

**Meanings in Madness:**  
a Mental Disability Studies reading of Ezra Pound's the Pisan Cantos

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"but spezzato [splintered] apparently,  
it exists only in fragments unexpected excellent sausage,"

– Ezra Pound

The reader's best course is to attempt perception of the theme in simple dimensions of understanding, then proceed if possible to more complex comprehension... Pound's themes, according to this theory, ought to gain effect when they can be stated in terms of 'meaning,' concepts which directly communicate an emotion, a reaction, or best of all a proposition approximating an idea or opinion.

– Earle Davis

"The consciousness of madness, in European culture at least, has never formed an obvious and monolithic fact"– Michel Foucault

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## **Meanings in Madness:**

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### **Introduction: meanings in madness**

Ezra Pound has clear authorial intentions for his 40 year work, the Cantos, of which the Pisan Cantos form a pivotal evolution, as well as an independent series of 11 poems. Meanings do exist, at least in the author's corporeal mental vision. Yet, the text remains notoriously difficult. Under-analyzed in both Disability Studies and Pound scholarship, what meanings come into being through Pound's madness?— through writing lengthy poems in a mad state, and through scholastic study of difficult poems in a mad state?

In 1948, Pound was imprisoned outside of Pisa, held as a traitor. Locked in a cage, flooded with light at night, he was exposed constantly to the elements for three weeks.<sup>1</sup> Here, during and after this maltreatment, he wrote the 11 lengthy poems of the Pisan Cantos. Regardless of any diagnoses, of Schizophrenia or otherwise, Pound certainly endured Post-Traumatic Stress. But after his confinement, he was deemed unfit to stand trial for his treason, and transferred to St. Elizabeth's hospital. For these reasons, this paper will examine the Pisan Cantos through the lens of Disability Studies and Mental Disability Studies.

First, we must find appropriate language for madness, and locate Disability— especially the difficult to pinpoint locations of madness. Was Pound mad enough to warrant study in a Disability Studies vein? We must next make sure we are asking the correct questions about madness, Disability and the poetry of such. The most central questions become,

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<sup>1</sup> Sieburth, XIV

does poetry “mean something different” (Davidson, 597) when the author is mad? And, how can authors deconstruct normalcy through difficult poetry? Turning to the poetry itself, this paper will analyze the motif of birds on telephone wires, insisting that it is Pound’s meticulous revisionary process that transforms a manic or psychotic detailing of birds on wires into the notes on a modern musical staff. Assuming *Race* to be a fiction, or perhaps a delusion, Pound’s racism will come under specific concentration, looking for War Prison race-relation realities. A lengthy analysis of economics in the Pisan Cantos will expose important becomings of the series. Through an equally lengthy study of names of deities and mythological heroes throughout the series, this paper will arrive at consistent and evolving meta-narratives— clearly with authorial intent. The penultimate section reveals what eyes can show us throughout the Pisan Cantos, and the final section will arrive at some disturbing understanding of Pound’s fascist moralities.

Pound’s poetics are most difficult to represent accurately on the page. For this reason, and to save paper, this paper will employ backslashes to represent line-breaks. However, Pound’s text employs backslashes, itself, usually following an abbreviation. In these instances, the parenthetical line citation will be accurate, not counting the abbreviation backslash as a line-break. For the same reason, as Pound uses ellipses in the work, this paper will employ brackets when shortening quotations. Brackets will also be employed around transcriptions of non-English alphabets. However, again, Pound uses parentheses and brackets in his work. Often these are singular, leaving open the parentheses, or only closing them. In an effort to

not go crazier, I have not devised a system for differentiating these, and left them simply as a further splintering of Pound's text and all analysis thereof.

### **Language of Madness: disorder erasure and corporeal mental states**

How does one put madness into words? Writing specifically about madness, Margaret Price cites Disability scholar Tanya Titchkosky, saying, "the aim of analyzing language about disability should not be to mandate particular terms but rather 'to examine what our current articulations of disability are saying in the here and now.'" (Price, 298) I would further this, asking what does the language of madness say in prior periods across time and space.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, American sociologist Irving Goffman writes using the language of Mental Illness. In a pre-Foucaultian gesture, Goffman quotes Elaine and John Cumming, "Clinical experience supports the impression that many people define mental illness as 'that condition for which a person is treated in a mental hospital...' Mental illness, it seems, is a condition which afflicts people who must go to a mental institution, but until they go almost anything they do is normal." (Goffman, 128, note 2) At the time of Goffman's writing, it is entirely one's confinement in a mental institution that always-already creates one's status as Mentally Ill. In retrospect a mental patient has always been crazy, but this retrospection is only accessible once confinement in a mental institution renders that person no longer normal.

Price, however, deconstructs the binary nature of the terms Mental Illness and Mental Health: "This well/unwell paradigm has many problems, particularly its implication that a mad person needs to be 'cured' by some means... Health insurance operates on a 'cure' basis, demanding 'progress' reports from therapists and social workers. (Price, 300) The power structures of Health Care companies and the Pharmaceutical syndicate reveal themselves as truly cancerous, when necessary treatment is stopped due to such progress, or unnecessary treatment forced due to lack of such progress. Deemed incurable at St. Elizabeth's Mental Hospital, Pound was released. A further dynamic of the Medical Model reveals itself; with no power over his mind or body to make more normative, medical authority need not confine or experiment on him at all.

As a result of these imbalanced power dynamics, I employ erasure of the term disorder when applied to diagnoses, such as in Mood Disorder or Psychotic Disorder. Returning to language of late-1940s America, the original standardized classifications of diagnoses— such as in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of 1952, and the Standard Classified Nomenclature of Disease of 1935— significantly employ the term reaction, as in Psychotic Reaction. But where do these states of mind exist, where is madness located?

To Price, the Cartesian mind is inadequate terminology for the location of madness. It creates an unavoidably simplistic and binary distinction between the body machine, and the ghost or spirit of the mind operating that machine. For Price, madness urgently exists in social systems, in the ethics of care, and in atrocities created by the false claims of scientifically objective coercion. And she further

discounts the medicalized term brain, deeming this a similar oversimplification. Current Post-humanist theory insists on corporeality as foundational to being in the world, we do not merely exist in the space between our skull, we exist in our bodies, but additionally in our interaction with others' bodies.

Concluding her "Naming and Definition" section, Price slips into first person, describing her personal preferences for Mental Disability as the nomenclature of madness, but arguing we should all dis-agree in Disability Studies. With this in mind, I posit the term for madnenses I will use in this paper: corporeal mental states. Corporeal mental states are firmly rooted in our bodies; they are grounded in societies; and they can be unruly or easily governed. The term is easily understood; everyone knows what state of being is connoted by a mental state, with no explicit references required to non-normativity, or still too-often stigmatized disability and madness. However, my term lacks the coalition-building potential, inclusiveness, and community of the term Mental Disability.

I self-identify as Mad, Mentally Disabled and as a Psychiatric Consumer; for efficacious purposes of full disclosure, as a medicated Schizophrenic; for humor, as bat-shit; for braggadocio, as a crazy person. Unacceptable, and beyond offensive to me, however, Looney-Tunes is a term derived from the television show of the same name; not merely bestial status and associated stigma, not merely cartoonish, unbelievable, and derisively humorous, but all of these in one term. The cartoon show is funny; applying those flat caricatures of lunatics to real people is not.



### **Where is Disability? stigma and the Cultural Model of Disability**

The controversies surrounding Ezra Pound's corporeal mental states— including his anti-semitism, unapologetic fascism, his contested-by-many diagnosis of schizophrenia, and his undeniably severe inability at reality-checking— lead literary critics and Pound scholars to either apologia or condemnation. This necessity, to either defend or dismiss his mental states, is nothing more or less than yet another example of "a world incapable of valuing disability or recognizing the value generated by disability." (Johnson and McRuer, 8.2, 137) Where is the value of Pound's mental states— not despite his racism and fascism, but within these horrifying states. (And what else is racism than madness, since race itself does not logically exist?) De-stigmatizing disability and madness enables broader cultural understandings, revealing normative realities located within the non-normative dis-realities.

Most specifically, Disability is located in systems that create stigma. Lerita Coleman Brown states, "during certain historical periods, in specific cultures or within particular social groups, some human differences are valued and desired, and other human differences are devalued, feared, or stigmatized." (Colman Brown, 147) Disability is one such system. She then arrives at the heart of stigma, "stigma, then, is also a term that connotes a relationship. It seems that this relationship is vital to understanding the stigmatizing process. Stigma allows some individuals to feel superior to others... In order for one person to feel superior, there must be another person who is perceived to be or who actually feels inferior." (Colman Brown, 149)

This essential observation, that stigma is a relationship, exposes what Lennard Davis describes in terms of normativity: that inequality is at the core of all binary systems, that stigma and normativity elevates one person is only at the expense of denigrating another person— frequently someone different in bodily ways.

Essential to all non-stigmatized understandings of disability and corporeal mental states is political Disability Activism. Turning to David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder,

a critique of these eugenic locations comes into being largely in the wake of the development of politicized disability efforts. Without these politicized efforts to reclaim disability as something more than tragedy, dysfunction, and misfortune, we would not be able to fully comprehend the entrapment of these other cultural locations... These arenas of politicized endeavor occupy an alternative ground without which these critiques could not be articulated. (Snyder and Mitchell, Cultural Locations, 4)

Tragedy, dysfunction, misfortune: this is the language of stigmatized understanding of bodily and mental difference in what has become known as the Medical Model of Disability. Yet, and most importantly, it is activism that enables any proto-notion of disability to intellectually migrate from those negative terms. Only when political activists claimed Disability as a sect of identity politics could intellectuals grasp the concept, a far cry from vanguardism. How does Pound's poetry accomplish similar activism, though through ideology, influencing our very perceptions of normativity?

Mitchell continues on the subject of the Medical Model, "these institutional, and largely scientific, ways of knowing disability... form a link in the chain of complicity that colludes (knowingly or unknowingly) to limit the freedoms and mobility of people with disabilities... Their modus operandi consists of efforts to classify and pathologize human differences (known today as disabilities) and then

manage them through various institutional locations.” (Snyder and Mitchell, Cultural Locations, 4-5) Disability becomes another Foucaultian system of control, wherein even the most benign efforts to classify and differentiate ultimately, and inevitably, lead to stigma, control, containment and attempts to eradicate.

So, beyond activism, past medicalized stigma, where does disability reside? Mitchell and Snyder, again, “the trend in Disability Studies for years has been to distinguish between disability and impairment, arguing that the latter term is a neutral designator of biological difference while the former represents a social process termed ‘disablement’.” (Snyder and Mitchell, Cultural Locations, 6) Refusal to locate the problems of disability in impaired bodies leaves the problems of disability entirely in social constructions. However, this Social Model of Disability is insufficient for Mitchell and Snyder, as well as other North American Disability Studies scholars. As Susan Wendell argues, “the distinction between the biological reality of disability and the social construction of a disability cannot be made sharply.” (found in Snyder and Mitchell, Cultural Locations, 7) More complex understandings of this Cultural Model of Disability can be compared to how Judith Butler describes the limits of linguistic constructivism, “to claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body.” (Butler, 10) Applying that Butleresque body logic to Disability Studies, there is no understanding of the body, either as a strictly

medicalized skin-envelope or as strictly societal abstraction, which is not mitigated by cultural understandings of both.

