upon study that some non-Christian and inextinguishable source of beauty persisted throughout the Middle Ages, maintaining song in Provence ...
>
> And this force was the strongest counter force to ... asceticism....A great deal of obscurity has been made to encircle it ... The usual accusation against the Albigeois is that they were Manicheans. This I believe after a long search to be pure bunkumb....
>
> The best scholars do not believe there were any Manicheens left in Europe at the time of the Albigensian Crusade. If there were

any in Provence they have at any rate have left no trace in troubadour art.[22]

His argument centres around his intuition that "since the aesthetic of the troubadours was one of delight in the available universe, the culture out of which they grew cannot have expressed itself in the dualist asceticism that is commonly supposed to have been the heresy of Languedoc".[23] The question as to why Pound should have felt it necessary to oppose the generally accepted belief that the Albingensians were Manichaean, and, therefore, ascetics, and to substitute a picture of "the Albigenses as *adepts of a pagan love cult*",[24] *can only have one answer:* he had to revise the scenario in accordance with the rest of his myth. As Makin says, "Pound was rewriting this part of religious and social history, and we must look at the evidence in detail, and judge his revision".[25] While he rejects the asceticism of Manicheaism, because it does not fit into his scheme, Pound nevertheless identifies indirectly with other elements of this body of thought, which he sees reflected in the troubadours' art. It is paradoxical that Pound, who based his *Cantos* on a "sense of the transcendent power of earthly beauty",[26] should have identified in any way, however indirectly, with a doctrine which taught that as the creation of the world was the work of the Devil, the world must be evil. Of the two qualities which seem to have attracted him, one has already been mentioned: the free-spiritedness of the troubadours, their profanity and their emphasis on sexual fulfillment. The other is equally important, and a discussion of these twin qualities should provide a complete picture of the troubadour ethos. It is the ritualistic quality which is present in Catharism, the cause of so much consternation on the part of its opponents, and in troubadour poetry. Ritual can operate as a means of concealment, of maintaining secrecy, and it is interesting to note once again how attractive Pound found this notion. We shall be discussing the ritualistic aspects of troubadour poetry in detail later on, for this is clearly a vital link in the chain of phenomena, invented and factual, that constitutes Pound's non-literal or mythical interpretation of history. In this connection, *it should not be forgotten that at the origin* of his "myth" are the rites of Eleusis, secret mystical practices that have never been exposed fully. In the Athenian state, sacrilege was a se-

verely punishable offence, and "the chief sacrilege was the breaking of silence" surrounding the Eleusinian Mysteries.[27]

It is clear that the troubadour operated within a highly sophisticated and complex society, governed by what Dawson calls "an elaborate moral code" which supported an ideal not Christian, but "frankly pagan". He qualifies this definition by listing the essential features of this ideal: "the glorification of life, the assertion of the individual personality and the cultivation of the pleasures of the senses".[28] Having established that Provencal society was nothing if not spiritually ambivalent, this seems an opportune moment to *focus on* that *which Pound presumed to be* the origin of this curious co-existence of secular and religious belief: the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were ritual celebrations which took place near ancient Athens[29] and which lasted for more than a thousand years.[30] Helen M Dennis gives a clear account of the two stages of the Mysteries:

> The Lesser Mysteries, sacred to Dionysus, were celebrated in *Spring*. The *Greater Mysteries*, sacred to the two Goddesses, Demeter and her daughter, the Kore or Persephone, were celebrated in Autumn. Participation in the lesser mysteries was a prerequisite to initiation into the greater or Inner Mysteries celebrated at Eleusis itself. The Inner Mysteries seem to have culminated in a vision of the Kore appearing to rise from out of the ground and seen in or through fire. (During the pan-Hellenic stage, a variation of this epiphany was the ritual union enacted by the priest and priestess ... a mimetic celebration of natural fertility as a divine function).[31]

In giving this account, Dennis has related the two main elements in the ritual drama: the descent into the world of the Dead, and the universal rite of regeneration which sometimes involved a ritual act of sexual union. As a religious cult, "the Eleusinian rites carry the symbolic meaning of a new birth" and their enactment laid the foundation for a stable social order".[32] In effect, the rites represent an organized attempt to secure a guarantee of survival from the gods. Pound's attraction to this

chthonic natural wisdom and his incorporation of its central ideas into the *Cantos* leads Surette to describe Eleusis as "the imaginative heart of his poem, with the metaphorical structure which has prevented it from flying apart".[33] He recognizes (for the first time in Poundian criticism, he believes) "the importance of the rites of Eleusis as a paradigm of the *Cantos*' action",[34] although he warns that an elucidation of the role of *Eleusis will not automatically reveal* the "meaning" of the poem.

In one of Pound's letters, the poet attempts to outline "the main scheme" of the *Cantos* in terms of a musical composition. The first movement *in this outline is "Live man goes down into world of Dead".*[35] Canto 1 is modelled on a Renaissance Latin translation of Homer's *Nekuia* (Book XI, "The Book of the Dead", the *Odyssey*), in which Odysseus is directed by Circe, with whom he has stayed for some time, to voyage across the seas to Hades, dwelling place of the dead. Here he will consult the shade of Tiresias, who will tell him how to find his way back to Ithaca and his wife, Penelope. Pound chooses to focus on the *Nekuia* , and in doing so, manipulates Homer's epic to fit in with his own. Two of Odysseus' actions are highlighted: his coupling with Circe and his descent to the Underworld. Both of these actions relate closely to the central action of Eleusis which, as we have seen, involves a ritual enactment of sexual union representing death and renewal, accompanied by a descent to the Underworld. It seems safe to assume, therefore, that Pound managed his Odyssean frame for the *Cantos* around his knowledge of Eleusis. In case one has missed the significance of the archetypal descent, canto 1 ends with the phrase "So that:", "suggesting that the balance of the poem is somehow a consequence of this initial descent".[36] Surette reinforces the idea that Pound had Eleusis in mind when he was composing the early *Cantos* in a discussion of a phrase from *"Canto One", from a passage discarded in revision*. "'O Virgilio mio' ... may well be taken as a direct reference to Virgil" and Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, he points out, "has long been regarded as the literary description of a descent into the Underworld most closely conforming to the Eleusinian rites, and Pound most assuredly would have been aware of this".[37] The reference in "Canto One" certainly requires an explanation, for Virgil as a writer was not admired by Pound.

There is much to be gained, in the way of understanding Pound's rendering of Eleusis, by examining cantos 17 and 39, *both of which relate to the Nekuia.*[1] Canto 17 takes up where canto 1 left off, with the phrase "So that:", linking the hymn to Aphrodite, goddess of love, of canto 1, "Bearing the golden bough of Argicida" (or Hermes, guide to the souls of the Underworld), with the Dionysian line "So that the vines burst from my fingers". This seems to indicate a clear passage of association between the journey to the Underworld in canto 1 and the earthly paradise which, because it is populated by Eleusinian gods such as Zagreus (or Dionysus) and Korê (or Persephone), can be interpreted as another journey to the Underworld or *Elysium (the land of the blessed dead* - "Korê through the bright meadow,"), in canto 17. The last lines of the latter lead us to the Underworld itself with the lines:

"For this hour, brother of Circe."
Arm laid over my shoulder,
Saw the sun for three days, the sun fulvid,
As a lion lift over sand-plain;
and that day,
And for three days, and none after,
Splendour, as the splendour of Hermes,
And shipped thence
to the stone place,
Pale white over water,
known water,
(17/79)

The first part of canto 39 is based on Book X of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus is delayed in bed by Circe from "Spring overborne into summer/late spring in the leafy autumn"(39/193), before departing on his voyage to the Underworld to meet the dead. This is a clear link between cantos 17 and 39, which indicates that Pound is describing the same event, the journey to the Underworld after a sexual encounter. In addition, there are similarities in the settings of the two cantos. Canto 17 is characterized by the dancers and the "light not of the sun"(17/77), canto 39 by the ritual dance to spring and fertility and the "half-dark"(39/195). So it is clear that the two cantos are linked by their

ıssociation with Odysseus' encounter with Circe, "an encounter which is ı prelude to the Underworld ... [which is] the *touchstone for* Eleusis".[39] Thus, in terms of the *Cantos*, the sexual act is seen to be the key to knowledge.

It is this concept that underlies another link between these two cantos, which Surette calls a "verbal signature".[40] It occurs in canto 17 as "with er eyes seaward" and in canto 39 as "with the Goddess' eyes to seaward". This goddess is Aphrodite, goddess of love, an important deity in the *Cantos* and one whose theophany is celebrated in canto 17. It is clear that in Pound's *rendering of Eleusis, passage to the Underworld*, that is, to knowledge, can only be granted by the rites of Aphrodite, an agent of revelation. In canto 39 for example, Circe's words to Odysseus, "Discuss this in bed said the lady"(39/194) are followed almost immediately by the fertility dance: the sexual act is associated with spring. This brings us back to the second element in the Eleusinian drama: the rite of regeneration, renewal and fertility. In "an epic moving toward a beatific vision attained through the agency of sexual love",[41] the concept of a fertility cult "at whose centre lies the mystery of human sexuality",[42] is *clearly vital*. Pound's myth allows those whose affirmation of the life-force sets them apart from those who are stunted by negativism, to apprehend a higher reality, expressed in the *Cantos* as "crystallised visions or manifestations of states of mind or emotion".[43] The link between the ability to apprehend what is essentially invisible, and the pantheistic aspect of Neoplatonic emanationism, discussed in Chapter 1, should be clear at this point, given the volatile, syncretic processes of Pound's mind.

