

In What Ways and to What Ends are Techniques of Fragmentation and Palimpsest Employed in Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*, and HD's *Trilogy*?

Currently housed at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture, *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound*, caused consternation and, in some quarters, disgust, upon its completion in 1914. Gaudier-Brzeska had moved from France to London, and had become, alongside Ezra Pound, a central figure in the genesis of the Vorticism movement. His sculpture had begun to move away from the neatly finished, classical Greek style in which he had previously practiced, and had taken on influences from the East (partially via Pound's interest in the construction of Chinese written characters), and from Cubism.

The latter is clearly present in the bust of the poet, which is comprised, in large part, by a number of flat surfaces meeting at sharp angles, recalling some contemporary Cubist portraiture (e.g. Picasso's *Portrait of Wilhelm Uhde* (1910)). And like that work, it too changes dependent upon the vantage point, suggesting diverse points of view and offering up multiple interpretations. From the front the likeness is certainly Pound's: pointed beard, strong nose, and voluminous sweeps of hair. From other angles however, the piece resembles nothing more strongly than an erect phallus - fulfilling the poet's singular instruction to his sculptor friend to ensure that the commission was 'virile'.

The substantial chunk of marble also stands as a useful milestone in the lives of both its creator and its subject. Within a year of the bust's completion Gaudier-Brzeska would be killed in the trenches of northern France, leaving the piece as one of the final large-scale works of his career. Pound, for his part, having been central to the rise of poetic Imagism, was on the cusp of complicating his own work with the inclusion of diverse vantage points and multiplicity.

The seed of Imagism was Pound's belief that 'the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol' (Eliot, *Literary Essays* 5). Alongside others he had been seeking a haiku-like purity of image that would transmit effectively to the reader an 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' (Eliot, *Literary Essays* 4) as the poet experienced it. Perhaps Pound's most celebrated imagistic work—'In a Station of the Metro' (1913)—had been hewn down over the course of months from more than 30 lines to just 14 words, as an exercise in distillation. By presenting the reader with a single, crystalline image Pound hoped to replicate in the reader's mind as closely as possible his own feelings and thoughts in the instant portrayed.

In some respects the ideogrammic method employed in *The Cantos* is a natural extension of Imagism in which, in place of the distilled image, the poem exhibits a great multiplicity of language, place, time, and character. Pound retains his belief in the adequacy of the natural object as symbol, but exponentiates occurrences within the work, setting each against the other so as to inspire in the reader not just a reaction to each on its own, but to the manner in which the collective interact with and reflect each other. He admits not just fragmentation of content, but also fragmentation as a central element of poetic construction.

In a letter to his father in 1927 Pound gave an outline of *The Cantos* which split his epic into three strands: 'Live man goes down into world of Dead'; 'The "repeat in history"'; the 'moment of metamorphosis' (quoted in Nadel 4). It is a rather too-neat attempt at encapsulation of a work that, at the time of the letter, was more than a decade in the writing and numbered 16 published sections. As the poem expanded over the succeeding decades other themes proliferated within it. Pound's attention turned to new matters, and as the circumstances of his life and thought dictated he included new strands in his poem.

The multiplicity of subject, as well as of voice, language, place, and time, raises the question of how the poem works as a whole. Remembering that upon Pound's death in 1972 the work was yet unfinished I intend to look at the manner in which the poem utilises

fragmentation not just as a feature but as a mode of composition, and how this affects the way in which it is read.

In the aforementioned letter Pound also includes a description of his method as akin to ‘subject and response and counter subject in fugue.’ This musical analogy provides us with one way in which to approach the poem, but we must begin by ensuring that the distinction between fugue and harmony is understood clearly. In his essay ‘A Retrospect’ Pound writes that ‘[t]he term harmony is misapplied in poetry; it refers to simultaneous sounds of different pitch’ (Eliot, *Literary Essays* 6). Fugue, by contrast, is a contrapuntal form in which multiple voices address one musical ‘subject’ on repeated occasions. The key difference then is the separation of the voices or sounds over time as opposed to playing all at once.