### **Hard to Pinpoint Mental States**

This synthesizing of the Cultural Model of Disability proves especially necessary when talking about corporeal mental states. Writing of the sensory disability of blindness, Titchkosky notices how one blind man— severely though still partially blind— becomes more blind as his vision deteriorates.<sup>2</sup> The problem raised is the binary description of blind/seeing to describe this disability. If one is either blind, yes or no, how can one become more blind? So Titchkosky adds a full additional axis to this yes/no binary, demanding we locate disability on the multiple planes of a map— a quadratic expansion of that binary system. Hence the importance of the North American Cultural Disability Model: resoundingly non-binary. Yet, corporeal mental states are most exceptionally difficult to pinpoint on this Disability map, no matter the number of axes employed.

To follow Anna Mollow in the map of Disability, “The strategy of maintaining a focus on social oppression rather than personal suffering — or on ‘disability’ as opposed to ‘impairment’— risks reifying a dichotomy that does not easily apply to disorders like depression [or other corporeal mental states].” (Mollow, 417) Unfortunately, the collective experience model excludes those disabled by corporeal mental states, who either have little in common with one another, or who find little happiness in being “understood.” Mollow furthers her point,

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<sup>2</sup>Titchkosky, 108

saying, "Disability Studies' emphasis upon observable manifestations of impairments makes it difficult to know how to begin thinking about a condition like depression [and other corporeal mental states] which is primarily a subjective experience." (Mollow, 416) Pushing her further still, what could be more subjective than mental states? Nothing can be more diverse than even normative mental states, even a single person's normative mental state, temporally changing dramatically in response to nigh every stimulus. Inclusion of multiple persons' normative mental states exponentially expands this diversity. I resignedly argue that the difference from normative mental states to non-normative mental states— though certainly swinging swifter or slower, and further in all directions, and subject to periodic or sustained riots and invasions— is very slight compared to the vast spectrum of mammalian emotional neurochemical coding.

Drastically expanding the difficulties in pinning down corporeal mental states, Bradley Lewis quotes an APA communique responding to Mad Pride hunger strikes, establishing that "brain science has not advanced to the point where scientists or clinicians can point to readily discernible pathological lesions or genetic abnormalities that in and of themselves serve as a reliable or predictive biomarkers [sic] of a given mental disorder." (Lewis, 124) No predictive biological markers: this means there is no hard proof corporeal mental states exist in the brain at all.

Mollow writes here specifically about the corporeal mental state of depression, but what can be made of corporeal mental states that differ vastly in affect? "[Depression] is an experience characterized by suffering." (Mollow, 416) Diagnoses of Schizophrenia do not

necessarily include mood non-normativity— though certainly its sub-type Schizoaffective does. Indeed, Pound's corporeal mental state seems closer to oblivious of suffering, oblivious to his own suffering in War Prison— when he was incredibly productive, writing the eleven lengthy poems of the Pisan Cantos— and also of the suffering of others while continuing to espouse Nazi politics of eugenics.

All this raises the question, was Ezra Pound a real or true or otherwise actual Schizophrenic in Medical Model understandings of the term?— though I will soon dismiss this question as both an impossible-to-answer oversimplification, and irrelevant to my project. Kay Redfield Jamison numbers Pound among her lengthy list of potential misdiagnoses of Schizophrenia which should be of Bipolarity.<sup>3</sup> Many would-be defenders of Pound argue he owned no madness at all, that his diagnosis was a political maneuver to save a poetic genius— and white, able-bodied, heterosexually married male— from the firing squad or hangman's noose. And William Chessick, writing in 1999, argues that, "Ezra Pound defies classification in DSM-IV; his pathology can be much better explained as slippage back and forth on the ego axis." (Chessick, 248) Though a steadfast critic of the American Psychiatric Association handbook the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Chessick— indeed, it seems very few top psychiatrists support the DSM, only referring to it at the insistence of Health Insurance companies and the Pharmaceutical syndicate— still works within the medical model, with the same dangerous assumptions of power and deficit.

As Jonathan Metzl argues, this type of biographical diagnosis is merely a psychiatric power-trip, akin to historiographical presentism.

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<sup>3</sup> Jamison, 268

He says, "present day definitions of schizophrenia make sense to us only in the context of contemporary doctor-patient interactions, diagnostic imaging technologies, insurance battles, pharmaceutical treatments, health-care aesthetics, social networks, and a host of other variables that were simply not relevant [then]." (Metzl, 26) Metzl goes on to establish Schizophrenia as a fundamentally unstable category, statistically, even within diagnostic standardizations. He establishes Schizophrenia as non-violent in the 1920s-1950s, and explicitly violent in the 1960s-1970s— significantly, exactly when racial unrest and the Civil Rights movement dramatically changed the racial and gender demographics of who was diagnosed as such.<sup>4</sup>

As to the question was Pound mad or not, in 1948, when he was deemed unfit to stand trial for political treason, in that historical moment, early in the standardization of Medical Model diagnoses, the diagnosis that four psychiatrists deemed Pound closest to was Schizophrenia. The inconsequential question becomes, was Pound Schizophrenic enough? This returns us to issues of depression as Disability, what constitutes depressed enough to warrant reasonable accommodations.

For my analysis, given the constructed nature of diagnoses and the shifting nature of any notion of real, true or actual Schizophrenia, that Ezra Pound was diagnosed in 1948 as Schizophrenic is indeed Schizophrenic enough. Furthermore, writing in the same time-period, Goffman's standard, of madness afflicting only those in a mental ward, would further cast Pound as certainly mad enough.

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<sup>4</sup> Metzl, *xiii-xiv*

### **Asking the Right Questions: mental disability in literature**

Leading Disability in Literature scholar Michael Berube focuses entirely on disabilities of characters within narratives, spending little time asking questions about any authors' disability, and what it means to read texts through that lens. His necessary project is one of destigmatization in interpretations of Disability, in popular culture and in more ambitiously literary texts. In doing so, he creates a separate camp for this field, entirely an ideological study of narrative-selves, or characters, with disabilities, versus those who would analyze authors', artists', and poets' works as owners of disability, themselves.

Michael Davidson asks exactly those questions. In the chapter on *Disability Poetics* in the Oxford Handbook of Modern and Contemporary Poetry, he poses the question, "what would it mean to read... Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, and John Berryman not only as confessional poets but as persons who lived with depression or bipolar disorder, for whom personal testimony was accompanied by hospitalization, medicalization, and family trauma." (Davidson, 590) He then answers his own question. Speaking of Larry Eigner, poet and cerebral palsy survivor, Davidson says, "such precise recordings of sights and sounds might be seen as any poet's attention to detail, but when read as a record of limited mobility and starkly restricted perspective, such attentiveness means something different." (Davidson, 597) Davidson's *means something different* will become my central question regarding Pound, his diagnosis of Schizophrenia, and the Pisan Cantos— answered by close-reading in the following sections.



However, Davidson's lengthy analysis of William Carlos Williams may pose questions larger than my project can address.

Williams's formal innovations in free verse are marked by his own experience of disability following a series of strokes beginning in 1952 that left him partially paralyzed with his speech slurred. To this extent, the prosthetic character of disability to support modernist innovation is extended to the formal means of poetic production... Many critics feel that Williams development of a triadic, stepped line beginning with "the Descent" passage from Patterson 2 was a direct outcome of his strokes, a typographic response to his newly vulnerable body and speech. There is no indication that Williams formulated his stepped line in this manner, but it leaves open the degree to which physical limits have powerful effects on formal strategies. (Davidson, 588)

Direct outcomes of disability and corporeal mental states are difficult to state categorically. Williams was an innovator throughout his poetic career; it is impossible to say whether his stepped-line developed from vulnerability and non-normative speech patterns, or merely another bright idea. Pound's disability is far from a vulnerability, is closer to a grandiosity, considering himself far more influential in affairs both personal and international than anyone could be capable of. He did once wield such power, not over nation-states and world wars, but over the poetic innovations of Modernism. Do Pound's fruitful, highly motivated, early years speak to an eccentric and bizarre innovator, or an already mad genius? This becomes exceedingly more difficult without the specific dates of a stroke or complete breakdown; we simply cannot know when Pound's severe non-normativity developed. In current understandings, Schizophrenia typically manifests itself in early adulthood, in one's 20s or 30s. If Pound's corporeal mental state held up to these contemporary understandings of Schizophrenia, it may well be that Modernist poets entirely owe the formal innovation of Pound's early career, thirty

years prior to his imprisonment in 1948, to Pound's non-normative mental state. Again, this analysis is beyond the scope of my project. But the links between innovation and outside-the-box thinking enabled by Disability and corporeal mental states demands further study, though by the nature of these questions, they must be left open.

So the last question asked by this section becomes, if, as Lennard Davis states of the novel and its bourgeois narrative-selves, "normalcy must constantly be enforced in public venues (like the novel), must always be creating and bolstering its image by processing, comparing, constructing, deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal" (Davis, *Constructing Normalcy*, 26), may poems written in the mid-20th century, in a severely non-normative corporeal mental state, deconstruct normalcy?

Garland Thomson furthers this idea by referring to Glossy Magazine syndicate, such as People Magazine photographs of disabled supermodel Amy Mullins, stating "these images imply that the same capitalist system in its drive to harvest new markets can produce politically progressive counter images and counternarratives... Images of disable fashion models are both complicit and critical of the beauty system that oppresses all women. Nevertheless, they suggest that consumer culture can provide the raw material for its own critique." (Thomson, 350) 1990's alternative culture can deconstruct normalcy, as well, as novels. But can High Modernist poems overcome stigma in such a way?

Returning to Coleman Brown, "when people find it necessary or beneficial to perceive their fundamental similarities they share with stigmatized people rather than the differences, we will see the

beginnings of a real elimination of stigma." (Coleman Brown, 158) Can Pound's project be said to accomplish such a task? Do he and his work effect normative culture? Do they effect culture through ideology, through academia pursuits, through popular culture, through Zeitgeist, or Universal Consciousness manipulation? This would be madness activism, perhaps less effective than those in wheelchairs taking sledgehammers to inaccessible curbs, but, perhaps only less immediate.

Now asking the right questions, we turn to the poetry of the Pisan Cantos, itself.

### **Birds on Wires**

One of the most celebrated elements of the Pisan Cantos, the combination of Canto 75— the majority of which is a handwritten transcription of Francesco da Milano's 16th Century "Song of the Birds"— and lines from Canto 79 and Canto 82— where Pound documents birds alighting on telephone wires— can be interpreted as a non-stigmatized corporeal mental state.

The shortest of the Pisan Cantos, Canto 75 features two pages of musical notation hand-written by Olga Rudge, violinist and Pound's longtime romantic companion. This text is an abbreviation by Gerhart Munch of "Le Chant des Oiseaux", or Song of the Birds, originally composed in the 15th Century by Clement Jannequin. Munch, however, was working with 16th Century version of Francesco da Milano— and by including this exact version of the song, Pound establishes a trope of Keatsean un-dying birdsong.

