Transcending the Senses, Transcending through the Senses:

The Modernist Neo-Epic Poem and the Experience of Transcendence

By

Urszula Anna Horoszko

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Cyrena N. Pondrom, Professor, English, Chair

Richard Begam, Professor, English

Susan Friedman, Professor, English

Lynn Keller, Professor, English

Barbara Buenger, Professor, Art History

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Abstract

"Transcending the Senses, Transcending through the Senses" offers a new perspective on the engagement of Anglo-American literary modernism with the issues of religion and religious experience. The project investigates representations of visionary experiences in three modernist long poems about war: David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (Chapter II), H.D.'s *Trilogy* (Chapter III), and Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos* (Chapter IV). It sheds light on vital continuities between religious and non-religious strands of Anglo-American literary modernism by revealing a shared dimension in the spiritual engagements of three modernists with ostensibly widely dissimilar philosophical and spiritual commitments.

I argue that relying primarily on the idioms of ontology and aesthetics, rather than any stable framework of a religious practice or orthodoxy, Jones, H.D., and Pound frame visionary experiences in their neo-epic poems as dynamic, subject-object encounters between a speaker and a transcendent object. They also conceptualize those experiences as extensions of ordinary moments of perception. Fundamentally, the project investigates the implications of such framing of the problem of transcendent vision by these three modernists. I situate these poets' approach to the problem of transcendent vision in the context of a broader engagement of aesthetic modernism with the issue of perception. In particular, I examine the attitudes of Pound, H.D, and Jones, as artists and theorists, towards the 'optical' aesthetics of nineteenth-century realism and the symbolist discourse of synaesthesia; I also explore these poets' engagements with visual media (sculpture, photography, film, painting, drawing and engraving). Most importantly, however, I draw attention to the ways in which phenomenology and the phenomenological method allow us to understand their conceptualization of the experience of transcendent vision as both a sensory and extra-sensory phenomenon. Specifically, I position the issue of transcendent

vision in Anglo-American poetic modernism in the context of the idealism-realism debate animating phenomenology in the first half of the twentieth century, and I demonstrate how this debate allows us to understand central philosophical and formal preoccupations of Pound, H.D. and Jones.

Chapter I

Introduction

In his *Theory of the Novel,* written on the cusp of the Great War, Georgy Lukács reflected on the cultural conditions that had contributed to the processes of emergence and decline of literary genres. Pronouncing the death of the classical epic as a product of "integrated civilizations," Lukács proposed that the modern novel is the new epic, *the* literary form "of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). Lukács predicated this last statement primarily on the recognition of a radical shift in "metaphysical conditions" (30) resulting in the "transcendental homelessness" (60) of modern man. He also argued that any attempt to resurrect the classical Greek or medieval poetic forms is simply "a violence done to the essence of everything that lies outside the sphere of art, and a desire to destroy it" (38).

More than a decade later, Mikhail Bakhtin proposed a distinction between the genres of the novel and the epic, based on their historical relationship to two branches of philosophy—epistemology and metaphysics, respectively. Bakhtin associated the epic with the narrative of the "absolute past," the "beginning," the "first," the "founder," and "that which occurred earlier" (*Dialogic Imagination* 15). He also argued that these categories are both temporal *and* valorizing, since memory serves as the primary source of power and creative impulse in the world of the epic. Conversely, the novel deals with contemporaneity as the "reality of a lower order" (17). As a genre, the novel comes into contact "with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present" (27), determined by experience, knowledge and practice. Finally, Bakhtin points to the vital relation between the dominance of the novel as the quintessentially modern literary genre and the dominance of epistemology as the modern philosophical discipline (*Dialogic Imagination* 15). In the end, both Lukács and Bakhtin's highly influential discussions take the

epic poem to be a culturally obsolete form and the idea of a "modern epic poem" simply a contradiction in terms.

Nonetheless, there has been a re-emergence and proliferation of the neo-epic poem in the Anglo-American poetry of the early and mid-twentieth century. In my dissertation, I attempt to account for this process and I seek to shed light on the historical and cultural origins of this phenomenon. In the following chapters, I will explore the ways in which three Anglo-American modernist poets, David Jones in *In Parenthesis* (Chapter 1), H.D. in *Trilogy* (Chapter 2) and Ezra Pound in *The Pisan Cantos* (Chapter 3) re-claim and re-adapt epic genre. I will pay particular attention to the ways in which these works elaborate modalities of the visionary experience, the theme which I take to be one of the central considerations of the modernist neo-epic poem and "high" Anglo-American modernism and one with which neither Lukács nor Bakhtin reckoned.

I will map the question of visionary experience in the modernist neo-epic onto two distinct and intersecting interpretive frames which reflect the range of the existential and formal interests of these poets. I understand the visionary theme in these works to arise from a radical reinterpretation of a traditional epic theme of an encounter of man with a god or gods; yet, I also consider it to be shaped by the immediate existential and historical contexts to which these works respond—a framework of total war. Situating the modernist neo-epic within both of those frames offers a unique insight into the relationship of textual, formal and existential considerations intertwined in these works and fundamentally contributing to their final shape.

More specifically, I examine the ways in which Jones's, H.D.'s and Pound's modernist neo-epic poems explore the relationship between perception, especially sensory perception, and the visionary experience. Given the recent "sensory turn" in the humanities and the growing

interest in a broadly conceived sensual culture,[1] the issue of sensory perception in modernist neo-epics certainly warrants more careful consideration. Regarding the subject of modernism and the senses, Sara Danius has recently argued that "in the modernist period, the human sensorium came to be invoked as a touchstone for aesthetic gratification and experiential authenticity" and that the issue of sense perception should be seen as central to the modernist discourse about representation (1-2). However, how such "experiential authenticity" available through sense perception allows modernist poets to understand and represent the visionary experience in their mature neo-epic poems has not yet been sufficiently explored.

I hope that a careful examination of the problem of perception in *In Parenthesis*, *The Pisan Cantos*, and *Trilogy* will enable us to perceive conceptual linkages among three Anglo-American modernist poets who have rarely been arrayed together, and hence to understand and explain, for the first time, some extremely important continuities between English and American modernism. Ultimately, I want to offer a new insight into how these poets' notion of transcendent vision—as both sensory and extra-sensory—elaborated in their modernist neo-epics sheds light of the problem of "religious experience" in Anglo-American literary modernism.

I argue that moments of transcendent vision in *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* are fundamentally enabled by the structure of ordinary perception. In the following chapters, I will trace these poets' reflection on sense experience, as it is initiated by their avant-garde experimentation, solidified by their understanding of the phenomenon of total war[2], and,

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[1] See Michel Serres's *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies* or David Howes's *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* for an investigation and analysis of this trend.

[2] The phenomenon of "total war" is widely understood by historians to have started in the West with World War I. It entails increasingly mechanized warfare, artillery and air attacks, military tactics directed equally, or perhaps primarily, against the civilian populace, the unprecedented number of civilian casualties, and the wide use of the new technical developments facilitating and optimizing the acts of mass destruction (such as the wide use of airplane bombs and night raids, the use of tanks, poisonous gas, etc. against both enemy troops and civilians). The transition

finally, informed by their thorough and radical re-consideration of the epic as one of the cultural forms central to Western literary tradition.

Modernism and the Problem of Sense Perception

Even a cursory overview of the history of early twentieth-century European art reveals the subject of sense perception to be one of the fundamental preoccupations of aesthetic modernism. Some examples of the consistent, practical as well as theoretical, engagement of aesthetic modernism with the issue of sense perception include the symbolist exploration of the phenomenon of synaesthesia, Wassily Kandinsky's reflection on the same subject in *On the Spiritual in Art*, Pound's and H.D.'s imagist poetics, and the many rapid developments of visual technologies honing, estranging, facilitating or amplifying the workings of the human sensorium.

David Jones, H.D. and Ezra Pound in their theoretical and poetic writings repeatedly return to sense perception as a central problem of aesthetic production. However, they also depart from previous, influential aesthetic theories which engage with the problem of sense experience, particularly from the discourses of the nineteenth-century literary Realisms (mostly French and Russian) and the discourses of synaesthesia central to the poetics of French Symbolism. At the same time, all three poets also reject the philosophical dogmas of nineteenth-century positivist thought with its reductive notions of experience and emphasis on isolated sense data. Thus, for example, Pound famously defines a poetic image by insisting on the instantaneity and directness of the act of perception producing (and apprehending) it; however, the poet also

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from the previous type of military conflict to the new phenomenon of total war is one of the central concerns of David Jones' First World War neo-epic *In Parenthesis* and I will discuss it in most detail in Chapter 1. Historians also argue that while separated by the period of twenty years, the First and Second World Wars are, in fact, two iterations (from the political, economic and technological point of view) of the same military conflict that started in 1914. Niall Ferguson, for example, goes so far as to argue that the two wars were a single conflict punctuated by a 20-year-long military truce. For some of the historical and military studies framing and expanding this discussion see, for example: Ferguson, Winter, Wright, Eksteins, Saunders, and Robertshaw.

suggests a "complex," sensory-intellectual character of the image. Drawing attention to an act of sensory perception as fundamental to the process of formation of the poetic image, Pound simultaneously suggests its immanent relation to non-sensory, aspects of experience. In fact, not only Pound and H.D. and their imagist poetics with its "postsymbolist emphasis on the empirical world" (Pondrom, "H.D. and the Origins of Imagism" 91), but also David Jones address the relationship between ordinary perception and poetic "vision" in a way which resists positivist, mechanicist and predominantly visual paradigms.

Similarly, the accounts of the issue of sense perception offered by Pound, Jones and H.D. defy the influential post-structuralist, Marxist, materialist, decontructivist and visual culture theories of experience often evoked in the readings of Anglo-American literary modernism. These important theoretical discussions of modern perceptual experience and literary modernism draw attention to epistemological skepticism as a central intellectual tenet of twentieth-century thought. The intellectual historian Martin Jay in his *Downcast Eyes* posits that the insistence on interpretation and textuality, and the profound epistemological skepticism which accompanies them, are interconnected phenomena defining twentieth-century Western (particularly French) thought. Jay connects them to the growing suspicion towards the operations of the senses, vision in particular; he argues that "we have increasingly come in the twentieth century to distrust perception in general and vision in particular as the ground of knowledge, often turning to language in all its various guises as an alternative" (318). The descent of vision, he argues, has led to an overemphasis on interpretation and the "iconoclastic discursive climate" (319).[3] Jay also proposes that "high modernism" is a part of that larger "scopic" regime and inscribes itself

[3] See also the recent discussion of Ricoeur's concept of the "hermeneutics of suspicion" offered by Rita Felski as a dominant theoretical attitude in the latter half of the twentieth century.

in the "ethic of pure opticality" which movements such as surrealism eventually reject (246). As we will see, this is an analysis of "high modernism" which the work of Jones, H.D. and Pound does not support.

Relatedly, in his *Introduction to Visual Culture*, Nicholas Mirzeoff insists that in the eleventh century sight *becomes* vision and "[s]ensory perception … [comes to be] understood to *mediate* external reality rather than simply *transmit* it" (21) [emphasis mine]. Similarly, Marx and Marxist-influenced critical thought situate the issue of sensory perception as an offshoot of more fundamental historical processes; this perspective is founded on Marx's proposition[4] that the process of formation of the five human senses is "a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present" ("Private Property and Communism"). Similarly, such theoretical discussions as Guy Debord's formulations about the society of the spectacle, recent discussions in the field of "visual culture" studies, or the important Foucauldian proposition that the "gaze" or *regard* "must reproduce in its own operations what has been given in the very movement of composition" (*The Birth of Clinic* 133) insist on a fundamental slippage between sense data and the reality about which such data provides reports. Summarily, these influential theoretical narratives textualize or historicize (often both at the same time) sense experience and reject the possibility of its "primary" or "authentic" (Danius) character. They posit that the more fundamental economic, linguistic, historical and/or mental processes preclude any notions of such a "direct" (and reliable) sense experience. Indeed, even if these accounts do not espouse the complete abdication of the senses in favor of various cultural "texts" or images,[5] they still insist

[4] Susan Stewart, discussing the relationship between sense experience and memory in the works of Marx, has remarked that senses should be viewed as "cumulative and accomplished, rather than given," and as participating in a complicated and mutually reinforcing dynamics of "sense activity, representation and expression" (59).

[5] The work of W.J.T. Mitchell addresses this intellectual trend in much detail and depth. See for example *What Do Pictures Want?*

on the necessity of interpreting and framing sense perception as a cultural construct, irrevocably subject to more primary intellectual or historical processes, tangled in language and the complex politics of perception.

Foucault and others have drawn attention to how sight or "vision" in particular has become bound to language and analytic thought, severed from the considerations of direct experience, and inscribed into the various discourses of skepticism proliferating in nineteenth- and twentieth- century thought. While drawing attention to a gap existing between sensory perception and reality, these narratives pose not only the domination (ideological and experiential), but also the separation of sight[6] from the rest of the human sensorium. Sight, or vision—no longer a form of a direct engagement of man with the outside reality—becomes "analytic" and starts to reproduce the abstract operations of logic "at the level of perceptual contents," Foucault argues (133). The new role of sight is reflected in language, since vision becomes a powerful source of figurative language for the operations of mind, and eventually comes to serve as a mere metaphor for analytic processes. For these theorists, the linguistic function of sight—vision becoming a prisoner of analytic thought and its idiom—both underscores and amplifies its radical separation from the rest of the human sensorium.

In those narratives, the domination of sight is many-fold; it is practical, because the sense of sight, since Aristotle, has had primacy over the rest of the human sensorium, and figural, since the visual has become the source of a conceptual idiom and metaphors for truth and knowledge. However, in this context, the philosopher David Michael Levin, in his important collection *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, draws attention to the centrality of the discourses of

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[6] For more details on Aristotle's "pyramid" of the senses see Susan Stewart's "Remembering the Senses."

vision for *both* modern science and religion. Levin shows that while the discourses of vision have become fundamental for the idiom of scientific investigation and empirical sciences, they are also endemic to the (often much older) spiritual narratives of internal journeys and visionary quests. A careful analysis of these multiple and often conflicting discourses of vision and the visual metaphors on which they are predicated exposes a number of cultural ambiguities ingrained in modern thought—on the one hand, they institute the language of modern scientific thought with its uncompromising commitment to the "objective" and the empirical; on the other, they play a part in religious myths "recounting visionary journeys of the spirit," "visionary rituals and practices," and the heterogeneous "visionary technologies of the self" (Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* 2).[7] These ambiguities, Levin argues, call for a more careful and critical investigation of the unlikely convergences between the idioms of the "objective" reality of scientific investigation and that of visionary experience.

Understanding these ambiguities is also central to understanding how and why Pound, H.D. and Jones conceptualize visionary experience in the modernist neo-epic as a complex multi-sensory, spiritual and mental phenomenon. Three poets challenge the deeply entrenched binaries and dogmas of modern thought on which these diverse discourses—whether prioritizing vision or based on the mistrust of sensory experience—rest. In fact, they reject the over-reliance on sight and, consequently, on visual metaphors by situating transcendent vision in their neo-epics as fundamentally framed by the workings of the full human sensorium. However, these poets are also far from naïvely positioning the senses as directly transmitting data about the external world with absolute accuracy. Rather, they investigate the various ways in which sense

[7] Levin asserts a tension between language and sense experience. For alternatives, see recent anthropological theories which offer an anthropology of the senses which moves "beyond textualism and hermeneutics" such as Howes's, challenging Clifford Geertz's anthropological textual model (*The Varieties* 300).

perception *may be considered* reliable and *may*, in fact, provide true reports about the shape of reality.

Susan Stewart has observed that senses as a "philosophical problem" appear "on a boundary between what we refer to, perhaps for a lack of better terms, as internal and external phenomena" (59); in the senses, Stewart continues, "the relation between external objects – that is, material forms and living organisms—and the phenomena of our immediate awareness of the world—color, shape, sound, smell, tactile feelings—is both distinguished and blurred" (60). In contrast to this position, I argue that Jones, H.D. and Pound frame sense perception as empirically accurate, and strategically deploy it to represent visionary experience in their mature neo-epics. They draw attention to the double role of the senses in their neo-epic poems as markers of experiential authenticity and harbingers of the visionary experience.

Their attention to the workings of the senses allows the three poets to investigate the relationship between the self and external reality, the body and the world of objects. Yet, Pound, H.D. and Jones also use their reflection on sense perception as an opportunity to re-think the problem of embodiment[8] in the era in which the human body is "increasingly vulnerable to penetration—by everything from radio waves to medical instruments" (Vetter 1) and recast the role of the human body as a site of the interconnected sensory, kinesthetic and visionary experiences. Ultimately, in their neo-epics they frame the sensing human body not merely as an element of a representational strategy—a symbolic figure of the spiritual or psychological and

[8] For a comprehensive discussion of the "crisis of embodiment" widely associated with the aesthetic production of modernism see Jay Bernstein's *Against Voluptuous Bodies: Late Modernism and the Meaning of Painting*, Jo Anna Isaak's *The Ruin of Representation in Modernist Art and Texts* or the most recent Devin Fore's *Realism after Modernism*.

non-sensory engagement with the transcendent—but, rather, as a medium of actual participation of man in the transcendent.

Attention to these poets' accounts of sensory experience not only allows us to offer a more nuanced narrative of some of the crucial aspects of literary Anglo-American modernism but also to re-think the historical and philosophical relationships between the pre-war avant-garde and "high" Anglo-American modernism. Literary historians such as Pericles Lewis have long highlighted a gap, marked by the historical and existential event of the Great War, between early radical experiments of the avant-gardes and the culturally and politically "conservative" poetic forms of high literary modernism. Lewis's and similar critical views situate the pre-war avant-garde experimentation and "high" modernism as two discontinuous aspects of Anglo-American modernist aesthetic production. My work intervenes in this historical and critical narrative in two ways—not only by considering more carefully these neo-epics as continuing the early avant-garde practice of these poets, but also by re-thinking the complex role of the Great War as the foundational generational experience marking the emergence of "high" Anglo-American modernism.

I hope to shed light on these epics as sites of formal experimentation; I read them as, first and foremost, attempts to redefine or challenge the boundaries of the epic genre and recover its "authentic" and experiential sources, rather than simply re-constitute its traditional formal patterns. I will demonstrate how, by taking up the epic form, these poets in fact expand the field of their own earlier experimentation with old artistic media such as lyric, painting or engraving, and new or emerging media, such as film or photography. All three poets emphasize the workings of sight as well as other senses—touch, smell, taste and kinesthetic sense—as important forms of engagement of a human subject with a work of art. They also frame their epic

works as demanding multi-sensory engagement, investigating the convergences between poetic vision and ordinary experience, the sensory and the verbal. I situate these poets' reflection on the relationships between these media and poetry within the broader context of such early Western avant-garde projects as Marinetti's attempts to produce a "tactile poem" in order to circumvent the absolute distinction between the verbal and the sensory, or Mallarmé's idea of *The Book* as a total work of art (containing words, sound and image). I will demonstrate that Pound's, H.D.'s and Jones' understanding of transcendent vision in their neo-epics is fundamentally buttressed by this earlier avant-garde reflection and should be viewed as a logical step in the development of their theoretical thought and artistic practice.

Such a reading of the modernist neo-epic naturally challenges those critical approaches which define Anglo-American modernist neo-epic as a "pre-eminently a textual production, fundamentally and ostentatiously a product of the library rather than the battlefield, the mead hall, or the court" (Whittier-Ferguson 211). Although the themes of historiography and the historical process – to which Pound himself drew attention by labeling the *Cantos* a "poem containing history"—rightly remain an important subject of literary criticism, they are important to my discussion only to the extent in which they foreground the (more fundamental) issues of perception and experience. *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos*, precisely in the ways in which they re-interpret traditional epic plots, expose the centrality of the experiential, rather than just the textual or the historical, for the modernist neo-epic.[9] While the quest for transcendent vision in *Trilogy*, *In Parenthesis* and *The Pisan Cantos* is certainly constructed in response to the specific formal and historical patterns of epic as a classical literary genre and an

[9] Although one may perceive experience as a narrative, these poets reject the notion that experience per se is always, *already*, textualized.

historical document, these modernist works both engage with *and* radically reinterpret the two fundamental Homeric and Dantean epic literary tropes—a journey or quest of an epic hero and his or her encounter with the god or the gods. I argue that Jones, H.D. and Pound engage with a quest narrative—a typical description of the epic—and reformulate the classical epic themes of a quest or a journey as a quest for a new and more comprehensive model of perception.

While I consider the event of war as central to these works, I take it to be not just an important thematic preoccupation of these neo-epics or a vast existential and civilizational threat occasioning a "conservative" cultural turn. I am also not primarily interested in the tribulations of war as a constitutive element of the classical epic plot (*The Iliad*). Rather, I examine the ways in which modern war as an event of mass destruction affecting human bodies and material objects, and, as Saunders has argued, an event which offers radically new types of sensory experience (182), allows these poets to rethink the relationship between transcendent vision and ordinary perception. In short, I examine the specific ways in which the understanding of the role of the human body as a site of the senses, honed by avant-garde experimentation and informed by the experience of war *as a sensory event* (Saunders), helps Jones, H.D. and Pound to solidify their understanding of both visual and poetic form and conceptualize the visionary experience in their mature neo-epics.

The Modernist Neo-epic and the Problem of "Religious Experience"

Lastly, through my examination of the relationship between ordinary perception and transcendent vision in *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* I hope to offer a new perspective on the question of "religious experience" and literary modernism. Indeed, a growing number of critics, such as Lara Vetter, Pericles Lewis, or Leon Surette (to name just a few more recent critical interventions), have suggested the centrality of the "religious question" for both

the development and the subsequent critical, historical and theoretical evaluations of Anglo-American literary modernism. I will argue that Jones, H.D. and Pound frame transcendent vision, first and foremost, as an embodied, first person experience. Thus, in this scenario, a possible transcendent, absolute object of such experience becomes a proposition posed by the trajectory of philosophical reflection on the modalities of human perception and the conditions of "authentic" experience, rather than a pre-conceived conclusion determined by any systematic religious framework, paradigm or orthodoxy.

I will not approach any of these poets as "religious" or interested in the subject of "religion" in any categorically rigorous or orthodox sense. In fact, I believe that the term "religious poet," if used with reference to Jones, Pound or H.D. often obscures the experiential aspect of their neo-epic works and, in consequence, our understanding of the specific formal and perceptual structures which these poets carefully construct and employ to represent the visionary as a part of a first person, embodied experience. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which they attempt to conceptualize and elaborate the meaning of visionary experiences primarily by means available to the modern secular artist, living in the secular or "disenchanted" (Max Weber) modern world. The focus on the issue of perception enables us to approach the important issue of modernism and "religious experience" in a way that establishes vital continuities between religious and non-religious expressions of it.

I believe that the existing criticism regarding the subject of "religious experience" and Anglo-American literary modernism focuses too heavily on the various aspects of syncretic religious and mythical systems (and various religious or spiritual *texts* central to them) which contribute to the shape of these neo-epic works. Critical discussions of the spiritual engagement of Anglo-American literary modernist artists often rely predominantly on the methodological

paradigm first elaborated by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James famously defines religious experiences[10] as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (50). In his account, James consciously brackets the issue of both origins and an object of such "feelings" and treats these experiences predominantly as psychological phenomena. Thus, this approach illuminates the spiritual experience of a human subject, but is, by definition, unable to account for the existence and properties of a possible object of such experience, except as it is seen to be the "religious feeling" itself. This account (and its variations) has been foundational for much of the early twentieth-century (mostly American) scholarship on religion, especially that immediately following James's influential study (for example, Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism* comes to mind); it has also informed some of the recent[11] studies of the subject of Anglo-American modernism and religion.

In order both to avoid overreliance on the conceptual apparatus offered by any single mythical and religious system contributing to the shape of these neo-epic works and to escape the blind spots of subject-oriented criticism, I will draw attention to phenomenology as critical in helping us understand the visionary experience in modernist neo-epics as both sensory and extra-sensory, and directed towards a particular object of such an experience. I argue that transcendent vision is conceived by Pound, H.D. and Jones not as an intra-subjective "religious experience," but rather a type of dynamic subject-object relationship between human subject and the absolute object. I will explore the potential of the phenomenological framework to open new contexts for

[10] For a more comprehensive discussion of the subject of religious emotion, see for example, John Corrigan's *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*.

[11] See Pericles Lewis's study *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*.

reading the engagement of Anglo-American modernism with the question of visionary and "religious" experience.

Recently critics have been paying closer attention to the relationship between phenomenology and Anglo-American literary modernism, suggesting that the relationship between the two should be more thoroughly and energetically explored by literary scholars. For example, Charles Altieri has devoted his latest book-length study to the examination of the relationship of philosophy and poetry in the work of Wallace Stevens. Altieri proposes that the conceptual system which informs Stevens's later work is formulated in defiance of some of the central formulations of American pragmatism, the philosophy which the modernist poet eventually rejects. Ultimately, Altieri argues for the centrality of a "phenomenology of value" for Stevens's later work and elaborates close links between Stevens's modernist poetics and the relevant developments of phenomenology. Likewise, Susan McCabe has recently posited in her work on the relationship between literary modernism and cinema that the phenomenological understanding of an "embodied consciousness" should be considered as fundamental for accounting for the modalities of embodiment in aesthetic modernism. Although some aspects of the relationship between Anglo-American literary modernism and phenomenology were explored in the 60's, the subject still remains a largely uncharted territory. I propose that since Pound, H.D. and Jones frame visionary experience as a problem of perception, and thus situate transcendent vision predominantly as a philosophical rather than a religious problem, the issue merits a more methodologically adequate approach than the one offered by William James's account. Such an approach is offered by phenomenology.

However, given the wide variety of philosophical tendencies and schools deemed "phenomenological" by literary and cultural critics, any general reference to a

"phenomenological paradigm" certainly remains too broad a designation. In the following chapters I will draw attention to the model of experience proposed by classical Husserlian phenomenology as central for my discussion. I will draw particularly (though not exclusively) on Edmund Husserl's discussion of the *intentional structure* of human consciousness in *Logical Investigations* and his specific use of the concept of "intentionality." The philosopher defines "intentionality" by insisting that human consciousness in its intentional acts is always directed towards an object. Crucially, such an "intentional object" of one's conscious act often "transcends" and exists independently of the act directed towards it or "intending" it. Husserl pays particular attention to the intentionality of sense perception, since an object of visual experience is not something in the mind; its existence "transcends" any (necessarily perspectival) experiences one may have of it. I propose that this approach should be more carefully considered in the discussions of Anglo-American literary modernism and "religious experience" as it proves helpful in conceptualizing modernist vision as a multi-layered spiritual, aesthetic and sensory subject-object relationship.

I will argue that Jones's, H.D.' and Pound's reflection on visionary experience is predicated on a carefully constructed structural model of the relationship between perception and its object, intended to suggest the ontologically independent status of the object of transcendent vision. I turn to Roman Ingarden's work[12] in realist ontology, formulated in reaction to Edmund Husserl's eventual movement towards transcendental idealism.[13] Ingarden's work posits the

[12] Although influential in the literary theory of the sixties and seventies (various schools of literary interpretation interested in hermeneutics), Ingarden's work has lost much of its academic caché. In my dissertation, I revisit it in a different context, drawing particularly on Ingarden's *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, as well as his *Ontology of the Work of Art*, which is better known to an American reader.

[13] Broadly, while philosophical idealism implies that objects and the physical world exist only as an appearance to or expression of mind and consciousness (or are somehow mental in their inner essence), philosophical realism

trajectory of experience —through the senses and into the mind— central for realist philosophy in general, while maintaining the fundamental tenets of subject-object dynamics and the nuanced and multi-modal phenomenological account of experience. I argue that a similar understanding of experience allows the three modernist poets to construct the object of visionary experience as mind-independent, extra-subjective and external to (or transcending) the self, rather than generated by it.

Modernism as a "Higher Realism"?

Careful attention to the workings of the senses illuminates the ways in which these Anglo-American modernist poets negotiate their forms of epic visionary experience or "spiritual realism" (H.D.), laboring over the questions of experience, the structure of the perceived world and the representational possibilities of various artistic media. What does it mean for a modernist artist to express commitment to a form of "realism"?