The struggle upwards from darkness to light, from ignorance to illumination, therefore, involves engaging the emotions, particularly those of love and sexuality. The concept of engaging emotion is central to Pound's mythopoeia: it relates to both the rites of Eleusis and to the troubadour *chanso* or love song. He reads the enactment of the Mysteries, the mechanisms of which included rape and adultery, as a *ritual* channelling of energies, energies which were divine, originating as they did from the gods. He perceives a similar organization of emotion or sexual energy in the troubadour lyric. He deduces, therefore, that these

two phenomena can be connected, for they have in common a concern with human sexuality, a ritualized way of expressing this concern, and a *desire to bring the human consciousness closer* to that of a higher realm. In terms of this deduction, the troubadours are seen to share the Eleusinian desire for renewal and rebirth, an idea which leads Makin to define what he calls "Eleusinian meaning" in Pound's *Cantos* as a transformation by "a kind of ecstasy".[44] The word "ecstasy" has been well chosen, especially if one considers Pound's essay "Psychology and Troubadours", in which he distinguishes between two kinds of contemplation: "ascetic" and "'chivalric'".[45] The first type, he maintains, describes the efforts of Medieval mystics to attain a vision of God; the second relates to that combination of courtly love and mysticism evident in the work of the troubadours.[46] This combination makes for a conceptual complex which is highly appealing to Pound, who sees Eleusis as "the fountain head of the religion of *amor* "[47] and the troubadour poets as the priests of this religion.

An ideology in which a particular attitude to human desire and its fulfillment is combined with a religious impulse of some kind, ("religious" in the sense that it is a spiritual impulse), is bound to produce some interesting results if it is expressed in poetic terms, particularly if the *poets are intimately involved* with the practice of this "religion". Even the theories which try to distill the essence of courtly love are sufficiently interesting to justify their presentation in this context. There has been much debate on this subject, and while disagreement persists, various scholars have *succeeded in providing general conclusions that* are useful for this study. Roger Boase views the concept of courtly love in the very broadest terms:

> Courtly love was ... a comprehensive cultural phenomenon, a literary movement, an ideology, an ethical system, a style of life, and an expression of the play element in culture which arose in an aristocratic Christian environment exposed to Hispano-Arabic influences.[48]

Other scholars have provided useful definitions, describing it as "an intellectual system with a formalized code"[49] and "a mode of thought,

expressed in literary conventions" revealing "a cluster of personal feelings and social values".[50] There is also the "game theory" of courtly love, which suggests that it was a "game of love ... played with some seriousness".[51] There is even a school of thought which, on the grounds of its sanction of adultery, considers courtly love to have been a heresy, *totally in opposition to Christianity.*[52] *And one* should not ignore the perspective provided by a feminist examination of courtly literature. For the purposes of this thesis, it is unnecessary to exhaust every possibility prompted by this complex cultural phenomenon, nor is it necessary to draw any scholarly conclusions; however, one area of detail, which the critic Foster has researched, throws some very valuable light on the substance of the troubadour love-ethic. In examining what he calls "a heightened awareness of love" in twelfth-century Western literature,[53] he takes as his text, not troubadour poetry, but a prose treatise called *De Amore* by Andreas Capellanus, commissioned in the 1180's by Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine. It is interesting to note that Andreas, who was probably a priest, and, as such, had been armed with a Christian education, saw fit to retract everything contained within *De Amore* in an epilogue to this work. This retraction is one of the reasons why Andreas can never really be taken seriously, but, as Foster notes, it lends considerable interest to the work, because "it brings the conflict between courtly love and Christianity ... into the open, and because it is clear evidence that the conflict was felt as a real one in the world for which he wrote".[54] It also helps to substantiate Pound's awareness of a certain "religiosity" in the troubadour lyric by implying that this love-ethic necessitated the substitution for Christianity of another kind of "religion". There seems to be no question of the intended seriousness of Andreas' love-ethic; Foster appraises this work as a "doctrine", *that is to say, a body of instruction expounding a belief.* And because he describes the ideas of Andreas as being "broadly in harmony with those of the twelfth century troubadours",[55] it is worthwhile examining the central principles of this doctrine.

Andreas' code of human love deals directly with the problem of human desire, firstly by accepting that "in human nature love is sexual attraction operating as conscious desire"[56] and secondly, by showing that sexual attraction has the potential to be of great spiritual and moral

value. Sex, therefore, should stand for more than just physical sensation; sexual energy should be directed to facilitate a spiritual ecstasy, *a refinement of the soul*, not a mere pleasuring of the body. We are faced once again with the channelling of energy, one of Pound's favourite ideas, and one which previously has been seen at the centre of his interpretation of the Eleusinian rites. Andreas stresses th need for self-control and the part it plays in the *effort "to bring sex into harmony with* the spirit".[57] Foster condenses Andreas' doctrine of self-discipline with the following:

> For him the true love-ethic, loving intelligently, *sapienter amare*, consists in directing sex in harmony with human nature precisely as human ...[58]

We have, then, a code of "natural" morality which insists that human love equals ongoing desire; which acknowledges that man is a part of the natural world and as such responds to the universal urge to renew and regenerate life (much as Erigena had done a few centuries earlier by means of an inverted image, one "of heavenly light descending and dividing itself into all being"[59]); and which endorses the individual's right to engage his emotions and desires in order that he might assert himself against a (Catholic) social order that sought to deny such individuality. As Heer has said, "The day when monks and clerks were the custodians of a man's soul was past; a man's hope of felicity now lay in the hands of ... his lady".[60]

Just as Pound perceives a "source of beauty" in the ritualized action of the Eleusinian fertility cult, so he sees a correlative in the organizing of emotion practised by "the servants of Amor"[61] in Provence, the troubadours. He was attracted by their *predelictlon for celebrating* human sexuality, for fulfilling all the human faculties, in short, he identified an aspirant energy which was embodied in a cult of the feminine and which can be formulated thus: "woman as focus of the poet's intelligence".[62] Pound explains this emphasis in *The Spirit of Romance* by first defining the function of sex in a general way as either reproductive or educational. He then addresses the problem of the Provencal attitude to sex, suggesting that this "'chivalric love'" of the troubadours' can

be defined as educational in function and further implying that this emotion led to "an 'exteriorization of the sensibility', and 'interpretation of the cosmos by feeling".[63] To rephrase his whole train of thought at this point: the troubadours "made disciplined use", in their rites of amor "of the 'charged poles' of sexual opposites in order to create within themselves an almost magnetic susceptibility to gradations of emotion. The *tensions thus evoked in their personality would* sensitize them to - and ultimately merge them with - the 'universe of fluid force' or Platonic mind (*nous*) about them".[64] Perhaps the most significant aspect of Pound's construction is the distinction allocated to desire by the troubadours. As Sieburth points out, *Pound preserves the Western* tradition of "the seminal power of love as art and knowledge"[65] by reading the troubadour aesthetic as an "aristocracy of emotion" and "a cult for the purgation of the soul by refinement of, and lordship over, the senses" and as a religion centered on the "sheer love of beauty and a delight in the perception of it".[66] And as the beauty is very often that of a woman, and the "chivalric love" directed towards a woman, the woman can be said to embody a desired goal. She becomes an abstraction, an ideal,[67] which is why "the psychological core of the Provencal lyric" is "the feeling of the lover that to approach near his beloved would be to rise to a higher level of existence".[68]

At this point in the development of the courtly love lyric, love is an enobling force, a transforming influence. The feelings projected onto the lady of the troubadours' lyric "facilitated some kind of mystical *experience* of the Divinity. It availed a numinous apprehension at the high end of poetic sensibility, bordering on religious ecstacy yet grounded in the carnal delight ... of sexual magnetism".[69] The ability of the woman to arouse heightened emotion in her lover transforms her into a source of wisdom for that lover. *But this process, according to Pound's way* of thinking, also involves that which *De Amore* so energetically stresses: exertion of self-control. Pound constructed an elaborate theory to support this idea, defined in *The Spirit of Romance* (p.97) as "necessary restraint". Surette has pointed out that the whole idea may have been purely an invention on the part of Pound, helped along by Remy de Gourmont, and should be evaluated as a historical fantasy, no more.[70] However, bearing in mind that Pound envisaged this phenomenon as no

less than a secret cult of sexual delay, one should investigate the existence of *trobar clus* (hidden style) in the troubadour work, before dismissing his ideas.