Pound understood well the linear nature of poetry: as a written form it can present only one ‘voice’ at a time. Imagism comprehends this truth by attempting to distil related thoughts and emotions into a single poetic artefact. The method of *The Cantos* is more complex, and owes something to TS Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’ as edited by Pound. In his essay on fragmentation within Eliot’s poem Anthony L Johnson argues that Pound’s excision of many of the poem’s narrative elements leaves the reader with the task of ‘following the text as an unfolding paradigmatic consciousness’ (404). This destruction of the work’s narrative thread, argues Johnson, is reflective of its subject—‘you know only / a heap of broken images’ (Eliot, *Selected Poems* 41)—and informs the reading of the poem such that ‘fragmentariness is not so much the result as the necessary tool or technique of Eliot’s poetic method’ (Johnson 414). We might adapt this statement in regard to *The Cantos* by substituting the indefinite article. Pound certainly utilises fragmentation to inspire the adoption of what Johnson terms a ‘paradigmatic reading strategy’ (404), but throughout the poem he is also working towards a harmony¹ he knows he cannot achieve.

First let us deal with the manner in which disparate elements relate to one another in Pound’s poem. Taken singularly the cantos that comprise the poem may prove frustrating,

¹ I use the word purposefully.

as they fail to yield much of their meaning to the reader. However, even the inattentive reader of several cantos cannot fail to detect the recurrence of certain elements, be they themes, places, or languages etc. The first order effect of these recurrences is to recall, for the reader, other instances of the particular element in the poem. The second order effect is that the reader begins to construct a framework of inter-relationships within their mind such that the linearity of the poem on the page is superseded by its life as a contiguous structure experienced with a greater degree of simultaneity.

A line from canto LXXVII provides an example:

mouth, is the sun that is god's mouth

This single image recalls a number of thematic elements that have previously made appearances in the poem. The sun, light, and fire appear numerous times in various guises to suggest purity, sincerity, and life: a Chinese character appears in LXXIV which represents the sun and moon, it therefore invokes the entirety of light and is understood to mean 'intelligence'; this same canto includes an occurrence of the refrain 'sunt lumina', which appears numerous times throughout the poem and is expanded in LXXXIII to 'omnia, quad sunt, lumina sunt' (trans: 'everything that exists is light'). The character of the sun itself is lent god-like omnipresence by phrases such as 'the sun in his great periplum' (LXXVI) and 'HAION ΠΕΡΙ'HAION' (trans: 'the sun around the sun' LXXIV). The symbol of the mouth (and concomitantly speech) also recurs: LXXIV contains the first mention of Wanjina, a god in Australian folk-lore who created too many things by naming them and therefore had his mouth sealed by his father; the same canto contains one of several occurrences of the phrase 'in principio verbum' (trans: 'in the beginning was the word').

All of this is brought together in the reader's mind by the eight words quoted above. It is an effect that might perhaps be accomplished with lesser potency by the sequential laying out of its elements one after the other. However, the fact that Pound, per Marjore Perloff, 'leaves it to us to put the elements together with the force of personal discovery' (493) is in large part responsible for the poetry's vividness.

Each part of Pound's poem—whether it is at the macro level of the cantos' inter-relationships; the micro level of thematics; the molecular level of sentences; or the atomic level of words—experiences a multiplicity of relationships with every other part. Eva Hesse argues that this method of poetic construction 'provides a plural relationship [between the poem's elements] instead of the dialectical one deemed by convention to be essential' (48). Indeed this is the end result of Pound's attempt to break free from old forms and find a new one 'elastic enough to take the necessary material... a form that wouldn't exclude something merely because it didn't fit' (Hall 47). The resulting ideogrammic method developed in *The Cantos* redefines what it means for an element to 'fit' within the poem. The work is properly considered a gestalt: not just more than the sum of its comprising parts but dependent upon the multi-faceted nature of their inter-relationships to achieve its full meaning.