A detailed discussion of the meaning and implications of such a modernist "realism" for the modernist neo-epic has not yet been offered. However, Cyrena N. Pondrom has posited that—thinking along with Henri Bergson and against the reductive scientist thought of the nineteenth century—many Anglo-American modernists have shared "a belief in art, in poetry, as the expression of a *higher realism*" (*Road to Paris* 15) or a "higher empiricism" (15). After Pondrom, I propose that this modernist version of "higher empiricism" should not be understood as simply a more complex or nuanced re-iteration of the nineteenth-century mechanicist, positivist (and largely visual) philosophical paradigm. In describing moments of climactic vision these poets fundamentally and strategically draw on the reality of sensory impressions in order to

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holds that objects and the physical world exist independently of mind and consciousness and of the way in which these latter experience the former.

posit "vision" as a radical extension rather than a polar opposite of ordinary experience. Yet, while these poets share an assumption that sense experiences can be reliable, they simultaneously reject as conceptually untenable the absolute separation of the sensory from other aspects of experience.[14]

Pound, H.D. and Jones also do not simply and unreservedly adopt one of the many available philosophical or aesthetic versions of realism; rather, they construct their respective notions of a "higher realism" by relying on a complex network of philosophical, visual and literary sources. In my discussion, I will examine a set of questions which emerges out of these poets' interest in the philosophical issues of formal properties of objects and the relationship between appearance and essence; I will also consider their confrontations with the legacy of the nineteenth-century literary realisms[15] and symbolisms (particularly the symbolist theorizations of sense experience). These two kinds of sources, I argue, eventually contribute to the formation of such a "higher realism" as a philosophical and aesthetic construct informing their respective epic projects.[16]

Examining the issue of perception central to the notion of such "realism" allows us to establish and explore important, and so far overlooked, connections between the work of these

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[14] While insisting on a precise and detailed description of any act of perception, all three poets reject those discourses of radical empiricism which characterize perception as consisting in *either* 'ideas' *or* 'sense data' and posit experience as divided into "individual atoms" such as "patches of color or particular shapes" (Hammond 3).

[15] Martin Jay has shown that the realist novel came to be defined by the visual, and shaped by the "scopic regime" of the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century literary realism "called on the author's visual acuity to create its effect of represented reality, the novel's 'holding a mirror to nature,' in Stendhal's famous phrase" (173). Conversely, French Symbolism in its approach to the sensory focused on the "self-conscious sensual derangement and the suppression of the mundane, rational ego" (238).

[16] For a recent discussion of the relationship of modernism and realism, illustrating the dominant critical attitude on the subject, see Morris Dickstein's *A Mirror in the Roadway: Literature and the Real World*, particularly the chapter "A Different World: From Realism to Modernism."

three modernists and, in this way, shed light on the vital continuities between the "religious" and "non-religious" strands of Anglo-American literary modernism. In fact, David Jones, the only ostensibly overtly "religious" poet of the three is usually read (if read at all) as a Catholic and marginal poet. As a consequence, his work is viewed as rather isolated in its interest in the "religious" question, or akin only to T.S. Eliot's poetry (and only after Eliot turned towards explicitly religious themes following his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism). While this argument is accurate to some degree in relation to Jones's post-Second World War epic poem, *The Anathemata*, it is often mistakenly taken to describe the entirety of Jones's *oeuvre*. I hope to show that such a selective focus on the biographical fact of Jones's adult conversion *ignores* the consistency with which Jones in *In Parenthesis* relies on an intentionally wide and diverse range of aesthetic and mythical references. I take this fact as convincing evidence of Jones's reluctance to produce simply a work of Christian apologetics. In fact, the poet frames the climactic visionary moment of *In Parenthesis* in aesthetic and ontological, rather than religious or devotional, terms. In contrast to Jones's supposedly openly religious or even "devotional" poetry (to follow the helpful though, in this case, rather misleading distinction introduced by T.S. Eliot), both H.D.'s and Pound's spiritual commitments are viewed as heterodox, highly complex, and of predominantly Neo-Platonic, spiritualist, or, more recently, occultist provenance.

Likewise, David Jones's interest in the philosophical realisms of Jacques Maritain, Aquinas, and Aristotle, while broadly discussed by Jones's critics, is taken to be unusual among his fellow Anglo-American modernist poets. In comparison, Ezra Pound's and H.D.'s philosophical attitudes are never read as comparably homogenous. Even Pound's supposed commitment to a 'naïve' realism (as René Wellek casually quipped) is viewed as decidedly non-

uniform[17] and largely problematized by the poet's interest in Platonic and Neo-Platonic[18] thought. In the third chapter, I will re-examine the notion of Pound's "realism" by taking a closer look at his discussions of Aristotle and Plato in *Guide to Kulchur* and Pound's much earlier reflection on Aristotle's theory of metaphor and its role in the formation of his poetics.

I believe that for Pound, the evolution towards positions closer to realism is occasioned by the complex process he labeled the "externalization of sensibility" ("Psychology and Troubadours") and which can be directly attributed to the poet's experience of the Great War. A similar evolution and re-validation of sense perception (and a sensing human body as its instrument) in the context of war can be traced in the works of all three poets; however, only for Pound and H.D. does it signify a fundamental re-consideration of the value of the physical body and the material world. Thus, for the two Imagists any such allegiance to a form of "realism" should be construed as a significant re-formulation of their earlier philosophical positions, which were closer, as multiple critics have argued, to Neo-Platonism and, consequently, to a radical form of philosophical idealism and monism. Finally, H.D.'s own version of "spiritual realism" (*Trilogy*) seeks to integrate the reality of the spirit and that of the sensing body. H.D.'s notion of "spiritual realism" is fundamentally informed by her reflection on the ability of an artist and her work to render faithfully the relationship between "the visible" and "the invisible" worlds (*Paint It Today*), and synthesize the sensory and the non-sensory aspects of experience in a new, complete and comprehensive perceptual act.

[17] More about the problematic character of Pound's "realism" in Burton Hatlen's "Pound and/or Benjamin."

[18] The subject is elaborated extensively in the works of James Longenbach, and Leon Surette, as well as other studies.

Drawing on a structure of philosophical reasoning and problems germane to it (although, with the exception of Pound, not necessarily on a strictly philosophical idiom), *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* in their approach to the issue of transcendent vision are conceptually animated by some of the problems central to epistemology and non-materialist ontology. There are, in fact, multiple and fundamental similarities in these poets' approaches to the problem of vision. Firstly, they all situate it as a high point of the narrative arc and a hermeneutic key to their epic narratives. Secondly, all three poets resort to a phenomenological description of "what appears" in their renditions of a visionary experience conceived as an encounter of a speaker-quester with a transcendent object. Finally, all three poets strategically draw on the discourse of sense perception in order to distinguish transcendent vision from a hallucination. In this way, Pound and H.D also re-confirm the validity of the empiricist impulse central for their early imagist poetics in their mature neo-epic works.

On the other hand, the differences among these poets' accounts of the experience of transcendent vision reflect the diversity of the intellectual sources which inform their neo-epics and their unique aesthetic goals. While all three poets foreground the issue of multi-sensory perception in relation to the experience of transcendent vision, this problem informs their work in a manner which reflects the nuances of their specific artistic projects. David Jones, influenced by the philosophical insights of the "critical" philosophical realism of Jacques Maritain, emphasizes the nature of an object of visionary experience as, at least partly, accessible and comprehensible through an ordinary act of perception; he positions it on an ontological continuum with ordinary objects. Ezra Pound renders the moment of transcendent vision in Canto 81 as fundamentally informed by his much earlier theory of poetic language elaborated in *The Spirit of Romance*—an "elliptical" language "beyond a metaphor" which can document a

special and heightened perceptual moment. Consequently, in *The Pisan Cantos* the transcendent object in Canto 81 is posited as accessible in an act of perception, yet not fully available to *positive*, descriptive statements of philosophy. Rather, it is rendered by means of a paradox suggesting a type of experience which neither the idiom of a realist nor of an idealist philosophical tradition can capture in full. In Canto 81, Pound foregrounds a tension between two contrasting meanings of *eidos* derived from Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotle's theory of universals; the poet suggests, however, that this duality is momentarily reconciled in a synthetic act of embodied perception which is both sensory and extra-sensory (drawing upon the third meaning of *eidos*, as 'I knew' and 'I saw').

Lastly, in contrast to Pound and Jones, H.D. foregrounds the problem of an "embodied consciousness" itself. In order to investigate the central problem of *Trilogy*—the relationship between the spirit and the body and their roles in the experience of transcendent vision—the poet reflects on a subjective, embodied visionary experience and its possible broader impact, its translatability beyond the narrow notions of a subjective vision. Indeed, for H.D. the value of any such experience lies also in its ultimate communicability—one might call it a more universal and community-forming function. Consequently, the poet suggests multiple links between the moment of Kaspar's vision, central to the final installment of *Trilogy*, and the moment of a ritual concluding the poem to convey the complex relationship between the sensory and extra-sensory experience of a private vision and its externalization in the act of a community-forming ritual.

Chapters

Chapter one, "David Jones's *In Parenthesis* as a Sensory Epic," is devoted to *In Parenthesis*, the neo-epic poem in which Jones—a newly minted poet and an accomplished painter, engraver and typesetter—offers a sustained reflection on the Great War as an event of

mass destruction. The poem, completed in 1937 but based on Jones's experiences as a soldier in the trenches of the Great War, frames the early period of war (until the Battle of the Somme) as transitional for the Western civilization. The civilizational change is marked particularly by the rapid transformation of the forms of modern warfare—from the old type of thing-like, tactile hand weapons to the new weapons of mass destruction. In his sustained reflection on the ascent of this new weaponry (in many ways prophetic, considering the forms of warfare used in the Second World War, particularly against civilian populations), Jones pays particular attention to chemical weapons, which he dubs "the creatures of chemicals," seemingly boundless and immaterial (certainly invisible) objects, with deadly physical impact, rendered all the more sinister by their invisibility. Jones explores the ways in which these new "creatures" stimulate and confuse the senses, reorganize the human environment, re-order kinesthetic relations and produce a range of new sensations.

The processes of destruction of material objects and human bodies—the shifting and decomposition of the physical boundaries of objects, the sensory responses that these processes generate, and, finally, the emergence of the "formless" chemical weapons—provoke the poet to re-examine the concept of form. Yet, the thematic dimension of the poem—Jones's exploration of various "forms"—also becomes fundamental to the conceiving of the formal structure of the poem. Jones crystalizes and explores the intersections between various dimensions of "form" by positing a distinct teleology of experience (through the senses into the mind, through the material towards the immaterial) re-enforced by the temporal development of the narrative of *In Parenthesis*. As the narrative progresses towards the Battle of the Somme, the poet's description of the experience of war continues to unfold new and unexpected dimensions of the concept. In this way, Jones's thematic exploration of the meaning of war suggests a more intimate

relationship between subject of the poem and its poetic structure than that defined by the traditional distinctions into the poetic form and the poetic content.

Initially "form" is posited by Jones simply as physical constitution, a boundary or a shape of any material object; yet, gradually, as the narrative progresses, "form" begins to signify various elusive and immaterial attributes of objects, intuited as well as simply perceived. Finally, these various dimensions of form—an elusive "concept" as well as a common, basic (and perceived-- seen, smelled and touched) aspect or property of any object—are brought to bear upon the climactic scene of the poem; here, Jones, drawing on his earlier reflection on the modalities of form, carefully constructs the object of visionary experience as simultaneously akin to and radically transcending the world of material objects. The final description of the "Lady" who appears to dying soldiers in the Mametz Wood is framed by the series of meditations on the modalities of sensory perception and embodiment, highlighting a close relationship between the multi-modal problem of "form" and sensory perception.

In this chapter, I also propose that only by thinking about and across visual and verbal media is Jones able to develop his multi-layered concept of "form," fully explored in *In Parenthesis*. Jones's work as a visual artist is also critical in solidifying his understanding of the significance and cultural purpose of *In Parenthesis* as an epic poem. While the fact that Jones was an extremely prolific and accomplished visual artist, successfully working in multiple media, provides much material and potential evidence for a discussion of the relationship between the visual and verbal in his work, I focus predominantly on his series of copper engravings for a small press edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* which he produced while working on *In Parenthesis*. I will demonstrate how his concept of form, formulated in resistance to the visual paradigms of modernity and the domination of vision

over the rest of the human sensorium, becomes a way of re-ascribing essential value to the non-visual (both sensory and extra-sensory) aspects of experience. I will draw on Jones' own theorization of the process of engraving as well as other theories and histories of engraving and graphic arts to demonstrate that the obstacles posed by copper as material as well as the historical relationship of engraving to the emergence of the "scopic" regime of modernity provoke Jones to solidify the understanding of form as material, artistic and ontological concept fully explored in *In Parenthesis*.

In chapter two, I will continue the investigation of the relationship between sensory perception and the artistic, ontological and material dimensions of "form" by examining the work of H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), particularly her neo-epic poem *Trilogy*. In particular, I will trace the relationship between the poet's multi-modal understanding of form and the development of her reflection about human body as a symbol and a narrative vehicle of *Trilogy.*

I will look specifically into how H.D.'s "spiritual realism," fully articulated in *Trilogy*, is informed by the development of H.D.'s aesthetic theory and marked by her consideration of the experience of war. I will discuss the formation of H.D.'s "spiritual realism" by drawing particular attention to the poet's reflection on painting, sculpture and cinema. I will argue that H.D.'s synthetic form of "spiritual realism" (which has so far been discussed by the critics only with reference to H.D.'s intellectual allegiance to Freud's ideas, thus in a context radically different to that which I propose), develops from a wide variety of transformed and reiterated occultist, spiritualist, and aesthetic sources. It re-casts and re-articulates the philosophical problem of the body and the material world confronted with the war as the event of mass destruction.

While focusing on *Trilogy* as a literary text central for this chapter, I will also offer a reading of H.D's inter-war novel-memoir *Paint It Today* as an artistic and philosophical investigation of verbal art (poetry, novel) in relation to visual arts (mainly painting and sculpture). I will argue that the novel anticipates in important ways the "spiritual realism" of *Trilogy*. H.D.'s reflection in *Paint It Today* is instrumental to understanding the poet's theory of perception; this theory seeks to reconcile the demands of the "visible" and the "invisible" worlds, the distinction which H.D. first formulates in *Paint It Today* and which informs her subsequent notion of "spiritual realism." I also read the novel as H.D.'s response to the traditions of both pictorial and literary realisms; in *Paint It Today*, by palimpsest-like layering of poetry, prose, painting, sculpture and literary translation, H.D. explores the possibilities and limitations of various art forms in elaborating the various sensory and non-sensory aspects of experience. In this respect, I take the novel to be instrumental in the process of formation of H.D.'s concept of "spiritual realism" and H.D.'s idea of epic form.

In the final chapter, I argue that in *The Pisan Cantos* (like H.D. in *Trilogy* or Jones in *In Parenthesis*) Ezra Pound re-thinks and re-positions the epic genre, by shifting away from the consideration of a physical journey or quest as central to the tradition of the epic poem, and re-conceptualizes *The Pisan Cantos* as a narrative of the modalities and evolution of human perception.

In the *Cantos* Pound constantly draws attention to the relationship between the embodied experience and the existing ideal unavailable to experience, between material reality and the non-material and the abstract. He also conceptualizes these binaries as a problem of perception, by positing the fundamental disparity and tension between the first person embodied experience—the dynamic, perspectival and embodied view of reality he calls "periplum"—and the "objective"

reality of how things *are*. In *The Pisan Cantos*, the poet rearticulates this fundamental tension between things as they are perceived and things as they are, between reality and the perception of it.

Already Pound's early writings on the Aristotelean theory of metaphor, his reflections on French Realism and the poetics of Symbolism, and particularly his own theory of the role of paradox in a poetic work of art, negotiate the relationship between the ideal and the material, form as an abstract category and the immediacy of sensory experiences. Likewise, Pound's writing on Vorticism and Imagism, both his foundational works on these subjects and the subsequent, less known, critical reflection on sculptural form (found particularly in his interwar writings on Constantin Brancusi whom Pound views as a continuator of the sculptural ideas of Vorticism) continue that reflection and contribute to the formation of Pound's visionary "realism" by reflecting on the relationship of the material and the abstract, the sensory and the extra-sensory, matter and the abstract form of modern sculpture.

When in the climactic moment of Canto 81 these binaries momentarily come together in and through an embodied act of perception, Pound strategically draws on his own earlier notion of a poetic "paradox" (borrowed from Dante) simultaneously to highlight the close relationship between ordinary perception and transcendent vision and to point towards the realm available fully neither to the senses nor to the conceptual vocabulary of metaphysics. Through the superimposition of multiple, conflicting meanings of *eidos*, Pound conceptualizes the moment of vision in Canto 81 as a climactic point of the narrative and a key to it; yet he also suggests that the reality towards which the vision ultimately gestures is intuited rather than fully understood. At the same time, by strategically drawing on the description of a sequentially ordered series of sensory impressions, Pound suggests the ways in which such vision is available to perception

(and, as a consequence, to literary description), even though it is only momentarily apprehended, rather than entirely comprehended

In his recent study of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a spiritual and political project at the heart of European modernism, David Roberts argued that "the ultimate work [of modern art] … responds to the knowledge of the death of God" (131). I hope that a careful examination of the relationship between ordinary perception and transcendent vision in *In Parenthesis, Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* will reveal a new dimension of the spiritual engagement of Anglo-American modernism, alternative to both the accounts of a "religious feeling" offered by William James and the narratives which posit that a fully modern work of art must necessarily (for better or worse) be born out of the rubble of the annihilated idea of God. In fact, by exploring the experiential continuities between ordinary perception and transcendent "vison" the three poets may well be gesturing towards the realm previously occupied by religion and, perhaps, re-opening a conversation about its nature, purpose, objects and uses. Yet, even if that is the point at which their neo-epics eventually arrive, Pound, H.D. and Jones conduct their investigations of the subject of vision in the vernacular of modern art and by means of the conceptual apparatus available to an artist immersed in the modern and secular *habitus*.

Chapter II

David Jones's *In Parenthesis* as a Sensory Epic

David Jones constructs the penultimate, and arguably climactic, scene of his 1937 neo-epic *In Parenthesis* as a series of *aporias*. In the scene, the narrative perspective, so far constantly shifting, momentarily stabilizes and a single speaker delivers an eye-witness account of the death of his fellow soldiers ushered to the afterlife by the mysterious Queen of the Woods.[19] The first-person, unadorned, reporting tone of the narrator and his insistent use of the present tense, firmly situate the scene in historical time—during the offensive in the Mametz Wood, in July 1916. The narrator's tone indicates his acceptance of the Queen's presence as natural, in some way a consequence of the previous events. Yet, she does not appear in the narrative prior to the scene. It is also clear that she does not belong to the military reality of the Battle of the Somme. Instead of elucidating her identity or elaborating the Queen's physical characteristics, the narrator immediately draws attention to her interactions with twelve wounded infantrymen. She offers these dying soldiers—from both sides of the battle-lines—flowers "appropriate to their stature" (IP 186) and they stretch their arms to accept her gift. These soldiers can see and hear the Queen, and their bodies are actively engaged in interactions with her. They are full participants, while the narrator is merely an eye-witness; capable of observing the scene, he is unable to hear the Queen's voice or the content of her message: "You couldn't

[19] Thomas Dilworth suggests that the Queen is a presence out of an Anglo-Saxon myth (*Reading David Jones*), while Neil Corcoran in "Spilled Bitterness: *In Parenthesis* and History" suggests that she is "a beneficent female presence and tutelary deity" (220). Alongside similar interpretative lines, Teresa Godwin Phelps argues that "the Queen of the Woods appears to transform the Soldier's seemingly meaningless deaths into a Celtic/Christian rite of sacrifice" (331). To add to these readings, the fact that she selects twelve soldiers may evoke the traditional iconographic attributes of the Virgin Mary, particularly her twelve-star crown as well as Jesus' twelve disciples.

hear what she said to him, because she was careful for the 'Disciplines of the Wars'" (IP 189). Nevertheless, the narrator's account is the only one presented to the reader.

The narrative of *In Parenthesis* elaborates the confusing and fundamentally multi-perspectival reality of the "mysterious existence" of the Western Front—with its "sharp contours and unformed voids" (*IP Pref* x)—through the embodied experience of the poem's narrator(s). Jones shows that the life in the trenches of the Great War produces a wide range of multi-sensory, often synaesthetic, experiences. Jones characterizes the soldiers' experience in the fields of France by borrowing a phrase from *Mallory*; he describes the landscape as speaking "'with a grimly voice'" (*IP Pref* xi). Yet, although the Queen appears in the midst of such a landscape, the climactic scene is sensorially austere; in fact, the narrator explicitly notes that he sees, but cannot hear the Queen. The matter-of-fact style in which the scene is narrated and the scarce description of the Queen's physical characteristics provoke questions about her status and the mode of existence. Is the Queen a real presence and, if so, in what sense? Is she a vision of a wounded soldier? Why can the narrator see, but cannot hear her? Why are other soldiers the main focus of the scene?

I will argue that by accentuating the moment of sensory deprivation, Jones paradoxically draws attention to the senses as a primary way of conceiving and validating the status of a lived experience. Jones constructs the Queen, and, more broadly, the Queen as an object of religious experience, to be independent of and external to the individual consciousness of the narrator, both akin to and radically transcending the world of material objects. The status of the Queen as a part of the lived and empirically experienced reality (she is visible, her body actively interacts with the bodies of the wounded soldiers), rather than a product of a private hallucination, is highlighted in this moment of sensory deprivation. "Seeing," associated with the world of

empirical fact and the ocular order of modernity,[20] and "vision," related to the reality of religious or spiritual experience, prove inextricably linked.

In this chapter, I will approach the central subject of this study— modernist transcendent vision—in the following manner. First, I will briefly discuss phenomenological method, particularly as elaborated by Roman Ingarden in response to Edmund Husserl's evolution towards transcendental idealism. I take it to be an acute hermeneutic key for understanding the relationship between the sensory and the extrasensory, the self and the world in David Jones's *In Parenthesis*. In order to explain why Jones constructs the Queen as both a sensory and extrasensory object, I will consider the ways in which the poet, similarly, renders the experience of the Western Front as demanding both sensory and extrasensory (intellectual, emotional or spiritual) engagement. Finally, I will demonstrate how the logic of temporal unfolding of the narrative of *In Parenthesis* supports the positioning of the Queen as, simultaneously, akin to and radically transcending the world of objects described earlier in the poem.

In order to contextualize the development of Jones's discourse on sense perception, I will explain its relationship to the discourse on synaesthesia central for the European avant-gardes. I will argue that Jones both participates in this broader reflection on the possibilities and limitations of sense perception and refocuses it towards new historical and existential considerations arising out of the context of the Great War. In this broader context, I will also examine Jones's decision to render the experience of the Great War and the culminating moment

[20] For a more detailed discussion framing modernity as an era of a "hegemony of vision" see McLuhan's *Guttenberg's Galaxy*, Levin's *Hegemony of Vision*, or, most recently Mirzoeff's *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*.

of transcendent vision in the form of a modernist neo-epic poem rather than any visual form, more readily available to him as an accomplished painter and a successful graphic artist.

Phenomenology and the Senses

In Parenthesis offers a complex meditation on the possibilities and limitations of sense perception. The strategies which Jones mobilizes to render the climactic experience of transcendent vision are fundamentally enabled by his prior reflection on the ways in which the human senses facilitate understanding of reality given in experience. By drawing on the discourse of temporality, immanent to the art of poetry and the narrative,[21] Jones constructs the object of the climactic visionary experience as a consequence of a series of temporally unfolding poetic moments which foreground and elaborate the issue of perception. In this way, the poet also distinguishes the climactic visionary experience from an instantaneous epiphany.

In "Approaches to God," Jacques Maritain shows that the structure of "philosophical proofs of the existence of God" is often predicated on the process of "unfolding":

> The philosophical proofs of the existence of God are like a decisive unfolding or development, on the level of 'scientific' or 'perfect' rational knowledge, of the natural pre-philosophic knowledge implied in the primitive intuition of the act of being….
>
> [T]his root knowledge, even when it is not yet explicitly awakened, is still present in a state of unconscious tension and virtuality. (88)

Maritain's claim draws attention to the ways in which the final scene of *In Parenthesis* strategically draws on elaborations of such "primordial" intuitions that precede it and usher it in.

[21] See Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoön* where he establishes painting as a spatial art and poetry as a temporal one.

The climactic vision both is thematically and structurally dependent upon those earlier moments of insight and radically transcends them. In this way, Maritain's comment sheds light on the larger conceptual framework of Jones's narrative.

In *In Parenthesis* Jones rescinds the discourse of Roman Catholic orthodoxy[22] and leaves the identity of the Queen unresolved in terms of any easily identifiable, consistent religious framework. Indeed, critics have argued that the Queen of the Woods is a figure out of Anglo-Saxon myths (Dilworth *RDJ*), Virgin Mary, or, perhaps, a composite feminine deity or principle (Godwin Phelps).This deliberate obfuscation of the Queens's identity forces readers to take a step back from an explicitly religious idiom or symbolism. In this way, Jones poses the *problem* of visionary experience in the new context of cultural isolation from previously available forms of worship and historical ways of legitimizing such an experience within communities of believers.[23] While Jones's later epic poem, *The Anathemata*, explores a similar set of issues in a tone more akin to religious apologetics[24] and within a more readily identifiable Roman Catholic framework, *In Parenthesis* alludes to Christian symbolism only as a means of establishing a tentative link between the Queen as an object of the climactic visionary experience and the realm of the absolute. Instead, in *In Parenthesis* the carefully developed discourse on sense perception—buttressed by Jones's extensive training and practice as a visual artist—becomes

[22] In *Eric Gill and David Jones at Capel-Y-Ffin* Miles argues that "Jones's knowledge of Catholicism and his comprehension of post-impressionist theory had developed almost simultaneously" (22). Jones was received into the Catholic Church in 1921.

[23] Gabriel Josipovici in his recent *What Ever Happened to Modernism?* attributes the beginning of modernity to the emancipation of individual consciousness and the radical break with the communal ideals of the Middle Ages. Josipovici sees the pinnacle of this process in the modernist movement and attributes some of the movements' distinct character to the nostalgia for the lost communal ideal, the nostalgia present, as Josipovici argues, in all great modernist works of art.

[24] The Queen of the Woods (as a female deity) reappears in *The Anathemata* and *The Sleeping Lord* ("The Dream of Private Clitus").

fundamental to his presentation of the object of the final visionary experience. The reliance on this discourse situates Jones's conclusions within the framework of philosophical and formal, rather than theological, reflection.[25]

Throughout *In Parenthesis,* the poet consistently reflects on the five human senses both as producing illusions and as a means of accessing objects given in experience. In particular, Jones's reflection on the phenomenon of total war as a sensory phenomenon facilitates his inquiry into modalities of sense perception. "Total war"—widely understood by historians to be a distinctly modern phenomenon and often associated with military developments of the First World War—entails an increasingly mechanized warfare and a wide range of military tactics directed primarily against civilian populaces, rather than just enemy troops. Total war is characterized by a wide use of new technical developments such as airplane bombs, night raids, tanks or poisonous gases facilitating and optimizing the acts of mass destruction. In *In Parenthesis,* Jones pays particular attention to the destruction and reconstitution of material objects, the processes inextricably linked to total war (Saunders 182). He uses the context of these unprecedented changes as an opportunity to rethink his basic philosophical and artistic commitments.

Elsewhere, Jones labels the subject of his investigation an inquiry into "the Plato-Aristotle thing" (in Dilworth *Shape of Meaning* 23).[26] In this way, he frames the central problem

[25] A series of copper engravings for Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*—coterminous with *In Parenthesis*—occupies a central place in Jones's *oeuvre*. 1928, the year the illustrations were completed and published in the small press edition of the book (Clarendon Press), marks the moment of transition of Jones's creative energies from visual arts to poetry. The illustrations represent the only time Jones ever worked in copper. Importantly, Jones attempted to render the themes central to *In Parenthesis* in a series of engravings, but has been "prevented" (*IP Pref* xiii). Miles and Shiel's in *The Maker Unmade* discuss the subject in more detail.

[26] Thomas Dilworth writes that Jones once told him "'there's something missing in the poems of Yeats, and when I asked what, he referred to 'the Plato-Aristotle thing.' By this he meant that, unlike Aristotle, Plato and Yeats

of his work in broader philosophical terms. The "Plato-Aristotle thing," or the realism-idealism problem, engaged not only Jones, but also major continental philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century. For example, the phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, in his *Controversy over the Existence of the World*, written under the German occupation of Poland between 1941 and 1944 (that is, less than five years after Jones completed his neo-epic), set out to resolve the question of the autonomous existence of the "real world" (10) given in experience and independent of an "ego" or "pure consciousness" (10, 17). [27] Ingarden insisted that the investigation into this problem was prompted by his personal experience of total war and of the German occupation. For Ingarden, these events necessitated a firm commitment on either side of the realism-idealism controversy (12).[28] Crucially, in the introduction to *Controversy*, Ingarden pointed to his earlier work in aesthetics as preoccupied with the same basic philosophical issues, now amplified and made more urgent by the environment of war.

discount the material world." In this way Dilworth accounts for Jones's interest in the physicality of objects, both in his visual art and later in poetry. (*Shape of Meaning* 23)

[27] René Wellek, in his critical study *Four Critics: Croce, Valery, Lukács, and Ingarden* uses an alternative title, *The Debate over the Existence of the World*, for Roman Ingarden's *Spór o istnienie świata*. The work, published in Polish and German (vol. 1) was never, in its entirety, translated into English. I am using the 1987 four-volume PWN edition in original Polish. Note that after this chapter was completed, a new translation of the first volume by Arthur Szylewicz became available to English-language readers.