Trobar clus was Pound's proof of the presence of ritual in the troubadours' song, proof supporting the myth which places a pagan religion "behind" the Provencal poetry. Most troubadour poems are written in the simple style known as *trobar plan* or *trobar leu* (light). However, some poems, by means of a particular use of language, are written in such a way that their meaning is obscured. The reason for this should be clear in the light of a previous discussion about the heterodox nature of courtly civilization, a society which after all might well have had need of concealing devices. Wilhelm traces the origin of *trobar clus* further back in time, when hermetic expression was necessitated by the suppression of early Christianity by the Romans. He describes how this religion operated secretly "with private fish symbols, handshakes, vocal greetings, and subterranean meeting-places. Furthermore, its doctrines depended heavily on things that cannot be seen, such as miracles and the interventions of angelic beings".[71] It follows that courtly lovers might have had "secret languages ... signs and symbols, colours and passwords",[72] artistic devices which communicated an element of worship, while protecting the lovers from possible censure. It follows, too, that all this concealment and secrecy would have great appeal for Pound who was fascinated by that which persisted apart from and despite mainstream opinion. Pound concluded that the rationale behind *trobar clus* was the concealment of the erotic, and Wilhelm's exegesis of Arnaut Daniel's famous sestina (Poem 18) supports this deduction by demonstrating the ambiguity of meaning which allows for interplay of sexual undertones. What follows is a breakdown of all the multiple meanings of six words that are repeated in the poem:

ARMA - the spiritual "soul", but also "he or she arms";
VERGA - the religious "virgin", as well as the phallic "rod, shaft";
INTRA - "to enter", a word that suggests sexual penetration;
CAMBRA - "chamber", the vaginal word that balances the "rod";
ONGLA - "fingernail", a word that suggests both savagery and playfulness, with tickling or harsh scratching;

ONCLA - "uncle"; the odd man out in this sensual context; a voice of authority who intrudes on the poet's imagined revery of bliss, along with a mother, a brother, and an odd assortment of relatives who want to inflict a taboo upon the mysteries of Christian Eros.[73]

Wilhelm elaborates on the ambiguity of the Provencal language, demonstrating that "Ambiguity ... goes even deeper than the connotations of words, into the words themselves", a fact he attributes to an ideological shift from Classical to Medieval Latin which "follows the change from an empirical Greco-Roman world to a metaphysical Christian one".[74] With this etymological research in mind, it certainly becomes easier to appreciate Pound's intuition about troubadour ritual, in terms of which words, which are emotional correlatives, are assembled much as an incantation is performed. The lyric is simultaneously about love, and is an act of love, and because the inherent potential of coitus places it in a realm which transcends surface reality ("Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu"36/180), it seems highly appropriate to Pound that the troubadours used language which straddles several layers of meaning, a formula which mystifies the uninitiated and *illumines those privy to its secrets.*

For Pound, sex "was so primary that it must be harnessed as a force towards transcendence",[75] a fact that renders the holding back, the "necessary restraint" of greater value than the consummation (which is why Odysseus' coupling with Circe, which Pound interprets as an example of *sapienter amore*, is singled out, along with the journey to the Underworld, in preference to Homer's *nostos* or homeward journey and all else for that matter).[76] If the act of love is performed with "the *proper sacramental* awareness of the correspondence between ... impregnation and knowledge of divine Forms",[77] in an exultation of the life-force, then the act remains sacred: if not, it is perverted. This we witness in the contemporary Hell Cantos (14-15) in which "the perverts, who have set money-lust/Before the pleasures of the senses;"(14/61) are accused of confusing natural increase, or regeneration of life, with the capitalistic increase of money: a case of energy misdirected. A debasement of the sexual act, "sadic mothers driving their daughters to bed with decrepitude,"(14/62) is followed by a horrible

reversal of natural propagation: "sows eating their litters"(14/62), and finally, "....Episcopus, waving a condom full of black-beetles,/monopolists, obstructors of knowledge,/obstructors of distribution."(14/63), opponents, in Pound's terms, of true values. *Canto 29* contemplates repression of desire, in a tone altogether more subdued, but with the same intent, which is to present spiritual death:

With a vain emptiness the virgins return to their homes
With a vain exasperation
The ochebe has gone back to his dwelling,
The djassban has *hammered and hammered,*
The gentleman of fifty has reflected
That it is perhaps just as well.
Let things remain as they are.
(29/143)

War is another cause of an imbalance in sexual energies. Canto 2 examines the causes and consequences of war and both of these "are expressed in terms of sexual strife".[73] Pound alludes to the story of Troy and to Helen (of Homer's *Iliad*), by means of her medieval analogue, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Eleanor's name is followed by two Greek words ("elenaus, eleptolis") which are from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* "in which play the chorus puns on Helen's name (Elena): *elenaus, eleptolis,* and *elandros* (destroyer of ships, destroyer of cities, and destroyer of men)".[74] This play concentrates on the cuckolding and murdering of Agamemnon by his wife Clytemnestra, who had taken a lover while her husband was at war. Helen is thus depicted as an agent of sexual dis-*order and in general,* the "Helen motif" signifies "the causes and consequences of war in private, domestic terms",[75] as in the case of the relationship between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. However, misdirection *of sexual energy is seen to have wider, more* public consequences, too, for example in canto 5 and canto 23. In these cantos, Pound mythicises, paralleling the fall of Troy with a medieval "repeat in history" which he calls "Troy in Auvergnat", based on *the vida of the troubadour,* Piere de Maensac. By employing this repeat, he successfully clarifies "his reading of the Trojan cycle as ... a story of the consequences of

withstaying the power of *amor* ".[81] *Amor* is to be understood as a foil to *adultery*: *in canto* 5, *war* is caused by cuckoldry:

> And Pleire won the singing, Pleire de Maensac,
> Song or land on the throw, *and was dreitz hom*
> And had De Tierci's wife and with the war they made:
> Troy in Auvergnat
> (5/18)

In canto 23, Pound returns to the analogue, this time interweaving the story of the Albigensian Crusade, in which the brilliant Provencal civilization was wiped out ("And went after it all to Mount Segur,/after the end of all things,"23/109). This destruction parallels the fall of the Trojan civilization ("And that was when Troy was down, all right,"23/109), which means that , in this case, adultery has as a consequence "the destruction of a civilization or culture".[82] It seems a bit puzzling that Pound should associate destruction, on the grand and the small scale, with adultery, which was very much a part of the relationship between a courtly lover and his lady, a relationship which hinged on the tension generated by obstacle. Perhaps it would be easier to read cantos 5 and 23 as examples of the idea that adultery *can* lead to strife, sorrow *and death, just as* canto 39 should be read as an example of the potential sanctity of the love act.

Although canto 47 lies outside the scope of this dissertation, it "expresses sexual mysteries ... harmony with the 'times and seasons', vegetation rituals ... [and] living forces ..."[83] and in particular, it includes an interpretation of *Odysseus' encounter with Circe which re*volves around the idea of restrained or controlled energy, and is therefore highly revelant to a discussion of desire as it operates in the *Cantos*:

> The bull runs blind on the sword, *naturons*
> To the cave thou art called, Odysseus.
> By Moïu has thou respite for a little,
> (47/237)

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Although canto 47 lies outside the scope of this dissertation, it "expresses sexual mysteries ... harmony with the 'times and seasons', vegetation rituals ... [and] living forces ..."[83] and in particular, it includes an interpretation of *Odysseus' encounter with Circe* which revolves around the idea of restrained or controlled energy, and is therefore highly revelant to a discussion of desire as it operates in the *Cantos*:

> The bull runs blind on the sword, *naturans*
> To the cave thou art called, Odysseus,
> By Moly thou respite for a little,
> (47/237)

Molù , literally, is a magic herb given to Odysseus by Hermes to counteract Circe's drugs, but in Pound's reading, it also encompasses another idea which Peariman has described as "the effective will, the refined intelligence, the sense of proportion man needs for creative action".[95] Odysseus' sexual union with the goddess Circe can therefore be read as a victory over sexual bondage, or slavery to the senses (mere physical lust), which is rewarded by the acquisition of knowledge, wisdom which allows Odysseus to "escape from his wanderings",[96] and to return home. Canto 47, then, contains a lucid illustration of the passage from *sapienter amare* , loving intelligently, to knowledge, an Eleusinian transformation by ecstacy which Pound places at the centre of the mystery of human love.

Canto 36 revolves around this mystery of human love, mainly because the major part of the canto consists of Pound's interpretative translation of "Donna Mi Priegha" (or "Song of Love") by the Tuscan, Guido Cavalcanti. Pound's fascination with Cavalcanti's ideas can be explained by the fact that he believed them to be a development of the troubadour religion of love, stemming from that pagan attitude toward and understanding of coitus "which is the mysterium",[97] according to Pound's essay "Religio". Pound perceived in "Donna Mi Priegha" the concepts of divinity manifested in the beauty of woman, of worship of woman as an means of access to the gods, and by its inclusion in the *Cantos* , this body of thought becomes "a philosophical expression of Pound's Eleusis",[97] and an important part of his fabula. Canto 36 includes a line, a Latin *dictum of Pound's, on which hangs* so much of his understanding of Eleusis:

> Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu.
> (36/180)

The canto is, as Cookson has said, a "radiant still centre",[98] a kind of resting place, despite or perhaps because of the obscurity of the meaning of Pound's translation. Obscure, because it is difficult to grasp onto anything in the translation; one feels as if the meaning is continually slipping away from one. John Lash has analysed this sensation very accurately, concluding that Cavalcanti delivers, by means of "extreme

compression of the sense-content ... word by word in concise terms ... a full-blown treatise on Love, IN ESSENCE AND METHOD ... The method is indirection ... the poem comes off as a sequence of *exquisite qualifications* ... *In form* , the poem itself is a perfect demonstration of indirection".[88] This criticism would seem to contradict all that Pound has said about the way in which Cavalcanti wrote his treatise. Pound extolled, in particular, the Tuscan's ability to think "in accurate terms ... the phrases correspond to definite sensations undergone".[89] Cavalcanti, therefore, perfects what Pound calls technique:

> ... the means of conveying an exact impression of exactly what one means in such a way as to exhilarate.[90]

His admiration of what he considered to be Cavalcanti's astounding precision of thought is paralleled by his judgement of the troubadour verse:

> Let us say that mediaeval thought (or *paideuma*) was at its best *in an endeavour to find the precise word for each of its ideas*, and that this love of exactitude created some very fine architecture ...[91]

The contradiction referred to above is in fact the key to understanding why Pound concentrated so heavily upon the translation of Cavalcanti's work and its incorporation into his *Cantos*. For he was fully aware of what Wilhelm calls "the two Cavalcantis"; the one a "transcendental mystic" who conveys "a sense of the mystical metaphysics of sexual energy" and the other an "empirical psychologist" whose acuteness of observation is manifest in highly refined, precise language.[92] Of course Pound endorsed both these approaches, not only individually, but in combination. It could be said that Pound's sense of idealism is grounded in realism; that his visionary proclivity is balanced by an awareness that only the most accurate and, therefore, real expression of the vision can bring it to the surface. Which is why the "Donna Mi Priegha", as it appears in canto 36, presents the reader with such difficulty. For, translated in the spirit of the original,[93] the poem begins in a mood of scientific enquiry, in which "natural demonstration" (36/177) will define the nature of love. The poem proceeds to describe the creation of love

and its operation, with an expression which is consistently and elegantly precise and measured. Cavalcanti's final description of love serves to illustrate this refined observation:

> Being divided, set out from colour,
> Disjunct in mid darkness
> Grazeth the light, one moving by other,
> Being divided, divided from all falsity
> Worthy of trust
> From him alone mercy proceedeth.
> (36/178)

as glossed by Wilhelm,

And yet in this extract, as in stanza 2, Cavalcanti suggests an idea that is far from precise: "that love is in some remote way linked to ... the intellectual light of the spheres".[95] It is this Neoplatonic interpretation of reasoning which makes Cavalcanti's ideas about love part of a tradition, embracing Erigena and Grosseteste, based on the "unifying principle of the intellectual Light, as this is the light which creates all things and illuminates the human cognition".[96] In the interface that exists between Pound's and Cavalcanti's ideas, the experience of love is a passage towards vision; it is a metaphysical power that transcends reality and, in doing so, apprehends an ideal.

Pound believed that what the Tuscan poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had inherited from the Provencal poets of the *welfth, was an "ecstatic precision of perception".*[97] In terms of Pound's syncretic imagination, the troubadour precision of expression is a corollary of their ritual organization of emotion: the poem is an invocation. Both kinds of restraint, at interrelated levels of form and content, are inspired by the desire to attain a vision of order. Pound formulates all of this in the following way: scientific precision combined with controlled intensity of emotion is equal to ecstatic transformation in vision.

Canto 20 illustrates this "formula" by the juxtaposition of a question of precise meaning with a description of an ideal landscape, which ends in a vision of a goddess:

The boughs are not more fresh
where the almond shoots
take their March green.
And that year I went up to Freiburg,
And Rennert had said: Nobody, no, nobody
Knows anything about Provençal, or if there is anybody,
It's old Lévy."
And so I went up to Freiburg,
And the vacation was just beginning,
The students getting off for the summer,
Freiburg im Breisgau,
And everything clean, seeming clean, after Italy.

And I went to old Lévy, and it was by then 6.30
in the evening, and he trailed half way across Freiburg
before dinner, to see the two strips of copy,
Arnaut's, settant'uno R. superiore (Ambrosiana)
Not that I could sing him the music.
And he said: Now is there anything I can tell you?"
And I said: I dunno, sir, or
"Yes, Doctor, what do they mean by *noigandres*?"
And he said: Noigandres! NOIgandres!
"You know for seex mon's of my life
"Effery night when I go to bett, I say to myself:
"Noigandres, eh, *noigandres*,
"Now what the DEFFIL can that mean!"
Wind over the olive trees, ranunculae ordered,
By the clear edge of the rocks
The water runs, and the wind scented with pine
And with hay-fields under sun-swath.
Agostino, Jacopo and Boccata.
You would be happy for the smell of that place
And never tired of being there, either alone
Or accompanied.
Sound: as of the nightingale too far off to be heard.
Sandro, and Boccata, and Jacopo Sellaio;

The ranunculae, and almond,
Boughs set in espalier,
Duccio, Agostino; e l'alors -
The smell of that place - *d'enoi gonres.*
Air moving under the boughs,
The cedars there in the sun,
Hay new cut on hill slope.
And the water there in the cut
Between the two lower meadows; sound,
The sound, as I have said, a nightingale
Too far off to be heard.
And the light falls, *remir,*
from her breast to thighs.
(20/89-90)

The greater part of the above passage concerns Pound's autobiographical account of his visit to the scholar Emile Lévy, who was working on a Provencal dictionary. The conversation between the two men centres around the precise meaning of Arnaut Daniel's word, *noigandres*. The word comes from a poem about love, in which an allegorical flower gives off fruit (love), seed (joy) and scent, ("d'enoi gendres"), which Levy read as "protection from distress".[88] The conceptual sequence of Arnaut's poem implies that protection from distress or annoyance is one of the effects of love. This "calmness" or "peace of mind", if one interprets the phrase still further, is amplified by the description of a serene, ideal natural setting which follows. Given Pound's "*formula*", we have so far traced a link between exactitude (the precise meaning of "d'enoi gandres") and emotion (love). The last two lines quoted complete the sequence in that they refer to Arnaut's vision of a goddess. Before examining the ramifications of this human apprehension of a divinity, it would be worthwhile to consider in more detail the connection Pound makes between the meaning of "d'enoi gandres" and the paradisal setting which follows. The link is made entirely by means of inference; as Makin has said, the landscape "demonstrates' ... the scent of the flower".[89] One could surmise that Pound's use of this technique may have arisen out of his evaluation of the so-called "spring-opening " which characterizes so many troubadour lyrics. His appreciation of the sensitivity

with which the troubadours express love, through the medium of natural imagery, *is reflected in The Spirit of Romance*:

> ... in most Provencal poetry one finds nature ... as ... an interpretation of the mood; an equation, in other terms, or a 'metaphor by sympathy' for the mood of the poem.[120]

To appreciate the vision of the goddess (And the light falls, *remir*,/from her breast to thighs.), one really needs to know that the word *remir* comes from one of Arnaut's poems which the poet begins with *an address to God, requesting the sight* of his lady's body. This request has been interpreted as a reaching towards a vision of Wisdom,[121] a reading Pound must have shared. The association in canto 20 of an ordered, serene landscape with an illuminating vision prefigures the later *Cantos*, in which "the natural world is apprehended with a paradisal serenity and a new order of descriptive exactness".[122] In fact, it is the later cantos which are primarily concerned with paradise, with an ideal and permanent order, nevertheless, many of the early cantos, which fall within the scope of this study, contain references to the vision of the ideal, which transcends time and space and is elevated above the commonplace. Ortega y Gasset has defined the process by which certain objects become timeless, a definition well worth repeating in this context:

> Culture presents us with objects already purified which once possessed an *immediate and spontaneous life, and which now, thanks* to our reflective process, seem free from space and time, from corruption and caprice. They form, as it were, a zone of ideal and abstract life, floating above this personal existence of ours, always so uncertain and problematical.[123]

Pound's need to express the ideal in poetic terms must have sharpened his focus, so that he concentrates on what he calls the "moment of metamorphosis, bust thru from quotidien into 'divine or permanent world'. *Gods*, etc.".[124] *Metamorphosis, the changing of form*, becomes his means of making visible the divine or the ideal and of expressing "revelatory moments of human/divine intercourse".[125] Thus the manifestation of the invisible, and the expression of a human state of mind, occur simul-

taneously. Pound explains his view in the essay "Religio or, The Child's Guide to Knowledge":

> What is a god?
> A god is an eternal state of mind...
> When is a god manifest?
> When the states of mind take form.
> When does a man become a god?
> When he enters one of these states of mind.[126]

Cantos 23 *and* 25 include images that occur elsewhere in the *Cantos* and which can be read as "signs" of the gods:

> "as the sculptor sees the form in the air ...
> "as glass seen under water,
> "King Otreus, my father ...
> and saw the waves taking form as crystal,
> notes as facets of air,
> and the mind there, before them, moving,
> so that notes needed not move.
> (25/119)

In the above passage, Pound makes use of images of water and waves, and crystal, images also found in canto 23:

> and saw then, as of waves taking form,
> As the sea, hard, a glitter of crystal,
> And the waves rising but formed, holding their form.
> No light reaching through them.
> (23/109)

Although the images of waves and crystal are part of a whole pattern of motifs in the *Cantos*, it is possible to see that Pound, in identifying the *crystal as a "sign* of the gods", "a frozen metamorphosis, a held moment of apparition",[127] associates the image with the "brilliantly unified world against which he can contrast the chaos of contemporary civilization",[128] one such world being Provence.

as Carlson says.