Before the song notation begins, the Canto starts with the lines, "Out of Phlegethon!/ out of Phlegethon" (75.1-2), referencing the name of the river of lava in Hades. Positioned as the second Canto in the section that was to be Pound's "Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell" (81.141), the above lines become a transition from the river of lava to the song of the birds. Pound attempts to ascend through music from the hell of War Prison, to his "serene philosophical heaven" (Bush, 261), and the only tolerable music available to him there was bird song.

By Canto 79, Pound surrenders much of his manuscript to patches of dialogue from prison staff, and he notices that birds on telephone wires resemble musical staff notes.

" with 8 birds on a wire/ or rather on 3 wires" (79.37-38)  
"4 birds on 3 wires, one bird on one" (79.66)  
"5 of 'em now on 2;/ on 3; 7 on 4/... 5 on 3" (79.74-78)  
"2 on 2/...3 on 3" (79.104-107)  
"f f/ d/ g/ write the birds in their treble scale" (82.77-80)

Yet none of these birds on telephone wires correlate to the modern musical notation hexachord, with five lines on the musical staff, whose inventor is named in this very Canto— Guido d' Arezzo. (79.76) Unmedicated psychotics inclined to poetry write manically, with every detail noticed seemingly worthy of documentation in verse.<sup>5</sup> What should be celebrated in Pound's obsessive detailing is his levels of revision— even while in a medical tent after his severe breakdown onset. Through equally obsessive revision, he builds the inconsequential number of birds on number of telephone wires into a motif related to the centuries old "Song of the Birds."

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<sup>5</sup> See Facebook page of Andrew Paleotto, 2013

## **Racism as Madness**

As established in an above section, stigma is a two way street, and Disability across other stigma systems need be analyzed as a give and take relationship, with stigmas on both sides. How do Pound's corporeal mental states converse with, map-out with, the stigma systems he applies to others?

In their article "Unspeakable Offenses: Untangling Race and Disability in Discourses of Intersectionality", Nirmala Erevelles and Andrea Minear outline three potential, diverging approaches to analyzing combinations of differences that lead to stigma:

(1) anticategorical frameworks that insist on race, class and gender as social constructs/ fictions; (2) intracategorical frameworks that critique merely additive approaches to differences as layered stigmas; and (3) constitutive frameworks that describe the structural conditions within which social categories in the above models are constructed by (and intermesh with) each other in specific historical contexts. (Erevelles and Minear, 354)

Erevelles and Minear work within the third, historical approach, wherein specific historical examples— one recent, one from the more distant past— of the combinations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability serve to elucidate the systems of stigma at work, today. The second framework, which tries to stack all stigma-systems, is the least helpful in critical analysis of race and other stigma-systems. However, the first framework— though often equally unproductive in Critical Race Theory, insisting as it does on all these systems as not biological, as fictions, as social constructs, as delusions— will be helpful to this paper in unravelling the stigmas and bigotry of Ezra Pound.

Since race has no biological basis, then it becomes nothing more than fiction, nothing more than delusion. Then what does one do with racism in the world? A vast system of oppression and stigma based entirely on delusion seems very mad, indeed. Can racism be construed as a corporeal mental state, with constructive effect? This section of the paper seeks to find honesties within the racist and anti-Semitic statements and verbiage of Pound's Pisan Cantos, not to support or bolster those statements, not to defend or dismiss those statements— either as “friendly racism”, or as harmless— but to find realities of War Prison race relations.

The most revealing of these statements occurs in Canto 79. Pound says, “Whereas the sight of a good n\*\*\*\*\* is cheering/ the bad’uns wont look you straight” (79.41-42) This racialized commentary reveals more than simply the stigmas of a mad person. Pound distinguishes between a good black person— singular— and the bad black people— plural. Pound is making categorical statements of morality, totalizing people into simplistic binaries— with an assumed authority derived from contemporary social hierarchies based around melanin levels. These moral judgements about groups reveal his socially constructed entitlement, wherein Pound elevates himself to a position of moral superiority. Put simply, this is a racist statement because a fictional group is constructed and stigmatized around skin color. This system is abused by Pound and others through assumed authority to make moral judgements. But the above distinction between a singular good person and the plural bad people speaks to many possible interpretations— none of them based on other than assumption.

Occurring in the same Canto, Pound writes, "Mr G. Scott whistling Lili Marlene/ with positively less musical talent than any man of color/ whom I have ever encountered/ but with bonhomie and good humor" (79.19-23) Though with less offensive language than above, this quotation imposes an assumed skill set—musicality—on a fictional, or delusional group constructed around skin color, and is therefore racist. Viewing race as a fiction, as delusion, it seems mad indeed to assume one should be capable of whistling well, based on the color of one's skin. But it is the assumption that is offensive and dangerous. A further level of corporeal mental states applies. A systemic and widespread assumption based on delusion is paranoid.

And there is a less destructive racism at work, a racism Pound applies to a kind, black face of a guard at the War Prison, "of the Baluba mask: 'doan you tell no one/ I made you this table' (74.319-320) In Canto 81, Pound makes further statements regarding this face of an African-American, "thank Benin for this table ex packing box/ 'doan you tell no one I made it'/ from a mask fine as any in Frankfurt/ 'It'll get you offn th' ground'"(81.67-70) Benin, a cultural and artistic capital of West-Africa famous for its wooden masks, becomes a name for the War Prison guard who builds a makeshift table for Pound to write on. Though Pound's statement is grateful and friendly, it still directly connotes an African-American male with the Primitivism of West African mask art. Not only is this kind officer degraded to a primitive other, with all associated stigma, but the officer's facial bone structure is stereotypically allied with those born in a separate hemisphere.

And the offensive language returns, "(young n\*\*\*\*\* at rest in his wheelbarrow/ in the shade back of the jo-house/ addresses me: Got it made, kid, you got it made./ White boy says: do you speak Jugoslavian?)" (80.458-461) Here, the assumptions, if not the stigma systems, are reversed, as a young black person assumes that Pound has an easy life limited to a cage in War Prison, rather than working in one. And a white person makes assumptions about language speaking that bother Pound, as well.

Though far more tempered than in previous Cantos on usury, Pound does display anti-Semitism throughout the Pisan Cantos. In Canto 74, he writes, "the yidd is a stimulent, and the goyim are cattle/ in gt/ proportion and go to saleable slaughter/ with the maximum of docility." (74.511-513) And the anti-Semitic rhetoric builds in the same Canto, "[SWASTIKA] this cross turns with the sun/ and the goyim are undoubtably in great numbers cattle/ whereas a jew will receive information/ he will gather up information/ faute de... something more solid/ but not in all cases/ [SWASTIKA]" (74.626-632) These passages hint at Pound's belief in a worldwide conspiracy of Jewish people, clearly promoting Nazi genocidal policies, as evidenced by the swastikas.

This paranoid conspiracy and resulting stigma system are fully revealed in Canto 79, "'half dead at the top'/ My dear William B. Y. your 1/2 was too moderate/ 'pragmatic pig" (if goyim) will serve for 2 thirds of it" (79.129-130) Poet and friend William Butler Yeats alludes to the cultural death at the upper echelons of class in society, but Pound takes this quote in a racist direction. The parenthetical, if goyim, refers to non-Jewish people as a consolatory



way of being for the culturally dead social elite— so the quote could be glossed as follows, two thirds of the upper class are pragmatic pigs, but at least they're not Jewish. Read in such a way, the statement references Pound's belief in world-wide banking conspiracy, conducted entirely by Jewish people— a severe paranoia which will be analyzed in the following section on Economics.

### **Unstigmatized Economics**

Writing in 1984, Peter Nichols states of Pound Scholarship, "most previous criticism of his work has, from a variety of motives, sought to keep these different strands separate, tending in particular to drive a wedge between the 'literary' and political dimensions of his writing." (Nicholls, 1) Such a synthesis parallels this paper's project, at a time when political motives could be conceived of as separate from not-as-yet-deconstructed High Modernist Literature; now, the task becomes to weave the strands of Pound's corporeal mental states into his economic, political and aesthetic motifs. Where will an unstigmatized approach to eccentric economics in poetry take us?

To deal first with the most mad of his economics, Pound makes quite clear in the earlier Cantos that he believes in a world-wide banking conspiracy— run by Jewish people, though he downplays this anti-Semitism by the 1948 Pisan Cantos. Regardless of the ethnicity of the alleged banking conspirators— Pound's racism is analyzed in the above section— how delusional, paranoid or based in reality is Pound's understanding of banking?

The answer depends much on whose economic ideology one buys into. Mainstream Keynesian economics supports the Federal Reserve— Pound's greatest mistrust, as developed below; the Austrian School, among others, would dismiss all notes of credit in support of a gold standard — which Pound rails against in the Pisan Cantos, also developed below. However, Earle Davis— a stolid marxist— has this to say about international banking systems:

We can now ask ourselves: Do bankers 'run nations into debt?' How are wars financed? For that matter, how are deficits financed? Most of us think it is real money, 'cash,' which is borrowed from the nation's resources to finance wars. Pound says that the nation borrows 'figures on the books' of banks, i.e., *credit*. The holders of this credit profit automatically from wars. Does this fact constitute a conspiracy? (Davis, *Vision Fugitive*, 79)

From Davis' point of view, Pound's economic conspiracy merely critiques Keynesian banking strategies— though Davis is resoundingly de-racialized. Yet, as espoused in an above section, to be mad, in mid-20th Century, is to be called mad. That Pound's eccentric economics are considered "funny-money" (Davis, *Vision Fugitive*, 78) makes them appear so, often through lack of understanding— the most frequent cause of stigma.

In 2011, Alessandro Lanteri accomplishes a sound break-down of what he calls Pound's "economic ethics", in his article for the Pisa and Rome based journal, *History of Economic Ideas*. Focusing on the theories of Clifford Douglas and Silvio Gesell— and not shying away from terms of "cranks" and "minor economists" (Lanteri, 147)— Lanteri provides a Keynesian analysis of Pound's two major economic influences.

Gesell, to whom antiquity has been kinder than Douglas, invented what is called Stamp Script, a form of currency notes designed to cut-short the hoarding of wealth.

Stamp script is a currency whose nominal value must be upheld by purchasing a stamp and attaching it to the bills. The stamps are due on a fixed dates and in fixed amounts. This way, the holders of banknotes end up paying a tax on currency. In order to avoid paying the stamps, bills holders must spend (or deposit) their money— and in this way they promote economic activity. (Lanteri, 154)

This theory is developed explicitly in the Pisan Cantos in Pound's references to monetary systems experimented with in Worgl, as well as his direct references to Gesell.