[28] „Wojna, której właściwe oblicze objawiło się tylko w Polsce, którą w jej najgroźniejszej postaci trzeba było przetrwać i wygrać wewnętrzną postawą duchową, wymagała od nas nie tylko hartu i odwagi w dokonywanych rozstrzygnięciach, ale i niezachwianej postawy moralnej. Ta zaś wymagała od nas zdobycia się na ostateczny wysiłek wyjaśnienia sobie poglądu na swiat, zakończenia z tym wymigiwaniem się przed istotnymi decyzjami teoretycznymi, które było tak charakterystyczne dla wielu prądow filozofii europejskiej XXw., a zwłaszcza dla krzewiącego sie u nas w latach 30-stych neopozytywizmu. Z tych wewnętrznych, w najgłębszym sensie praktycznych potrzeb życia duchowegowypłynęła ta wola uzyskania rozstrzygnięcia, która pozwoliła mi napisac tę ksiazkę." (*Spór o istnienie świata* 12) In Arthur Szylewicz's recent translation of *Controversy*: "The war—whose true countenance was certainly for the first time fully disclosed in Poland ... and which could only be endured through inner spiritual fortitude—demanded of us ... an unshakeable moral posture. Such a posture in turn demanded that we invest everything into clarifying our own understanding of the world in its innermost depths. An end had to be put to the sort of thinking and evasion of ultimate theoretical commitments that was so characteristic of many currents in [early] 20th century European philosophy, especially so of the Neopositivism promulgated in Poland in the 1930s."(24)

Jones considers the same set of issues in the context of his experience of the Great War and his work as a painter, engraver, typographer, and a poet. However, there are other, equally significant, correspondences between Jones's project and the issues identified by phenomenology. The phenomenological method understood as a "way of describing" rather than explaining (Bettis 6) and the phenomenological idea of intentionality prove central to Jones's poetic *praxis*. In *In Parenthesis*, the dynamic relationship between the narrator's consciousness and the object world draws attention to the fact that "there is no such a thing as mental activity apart from some object toward which it is directed" (Bettis 11). Indeed, Jones rejects reductionist definitions of experience as atomized and consisting of either "ideas" or "sense data" (Hammond 3). His detailed descriptions of the reality of the Western Front transcend the exclusive binary between "material things" and "psychic facts" (Ingarden *Studia* III) in favor of phenomenological description of what appears. Moving beyond positivist reduction of experience to physical phenomena and rejecting pure materialism as equally untenable,[29] Jones does not dismiss the role of empirical evidence. Rather, he views it as deeply integrated with other aspects of experience.

By consistently positioning every act of perception and mental activity in relation to an object, Jones also challenges the discourse of "religious emotion" popularized by William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. James defines "religious experiences" as "the

[29] It is, obviously, a broader reaction of twentieth-century philosophy to nineteenth-century positivism. This reaction is reflected in the works of European philosophers such as Bergson, Bataille, Maritain or Husserl (to name just a few). Bataille's offers the following critique of materialism:

> Most materialists, even though they may have wanted to do away with all spiritual entities, ended up positing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it as specifically idealist. They situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse facts, without perceiving that in this way they gave in to an obsession with an ideal form of matter, with a form that was closer than any other to what matter should be.…Materialism will be seen as a senile idealism to the extent that it is not immediately based on psychological or social facts, instead of artificially isolated physical phenomena. (*Visions of Excess* 15)

feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (50). [30] Jones shifts the focus of his narrative away from the question of religious experiences,[31] as defined by William James and others, towards considering a relationship between a subject and an *object* of a visionary experience. Consequently, in the climactic moment of *In Parenthesis*, James's discourse of a "religious feeling" is rearticulated as a dynamic *relationship* between a subject and an object. Yet, in *In Parenthesis*, not only does Jones consider the dynamic, subject-object character of the climactic visionary experience, but he also reflects on its communal character.

In *In Parenthesis*, Jones repeatedly describes religious ritual and war as fundamentally collective phenomena. Ultimately, however, this reflection on collective aspects of experience transcends the immediate historical context of the poem. *In Parenthesis* should not be simply considered a poem about the Great War. Completed in 1937, it is certainly shaped by Jones's experience as a soldier; however, it is equally influenced by his practice as a modern artist and marked by his reflection on the forms of mass spectatorship and collective experience emerging in the interwar period. While not explicitly acknowledged in *In Parenthesis*, this broader modern milieu fundamentally informs Jones's interest in the communal dimensions of experience.

Peter Nicholls has argued that mass experiences are, in fact, primordial and foundational experiences for modernist artists. The critic also shows that those experiences are often used by modernist poets as occasions to reflect on the issue of individual consciousness. Historically,

[30] For a more comprehensive discussion of the subject of religious emotion, see for example, John Corrigan's *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*.

[31] See William James's definition of "religious feeling" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

Nicholls links the modernist interest in mass experience to the figure of a *flâneur*, a modernist archetype championed by Baudelaire:

> Once again, the conditions of modernity seemed to foster a certain duplicity in in the writer, allowing him to 'see the world, to be at the very center of the world and yet to be unseen of the world.' The crowded thoroughfares of the city now provided a setting for a private drama in which the artist as a stroller (or *flâneur*) could shift at will between postures of aloofness and surrender. A wager of a kind was involved in this exhilarating experience, for in so far as the abrupt movements of the city were incorporated into the artist's internal life, so the self began to lose its boundaries, becoming instead a flux of sensation and contradictory states of mind. (17)

According to Nicholls, a *flâneur* becomes a capacious modernist trope, investigating the intersection between a modern mass experience and a complex modern subjectivity. A *flâneur* becomes "at will, both himself and the other people" (17); like "a wandering soul seeking a body," through an experience akin to metempsychosis, "he can enter, whenever he wishes, into anybody's personality" (Nicholls 17). In this way, a symbolist poet's ego becomes "dispersed" in one moment and "centralized" in another (Nicholls 17). The dominant model of a modern poetic self, a *flâneur* has an ability to originate the processes of dispersion of his own ego into the world and diffusion the boundaries between himself and other people.

Conversely, the narrative of *In Parenthesis* marks the increasing separation between the self and the world of objects, a process which ends with the ultimate assertion of the autonomy of the subject in the final scenes of the poem. Initially, however, Jones investigates the archetypal model of a poetic self constructed by Baudelaire. Two scenes in particular, the boast of Dai Great-coat in Part 4 and the vision of the Queen of the Woods in Part 7, highlight the

reversal of the process of dispersion of the ego into the world of things, captured by the poetic trope of a *flâneur*. These scenes offer a particularly apt illustration of the changing relationship between the self and the world in *In Parenthesis*.

Dai is an element linking the two scenes and a figure of a modern poet, "a *flâneur*," through which Jones explores the possibilities and limitations of literary form. However, while the scene in Part 4 focuses on the identity of Dai as a bard and a poet, he is conspicuously missing from the final scene in Part 7. The Queen calls him by his name: "Dai Great-coat, she can't find him anywhere—she calls both high and low, she had a very special one for him. Among this July noblesse she is mindful of December wood—when the trees of the forest beat against each other because of him" (IP 186).[32] In this way, the character of Dai becomes one of the elements solidifying the narrative arc of the work. Both scenes actively investigate the relationship between the mind and the world, material things and consciousness. Yet, while the boast in Part 4 foregrounds an almost complete fusion of Dai's consciousness with the world of objects, the vision of the Queen of the Woods marks the separation of human consciousness from that world.

Marked by the rare departure from the linear chronology which otherwise organizes the temporal structure of *In Parenthesis*, the scenes in Part 4 and Part 7 should be read alongside one another. In Dai's boast in Part 4 myth and history come together not merely as abstract concepts, but as elements of Dai's lived experience. The boast connects events of chivalric romances, the Biblical story of Genesis, and the myth of the Fisher King with the experiences of soldiers in the

[32] In "Spilled Bitterness: *In Parenthesis* and History" Neil Corcoran draws attention to Dai's absence to argue that "his absence (presumably because he has been blown unrecognizably into pieces) obdurately insists on what will always remain outside the assuaging and emollient reconciliation of myth. Not being available in his material body, Dai is not available to benediction" (224-5).

historically situated moment of the Great War. Dai begins his boast by recalling the past military deeds of his ancestors: "My fathers were with the Black Prinse of Wales / at the passion of / the blind Bohemian king. / They served in these fields;" he continues with the present-tense exchange in the trenches: "it is in the histories that you can read it, Corporal—boys / Gower, they were—it is writ down—yes. / Wot about Mathuselum, Taffy?" (IP 78). The boast immediately introduces the notion of a mythical time and navigates it as a part of the first-person, embodied experience: "I was with Abel when his brother found him, / under the green tree … I was the spear in Balin's hand / that made waste King Pellam's land" (IP 79). In this way, the commemoration of the experiences of Dai's ancestors becomes a memory of Dai's *own* experience of mythical events. Dai's consciousness freely traverses the boundaries of various temporal frames and objects, incarnating into animals, other men, groups of people, inanimate objects and, finally, into a series of natural phenomena: "I the fox-run fire," "I the south air, tossed from high projections by his Oli- / fant" (IP 80).

The role performed by Dai changes throughout the boast—he is a poet, an observer and, finally, the main theme of his own recitation. First, Dai asserts his separation from the world of objects (both things and other people): "I was *with* Abel … I built a shit-house *for* Artaxerxes" (IP 79), "I took the smooth stones of the brook, / I was *with* Saul / playing before him. I saw him armed like Derfel Gatheren" (IP 80) [emphasis mine]. However, the boundary between the speaker's consciousness and the world of objects is also repeatedly challenged: "I *was* the spear in Balin's hand… I *am* '62 Socrates, my feet are colder than you think / on this / Potidaean duck-board" (IP 80), "I the adder" (IP 80) [emphasis mine]. The persistent, uninterrupted stream of Dai's consciousness subsumes animals and inanimate objects, individuals and groups of people, humans and natural phenomena (wind, fire); it constantly constructs links between various

phenomena and objects, and highlights the possibility of thinking about them as, in some way, related. Yet, the scene also renders Dai's ego, like that of Baudelaire's *flâneur,* as dispersed throughout the material world.

How can it be that Dai is a "spear" or a "hand gun"? By exploring Dai's poetic process, Jones draws attention to the ways in which the singer-poet reduces "the world to consciousness" (Brown, *A Sense of Things* 188). Dai's consciousness absorbs a variety of objects and temporal frames into its uninterrupted stream; in fact, all things and events become immanent to that stream. At the same time, Jones highlights the intensity of Dai's sensory experiences—the smoothness of a touched stone, the sound of an echo, or "sparkling eyes" of the "Bracelet Giver" (IP 81). The evocation of the physical sensations suggests that Dai's experience is both mental and empirical, real and imaginary, figurative and literal. In important ways, Dai's boast also anticipates the climactic moment of vision in Part 7. In the scene, Jones predicates the construction of the Queen as a real, three-dimensional object upon her radical separation from the speaker. Likewise, Jones draws attention to the speaker's sensory experience—the moment of sensory deprivation associated with the speaker's vision of the Queen. Due to the speaker's physical positioning, he can see, but cannot hear the Queen. In this way, the climactic scene sharply contrasts with the experience of Dai in Part 4. Moreover, while Dai's boast in Part 4 reflects exclusively on the experience of a speaking "I" (therefore it is, perhaps, most akin to a lyric), the moment of vision focuses on objects external to the speaker's consciousness and draws attention to the multiplicity of perspectives at play in the scene.

In the climactic scene of *In Parenthesis*, the senses help apprehend the transcendent object as distinct from the narrator's consciousness and concretize the separation of the self and

the world. Thomas Dilworth suggested that Jones's vision in *In Parenthesis* is "typological"[33] (*The Shape of Meaning* 201). This reading is consistent with the criticism of Jones interested in exploring his status as a Catholic or, more broadly, a religious poet. However, I believe that Jones in *In Parenthesis* explores an evolution of ordinary human perception to demonstrate how an eye-witness to the destruction of total war becomes a subject of and a participant in a vision transcending the material world.

Following Aristotle and Aquinas, Jones believed that "all being derived from the divine beauty … [there is] nothing is in the mind unless first in the senses."[34] Yet, already in *In Parenthesis*, Jones frames the final experience of vision primarily as an embodied experience of perception. The human senses, in the climactic scene represented by sight, hearing and touch, become a primary pathway through which the vision occurs. While, the speaker's sensing body and its spatial positioning restrict him and prevent from apprehending the Queen in full, it is also thanks to this situated moment of perception that the Queen becomes accessible at all.

Graham Pechey has argued that in Jones's work, the experience of human corporeality is conceived as both an advantage and a limitation.[35] Indeed, placed at the center of the climactic scene, the body of the narrator prevents him from conceiving of the Queen in full. However, by the same token, Jones draws attention to the object of transcendent vision as three-dimensional and a part of a lived reality of experience. Emphatically, it *is* perspectivally given and its

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[33] In *Shape of Meaning*, Dilworth argues that *The Anathemata* "devoid of controlling narrative… initially discloses its meaning through symbolic interaction"(201) and relies, more heavily, on typological logic. In his later *Reading David Jones* he discusses the typological gaze as applying to the logic of *In Parenthesis* as well.

[34] More on the subject of Jones's allegiance to realism, see Jones's "Art and Sacrament," Anne Price-Owen's "Materializing the Immaterial. David Jones: Painter-Poet" and Richobaud's *Making the Past Present*.

[35] Pechey writes that for Jones all art "proclaims and presupposes the artist's occupation of a situated body: corporeality is a condition not only of art but of all that escapes the utile" (6).

apprehension *is* restricted by the ordinary limitations of the speaker's embodiment. Thus, the narrator ultimately does not learn about the content of the Queen's message. While in his boast Dai proclaims "I was a spear" (IP 79), the final scene, immediately following the moment of vision, further foregrounds the separation of an individual and the world of objects, a soldier and his gun. In this way, Jones concretizes the trajectory of change taking place over the course of the narrative. In the closing stanzas of the poem, the speaker advises a soldier to "leave" his gun "under the oak." By highlighting the separation of a soldier and his handgun, the conclusion reflects back to Dai's boast in Part 4, and foregrounds the autonomous identities of the speaker and the object world. In this way, the closing monologue also draws attention to the significance of the Great War as a historical event and reflects on the inevitable museumification[36] of its, once deadly, instruments, such as hand weapons. Those instruments are now clunky and obsolete—useful only to an archeologist or "Cook's tourist to Devastated areas" (IP 186).

The Senses and the Great War

Just as Jones draws on the modern poetic archetype of a *flâneur* to reflect on and eventually reestablish the boundaries between the self and the world of objects, he also makes use of the paramount modernist experience of synaesthesia. Nicholls argues that in Symbolism (particularly Arthur Rimbaud's, but also Baudelaire's) the "disjunction between words and things no longer generates feelings of loss and anxiety but provides a sort of mandate for a

[36] In the endnote to the scene, Jones writes: "I remember in 1917 discussing with a friend the possibilities of tourist activity if peace ever came. I remember we went into details and wondered if the unexploded projectile lying near us would go up under a holiday maker, and how people would stand to be photographed on our parapets." (n.45 224). Indeed, the interwar period saw a high level of both archeological activity and "memory tourism" in the area of the Western Front: "As soon as the Armistice was signed visitors began to flock to the battlefields in large numbers. Organized tours and guidebooks were available as early as 1919" (Robertshaw &Kenyon 27). The former trenches were often dug up and scavenged in search of souvenirs and memory objects. For a more comprehensive discussion of the subject, see: Robertshaw and Kenyon's *Digging the Trenches: The Archeology of the Western Front*, Saunders' "Bodies of Metal, Shells of Memory" or Hallam and Hockey's *Death, Memory and Material Culture.*

creative destruction of the world" (29). According to Nicholls, Rimbaud resolves "to destroy the very axis of the self" (29); the poet foregrounds the experience of synaesthesia, predicated on the deliberate giving up of precise designations of things by words in order to blur the boundaries between the self and the world of objects (30). In this way, Nicholls also draws attention to a central role of the discourse on sense perception in the historical moment of the birth of European modernism. In particular, the critic shows that French symbolists repeatedly draw on the experience of intensification and transference of sense impressions as a pathway to "the unknown" (Rimbaud in Nichols 30). For example, Baudelaire in his sonnet, "Correspondences," famously depicts a moment of synaesthesia and imagines the nature as a temple whose pillars release confused, indistinct words. In its midst, man passes through "a forest of symbols" that "peer out" and observe him, while "lights, smells, colors and sounds concur." For Baudelaire, like for other symbolists, the complex physical and spiritual effects of synaesthesia become an entry point to a higher reality.

The French symbolists are not isolated in their interest in the phenomenon of synaesthesia. In a similar vein, Kandinsky attempts to chart a path between the experience of synaesthesia[37] and an "absolute" work of art. For those modernist synaesthetes, the experience of synaesthesia signifies the "expansiveness of infinite things" ("Correspondences") which are immaterial and reside primarily in the mind. For Jones, the senses mark the separation of man from the object world and, ultimately, from the object of transcendent vision. In *In Parenthesis*, the experience of synaesthesia is not generated by the deliberate disturbance of cognitive faculties in order to suggest the immaterial reality of spirit. Rather, it is produced by the

[37] More on the popularity of the discourse on the senses as a means of access to a higher reality of spirit, see Maurice Tuchman's collection *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting: 1890-1985.*

experience of total war. By considering it in a new historical context, Jones in *In Parenthesis* critically confronts the broader modernist discourse about sensory experience.[38]

Jones draws attention to the ways in which the violence of total war produces a wide range synaesthetic sensations; for example, the poet insists that the "landscape" of the Western Front itself "spoke with a grimly voice." Indeed, military anthropologists have shown that the processes of destruction and reconstitution of matter inherent to the phenomenon of war occasion changes in human perception and offer "radically new types of sensory experiences" (Saunders, "Bodies of Metal, Shells of Memory" 182).[39] The attention Jones pays to the workings of the human sensorium in the environment of total war is provoked by those new experiences of materiality—physical objects being annihilated and reconstituted as a result of the process of intentional, organized and mechanized mass destruction. In *In Parenthesis*, sensory confusion produced by the experience of war is lived rather than imagined; it is sustained, rather than self-induced. In the existential context of war, the senses become the primary means of orientation. In fact, Jones insists that in the trenches of the Great War, the clear and efficient work of the human sensorium is one of the fundamental means of ensuring survival.[40]

In *In Parenthesis*, Jones carefully combines the appeals to the visual with evocations of tactility, smell and hearing in order to suggest that no single sense is sufficient in rendering the complexities of the environment of the Western Front. In this way, the poet also replaces the

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[38] See Maurice Tuchman's "Hidden Meanings in Abstract Art" in *The Spiritual in Art*.

[39]Saunders sees war primarily as "the transformation of matter through the agency of destruction" ("'Bodies of Metal, Shells of Memory': 'Trench Art' and the Great War" 182).

[40] Santanu Das in his *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* highlights the centrality of touch, rather than vision, as the most important sense in the First World War literature.

symbolist emphasis on the experience of synaesthesia with a renewed attention to multi-sensoriality. Marshall McLuhan has suggested an alternative meaning of synaesthesia, no longer the term signifying the process of transference of sensory impressions, but rather a fully integrated act of perception:

> [When] at the end of the nineteenth century Bernard Berenson had begun a crusade 'to endow the retinal impression with tactile values' … [t]here was wide awareness that photography and other technological change had abstracted the retinal impression, as it were, from the rest of the sensorium. Thus, in 1893 Adolf Hildebrand, the sculptor, published a small book called *The Problem of Form*. He insisted that true vision must be much imbued with tangibility, and that creative, aesthetic awareness was touching and making. Such was the timeliness of his insistence that the theme of artistic vision as tangible, tactile, and based on the interplay of the senses began to enjoy acceptance in poetry and painting alike. ("Inside the Five Sense Sensorium"43)

Like McLuhan, Jones distinguishes between an integrated act of sensory perception and the synaesthetic transference of sense impressions. Thus, in *In Parenthesis*, the soldiers stumble through "circular roughness" (IP 20), the appearance of the moon is described as "her bright disc rising yet her veiled influence illuminated the texture of that place, her glistening on the saturated fields" (IP 27).

In this context, Jones explores not only the evocative potential of the human sensorium, but also the limitations and illusions produced by pure images. He takes up the theme of the treachery of sight already in some of his early war-time drawings. For example, his drawing of a hand-gun (in Miles& Shiel 24) emphasizes *perceived* material continuities between a handgun and a tree branch against which the rests. In his early drawing, Jones constructs the relationship

between two objects—a tree branch and a hand-weapon—as contingent upon the sense of sight. In reality separate, in the image the two objects are almost entirely, materially unified; the drawing foregrounds the perceived continuity between the objects and the contingency of their mutual relationship upon purely visual perception.[41] The physical boundary between the branch and the gun, easily detected by both sight and touch, is deliberately blurred by Jones. While W. J. T. Mitchell in *What Do Pictures Want* posits that men can experience only images, but never things in themselves, Jones's early drawing deliberately stages a tension between an image and a thing, exploring the dialectical relationship between the two. In this way, Jones draws attention to the modalities, functions and deceptions of sense perception. Even more importantly, in the final section of *In Parenthesis* Jones returns to this early image and performs a symbolic separation of the two objects; in the closing scene of the poem, the narrator repeatedly and urgently commands a soldier to leave the gun "under the oak" (IP 186).

In *In Parenthesis*, Jones states: "I have only tried to make a shape in words, using as data the complex of sights, sounds, fears, hopes, apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior, the landscape and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men" (*IP Pref* x). For the poet, the early years of WWI become a transitional "space in between" (*IP Pref* xv); it is the time when both modern warfare and the culture at large undergo rapid and dramatic changes. Jones states that he has written *In Parenthesis* "in a kind of space in between—I don't know between quite what—but as you turn aside to do something; and because for us amateur soldiers… the war itself was a parenthesis…and also because our curious type of existence here is altogether in parenthesis" (*IP Pref* xv). The painstakingly precise descriptions of sensory

[41] Miles & Shiel read the image as an evidence of Jones's interest in surrealism (24, 90).

experiences generated by those changes, allow Jones to render the theater of the Great War as a liminal space of an accelerated cultural and civilizational transition.

While Jones is unsure about the ultimate implications of those civilizational changes, he draws attention to their unprecedented character, most strikingly prophesized by new weapons of mass destruction, particularly by the disembodied "creatures of the chemicals" (*IP Pref* ix). The narrative of *In Parenthesis* highlights the ways in which these new "creatures" distort ordinary spatial relationships and produce a new range of sensory impressions. Typified by gas clouds and "petroleum spills hurting the sea" (*IP Pref* ix), these "new creatures" challenge fundamental categories of human existence. For Jones, the experience of unprecedented mass destruction and the emergence of those new, amorphous "extensions of man" (McLuhan), puts into question the categories according to which objects used to be cognized and classified:

> Yet must we do gas-drill, be attuned to many newfangled technicalities, respond to increasingly exacting mechanical devices; some fascinating and compelling, others sinister in the extreme; all requiring a new and strange direction of the mind, a new sensitivity certainly, but at a considerable cost. (*IP Pref* xiv)

Yet, Jones not only reflects on these unprecedented changes, but also draws attention to the destruction of total war and the emergence of the disembodied "new media" as two mutually reinforcing processes.

For the poet, the reconfiguration of the material world due to the destruction of the Great War parallels larger processes of disembodiment and dematerialization of man's *habitus*. The latter processes are not necessarily specific to the experience of war. Although Jones insists that

the dramatic civilizational transition is exacerbated by the military conflict, he repeatedly gestures towards its consequences that affect modern life after the end of the Great War:

> [We] who are of the same world of sense with hairy ass and furry wolf and who presume to other and more radiant affinities, are finding it difficult, as yet, to recognize those creatures of chemicals as true extensions of ourselves, that we may feel for them a native affection, which alone can make them magical for us. It would be interesting to know how we shall ennoble our new media as we have already ennobled and made significant our old—candle light, fire-light, Cups, Wands and Swords, to choose at random. (*IP Pref* xiv)

In "A, a, a, Domine Deus" (*The Sleeping Lord*), his short and lesser known poem, Jones clearly and powerfully recapitulates this attempt to understand and embrace the various mass-produced "creatures"—the products of modern machinery: "I have watched the wheels go round in case I might see the / living creatures like the appearance of lamps, in case I might see / the Living God projected from the Machine." Experienced individually and communally, destroyed or placed in new and unusual contexts, both ordinary objects and these new elusive "creatures" becomes the foundation for Jones's subsequent analysis of the object of visionary experience.

Objects and Things

Recent literary criticism and literary theory have defined the interwar period as an era of an object. For example, Douglas Mao argues that the period immediately after the Great War is characterized by the rejection of abstraction and the return to the "thingliness" of things. Attributing this turn towards "solid objects" to the experience of the First World War, Mao writes that "central to these ideas is that the survival of art, and indeed of society itself, depends

upon a reproof to abstraction and a return to the particular" (25). Similarly drawing attention to the experience of war as a pretext for reconsidering the world of material things, Bill Brown insists that the history of the twentieth century should be seen as "the story of objects asserting themselves as things" ("Thing Theory" 4). In particular, Brown urges us to pay attention to those "occasions of contingency—the chance interruption—that disclose a physicality of things" (Brown, *ST* 188). He argues that to experience the *Dinglichkeit* ('thingness') of things is to see them as fundamentally autonomous from a human subject and to find a way out of the extreme subjectivization of human perception.

For Jones, the event of the Great War provokes a radical reevaluation of categories which are often spontaneously and non-reflexively imposed upon the world of material objects and the fabric of lived experiences. The poet shows how the experience of war fundamentally estranges otherwise familiar objects and, at the same time, allows us to perceive them anew. In *In Parenthesis*, Jones develops a complex network of typologies in order to reexamine the world of ordinary objects and render the processes of cultural and historical transformation with more precision. Simultaneously, the poet challenges multiple familiar categorizations according to which objects used to be cognized: the machine- and man-made, natural and artificial, formed and formless, solid and non-solid, material and immaterial, visible and invisible, concrete and abstract. Instead, he stages moments of tension between mutually reinforcing effects of intimacy and estrangement which ordinary objects produce in the extraordinary circumstances of the Western Front.

Reexamining those existing categories, Jones also takes a broader look at his cultural milieu. In this reflection, Jones draws on the ideas of his mentor, the British sculptor Eric Gill, whose diagnosis about the direction of the Western civilization is, in turn, shaped by the thought

of a neo-Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain,[42] and the writings of a German historicist, Oswald Spengler. Jones and Gill label their historical moment "the Break" and associate it primarily with economic and cultural processes due to which man-the-maker lost touch with his tools and materials. As a result, objects surrounding modern man are not hand-crafted, but mass-produced or, in Jones's own striking phrase, "projected from the machine" ("A, a, a, Domine Deus"). Jones and Gill both agree that "the Break" begins with the rise of industrial production, the subsequent division of labor, and the "reduction of the worker to a sub-human condition of intellectual irresponsibility" (in Daly 225). Both artists explain deeper causes of the current crisis and search for its roots in the historical beginnings of modernity.

Still, critics and historians ultimately overemphasize the affinities between Gill's and Jones's ideas.[43] Indeed, Gill's economic distributism and his attempts to return to pre-modern notions of craftsmanship should be seen primarily as a continuation of the nineteenth-century initiatives emerging under the dispensation of the Arts and Crafts movement. Conversely, Jones does not fully commit to Gill's nostalgia for the pre-modern. Rather, he carefully and critically examines the ways in which things function in the culture of his time. Ultimately, Jones rejects the absolute, valorizing distinction into mass-produced and hand-crafted objects championed by his mentor. Although Jones's work certainly identifies tensions between these two aspects of modernity's material culture, it also points towards new considerations that render obsolete the absolute distinctions into man-made and machine-manufactured objects.

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[42] The ideas derived from Maritain's *Art and Scholasticism* (first known to Gill and Jones as *Philosophy of Art*) prove instrumental in establishing the artistic colony in Ditchling organized by Eric Gill. Gill insists in his *Autobiography* that "following William Morris, following Ruskin, we were in revolt against the whole conception of art as being irrational. Without knowing it we were Thomistic and Aristotelean" (136-7).

[43] See, for example, Adam Schwartz's *The Third Spring*.