Now let us turn to the poem's efforts towards unity. In his 1928 essay 'How to Read', Pound defined the class of artistic 'masters' thus:

'[Those] who, apart from their own inventions, are able to assimilate and co-ordinate a large number of preceding inventions. [...] [T]hey digest a vast mass of subject-matter, apply a number of known modes of expression... and bring the whole to a state of homogeneous fullness'

(Eliot *Literary Essays* 23)

This serves as a clear indication that for Pound, then some years into the project of *The Cantos*, the establishing of unity was a primary artistic goal. Present within the text itself are various indications of the desire to harmonise the poem's disparate elements. We can consider the creation of the imagistic nexus points discussed above to be one such technique, bringing together as they do several strands, and intertwining them in the reader's mind. We also find phrases such as the already quoted 'lumina sunt' and 'PANTA'REI' (trans: 'everything flows', e.g. LXXXIII) which speak to a spirit of unity within both the poem's subject(s) and the poem itself.

The inclusion of Chinese characters within the text can be read in the same spirit. Pound had been interested for some time in the construction of these *hànzì*, which often take their meaning from the two or more independent *hànzì* from which they are formed². This method appealed to Pound as a way of suggesting multiple meanings at one time (or, if we prefer, harmoniously), and he employed it in *The Cantos* by including Chinese characters in the text the composition of which speaks to more than one of his persisting threads. So in LXXVI the character for ‘sincerity’ occurs, and to those aware of its component parts simultaneously stands as one of many appearances of the sun or light in the text. This being the case the perceptive reader is put in mind of the character of ‘the man on whom the sun has gone down’ (via LXXIV) and the Homeric inference it bears, the aforementioned refrain of ‘sunt lumina’, as well as references to tensile light in lines such as ‘funge la purezza, / and that certain images be formed in the mind / to remain there’ (LXXIV).

The formation of images in the mind remains central to Pound’s endeavour with *The Cantos*, just as it was with Imagism. As we have seen, however, the images are formed in a different manner, are more compound in nature, and rely more heavily on the interplay of one to another to render their full meaning. It is the characterisation of this relationship between elements that leads us to the question of the poem’s success or failure.

Pound himself put it in terms of ‘a radiant node or cluster... a VORTEX from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing’ (Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska* 92). Whilst this is not a formulation that places a premium on unity, though it does speak to the inter-operation of the work’s parts. Hugh Kenner, in his book *The Pound Era*, says that Pound’s words ‘lie flat like the forms on a Cubist surface’ (29) and compares the poet’s ‘VORTEX’ to a knot: a ‘self-interfering pattern’ (145) which is held together by the tensions it creates between its composite parts. It is the technique then, and not the language, which is the primary component of the poem for Kenner.

² For example, the character 休 *meaning* ‘rest’ is comprised of the independent characters 人 and 木, indicating ‘person’ and ‘tree’ respectively.

Other critics have argued, similarly, that the achievement of *The Cantos* is one of technique rather than philosophical coherence or poetic beauty. Lucy Beckett places the poem among ‘the saddest of modern defeats’ owing to its ‘*persistence of method*’ over ‘*persistence of thought*’ (quoted in Perloff 487), and Jerome J. McGann judges that ‘Pound’s (poetic) quest for Total Form... survives only in its own contradictions’ (8). There are indications that Pound came to have similar reservations about his poem’s success. Among the last published cantos we find lines such as ‘I cannot make it cohere’, ‘as to who will copy this palimpsest?’, and ‘I cannot make it flow through’ (all CXVI). It is impossible, when one reads this, not to recall the instances within the poem of ‘PANTA’REI’, and we are asked to make a judgement of our own as to how successful Pound has been in creating a work which ‘flows’ and ‘coheres’.