Douglas falls more into the "crank" category, and befittingly, Pound owes most of his economics to this figure's A + B Theorem. Douglas understands Capitalism as an imbalance between costs of goods on the market and power to purchase all those goods.<sup>6</sup> This imbalance necessarily results in drive for economic growth— through exports, in the short term, but ultimately only satisfied by bank credit.<sup>7</sup> Far too simplistic to explain the vast interlocking systems of macroeconomics, Breit and Elzinga reject the theory as inaccurate in 1980. The flaws in the A + B Theorem can be explained as, "double-counting. The cost of raw materials should be factored in only once and not cumulatively at each subsequent stage of production." (Lanteri, 151) But regardless of perceived accuracy— we are dealing with both macroeconomics and corporeal mental states— even Keynes believes Douglas "ought to have been on to something." (Lanteri, 152) According to Douglas, national and global debt is increased by economic growth, even despite debt repudiations.<sup>8</sup> And despite perceived inaccuracies, Douglas proposed solutions to what he understood about macroeconomics. "Douglas'

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<sup>6</sup> Davis, *Vision Fugitive*, 24

<sup>7</sup> Lanteri, 150-152

<sup>8</sup> Lanteri, 152

proposals were originally of two kinds. You either subsidize the buyers or the seller, and the government adds the paper money which makes up the difference to either side of the equation." (Davis, *Vision Fugitive*, 103) Regardless of perceived inaccuracies, Pound regards these theories and proposed solutions of Douglas' as revelation on scale with the conversion of St. Paul,<sup>9</sup> and they are woven through the Pisan Cantos— and Pound's Roman radio broadcasts, and his corporeal mental states— as necessary solutions, any deviation from which is damnable and immediately dismissible.

The first reference to economics in the Pisan Cantos occurs in Canto 74, thirty-four lines in: "nor Charlie Sung's money on loan from anonimo/ that is, we suppose Charlie had some/ and in India the rate down to 18 hundred/ but the local loan lice provided from imported bankers/ so the total interest sweated out of the Indian farmers rose in Churchillian grandeur/ as when, plus when, he returned to the putrid gold standard/ as was about 1925" (74.34-41) Pound is flatly against any gold standard, but avid in his criticism of banking loans, demeaning those who charge interest on loans to carnivorous insects. Paralleling British colonialism, these Banking systems— according to Pound— subjected Indian farmers to systems of monetary interest, working to support a system that does the workers little good. Only the British elite— such as Winston Churchill— become more grand on the backs of this work.

And his interest in government banking systems are developed in the same Canto: "and the fleet at Salamis made with money lent by the state to/ shipwrights/ [...] Never inside the county to raise the

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<sup>9</sup> Lanteri, 150

standard of living/ but always abroad to increase the profits of usurers/ dixit Lenin,/ and gun sales lead to more gun sales/ they do not clutter the market for gunnary/ there is no saturation" (74.161-169) Repeatedly referenced in the Pisan Cantos, Salamis represents governments loaning money to build fleets, and also the victory of this strategy. Pound was convinced he could turn the Soviets to his theory of fiscal policy,<sup>10</sup> hence the reference to Lenin. The conspiracy of bankers is evident, here, comparable to war profiteering— though at this stage of his life's work, the rhetoric amounts to little more than complaining.

Certainly his most impactful tirade occurs some 250 lines later in Canto 74, "so lay the men in Circe's swine-sty;/ *ivi in haum ego ac vidi cadaveres animae/ [...]* Robbing the public for private individual's gain [THELGEIN]/ every bank of discount is downright iniquity/ robbing the public for private individual's gain/ *nec benecomata Kirke, mah [kaka phurgak edoken]*" (74.404-424) This references Odysseus' men turned into pigs by Circe, then an ideological system of acquiring personal wealth is under attack, then what translates to bewitching, and a notion of unfairness. But unfairness exists in Pound's corporeal mental state because he believes in a notion of universal fairness

This unfairness and fairness develops further, as Pound expands his distaste for the gold standard, developing it into alteration of monetary values of gold. "It's downright iniquity said John Adams/ at 35 instead of 21.65" (74.496-497)— the later half of the quotation refers to this change. But it also points to why Lanteri focuses his article on the ethics of economics. Iniquity, gross inequality: Pound

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<sup>10</sup> Sieburth, 122, note 74.161-69

assumes some notion of world-wide fairness, hardly an effective strategy for economic growth. Perhaps Ezra Pound's morality— his famous generosity and sheer niceness, as well as his optimism that macroeconomic systems can be changed for the better, or at all, or that world leaders would act in the interests of such an unprofitable change — is the ultimate flaw of his economic theories.

The economics of Canto 74 also delve into the theories of Gesell:

“and the two largest rackets are the alternation/ of the value of money/ (of the unit of money METANTHEMENON TE TON KRUMENON/ and usury @60 or lending/ that which is made out of nothing/ and the state can lend money as was done/ by Athens for the building of the Salamis fleet/ and if the packets get lost in transit/ ask Churchill's backers/ where it has got to the state need not borrow/ nor do the veterans need state guarantees/ for private usurious lending/ in fact that is the cat in the woodshed/ the state need not borrow/ as was shown by the mayor of Worgl/ [...] and when a note of the small town of Worgl went over/ a counter in Innsbruck/ and the banker saw it go over/ all the slobes in Europe were terrified/ [...] But in Russia they bungled and did not apparently/ grasp the idea of work-certificate/ and started N.E.P. with disaster (74.537-570)

Here, Pound points to two of what he considers the major flaws of contemporary economics: changing monetary value, and heavy interest charged on bank loans— Metanthenon refers to the former. Salamis' government loan is referenced, again, along with its historical location in Athens. But the Austrian town of Worgl represents a venture into Gesell's expiring money<sup>11</sup>— also repeatedly referenced in the Pisan Cantos. Again, the Soviet economic policy is deemed a disaster, because they are out of line with Pound's vision. And Gesell is mentioned specifically by name, forty lines later, “Gesell entered the Lindhauer government/ which lasted rather less than 5 days/ but was acquitted as an innocent stranger.” (74.610-612) This figure's time in

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<sup>11</sup> Sieburth, 127, note 74.552-67

government did not last long— paralleling Pound's continuing belief in Fascism as a system that was working, but cut short before reaching full effect.

Canto 75 does not reference economics at all— as established in an above section— nor does the majority of Canto 76. Yet the following lines appear, addressing government systems, and adding a necessary element of Pound's understanding of governments as they relates to monetary systems: "and if theft be the main principle of government/ (every bank of discount J. Adams remarked)/ there will be larceny on a minor pattern/ a few camions, a stray packet of sugar/ and the effect of movies," (76.161-165) Here is the crux of Pound's defense of Fascism. In his corporeal mental state, the only point of government is theft, so with strictly fascist governance, this theft will be minimized, and there will be stray luxuries, and ideology of movies to satisfy the people.

And the last lines of Canto 76 return to the economic theme, referencing the island of the Sun God, where Odysseus slaughtered the sacred cattle. "to eat remnants/ for a usurers holiday to change the/ price of a currency/ METATHEMENON/ NESON AMUMONA" (76.331-335)— the final lines reference the noble island of the Sun God. This alludes to the meaty economics of the following Canto, where this theme is developed in full earnest. Pound declaims, "it is recorded, the state can lend money/ as proved at Salamis/ and for notes on monopoly/ Thales; and credit, Siena;/ [...] interest on all it creates out of nothing/ the bugging bank has; pure iniquity/ and to change the value of money, of the unit of/ money/ METATHEMENON/ we are not yet out of that chapter" (77.119-130) The economic understandings of Douglas are

again referenced in Salamis, and furthered by references to Thales and Siena. Thales was a agriculture speculator at the time of Aristotle, and Siena demonstrated a system of credit also based on agricultural growth.<sup>12</sup> This is the main statement of the economic strands of the Pisan Cantos, that economic growth can and should occur through natural growth, agricultural growth, not based on numbers in books. As developed in a later section, after he learns that WWII is over— an evolution occurring in the first hundred lines of Canto 77— Pound can fully expound on these theories, beyond mere complaining. Only after WWII becomes over for Pound, can he provide a full vision for his global economics.

And this Canto continues with, “‘And with the return of the gold standard’ wrote Sir Montagu/ ‘every peasant had to pay twice as much grain/ to cover his taxes and interest’/ It is true that the interest is now legally lower/ but the banks lend to the bunya/ who can thus lend more to his victims” (77.291-296) Again covering his distrust of any gold standard of money, and how such systems are immeshed, Canto 77 becomes the primary economic statement of the Pisan sequence.

Yet Pound’s economic themes are far from over, though they do thin out over final six poems. As Canto 78 adds, “‘and the economic war has begun/ [...] Firms failed as far off as Avignon” (78.22-28) The economic effects of WWII were felt all over France. Canto 78 continues,

Geneva the usurers dunghill/ Frogs, brits, with a few dutch pimps/ as top dressing to preface extortions/ and the usual filthiness/ for detail see Odon’s neat little volume/ , that is, for a few of the more obvious details,/ the root stench being usura and METATHEMENOM/ and Churchill’s return to Midas broadcast

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<sup>12</sup> Sieburth, 137, footnote 77.121-122



by his liary/ 'No longer necessary,' taxes are no longer  
necessary/ in the old way if it (money) be based on work done/  
inside a system and measured and gauged to human/ requirements/  
inside the nation or system/ and cancelled in proportion/ to what  
is used and worn out/ a la Worgl [...] and if theft be the main  
motive in government/ in a large way/ there will certainly be  
minor purloinments/ As long as the socialists use their  
accessories as red herring/ to keep man's mind off the creation  
of money (78.159-187)

Geneva, Switzerland is referred to as a dunghill, with Frogs a  
reference to French people, along with the British and Dutch, all of  
whom introduce the extortion that Pound views banking to be. All of  
this is caused by banking interest and changing the value of money. He  
furthers his distaste for the gold standard, by combining references to  
Churchill and Midas. This final economic barrage of Canto 78 ends  
insisting that money be based on labor. However, he adds that money  
must be cancelled, very much in line with Gesell's stamp script,  
followed by a further reference to the town of Worgl. Then comes the  
second passage of his government equals theft rhetoric. Yet Pound  
decries the Socialists for not focusing on what Pound views to be the  
central problem of contemporary economics, the creation of money.

Canto 79 contains only one reference to economics, and this  
passage contains much of the same rhetoric: "'the value thereof'/ that  
is the crux of the matter/ and god damn the perverters/ and if Attlee  
attempts a Ramsey/ 'Leave the Duke and go for the gold'/ in less than a  
geological epoch'/ and the fleet that triumphed at Salamis/ and  
Wilkes's fixed the price per loaf/ [ethos]" (79.88-96) Once again, it  
is the value of money or gold— more specifically changing the value  
thereof— that is viewed as central to the Cantos economic theme.  
Attlee was the new British Prime Minister, after the defeat of  
Churchill, and the reference to Ramsey alludes to that figure's

switching parties from liberal to conservative. Salamis is referenced again, and so is government intervention in civilian economic matters, such as fixing the value of bread to an affordable rate. Pound is stirring himself into a frenzy, cursing and damning, but with less and less to say.

By Canto 80, even Pound admits that he has already said everything he wants to, and that his economic theme wears thin. "and the economic war has begun/ 35 via Balbo/ (Napoleon etc.) Since Waterloo/ nothing etc. Leave the Duke, go for the gold!/ action somewhat sporadic/ 'Will never be used at home/ but abroad to increase the/etc. of the lenders,' the eh... investors" (80.150-157) Employing ellipses and etc.s speaks to this running out of material, and the language itself is equally repetitious. Yet, as developed in the next section, another important evolution of the Pisan Cantos occurs in Canto 80, after which the poems are rejuvenated, aesthetically. By line 705 of Canto 80, the ousting of Churchill becomes something for Pound to celebrate with optimism.