In his late critical essay, "The Utile," Jones bemoans the "technocracy" which results in "the vacuity and deprivation apparent in the thousand-and-one utensils and impedimenta of our daily lives" (181). However, in *In Parenthesis* he also, figuratively and half-jokingly, rejects the rigid boundary between the unique and the mass-produced. Early in Part 1, the image of the iconic Uccello's San Romano squire smoking a cigarette (IP 5) combines the quintessentially unique—the unparalleled Uccello's master painting—with the quintessentially mundane and mass-produced—a cigarette. In this way, Jones suggests that the man-made and the mass-produced as categories no longer produce the central tension in the culture of his time. Rather than advocating the return to the pre-modern ways of making things and the culture of craftsmen, Jones highlights the understanding of art – and, more broadly, any process of *making*—as one which foregrounds the role of an artisan "as declaring his finitude in his forms, as having a mortal body" and "making forms that reflect the multiplicity and movement" (Pechey 6) of lived, embodied experience.

Consequently, Jones insists that while mass-manufactured objects are alienated from their original creators and devoid of the "gratuitous" or "non-utile" (as Maritain calls it in *Art and Scholasticism*) aspect central to the hand-crafted objects of the pre-industrial era, many of those objects are still "solid" and *formed*. In this way, they starkly contrast with the "petroleum spill hurting the sea" or chemical weapons—the amorphous objects which appear to lack any boundaries and forms altogether. According to Jones, those new "creatures" produce an environment in which "you feel exposed and apprehensive" (IP 9). They both symbolize and provoke another civilizational change:

> It is not easy in considering a trench-mortar barrage to give praise for the action-proper to the chemicals—full though it may be of beauty. We feel a rubicon has been passed

> between striking with a hand weapon as men used to do and loosing poison from the sky as we do ourselves. (*IP Pref* xiv)

These changes which the historical moment of the Great War merely crystallizes, and which Jones so aptly captures, extend beyond 1918. In this way, *In Parenthesis,* though published in 1937 and engaging directly with the early phase of the Great War, anticipates, in surprising and prophetic ways, the Second World War with its use of gas chambers, the atomic bomb, and the ever-growing industrialization of modern warfare. The latter no longer entails "striking with a hand weapon" (xiv), but rather becomes increasingly detached from any known notions of human agency, responsibility or direct action. In this way, by seeking to render the differences between "solid things" and these various new "creatures," Jones also introduces two concepts which become the cornerstones of his reflection—corporeality and form (or, more precisely, the quality of "being formed").

Jones chooses a wide and diverse repository of objects to examine these two, initially somewhat abstract, categories. One of those objects is a "latch-key" (IP 23), which, early in the narrative, becomes an ironic, nostalgic and symbolic image illustrating the larger processes to which common objects are subject in the environment of total war. One of the characters, Ball, finds the key in his pocket among "one flattened candle-end, two centime pieces, pallid silver sixpence, [and] a length of pin Orderly Room tape" (IP 23). The narrator describes the key as an object "strayed in the wilderness" (IP 23); it is an otherwise common and insignificant thing which, in this new context, becomes strangely visible and vested with a new meaning. We learn that the latch-key, a mass-produced object par excellence, has its identical "twin" which belongs to Ball's father (IP 23). It immediately draws attention of Ball's companions who "glanced where it lay incongruous, bright between the sets" (IP 23). Misplaced and devoid of its original

purpose, the key is of absolutely "no use here, so far from its complying lock" (IP 23). Unnoticeable in a more ordinary context and now attentively observed, the key becomes a symbol of finitude and a sign of an order with "shiny doors" that may be locked, separating the self and the external world, the inside and the outside. It is also solid, thus formed (Pechey) and tactile; by its nature and definition, it is meant to be touched and handled.

Indeed, the characters in *In Parenthesis*, though "alienated from their surroundings" (Staudt 67), are provided with the sense of finitude and familiarity primarily by objects surrounding them. "[I]ll-shaped," misplaced or misused as they may be, these "solid things" allow the soldiers to create a temporary "unlovely order" (IP 27) in the midst of the Great War. Jones juxtaposes the "greatcoat that fits superbly" (IP 170)—the evidence of good craftsmanship and a craftsman's humble, yet individual, creative act—with the "terrible certainty," "sinister perfection" ("Religion and the Muses" 104), and the supreme integrity of the new chemical "creatures;" he contrasts the physical finitude of hand-weapons with the poison "loos[ed] from the sky" (*IP Pref* xiv). The poet views prosthetic limbs, keys and hand-guns as fundamentally and qualitatively different from gas clouds and exploding bombs, even though both types of objects are mass-produced. The latter become "extensions of man" (McLuhan) in a new, yet unknown sense. They create an environment in which human bodies and all "solid things" (IP 24) are threatened with "losing [their] compact form" (IP 20) through "the dissolving and splitting," "all barrier-breaking, all unmaking" (IP 24). In this new context, the key symbolically stands for the lost order of "locks for shining doors for plaster porches, gentlemen of the 6.28, each with a shining key" (IP 23). Although now useless in the practical sense, it symbolizes the lost order reliant not on the principles of aesthetic beauty or the uniqueness of craftsmanship, but rather on a fundamental sense of boundaries between the inside and the outside, the self and the

world. Jones insists that these categories, central for the human order and previously been taken for granted, are dramatically challenged by the experience of total war.

The sense of accelerated civilizational change taking place during the Great War is reflected in the narrative structure of *In Parenthesis*. Early on, before entering the battle, the soldiers are "given lectures on very wet days in the barn, with the great roof, sprung, unpreaching, humane, and redolent of a vanished order" (IP 13), while at nights they rest "cozily" in "thick straw," all "crowded together " and engaging in "hours of confused talking" in the "tiny room[s] heavy with the haze of smoking, and humane with the paraphernalia of any place of common gathering, warm within small walls" (IP 13). These scenes evoke the sense of familiarity associated with the order of all "humane" shelters—walls, roofs and locks. However, as the narrative progresses, this sense of finitude is gradually and irrevocably lost. Progressively, all man-erected boundaries become untenable and unable to protect the soldiers from the threat posed by explosives and the borderless "creatures of chemicals."

Two final sections of the poem, concerned directly with the soldiers' experience of the battle of the Somme, return to the images of keys and "fitting" and solidify their role as central symbols and conceptual motifs of the narrative. In this way, Jones stresses the sense of both physical limits and "corporeality" as fundamental and shared experiences of all creatures and objects of the "vanishing order" (IP 13). The poet repeatedly draws analogies between the finitude of the human body and that of old, familiar objects. The image of a sleeping and resting body which "fits the crevice of the bay in the most comfortable fashion imaginable" (IP 53-4) is later echoed in a different context:

> The inorganic earth where your body presses seems itself to pulse deep down with your heart's acceleration … but you go on living, lying with your face bedded in neatly

> folded, red-piped, greatcoat and yet no cold cleaving thing drives in between expectant shoulder-blades, so you get to your feet , and the sun-lit chalk is everywhere absorbing fresh stains. (IP 167)

Jones argues that the act of "fitting together" is fundamental for all processes of making and interacting with inanimate objects; it is foregrounded in the opening of the poem by the images of "a greatcoat that fits superbly," of Ball adjusting his backpack straps (IP 2) and of the key fitting into the "complying" lock (IP 23). Here, the motif of "fitting" acquires yet another meaning—the soldier hopes to "fit" his body into a non-existent crevice in order to ensure survival.

The experience of the Great War and the deep transformation of material reality it engenders provoke Jones to reflect on embodiment and physical boundaries as fundamentally defining man's relations with the world of things. However, in their discussion of the material culture and war, military anthropologists Cornish and Saunders have also suggested that objects "embody an individual's experiences and attitudes as well as cultural choices in the technology of production;" the theorists have argued that things occupy "a dynamic point of interplay between the animate and inanimate worlds, inviting us to look beyond the physical world and consider the hybrid (and constantly renegotiated) relationship between objects and people" ("Material Culture and the 20th Century War"). In *In Parenthesis*, Jones draws attention to a similar process of soldiers establishing intimate relationships with the object world.

In *In Parenthesis*, a hand-weapon stands for the ideals of the early period of the Great War, before "things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair, took on a more sinister aspect" (*IP Pref* ix). It is "an instrument of precision—it costs us tax-payers money" (IP 184), and a mass-produced instrument of modern warfare, reflexive of the utilitarian values of its time.

Yet, it is paradoxically more akin to Roland's Durendal than to the new weapons of mass destruction. The speaker extols the virtues of the hand-gun and humanizes it, first sarcastically: "Fondle it like a granny—talk to it—consider it as you would a friend… You've known her hot and cold" (IP 184) and later sincerely: "You know her by her bias, and by her exact error at 300, and by the deep scar at the small, by the fair flaw in the grain, above the lower sling swivel" (IP 184). In this way, Jones embraces the weapon as an object that may gradually gain individual traits, if not through a creative act of a man who made it, then, certainly, through touch, use and contact with its owner. Indeed, the tone of the final scene fluctuates between irony and genuine affection, the duality reflective of the gun's ambiguous role as a means of self-protection and an instrument of destruction. In contrast, the process of industrialized mass destruction is dissociated from such specific and solid instruments. It is described by Jones in decidedly abstract terms which further diffuse and destabilize any notions of subject-object relationships as organizing those acts of destruction; Jones refers to those acts as "all barrier breaking, all unmaking" (IP 24).

In this context, Jones yet again reaffirms the role of the sensing body as the primary tool of orientation in the reality of the Western Front. In particular, he is interested in the ways in which the human sensorium copes with the many types of elusive and *formless* objects. Jones pays particular attention to the ways in which these formless creatures baffle and confuse the senses. Bois and Krauss adopting Bataille's notion of *informe* characterize "the formless" as a neglected "other" of the modern aesthetic theory (18). The theorists argue that Bataille's *informe* is not "so much a stable motif to which we can refer, a symbolizable theme, a given quality, as it is a term allowing one to operate a declassification" (18). "Nothing in and of itself," the critics propose, the formless as a concept has "only an operational existence: it is an operation" (18).

While Bois and Krauss direct their attention towards "the formless" solely as a *process* or principle of declassification itself, Jones sees it also as a property and aspect of certain, non-solid objects.

In *In Parenthesis,* the formless as both a process and a condition of matter is particularly closely associated with moments of overabundance of sensory stimuli. For example, seconds before a moment of explosion, Jones amplifies the sense of sharp boundaries between objects:

> The exact disposition of small things—the precise shapes of trees, the tilt of a bucket, the movement of straw … all minute noises, separate and distinct, in a stillness charged through with some approaching violence—registered not by the ear nor any single faculty—an on-rushing pervasion, saturating all existence; with exactitude, logarithmic, dial-timed, millesimal– of calculated velocity, some mean chemist's contrivance, a stinking physicist's destroying toy. (IP 24)

The explosion is followed by complete chaos paralleled by the language of poetic description becoming increasingly abstract. The data initially provided by the senses of sight and hearing, temporarily gives way to the more elusive: "Pandoran," "all-barrier breaking," "all-unmaking." Jones carefully mixes the imagery of solidity with the language of abstraction:

> Out of the vortex, rifling the air it came—bright, brass-shod, Pandoran; with all-filling screaming the howling crescendo's up-piling snapt. The universal world, breath held, one half second, a bludgeoned stillness. Then the pent violence released a consummation of all burstings-out of vents—all barrier-breaking—all-unmaking. Pernitric begetting—the dissolving and splitting of solid things. (IP 24)

The explosion "performs a declassification" (Bois and Krauss 18) by exposing and amplifying the rift between existing, conventional categories and the immediate experience of reality after the explosion.

The scene ends with the image of a destroyed vegetable patch which "slobbered" (IP 24) all over the precise mechanism of a weapon, "the spotless breech-block of No. 3 gun" (IP 24). In the new landscape emerging from the explosion the boundaries between two worlds—the natural and the man-made—blur and the formless synthesis emerging as a result needs to be comprehended in a new way. The speaker's struggle to understand the nature of these 'formless' and elusive new forms is captured in a series of somewhat paradoxical formulations which mix the concrete and the abstract. In this way, Jones also draws attention to the ways in which previously separate objects are reconfigured and temporarily united into a formless synthesis. Consequently, they need to be both cognized and represented in a new way.[44]

However, in *In Parenthesis* the category of "the formless" comes to define not only a process, but also a new class of objects emerging out of the Great War. These new objects often perform the process of declassification as defined by Bois and Krauss and provoke a radical rethinking of man's corporeality in relation to the world of material things. These new objects demand a new type of heightened sensory attention, "a new and strange direction of the mind, a new sensitivity certainly" (*IP Pref* xiv). In Part 1, vegetables destroyed in an explosion are described as "mixed with chemical earth, spattered and made slippery" (IP 24):

> Behind 'E' Battery, fifty yards down the road, a great many mangolds, uprooted, pulped, congealed with chemical earth, spattered and made slippery the rigid boards leading to

[44] More on the subject of the "transformational power of industrialized conflict" (176) in relation to solid matter see, for example, Saunders's "Memory and Conflict."

> the emplacement. The sap of vegetables slobbered the spotless breech-block of No. 3 gun. (IP 24)

In this image, the organic is mixed with the inorganic, the natural with the man-made, the hand-cultivated (vegetable patch) with the "machine-factured" (a hand gun, an exploding bomb). All objects temporarily change their once familiar parameters. In this and many similar moments, Jones highlights the role of the senses as central to the processes of re-conceiving of the objects that have been reconstituted through the agency of mass destruction. In this context, Jones also foregrounds the function of touch, smell and hearing, as complementary or even alternative to vision.

Even more importantly, however, by focusing on mangolds—vegetables which naturally grow half underground half over the ground—Jones highlights more than just the ways in which the war disturbs the once solid state of the mangolds and transforms them into a formless mix. While the explosion changes their texture and essential properties, it also causes that which has previously been unseen to become momentarily seen. Growing in their natural state, mangolds (or chards, from *German* "mangold wurzel") remain simultaneously seen and unseen by the human eye; thus, quite literally, they exist as if in the liminal space between visibility and invisibility, delineated by the contour of the soil. Jones's choice of this particular vegetable is not accidental; rather, it is intended to draw attention to the complicated role of sight as the primary instrument of "objective" empirical and scientific investigation.

In this scene, sight eventually validates the material existence of the usually invisible part of the vegetable (after it becomes "uprooted"). Yet, strikingly, Jones also posits that *only* when the normally hidden part of the vegetable is revealed to human sight through the agency of mass destruction, its full form ceases to be an act of imagination or belief and becomes proven via a

purely empirical, sensory act of perception. Before that happens, the hidden part of a mangold is, in fact, simply assumed or believed to be there. This observation about a common vegetable, only half-visible in its natural state, previews the climactic scene of *In Parenthesis*. In the climactic vision, Jones's presentation of the mysterious Queen of the Woods re-articulates this earlier question about the validity of the empirical evidence of sight. Both scenes investigate ordinary sensory experiences, yet point to the problem of the unacknowledged belief associated with any ordinary act of perception.[45] In this way, Jones also draws attention to the many paradoxes of visibility[46] and examines the role of sight as "a primary sense" [47] of modernity, central to scientific investigation and the notions of empirical "objectivity."[48]

In contrast to the predominantly visual order of modernity, Jones sees the environment of the Western Front, with its "poison loosened from the sky" and the "unseen wind" (IP 19), as calling for a profound rethinking of the analytic abilities of the human sensorium. In these new conditions, the senses other than sight become increasingly central to ensuring survival. Indeed, objects affecting the lives of soldiers, such as "gas clouds," are invisible; yet, they possess a "sickly smell of a pineapple" (IP 24). Consequently, it is the sense of smell, rather than sight, which allows the soldiers to detect their presence. Similarly, the sense of touch recognizes forms

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[45] Edmund Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* argues that an object of a visual[45] experience is always experienced as perspectivally given, hence also as "transcendent" in this basic sense; it is not something in the mind but rather it always "transcends" any experience one may have of it.

[46] The scene alludes to the fragmentation of vision, but also an act of making things fully available to vision ("pure visibility) which is, for instance, a fundamental gesture of cubism. Dilworth points out that Jones was deeply interested in post-impressionism, cubism (10), and himself met Braque (*Shape of Meaning* 14).

[47] Mirzoeff tracing the history of vision in Western culture writes: "For ancient Greek, Indian and Arab scholars vision was not a problem of importance because the eye was held to engage in direct contact with the object of sight.… In the eleventh century CE, the Arab scholar Ibn al-Haytham radically transformed the understanding of sight… [and this is when] sight became vision" (*An Introduction to Visual Culture* 20-21). Mirzoeff also argues that the "visual" has become gradually "divided from the rest of sensorium" (21).

[48] Jones seems to view the Western discourse on vision as both constructed and predicated on previously held notions unrelated to empirical evidence.

of objects in the half-darkness of the trenches, while hearing and smell, rather than sight, are responsible for the awareness of the approaching danger.

Not only the new chemical weapons, but also familiar objects such as light, experienced and cognized in the new context of the Western Front, consistently call for the multi-sensory engagement of a human subject. As the chaos of the war increases, no single sense can fully register the changes thematized in the poem and enacted through Jones's poetic language. By moving away from the initial "thingness of language" (Staudt) towards the increasingly abstract diction, the poetic language of *In Parenthesis* reflects the increasing engagement of the narrative with the subject of mass destruction; the descriptions which foreground the clarity offered by discrete sensations give way to the all-encompassing, coenesthetic [49](Serres 19) sense of the approaching danger.

Not only in his reflection on the new "creatures" of mass destruction, but also in his multi-layered meditation on the nature of light,[50] Jones closely connects the aspects of reality apprehended by the senses with those which are ordinarily unavailable to sense perception. He also highlights the ways in which sight is always already grounded in and supported by the work of the rest of the human sensorium. A natural phenomenon associated with vision and sight, light

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[49] According to Serres, the sense of coenesthesia—the sense of one's existence in space—confirms the existence of one's body in relation to and as separate from objects. Serres argues that situations of immediate physical danger expose these faculties of the human body to the fullest:

> The body knows by itself how to say I. It knows to what extent I am on this side of the bar, and when I am outside. It judges deviations from normal balance, immediately regulates them and knows just how far to go, or not go. Coenesthesia says I by itself. It knows that I am inside, it knows when I am freeing itself. This internal sense proclaims, calls, announces, sometimes howls like a wounded animal. This common sense apportions the body better than anything else in the whole world. (19)

Serres also insists that in those situations of danger, one relies primarily on the senses of touch and smell, temporarily disregarding the sense of sight.

[50] In *Maker Unmade* Miles and Shiel draw attention to the fact that light also plays a central role in Jones's watercolors, providing the sense of movement, luminosity and dynamism to his objects and composition (135-6).

is ordinarily considered to be an invisible parameter of vision, enabling visibility of other things. In *In Parenthesis,* it becomes the subject of close analysis as Jones explores its multiple historical, mythic, phenomenological, theological and sensory meanings. Ordinarily defined as that "which, illuminating the rest, remains at its source in obscurity" (*The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty 131), in *In Parenthesis* light is depicted as approaching the condition of a thing: "how mysterious in cupped hands glow the match-lights of a concourse of men, moving so early in the morning" (IP 5). Enclosed in a soldier's "cupped hands," light becomes almost tangible; when "touched," it is also seen differently. Here, touch and sight enable, rather than replace, sight.

Conceived at various moments of the narrative as a dispersed presence, a source of visibility and an almost solid thing, light also functions as the central motif announcing the nearness of mystery and the reality of vision. While the transcendent realm of mystery is initially signaled in one of the poem's epigraphs, in the early sections of the poem Jones seems to entirely forsake the question of transcendence. Yet, as the chaos of war increases, the two realms—the transcendent and the ordinary—initially introduced as if they were merely parallel, appear increasingly interrelated. The ways in which Jones foregrounds the function of light as a structural motif and a symbol connecting the two realms is closely associated with his interest architecture of Gothic cathedrals.[51] Rather than a mere parameter of vision, in the elaborate

[51] In "Religion and the Muses" Jones speaks of a Gothic cathedral as the most perfect product of the medieval civilization. Rene Hague in his "From *Dai Greatcoat*: A Self-Portrait of David Jones in His Letters" argues that the membership in the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic modeled on the medieval craftsman guild was formational for Jones's sensibility: "Ditchling provided David with a period of rest and reorientation… [,] he found a starting point at Ditchling in Eric Gill's views on industrialism, in the Scholastic philosophy of art as presented by Jacques Maritain—in particular in Maritain's treatment of the artifact as sign or symbol, the other half of Gill's view of the artifact as a thing made 'according to right reason'." (98)

architectural system of a cathedral, thanks to elaborate networks of stained-glass windows, light itself becomes temporarily visible:

> As Gothic verticalism seems to reverse the movement of gravity, so, by a similar aesthetic paradox, the stained-glass window seemingly denies the impenetrable nature of matter, receiving its visual existence from an energy that transcends it. Light, which is ordinarily concealed by matter, appears as the active principle; and matter is aesthetically real only insofar as it partakes of, and is defined by, the luminous quality of light [,] … [n]o segment of inner space was allowed to remain in darkness, undefined by light. Exterior walls pierced by continuous rows of windows … appear as a shallow, transparent shell surrounding nave and choir, while the windows, if seen from the inside, cease to be distinct. They seem to merge, vertically and horizontally, into a continuous sphere of light, a luminous foil behind all tactile forms of architectural system. (Simson 4)

By partially blocking light's access to the interior of the architectonic structure, stained-glass windows paradoxically enable its visibility. The scene where a soldier "holds" light in his hands is one of many allusions to the complex system of Gothic cathedrals introduced by Jones in the poem.

The seminal studies of Gothic cathedrals such as Erwin Panofsky's or Otto von Simson's emphasize the role of light as a symbol of divine presence. Likewise, for Jones the images of light invariably point towards the possibility of a supernatural presence. He situates both the motif of light and verticality—both central to the theorizations of Gothic sacral architecture—in relation to the possibilities and limitations of the human sensorium. In *In Parenthesis*, the imagery of light gestures towards the boundaries of ordinary vision. Early in the narrative, when

the soldiers are marching through the fields of France, the boundaries of ordinary sight are already pushed to its limits:

> The sky maintained its clear serenity, no cloud at all sailed on its vastness at noon. John Ball stretched his neck to ease the pain of his valise-straps chafing, his eyes looked involuntarily, with his head's tilting. There spread before him on the blue warp above as though by a dexterous, rapid shuttling, unseen, from the nether-side, a patterning of intense white; each separate bright breaking through, sudden and with deliberate placing—a slow spreading out, a loss of compact form, drifting into an indeterminate mottling. He marveled at these foreign clouds. There seemed in the whole air above but from no sensible direction, or point, a strong droning, as if a million bees were hiving to the stars. (IP 20)

This early scene already contains an allusion to the realm of transcendence. The sound of "bees hiving to the stars" – a symbol of Paradise in multiple mythologies (Near East and Aegean, in particular)—situates it within the conceptual realm of several vertically mapped cosmologies, one of which directly contributed to the design of Gothic cathedrals. The architecture of the cathedrals intended symbolically to defy the laws of physics *and* direct human vision upwards becomes an invisible spatial referent and the scaffolding of the scene.

In this scene, the gradual approach towards the boundaries of sight and visibility, facilitated by the purely physical, vertically oriented act of looking up, alludes to the extreme verticality of Gothic architectural designs and contextualizes Jones's complex gesture towards the notions of pre-Copernican and mythical cosmologies.[52] The abstract image of a "patterning

[52] For more details, see for instance *The Discarded Image*, C.S. Lewis's work offering a systematic and detailed explication of medieval cosmology.

of intense white" into which the visible part of the sky gradually metamorphoses suggests a symbolic place where an ordinary, visible sky dissolves into another (perhaps spiritually charged) realm. The image also references the strategies of modern abstract painting.[53] Likewise, in the closing sections of the narrative, the extension of ordinary sight along the same vertical axis gestures towards a realm separate from the theater of the Battle of the Somme. Like in the earlier scene, this realm is situated beyond the boundaries of sight. In these scenes, the narrator briefly references birds which cannot be seen but can, in fact, be heard—"In the regions of air above the trajectory zone, the birds / chattering heard for all the drum-fire, / counter the malice of the engines" (IP 154). The image of birds is superimposed on the subsequent image of angels:

> But he made them a little lower than the angels and their inventions are according to right reason even if you don't approve the end to which they proceed; so that there was rectitude even in this, which the mind perceived at this moment of weakest flesh and all the world shrunken to a point of fear that has affinity I suppose, to that state of deprivation predicate of souls forfeit of their final end, who nevertheless know a good thing when they see it. (IP 154)

Both the vertical orientation and the progression of the scene—from the image of birds to the image of angels—suggest the super-sensory extension of the experience first rendered as an ordinary physical act of looking up. In this way, the limits of ordinary sight—associated with the limitations of the human corporeality (in Part 1, Ball simply cannot stretch his neck any

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[53] David Jones was not an abstract painter himself; however, he wrote and spoke in favor of modern abstraction, most notably in his essay "Abstract Art." He was briefly a member of the British Seven and Five society which included such prominent abstract artists as Ben Nicholson, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. On the spiritual dimension of abstraction in modern painting – the theme which Jones obviously references in the image of a "patterning of intense white"—see, for example, Robert Rosenblum's *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* and Robert P. Welsh's "Sacred Geometry: French Symbolism and Early Abstraction" in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, ed. Maurice Tuchman.

further)—acquire a new meaning by symbolically pointing towards the realm of transcendence. The reference to the scholastic ladder of creation (men situated below angles) solidifies Jones's extended evocation of the system directly contributing to the architecture of a Gothic cathedral and to "verticality" as a structural and conceptual motif of *In Parenthesis*.

Likewise, the climactic scene of *In Parenthesis* reinstates both sight and corporeality as central to the series of interactions of human subjects with the Queen of the Woods. While corporeality and an individual embodied perspective are certainly presented as obstacles to beholding the nature of the final vision in full, they also become its fundaments. By constructing the narrator's final interaction with the object of visionary experience as severely restricted by his corporeality and spatial positioning, Jones accurately represents the limitations of the senses and the human body in any encounter with a three-dimensional object that can be known only perspectivally, through a limited, embodied perceptual experience.

The climactic scene highlights the relationship between the mind and the senses and foregrounds the Queen's physical interactions with the wounded soldiers:

> These *knew* her influential *eyes*. Her awarding hands can
>
> pluck for each their fragile prize.
>
> She speaks to them according to precedence. She knows what's due to this elect society. She can choose twelve gentle-men. She knows who is most lord between the high trees and on the open down.
>
> …….
>
> Fatty wears sweet-briar,
>
> he will reign with her for a thousand years. (IP 185) [emphasis mine]

The corporeality and the physical presence of the soldiers and the Queen are highlighted by a series of spatiotemporal references ("she reaches high," soldiers "lie in a serious embrace" [186]). These references also draw attention to the symbolic function of spatial relationships in

the narrative: "Dai Great-coat, she can't find him anywhere—she calls both *high and low*, she had a very special one for him. Among this July noblesse she is *mindful* of December wood—when the trees of the forest beat against each other because of him" (IP 186) [emphasis mine]. The physical presence of the mythical female who looks for Dai "high and low" and her interactions with the soldiers are deeply grounded in the material reality of the Mametz Wood, the sensory order and in the historical realities of the Western Front. Thus, she ultimately whispers to (rather than openly addresses) Aneirin "because she was careful for the disciplines of the Wars" (IP 186).

In Parenthesis and Graphic Arts

Jones's incorporation of his practice as a typographer into his work as a poet, and his reliance on typographic techniques reveal the complexity of the verbal-sensory construction of *In Parenthesis* and establish further analogies between *In Parenthesis* and the system of Gothic cathedrals. Although not fully elaborated until the poem's climax, the relationship between the historical reality of war and the realm of transcendence is already introduced in the poem's epigraphs. The first epigraph commemorates concrete events and people "IN THE BOESINGHE SECTOR N.W. OF YPRES SOME TIME IN THE WINTER 1916-17," while the second one offers a rewriting of a mythical story about the origin of metaphysical evil. The second epigraph echoes the Book of Genesis, and is taken from the ancient Welsh saga, *The Mabinogi*:

> Evil betide me if I do not open the door to
> know if that is true which is said concerning
> it. So he opened the door … and when they
> had looked, they were conscious of all the
> evils they had ever sustained, and of all the
> friends and companions they had lost and of

all the misery that had befallen them, as if
all had happened in that very spot; … and
because of their perturbation they could not rest.

The content of the epigraphs and Jones's use of typography usher in a variety of thematic dimensions of the poem and highlight the evocative range of the lettering itself.

The typography of the two introductory epigraphs carefully enacts the relationship between the two realms directly evoked in their content. The semantic content of the opening epigraph elaborates the concrete historical and existential situatedness of the narrative: ""IN THE BOESINGHE SECTOR N.W. OF YPRES SOME TIME IN THE W INTER 1916-17." Not unlike the detailed references to *this* "tin-hat" and *this* "reputable Arm" in the closing section of *In Parenthesis*, the epigraph situates the narrative in the specific spatiotemporal context of the Western Front. The wording of the epigraph and the shape of the lettering gesture towards the historical context of the inscription. Indeed, the visual arrangement of the opening page of the narrative directly echoes an inscribed commemorative obelisk; the shape and content of the inscription is consistent with the long tradition of erecting such objects in the aftermath of military conflicts. Throughout the poem, the multiple references to the geological[54] imagery of stones and to the actions of breaking and cutting stone concretize and solidify the opening allusion to the sculptural qualities of such 'writing' on a stone and suggest the tactile quality of the inscription.[55] Commemorating the soldiers fallen in the Great War, this epigraph also

[54] On Jones's interest in geology and geological imagery see for example: Thomas Dilworth's "David Jones's Use of a Geology Text for *The Anathemata*."