An element of the poem itself may assist us. In LXXVI Pound makes reference to the Confucian idea that ‘things have ends and beginnings’. This is explicated well by Carroll F. Terrell as part of a passage in the Confucian *Great Digest* interpreted as ‘Things have roots and branches; affairs have scopes and beginnings’ (Terrell 400). We can read this in conjunction with the lines from LXXIX ‘in / discourse / what matters is / to get it across e poi basta’ and discern that Pound too felt the tension within his magnum opus between the expansive inclusivity of the material and the efficacy of its delivery. This returns us to the core tenets of Imagism and the directive, as decided between Pound and HD in 1912, and related by him in ‘A Retrospect’ (1917), to ‘use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation’ (Eliot *Literary Essays* 3). The ideogrammic method, defined by George Kearns as ‘juxtaposition upon juxtaposition combined with extreme compression’ (8), was Pound’s tool in the effort of reconciling the competing characteristics of his work. Though Pound, in the above quote from CXVI, uses the term ‘palimpsest’, it is a term that to my mind carries a connotation of linearity that the poem does not bear out. A palimpsest, properly defined, places multiple elements one on top of the other; like harmony it indicates the simultaneous presentation of multiple comprising parts. And, like harmony, it is ‘misapplied’ in reference to *The Cantos*.

What we have in Pound's poem is something an order of magnitude more complex: a system in which separate elements are sustained not just in a linear relationship but as part of a three dimensional nexus of meanings constructed in the reader's mind. I am reminded of an image in Buddhist thought known as Indra's net. This metaphor for the inter-relation of all things takes the form of a web or net that stretches infinitely in all directions. At each point where one strand meets another a jewel is suspended. Each jewel reflects all of the others, and is, in turn, reflected by each of them.

The criticism that *The Cantos* represents 'nostalgic montage without unity' (Hartman 358) does not allow for (or dismisses as a failure) the method with which the poem is constructed. As a former imagist in the act of composing a single poem stretching over five decades and 117 published works, Pound certainly paid due attention to the extent to which *The Cantos* cohered holistically. To suggest otherwise is to misread the poet's intentions.

McGann, though he terms *The Cantos* as a whole 'a paradigm of poetic obscurity' (2), is close to the mark when he writes of it the following:

only the work has "Total Form," there is no primal vision or ultimate knowledge.... [E]very part of the work, productive and reproductive, stylistic and contextual—every synchronic aspect and every diachronic phase—impinges on every other'

(McGann 24)

To McGann's reading of the text then, and to my own, Pound could have been referring directly to the individual elements of his poem when he writes in LXXVII: 'Ils n'existent pas, leur ambience leur confert / une existence'.

Perhaps even more direct than this is the phrasing in LXXIV: 'Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust' / 'so light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron'. This image, of metal filings drawn into a pattern by the unseen force of a magnet, is easily read as a call to the reader to consider the pattern of the poem as a whole - to look not just at the pieces but to consider how they fit together. As with many elements it is repeated in various guises

throughout, so that the reader is reminded at LXXX that even when the ‘wind is lighter than swansdown’ there are forces at work between all things.

‘[T]he Confucian universe as I see it is a universe of interacting strains and tensions’, Pound said in an interview published in 1962, adding ‘you haven’t got a nice little road map such as the Middle Ages possessed of Heaven’ (Hall 47). This last echoes a note of Pound’s in which, comparing his own epic to *Divina Commedia*, he stated simply ‘Aquinas *not* valid now’ with reference to the priest’s map of the human soul (reported in Kearns 6). *The Cantos* admits (in both senses) confusion and uncertainty, and relies upon the reader to parse it into a vibrant system of nexuses of meaning, the relationships between which are redefined continuously.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the *dynamic* nature of reading Pound’s poem. Where Anthony L. Johnson argues that it is the task of the reader of ‘The Waste Land’ to ‘reconstitute textual integrity’ (400), we might find that this is impossible in the case of Pound’s poem, as it infers a single, stable form that the work could, or ought, take; *The Cantos* exhibits a serpentine tendency to redefine itself as the reader progresses.