Oh to be in England now that Winston's out/ Now that there's room  
for doubt/ And the bank may be the nation's/ And the long years  
of patience/ And labours vacillations/ May have let the bacon  
come home,/ To watch how they'll slip and slide/ watch how  
they'll try to hide/ the real portent/ [...] to look at the fields;  
are they tilled?/ is the old terrace alive as it might be/ with a  
whole colony/ if money be free again? (80.705-722)

The straightforward rhyme scheme, the very un-Vorticist exclamation of Oh, and the language itself all speak to this optimism. Yet it is not overly realistic to believe that due to a change in the party of the Prime Minister, the foundations of Western capitalism and banking will change to Pound's eccentric beliefs; it is the economic theme that provides the clearest example in these poems of his inability at

reality-checking. And by following Pound's economic statements throughout the Pisan Cantos, it becomes clear that Canto 77 is a lynchpin for this series of poems, as will be developed in the next section.

### **Becomings**

Being in the world is a constant state of becoming, often becoming something different. When being in the world in a non-normative corporeal mental state, these changes are often severely different. Tracing the most significant changes within the entirety of the Pisan Cantos reveals some interior workings to the series, and will become immensely useful to this paper's broader analysis.

The first major evolution of the Pisan Cantos, a change in being which defines the entire series of 11 poems, occurs in Canto 77, and its course spans the entirety of series. In the poem's theme of War Prisoner realities— where Charles Olsen can state Pound "scored" (Sieburth, XVII)— WWII ends. The effects of this war becoming over— for Pound's fascist sympathies, a defeat— ripple across the remaining Cantos in unexpected ways. Pound says, "[I heard it in the s.h. a suitable place/ to hear that the war was over]" (77.91-92) Note the resigned, the war was over, not the exuberant, the war is over. Over and again, Pound still unapologetically supports his lost cause.

To expose the significance of this evolution, an anonymous English speaker has, at this point in the series, asked to be told the books of the bible three times, yet it is only after the war is over that Pound will respond to him. "'Hey Snag, what's in the bibl'? what are the books of the bibl'? Name 'em! don't bullshit me!' 'Hobo

Williams, the queen of them all'" (77.271-274) It is in the wearied ennui of a war lost that Pound finally reveals as Queen of the Bible a character homeless, and perhaps mad.

A second dichotomy of becoming exposes itself in Canto 79, internal to this poem as a single unit. Related to sexuality, yes, but also it could be related to madness, mania and schizophrenia. In Canto 79, there are two distinct styles of writing, the first hectic and manic, and second an ode to the sexualized Lynx form of Zeus,

with 8 birds on a wire/ or rather on 3 wires, Mr. Allingham/ The new Bechstein is electric/ and the lark squawk has passed out of season/ [...] different lice live in different waters/ some minds take pleasure in counterpoint/ pleasure in counterpoint/ and the later Beethoven on the new Bechstein/[...] 4birds on 3 wires, one bird on one/ the imprint of the intaglio depends/ in part on what is pressed under it/ the mould must hold what is poured into it/ in/ discourse/ what matters is/ to get it across e poi basta/ 5 of 'em now on 2;/ on 3; 7 on 4/[...] Bless my buttons a staff car/[...] the young horse whinnies against the sound of the bumm band;/ to that 'gadgett,' and to the production and the slaughter/ (on both sides) in memoriam/ "Hell! don't they get a break for the whistle? (79.37-123)

O Lynx, guard this orchard,/ Keep from Demeter's furrow/ This fruit has a fire within it,/ Pomona, Pomona/ No glass is clearer than are the globes of this flame/ what sea is clearer than the pomegranate body/ holding the flame?/ Pomona, Pomona,/ Lynx keep watch on this orchard/ that is named Melagrana/ or the Pomegranate field/ The sea is not clearer in azure/ Nor the Heliads bring light/ Here are lynxes Here are lynxes (79.207-220)

This first passage may be read as a manic or psychotic episode. The second is a release from this mania, psychosis, and or frustration. The established interpretation of this change between the two passages is sexual, supported by the mythological, sexualized Lynx imagery. But post-Freudian mental illness is not simply sexual repression and release; this evolution could be caused by any of the stresses and easings of a War Prisoner, or poetic luminary, or mad person. For a reading of the Pisan Cantos within Mental Disability Studies, however,

it is an evolution from the biting reality of prison to complete immersion in fantasy.

The final major thematic shift of the Pisan Cantos is the finding of a book of poems in the War Prison camp. Pound says, "that from the gates of death,/ that from the gates of death: Whitman or Lovelace/ found on the jo-house seat at that/ in a cheap edition! (and thanks to Professor Speare)/ hast'ou swum in a sea of air strip/ through an aeon of nothingness,/ when the raft broke and the waters went over me" (80.661-667) Throughout the Pisan Cantos, Pound has had almost no external literature to translate, reference or allude to—merely his Confucius, a Chinese dictionary, a Catholic prayer book, and his memories. In the Mental Disability Studies reading, this lack enables Pound to focus on reality: reality of War Prison, and the shifting reality of his memories. However, with this Found poetry, he returns to the pre-Pisan Cantos form of multi-lingual translations, unannotated quotations, and the mythology and history of his heroes—expounded on in the next section.

The Found volume of poetry rejuvenates Pound's lyricism, and the lust for sonic disincorporation builds his Tower of Babel to the sky. But this book also allows Pound to disengage entirely with his surrounding normative reality, and his following Cantos are absorbed in fantasy, mythology, and idol worship.

### **Inter-Personal Boundaries and God Complex**

What makes a name? And what does naming create? Where does one's own name end, and another's name begin? What are the limits of the corroborative language of naming?

Multiple names of protagonistic narrative-selves run throughout the Pisan Cantos, from Odysseus' pseudonymical response to the Cyclops, to Dionysus, to Aeneas, to Old Ez, himself. An unstigmatized corporeal mental state—perhaps similar to Medical Model diagnoses of God Complex and weak Inter-Personal Boundaries— inundates this morphing from narrative-self to narrative-self. Interpersonal boundaries, or understanding of where the self ends and others begin, can be applied to the narrative-selves named in the Pisan Cantos, and all of these relate to Pound's corporeal mental state. The names and boundaries of what becomes a single protagonistic narrative self— of Deities, Heroes and Pound's own self— are so loosely constructed as to not exist. In his study of the Pisan Cantos, Richard Sieburth notes, "it is a particular feature of Pound's schizopoetics (as Deleuzians might call them) that the position of self and other, subject and object remain ever unstable, ever convertible." (Sieburth, XXXVIII) Pound, along with clearly compromised reality-testing abilities, displays no knowledge of his limits, or even the limits of his own personhood.

In the Pisan Cantos, Pound names people documented in history, in literature and mythology, and from memory. Yet, where does this naming begin and end? Earle Davis is again helpful, saying, "Pound's historical heroes, distinct from his literary and symbolic ones like Odysseus, are the leaders who helped establish order, prosperity, and culture." (Davis, *Vision Fugitive*, 30) This is a clear distinction between narrative-selves over the entirety of this splintered,

fragmented work. The historical figures exist in a different totality from the deities and literary heroes. The historical figures are contained in this poem as optimal leaders, as historical fascists who were benevolent and supported the arts, while the deities and mythological heroes are antagonistic and subjectively related to the artist, himself. Yet, even in this fascist corporeal mental state, the Pisan Cantos do admit a difficulty of this benign fascism— the transfer of power, as will be developed in the final section, on The Process.

Along those lines of distinction, the opening of the poem separates narrative-selves along with their separate names, differentiated between the historical figures and literary or divine figures, "Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,/ Thus Ben and la Clara a *Milano*/ by the heels at *Milano*/[...] DIGONOS, [Digonos], but the twice crucified/ where in history will you find it?" (74.3-9) The translation refers to the twice-born, a name for Dionysus.<sup>13</sup> Sandwiched between historical martyrs and crucified fascists, the mythological antagonistic literary narrative-self develops, and will quickly evolve across many more names: those of deities and of mythological characters.

From Dionysus, to Helios the Sun god's circumnavigation of the sky, "'the great periplum brings in the stars to our shore.'/ You who have passed the pillars and outward from Herakles/ when Lucifer fell in N. Carolina./ [...] OY TIE, OY TIE? Odysseus/ the name of my family." (74.19-24) Finally, it is Odysseus and his pseudonymical response to the Cyclops, of No-man, that becomes the name of Pound's family of names. This line is clearly antagonistic, and pertinent to

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<sup>13</sup> Sieburth, II9, note 74.7

War Prisoner status. Pound is trying to begin a concluding third of his 40 year work, the Cantos, trying to create "Ellysium, though in the halls of hell", (81.141) and he first finds his name in Odysseus confronting the Cyclops. Towering imagery is an architecture of corporeal mental states as Disability, a way to map this type of Disability, as will be developed in a later section.

The No-man motif continues, quickly morphing into deities with, they spoke of Elias/ in telling the tales of Odysseus OY TIE/ OY TIE/ 'I am noman, my name is noman'/ but Wanjina is, shall we say Ouan Jin/ or the man with an education/ and whose mouth was removed by his father/ because he made too many *things*/ whereby they cluttered the bushman's baggage/ [...] Ouan Jin spoke and thereby created the named/ thereby making clutter/ [...] and so his mouth was removed/ as you will find it removed in his pictures/ in principio verbum/ paraclete or the verbum perfectum: sinceritas (74.60-77)

The first deity to appear in the Pisan Cantos is Wanjina, a creator god of native Australia, followed by the name Ouan Jin, translated to man of letters.<sup>14</sup> This is clearly the same narrative-self, two characters becoming the same, a creator and the man with the education who speaks. Pound finds corroborative power in naming, speaking names creates those named. Pound then moves into passages of available quotations from the Catholic Prayer Book, which translates to, in the beginning was the Word, the Holy Ghost, or the perfect Word: sincerity. Pound by splintering texts of the Gospel of John with his own latin, establish this narrative-self as speaking sincerely.

The next deity to appear is female, " and this day the air was made open/ for Kuanon of all delights," (74.130-131) Kuanon is a Chinese goddess of mercy.<sup>15</sup> Female deities return in the same Canto,

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<sup>14</sup> Sieburth, 120-121, note 74.64-74

<sup>15</sup> Sieburth, 122, note 74.131



"sia Cytherea, sia Ixotta, sia in Santa Maria dei Miracoli" (74.190) which translates to: either Aphrodite, either Isotta degli Atti, in the church of Santa Maria of Miracles. In the dual eithers that Pound employs, he establishes them as the same character. There is no great distance between interpersonal boundaries of female narrative selves, either. Isotta, the mistress of Sigismundo Malatesta— himself a 15th century Italian philanthropist— she morphs with the goddess of love. Is this female deity protagonistic? Twenty-two lines later, the moon appears, associated with the goddess of the harvest, "la luna/ thin as Demeter's hair" (74.202-203) This feminized by article moon is crescent, like the goddess of Autumn— Pound's time in War Prison. This is clearly an Other, not the same narrative-self as the protagonistic one. Pound has established himself as the Sun, and the references to a feminized moon as a feminized autumn are not the same narrative-self. With this separation along gender lines of narrative-selves established, we turn to an examination of the different female narrative selves running through the Pisan Cantos.