[55] Jones's artistic development was affected by his membership in the Guild of St. Joseph and Saint Dominic at Ditchling Commons, fashioned after a medieval craftsman guild. At Ditchling, each member could try his hand in various traditional crafts (such as woodwork, stone-carving, typecasting, etc.). At the heart of their model of life was the desire to erase the distinction between artist and craftsman, believed to have been introduced at the wake of industrial era to the deterioration of both. The activity of the Guild was, in fact, quite in sync with many artistic movements of late nineteenth and early twentieth century (see, for instance: the basic philosophy and *modus*

foregrounds the central role of the sensory order. As its typographic distinctness draws attention to the sensory dimension of the act of reading, Jones challenges the construction of the poetic and verbal order as exclusively mental.

In his sustained attention to typography and typographic experimentation as unifying text and image, Jones also gestures towards the avant-garde tradition of exploring the boundaries of artistic media. Even though the subject remains almost unanimously overlooked by Jones criticism, the place of Jones's work in the broader context of the European and American avant-gardes of the first half of the twentieth century certainly warrants more careful consideration. Indeed, critics tend to champion the vision of Jones as a somewhat original, if not isolated, figure.[56] Yet, Jones's epic project should be viewed within the rich context of such early avant-garde projects as Marinetti's "tactile poem" or Mallarmé's idea of *The Book* as a total work of art. Those literary projects require a multi-sensory engagement and encourage their audiences to actively partake in the creative act itself (Arnar).[57] Similarly, in *In Parenthesis* the sheer visual arrangement of the narrative (visually distinct narrative sections), the use of punctuation and typography found the direct, multi-sensory appeal of the poem.

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operandi of the School of Bauhaus, and the much earlier Arts and Crafts movement and William Morris's circle or the Bloomsbury's Omega workshops).

[56] Jonathan Miles's and Derek Shiel's (the latter a multi-media artist himself) *Maker Unmade* is an exception in this regard, yet their study of Jones takes interest primarily in his visual art.

[57] A series of wood engravings that Gill created to accompany the limited edition of *Four Gospels*, published in 1931 by Golden Cockerel Press is an example of a modern interpretation of the idea of an illuminated manuscript**,** appealing to "[s]trictly physical vision" in order to establish "the simplest, most primitive of sensual connections with the object and with the belief in the effect" (Lentes 361); the simultaneous act of contemplation of text and illustration momentarily unifies the otherwise dissociated intellect and senses. Combining typography and figurative arts, the "word" of the scriptures serves as a scaffolding device for the entire composition; as a result the image and the text constitute a unified whole. Similar techniques are used by Jones in illustrating the late medieval *Chester Play of The Deluge*.

Jones himself draws attention to the sensory function of the poem's punctuation and the typographic arrangement of letters on the page:

> I frequently rely on a pause at the end of a line to aid the sense and form. A new line, which the typography would not otherwise demand, is used to indicate some change, inflexion, or emphasis. I have tried to indicate the sound of certain sentences be giving a bare hint of who is speaking, or the influences operating to make the particular sound I want in a particular instance, by perhaps altering a single vowel in one word. (*IP Pref* xi-xii)

By mixing the visual and the verbal, the material and conceptual, Jones establishes the relationship between the sensory and the extra-sensory dimensions of experience.

While Jones's attention to typography certainly suggests his interest in a literary work of art as a material and sensory object, his positioning of *In Parenthesis* as a "song" simultaneously transcends the purely physical aspect of the work *as a material thing*. Moreover, this reference frames *In Parenthesis* as an event—or a dynamic relationship—between a singer and his audience:

> We are shy when pious men write A.M.D.G. on their note paper—however, in the Welsh Codes of Court Procedure the Bard of the Household is instructed to sing to the Queen when she goes to her chamber to rest. He is instructed to sing first to her a song in honour of God. He must then sing the song of the Battle of Camlann—the song of treachery and of the undoing of all things; and afterward he must sing any song she may choose to hear. I have tried, to so make this writing for anyone who could care to play Welsh Queen. (*IP Pref* xiii)

This communal aspect of Jones's work—the desire to reach a diverse and broad audience—and the definition of *In Parenthesis* as a song sheds light on the poet's choice of his literary form.

Herbert Tucker, in his recent excellent and comprehensive *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse 1790-1910*, draws attention to the undeniable benefits of classifying certain literary works as epics. Such a designation, Tucker argues, clarifies the cultural scope, ambitions as well as the conceptual labor the work aims to perform:

> For this is the very idea of epic to tell a sponsoring culture its own story, from a vantage whose privilege transpires through the successful articulation of a collective identity that links origins to destinies by way of heroic values in imagined action. […] To narrate the tale of the tribe is at once to receive an order, to describe an order, and to issue an order, in a powerful gyrostabilized loop that, if we may judge from the recent history of epic theory, sheds a portion of steadying influence on all who move within its orbit. (14)

Given this useful definition, it becomes necessary to raise the question in what way *In Parenthesis* may, in fact, be classified as such "a tale of the tribe" and an expression of a collective identity. I argue that classifying *In Parenthesis* as an epic, rather than a "long poem" or even a "novel" (as some critics have suggested), illuminates the scope of Jones's work as an artistic and philosophical project. For Jones, a neo-epic poem, [58] as a *polyphonic* structure (Bakhtin) rooted in "ideas" (Jones, "Religion and the Muses" 105), rather than relying primarily

[58] Classifying *In Parenthesis* as an epic, rather than a "long poem" or a "novel" sheds more light on Jones's artistic project, even though such a classification requires an in-depth discussion, exceeding the spatial constraints in this study. In this and the following chapters, I take it after Herbert Tucker's excellent and comprehensive study of the epic tradition that "radical changes the first modernists visited on epic can be only notionally apprehended, and at best coarsely appreciated, without reference to the genre's continuous tradition during the preceding century, of which the modernists themselves were aware even if those who study them are not" (7).

on material means, becomes the most fitting expression of both the sensory and the extra-sensory dimensions of the reality of the Great War.

In *In Parenthesis*, Jones is consistently reluctant to articulate any strong national and nationalistic allegiances. The insufficiency of the logic of national interests is acknowledged already in the dedication of *In Parenthesis*, where Jones points to a "misadventure" as a primary reason which brought German and British soldiers to fight on the opposite sides of the Great War. The narrative movement of *In Parenthesis* confirms the rejection of any nationalistic paradigm; in fact, it is marked by the increasing blurring of the boundaries between the two sides of the military conflict. Thus, in the climactic scene, the Queen of the Woods appears to the dying soldiers from both sides of the battle lines. By insisting that "Ulrich smiles for his myrtle wand" (IP 185), and choosing a distinctly German name, Jones clearly gestures beyond the constraints of the political conflict at hand and its political divisions. The ultimate rejection of the logic of national interests is symbolized by the image of "Hansel with Gronwy"[59] who "lie in serious embrace beneath the twisted tripod" (185). In this context, the question arises: what communal identity or shared order is Jones evoking in his neo-epic about the Great War?

Lukács in *Theory of the Novel* and T.S. Eliot in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" reflect on the epic in the historical context of the Great War. Both view the epic genre as an attempt of impose order and organize the idiosyncratic and confusing fabric of experience. However, Lukács and Eliot also significantly differ in their diagnoses; while former declares that any attempt to resurrect the classical or medieval epic forms is "a violence done to the essence of everything that lies outside the sphere of art, and a desire to destroy it" (30), Eliot embraces Joyce's

[59] Hansel and Gronwy are a German and an anglicized Celtic name, respectively.

rewriting of the epic tradition and asserts that the "mythic" method adopted by Joyce is the most appropriate way of giving "expression to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Conversely, Lukács rejects the classical epic as a quintessentially "closed" form, characteristic of pre-modern systems of thought. In the epic "the soul goes out to seek adventure, it lives through adventures, but it does not know the real torments of seeking and the real danger of finding" (Lukács 30). According to the critic, such existential optimism is unwarranted in the modern conditions of the "permanent despair" over "the fate of the world" (12).

Those influential theorizations of the epic offer a counterpoint to Jones's own definition of the genre. Facing the radical discontinuation of received norms in the cultural moment of "the Break," Jones in *In Parenthesis* draws attention to the basic *experience* of order—*lived* rather than externally *imposed*—which is manifest in the sense of physical boundaries between the self and the world. In the new existential conditions, the poet attempts to fix those essential means of orientation challenged by the agency of mass destruction. For Jones, to "receive an order" (Tucker 14) is to return to the primeval fabric of reality given in experience and reiterate the demarcation lines between the self and the world. In this respect, Jones's poetic reflection is buttressed by his work as a visual artist and fundamentally crystallized for him by his practice as a copper engraver.

In *In Parenthesis* Jones takes the basic tenets of an engraver's practice and conceptually extrapolates them to elaborate the nature of historical change. Just as the architecture of Gothic cathedrals becomes a scaffolding organizing spatial relationships in *In Parenthesis*, an engraver's

"contour"[60] becomes a means of drawing attention to the problem of embodiment. Jones's work on a series of copper engravings for Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (completed in 1928) constitutes an isolated episode in his creative life, since never before or after did Jones work in copper. Although often underestimated by literary critics, Jones's reflection on copper as a medium fundamentally informs the conceptual and formal fabric of *In Parenthesis*.

In his wide-ranging reflection on copper engraving, Jones considers the history of the medium. He describes the challenges of the physical process of engraving and reflects on the mass appeal of engraving as one of the arts associated with the rise of Western modernity. Finally, he draws attention to an engraver's reliance on a "contour" as the primary means of expression. In his own practice as a copper engraver, Jones accentuates the fundamental importance of such a "contour": "I am of the opinion that the most specific beauty, that which belongs to the copper engraving, *sui generis*, is a lyricism inherent in the clean, furrowed free, fluent engraved line" ("Introduction"14). Attempting to situate his own work within the tradition of engraving as a medium, Jones goes back to Dürer and Blake[61] in order to identify two milestones in the historical development of copper engraving. Jones argues that Dürer's work draws on the effects of optical illusion; his excessive use of cross-hatching—dictated by the desire to emulate the techniques of the late Renaissance painting –ultimately impoverishes the viewers' experience. In Jones's view, Dürer's use of cross-hatching in order to create the effect of chiaroscuro leaves nothing to the imagination; in Dürer's hands, copper engraving remains

[60] A relief-like quality of an engraved copper plate evokes a multi-sensory response engaging senses of touch alongside vision. There is, however, yet another resonance between an act of engraving and the subject of *In Parenthesis;* Robertshaw& Kenyon wrote that by "the end of 1918 the war on the Western Front had created a huge 400-mile-long scar across France and Belgium" (25). It is difficult not to see a correspondence between an engraved copper plate and the image of the scarred landscape.

[61] Blake also adds a powerful visionary theme to the tradition and repertoire of the medium.

arrested within the realm of optical illusion and rescinds its unique potential as a medium. In contrast to Dürer's techniques, Blake emphasizes a "contour"—a line with a "lively sense of movement" (Cleaver 56)—and purely arbitrary shading. The historians of the medium have characterized such a "contour" as "mainly constructive in the sense that it underlines the composition, leading the eye through the intricacies of the pattern" (Wright 16); Jones argues that Blake's use of the "contour" revives the art of copper engraving after many centuries of the misguided desire of engravers to imitate painters.

In Jones's hands, copper engraving becomes an exploratory tool used to survey the complexities of the poet's own milieu. For Jones, graphic arts point towards the previous historical turn—the transition between The Middle Ages and the modern era—inextricably bound to the emergence of mechanical reproduction and print culture.[62] Those rapid changes in the public and economic spheres, occasioned by the transition from the pre-modern to modern era, are inextricably bound to the emergence of the graphic arts. Indeed, copper engraving is widely associated with the rise of the arts' commercial application; as Mieczysław Porębski has argued, it is a quintessentially visual medium accompanying the printed word. Initially conceptualized for Jones by Oswald Spengler,[63] those notions of the relationship between the civilizational change and the graphic arts fully contextualize Jones's use of a copper engraver's

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[62] See Marshall McLuhan's *Guttenberg's Galaxy* or Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

[63] Spengler's ideas were wildly popular in the European modernist circles. Staudt explains:

> Spengler portrays the Europe of 1918 as entering the late autumn and early winter of civilization which began with the emergence of Gothic culture in the twelfth century. The springtime of this culture is reflected not only in what Jones calls "the living florations" of gothic architecture (*A*, 49), but also is the dominance of a fully realized Catholic Christendom and in the ordered hierarchies of feudal society and court life. (446)

Jones was certainly not uncritical of Spengler's ideas and wrote in his 1942 letter to Harman Grisewood that Spengler is "*so right*, and …also *so wrong*" (in Staudt 446).

"contour." For Jones, the "contour" is both a technique and a concept that signifies forms of physical objects and, ultimately, allows Jones to capture civilizational shifts associated with the experience of the Great War. Yet, Miles and Shiel also remind us that even though *In Parenthesis* started out as a series of copper engravings, Jones eventually embraced the literary form of the modernist neo-epic as better suited to represent the complexities of the cultural context of the first half of the twentieth century. Ultimately, Jones views copper engraving as functioning in and supporting a primarily visual order, thus incapable of fully rendering the modalities of a soldier's experience of the Western Front.

In *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan suggested that the invention of writing and later of print resulted in a replacement of an ear for an eye as the primary sensory organ; the "abstract, visual and mechanical order" that ensued, replaced the previous sensory order based on aurality and subordinated all types of sensory and multi-sensory perception to vision (46). As a result of those processes, the reason itself became "reduced to classification, lineal (cause-effect) thinking and quantification" (46). Thinking about the philosophical origins of modernity, Maurice Merleau-Ponty similarly argued that Descartes took interest in copper engraving because it "preserve[d] the forms of objects," or, at least, gave us "sufficient signs of their forms" by presenting an object "by its outside, or its envelope" (*Primacy of Perception* 171). According to Merleau-Ponty, Descartes associated every visual form with copper engraving; for example, he did not distinguish between engraving and painting, since he considered both to be simply "mode[s]" or "variant[s]" of thinking (172). Jones shares those historical diagnoses; however, for him the multi-sensory experience of the life in the trenches also calls for radically new forms of creative expression. Though Jones incorporates some of the essential attributes of

copper engraving into the fabric of his poem, he ultimately views the reality emerging out of the Great War as calling for more adequate means of representation.

Roman Ingarden in his *Literary Work of Art* elucidated the relationship between the material and the non-material strata of a work of literature; he defined a literary work of art as an "object of an intentional act" which in itself, unlike painting and sculpture, does not need to exist in the spatiotemporal world.[64] Similarly, Jones views poetry, in contrast to engraving and architecture, to be the art of "idea[s]" ("Religion and the Muses" 105). For him, an epic poem is analogous to a Gothic cathedral in its expressive and media-absorption abilities; yet, unlike a cathedral, it does not need to rely on an integrated corporate culture[65] to emerge and flourish. In the new cultural conditions, as largely independent of the material means central to architecture, a literary work of art stands more chances of survival:

> But in the absence of a corporate tradition there can be no corporate renewal. Individuals of this or that perception or vision, or even the collaboration of individuals, may locally and in a tentative and fluid manner make the desert blossom in some way or other. … Those arts which demand the minimum of collaboration, which depend least for their

[64] Levin (xvii) in his introduction to Ingarden's *Literary Work of Art* explains:

> Whatever the intentional act happens to be, here, one and the same object, namely, this manuscript, is in question. So the manuscript, we may say, is transcendent with respect to the multiplicity of its logically possible correlative intentional acts. Furthermore, the transcendence of the object is such that it is never accessible in its absolute totality of properties….[O]ne and the same object can be present in terms of the very same conjunction of properties, or aspects, to different intentional acts at different times. It follows from the essence of objectivity that one and the same object, given as something transcendent and ontologically distinct from all the conscious acts that intend it, cannot possibly reveal itself in the absolute plentitude of its virtual contexts and relationships. (xx)

[65] The Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic was an art colony and experiment in communal life. Eric Gill, a sculptor and letter cutter, came to Ditchling, Sussex in 1907 with his apprentice Joseph Cribb and was soon followed by fellow craftsmen, Edward Johnston and Hilary Pepler. David Jones joined shortly after. The Guild (like a medieval guild) existed for the protection and the promotion of its members' work. Politically, most members adopted a form of non-Marxist socialism.

> existence on the material—which remain more in the region of 'the idea' would seem to stand most chance. It will seem more possible to write a good poem than build a good cathedral—although, of course, all these things are, in the end, inextricably related. There is no escape from the Incarnation. It's like a shunting train. ("Religion and the Muses" 105)

Confronting the inability to duplicate the collaborative and communal spirit animating the culture of the High Middle Ages, Jones's gradually transitions away from the notion of an art as relying on manual craftsmanship towards poetry, the art of ideas which nevertheless constantly gestures towards the sensory and the material.

In Parenthesis certainly relies on the essential attributes of visual form, such as an engraver's "contour" and repeated allusions to painterly perspective, as well as on the symbolic sense of spatial relationships evoked by the many allusions to Gothic sacral architecture. Importantly, these direct references to typography, engraving, drawing, painting or architecture are firmly rooted in the conceptual and mental, rather than just purely sensory and material, order. In order to reframe the experience of transcendence outside of the discourses of institutionalized religion and within the formal constraints of a modernist work of art, Jones draws attention to the constant interplay between the material and sensory (typography, illustration) and non-material (non-sensory and verbally mediated) aspects of his epic poem.

The relationship between these dimensions of experience is illuminated powerfully in the climactic scene of vision. Opening of the scene, the narrator highlights the interconnectedness of the mind and the senses and the affinity of the speaker's and the Queen's perceptual and cognitive structures; he declares that "these *knew* her influential eyes" (IP 185) and that "she in *mindful* of December wood" (186) [emphasis mine]. Jones's description of the appearance of the

Queen of the Woods evokes the sense of painterly immediacy and directly references her physical and visual attributes; the narrator also draws attention to the role of the human senses by insisting that he can *see* but not *hear* the Queen. Nevertheless, his situated, primarily visual (insistent evocations of color), and fundamentally perspectival experience seems to suggest the Queen's status as a three-dimensional object, external to the speaker. Thus, while she is fully seen, she is not heard due to the physical distance. Likewise, the Queen's presence in the material realm of bodies extended in space (she interacts with others, touches the wounded soldiers, and is being both touched and observed in return) is signalized by the fact that her *thoughts* are, ultimately, unknown to the narrator. Indeed, her final message remains conspicuously hidden: "You couldn't hear what she said to him, because she was careful for the 'Disciplines of the Wars'" (IP 189). The long arc of reflection which begins with Dai's boast and his shape-shifting in Part 4—"I was the spear in Balin's hand / that made waste King Pellam's land" (IP 79), "I the fox-run fire," "I the south air, tossed from high projections by his Olifant" (IP 80)—is concluded with the confirmation of the narrator's separation from the Queen.

Jones's ultimate gesture towards the limitations of his primary narrator, particularly his inability to learn what the Queen says, reveals full implications of the broader narrative structure of *In Parenthesis*. In the climactic scene, Jones emphasizes the limitations of the primary narrator in order to contrast those limitations with Dai's creative, poetic omnipotence; in this way, he suggests the Queen's status as a three-dimensions (and real) object, unlike the objects which Dai includes in his boast. Conversely, the interactions of the twelve soldiers with the Queen draw attention to the embodied and communal aspect of the final vision. The dying soldiers' full sensory and corporeal participation in the scene is contrasted with the narrator's

partial sensory deprivation. Indeed, the final encounter with the Queen is experienced in unequal degrees by those who participate in it, the fact highlighted by Jones's insistent attention to the vantage point from which the events are observed.

Unlike the narrator, the twelve soldiers who interact with the Queen simultaneously observe the same object from several points of view, unavailable to the solitary narrator all at once. In this way, Jones emphasizes the character of the Queen as an ordinary, because perspectivally given, object. Yet, we also remember the earlier moment in the narrative when the explosion enables normally hidden and unseen parts of mangolds to become momentarily visible. The earlier scene exposes a positive and, fundamentally, a non-sensory act of perceptual belief associated with every act of visually beholding a three-dimensional object—one *assumes* that its hidden, invisible part is there. Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and The Invisible* intimates that such an act of "perceptual faith" is never a leap of blind faith, but a *positive* commitment which has always, *already*, been made. Likewise, Jones shows that a moment of perception is always already tied to such an act of "perceptual" faith, in contrast to the dissecting modern analytic gaze. However, while Merleau-Ponty explains that such a "faith" is centered in the body of the perceiving subject which "will draw to itself the intentional threads which bind it to its surroundings and finally will reveal to us the perceiving subject as the perceived world" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 24), for Jones such commitment to the visible is associated with, and ultimately directed towards, an external object.

In the final scene of vision, the poet also suggests that such an act of perception does not need to be solitary, but, in fact, can be communal. Indeed, Jones's description highlights that each participant sees the Queen from his unique, situated and *limited* vantage point and emphasizes the limitations imposed on them by their embodiment as fundamental to the scene.

The intersecting perspectives of the narrator as a witness and the soldiers as participants in the event further frame the status of the Queen as a non-hallucinated object. In this way, not only does Jones demonstrate how this and other perceptual experiences draw on related perceptual experiences of others. He also posits the possibility of transforming a modern solitary religious "feeling" into a communal experience, where accidental spectatorship is transformed into an intentional act of understanding and interaction enabled by human corporeality and the senses. The narrator insists on the relationship of reciprocity between the dying soldiers and the Queen who both interacts and is interacted with, both sees—"These knew her influential eyes" (185)—and is seen. She is—depending on a vantage point—both an object and a subject of the experience. Just as the earlier collective experiences enforced through military training (Part 1) and naturally strengthened through daily co-existence of the soldiers in the trenches, the final scene is built around a similarly shared corporeal and sensory experiences of seeing, hearing and interacting with a reciprocating object

Chapter III

H.D.'s *Trilogy*: The Epic of "Spiritual Realism"

In David Jones's *In Parenthesis* the climactic vision spans merely a short scene in the closing section of the poem. So too, Kaspar's visionary experience, described in "The Flowering of the Rod," the final installment of Hilda Doolittle's war epic, *Trilogy*, is very brief (the poet-speaker insists it lasts a "half-second"). Like the vision in *In Parenthesis*, the experience cannot be considered in isolation. Rather, it constitutes a climactic point of the work's narrative arc—a high point in the development of H.D.'s philosophical and spiritual reflection throughout *Trilogy*. Kaspar's visionary experience and the subsequent ritual closing the poem illuminate the full implications of H.D.'s "spiritual realism" (48) as a philosophical, spiritual and artistic project to which the poet-speaker seeks to "re-dedicate her gifts" (48) in the first book of *Trilogy*, "The Walls Do Not Fall."

Critics have importantly discussed the notion of "spiritual realism" in relation to the poet's interest in (both allegiance to and defiance of) the ideas of Sigmund Freud.[66] Less explicitly, however, drawing attention to the primacy of the material and the physical, or, conversely, the psychic and the spiritual in H.D.'s work, scholars have often foregrounded and privileged either the former or the latter element of H.D.'s synthetic concept of "spiritual realism." Namely, they focused either on H.D.'s emphasis on the material and the bodily, or on her heterodox spirituality. I hope to consider H.D.'s "spiritual realism" along lines alternative to those discussed so far by literary scholars. To this end, I will examine H.D.'s interest in the workings of an embodied consciousness as fundamental to her "spiritual realism."

[66] Joseph N. Riddel's "H. D. and the Poetics of 'Spiritual Realism'" is a prime example of such criticism.

While observing the central role of the material and the visual in the process of the formation of H.D.'s poetics, critics have insisted that H.D.'s texts—via references to things, sensations and images—in actuality prioritize the psychic, the internal[67] and the spiritual. For example, Rachel Connor has remarked on H.D.'s understanding of a poetic image that the poet takes the visual to be "a portal to spiritual or divine experience" (13). On the other hand, the poet's direct and sustained attention to the workings of the body, the senses (particularly vision[68]) and the world of material objects has also generated a significant amount of critical interest. However, existing criticism does not sufficiently answer why H.D. insists on framing transcendent vision in *Trilogy*, as a multi-sensory[69]—rather than strictly visual—act of perception directed towards a particular object, or what such a "vision" as a special act of perception reveals about the role that H.D. ascribes to the senses. Indeed, like *Trilogy*, H.D.'s imagist poems with their "postsymbolist emphasis on the empirical world" (Pondrom 91), her writings on visual arts and the emerging art of film, and her reflection on the traditions of the modern novel consistently highlight the role of the senses as the empirical apparatus, mobilized by the poet in her literary representations of visionary experience.

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[67] Susan Friedman asserted that H.D's imagist poems are interested in "consciousness, not the world of objects external to consciousness" (*Psyche Reborn* 56).

[68] Recently, Susan McCabe, Lara Vetter and Eileen Gregory have helpfully drawn attention to the sensory engagements of H.D.'s poetics, arguing about the co-dependence of "vision" and ordinary "seeing" in H.D.'s work.

[69] The exception is a recent dissertation "Modernist Multisensuality: Mina Loy, H.D., and Gertrude Stein" completed by Suzanne Zelazo. Zelazo argues that a "multisensuality," characteristic of modernist female writing and "clearly encompassing aspects of 'synaesthesia'" (she uses the terms interchangeably), "refers broadly to a somatic-oriented aesthetics which aims fundamentally to make present, to instantiate, feminine artistic experience" (iv). I will carefully distinguish between the two terms to demonstrate that while H.D.'s writing indeed privileges the multisensory over the visual, her multi-sensory poetics distinguishes itself from the techniques and goals of synaesthetic Symbolism. Rather, H.D.'s work continues to emphasize the "postsymbolist emphasis on the empirical world" (Pondrom 91) central to the early poetics of Imagism.

I will examine what such moments of heightened sensory perception and multi-sensory engagement reveal about the goals of H.D.'s modernist poetics and her "spiritual realism." There is a close relationship between "spiritual realism" as a theory of experience and "spiritual realism" as a literary strategy. H.D.'s emphasis on vision as a multi-sensory, yet not synaesthetic,[70] moment of perception, positions her form of "realism" in the context of the poetics of Symbolism as well as the "visual" or "optical" (Jay) strategies of literary realism of the nineteenth century, while radically departing from their theoretical formulations about sense experience.

The examination of H.D.'s concept of "spiritual realism" as a broader conceptual paradigm organizing notions of perception and experience reveals a relationship between ordinary perception and transcendent vision, which sheds light on the question of spiritual or religious experience and Anglo-American literary modernism. I will argue that H.D.'s "spiritual realism" takes an individual, embodied act of perception as central to apprehending transcendent vision in terms of a subject-object relationship between the self and transcendent object. Such a comprehensive act of perception is, in turn, central to reclaiming the sensory and the bodily not merely as "a portal to the spiritual" (Connor 13), but rather as fundamentally enabling the visionary experience to be both represented and occur at all. In this way, human *embodied consciousness* becomes not simply a figure of a mental and abstract engagement with the transcended but an actual form of participation in it.

[70] Although critics often use the terms multi-sensory and synaesthetic interchangeably, synaesthesia implies *transference* of sensory impressions; its goal is to "arrive at the unknown by the disordering of all the senses" (Rimbaud in Nichols 30).

Sensual culture theory has recently turned attention back to the problem of sense perception to examine more carefully its significance and cultural implications. Sara Danius has recently asserted that "in the modernist period, the human sensorium came to be invoked as a touchstone for aesthetic gratification and experiential authenticity" (1). She also asserts that "classical modernism represents a shift from idealist theories of aesthetic experience to materialist ones," resulting in internalizing of "technological matrices of perception" and "the ever-closer relationship between the sensuous and technological" (2). Susan Stewart has also argued that the senses, as one of the central issues of epistemology, have always been considered "as a philosophical problem appearing on a boundary between what we refer to, perhaps for a lack of better terms, as internal and external phenomena" (59).

Relatedly, in her recent reading of H.D.'s imagist work, Diana Collecott explores the instances of what she calls a "betweenness" in order to draw attention to a "strong mimetic aspect" (103) of H.D.'s imagist poems. Collecott perceptively describes H.D.'s "aesthetic of liminality" (103) which encourages "phenomenological" (103) readings, as the poet explores the boundaries and intersections between the world of objects and consciousness,[71] the internal and the external, sense perception and things. Such a proposition, while emphasizing both the material and the immaterial aspect of H.D.'s poetic world, also problematizes any rigid notions of H.D.'s materialism.[72]

[71] Relatedly, Susan Friedman asserted that H.D's imagist poems are interested in "consciousness, not the world of objects external to consciousness" (*Psyche Reborn* 56).