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In many respects the case of Hilda Doolittle’s *Trilogy* is less complex than that of Pound’s *Cantos*. Even at the macro level of the work’s construction we find a pleasing orderliness: three discreet sections, each divided into 43 numbered sub-sections. Again, at what I have previously termed the micro level of thematics, we find that HD is far tidier with her material than Pound: the text sprawls less; the occurrence of foreign languages is infrequent and never extended; speakers and voices are named and attributed. The reader of *Trilogy* always has their feet planted on relatively solid ground, assured for instance that they are within one of three distinct and recognisable time periods and places. All of which is in service of the poems’ greater project of discovering and examining links between eras.

There is a far greater sense of linearity to HD's poems, and in turn we find that *Trilogy* as a whole is more properly palimpsestic than the less ordered cosmos of Pound's poem. Gertrude Reif Hughes argues eloquently that, for HD, time is 'a medium of connection' wherein the construction of palimpsests declares 'that the past can reinvigorate the present' (390). This, of course, requires the establishing of strong bonds between the different time periods, which HD achieves through the compounding of various elements.

First we might consider the palimpsestic nature of people in *Trilogy*. The most clearly defined of several examples is present in the character of Mary. The eighth section of 'Tribute to the Angels' [TA] contains the following lines:

...till marah-mar
are melted, fuse and join

and change and alter,
mer, mere, mère, mater, Maia, Mary,

Star of the Sea,
Mother.

This passage, which represents a kind of etymological alchemy, interrogates several possible meanings of Mary's name, suggesting to the reader that no one will suffice. The theme recurs in the sixteenth section of 'The Flowering of the Rod' [FR]:

Mary shall be myrrh;

I am Mary - O, there are Marys a-plenty,
(though I am Mara, bitter) I shall be Mary-myrrh

As well as conflating the figure of the Madonna with that of Mary Magdalene, HD is also playing with various references via sound: 'marah' as either a bitter root, or a place passed through during the Exodus; 'mar' as either the sea, or an honorific translatable as 'my lord'; 'mater' of course meaning mother. All of these are compounded in these passages into the reader's understanding of Mary as a character in the text.

This palimpsestic encoding of Mary allows for another of the poem's central characters to reach a moment of revelation. Susan Gubar, writing of FR section 33, argues that in '[r]eading Mary like a palimpsest, Kaspar has fully penetrated the secret of the mystery' (Gubar 212-13). Kaspar makes the connection between the two Marys he encounters, and between the two jars of myrrh referenced in the poem, establishing for himself and for the reader a clear thread that runs through the text. This is the palimpsestic nature of the poem in effect: by layering several instances of an element—in this case a name—HD creates a compound which informs the reader's understanding of each individually.

A similar technique is employed with respect to language in the text. Gubar notes the moment in the ninth section of 'The Walls Do Not Fall' [WF] when HD unpacks the possible meanings of 'cartouche'. Behind the modern understanding that the word indicates a paper ammunition cartridge HD reveals its legacy as the word for the section of an Egyptian monument bearing the name of a deceased ruler. Comprehension of the palimpsestic nature of language allows for the possibility, Gubar argues, that we might 'disentangle ancient meanings from corrupt forms', and that words might be 'freed not only of modernity but also of contingency' (206).

What does it mean for language to be free of contingency? Looked at in terms of HD's larger project of establishing links between disparate eras, one element (be it word or person) is very much contingent upon another if the continuum is to hold. To disassociate the two (or more) instances entirely would rescind the inter-era palimpsest and cancel the harmonising effect of the poetic method. More precisely it is the *meaning* of the word that is freed of contingency, so that in one era it might mean one thing and in another something else. As Norman Holmes Pearson phrases it, 'Words, like the Word itself, themselves can be re-incarnations' (Doolittle ix). By layering one meaning of a word on top of the other (as one Mary on top of another, or, in the opening of WF, London on top of Karnak) HD simultaneously establishes a connection between multiple elements and invites the reader to interrogate how they inter-relate.

In each of these cases palimpsest is being used to redefine our understanding of each element within a composite. As Hughes puts it, ‘components of Doolittle’s temporal compounds enhance one another’, and ‘open past culture for present uses’ (390). HD brings forward the ancient meanings of things to show how they are related to their modern analogues, and in doing so redefines the meaning of the modern element by establishing its lineage. ‘I have gone forward, / I have gone backward’ she writes in the eighth part of FR.