In canto 4, we enter the world of Provence, and, by means of certain images, and by the overlay of Provencal matter and Greek myth, we are able to witness Pound's evocation of the divine, a world in which the gods signify the eternal:

Thus the light rains, thus pours, e lo soleills plovil
The liquid and rushing crystal
beneath the knees of the gods.
(4/15)

The passage leading to knowledge, wisdom and divine illumination, that moment of apparition expressed by the "rushing crystal", is via Eros, human love, expressed in terms of the Greek myth of Actaeon and the *vida* of Pierre Vidal. Their sexual encounters, Actaeon with Artemis who is "a recurrent 'eternal state of mind' in the cosmos of the poem",[115] and Vidal with his lady Loba of Penautier, precede a revelatory experience or vision. This union with the divine is anticipated elsewhere, in canto 5, with the following line:

The bride awaiting the god's touch; *Ecbatan,*
(5/17)

Libera has pointed out that, in a sense, "the bride awaiting the god's touch is the symbol of the religious or creative man in relation to his inspiration",[116] which makes the fact that the god awaited is Hymen, god of marriage, who will sexually consummate the union in a shower of golden light, all the more apposite in terms of Pound's myth, which achieves its most sublime expression in a celebration of life-forces.

That which is mythical about Pound's *Cantos* consists of a web of interwoven threads; ideas connected and associated with one another, forming an overall pattern of which one tends to lose sight in an attempt to unfold the meaning of individual parts of the structure. The hope, in writing this chapter, is that the pattern, like Pound's image of the crystal, has been revealed in part.

9.0 FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. Leon Surette, review of *Pound's Cantos* by Peter Makin, *Paideuma*, Volume 15, 1986, p.309. Surette refers to Makin's attempts "to persuade his readers that Pound's religious and philosophical beliefs are true and his fantasy history accurate at least in outline" (p.308).

2. Ibid. p.308.

3. James J Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound*, p.86.

4. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.90.

5. Makin, *Provence and Pound*. p.242.

6. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.90.

7. Leon Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", *Paideuma*, Volume 3, 1974, p.198. Surette's observation is contradicted by Makin in *Pound's Cantos* (1985): " ... Pound had already in 1912 long known ... the Greek mysteries at Eleusis" (p.91) and in *Provence and Pound* (1978): "That is quite clear: there was a religious cult behind the troubadours ... derived from the cult of Eleusis. Pound had set out all these ideas quite openly ... in the 'Psychology and Troubadours' lecture ... "(p.219). Surette's point seems to be based on a more cautious approach, in keeping with his insistence upon a critical detachment from Pound's assertions. He does concede, however, that "we can be confident that the idea of a continuity of belief reaching from Eleusis through Provence and Dante to himself had been planted in Pound's mind long before his *first mention of it, and even several years before he began composition* of the *Cantos*" (p.198).

8. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.53.

9. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.97.

10. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.90.

11. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.197.

12. Pound, *Selected Prose*, pp.58-59.

13. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.90. I have taken the liberty of substituting the phrase "the spirit of Eleusis" for Pound's "paganism" for the sake of clarity.

14. Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound*, pp.24-25.

15. Christopher Dawson, *Medieval Essays* (Sheed and Ward, 1953.) p.232.

16. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.244.

17. Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961.) p.131.

18. Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, p.219.

19. Heer, *The Medieval World*, p.170.

20. Ibid. p.168.

21. Ibid. p.184.

22. Pound, *Selected Prose*, pp.58-59.

23. Makin, "Pound's Provence and the Medieval Paideuma: An Essay in Aesthetics", *Ezra Pound: The London Years 1908-1920*, p.51.

24. Leon Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1979.) p.57.

25. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.221. In any case, while the nobility of Provence seems to have given the church genuine cause for worry, this does not mean that the Albigeois were capable of stirring up the kind of trouble which could affect Catholic domination to any great extent. Wilhelm, in *Il Miglior Fabbro* (p.25), maintains that modern research has revealed the Albigensians to be "little more imaginative or poetic than the fundamentalist Protestant religions ... *with their constant imprecations against the Devil*, drink and woman". This suggests that the Manichaen asceticism may not have been sufficiently pronounced to have been able to exert any significant influence on the troubadours in the first place.

26. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos* , p.68.

27. Peter Makin, *Pound's Cantos* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985.) p.18.

28. Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, p.214.

29. Helen M Dennis, "The Eleusinian Mysteries as an Organizing Principle in *The Pisan Cantos*", *Paideuma*, Volume 10, 1981, p.275.

30. Makin, *Pound's Cantos*, p.98.

31. Dennis, "The Eleusinian Mysteries as an Organizing Principle in *The Pisan Cantos*", p.275.

32. Tay, "Between Kung and Eleusis", pp.40-41.

33. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p.67.

34. Ibid. p.vii.

35. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound: 1907 - 1941* (ed) D D Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971.) p.210.

36. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.200.

37. Ibid. p.200.

38. Ibid. pp.201-27. The discussion of cantos 1 and 39 that follows is based largely on Surette's study, to be found on these pages.

39. Ibid. pp.205-26.

40. Ibid. p.204.

41. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p.75.

42. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.207.

43. Dennis, "The Eleusinian Mysteries as an Organizing Principle in *The Pisan Cantos*", p.274.

44. Makin, *Pound's Cantos*, p.80.

45. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.94.

46. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.209, in which the author points out that Pound was speculating that the troubadours were mystics "Long before he had begun to speak of Eleusis".

47. Ibid. p.208.

48. Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (Manchester: Manchester University

Press, Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977.) pp.129-30.

49. Smith and Snow, (eds), *The Expansion and Transformations of Courtly Literature* (Athens : University of Gorgia Press, 1980.) p.6.

50. *Ferrante and Economou (eds), In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature* (New York: Kennikat, 1975.) p.3.

51. Smith and Snow (eds), *The Expansion and Transformations of Courtly Literature*, p.6.

52. Fr A J Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love* (New York, 1947.) p.20.

53. Kenelm Foster, *The Two Dantes and Other Studies* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977.) p.15.

54. Ibid. p.16.

55. Ibid. p.18.

56. Ibid. p.22.

57. Ibid. p.36.

58. Ibid. p.20.

59. Miyake, *Between Orpheus and Eleusis* p.iv.

60. Heer, *The Medieval World* p.130.

61. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.91.

62. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.160. The possibility of homosexuality is not considered by Pound and is ignored by Andreas who views it as "a deviation from nature". According to Andreas, love cannot

be homosexual because "love is essentially in line with nature" (this is deduced from *De Amore* by Foster, *The Two Dantes and Other Studies*, p.22). However, it seems perfectly possible that the hermetic tendency of troubadour verse could have served as a shield for homosexual love. Therefore, the focus on the woman by troubadour poets should be read as a literary convention which does not completely exclude the existence of homosexuality.

63. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.94.

64. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.42.

65. Ibid. p.41.

66. *Pound, The Spirit of Romance*, pp.90-91.

67. "This ideal gave women a certain amount of freedom", as Diane Bornstein points out in *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, Inc, 1983.) p.119, but this feminist writer argues that the fact that men were the worshippers rendered the objects of this worship inactive and passive, mere symbols of an abstract ideal (p.9).

68. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.172. Makin modifies Peter Dronke's hypothesis about the development of the courtly love-lyric, to be found in Dronke's book called *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.), and doing so, he distinguishes three stages in this development. Makin does this in an attempt to elucidate the centrality of the worship of women in Arnaut Daniel's poetry. It is clear that the reason for analysing so closely the development of the love-lyric is that, is so doing, the essence of the troubadour aesthetic may be distilled - an aesthetic which had a profound impact on Pound's own appreciation of beauty.

69. John Lash, "Making Sense of Donna Mi Priegha", *Paideuma*. Volume 15, 1986, p.83.

70. Surette, Review of *Pound's Cantos* by Peter Makin, p.308.

71. Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound*, p.6.

72. Heer, *The Medieval World*, p.124.

73. Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound*, p.20.

74. Ibid. pp.18-19.

75. Makin, "Pound's Provence and the Medieval Paideuma: An Essay in sthetics", p.41.

76. Surette, "'A Light from Eleusis': Some Thoughts on Pound's *Nekuia*", p.215.

77. Libera, "Casting His Gods Back into the *NOUS*: Two Neoplatonists and The Cantos of Ezra Pound", p.362.

78. Surette, "The Historical Patterns in Ezra Pound's Cantos", *Humanities Association Bulletin*, Volume 22, Number 3, 1971, p.15.

79. Ibid. p.15.

80. Ibid. p.15.

81. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p.59.

82. Surette, "The Historical Patterns in Ezra Pound's Cantos", p.17.

83. William Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985.) p.51.

84. Daniel Pearlman, *The Barb of Time: On the Unity of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.) p.180.

85. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p.65.

86. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.70.

87. Surette, *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, p.77.

88. Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p.40.

89. Lash, "Making Sense of Donna Mi Priegha", p.87.

90. Pound, *Literary Essays*, p.162.

91. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.33.

92. Pound, "Medieval Music and Yves Tinayre", *Listener*, XVI, 395, 1936, p.187.

93. J J Wilhelm, "Guido Cavalcanti as a Mask for Ezra Pound", *PMLA*, Volume 89, 1974, pp.333-34.

94. Wilhelm (ibid.), concedes that many scholars "have condemned Pound's philosophic judgements and critical acumen" (p.339). However, he believes that Pound captures the *spirit* of Cavalcanti's work in his poetry to a degree not matched by the many critical commentaries on the Trecento.