[72] Zelazo makes a materialist argument about H.D.'s poetics, proposing that the purpose of multisensoriality in her work is to "concretize consciousness" (iv). Her work is grounded in feminist historical and materialist theoretical practices. Likewise, Demetres Tryphonopoulos in his recent critical introduction to H.D.'s Second World War memoir *Majic Ring*, proposes H.D.'s close affinity with materialist thought via her interest in the Occult.

Likewise, many moments of description in *Trilogy*—particularly the moment of Kaspar's vision in "The Flowering of the Rod"—reveal a "mimetic" (Collecott) quality, by transcending the exclusive binary between "material things" and "psychic facts" (Ingarden *Studia*) in favor of phenomenological description of what appears. I will explore the potential of the phenomenological framework in examining the modalities of H.D.'s "spiritual realism" as prioritizing not the irrational and the psychic, but rather strategically drawing on the reality of sensory experience in order to situate the moments of transcendent vision a part of an embodied experience which is given, rather than self-generated.

Sense Experience in *Trilogy*

Canto 34 in "The Flowering of the Rod" highlights the centrality of the issue of sense perception as a philosophical problem. The speaker-narrator examines Kaspar's act of perception, charting the multi-layered architecture of Kaspar's self:

> his mind prompted him,
> even as if his mind
>
> must sharply differentiate,
> clearly define the boundaries of beauty;
>
> hedges and fences and fortresses
> must defend the innermost secret,
>
> even the hedges and fortresses of the mind;
> so his mind thought,
>
> though his spirit was elsewhere
> and his body functioned, though himself,
>
> he-himself was not there;
> and his mind framed the thought,
>
> the last inner defence
> of a citadel, now lost [,]. (158)

Taking place in a complicated spatio-temporal[73] context, the scene elaborates a structure of the self which complicates and transcends the dualist Cartesian conception of a knowing and thinking subject (Kaspar's sensate body is detached, yet performing its basic functions; his spirit or "he-himself" and his rational mind are spatially separated).

Thanks to the separation of the speaker-narrator and the main actor of events in "The Flowering of the Rod" we know what happens in the scene (the scarf slips off the woman's hair; the woman picks up the scarf and ties it back on immediately). Yet, the narrator also suggests two distinct ways of understanding Kaspar's experience, one in which mind's desire to organize it immediately supersedes data provided by sense perception, and another, where mind takes into account the sensory data. The first of these two competing theories of experience is reflected in Kaspar's immediate interpretation of the event. It follows a specific understanding of the role of sense perception, according to which senses are hierarchically subordinated to mental processes and social conventions. Consequently, Kaspar accuses the woman of "immodesty." However, an alternative conclusion can be derived from observation (the speaker-narrator asserts that Kaspar, in fact, *saw* "a woman of discretion") and would, in fact, correspond to the state of external reality. Thus, rather than privileging the irrational, H.D. explores two, competing theories of "rationality"—one based on the notion of a dominant mind, the other privileging the data provided by sense perception.

[73] The spatio-temporal modalities of *Trilogy* transcend the sequential and linear understanding of space-time characteristic for the mechanistic paradigm of pre-Einsteinian physics. Regarding this issue, Lara Vetter recently discussed the ways in which modernist writing responded to the developments of the early twentieth-century science (by both incorporating and representing them). This modernist "religio-scientific discourse" rejects the mechanicist paradigm of Newtonian physics. This moment of *Trilogy* is one of the many instances of H.D. drawing attention to the complementary character, rather than mutual exclusivity, of the discourses of science and spiritual experience.

Either way, this moment of description draws attention to the functioning of the senses as inseparable from the non-sensory aspect of experience. Whether the female character is taken to be a "woman of discretion" (Canto 35) or a "disheveled," "unseemly" one (Canto 34), sensory data is instantaneously inscribed into a broader structure of interpretation and signification (both "unseemly" and "discretion" gesture towards the world of social norms). Suggesting the impossibility of extricating the workings of the senses from the complexities of mental, psychological, spiritual or moral aspects of experience the speaker-narrator certainly points to one of these interpretations as more plausible than the other. In the end, the interpretation following and factoring in the evidence of the senses appears more feasible or rational, not because it arbitrarily prioritizes senses over mind, but because it takes into account the object of experience (and interprets her actions properly). In this way, H.D. both draws attention to the workings of human perception in and of itself, and highlights the subject–object dynamics into which each individual act of perception in *Trilogy* is inscribed.

The question about the interpretation of experience is immediately relevant to the problem of transcendent vision. The moment of Kaspar's vision itself relies on the sustained and detailed description of sensory impressions and kinesthetic relations, and foregrounds the workings of more than one sense. A series of sensory impressions fundamentally scaffolds the scene of vision, framing it as more than a hallucination; in Canto 33, the poet cites not only sight, but also hearing as central to the experience of Kaspar who "heard, as it were, the echo / of an echo in a shell" (156). Later, Kaspar's body also becomes a central element of an elaborate homage-"ritual" closing *Trilogy* ("The Flowering" 171, Canto 42). Kaspar performs a sequence of meaningful and intentional gestures, kinesthetically engaging with the surrounding space, receiving and processing sensations. This final encounter of Kaspar with the "girl" similarly

relies on the descriptions of sensory impressions—*all* senses rather than just sight—as a way of validating the status of the experience.

Importantly, in these scenes H.D. does not merge the speaker with the character in order to position the subjective experience of the speaker-narrator's "I" in the center of events. Instead, the poet draws attention to the limitations of knowledge of the non-omniscient narrator of *Trilogy*, Kaspar ["he did not know whether she knew / the fragrance came from the bundle of myrrh" (172)]. H.D. foregrounds various converging and conflicting interpretations of individual acts of perception and experiences in order to confront the question about the limitations and paradoxes of knowledge. For example, on several occasions, the poet refuses to describe the whereabouts of Kaspar ("*we* do not know whether or not / he-himself followed her" (159) [emphasis mine]) or his "spirit" (Kaspar's spirit was "elsewhere").

Whittier-Ferguson has argued that placing the speaking "I" as the center of a narrative has been the fundamental strategy of the modern epic poem since Wordsworth's *Prelude* (famously defined by Wordsworth himself as the "poem on the growth of my own mind"). Conversely, Herbert Tucker draws attention to the always already communal or even communitarian purpose and form of the epic. Tucker argues that the purpose of the epic is "to tell a sponsoring culture its own story, from a vantage whose privilege transpires through the successful articulation of a collective identity that links origins to destinies by way of heroic values in imagined action" (14). Tucker continues to assert that to write an epic is to narrate "the tale of the tribe" which means three things—"at once to receive an order, to describe an order, and to issue an order" (14). In *Trilogy*, the narrator's declaration that "No one will know exactly how it came about / but we are permitted to wonder" (167) marks the passage from the notion of

an individual, exclusively subjective experience and its conflicting interpretations, to the space which embraces the possible communal[74] implications of such an experience.

The final scene shifts attention away from the content of Kaspar's vision towards his role in a ritual of the "second order of priests," involving two other men as active participants of the ritual-homage. Silences of the narrator become an element of a careful representational strategy. Rescinding the narrator's power as omniscient, and collapsing the "fourth wall" by addressing the reader ("*we* do not know"[159]), the poet draws attention to the form of *Trilogy* as an epic interested in establishing a communal dimension of visionary experience. It separates her epic project from the narrative conventions of the modern novel privileging an omniscient narration and epistemological investigation (Bakhtin), while also defying Wordsworth's formulations about the "radical modern subjectivity" (Whittier-Ferguson 214) of the speaking "I" as the sole interest of the modern epic.

In a ritual, as Clifford Geertz argues, "the world as lived and the world as imagined turn out to be the same world" (112); Geertz also asserts that a ritual offers both a model *of* and a model *for* reality. In the closing of *Trilogy*, the speaker signals that Kaspar enters the space of a ritual as a speculative space of mystery by declaring that "No one will *know exactly* how it came about / but we are permitted to wonder" (167) [emphasis mine]. Yet, at the same time, the following scenes meticulously describe the reality of movement, sensory impressions and spatial relations to highlight the embodied status of the final experience as a lived interaction with an

[74] In his critical introduction to H.D.'s *Majic Ring*, Demetres Tryphonopoulos has proposed that H.D. in *Trilogy* seeks to transcend the notions of esoteric knowledge available only to a group of initiates into Hermeticism to include the communal and the exoteric into her epic community.

external object. In this way, the ritual becomes continuous with Kaspar's visionary experience which similarly emphasizes the multi-sensory experience of the subject.

I believe that there is a vital link between *Trilogy*'s thematic exploration of an embodied experience and the shape of *Trilogy* as a narrative. By drawing on the tradition of the epic as a narrative of a journey or quest, H.D. rearticulates this convention as a quest for a new and integrated model of perception. Yet, she also uses this narrative structure in order to examine and re-articulate the notion of embodiment or an "embodied consciousness" as a central image-symbol of *Trilogy*.

Rituals of Perception

In the attempt to transform the old, spent symbolism at the wake of a "new dispensation,"[75] the speaker of *Trilogy* begins her quest for a symbolic idiom with both a naming and metamorphic power. H.D. confronts the possibility of such a "new dispensation" in both *Majic Ring* and *Trilogy*, taking it to be a new condition of existence; in *Trilogy* the speaker defines the goal of her quest as bringing a new "life to the living" (*Trilogy* 7). But what about the dead? What kind of re-birth is possible if a body is already destroyed? While leaving behind the ashes of London, one of the many fallen, annihilated "great cities" (*Trilogy* 126) of history, does the speaker-poet also abandon those who perished in the Blitz? If the body is merely a "husk," a "brittle case" (*Trilogy* 4) containing the spirit longing to be released, why mourn the dead and the dying? Does the promise of a re-birth lie in the abandoning of the body? The view that the human body is merely a trap of the soul is often ascribed to H.D. by critics interested in her heterodox spirituality and the ways in which H.D.'s interest in Hermetic religions relates the poet

[75] A "new dispensation" is a term which H.D. uses in *Majic Ring*, one of her visionary memoirs, to refer to the astrologically calculated beginning of a new era, dawning as the world emerges out of the Second World War.

to Neo-Platonism. Taken to its logical conclusion in the existential context in which "The Walls Do Not Fall" is situated, this view would certainly come at a considerable price. I want to suggest that the problem of the body as an ethical, aesthetic, and religious problem, is a central issue articulated by H.D. in *Trilogy*. Embodied consciousness as a *vehicle* of the narrative and its fundamental thematic concern is placed at the center of the epic quest.

An interest in body as an image and a source of dynamic progress in a poem is not unique to or first introduced in *Trilogy*. Cyrena N. Pondrom in her "H.D. and the Origins of Imagism" has shown how in "Orchard," H.D.'s imagist poem, the imagery shifts away from the orchard--the organizing image of the first section of the poem—towards the focus on the speaking "I" and her body that "fell prostrate." The poetic transition between the two images is marked by the dynamism of the physical movement of the lyric "I." In *Trilogy*, there is certainly an echo of this dual imagery of the embodied self as a vehicle of the narrative and an image-symbol. Between the initial withdrawal of the speaker "into the psyche as protective shell" (Gelpi, "Remembering the Mother" 176) and the full physical participation of Kaspar in the concluding ritual, the narrative of *Trilogy* seeks to close the gap between the empirical and the transcendent, soul, body and mind, while re-ascribing value to human "flesh" in the context of total war. The narrative arc of the work thematizes the issue of a gradual re-validation of the sensing body to suggest both a spiritual and physical re-birth.

The opening of "The Walls Do Not Fall" firmly situates the human body in the historical context of war, but also, due the confrontation with the issues of physical death and destruction, draws attention to a broader conversation about its cultural and religious significance. Susan Friedman in *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* has argued:

> Like the woman Hilda Doolittle, the poet of the *Trilogy* makes no attempt to escape the gaping walls and constant death that surround her. The poem begins with the poet walking through the ruined city just after a bombing raid. Staring in desolation at the destruction, she records her impressions in the first section. But even as she is immersed in the concrete, actual horror of the war, she refuses to limit her understanding of the destruction to the material rubble in front of her. (104)

Indeed, while initiating a sustained inquiry into the cultural and religious implications of the confrontation of human physicality with death, the speaker-poet is firmly situated in the concrete spatio-temporal context of London during the blitz.

Referring to the destruction inflicted by German bombers as "Apocryphal fire"—thus highlighting the eschatological dimension of this poetic reflection on human physicality—the poet asks:

> the bone-frame was made for
> no such shock knit within terror,
> yet the skeleton stood up to it:
>
> the flesh? it was melted away,
> the heart burnt out, dead ember,
> tendons, muscles shattered outer husk dismembered,
>
> yet the frame held:
> we passed the flame: we wonder
> what saved us? what for? ("The Walls Do Not Fall" 4)

The dual reference to bombing fire and the "Apocryphal fire" highlights the two-fold significance of these images—historical and symbolic, physical and eschatological. The speaker also characterizes human physicality as meager and insignificant, captured in the opening image of a "frame" from which "flesh" "was melted away" ("Walls"4).

In "The Walls Do Not Fall" the poet also draws parallels between the images of suffering, mutilated bodies in Canto 1, and the images of a mutilated, crucified Christ on the cross:

> The Christos-image
> is most difficult to disentangle
>
> from its art-craft junk-shop
> paint-and-plaster medieval jumble
>
> of pain-worship and death-symbol [,]. (27)

In this context, critics have argued that *Trilogy* seeks to re-define the Christian concept of "resurrection" by integrating the notions of female divinity or a female God(s) in to the Christian concept of God-the Father. Indeed, in her poetry, fiction and film criticism H.D. highlights how the body of Christ, the "Christos-image" (27), has become inscribed and implicated into the logic of the "death" culture which elevated it to the status of its central symbol. While Christ remains one of the central and positive figures of *Trilogy* ["He was the first to say" not just to a chosen few, but "to an outcast and vagabond, *to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*" (128)], H.D. views Christ's image primarily as a victim of misrepresentation and appropriation. Yet, *Trilogy* also shifts away from the notion of Christ's body as a conventional religious symbol in order to inquire into the politics of the representation of his dying body and its possible cultural consequences. This reflection prompts her to re-examine the notions of what it might mean to be re-born or resurrected in a body.

Already in *Notes on Thought and Vision*, H.D.'s early fundamental text on the subject of visionary experience, the poet delineates several important theoretical points which will remain central to the structure of her reflection on embodied consciousness in *Trilogy*. Presented as a collection of first-hand observations and conclusions, the memoir culminates in a detailed

description of the narrator's visionary experience, captured by the image-object of a "jelly fish" becoming "concentrated" (51) above her head. Tapping into a connection between the spiritual and the material, the "jelly fish" as an object-image functions as both a hermeneutic and a heuristic device. It allows the poet to "understand exactly what the Galilean meant by the kingdom of heaven, being a pearl of great price" (51). Not unlike in *Trilogy* where the speaker-poet claims her identity as the author of the *new* book of Revelation and declares "*I John saw. I testify*" ("Tribute to the Angels"109), the embodied, personal experience of vision of a "jelly fish" is used strategically to interpret and make sense of the earlier scriptural parable and its central image. The narrator's own embodied experience allows her to probe and eventually accept the validity of the New Testament text as a representation of a similarly embodied, and valid, vision. Yet, also the scriptural text is used to probe and validate the narrator's embodied experience which makes her understand "exactly what the Galilean meant."

Diana Collecott has argued that H.D. "sited her earliest writings on the borderline between human consciousness and natural objects, divine beings and elemental forces" (97). Indeed, *Notes* investigates various ways in which one can conceptualize the "I" and position it in relation to external reality. In this context, asking a series of questions about the value and role of the human body and its relation to the core or "essence" of the self, H.D. launches her analysis of a body as an object. This reflection reveals the human body to be "not a very rare or lovely *thing*" (51) [emphasis mine]. Rather, its function is the capacity to "cast off" the spirit, the "concentrated essence" of the self (51):

> [In vision] The body seemed an elementary, unbeautiful and transitory form of life. Yet here again, I saw that the body had its use. The oyster makes the pearl in fact. So the

> body, with all its emotions and fears and pain in time casts off the spirit, a concentrated essence, not itself, but made, in a sense, created by itself. (*Notes* 51)

Yet, while exploring the notion of the body as merely "transitory" and "unbeautiful," H.D.'s images of "jelly fish" and "pearl" are not constructed as merely visual or abstract. Rather, both "pearl" and "jelly fish" are objects with distinct textures, and different physical constitutions (states of condensation). The image of a "jelly fish" "becoming concentrated" draws attention not only to the visual, but also tactile properties of the object. Thus, paradoxically, while the body is deemed to be "unbeautiful and transitory" the poet repeatedly mobilizes it, its capacity for kinesthesis, its sensations, and multi-sensory perceptions, in order to render the nature of the visionary experience. In important ways, this early reflection anticipates and loans its conceptual idiom to the poet's reflection in "The Walls Do Not Fall" where H.D. explores the paradoxical nature of a body as a limitation and an advantage.[76]

More broadly, however, by posing her literary "images" as neither exclusively nor even primarily visual, H.D.'s work questions the exclusive role of sight and / or an autonomous mind as the sole sources of "objective" knowledge. Martin Jay and Michael Levin remind us that the Cartesian project prioritizes both rational mind and vision, the latter associated by Descartes with mental operations. Relatedly, Susan Friedman has observed that for H.D. "creativity of the highest order incorporates the body, the mind and the spirit" (*Penelope's Web* 10). Indeed, H.D. does not simply seek to de-throne the rational mind, in favor of the irrational. Rather, she suggests the existence of forms of knowledge which nevertheless defy the hierarchies of the

[76] In this way, the careful reading of *Notes*, paying attention to the subject-object relationships organizing the conceptual structure of the text, complicates the critical assertions about H.D. "pushing her writing well beyond the confines of Imagism" (Burnett 3) in the post-Great War period. While as an assertion of H.D.'s formal and generic post-imagist interests it is certainly true, there is also a definite continuity in terms of the philosophical problems which she continues to pursue in and far beyond Imagism.

Cartesian paradigm. She also takes sight not as autonomous, but rather as integrated into the sensorium as a whole.

Paint It Today (1921), H.D.'s first novel, which Gary Burnett called a "directive" for the writer's own aesthetic, articulates and reformulates H.D.'s stance on the body as an "unbeautiful and transitory form of life" (*Notes*) through foregrounding and exploring the issue of representation. Not only H.D.'s early accounts of vision in *Notes*, but also her theory of representation articulated in this interwar novel anticipate the formation of the "spiritual realism" of *Trilogy* as a philosophical, spiritual and literary project. H.D.'s reflection on embodied consciousness is central to the theory of representation elaborated in *Paint It Today*. In the novel, she re-thinks the formulations of literary and pictorial realisms and explores the role of the human body as both a subject and an object of art.[77] In this way, H.D.'s *roman à clef* (Friedman, *Penelope's Web* 71) investigates the issue of aesthetic "realism," anticipating in important ways the "spiritual realism" of *Trilogy*.

Devin Fore in his recent *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* describes the broader aesthetic trend of a return to "realism" in both the literary and the visual arts in the interwar period. Re-instating the human and the human figure, such "realism" in representation troubles, Fore argues, the accepted and deeply entrenched narratives of modernist art. Fore claims that "nearly every variety of interwar realism took the human figure as a given" (1). Underlying the turn in the aesthetic tide after modernism with its "crisis of representation," interwar realism's "emphatic campaign to rehumanize art" constitutes "a complete *volte-face* from its cultural predecessors" (3). Citing the event of the Great War, the

[77] While the novel is indeed often read as H.D.'s statement on visionary experience (Friedman, more recently Christodoulides), it is rarely celebrated or carefully examined as a complex and systematic elaboration of the relationship between H.D.'s own aesthetic theory and these various "realisms."

destruction and the disfigurement of bodies, as provoking the change, Fore draws attention to the complicated nature of such a desire to return to a form of realism which presupposed "the inviolability of the body" (4). As "aesthetic modernism, social modernity, and technical modernization had destroyed the anthropomorphic foundations of its artistic program" (4), Fore concludes, the very grounds of such a pre-lapsarian notion of "realism" have, in fact, been irreversibly destroyed.

In *Paint It Today* H.D. constructs a complex network of clues suggesting her interest in a notion of a "realism," as both a philosophical and aesthetic construct. By exploring the narrative conventions of a modern realist novel, an epistolary novel, and a memoir, (but also actively thinking about figural painting and sculpture), H.D. in *Paint It Today* re-thinks multiple existing traditions of "realism," both literary and visual. The fact that H.D. experiments with several different narrative modes and models of the modern novel—the genre which has been widely theorized to be the modern epic—also sheds light on her engagement with the question of the epic as a genre.

The opening words of *Paint It Today* "A portrait, a painting?" (3), suggest not only H.D.'s preoccupation with the issue of the artistic medium (after all, it is a novel about painting, poetry and sculpture), but also the narrator's interest in various representations of a human figure. As Susan Friedman asserted, in *Paint It Today*, "to paint a portrait" in time is to "create a narrative" (*Penelope's Web* 196), thus rightly suggesting the parallel between the arts of painting and literature. H.D. carefully builds and examines this parallel in the novel. Yet, it is also important to note that H.D.'s complex notion of form as an ontological and artistic concept formulated in *Paint It Today* emerges out of a comparative study of the possibilities and

limitations of a wide range of literary and visual media and her reflection on the similarities as well as differences among sculptures and narratives, poems and paintings.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his essay "Eye and Mind" suggests that a more careful study of painting would lead Descartes to "another philosophy" (172). In particular, Merleau-Ponty surveys a relationship between Cartesian doctrine and cultural perceptions of the medium of painting. Discussing the notion of "form" emerging from Cartesian philosophy, Merleau-Ponty argues that "any theory of painting is a metaphysics" (171). He proposes a definition of "perception" which transcends the notion of perceiving as merely receiving visual data. This new expanded definition of perception informs his definition of painting:

> The painter "takes his body with him," says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or bundle of functions but the body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. …
>
> [I]t is just as true that vision is attached to movement. We see only what we look at. What would vision be without eye movement? (162)

The philosopher also suggests that Descartes mistakenly equates paintings with copper engravings, the latter of which he values for their ability to "preserve the forms of objects," or at least "give us sufficient signs of their forms" by presenting an object "by its outside, or its envelope" (172). Thus, for Descartes painting "is not a central operation contributing to the definition of our access to being; it is a mode or a variant of thinking, where thinking is canonically defined according to intellectual possession and evidence." (172)

Laying foundations for the "spiritual realism" central to *Trilogy*, H.D. in *Paint It Today* poses the problem of a medium as one with similarly far reaching philosophical consequences. Merleau-Ponty's definition of painting as a an object which engages the "body" of both a maker and a beholder, is crucial for understanding the process of formation of H.D.'s doctrine of perception and her reflection on a work of art as granting an "access to being." Her new form of "realism" as a unified conceptual model of perception and experience, but also as a representational strategy, is negotiated through meditations on painting, sculpture and literature. Each of them is taken by H.D. to offer distinct and unique insights into the nature of things they behold and hope to represent.

The novel consistently draws attention to the problem of the possibilities and limitations of diverse media or, more precisely, ways of "making." Painting, sculpture and literary description all seek to celebrate "the visible" and the embodied:

> A portrait? Paint it yesterday on porcelain, in print pinafore and leghorn wreathed with cornflowers. Paint it today; colt knees crawling into the rabbit hutch, scent of old straw and this morning's lettuce leaves and yesterday's half-gnawed carrot tops and sprinklings of oats and stiff straws to print little, half-perceived pricklings of the grimed knees and length of half-leg. …
>
> It was Midget who scaled the tree, who shook the branches in a frenzy, till the multiplying Edwardses were drenched in the soft, too-ripe, purple blackberries which yet tasted so unlike blackberries, mellow, oversweetened yet not sweet. …

> Find her, differentiate her, carve her from dark cypress wood, only to lose her again, her valiant outline blurred in the process of civilizing, of schooling, of devitalizing.(4-5)

Accentuating the central role of sensory and kinesthetic experiences for an artist's vision, the passage celebrates embodiment by drawing attention to the abilities of painting and sculpture to focus on an object and render its unique and essential attributes—a form ("outline") of the represented figure ("find her, differentiate her"). Yet, this moment of description (perhaps its urgent tone most of all) also carefully escalates a paradox, revealed only later in the narrative.

Roman Ingarden in his *Ontology of the Work of Art* suggested that:

> The non-visual properties of objects either cannot be presented at all or can be presented only in an indirect way in a picture; this indirect presentation is possible only if the non-visual properties are constituted in visual properties as objectual entities. One can paint neither the stench of tainted flesh, not the sweetness of sugar, nor the moistness of water; that is to say, to bring them to explicit immediate appearance in a picture with the means of painting. (146)

Highlighting the ways in which all art can (or even is obligated to) celebrate embodiment, the narrator of *Paint It Today* draws attention to the ways in which painting can represent neither a scent nor other, non -visual properties of objects.

Indeed, the narrator explains:

> She, Midget, did not wish to be an eastern flower painter. She did not wish to be an exact and *over-précieuse* western, a scientific describer of detail of vein and leaf of flowers, dead or living, nor did she wish to press flowers and fern fronds and threads of

> pink and purple seaweed between the pages of her book. Yet she wanted to combine all these qualities in her writing and to add still another quality to these three. She wished to embody, as this other quality, the fragrance of the flowers.
>
> You cannot paint fragrance, you cannot be a sculptor of fragrance, you cannot play fragrance on a violin. Yet you can, with a pencil, at least attempt to express something in definite terms, before which the violin, the chisel, and the brush are powerless. (17)

While in the end "you cannot paint a fragrance" (17) of flowers, both Ingarden and H.D. draw attention to the evocative range of writing, thus highlighting the unlikely proximity of the multi-sensory embodied experience and verbal art.

These passages also anticipate H.D.'s discussion of "form" as an aesthetic and ontological concept, fully expressed in the moment of "vision" in the Louvre's classical sculpture gallery. The problem of "form" is already introduced in the early reference to "her valiant outline" rendered by means of a sculptor's chisel, carved in wood, but lost in the processes of "devitalizing" and "civilizing." Yet, it is fully articulated and elaborated in the narrator's meditation on a group of classical sculptures in chapter six. Here, "form" is not merely a "shape," detail (as Descartes would have it), or an "outline," but an inherent and intuitively apprehended quality of an object. This new dimension of form is revealed through an act of gazing and contemplating a sculptural work of art, its material shape and constitution:

> But were a peculiar gift of vision granted me, a gift having nothing to do with the pen or violin or chisel, I would say: something about the firm contour on the bent torso of the Jason, something about the firm hand and the straight arm of the discus

> hurler, reminded me of the fresh, not-quite-opened-spikes of the lily of the valley; something in the alertness of the discus hurler brought to my nostrils the scent of young birch trees but in half leaf; something about the Jason caught me like spring rain, cold, intoxicant. Something about the thought of the two of them in that half-lighted gallery brought to my soul the uttermost calm of utmost friendship, the delight of a vision of perfect understanding. (64)

The narrator formulates a series of analogies or similes in order to render her insights into the meaning of form as a relational and dynamic concept—suggested by the pent-up energy and the "alertness of the discus hurler." The "firm contour on the bent torso" and "something about the firm hand and straight arm" is associated with the "not-quite-opened-spikes of the lily of the valley" about to bloom; thus, the "shape" or form transcends the boundary between two objects. The narrative arc which H.D. constructs, spanning the opening image of "her valiant outline" and concluded in Jason's "firm contour," anticipates the thematic focus of *Trilogy*, and also traverses the binary between feminine and masculine imagery.

The labor of the artist who originally rendered the essential outline or form of the figure and the act of perception of a beholder apprehending its immaterial and material dimensions harmonize and the two perspectives converge. The scene highlights synchrony between the beholder's act of looking and the vision of the artist who originally renders the object. These two separate perspectives, one originally revealed in an act of contemplation of a work of art, the other stemming from the sculptor's creative act, synchronize in the moment of vision. While originating in the moment of visual contemplation of the sculptures of "Jason and his friend," the moment of vision is framed not as a merely visual, but rather a multi-sensory one. H.D.'s description draws on visual and olfactory sensations ("the scent of young birch trees but in half

leaf" [64]); it also foregrounds the fact that both Midget's consciousness and her senses seem to be able to traverse several time frames at once. Thus, Midget was looking "through the past and the future, as through a glass, not darkly, but with intensely luminous vision" (63).