As well as being one of the text’s central poetic techniques this re-figuring of language is also an important theme within the poems. HD builds palimpsestic linguistic compounds to demonstrate the power of language to transcend time and place, and this is also something she explicitly argues for in the text itself. Early in WF she writes, ‘*in the beginning / was the Word*’, thereby echoing Pound’s refrain of ‘in principio verbum’ and establishing the primacy of language. In the same section she puts the question ‘so what good are your scribblings?’, and answers it, ‘this—we take them with us / beyond death’ (Doolittle 17).

For HD language is both *subject* to reincarnation—as new meanings accrue to old words—and itself a *means* of reincarnation: the medium by which human intelligence transcends time and death. Perhaps the clearest evocation of this comes in the fifteenth section of WF when she writes, of poets:

we are the keepers of the secret,
the carriers, the spinners

of the rare intangible thread
that binds all humanity

to ancient wisdom,

This concept, of language as a means by which a communal human consciousness sustains itself from one generation to the next, is what Claus Uhlig—with particular regard to the written word—terms ‘textual palingenesis’. The exact definition of ‘palingenesis’ as Uhlig gives it is of some importance, since it refers not just to ‘rebirth, resurrection’ but ‘the *cycle* of death and birth’ (483, my emphasis). This is our first incitement to consider not just the

linear nature of the elements' relationship one to another, but also a dynamic of circularity. We will return to this theme.

Uhlig quotes Enlightenment-era philosopher and literary critic Johann Gottfried von Herder:

Forever rejuvenated and formed anew, the genius of humanity blossoms and palingenetically moves on to different peoples, generations, and races'

(Uhlig 483)

This process is directly attributed to art in general and literature in particular, with Uhlig arguing that the 'historicity of literary texts manifests itself primarily in the superimposition of different layers of time' (496). The reading strategy advocated here is strikingly similar to the manner in which the reader encounters elements of *Trilogy*. The effort of redefinition and re-contextualisation on the part of the reader that HD's palimpsestic compounding inspires is termed by Uhlig 'philosophical reflection', and it is, for him, the only way 'strict temporal limitations can be transcended and replaced by a "virtual presence" of all stages in history' (484-5).

Here again we see the simultaneous bringing forth and writing back of meaning, so that one instance of an element (be it person, word etc.) does not supercede another, but is alchemically fused with it in the compound. The process 'merges the distant future / with most distant antiquity' (WF 20), whilst revealing that the truth is not in one facet alone but in all as one:

And the point in the spectrum
where all lights become one,

is white and white is not no-colour,
as we were told as children,

but all colour

(TA 43)

In section 2 of WF, HD reminds us that ‘gods always face two-ways’, and by inspiring ‘philosophical reflection’ in her reader she calls to us to adopt the same stance. In section 36 of WF, it is phrased this way:

now is the time to re-value
our secret hoard

in the light of both past and future

The object of this endeavour, as she writes in the preceding section, is to ‘re-vivify the eternal verity’ (WF 35): not to sort one true meaning from falsehoods but to establish a gestalt of understanding wherein every part has its place.

The dynamics of this poetic system then, are somewhat more complicated than they may first have appeared. Whilst I began addressing *Trilogy* by stating that there is present within it a greater degree of linearity than in *The Cantos*, the reader of the work finds that not only is movement within that linearity not uni-directional but bi-directional, but in addition there exists within the poem a strong evocation of circularity. Frequently within the text death and rebirth are twinned. The sixth section of WF contains the following image:

[...] I,

the industrious worm,
spin my own shroud.

The choice of the word ‘shroud’ contains the inescapable connotation of death, but the image as a whole is also one promising re-birth. It recurs in the eighth section of the poem when HD writes of ‘those who have done their worm-cycle’.