Aphrodite becomes a major narrative-self in the Cantos. In her second appearance in the Pisan Cantos, Pound writes, "as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her/ and from her manner of walking/ as had Anchises" (74.341-343) This passage refers to recognizing Aphrodite, recognizing beauty, recognizing artistry— as Pound would say, "some minds take pleasure in counterpoint/ pleasure in counterpoint" (79.41). In Canto 76, a similar recognition of beauty occurs, "or Anchises that laid hold of her flanks of air/ drawing her to him/ Cythera potens, [Kuthera, deina]/ no cloud but the crystal body" (76.144-147) Powerful Aphrodite, is the translation, here.

Again, this is recognition of beauty, recognition of art— and both beauty and art, here, are powerful. By Canto 76, Pound can explicitly name Aphrodite by her Latin name, Cythera, and by doing so, directly establishes his Pisan Cantos as finding powerful art.

But returning to Canto 74, Pound cannot yet be sure of the power of his work, and does not name explicitly, rather allude to deities and his heroes indirectly,

but this air brought her ashore a la marina/ with the great shell borne on the seawaves/ nautilus biancastra/ By no means an orderly Dantean rising/ but as the winds veer/ tira libeccio/ now Genji at Suma , tira libeccio/ as the winds veer and the raft is driven/ and the voices , Tiro Alcmene/ with you is Europa nec casta Pasiphae/ Eurus, Apeliota as the winds veer in periplum/ Io son la luna' . Cunizza/ as the winds veer in periplum/ and from under the Rupe Tarpeia/ drunk with wine of the Catelli/ 'in the name of its god' 'Spiritus veni' (74.637-652)

A giant clam shell bears Aphrodite to shore, where she— beauty, art— encounters the Pisan Cantos— modeled after Dante's divine comedy, but considerably less orderly. The winds, the elements, and deities of winds become a major motif to be developed in a later section— understandably, as Pound was exposed to the elements all day and night his first weeks in War Prison, and his cage flooded with light at night.

By Canto 80, still before the becoming of finding the book of poetry, Pound exclaims, "Cythera egoistta" (80.270-275). Beauty and art are selfish. Not yet half-way through this lengthy Canto, Pound struggles to find beauty in his War Prison habitat. But find it he does, "lay there till Rossetti found it remaindered/ at about two pence/ (Cythera, in the moon's barge whither?/ How hast thou the crescent for car?" (80.594-597) The first two lines reference Dante Gabriel Rossetti finding a printed version of the Rubaiyat of Omar

Khayyam, a series of 12th-Century Persian poems translated by Edward Fitzgerald. Beauty is difficult to find, but poets have good luck finding it.

This notion of difficult beauty is expounded upon, "'Beauty is difficult, Yeats' said Aubrey Beardsley/ when Yeats asked why he drew horrors/ [...] in the moon barge [Brododaktulos Eos]/ with the veil of faint cloud before her/ [Cythera deina] as a leaf borne in the current" (80.611-621) The translation reads, Rosie-fingered dawn, fearsome Aphrodite. A mere fifty lines before the finding of the book of poetry, Pound can find beauty in War Prison reality, in the dawn, and in the moon. The names of Aphrodite become a metaphor for beautiful artistic accomplishment. And when he finds this beauty, it is fearsome.

But is there more than one female narrative-self, separate from the Aphrodite metaphor, and what would that accomplish?

First comes a clever bit of mythological name-play, "Ladro the cat;/ as Nemi waited on the slope above the sunken lake in the pocket/ of hills" (74.461-463) Nemi refers to the temple of Diana, guarded by the same monk till another monk challenged and kill him.<sup>16</sup> Pound finds humor by referring to the feline Ladro as guard of Nemi. But does this reference invoke a separate narrative-self of Diana or Athena? Her name returns eight lines later, "saeculorum Athena/ [glaux, glaukopolis]/ olivi/ that which gleams and then dies not gleam" (74.471-474). This description of owls, olives, and eyes, as struck with periodic light will be developed in the next section.

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<sup>16</sup> Sieburth, 126, not 74.462

By Canto 76, the narrative-self of Athena is definitively developed as separate from Aphrodite, "Athena, who wrongs thee?/ [Tis adikei]" (76.286-287) Here, the translation means the same as the line previous, yet line 287 is from a poem by Sappho, "Hymn to Aphrodite". Athena is established as wronged by Aphrodite, as separate from her. The goddess of Wisdom is not the goddess of Beauty, indeed Beauty does not play fair toward Wisdom.

And another name, perhaps another separate narrative-self exists across the series, "[KORE, AGLAOS ALAOU]/ Glass eye" (74.605-606). Daughter, referring to Persephone, and radiance of the blind one, creates an intriguing mapping of proto-disability. This narrative-self named Persephone— the involuntary wife of Hades— helps to establish Pound as a Odysseus figure, searching the land of death for advice from ghosts. This reading is furthered by another passage, "Nothing but death, said Turgenev (Tiresias)/ is irreparable/ [aglaos alaou porne Persephoneia]" (80.36-38) Tiresias is one of the ghost Odysseus finds in the underworld.

The Persephone theme continues to splinter throughout the Pisan Cantos, [Persephone] under Taishan/ in sight of the tower che pende" (74.619-620) The wife of the god of Death, under the tower that leans. And, "[Kore, Delia deina]/ et libidinis expers" (76.151) This translates to, Persephone, to whom passion is unknown. Though clearly separated from Aphrodite, a non-passionate Persephone may be the same as Athene, mistreated by Aphrodite.

More female deities appear in Canto 76, "... nor is this yet *atasal*/ nor are here souls, *nec personae*/ neither here in hypostis, this is the land of Dione/ and under her planet/ to Helia the long

meadow with poplars/ to [Kupris]" (76.180-185) Atasal translates to contemplation or union with divinity— but this is not atasal, yet. Dione was the mother of Aphrodite, and at this point in the Pisan Cantos, this is her land, not Pounds, but Venus is not Dione's planet, but Aphrodite's. This further establishes female names as Others, as different from the protagonistic subjectivity, though all the female narrative-selves have weak interpersonal boundaries, as well.

This notion of atasal returns in the same Canto, "... and within the crystal, went up swift as Thetis/ [...] spiriti questi? personae?/ tangibility by no means atasal/ but the crystal can be weighted in the hand/ formal and passing within the sphere: Thetis,/ Maya, [Aphrodite]," (76.221-214) Thetis was a nereid, and the mother of Achilles— so add Achilles to the list of protagonistic heroes— and the translation asks if she is a spirit or a person, followed by the reference to atasal, contemplation or union with the divinity. But again, it is a negated contemplation of divinity. The passage then equates the nereid Thetis with fertility rights and the goddess of Beauty— but this could be a reference to the three women appartition, developed later in this section.

And Pound's own romantic companion blends into this morphing of names, "she did her hair in small ringlets, a la 1880 it might have been,/ red/ and the dress she wore Drecol or Lanvin/ a great goddess, Aeneas knew her forthwith" (74.363-365) Comparing Olga Rudge to Aphrodite— whom Aeneas recognized immediately— creates Pound as Aeneas. And again Rudge appears, "le countre-jour the line of the cameo/ profile [...]/ a dream passing over the face in the half-light/ Venere, Cytherea 'aut Rhodon" (74.661-664) Through authorially distinct

Others, Pound is able to create more names for his protagonistic narrative-self. So do the mythological, female monster figures of the Sirens sing to Odysseus, tied to his mast, "as the fish-tails said to Odysseus, [Eni Troie]" (79.161) Odysseus morphs into Aeneas, the mythological founder of Rome. Yet it is through clearly Otherized women's names that this is made possible.

There are also male figures that are not protagonistic, but friends, "lay there Barabbas and two thieves lay beside him/ infantile synthesis in Barabbas/ minus Hemingway, minus Antheil, ebullient" (74.98-100) Pound here explicitly compares his protagonistic narrative-self, and through it his corporeal self, to Jesus. By comparing his own friends to the companion of Jesus, Pound literarily becomes the son of the omnipotent, creator god of Christianity. But, like Jesus, he is no prosperous deity. As he says twenty lines before, "OY TIE/ a man on whom the sun has gone down" (74.77-78), and ten lines later, the same two lines again. Pound and his protagonistic narrative-self are clearly intended to mean the same as the names of these deities— though it is only through the objectivity of friends in memory and friends in War Prison that this becoming is made possible in the poem. It is only through interacting with other selves, other bodies, other names, that the protagonistic, subjective self may create itself. For this protagonistic narrative-self, though without diagnosing Pound's corporeal mental state, believing one's self a deity is similar to Medical Model notions of a God Complex.

The clearly identified as protagonistic name returns, "between NEKUIA where are Alcmene and Tyro/ and the Charybdis of action/ [...] a

man on whom the sun has gone down" (74.212-213). This passage returns the narrative self to references of Odysseus' descent into the underworld, and the ghosts he meets there. And there is a monster figure, of action, which splinters back to Odysseus. Then the protagonistic narrative-self becomes "[HELION PERI HELION]" (74.224) The sun around the sun, mimicking the whirl-pool, of action, Helios becomes the reigning name. So this monster figure, of action, becomes the passing of the days. This speaks to War Prison reality, the most difficult task is passing the time without action.

And in the next line, Pound is back to playing Jesus, "Est consummatum, Ite;" (74.245) It is finished, go- the final words of Jesus on the Cross. And the friends of Jesus are referenced again, with, "with Barabbas and 2 thieves beside me," (74.393) And Pound further distances his protagonistic narrative-self from mankind, "Zarathustra, now desuete/ to Jupiter and to Hermes" (74.466-467) Translating to obsolete, Zarathustra references a Nietzschean uber-man, but Pound has grown past the corporeal mental states of men, and likens his state of being to divinity.

However, all this naming does not solely inflate Pound's ego. In these poems, names of narrative-selves are capable of critiquing society, "ec ego in harum/ so lay men in Circe's swine-sty;/ ivi in harum ego ac vidi cadaveres animae" (74.243-245) Circe becomes an important figure in the Pisan Cantos, turning the sailors surrounding Odysseus to swine, then telling him to visit the land of the dead. The reference becomes one of social critique, equating the men around Pound to swine, and by extension, all members of the War Prison, and by further extension, all people. Circe returns in Canto 76, "Came Eurus

as comforter/ and at sunset la pastorella dei suini/ driving the pigs home, benecomata dea" (76.251-253) Eurus is the Easterly wind, and the little swineherd, Circe.

And beyond critique, Pound attempts to educate, "or remembering Carleton let him celebrate Christ in the grain/ and if the corn cat be beaten/ Demeter has lain in my furrow" (80.690-692) According to Sieburth, Mark Alfred Carlton invented better growing strains of grain.<sup>17</sup> By comparing Carleton [sic] to Demeter, Pound creates a difficult to unpackage learning situation, or perhaps merely a tribute.