Yet, at the same time, the narrator posits the strenuous act of *overcoming* the separation of the "visible and the "invisible" worlds (80) as one of the most fundamental problems facing a modern artist. H.D. insists that only by unifying the two can an artist's act achieve completion—"when we can get the visible and the invisible together that makes another world" (80). In the end, the integration of the "the visible" and the "invisible" is not a problem of any specific artistic medium discussed in *Paint It Today*. Rather, the narrator articulates it as an issue of perception—an inability of an artist to see properly which, in turn, renders an object fragmented and incomplete. The narrator argues: "Therefore our songs, had we (or have we) the gift of singing, are never at a loss for some worthy object. The trouble is not with objects, the trouble is with ourselves" (*Paint it Today* 63). The central question of the novel: "Will they come together some day, my soul and my body?" (*Paint it Today* 54) suggests the necessity of a radical recasting of the relationship between body and spirit and mind (Friedman). Yet, interestingly, the narrator insists that it is "the visible" world which must be re-validated most of all—only *eventually* it is revealed to be *as significant* as "the invisible" (80).

The existence of the spiritual as eternal and permanent (though dynamic and fluid) is hardly doubted by the narrator. Rather, she asserts that it is the visible world that, in fact, after all "exists." The narrator continues to argue that she has learned after she has "outgrown the period of war convalescence" that "the visible world exists as poignantly, as etherially as the invisible" (80). The evolution of the narrator's ideas allows her eventually not only to re-evaluate the "visible" world, but also transcend the notions of a body as merely an "unbeautiful and transitory

form of life" (*Notes*). Through the act of seeing and contemplating the *sculptural bodies* of Jason and his friend, a sensing body becomes integrated into her spiritual system as a fundamental element of the visionary experience.

Knowledge granted through the "vision" at the Louvre is "mystical" (64) and transcends the notions of Cartesian rationality; it is also rooted in a highly premeditated, intentional and extended act of perception. The word which H.D. uses, "contemplation" (63), is highly suggestive of the ways in which she conceives of the structure, purpose and context of such a perceptual experience. Thomas Lentes in his reflection on the medieval "rituals of gazing" helpfully explains that contemplation, as a widespread religious practice, involved "strictly physical vision" and first sought to establish "the simplest, most primitive of sensual connection with the object and with the belief in the effect" (Lentes 361). Any such act of "ritual" gazing— turning an object of perception in mind while contemplating its mysteries— is initiated and remains grounded in a strictly sensory act. It resembles, in important ways, H.D.'s description of Midget's experience at the Louvre.

While H.D. draws attention to a similar structure of these two types of "contemplation," secular and religious, Midget's experience remains secular and directed towards classical sculptures rather than any sacred object. Elaborating a historical relationship between the spaces of worship and museum spaces, Carol Duncan has argued that museums have often been designed to resemble old ceremonial spaces such as monuments and temples, and that they have since become ritual spaces of the modern era (7). While in "The Walls Do Not Fall" H.D. carefully explores continuities between the spaces of worship and museums, in *Paint It Today* the vision prompted by such a moment of contemplation is secular, rather than religious.

In fact, H.D. draws particular attention to the specific structure of perceptual acts mobilized to behold the complex nature of multi-modal objects, such as works of art. While H.D. is interested in the structure of perception itself, her approach is also phenomenological. Husserl argues that "[u]niversally it belongs to the essence of every actional cogito to be consciousness of something" (*Ideas* 73). Relatedly, Bettis characterizes the phenomenological method as positing that "there is no such a thing as mental activity apart from some object toward which it is directed" (Bettis 11). The act of "contemplation" in *Paint It Today* involves a subject who directs her senses and consciousness towards a specific, three-dimensional object. This phenomenological approach as a "way of describing rather than explaining" (Bettis 6) becomes central to this section of the narrative. The moments of indeterminacy such as the narrator's use of conditional sentences, negations (e.g. "a gift having nothing to do with the pen or violin or chisel"), and nouns such as "something" are counterbalanced by the statements which foreground the material and sensory aspect of described objects. These references to the sensory and the material –"the firm contour on the bent torso," "the firm hand" "the fresh, not-quite-opened-spikes of the lily of the valley" "something about the Jason caught me like spring rain, cold, intoxicant"—concretize and ground other, more abstract, qualities. The narrator roots the complex experience in the material realm and in the beholder's body (the sensations of smell, cold, firmness etc.) which render it clearer, tangible, and available to literary representation.

The description of vision in *Paint It Today* alludes to the experience of synaesthesia,[78] central to the symbolist poetics of Rimbaud and Baudelaire, and often evoked in their poetic

[78] M. H. Abrams defines synaesthesia as signifying "the experience of two or more modes of sensation when only one sense is being stimulated" (323). "In literature," Abrams adds, "the term is applied to descriptions of one mode of sensation in terms of another" (323).

renditions of a "metaphysical" experience.[79] Such evocations suggest a link between spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of the experience. In H.D.'s novel, at first the scent of "young birch trees" appears to be brought to the narrator's "nostrils" by means of visual, rather than olfactory, stimulation. However, H.D. departs from the synaesthetic account of the intentional "disordering" (Rimbaud) of the senses, by illuminating the sequential, rather than simultaneous, character of these sensations and situating the scene as a carefully curated descriptive moment of recollection. The meditative tone of the scene and the use of the past tense sharply contrast with the earlier urgent tone and emphasis on short, compound-noun forms mobilized to describe painting: "Paint it today; colt knees crawling into the rabbit hutch, scent of old straw and this morning's lettuce leaves and yesterday's half-gnawed carrot tops and sprinklings of oats and stiff straws to print little, half-perceived pricklings of the grimed knees and length of half-leg" (5). Rather than suggesting a similar effect of immediacy and urgency of experience, H.D. insists that sensations evoked in the scene of vision are recalled or "reminded." It is the act of description and reflection—not an object stimulating specific sensory organs—which ultimately renders these non-visual sensations. The reflective, *mediated* character of the scene is highlighted by its complex, conditional opening, situating it in the realm of consciousness and speculation: "But were a peculiar gift of vision granted me." Yet, the narrator also suggests that this description originates in an ordinary act of perception directed *towards* a material, three-dimensional sculptural object.

Drawing on the notion of "contemplation" as a ritual act of looking adapted to the secular space of a museum gallery, H.D. challenges the separation of sense perception, particularly

[79] I discuss the issue in detail in chapter one.

sight,[80] from transcendent "vision."[81] However, without rescinding the role of visual perception, H.D. in *Paint It Today* also draws attention both to the non-visual and the *non-sensory* as central to Midget's experience. In relation to Midget's role in the Great War effort the narrator comments: "Midget did very little. A Zola or a de Goncourt would not have found her altogether a heroine, however, for a realistic novel. Midget thought much" (69). By drawing attention to forms of experience which realism associated with the aesthetic of pure visibility (Auerbach) is unable to register, H. D. ushers in her critique of the modern novel. Indeed, the narrator in *Paint It Today* explicitly links French realist and naturalist novels with a particular set of assumptions about perception and experience. Thus, while Midget is not a proper heroine for a realist novel, the "realism" interested primarily in demonstrable actions and the visible also appears unable to render the complexities of her experience.

Martin Jay has shown that the "realism" of the nineteenth-century French novel is linked to "the stubborn persistence of a certain faith in the power of observation in 'the literature of images'" (110). This form of realism was first and most aptly defined by Flaubert and Stendhal, its two grand masters; while Flaubert famously quipped "I am an eye," Stendhal in his preface to *The Red and the Black* defined his novel as "a mirror held up to reality." Jay calls Flaubert "the

[80] Various critics and cultural historians characterize modernity as the age of "hegemony of vision." Levin calls modernity's focus on ocularcentrism a "culture of vision"; he cites Hannah Arendt who claimed that "from the very outset, in formal philosophy, thinking has been thought of in terms of seeing…Since Bergson, the use of the sight metaphor in philosophy has kept dwindling, not unsurprisingly, as emphasis and interest have shifted entirely from contemplation to speech, from *nous* to *logos*" (in Levin's *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* 2). Martin Jay in his *Downcast Eyes* characterizes the nineteenth century as the age of vision, its ideas of objectivity strongly associated with the sense of sight and visibility. This ocular order dominates the arts, not only visual, but also literary (for example, the French realism of Balzac and Stendhal).

[81] For H.D. the broad categories of "visible" and "invisible" also apply to the larger cultural condition, namely a sharp and unbridgeable distinction between the discourses of religion and science. Lara Vetter, and Susan McCabe have shown that implicit in that division is the separation of the spiritual and the scientific, the experiential and the empirical—a "dissociation of sensibilities" which much of high modernist writing seeks to counter-act.

most visually acute" of all French realists and draws attention to the special visual quality of his writing—his "dispassionate, pitiless gaze [which] has often been compared to that of a photographer or even a filmmaker" (111). By situating *Paint It Today* in the context of formulations of French literary realism, H.D. suggests the ways in which her novel both interprets and diverges from its central precepts. While both foreground the issue of "vision," the former associates it with a single sensory organ and the analytic powers of observation; conversely, *Paint it Today* foregrounds the idea of looking as contemplation involving the entire body of the beholder. H.D.'s exploration of the form of the modern novel and its descriptive conventions anticipates the central questions of *Trilogy*.

This new-found interest in the modalities of the "visible world" (*PIT* 80) is provoked not only by H.D.'s interest in the conventions of the modern novel, painting and sculpture, but also is directly linked to her experience of the Great War.[82] The narrator insists that, of all arts, sculpture is "the easiest to fall in love with" (61), because it is the least "subjective," least clouded with "feeling," and least likely to obscure the original intuition of form. While the dimension of sculptural form revealed in the moment of vision at the Louvre certainly transcends a purely physical notion of a "shape" or an "outline" and taps into an ontological, dimension of "form," H.D. also celebrates the strictly physical dimension of the object. In fact, the narrator of *Paint It Today* seems to affectively privilege sculptural form because it most resembles human shape:

[82] Lara Vetter has shed light on the modernist crisis of embodiment as tied to the experience of war and the recognition that "the human body was increasingly vulnerable to penetration—by everything from radio waves to medical instruments" (1); she argues that these experiences are at least partially responsible for the central role H.D. attributes to the human body in her work. Susan Schweik has also argued that H.D. in *Trilogy* offers a female parallel to war poetry and that the male-centered war poem usually privileges the body as a sacrificial symbol.

> A work of art is a materialization of the electric force of the artist, electric force plus the directing impetus of the intellect.
>
> The material of the sculptor is the most definite of all. His electric impulse is materialized in definite form. The dynamic strength of his original impulse should therefore reach us less encumbered (as in the other arts) with our own impulses. In music, in painting, in poetry our own emotions are apt to intrude, to cloud over the original impulse (or as commonly called, inspiration) of the artist.
>
> We should be able, more easily, to fall in love with a statue than with any other work of art. (61)

This definition of sculpture closely resembles vorticist formulations about dynamic and relationally understood sculptural form as "masses" in relation (Pound). However, H.D. also eschews the vorticist interest in sculptural abstraction in favor of the mimetic and "humanized' (Fore) classical statue of Jason.

An interest in a dynamic human figure, central to *Paint It Today* and later *Trilogy*, also informs H.D.'s reflection on cinema. In her writing on the subject of film (and her work as an actress), H.D. highlights the ways in which cinema examines the modalities of human embodied consciousness by situating it in the complex network of overlapping perspectives and subject – object relationships. A similar reflection on the human figure as both observing and looked at, a subject and an object, organizes H.D.'s early imagist poem, "Orchard." However, in her thinking about cinema, H.D. explores the potential of the new art of film in elaborating the modalities of embodiment in the context of an extended, temporally unfolding narrative. In some of the filmic

works which particularly interest H.D. as a critic, the human figure becomes not only one of the many constitutive elements of the filmic narrative, but also its central vehicle.[83]

Recently, Susan McCabe has argued that it is necessary to examine the relationship or even "complicity" of the "apparently distinct aesthetic discourses of modern poetry and cinema" more closely ("'Delight in Dislocation': The Cinematic Modernism of Stein, Chaplin, and Man Ray" 429). McCabe has also drawn attention to the "modernist crisis of representation" and "a crisis of embodiment" caused by the fact that "experimental film made visible a body never visible before—one at once whole and in pieces" (430).[84] The criticism on the subject of H.D.'s engagement with the cinematic medium has often concentrated on the poet's interest in the Soviet film and the technique of montage.[85] However, in recent years critics have also elaborated the relation between H.D.'s view of the body in cinema and in poetry on the basis of their shared "phenomenology" of experience. For example**,** McCabe and others have drawn attention to H.D.'s interest in the image-movement idiom of cinema as a source of inspiration and representational potential for her literary work. Susan Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis have also persuasively argued that film offered H.D. new "ways of focusing on the fleeting subjectivities of consciousness" ("'I had two loves separate:' The Sexualities of H.D.'s *HER*" 206).

In many ways, H.D.'s critical reflection on cinema foreshadows main themes of her neo-epic poem, *Trilogy*, particularly by illuminating the relationship between a character and a larger

[83] For example, H.D. reviews historical epics such as Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* or Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings*.
[84] The experience of war, McCabe argues, means for cinematographers and writers a necessity to "negotiate the literal, posttraumatic, bodily disfigurements caused by WWI" (430). McCabe also argues that in *Tribute to Freud* H.D. "elevates cinema to a visionary art" (*Cinematic Modernism* 137).
[85] See Donald, Friedberg, Marcus, *Close Up 1927-1933*: *Cinema and Modernism*.

structure of a narrative. “Cinema and the Classics,” the multi-part reflection situating film in the context of other arts as a way of legitimizing the new art of cinema, is certainly the most celebrated cinematic essay of H.D.[86] However, I want to focus on her less discussed, February, 1928, review of Cecil B. DeMille’s biblical epic, *King of Kings*, because it provides a unique insight into the formation of H.D.’s theory of the body as a literary symbol and a vehicle of a narrative.

H.D.’s review of *King of Kings* focuses on two discreet yet related aspects of the film — the broad narrative vision of DeMille, and H.B. Warner’s depiction of the figure of Christ. H.D. argues that Warner’s craft as an actor, his physical constitution and his face become the center of the film narrative and almost exclusively manage to communicate its complex message. Thus, DeMille, “this most mechanically modern of creators … has toned down his surroundings, almost as if some outer force directed him in his ambition to conceive convincingly that central figure” (22-3). H.D. reflects on Christ’s body as a complex figure of synthesis—a combination not only of the real and the ideal, but also of two divergent pictorial traditions. Through the successful convergence of the actor’s physique, the director’s external narrative eye and the technical possibilities offered by the medium, the traditional, mundane iconographic representations of Christ’s figure (central to the pictorial tradition of Christian art) are infused with the sense of a Hellenic ideal of human body:

> Warner brought the most uncanny spirituality into the graceful figure. His very robes seemed patterned to robust lean Hellenic limbs, the frame so sparse yet so upright, so

[86] In the context of H.D.’s reflection on film and the possibilities of cinematic art, it interesting to examine Kenneth McPherson’s editorial for the February 1928 issue of *Close Up*, the same in which H.D.’s review of *King of Kings* appears. McPherson constructs a striking image of a movie theater as a modern “cathedral” while arguing that the power of cinema as art (in fact, its primacy over other forms of expression) lies in its ability to represent "the essential poetry and beauty of objective things" (13-4).

> stern yet so tender, so unassailable yet so approachable. The Christ of Warner is a miracle of synchronization. Hellas of Renaissance. The outline remains Jewish according to conventional Christian pattern, yet the figure retains some heightened sense of physical perfection, some convincing psycho-physical emanation. (31-32)

H.D. draws attention to modern technology, which allows the director to masterfully and a-temporally construct the central figure. Yet, she also insists that the film fundamentally constitutes a convergence of visions of two artists—the director and the actor who does not simply perform but, in fact, *embodies* the central character.

The quality which H.D. attributes to the figure (so skillfully embodied by Warner) revises and recasts the notion of Christian love, Caritas, into "charitas": "[c]harm with integrity, beauty remaining through mutilation" (25):

> I believe that the last tableau was deleted from the London production … [which] seemed to hold the crux and final reason for the whole matter. Christ out of a gallery, Christ smelling of paint and with red scars also smelling of paint and with exquisite but too innocent forget-me-nots and briar roses springing from blameless feet was not "with us always." Nor the Christ of terrible Flemish outline, the figure that has roused in so many defence-less children the phobias that in later life paralyze will and being. Intellect and reason have tried to annihilate that gruesome figure, have sometimes in part succeeded, where pure mind fails, they charmed away prejudice and revulsion by stressing (I refer particularly to the last Passion) the beauty of harmony rather than the ghastly discord of subjection. (24)

Attributing the charm of the figure to the influence of Greek art --"that grace, that Hellenic charis" (26)—H.D. sees it as a figural and physical synthesis of characteristics manifesting the human-divine status of Christ and expressed through a particular set of physical features. It combines the mimetic, yet idealized beauty of a Greek sculpture and the actor's physical resemblance to the traditional religious images of Christ.

Even more importantly, however, in Warner's figure of Christ, DeMille collapses two separate historical time frames, the past and the present:

> I must say no Eleusinian magic or trick of ancient priest craft could more honorably and with more divine subtlety have portrayed to the initiates its earth mother or the mystery of Osiris. By drawing the Christian tale and poetic drama right into line with the most modern minute-after-next modernity Cecil M.de Mille [sic] has flung it back spiritually into its own setting. The young man Is a young man. He is no bearded and over-robed occult priestling no over-ornate somewhat sheep-like mystic, he Is. The Christ of the *King of Kings* […] is true to utmost convention yet stands unconventionally apart a new reality to be grasped and gratefully re-instated…'behold I am with you always.' (24)

Through the combination of precise understanding of the dynamics of the biblical story and the latest developments of cinematic technology DeMille manages to represent simultaneously multiple and overlapping time-planes. H.D. also notes a parallel between the filmic representation of "the throng and crowd who simply don't know what the whole thing is they shout for" and demand to "crucify him," and the crowds in modern-day Europe who scream "we want war" (31). Yet, the symbolic, Hellenic-Semitic-Christian representation of Christ's figure manages to traverse these time planes and historical periods (he "Is") and confront the problem of narrative temporality in a manner akin to the one which H.D. uses in *Trilogy*.

Susan Friedman has shown that in the beginning of "The Walls Do Not Fall," when the speaker-narrator walks through a destroyed London:

> The ruins remind her of Pompeii–another instance of sudden catastrophe in human experience. This is no escape back into time; rather, H.D.'s comparison foreshadows her insistence throughout the poem that the ultimate reality of any single moment in history is contained in a pattern of essential experience which informs all time. The fire in London, like the fire in Pompeii, is a special kind of flame–Apocryphal fire, destruction which brings rebirth. (104)

The effect of superimposition of past and present which Friedman rightly highlights is initially introduced by means of memory and recollection. However, in *Trilogy*, the notion of the mythic and historical past as simply commemorated or remembered eventually gives way to a relationship between the past and the present as intersecting time frames in which events unfold "over and over" (139). Just like the Christ of DeMille's "Is," the key events and symbols in *Trilogy* exist in more than a single[87] time frame. Likewise, symbols in *Trilogy*, though they are physical and material, "concrete" things become a-temporal vehicles; thus, "grape, knife, cup, wheat / are symbols in eternity, / and every *concrete object* / has abstract value" (24) [emphasis mine].

[87] Likewise, Midget's vision in *Paint It Today* allows her to see "through the past and the future, as through a glass, not darkly, but with intensely luminous vision" (63). These formulations certainly transcend any notions of mechanical physics, and require an awareness of experience that is proper to a mystic (for example, St. Augustine in *Confessions* explores the mysteries of time and refers to "a present of things past," "a present of things to come" and "a present of things present" [235], trans. Henry Chadwick).

Symbol and Epic

Critics have argued that H.D.'s post-Second World War poem, *Helen in Egypt*, engages the epic tradition most fully and that it particularly merits the "epic" label. However, while *Helen in Egypt* certainly tasks itself with addressing the tradition and themes of the Homeric epos, *Trilogy* explicitly grapples with the tradition of Dante's medieval epic. We know from Pound's early writings that he considers Dante to be a proto-imagist and that his theoretical formulations about imagist poetics were shaped by both H.D.'s poetic work and Pound's careful consideration of the tradition of Romance poetry. Thus there may be no surprise that there is also a correspondence between the ways in which Dante's *Commedia* and H.D.'s *Trilogy* investigate the problem of a human body, between the narrative structure of Dante's work and H.D. conceptualization of the structure of her epic poem.

John Freccero has polemically proposed that most theorists deliberately overlook the centrality of the Prologue of the *Comedy* in establishing "the autobiographical dimension" of the poem. He argues that when reading the *Inferno* the "theorists of Dante's 'realism'" usually skip over the "Prologue" and as a result "find[ing] its allegorism to be vague and even tiresome" ("Dante and the Epic of Transcendence" 79). One must consider the Prologue, Freccero proposes, in order to understand how Dante unifies the spiritual and physical heroic quest and *poiesis* within the arc of his narrative; this unification is fully elaborated between the Prologue and *Paradiso*:

> The vision of the Incarnation [in *Paradiso*] coincides with the coming together in the poem of the pilgrim and the author and narrator who has been with us from the beginning of the poem. … When pilgrim and poet meet at the last stage of the journey, the circle is squared, to use Dante's figure, the poet's word joins the flesh of his experience and, in a

> sense that is at once paradoxical and exact, the poem is born. (*Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* 218-9)

Freccero adds that the twentieth-century readings of the *Divine Comedy* which focus almost exclusively on the first book of Dante's epic, *Inferno*, as a "transitional" work bridging the gap between the Middle Ages and modern era, as well as those that read it as allegorical, misread it and ignore the intricate construction of the rest of Dante's sequence. Dante's poetic vison, Freccero insists, rests on the careful development of the whole narrative arc, rather than on any of its isolated elements. A similar argument applies to *Trilogy*.

The visionary quest of the poet-speaker in *Trilogy* as both physical and conceptual, involving mind, spirit, and body and stretched over all three sections of *Trilogy*, parallels in important ways these basic formulations about Dante's epic. Michele Braun also notes there is a close relationship between individual poetic images and the narrative structure of *Trilogy*. While the early stanzas of the epic "exhibit the clear and crisp description of an Imagist poet," when the images begin to "repeat, they build momentum, erupting into narrative" (2). The structure of repetition of the images—as well as their variation—provides the scaffolding for the linear unfolding of the narrative:

> In early narrative eruptions, the reader does much of the work of narrative construction, seeking patterns in the repetition; however, by the end of the poem narrative repetition is replaced by temporal narrative markers that impose linearity on the images, ordering the action in the final stanzas. (2)

I wish to suggest that in the central image-symbol of the body, H.D. brings the two dimensions—the figure and the narrative of the quest—together.

Paul Ricoeur in “Existence and Hermeneutics” defines a symbol as “any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first” (12-13). Stephen H. Webb has also drawn attention to the relationship between a myth and a symbol. Linking the structure of signification of the symbol and a development of myth as a narrative, Webb argued that a myth is, in fact “an attempt to explain and articulate the symbol" (29). H.D. establishes an analogous relation between a literary figure and the narrative structure of *Trilogy*—the symbol as the central poetic device of *Trilogy* becomes something which must be explained, described and elucidated over the course of the temporally unfolding narrative.

In “The Walls Do Not Fall,” the speaker declares the centrality of the symbolic for her poetic project:

> … the Holy Ghost / … is the Dream;
>
> that way of inspiration
> is always open,
>
> and open to everyone;
> it acts as go-between, interpreter,
>
> it explains symbols of the past
> in to-day’s imagery. (29)

Drawing a parallel between one of the persons of Trinitarian theology, “the Holy Ghost,” and “the Dream,” she both references and modifies the theological structure informing the *Commedia*. The strictly religious concept is expanded to become a source of creativity which cannot be traced back to the framework of Christian orthodoxy. This source of inspiration allows for the interpretation of symbols which span multiple spatio-temporal frames in which the narrative operates.

The structure of a symbol in *Trilogy* as demanding a continuous act of elaboration and exegesis corresponds to the larger (narrative and temporal) structure of the poem. The very construction of a symbol which, as shown by Webb and Ricoeur, must be properly articulated and *elaborated* in order to be understood is reflected in and paralleled by the narrative process of the gradual revealing of strategic elements of the represented world in *Trilogy*. In Canto 9 the poet also asserts that a "symbol," or a "hieroglyph," central to *Trilogy* will integrate a word and an image, the sensory and the verbal. A "hieroglyph" is not merely an image, but an expressive sign inviting a continual interpretive action. It draws on a structure of interpretation akin to that governing a symbol, by both hiding and revealing another layer of reality represented only indirectly. H.D. refers to hieroglyphs in the Temple of Luxor in the very first poem of *Trilogy*, and thus announces the central theme of the work; "the Luxor bee, chick and hare" (3) are not akin to a type of modern *writing*. Rather, they are carved into the walls of the temple. In this way, from the beginning, in a manner reminiscent of her earlier reflection on sculpture and painting in *Paint It Today*, the poet suggests an intimate connection between visual and literary forms, the material and the conceptual. As a consequence, the poet synthesizes "writing" and "carving" into a complex notion of *poiesis* which subsumes various forms of "making" and announces the identity of the speaker-quester as an artist.

Similarly, the recovery of "spiritual realism" and transformation of the culture of "death-worship"—the tasks to which the speaker of *Trilogy* chooses to "re-dedicate" her "gifts"—require the act of scraping "a palette, point pen or brush" (48). The image draws attention to poetry and writing not as purely conceptual, but rather physical acts of making or re-making. Gregory Nagy reminds us that Aristotle distinguishes poetry from other forms of "making" elaborated in *Poetics*. Nagy shows that the etymology and context of Aristotle's use of the words

poiesis, poietike, and poiein suggests that Aristotle's central expression is *poietike (tekhne)* or "poetic craft":

> [T]he more basic idea inherent in these words … deriving from the stem *poie-* is "composition" pure and simple. The verb *poiein*, which means "compose" or simply "make," can refer to the making of any artifact, not only an artifact that happens to be a poem. So the fact that *poiesis* and *poietike* are used exclusively to refer to making of poetry, not to any other kind of making, shows that making poetry was considered to be a most basic kind of making. (21)

Like Aristotle's *poiein*, H.D.'s notion of "spiritual realism" closely associates poetry with writing as a physical, embodied activity, but also—through images of a "brush" and "a palette"—one which is closely connected to visual media such as painting.

However, the artist's very craft and vision—those qualities which fundamentally allow her to start the quest in the first place—are also immediately and violently questioned. The speaker repeatedly evokes voices of skepticism which challenge the merit and outcome of the journey. The hope to find the "true-rune" immediately faces a series of anathemas and accusations: "your heart, moreover, / is a dead canker," "your rhythm is the devil's hymn," "your stylus is dipped in corrosive sublimate" (6). Oscillation between hope and despair, doubt and determination, orients the first section of *Trilogy*. Thus, Canto 1 ends with a question expressive of both hope and doubt: "what saved us? what for?" (4). By asking "what" rather than "who," H.D. also rescinds the idea of a personal God central both to the religions of "the Book" and to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Already in *Paint It Today* H.D. shows that Althea similarly questions Midget and her newly discovered philosophy *o*f the visible world. In chapter eight, "Visible World," she writes:

> "I do not understand your philosophy," she said … ["] I have listened to many arguments on the origin of the world, of space and of the stars. I have not heard a plea, or a defense, as you seem to have made it, of the visible world. If you must argue about and defend your so-called visible world, I do not think it can be a very pleasant, satisfying, or convincing place to live in. In fact, I do not understand you at all. You seem to be talking in a cloud, about a cloud. Is your world a cloud, that you must make these curious distinctions between past, present, visible and invisible?" (81)

Anticipating the confrontation with doubt and skepticism central for "The Walls Do Not Fall," Althea's words foreshadow the questioning which the skeptics launch in *Trilogy*; more importantly, however, they also suggest the structure of the quest as, at least partially, a defense or an apology of the new philosophy.

While the first book of *Trilogy* concludes with a conditional expression of hope: "possibly we will reach haven, / heaven" (50), the imagery of "The Walls Do Not Fall" consistently dwells on dualities and confusion, wavering between hope and skepticism, a desire to continue the quest in order to "recover old values" (5) and despair caused by the accusations addressed towards the speaker-quester. The accusers charge that she is not progressive enough and is overly dedicated to the uncertain goals of her journey, which is charted between the desire for peace and the reality of war. Indeed, the world in which the speaker begins her journey is strongly marked by military conflict; immediately after asserting her identity as the poet and the quester, the speaker is brought back to the violent historical context of London under the blitz. The ambiguous imagery of the first section of the poem explores the ways in which ancient

symbols expressing intimate and harmonious connections between words and things, the conceptual and the material, have been broken apart and their original meanings abandoned.