A similar image is contained within WF’s 21st section:

be cocoon, smothered in wool,
be Lamb, mothered again.

Both 'cocoon' and 'smothered' carry the spectre of death, yet the former also contains within it the potential for re-birth, seemingly promised here by the inclusion of 'Lamb', which appears capitalised so as to suggest both the fecundity of spring and Jesus as symbol of resurrection.

These evocations of life's circularity abound in the poems³, but take a notable turn in FR. In that poem's second section we get this image:

I have given
or would have given

life to the grain;
but it will not grow or ripen

Here HD introduces a previously unconsidered possibility: the failure of renewal. It is something she treats at length in the fifth and sixth sections of the poem where she gives the image of birds that 'drop from the highest point of the spiral / or fall from the innermost centre of the ever-narrowing circle' (FR 5), and charges:

yours is the more foolish circling,
yours is the senseless wheeling

round and round—yours has no reason

(FR 6)

The prospect that the continuation of life, and with it the perpetual circularity seen previously in the poem, can proceed aimlessly, is new to the text at this relatively late stage, and stands as a re-confirmation of the importance of HD's search for value and 'eternal verity', pursued through the establishing of connections in palimpsestic compounds.

³ An instance in section 22 of WF that refers to 'the re-born Sun' provides an echo of Pound's 'sun in his great periplum' from canto LXXVI.

Towards the end of FR, in the 31st section, we encounter an image that will be familiar to us. HD writes of a flower:

opened petal by petal, a circle,
and each petal was separate

yet still held, as it were,
by some force of attraction

to its dynamic centre

This floral image, the circular motion of which reverses the pessimistic 'ever-narrowing circle' above, recalls Pound's description of the rose of steel dust. Both poets invoke a shared belief in a kind of unity, arranged by unseen forces: 'so light is the urging' (LXXIV) he writes, just as here HD speaks of 'some force of attraction'.

Like the petals, the elements of *Trilogy* exist separately, and yet have an order in their arrangement one to another. The meanings of words do not co-exist, the Marys do not meet, the essence of each is transmuted by the passage of time and their palingenesis from one form into the next - but HD's poem suspends those distinctions. By the effort of her poetic method the disparate parts are brought into line so that the reader sees them layered, a palimpsest that reveals their compound meaning.

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In section 15 of TA, HD recalls the bell towers of Venice: 'one of the campanili / speaks and another answers'. We might adopt this as a metaphor explaining the inter-relation of parts within both *Trilogy* and *The Cantos*, but in each case it requires qualification. In Pound's poem we have a cacophony of bells, with the reader's task being to listen as each plays and then discern which one answers which others. In the case of HD's poems much of the work has been done for the reader: the poet herself has constructed a musical form that features prominently and unmistakably the synchronous chiming of several bells. The former, we might say, is fugue, the latter harmony.

The relative complexity of *The Cantos* can work against it, opening the poem to charges that its 'heteroclitic contents' (McGann 11) lack unity. The poem, by virtue of its adopting a form of the modernist stream of consciousness in the presentation of its materials, certainly requires a greater effort of cognition on the part of its reader. The extent to which the individual reader finds value in the endeavour of relating one element to another is likely to inform their level of enjoyment of the poem.

HD is more direct with her presentation of the relationships between elements, and draws her through-lines more clearly. It would, however, be a mistake to read this form as an over-simplification, as it allows for both bi-directional linear perspective and cyclical dynamics; it possesses the discipline to render true palimpsestic compounds that Pound's form lacks.

For each poet the inter-relation of individual elements is both subject and poetic method. HD ends *Trilogy* with the coming together of Kaspar and Mary, which Susan Gubar reads as 'the healing of the poet's own sense of fragmentation' (211). *The Cantos* remain incomplete, and the last published passages infer their author's belief that he had failed to establish unity within the work. This, however, does not preclude the fact of his having constructed a poetic mode within which the attentive reader finds innumerable dynamic relationships between elements, and in doing so glimpses the sense of a greater order: 'it coheres all right / even if my notes do not cohere' (CXVI).

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