Pound builds an image of three woman, chronicled in the unpublished Italian Cantos. As established in Sieburth, Pound had a "visionary encounter", or "dreamt" of these three women image on a crossing of three roads.<sup>18</sup> This names involved in this vision are best explicated in Canto 76, "But on the high cliff Alcmene,/ Dryas, Hamadryas ac Heliades/ [...] Dirce et Ixotta e che fu chiamata Primavera/ [...] that they suddenly stand in my room here/ between me and the olive tree/ or nel clivo ed al triedro?/ and answered: the sun in his great periplum" (76.7-14) These references to three tree nymphs, followed by three female muses who inspired, respectively, Walter Savage Landor, Sigismundo Malatesta, and Cavalcanti, open a new field of corporeal mental states. In the unpublished Italian Cantos written before his breakdown in War Prison, Pound recounts this vision of three women appearing at a crossing of three roads. Is this a dream, as Sieburth calls it with would-be diplomacy, or an open-eyed hallucination?— and why is that so frightening to generations of Pound scholars that they

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<sup>17</sup> Sieburth, 151, note 80.690-692

<sup>18</sup> Sieburth, 126, note 74.445-446



must dismiss his schizophrenic tendencies, entirely? That this vision of three women occurs in the Italian Cantos, before his severe mistreatment in War Prison, establishes Pound as in a severely non-normative corporeal mental state separate from and in addition to any Post-Traumatic Stress he may be undergoing.

The motif of three women reoccurs throughout the Pisan Cantos, “‘With us there is no deceit’/ said the moon nymph immacolata/ Give back my cloak, *hagoromo*./ had I the clouds of heaven/ as the nautile borne ashore/ in their holocaust/ as wisteria floating shoreward/ with the sea the colour of copper/ and emerald dark in the offing/ [...] At Ephesus she had compassion on silversmiths/ revealing the paraclete” (80.260-271). Within 11 lines, he mentions a nymph, references Aphrodite through her arrival by clam shell, and alludes to Athena as goddess of the town Ephesus and of silversmiths. And as splintered as the rest of the work, the three women motif begins in a proto-state of being in Canto 74, “The Muses are daughters of memory/ Clio, Terpsichore/ and Granville was a lover of beauty/ and the ladies all waited/ ‘and with names to come’/ [Essomenoisi]” (74.719-724). Translated to, generations to come, these muses and nymphs and ladies are linked— but early in the Pisan Cantos, only two are named, the other woman has yet to appear in this map of hallucination.

By Canto 77, Pound feels like celebrating the accomplishment of the Pisan Cantos, “[direction of one’s will] bringest to focus [perfect or focus]/ Zagreus/ Zagreus (77.323-325). These last lines reference a cult of Dionysus— and the god of Drink and his father Zeus, god of Thunder, will become the central male deities for the ending of the series. First, though, Pound becomes another deity of the sun, “Kai

Ida, thea faces Apollo" (77.199). This line translates to, And the Goddess Ida faces Apollo. Then back to Odysseus, "many men's manners videt et urbes [Polumetis]/ ce ruse personnage," (78.188-189). This translates to, he saw the many manners of men and cities— this many witted, shrewd character. Many witted and shrewd: this references Odysseus.

Finally, and only in Canto 79, Ezra Pound begins to name himself as the protagonistic narrative-self, along with deities and mythological figures, "to rest 3 months in bottle/ (auctor)" (79.109-110). The auctor, here, is Pound himself, the author — for the moment grounded in normative reality of three full months in War Prison. Then, Ezra Pound employs his own name as for his protagonistic narrative self, "Old Ez folded his blankets/ Neither Eos nor Hesperus has suffered wrong by my hands" (79.165-166). Neither the Eastern dawn, nor the Western, evening star has been done wrong by Pound— according to Pound. This could be understood to mean that neither side of the war has been wronged by his actions. Yet it is specifically not corporeal people that are referred to, but the stars. This could also speak to Pound's exposure to the elements in War Prison.

The Dionysus and Zeus theme develops in earnest, with the evolutionary easing of stress or tension, developed in an above section, "O Lynx, my love, my lovely lynx,/ Keep watch over my wine pot,/ Guard close my mountain still/ Till the god comes into this whiskey./ Manitou, god of lynxes, remember our corn./ Khardas, god of camels/ [...] 'Prepare to go on a journey.'/ 'I...'" (79.136-145). These deities, all of whom may or may not be Pound, number the following: the

lynx, a form of Zeus; Dionysus, alluded to by the wine pot; Manitou, a Native American Indian omnipresent power; and Khardas, a Persian deity; and, finally, a reference to Circe instructing Odysseus. Dionysus, as god of Drink, is specifically related to wine and alcohol, and the reveler god is a deity of drunkenness. With no access to liquor in War Prison, was Pound drunk off of his own corporeal mental state? I would argue instead, he is inebriated by his success in writing the Pisan Cantos series, a crucial becoming segment in the larger Cantos project, not yet reaching a Dantean heaven, but towering pretty high toward that "Elysium, though in the halls of Hell" (81.141). The references to Zeus as King of gods furthers this interpretation. And the combination of these two deities continues, "O Lynx, wake Silenus and Casey" (79.167-168). One a companion to Dionysus, and one a corporal at the War Prison, these two men equate a friend of Dionysus and a friend of Pound's own. Again, and only through clearly non-protagonistic figures, Pound clearly references himself as a deity.

And a few lines later,

set wreaths on Priapus Iakchos, Io! Cythera, Io! / [...] Iakche, Iakche, Chaire [...] / O Lynx, guard this orchard, / Keep from Demeter's furrow / [...] Pomona, Pomona, / [...] And now Priapus with Faunus / The Graces have brought [Aphrodite] / Her cell is drawn by ten leopards / [...] Helios is come to our mountain / there is a carpet of pine spikes / [...] This Goddess was born of sea-foam / She is lighter than air under Hesperus / [You are fearsome, Cythera / terrible in resistance / Kre kai Delia kai Maia / trine as praeludio / Cyprus Aphrodite / a petal lighter than sea-foam / Cythera / aram / nemus / vult / O puma, sacred to Hermes, Cimbica servant of Helios. (79.183-281)

Priapus is a god of fertility; Cythera, a name for Aphrodite, as is Chaire; the Lynx references Zeus; Demeter was goddess of harvest; Pomona, the goddess of food bearing trees. This is followed by Helios, god of the Sun, another reference to Aphrodite, Hesperus, the evening

star or Venus, and finally Hermes and Helios, again. All of these names of deities are of power, beauty, and bounteous food. Pound, near the end of the Pisan Cantos is on point, knows it, and shows it through his naming.

We arrive at the most intriguing location on the map of Disability in Canto 80, "OY TIE/ [Achronos]/ now there are no more days/ OY TIE/ [Achronos]" (80.210-214) With a-chronos meaning a negation of time— so out of time, or beyond time— the protagonistic figure here exists beyond time. This could be a reference to the undying nature of poetry and literature, or by 1948, a notion of outside of Einstein's space-time.

And the protagonistic narrative-self becomes more and more emotional, "then glaring Eos stared the moon in the face" (80.219) With Pound established as linked to the sun, the god of dawn glares down the moon. And, "the folly of attacking that island/ and of the force [huber moron]/ with a mind like that he is one of us/ Favonus, vento benigno" (80.656-659) Again a reference to Odysseus, but far more emphatic than before.

The final protagonistic names occur in Canto 81, "Zeus lies in Ceres' bosom/ Taishan is attended of loves/ under Cythera, before sunrise" (81.1-3). Zeus, the king of gods, becomes the final name for Pound's central narrative-self. Ceres is the goddess of farming, and that the protagonistic narrative-self sleeps on her chest is a clear reference to plenty, to success. Pound's corroborative naming at the end of the Pisan Cantos establishes the series as mighty, bounteous, beautiful, and toweringly successful poetry.

## **Eyes**

Much has been made of the repetition of eyes flowing through the Pisan Cantos. However, when madness activists such as Leonard Roy Frank can be incarcerated for little more than "piercing eyes" (Lewis, 119), surely an investigation into an unstigmatized obsession with eyes as part of a corporeal mental state is worth undertaking.

The language of eyes in the series begins at a low volume. "The suave eyes, quiet, not scornful," (74.12). Suave, connoting masculinity— written in a War Prison reality, surrounded by only men— the not scornful eyes become a place of lack of scorn, a place of lack of authority and abuse. Further referencing all male War Prisoner status, the first female eyes in the Pisan Cantos are bestial, "the ewe, he said had such a pretty look in her eyes;" (74.179) And even more eyes are masculine, "night green of his pupil, as grape flesh and sea wave/ undying luminous and translucent" (74.243-244)

Soon enough, however, the eyes become humanly feminine, and idealized with references to deities, "as by Terracina rose from the sea Zephyr behind her/[...] till the shrine be again white with marble/ till the stone eyes look again seaward" (74.341-345) As established in the above section, the crossing of three roads is a reference to a vision of three women. And, as Sieburth has it, this crossroads would be "and, Pound dreamt, locus of a future shrine reestablished in her [Venus's] honor." (Sieburth, 124, note 74.341-45) Explicitly established as hallucination, once the temple is built, the statue of the goddess will look toward the sea with stone eyes, at this crossing of three roads. Pound's eyes have become archeological, a statue in a

temple that would look seaward. This vision of a temple is a map of Mental Disability, a map of a corporeal mental state.

And proto-notions of disability appear, rooted in terms of blindness. "[KORE, AGLAOS ALAOU]/ Glass eye" (74.605-606). This translates to, Daughter, referring to Persephone, radiance of the blind one. This blind deity is deemed radiant. And more blindness is specifically alluded to, through the losing of one's eyes, "both eyes, (the loss of) and to find someone/ who talked his own dialect." (76.189-190) In this anecdote told Pound by his daughter,<sup>19</sup> after both eyes are lost, the male figure still speaks, though struggles over language barriers.

Historical figures also have eyes, in the poem, though in the first instance of such, the eyes are also divine, "Born with Buddha's eyes south of Mason and Dixon/ as against:/ Ils n' existent pas, leur ambience leur confert/ une existence" (77.223-226) And so do mythological figures, "Cassandra, your eyes are like tigers,/ with no words written in them" (78.6-7) And almost 200 lines later, "Cassandra your eyes are like tigers'/ no light reaches through them" (78.195-196) Cassandra, the prophet no one will believe, has ferocious, though blank, eyes.

The poems contain sustained reference to glistening eyes, "Athena cd/ have done with more sex appeal/ caesia oculi/ "Pardon me, [glaux]" (79.97-99) The translation refers to grey, or glistening, glinting, eyes. These are eyes that are not lit from within, not glowing to increase night vision, but struck with periodic light. As eyes dilate, they can seem lit from within. This is eye dilation, and

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<sup>19</sup> Sieburth, 133, note 189-94

the intense emotional connections expressed by it can be immensely difficult for those in a corporeal mental state.

By Canto 81, he can quote these lines, from Chaucer's "Merciless Beaute", "Youe eyen two wol sleye me sodenly/ I may the beaute of hem not susteyne" (81.114-115). The eyes here will destroy, due to their beauty. And another vision appears in his tent,

there came new subtlety of eyes into my tent,/ whether of spirit  
or hypostasis/ but what the blindfold hides/ or at carneval/ nor  
any pair showed anger/ Saw but the eyes and stance between the  
eyes,/ colour, diastasis,/ careless or unaware it had not the/  
whole tent's room/ nor was place for the full [Eidos]/ interpass,  
penetrate/ casting but shade beyond the other lights/ sky's  
clear/ night's sea/ green of the mountain pool/ shone from the  
unmasked eyes in half-mask's space. (81.118-133)

Is this another open-eyed hallucination, brought on by a corporeal mental state of Post-Traumatic Stress, after extreme exposure to the elements? Or perhaps the more severe Schizophrenic tendencies of reoccurring open-eyed hallucination? Three colors appear in this vision of eyes, clear sky blue, dark sea green, and a lighter green. This continues the motif of the vision of three women, explicated above.