95. Ibid. p.339.

96. Tay, "Between Kung and Eleusis", p.54.

97. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.43.

98. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.179.

99. Ibid. p.179.

100. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.31.

101. *Makin, Provence and Pound,* p.180.

102. Sieburth, *Instigations*, p.153.

103. *José Ortega y Gasset, Meditations on Quixote* (W W Norton & Company, Inc.: New York, 1963.) p.43.

104. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* (ed) Paige, p.210.

105. Libera, "Casting His Gods Back into the *NOUS*: Two Neoplatonists and The Cantos of Ezra Pound, p.357.

106. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.47.

107. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.182.

108. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, p.151.

109. Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p.9.

110. Libera, "Casting His Gods Back into the *NOUS*: Two Neoplatonists and the Cantos of Ezra Pound", p.362.

10.0 CHAPTER 4

Canto 6: An Idea into Action

The previous chapter sought to focus attention on Pound's fascination with the troubadour aesthetic, as revealed in the early *Cantos*, with special emphasis on the intellectual content as opposed to his means of expressing these ideas. This chapter will attempt to redress this imbalance, and, *in doing so, will concentrate on the presentation* of these ideas. It will touch on aspects of language such as style, form and image patterns in the early *Cantos*, all of which have something to do with Pound's perception of twelfth-century Provencal poetry.

Pound's struggle to render troubadour emotion in a manner which both preserves it, and makes it accessible to the modern reader, is in effect, a search for a new language. If one sees the bulk of his work on Provencal material, including translation and interpretation of troubadour verse, as part of this striving towards a fresh means of expression, then the *Cantos* are something of a watershed. For by 1920, Pound had begun to work with words in an interpretative way that he believed accomodated an experience of the modern world, while remaining true to the medieval world. Stuart Y. McDougal explains Pound's difficulty in finding a workable language:

> The spirit of Provence, as he interprets it, is "archaic" inasmuch as its values and sensibility do not function effectively in the modern world. Love has become debased (see the images of *fals' amors* in *The Cantos*, and the association there between this love and prostitution) and we have lost the mystical reverence for *Amor* that permeated the medieval world. Consequently, *Amor* cannot adequately be described in nineteenth or twentieth century English, *and a new language must* be created.[1]

It is quite clear that Pound's problem lay in a disjunction between twelfth-century meaning and twentieth-century modes of expression.

The path that he trod in an attempt to bridge this gap is not an easy one to follow: Miyake points out that "Pound's early development from *A Lume Spento* (1908) to his Imagism in 1912 has never been studied adequately in relation to his *Cantos* ".[3] What is obvious, however, is that just as he had had to reject the Romantic idiom in order to formulate the *Imagist dicta, so he had to move* away from the stylistic influence of Browning's meditative and discursive approach, when revising the first-draft *Cantos*. This development represents a return to a form "more in keeping with the Imagist principles affirmed back in 1912",[3] and thus provides a link between his early work and his magnum opus. An understanding of this link is vital if one is to grasp how it is that Pound overcame his initial difficulties at the outset of the *Cantos* , and therefore how this work came to be written as we know it.

The problem of finding the right words to convey the troubadour aesthetic applies to the *Cantos* as a whole, for Pound assumes the role of the interpreter of human history, and as such, the scope of his material is vast and varied. He needed a form "elastic enough to take the necessary material",[4] and for this he drew on his Imagist doctrine and on what was suggested to him by *the manuscripts of Fenollosa's work on* the Chinese ideogramic tradition. It is unclear whether Pound acquired Fenollosa's essay before or after formulating Imagism,[4] and it hardly matters; what is important in this context is that it was this theory of ideograms - "compound images forming a conceptual meaning"[5] - that enabled Pound to progress from individual poems to his magnum opus. The structural method provided by the ideogram allows for the intensity of direct presentation of image and action, and, at the same time, accurately reflects "his conception of the shifting, fragmentary nature of *twentieth-century experience*".[3] As such, the most striking contribution of Pound's ideogramic method, as it is known, is its interpretative value. Pound considered the "interpretive function" to be "the highest honor of the arts" and that "art is vital only so long as it is interpretative",[6] a quality which relies on accuracy or precision for its efficacy. The precise rendering of meaning by the associational juxtapositions of the ideogram is instrumental in the achievement of the imagist aspiration to timelessness, in which the sequences of history are interpretatively fused

into larger mythic patterns of the timeless and is thus central to Pound's *use of language in the Cantos and* to the *form* that they take.

The abundance of different foreign languages also plays an important part in Pound's presentation of history not as a process of events bound by time, but as a series of timeless "repeats" or archetypal patterns. Both languages and texts of the past are "superimposed and juxtaposed in an energetic approximation of historic flux".[9] Pound anticipated the outcry that arose, accusing him of deliberate obfuscation, and he defends himself thus in 1939:

> There is *no intentional* obscurity. There is condensation to maximum attainable. It is impossible to make the deep as quickly comprehensible as the shallow.
>
> I believe that when finished, *all* foreign words in the *Cantos* , Gk. etc. will be underlinings, not necessary to the sense, *in one way*. I mean a complete sense will exist without them ... the Greek, ideograms, etc., will indicate a *duration* from whence or since when. If you find any *briefer* means of getting this repeat or resonance ...[10]

The result of Pound's inclusion of French, Provencal, Spanish, Italian, Latin and Greek in the English text of the *Cantos* is what Donald Davie calls a "compound language", arising out of Pound's endeavour to "create *or re-create a lingua franca* "[11] *which would indicate* what the poet calls "duration" and "resonance" of ideas across barriers of time and space. In terms of this system, the presence of Provencal in the text of the *Cantos* has to be seen as a primarily intellectual device, because as Wilhelm argues, "very few readers can even pronounce the language properly".[12] The value of the sound of the language, and even some of the rhythmic quality, is therefore lost, and the words come to represent a cultural offering whose value Pound wishes to endorse. It would seem that what is lost in comprehension is gained in the immediacy and directness of such words and phrases, which take a short cut across time and space limits and in doing so put forward a reality which is necessarily fragmented.

In chapter 3 we examined Pound's use of the images of waves and crystal, noting that these symbols *arrest the essence of an ideal which* is timeless and mythical and which is described elsewhere by Pound as existing "... only in fragments ..."(74/438). By using such imaginative symbolism, Pound reveals an impulse to lift out of the randomness of a sequential experience of history, the pattern which endures and is thus an ordering force in the maelstrom of time. What follows is an attempt to show how Pound demonstrates the way in which certain ideas are energised and liberated, so that they become part of the pattern and become timeless, due to a special kind of human endeavour, or "a direction *of the will*".[13] *Because these energies and ideas,* or cultural phenomena, are seen to be shared, surfacing again and again in history, they are perceived by Pound to be prototypical. We may call them components of this "myth".

Pound focuses on various cultural phenomena in the *Cantos*, using them as pivots of action and relevance in terms of his overall view of the workings of culture. One such focal point is annotated in canto 6 and is extended in canto 29. Canto 6 is a statement about Provencal culture; it illustrates Pound's belief that there was "a continuity of culture and awareness of human possibilities from the circle of William IX of Aquitaine right through to the circle of Dante, and that this continuity depended on personal influence and contact".[14] So it is by means of prominent historical characters, and their relationships with one another, that Pound develops a highly selective (*and inaccurate*) "*anthology*" *of events*, which Makin calls "a cultural dynasty",[15] and which reveals a great deal about the poet's vision of "sex and fertility as the source of artistic creation".[16] Canto 6, therefore, can be seen as central to the concerns which this study addresses, because it "demonstrates" Pound's distillation of the Provencal matter, and at the same time, it can be approached as an example of his poetic technique and method. It clearly merits a detailed examination and, in accordance with the intended emphasis on presentation in this chapter, an attempt will be made to show how Pound *expresses this flow of personal energies*, how he makes the connections in terms of images, and how he conveys the tone of the periods about which he is writing.

The initiator of Pound's "cultural dynasty" is William, 9th Duke of Aquitaine, who elsewhere in the *Cantos* has been accredited as the instigator of troubadour poetry:

> And Poictiers, you know, Guillaume Poictiers,
> had brought the song up out of Spain
> With the singers and viels.
> (8/32)

Within the first three lines of canto 6 William and another hero of the *poem, Odysseus, have been associated* with each other:

> What have you done, Odysseus,
> We know what you have done ...
> *And that Guillaume sold out his ground rents*
> (6/21)

The "And" of the third line suggests that the two characters share common pursuits. The phrase "sold out his ground rents" *refers to* William's willingness to liquidate his assets in order to fund his crusades. Thus the connection between the two men, both of whom are travellers in search of knowledge, is cemented. So too is the idea of William as a leader who valves renewal and increase of knowledge above securing material wealth, which is stagnant. This places him on the side of fertilizing as opposed to hoarding and life-denying, in terms of one of Pound's favourite arguments. Not only does William redirect and energize in monetary or economic terms; he is also seen to be sexually energetic. A direct quotation of lines from one of William's poems tells of his concupiscence, in frank and lusty words, translated into English from the Provencal of the canto as "I fucked them, as you will hear, 100 + 4 x 20 + 8 times".[17] Throughout this canto Pound makes use of direct quotation of troubadours' poems, as a means of retaining the intensity which he associates with the characters. The third way in which William *is seen* to fertilize is expressed by means of what Terrell calls an "invocation of the prehistorical concept of kingship, where the cycle of life and death, running from sexual prowess to sacrificial regicide, is linked with the fertility of the earth ...".[18] The lines describing this invocation

situate William within the Eleusinian tradition of ritual renewal of nature's cycles and the corresponding regeneration of culture:

> The stone is alive in my hand, the crops
> will be thick in my death-year ...
> (6/21)

The next link in the sequence of renewing energies after William is Eleanor, his granddaughter. Historically, Eleanor and many of her children (specifically those from her marriage with Henry II of England) *succeeded in influencing their respective cultures*, and Pound recognizes this by associating Eleanor with Odysseus and his sea-travels (and, therefore, with William too):

> Went over *sea till day's end (he, Louis with Eleanor)*
> (6/21)

Eleanor accompanied her first husband, Louis VII of France, on a crusade to the Holy Land, a fact which Pound uses in such a way *that her journey* assumes the significance of an Odyssean search for knowledge. Eleanor is also seen to share her grandfather's sexual energy, and, implicitly, his ability to fertilize and renew culture. Pound does this by inserting a line from one of Arnaut Daniel's sestinas which includes the sexually ambiguous words "Ongla, oncle" (literally, "Fingernail, uncle"). The suggestion is that Eleanor had an affair with the troubadour, and thus had some influence on the lyric tradition within which Arnaut worked. This line is followed immediately by a reference to Raymond, Eleanor's uncle, to whom it was rumoured she became very close, much to the discomfort of her husband:

> And he, Louis, was not at ease in that town,
> (6/21)

Another sexual alliance is referred to, this time between Eleanor and Saladin, the Arab warrior, by the attaching of her scarf to his helmet, a detail which, like the affair itself, is completely fictitious and historically inaccurate according to Terrell, [3] but which no doubt was intended

to enhance one's sense of the lady's hedonism. Pound clearly endorses this kind of earthy enjoyment, and he conveys a sense of the life-denying, penny-pinching mentality which is its opposite, in two lines referring to Louis' total impotence, both mental and physical. The lines are presented in French, being his mother tongue, and they translate as follows: "And when Louis heard, he became very angry.". The intention is to bring across both Louis' inability to constrain, let alone satisfy Eleanor physically, and his utter inability to identify with her cultural affinities, and her native *langue d'oc*. This line is preceded by one which suggests Henry's decisiveness and activity, conveyed in *simple diction*:

> And that year Plantagenet married her
> (6/21)

So Pound succeeds in pinpointing the essential difference between the estranged Louis and Eleanor in a highly efficient and condensed way, drawing on the tones and rhythms of language to "demonstrate" atmosphere and aesthetic nuances.

Pound enlists yet another troubadour into Eleanor's circle of lovers: Bernart de Ventadorn. He does this by making the troubadour's phrase *domna jauzolnda* ("joyous lady", the identity of whom we do not know), apply to Eleanor.[26] Bernart's purpose in this canto extends beyond his association with Eleanor, however. Pound selects incidents from the troubadour's life and relates them to his poetry, presenting the situation dramatically, in direct speech. For example, "'My Lady of Ventadour'/Is shut by Eblis in"(6/22), refers to Margarida of Torena, to whom, like another noblewoman, Lady Audiart ("Na Audiart"), he was attached at one time. The line "Malemorte, Correze ...", names the castle in which Lady Audiart lived and the river which skirted it, thus providing, by inference, another dimension in Bernart's career as love-poet. Margarida's husband, Eblis III of Ventadour, grew jealous, so the story goes, of Bernart's attentions to his wife, and imprisoned her. The troubadour's imagined appeal for her freedom is voiced by Pound, both in prosaic terms ("'Send word I ask you to Eblis/you have seen that maker/'And finder of songs so far afield as this/'That he may free

her,6/22), and in natural images of great beauty borrowed from Bernart's own verse. The line "'Nor watch fish rise to bait" is suggested by one of Bernart's and is followed by Pound's "'Nor the glare-wing'd flies slight in the creek's edge"(6/22). Almost immediately after this is a quotation from the beginning of one of Bernart's most admired poems, the one which is supposed to have moved Margarida to love him: "'Que la lauzeta *mover*'"(6/22). This line is borrowed from the original which Pound quotes in *The Spirit of Romance* (p.41) as "'Quant ieu vey la' lauzeta mover/De joi sas alas contral ray' ", along with his own translation which reads, "When I see the lark a-moving/For joy his wings against the sunlight,...". *These lines which Pound selects and uses are,* according to Makin, "a faithful remaking of the tone-colour of some of the best Provencal verse",[21] and his skill in invoking the idea of flight and the ecstacy of escape from earthly limits through the medium of Bernart's poetry, prepares us to catch the beauty of *the line which completes this* section: "who sheds such light in the air.'" (6/22). The line is borrowed from the late thirteenth-century poet of the *dolce stil nuovo*, Cavalcanti, and by attaching it to the voice of the twelfth-century Provencal troubadour lyricist, he completes the cultural continuum. As Makin points out, "the line is a century out of place, but it fits.... The atmospheres of these sections are continuous with one another, and that is the effect of the cultural 'dynasty' that Pound is proposing...".[22]

In moving from Bernart to Cavalcanti Pound has in fact omitted a link between these two - Sordello, the last great troubadour. Pound follows the Provencal *vida* which describes this poet from Mantua, Northern Italy, leaving the first line in Provencal:

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

(6/22)

The connection between Sordello and Cunizza is once again referred to a few lines later:

A marito subtraxit ipsam...
dictum Sordellum concubuisse:
(6/23)

The lines come from a Latin chronicle,[23] and are a direct quotation, meaning Sordello "took her away from her husband and is supposed to have slept with her". They are intended to articulate both Sordello's and Cunizza's attachment to a way of life which Pound intuits as being bountiful, abundant, liberal, and also courageous. He repeatedly endorses this approach to the business of living in the *Cantos*: canto 29 contains an account of Cunizza's way of life, which is summarized by the words *"greatly enjoying herself"*(29/142). In canto 6, Pound demonstrates the courage that underlies the abundance of desire and energy by including Cunizza's remarkable act of freeing her brother's slaves (April 1, 1265). Like William of Aquitaine's selling of ground rents, her action displays "freedom from possessiveness",[24] *a quality which Pound* associates with the ability to redistribute and to fertilize. The lines which refer to the implications of the slaves' freedom have an important bearing on a remark of Pound's quoted earlier, concerning culture in general. He calls culture "a direction of the will".[25] Here are the lines from canto 6:

"free of person, free of will
"free to buy, witness, sell, testate."
(6/23)

By enunciating the basic human freedom which the slaves were afforded, Pound manages to indicate the concomitant giving and receiving of freedom that lifts Cunizza, William, Henry and Eleanor, by virtue of their action, and Sordello and Bernart, by virtue of their passion, above the deadness, inertia and perversion of characters such as Louis and Cairels of Sarlat. Cairels is included directly after an adaptation of one of Sordello's poems which suggests Cunizza's grace and beauty. He is thus set up in direct opposition to the troubadour art, for Pound sees

his poetry as a symbol of "the dead reworking the dead".[26] It seems from the Provencal *vida* that he was no creator of lyrics, only a copier of others' work, and a poor one at that. He therefore embodies the end result of the Albigensian Crusade. The dead end that he represents is expressed as ellipsis:

> And Cairels was of Sarlat...
> (6/23)

Culture, and the making of it, is placed in the hands of those who are active, who risk the status quo in a quest for fresh ideas and experiences, or as Pound puts it:

> The history of a culture is the history of ideas going into action.[27]

Cunizza's action of freeing the serfs, which elevates her to "a woman of significant action"[28] in Pound's eyes, is again referred to in canto 29:

> In the *house of the Cavalcanti*
> anno 1265:
> Free go they all as by full manumission
> All serfs of Eccelin my father da Romano
> Save those who were with Alberic at Castra San Zeno
> And let them go also
> The devils of hell in their body.
> (29/142)

Pound's isolating of this fact is a good example of the way in which he interpreted and selected from recorded history, transforming a past event into a vivid, full-blooded happening (note the use of the first person in "my father da Romano"). Pound was not alone in his admiration for this woman; he was aware that Dante, his mentor, had placed her "in his Third Heaven, the place inhabited by those stained by earthly love",[29] this in spite of her notorious elopement with Sordello. He ponders Dante's reaction to Cunizza in *Guide to Kulchur* :

Cunizza, white-haired in the House of the Cavalcanti, Dante, small gutter-snipe, or small boy hearing the talk in his father's kitchen *or*, later, from Guido, of beauty incarnate, or, if the beauty can by any possibility be brought into doubt, at least and with utter certainty, charm and imperial bearing, grace that stopped not an instant in sweeping over the most violent authority of her time and, *from the known fact, that vigour which is a grace* in itself. There was nothing ... to surpass the facts of Cunizza, with, in her old age, great kindness, thought for her slaves.[30]

The passage above, *combined with the reference in canto 6 to* "Farinato de' Farinati"(6/23), and the essential line *from* canto 29, "In the House of the Cavalcanti"(29/142), complete the dynastic link between Sordello, Cunizza, Guido Cavalcanti and Dante, but not without some work on the part of the reader. The reference in canto 6 has to be subjected to exegesis in order that one may learn that Farinata's daughter Bice married Guido Cavalcanti two years after the incident of the freeing of the slaves,[31] just as one has to have some knowledge of Latin and Provencal or at least French, for the sense of the canto to proceed uninterrupted. Even if the reade. does all his homework, Pound's efforts are directed towards bringing the reader into history, and. as mentioned before, "He will therefore often receive fragmentary information".[32] To the same end, that is, the dynastic presentation of history, Pound makes use of what Makin calls his "throwaway syntactical subordination"[33] in lines such as "Till Louis is wed with Eleanor"(6/21)and "Divorced her in that year"(6/21); he evokes the language of documents, for example "(He, Guillaume)" and the repeated "he, Louis", all of which make the reader feel as if he too is skimming through documents, trying to piece the fragments of information together. This feeling of being a participant *in the unfolding* action of history is brilliantly conveyed by ellipsis and quotation in the following lines describing the Plantagenet family politics:

In pledge for all his life and life of all his heirs
Shall have Gisors, and Vexis, Neufchastel
Bu' if no issue Gisors shall revert...
"Need not wed Alix... in the name
Trinity holy indivisible... Richard our brother

Need not wed Alix once his father's ward and ...
But whomso he choose... for Alix, etc...
(6/21-22)

So Pound, in canto 6, is working with his "fragmentary poetic" in the sense that each fragment relates to the whole, which is in this case, a dynastic vision. The relative impersonality of tone of document and chronicle extract is balanced against the breezy tone of lines such as "That freed her slaves on a Wednesday"(6/22) and colloquialism of "(that had dodged past 17 suitors)"(6/21); all these are set against the archaism and lyricism of Bernart's address to Eleanor and Sordello's to Cunizza. The resulting range of "voices" creates the kind of shifting surface that both approximates reality, because there is no single, complete image of the passage of time, and articulates reality, by structuring the fragments of that reality in relation to one another.

One of the ways in which Pound arranges his images in canto 6 is by means of an overlay of medieval history and classical myth. We have already seen how Odysseus is paralleled by both William of Aquitaine and his granddaughter Eleanor, and how this repetition of subjects creates a resonance, or what Pound calls "duration from whence or since when". He does the same thing with the rhyming of Eleanor and Raymond with Helen of Troy and Theseus:

Her uncle commanded in Acre,
That had known her in girlhood
(Theseus, son of Aegeus)
(6/21)

The "'repeat in history'"[34] that this yoking of Eleanor and Helen represents "indicates a blurring of historical identities, a movement toward archetypes",[35] which Miyake has called "a prototypification".[36] In other words, there is a compression of image, so that the one is intended to *recall the other, and all its associations. The images of Helen* and Eleanor, because they are liberated from their original limits of space and time, become recurrent symbols and archetypal motifs. So it is that both women are archetypal *femmes fatales* in the *Cantos*, agents of both cre-

ativity and destruction. In canto 2, Eleanor is rhymed with Helen by means of the Aeschylian pun in *Agamemnon* which translates into English as "ship-destroying and city-destroying". Thus the Helen, "who stirs the old counsellors on the walls of Troy, both to desire and to unease about the future",[27] is also Eleanor, who is knee-deep in the political wrangling brought about by her two marriages, in canto 8. The destructive nature of the Helen/Eleanor motif is reiterated at the beginning of canto 7, following on from a reference to an incident in which Theseus narrowly escapes death brought about by family strife, at the end of the previous canto. Eleanor is once again linked to Helen by the puns on *the latter's name*, which this time translate as "man-destroying and city-destroying"(7/24). This doubling-up of images is perhaps best described by Pound himself, in canto 4:

> Ply over ply ...
> (4/15)

The phrase "Ply over ply" has been evaluated as an organizing principle in the *Cantos;*[28] it conveys Pound's method of juxtaposition and superimposition in pursuit of "language charged with meaning to the highest possible degree".[29] It also suggests the creation of pattern, which Pound firmly believed "*ought* to be discoverable"[30] and which he saw as either permanent or recurrent. As such, "Ply over ply" defines both Pound's quest for order and his method of creating that order.

The idea of a "cultural dynasty" is an attempt to monitor Pound's ordering of ideas; canto 6, as we have noted, is devoted to a vision of the interaction of ideas and personal energies. Canto 36 should not be ignored in this respect, for through it Pound developes one of the relationships of canto 6, around his important Latin dictum: "Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu."(36/180). This line follows the translation of Cavalcanti's treatise on the nature of human love, and it anchors his sense of the attachment between the senses and love. In doing so, it voices Pound's belief in what he saw as a persistent cultural tendency, reaching from pagan times through to the beginnings of the Renaissance, towards a refinement of the notion of sexual love. He isolates this refined idea in the work of the troubadours and those who inherited their art,

and in this canto, it is Sordello and Cavalcanti who are singled out. We know from canto 6 that Pound considered Sordello to be capable of *great beauty in his love-lyrics;* we also know of his abduction of and relationship with Cunizza, who is depicted as a vital, sexually energetic and innovative woman who activates her sphere of influence. So it is with this idea of Sordello that we approach canto 36:

> Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu.
> Lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana
> of a castle named Gioto.
> (36/180)

The Provencal line from the *vida* introduces an account of Sordello's rewards for services as a soldier and his reaction ("'And what the hell do I know about dye-works?!'"(36/142)), all of which Pound injects with the vigour and energy of the troubadour's personality by means of ellipsis, direct speech, uneven rhythmic pattern and inconsistent use of tenses: a kind of sweeping portrait of the prototypical "emancipated poet".[11] The canto ends, however, with a return to the tone of "Sacrum, sacrum ...":

> Quan ben m'albir e mon ric pensamen.
> (36/180)

The line comes from a stanza by Sordello, and it is worth quoting the whole in translation, for it gives one an idea of the qualities which Pound perceived as constituting a ritual worship of woman akin to a reaching towards a vision of an ideal:

> When I consider well in my proud thoughts
> [*Quan ben m'albir e mon ric pensamen*]
> of her to whom I give myself up and surrender myself, what kind she is,
> I love her so much, because her worth is beyond that of the delightful women that exist,
> that in the matter of love I esteem each one as nothing,
> and since I know no other in the world so worthy
> of whom I might take pleasure lying kissing;

for I do not want to taste any fruit
through which the sweet should turn sour for me[42]

The single line at the end of canto 36 is meant to represent both Sordello's proclamation of the beauty of love and of sex, and his affiliation to a tradition that is based upon this aesthetic, shared by both the troubadours and the poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*.

This chapter has attempted to show how Pound tried "to make the *Cantos* historic ... not fiction."(1960),[43] by approximating the tones of *history as closely as possible. It is important to be aware* that, while Pound was aiming for a kind of historical authenticity or truth in the *Cantos*, his treatment of the Provencal material nevertheless transmutes, by its association with other elements (such as Neoplatonism and Eleusis) into something more akin to myth. This is because the factual components, both in terms of history and ideas, are blended so as to become symbols in Pound's idiosyncratic vision of the Universe: a vision in which sexual love takes its place in a context of fertility and illumination and cosmic order.

11.0 FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 4

1. McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition*, pp. 138-39.
2. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.58.
3. Foster, "Pound's Revision of Cantos I-III", p.244.
4. Donald Hall, "Ezra Pound: An Interview", *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* (New York: Compass Books, 1965.) p.38.
5. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.84.
6. Ibid. p.158.
7. Foster, "Pound's Revision of Cantos I-III", p.244.
8. Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, p.87.
9. Kuberski, "Ego Scriptor: Pound's Odyssean Writing", p.36.
10. Pound, *The Selected Letters*, pp.322-23.
11. Davie, *Pound*, p.23.
12. Wilhelm, *Il Miglior Fabbro: The Cult of the Difficult in Daniel, Dante and Pound*, p.86.
13. Pound, *Selected Prose*, p.290.
14. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.73.
15. Ibid. p.204.
16. Cookson, *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, p.13.

17. Translated by Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 1, p.23.

18. Ibid. p.23.

19. Ibid. p.24.

20. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.79.

21. Ibid. p.79.

22. Ibid. pp.79-80.

23. From Rolandini chronicle, lib. V, cap 3, in Chabaneau, quoted by Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 1, p.27.

24. Ibid. p.26.

25. Pound, *Selected Prose* p.290.

26. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.81.

27. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, p.44.

28. Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement*, p.118.

29. Ibid. p.117.

30. Pound, *Guide to Kulchur*, pp.107-08.

31. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Volume 1, pp.26-27.

32. Emery, *Ideas into Action: A Study of Pound's Cantos*, p.94.

33. Makin, *Provence and Pound*, p.84.

34. Pound, *The Selected Letters*, p.210.

35. Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement*, p.102.

36. Miyake, *Between Confucius and Eleusis*, p.101.

37. Makin, *Pound's Cantos*, p.81.

38. Hugh Witemeyer, "Pound and the Cantos 'Ply over Ply'", *Paideuma*, Volume 9, 1979, pp.229-35.

39. Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York (1934) 1960.) p.36.

40. Pound, *The Selected Letters*, p.293.

41. Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgement*, p.116.

42. Sordello, *Poesie* (ed) Boni, no.III *Atreton del ben chantar finamen*.

43. From an interview with Donald Hall, *Paris Review*, Volume 7, Number 28, 1962.

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