Near the end of the series of poems, bestial eyes reveal the most sincere meaning of the entire series,

But in the caged panther's eyes:/ 'Nothing. Nothing that you can  
do...'/ green pool, under green of the jungle,/ caged: 'Nothing.  
Nothing that you can do'/ [Drayas], your eyes are like clouds/  
nor can who has passed a month in the death cells/ believe in  
capital punishment/ no man who has passed a month in the death  
cells/ believes in cages for beasts/ [Drayas], your eyes are like  
the clouds over Taishan/ When some of the rain has fallen/ and  
half remains yet to fall (83.60-71)

The panther's eyes are caged, a clear reference to Pound's War Prisoner status. And, as Pound now knows, anyone who has spent time in a cage cannot condone the madness of confinement, for beasts or men.

At the very end of the poem, the eyes become historical again, "and the family eyes stayed the same Adriatic/ for three generations" (83.118-119) These are the eyes of art-history, three generations of eyes seen in paintings. And become eyes from memory, "as it were the wind in the chimney/ but was in reality Uncle William/ downstairs composing/ that had made a great Peeeeacock/ in the proide ov his oiye" (83.164-168) This is a bestial eye, yes, but also a feathered resemblance of an eye, that does not remotely dilate. And furthermore, it is as well the eye of a W.B. Yeats poem, "the Peacock", that Pound remembers him compose. This eye is the eyes of art, the eyes of poetry.

And there is a final, extremely complex reference to eyes to bookend the clearly authorial motif, "The eyes, this time my world/ But pass and look *from* mine/ between my lids/ sea, sky, and pool/ alternate/ pool, sky, sea" (83.197-202). As established in Sieburth, this passage is a crossing of external vision and internal vision, an image borrowed from Cavalcanti.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Process**

The Pisan Cantos begin with a twice crucified dictator, and end with executed traitors. So this gory poem contains an un-wavering pivot, a notion borrowed from Confucian philosophy, and indeed it is within these 11 poems of the broader Cantos project that Pound's notion of "the Process" is most specifically, though quite abstractly,

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<sup>20</sup> Sieburth, XXXIV



enumerated. The un-wavering pivot of Confucius may be glossed as a unyielding commitment to one's code of ethics.

The just mentioned political figures occur in the first ten lines of the series, "Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,/ Thus Ben and la Clara a *Milano*/ by the heels at Milano/[...] DIGONOS, [Digonos], but the twice crucified/ where in history will you find it?" (74.3-9) The translation refers to the twice-born, a name for Dionysus— as established in an above section, a clearly protagonistic narrative-self — who is stuck in-between the historical figures, the historical circumstances.

Pound's phrase for these Confucian ethics, the Process, begins with exposure to the elements, "rain is also of the process./ What you depart from is not the way/ and olive tree blown white in the wind/ washed in the Kiang and the Han/ what whiteness will you add to this whiteness,/ what candor?/ [...] the wind is also of the process," (74.13-25) Pound was permanently exposed to the weather in his first three weeks at War Prison,<sup>21</sup> so his term the Process, in its insistence on the weather, seems located in his body, his corporeality. Wedged between his corporeal body, comes a reference to Confucius. This time, the subjective, protagonistic narrative-self does the sandwiching. And inside is a meditation on the passing of an honorable Fascist leader. In this parable, Confucius has passed away, and a disciple describes him as whiteness that cannot be made more white, emphasizing the figure's candor, energetic honesty. But that this parable is so prominent in Pound's corporeal mental state, still early in the series, before the war becomes over, reflects— intentionally or

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Sieburth, XIV<sup>21</sup>

unintentionally— the failures of Fascism. The most benevolent of dictators will eventually die, and must pass on their power, leaving his empire rather out in the weather.

And this theme continues, “Yu has nothing penned on Jehoveh/ sent and named Shun who to the/ autumnal heavens *sha-o*” (74.517-519) And “Yaou chose Shun to longevity/ who seized the extremities and the opposites/ holding true course between them/ shielding men from their errors/ cleaving to the good they had found” (74.586-590). The idea that men must be shielded from their mistakes is resoundingly fascist. And the issue of fascist transfer of power is made even more explicit, “Nenni, Nenni, who will have the succession?/ To this whiteness, Tseng said/ ‘What shall add to this whiteness?’” (80.94-96) Petri Nenni was a leading figure in the Fascist party after the disposition of Mussolini, so this passage becomes a cry for a successor to Mussolini.

The omnipresence of the elements continues, “The wind is part of the process/ The rain is part of the process/ [...] filial, fraternal affection is the root of humaneness/ the root of the process” (74.440-441). Morality enters the picture, explicitly developed as part of Pound’s notion of the Process. And Confucian morality becomes more central, “wd/ have put the old man, *son pere* on his shoulders/ and gone off to some barren seacoast” (74.593-594) This is a moment of weakness to standing-by one’s principles, as Confucius admits that if his father committed murder, he would run away with him. But it is not Confucius, himself, who has this moment of weakness, and it becomes for that leader a moment of strength, asserting the best reaction to such a circumstance.

This notion of the Process is developed into temporality with, "things have ends and beginnings" (76.305) And in the next Canto, "(a.d. 1904, somewhat previous but effective/ for immediate scope/ things have ends (or scopes) and beginnings. To/ know what precedes [precede] and what follows [follow]/will assits yr/ comprehension of the process" (77.30-32). Because the process is developed as a form of Confucian morality, that the process has beginnings and endings locates these ethics specifically in their own time and space. This morality is effected by what goes on before and after the moment of steadfast adherence to principle, may even be relative and conditional. The Process is strictly delineated by time, place, and corporeality.

And a most terrifying standing by one's convictions reveals itself in a sergeant at the War Prison, "'Why war?' sd/ the sergeant rum-runner/ 'too many people! when there git to be too many/ you got to kill some of 'em off.'"/ 'But for Kuan Chung,' sd/ Confucius/ 'we shd/ still be buttoning our coats tother way on.'" (80.226-230) This is the most troublesome of Pound's fascist statements, regardless of apologia or condemnation. In this poem, that admits "there are no righteous wars [...]/ that is, perfectly right on one side or the other/ total right on either side of the battle line" (82.83-75), the combination of this rum-runner's theory on meta-narratives of warfare with this passage of Confucius, within a line of each other, is extremely troublesome, relating as it does to Pound's corporeal mental state. Combine this passage with Nazi atrocities soon to be revealed against Jewish people, and with Pound's steadfast fascism and belief in a world-wide Jewish banking conspiracy— developed above— and a truly horrifying corporeal mental state may be revealing itself; any

corporeal mental state in favor of genocide demands stigma be imposed upon it by posterity. However, only through non-stigmatized analysis can this truly atrocious interpretation be arrived at. And it is only one interpretation, of a difficult, severely splintered text— a text that can be firmly argued to contain authorial meaning, but only one human knows that meaning, completely.

The final reference to the Process occurs in Canto 83, “it shines and divides/ it nourishes by its rectitude/ does no injury/[...] Boon companion to equity/ it joins with the process/ lacking it, there is inanition/ When the equities are gathered together/[...] it springeth up vital/ If deeds be not ensheaved and garnered in the heart/ there is inanition” (83.90-102) Morphing into the process, the notion of doing no harm becomes the closest friend of equity. One’s deeds become the essence of who one has become, without which there can be no spiritual vitality— or inanition. And Pound, as established above, feels he has done no harm to either side of WWII, or to the metaphorical early morning or late evening.

And the entire series is further sandwiched between those whom Pound considers martyrs, dying with integrity and conviction in his or her beliefs, “Angold [tethneke]... Angold [tethneke]” (84.3-5) The Greek, here, translates to Angold is dead— referring to John Penrose Angold, executed for treason. As Pound finished the series, he knew not whether his fate would be the same.

**Conclusion: a Pisan Tower of Babel**

On the map of Disability Literature, there is a tower: Ezra Pound's Pisan Cantos. These are his most mad poems, and his highest awarded, and they speak in as many languages as in the biblical Babel. The larger Cantos project never reached the "serene philosophical heaven" (81.141) Pound envisioned, and he never published an authorial version of his final Cantos. Like the Tower of Babel, it never could reach heaven. But the architecture of this tower reaches 116 stories, 116 songs, toward it. Of which, eleven still tower in a WWII War Prison outside Pisa. As Pound said of T.S. Eliot, "Say this for the Possem [T.S. Eliot]: a bang, not a whimper," (74.9) The major states of becoming involve three evolutionary becomings. Economics become more focused after WWII's end; fade after the release of stress in the Lynxes passage; and quickly disappear after the Found poetry volume.

And even in its splinters, fragments of deities, eyes, heroes, economics and morality, these poems are far from Deleuzian, fungal, one-celled organisms. The Pisan Cantos are still Modernist poems for two reasons. Once a Modernist always a Modernist, in the Psychiatric sense that one's proto-history and the history of one's early youth define one's corporeal mental state for the rest of one's life and artistic production; the first artistic Zeitgeist of an artist's career in sustained relevancy dominates the entirety of one's artistic production, and the name of that artistic era should continue to apply to that artist as long as remembered. Ezra Pound was first and foremost a High Modernist, and always will be.

Secondly, Pound is a Modernist in 1948, still, because Post-Modernism did not yet exist. Before the spread of knowledge about Nazi

atrocities, the absurdity of Post-modernism cannot be said to exist in 20th century Zeitgeist.

But, to return to Lennard Davis, Garland Thomson, and Coleman Brown, do Pound's Cantos disrupt the ideological construction of normalcy, do they provide effective counter-narratives to disrupt consumer capitalism, do they aid in making people aware that it is "necessary or beneficial to perceive their fundamental similarities they share"? (Coleman Brown, 158)? Not really. These poems are immensely difficult, and whomever can penetrate their interior meanings needs impose some degree of his or her own interpretations, regardless of authorial intent. If one is looking for reasons around which to impose stigma, one will certainly find them, and, alternatively, if one is looking for aesthetic triumphs, those will be found as well.

However, A poem cannot be said to fail. Perhaps the Cantos do not penetrate popular culture to the degree of the Waste Land, or certain Robert Frost poems, but certainly a poem written about as much academically as the Cantos cannot be said to fail. But if the poem does not alter normativity through ideological means, it is clearly not as effective as 40 years of work should be. Does Pound conquer normativity through sheer volume? Since the 1970s, Ron Silliman has been working on his life-long poem of LANGUAGE poetry— a non-normative style of poem Pound would appreciate. Since the 1990s, David Foster Wallace and Mark Z. Danielelesky wrote decidedly non-normative novels with endnotes; one must flip back and forth between two bookmarks, a similar task to reading Pound and the Pisan Cantos combined with Sieburth's comprehensive annotations. Perhaps Post-Modernity and

whatever is post-Post-Modernity has been drastically moved away from normativity by the influence of this Modernist's late works.

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