For example, "cartouche," an image-symbol which H.D. contemplates in Canto 9, connotes a complex network of objects spanning the distant historical realities of Ancient Egypt and twentieth-century war. The Egyptian hieroglyph for cartouche which stands for a noun ("name"), in its half-form also graphically designates a verb (to "divide" or to "exclude"). This example reveals the poet's interest in words which span multiple meanings and grammatical forms, and which express actions as well as name objects. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998 edition) suggests that "cartouche" is a noun designating a concrete physical thing—"a carved tablet or drawing" or "an oval or oblong enclosing a group of Egyptian hieroglyphs, typically representing the name and title of a monarch" (281); a "cartouche" also designates a votive object shaped *like* the hieroglyph placed in a coffin in order to record and immortalize the name of the dead individual. Through these multiple meanings, "cartouche" gestures towards an inextricable link between death and immortality, language and object-hood. Yet, stating that the "irony is bitter truth / wrapped up in a little joke / and Hatshepsut's name is still circled / with what they call the *cartouche*" (16), the poet also draws attention to the purely contemporary, militaristic meaning of "cartouche;" the word had been appropriated by the militaristic culture and had come to signify both producer's markings on ammunition and rifles, and an ammunition box. The poet foreshadows and amplifies this duality when she draws attention to a similar duality of the English word "cartridge": "folio, manuscript, old parchment, / will do for cartridge cases" (16) several lines earlier.

The philological exploration of the historical origins of these words emphasizes tightly woven, rather than tenuous, relationships between words and things they signify.

Etymologically, the English noun "cartridge" is in fact a borrowing and a corruption of an earlier French and Italian "cartouche" (thus of Latin rather than Anglo-Saxon origin). The relationship between line 12 introducing "*cartridge* cases" and lines 15-16 "Hatshepsut's name is still circled / with what they call the *cartouche*" helps thematize and amplify the temporal aspect of the speaker's quest as a "recovery" of "old values." The progress of the poem from line 12 to lines 15-16, simultaneously and paradoxically, implies a movement forward and a continual unfolding of the narrative, while also moving from a newer meaning of the word to an older one (thus suggesting a movement "backwards"). In this way, this early reflection on the meaning of "cartouche" anticipates the statement about the purpose and complex temporal structure of the journey of the speaker: "I have gone forward / I have gone backward, / I have gone onward from bronze and iron, / into the Golden Age" (124).

The sense of a complex temporal framework of the poem is solidified and highlighted in the following stanzas of "The Walls Do Not Fall." Here, the speaker asserts the primacy of language and its original, creative, generative power of naming over the militaristic culture which subsequently appropriated and corrupted it. The speaker declares: "remember, O Sword, / you are the younger brother, the latter-born [of the Word]" (17). In a moment of *creative* etymology, H.D. draws attention to a similar relationship between the words "sword" and "word" to that which governs the relationship of "cartridge" and "cartouche." While standard etymological analysis suggests diverse roots of "word" (Latin) and "sword" (Germanic) (unlike what their *appearance* may suggest), H.D. chooses to link the two not by their roots, but by establishing a connection and kinship ("brother") based on how they present themselves to a reading subject. A"(s)word" is divided from its predecessor, "word," by a single consonant "s"—a sedimentation determining its sinister, militaristic, yet "latter-born," meaning. In this way, H.D.

not unlike Jones, draws attention to the relationship of language and sight, meanings of words and sensory perception (visual, not auditory). The sense of sight and the visual, in this case, both help establish kinship between the words, and, situated in a broader linguistic context, become a source of deception. Nephie J. Christodoulides reminds us that for H.D. "thinking" is not merely an act involving words (24). Indeed, a hieroglyph or a symbol are neither entirely verbal and conceptual, nor visual and sensory. Rather, they rely on the relationship of what is manifest and what is hidden, visible and invisible.

Just as in "The Walls Do Not Fall," the superimposition of the older "cartouche" on the more recent "cartridge" draws attention to a complex narrative of history as linear, the superimposition of the images of a circle, "bee-line" and "honey comb" in "The Flowering of the Rod" stages a moment of tension between more complex notions of linear and circular experiences of time—both historical and sacred:

> O blasphemy, pity is a stone for bread,
> only love is holy and love's ecstasy
>
> that turns and turns and turns about one centre,
> reckless, regardless, blind to reality,
>
> …….
>
> Yet resurrection is a sense of direction,
> resurrection is a bee-line,
>
> straight to the horde and plunder,
> the treasure, the store-room,
>
> the honeycomb;
> resurrection is remuneration,
>
> food, shelter, fragrance
> of myrrh and balm. (122-3)

The geometrical images of line, circle and hexagon refer the reader back to the graphic and geometric representation of two competing interpretations of time—a linear one, central for

the religions of the Book (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) and the circular. Through the juxtaposition of love and pity, and the superimposition of three geometric images: a circle, a line ("bee-line, / straight"), and a hexagon ("honeycomb") the poet explores and seeks to reconcile two conflicting experiences of time. These images, superimposed on the concepts of love and pity, reveal a tension between the two rivaling concepts of time and their cultural implications. "Love" is associated with an image of time as a self-contained and self- perpetuating circle which "turns and turns and turns." On the other hand, pity, as we learn from the early stanzas of *Trilogy*, understood to be a pernicious dimension of Christian love, inscribed into an old order which the poet seeks to transcend, connotes a linear, teleological experience of time.[88] Finally, the desire of the speaker to reconcile these divergent notions of time is suggested by the geometric form of a "honeycomb." Thus, taken together, these images contain a paradox while, at the same time, their geometric structure points to its resolution.

H.D.'s exploration of the expressive potential of a geometric image of a hexagon ("honeycomb") contains a cleverly veiled allusion to Dante's *Paradiso*. For Dante, "squaring the circle" represents a task which is beyond human comprehension:

> As the geometer his mind applies
> To square the circle, nor for all his wit
> Finds the right formula, howe'er he tries. (*Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII, lines 133–135, 347)

The medieval poet compares such a task to his own inability to comprehend *Paradise*.[89] The image of a "honeycomb," drawing on the idiom of Euclidean geometry, suggests an analogically impossible task of reconciling the two radically different experiences of time. H.D. constructs an allusion to Dante, but also re-formulates it to reflect her own artistic, philosophical

[88] See Eliade's *Myth and Reality* and his notion of "eternal return."
[89] For an in-depth discussion of Dante's image, see John Freccero's *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*.

and spiritual framework. In mathematical and visual terms harkening back to Euclidean geometry, a construction of a regular hexagon combines three circles and six straight lines (and the use of a straightedge and a compass). Thus, a hexagon as a geometric figure suggests a possibility to contain—by holding them in a productive, non-binary tension—the images of a circle and a line, inherent in the initial juxtaposition of linear and circular notions of time, love and pity, posited by the poet.

Yet, in the opening canto of "The Flowering of the Rod," the poet-speaker rejects abstraction for its own sake by stating: "do not look below / where the blue gentian / reflects geometric pattern / in the ice-floe" (113); and motivates herself to continue the *physical* journey forward and upward "do not be beguiled / by the geometry of perfection" (113). Likewise, the geometrical, mathematical, symbolic, occult and aesthetic meanings of a hexagon-"honeycomb" are immanently integrated into an object with its distinct visual, olfactory and, most of all, *gustatory* properties. The poet emphasizes the inextricability of abstract and spiritual connotations of the symbol with its sensory, physical, nourishing properties by insisting that "the resurrection is remuneration, / food, shelter, fragrance / of myrrh and balm" (123).

Likewise, sensing body itself as an instrument of both empiricism and a religious ritual becomes an image-symbol. *Trilogy* opens with the image of the body as damaged, fragmented and incomplete--"the frame held" although the "flesh has melted away." This incompleteness, however, is taken by the speaker to be a complicated and ambiguous one. The rejection of the body—of the material and the physical—does not transport the speaker into the realm of the abstract or the imagination. Rather, it prompts her to contemplate the duality of the body and its physical constitution. Its form is both the trap of the spirit and a "shelter," a shell producing the "pearl" of "great price," and a feeling, sensuous site of consciousness. The speaker ultimately

acknowledges the re-birth of the physical body as a goal of her quest, most explicitly in "The Flowering of the Rod," when she declares "No poetic fantasy / but a biological reality, / a fact: I am an entity / like bird, insect, plant / or sea-plant cell; I live; I am alive" (125). However, in the stanzas of *Trilogy* that precede this declaration, she explores its many dualities.

The boundary between infinity and finitude which the speaker probes in the first section of the poem is mapped onto the tension between the soul and the body. The speaker starts out by building the analogy between the body and a frame or a shell:

> There is a spell, for instance,
> in every sea-shell:
>
> continuous, the sea-thrust
> is powerless against coral,
>
> bone, stone, marble
> hewn from within by that craftsman,
>
> the shell-fish:
> oyster, clam, mollusc
>
> is master-mason planning
> the stone marvel:
>
> yet that flabby, amorphous hermit
> within, like the planet
>
> senses the finite,
> it limits its orbit
>
> of being, its house,
> temple, fane, shrine:
>
> it unlocks the portals
> at stated intervals:
>
> prompted by hunger,
> it opens to the tide-flow:
>
> but infinity? no,
> of nothing-too-much:

I sense my own limit,
my shell-jaws snap shut

at invasion of the limitless,
ocean-weight; infinite water

can not crack me, egg in egg-shell;
closed in, complete, immortal [.] (8-9)

The duality of the image of a "flabby, amorphous hermit" and its "house, / temple, fane, shrine" contributes to a complex notion of the self, reminiscent of the earlier reflection on the vision of a "jelly fish" in *Notes on Thought and Vision*. Yet, through this image the speaker also explores the duality of the body itself—both a limit and a "temple, shrine." The poet introduces multiple cultural meanings of a body—a Neo-Platonic "trap" of the soul and a temple of the soul—in order to examine and define the relationship between soul and body.

The image of "bone, stone, marble / hewn from within by that craftsman" draws attention not only to a religious dimension of the poet's reflection on the body, but also to its implications for H.D. as an artist. The image of the "bone, stone, marble / hewn from within" firmly situates these lines in continuity with the earlier reflection on sculptural form. In *Paint It Today,* an act of contemplation of two sculptural figures of "Jason and his friend" provokes the reflection on the immaterial dimension of "form" as an ontological attribute, rather than simply a physical shape. H.D.'s allusion to sculpture in "The Walls Do Not Fall" draws attention to a paradox: "bone, stone, marble" highlight the relationship between the human skeleton or "frame" and the sculptor's material. Sculpture, as that which relies most on the material and is most subject to the laws of gravity (unlike words or musical notes, for example), corresponds to the material, spatial and *tactile* qualities of human body, which is similarly bound to matter, and subject to the destruction of war. At the same time, the topsy-turvy nature of the imagery of the passage highlights the ways in which the external form of a sculptural work of art is in fact a

materialization of some internal, dormant principle. Form (which is both material and immaterial, as we learn from *Paint It Today*) which determines its unique physical shape is "hewn from within." H.D. resorts to a verb which amplifies the effects of strenuous physical activity. Thus, a relationship between a material, three dimensional body and spirit which is immaterial "Invisible, indivisible" (83) is expressed through a paradoxical image combining physical activity and the immaterial form.

The centrality of the bodily and the sensory to the imagery of the first section of the poem is constantly highlighted, particularly in those sections in which the poet reflects on the body as an obstacle and a limitation. The titular "walls" not only signify the boundary between finitude and infinity, mortality and immortality, but also suggest a boundary between the self and the world, human and divinity, the inside and the outside:

Still the walls do not fall,
I do not know why;

……..

dust and powder fill our lungs
our bodies blunder

through doors twisted on hinges,
and the lintels slant

cross-wise;
we walk continually

on thin air
that thickens to a blind fog,

then step swiftly aside,
for even the air

is independable,
thick where it should be fine

and tenuous
where wings separate and open,

and the ether
is heavier than the floor,

and the floor sags
like a ship floundering;

we know no rule
of procedure,

we are voyagers, discoverers
of the not-known [.] (58-59)

Even before the poet-speaker reveals that there is no escape from the body and reintegrates it into the new quest, the ways in which she describes the physical world and its relations suggests not an imaginary, but a strictly physical dimension of the quest. The striking reversal of ordinary physical relationships—the fact that the words of wisdom are "stamped on the atmosphere" (17)—does not suggest a "mystical" disordering of the senses. Rather, it is proper to the historical and existential context of total war and the experience of German air bombings during the blitz. This context only amplifies the role of the bodily and the physical.

Total war as an event, Saunders and others[90] have argued, affects human bodies and material objects, offering radically new types of sensory experience (182). It disturbs physical relationships in a manner which French symbolist poets, such as Baudelaire and Rimbaud, and modern artists, such as Kandinsky, viewed as desirable and generative. In "The Walls Do Not Fall" these unusual sensations are inherent in the concrete spatio-temporal context from which the speaker initiates the quest. They are not generative; rather they portend death and destruction. The paradoxical reversals of the relationships between spirit and matter, turning upside down of the physical properties of solids and gases—"the ether / is heavier than the floor," "stamping" words on "atmosphere"—are suggested by the poet not to transport the quest into the realm of poetic imagination, but rather to ground it more firmly in the confusing and paradoxical, yet

[90] See discussion in chapter one.

undeniably physical, reality of the destruction of war. Images organizing these early poetic passages emphasize the reality of sensory perception and physical sensations. Not unlike *Notes on Thought and Vision*, the opening stanzas of *Trilogy* question the value of the body. At the same time, the speaker of the poem relies on the reality of sensory perceptions and physical sensations to render the rich and complex context from which she commences on her visionary journey.

Only much later, in "Tribute to the Angels," does the speaker seem to accept the fact that there is no escape from embodiment; here, the senses also seem to confirm the status of the speaker's vision: "but from the visible / there is no escape; / there is no escape from the spear / that pierces the heart." (86) The poet continues in the following Canto 23:

> We are part of it;
> we admit the transubstantiation,
>
> not God merely in bread
> but God in the other-half of the tree
>
> that looked dead—
> did I bow my head?
>
> did I weep? *my eyes saw*,
> it was not a dream
>
> yet it was vision,
> it was a sign, [.] (87) [emphasis mine].

A tree as a *signum*-symbol harkens back to the poet's earlier definition of a symbol as "something that might mean something else" (*King of Kings* 29). The dead tree flowering is mapped on the notion of the re-birth of a physical body, the two linked by the image of a "burned-out" wood recalling the "burnt-out" "heart" (4) in the first poem of *Trilogy*. While, the image of the tree marks the transformation of the old "death" symbolism of the tree of the Cross into a new, generative symbol, the scene still highlights a dual, complicated role of human

embodied consciousness. It enables visionary experience through its ability to experience and understand or interpret sensations, yet, it also remains a source of suffering (there is "no escape from the spear / that pierces the heart"). The visionary experience of the speaker at the heart of the middle section of *Trilogy* also looks forward to Kaspar's vision. Both are sensory and firmly rooted in the reality of the body; thus, the poet-speaker insists that "We see her visible and actual, / beauty incarnate, / as no high-priest of Astoroth / could compel her / with incense" (82-3). Although religious ritual is an act of celebration and veneration, it nevertheless cannot compel the sacred into being or action--"we asked for no sign / but she gave a sign unto us" (82).

Similarly, the actual moment of Kaspar's vision—initiated in Canto 30 when "the speck, fleck, grain or seed / opened like a flower" (152) and spanning Cantos 31, 32, and 33, is granted rather than generated. The scene also reverses the relationships between what is hidden and what is illuminated, an idea central for this part of the narrative—"in that point or shadow, / was the whole secret of the mystery" (152). The speaker-narrator argues that in vision what normally is hidden and remains in the shadows suddenly becomes visible. This crux of a visionary experience (immediately and meticulously described as both auditory and visual) and the key to the narrative normally remains in *shadow*.

The description of Kaspar's vision, extending over multiple time frames, seeks to reconcile a number of conflicting, often paradoxical, formulations which the poet engages throughout the work. The description of vision consists of several crucial elements: both sound and visual effects originate in specific physical objects (a flower, a city, a shell); Kaspar does not generate these experiences (thus, for example, the message in Canto 33 translates "itself"); finally, the scene retains a somewhat a-temporal character (in real-time, in its totality, it takes only a "half-second"), but the poet builds and escalates the description of Kaspar's visionary

experience through staging a specific order of events supporting the temporal structure of *Trilogy* as a journey both "backward" and "forward." Visual experiences give way to sound "as of many waters" which is finally transformed into a "spell." The weight of evidence throughout the scene shifts. At first the speaker emphasizes sight and the visual effect, and later hearing and sound "as of many waters" (155), which eventually become a comprehensible "spell" in a language.

The poet positions the scene on the verge of Kaspar's rational faculties—*before* he was "lost" (153)—thus suggesting a perhaps heightened yet conscious state of mind of the main actor of events. This state is highlighted not only by the intensification, but also peculiar otherness of the sensory data he receives. Thus, the poet proposes that Kaspar saw everything "as if enlarged under a sun-glass; / he saw it all in minute detail" and that the vision contains other non-visual, impressions, "a sound *as of* many waters, / rivers flowing and fountains and sea-waves washing the / sea-rocks" (155). Sound eventually becomes differentiated into a language--"he heard, *as it were*, the echo / of an echo in a shell" and although "the sound was other / than our ears are attuned to" Kaspar still "understood it" (156) [emphasis mine]. On the one hand, the sensory impressions that initiate and frame the scene are described in minute detail. On the other hand, they are rendered by means of an approximation or analogy ("as of," "as it were," etc.). This reliance on analogies suggests the insufficiency of Kaspar's pre-existing conceptual apparatus to explain away the nature of the experience, rather than an indeterminate or ambiguous character of the experience itself (even though Kaspar was a worldly man, a sage, and a "great wanderer" the message in the shell was in no language he could recognize).

Kaspar's vision emphasizes extreme clarity of images, since Kaspar "saw it all as if enlarged under a sun-glass; / he saw it all in minute detail" (155), sounds and the "rhythmically" conveyed message. However, in the following moment in which the narrator highlights the strict,

sharp and clear character of mental boundaries is governed by the same principle of descriptive lucidity. Kaspar's vision begins as he "stooped and straightened" and noticed "the fleck of light" "like a flaw in the third jewel, / to his right" (152). The overly meticulous and detailed description of Kaspar's movements and the kinesthetic relations organizing the scene ("to his right") is immediately matched by the moment opening the visionary experience-proper—the "speck" which opened like a "flower" in front of Kaspar (152) "contained / in the infinitely tiny grain or seed, / opened petal by petal, a circle" (153). Here, likewise, the speaker insists on the clear and lucid nature of the experience to establish and highlight the descriptive, physical and empirical continuity between the two. Finally, however, this clarity is momentarily superseded by Kaspar's reflection in the aftermath of the experience; thus his mind "must sharply differentiate, / clearly define the boundaries of beauty" (158). The two types of "clarity"—one offered by the senses, the other by the mind—put each other into question.

The scene of vision foregrounds not only the distinct and lucid character of sensory impressions framing it, but also their seamlessly sequential character. In Canto 33 the speaker insists that the image is slowly transformed into "sound" which "translated itself / as it transmuted its message" while Kaspar's brain "translated" it (156). The sound initiates a signifying chain—before the content of the message is revealed, the poet draws attention how the "spell" travels—via sound, "through spiral upon spiral of the shell / of memory that yet connected us / with the drowned cities of pre-history; / Kaspar understood and his brain translated" (156). Here, the act of translation does not pertain to an act of interpreting a visual "hieroglyph;" rather it is centered on sound and speech which contains "words neither sung nor chanted; / but stressed rhythmically" (156). In this way, the narrative arc of *Trilogy* connects the earlier symbolic (and visual) messages conveyed in hieroglyphs (written, carved, read and seen),

with a message which is being spoken and heard. This arch also connects the speaker "remembering" Pompeii at the outset of the narrative with Kaspar being connected to the cities of pre-history. The harmonious nature of this experience—the ways in which Kaspar's mind "translates" the evidence of the heightened and attuned senses, and understands the content of the message (to which all mind, senses, and spirit contribute)—creates a sharp contrast with the events of the following Canto 34—"the second half-second" (158) of Kaspar's experience. When Kaspar's mind begins to defy and question the content of the previous experience, the newly unified "self" disintegrates back into three independent and conflicting parts.

One of the powerful ways in which H.D. links the homage to the Lady in "Tribute to the Angels" and Kaspar's tribute in the closing of "The Flowering of the Rod" is through the likeness of the characters' ritualistic gestures. The speaker's half-conscious homage: "did I bow my head / did I weep?" (87), is replicated by Balthasar's who "bowed" (17), and finally by Kaspar himself who "inclined his head only slightly" in order to signal "that his part in this ritual / was almost negligible, / for the others had bowed low" (171). Attention to the reality of the body and its fundamental involvement in the final ritual is marked not only by the similarity of the gestures of the speaker and Kaspar, but also by the careful attention to the intensity and degree of each character's physical involvement. In this way, the speaker also amplifies the autonomous character of these experiences. While in "Tribute to the Angels" the speaker declares "*I John saw*" (109) adopting the identity of the figure of the New Testament, in "The Flowering of the Rod" Kaspar's and the speaker's identities remain separate, even though their gestures bear likeness.

Similarly, the image of "the new Eve" ("Tribute to the Angels" 101), referencing John's Revelation and its imagery of Mary as the new Eve destroying sin by crushing the head of the

serpent—"who comes / clearly to return, to retrieve / what she lost the race, / given over to sin, to death; / she brings the Book of Life, obviously" (101)—is replicated and modified in the final section of *Trilogy* in the image of a woman holding a "bundle of myrrh" (172). Yet, they are not simply the same event recalled, remembered or re-presented in two different ways. Rather, in the same way in which the narrator's own vision of *Notes on Thought and Vision* and the image of "the pearl of great price" correspond to one another, the image of the Lady with the Book and the woman with the bundle of "myrrh" remain autonomous while re-validating and re-affirming one another through a mutual structure of interpretation.

More generally, however, the multiplicity of personages and the proliferation of their *possible* identities contributes to the suspense-resolution structure of "The Flowering of the Rod." By this means H.D. highlights the linear character of the final sequence and draws attention to the structure of *Trilogy* as a quest and a narrative; the structure of silences and subsequent revelations helps highlight its temporal unfolding. For example, in Canto 22 the speaker hints at the identity of "Simon." The character is not quite precisely fixed as Simon Peter, but the speaker insists that "he bent to whisper / into the ear of his Guest / I do not know her" (142), in a manner very directly evoking the scene of Simon Peter's denial of Christ. It is only in Canto 26 that the speaker reveals that "this Simon" was, in fact "not Simon Peter, *of course*, / this is not Simon Zelotes, the Canaanite / nor Simon of Cyrene / nor the later Simon, the sorcerer, / this Simon is Simon, the leper" (146) [emphasis mine]. The extremely meticulous manner which the speaker adopts to reveal the identity of the character eventually, despite the initial misleading allusion to his identity, draws attention to the role of the speaker as controlling the story and its temporal unfolding. Yet, the speaker-narrator at various points in *Trilogy* also draws attention to the problematic nature of her own omniscience, thus departing from the

narrative conventions of the nineteenth-century realist novel. In those moments, strategically asserting herself as separate from characters, the speaker adopts a dual role of the co-actor and the witness of the events.

The final cantos of *Trilogy* mark one of such moments, as the narrative enters into the realm of faith and intuition. Kaspar's motivation to follow the woman, which can be attributed to belief or intuition ("the vow he had made-- / well, it wasn't exactly a vow, / an idea, a wish, a whim, a premonition perhaps" which "we all know / … *has happened before somewhere else*" [167]) is unavailable directly to the speaker-narrator or to the reader. While Kaspar's mental processes are strategically hidden in the scenes (as the purpose of the ritual is, after all, "to show without speaking" [170]), their kinesthetic and sensory aspects are emphasized as an empirical validation and a visible structure of the final experience: "Melchior made gesture with his hands / as if in a dance or play, / to show without speaking, his unworthiness, / to indicate that this, his gift was symbolic, / worthless in itself" (170). These final scenes are structured and organized by a series of sensory impressions and kinesthetic relations; Kaspar's body participates in an activity akin to a play or theatre, which transcends the boundaries of that time and place: "Balthasar touched his forehead and his breast;" and "Balthasar bowed," "Balthasar stood aside / and Melchior took his place," "Kaspar stood a little to one side / … and placed his gift / a little apart from the rest" and "inclined his head only slightly" (170-1). The bodily, physical dimension of the closing ritual, which integrates the spiritual and the material, the eternal and the historical, also emphasizes and foregrounds the sensory; thus there is a sound-image ("she spoke / so he looked at her") and a reference to "fragrance": "she said, Sir, it is a most beautiful fragrance, / as of all flowering things together" (172).

While the unidentifiable and sublime character of the smell suggests a transcendent totality "as of all things together," unavailable fully to the human sensory and conceptual apparatus, it also situates the scene firmly in the realm of lived experience and the physical reality of the body. It is connected to the moment of Kaspar's vision when he hears the sound "as of many waters" (155), which eventually becomes a comprehensible "spell" in a language. In this way the visual, gustatory ("the honey-comb"), auditory, and olfactory are synthesized into one notion of a symbol encompassing all of the senses, and carefully elaborated over the course of the narrative. By referencing a whole range of physical sensations the poet re-instates the body as the driving force of the quest and a central image-symbol, an embodied consciousness and a "shelter."

Chapter IV

Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*: The Epic of Visionary Realism

When we turn to Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos,* we once again find the arrival of visionary experience announced and framed by the medium of the senses. Like in David Jones's *In Parenthesis* and Hilda Doolittle's *Trilogy* the climactic visionary moment in Pound's Canto 81 is clearly articulated as the high point of the narrative arc of the work. Yet, unlike *In Parenthesis* and *Trilogy*, Pound's entire neo-epic poem explicitly and insistently foregrounds and investigates the problem of vision: what does it mean to have it? How does it come about? What makes it possible and what prevents it from taking place?

For example, in the "hymnic lynx choruses" (Sieburth, "Introduction" xxxiii) of Canto 79, one of the several *near*-visionary moments in *The Pisan Cantos*, the poet asserts: "Here are lynxes Here are lynxes" (510). In this way, the earlier moment of supplication: "O Lynx, wake Silenus and Casey / shake the castagnettes of the bassarids, / the mountain forest is full of light…O Lynx keep watch on my fire" (508-9), metamorphoses into a firm, twice repeated declaration of presence, situated within a single poetic line divided by a pivotal—and typographically accentuated—pause. Throughout the scene the intensification of sensory impressions signals the approaching vision; while the experience remains unrealized until the scene of vision in the tent of Canto 81, it is clear that the speaker expects the senses to play the role of the empirical tool measuring its validity. Thus, Pound concludes the scene in Canto 79 with a series of questions which either directly evoke or allude to the sensory order and echo the distinct imagery of the previous stanzas ("the castagnettes of the bassarids," "the mountain forest is full of light," "the tree comb is red gilded") (508-9). Closing the scene in Canto 79, the poet

again seeks the confirmation of the status of the experience in his sensory impressions: "Is there a sound in the forest / of pard or of bassarid / or crotale or of leaves moving? / Cythera, here are lynxes / Will the scrub-oak burst into flower? / There is a rose vine in this underbrush / Red? white? No, but a colour between them / When the pomegranate is open and the light falls / half thru it" (510).

In important ways, the structure of this scene anticipates the moment of vision-proper of Canto 81; both take place within ordinary time, in the realm of (spatially) extended bodies (references to "here," "now" in Canto 79 and "my tent" in Canto 81 highlight the fact). However, the abundance of detail in the earlier scene contrasts with the brevity and the indeterminacy of the scene of vision-proper. While the comparatively long scene in Canto 79 is characterized both by the insistent use of the present tense and the extended description of an elaborate ritual involving multiple senses, the scene in Canto 81, in comparison, appears very brief, is narrated entirely in the past tense and lacks the sensory detail characterizing the scene of "lynx choruses."

Why should it be? These a-symmetries between the near-vision of the "lynx choruses" and the moment of vision-proper in Canto 81 highlight several central thematic tensions at play in *The Pisan Cantos*. The climactic vision in Canto 81 shifts away from the focus on the sensory order, central to both the "lynx choruses" and the larger narrative of *The Pisan Cantos*, emphasizing instead the moment of full synthesis of the (ostensibly independent) acts of seeing and thinking. Corresponding to the faculties of the senses and the mind respectively, "seeing" and "knowing" are subsumed under a joint dispensation of "*Eidos*". Importantly, this verb-noun signifies not only "seeing" and "knowing" (as Terrell points out), but also "shape, form, essence or type," thus gesturing towards the philosophical concept at the heart of both Plato's theory of

forms and Aristotle's theory of universals.[91] Situated in the center of the experience of vision in Canto 81, "*eidσs*" [92]provides the fundamental hermeneutic key to the narrative of *The Pisan Cantos* and constitutes the pivotal moment of the poem as a narrative whole, binding the extrasensory and sensory dimensions of experience. In doing so it parallels the moments of transcendent vision in *Trilogy* and *In Parenthesis*, and illustrates one of the principle interpretive constructs of this study.

The moment of *eidos*—understood broadly in its semantic, grammatical, etymological and philosophical dimensions—subsumes the larger narrative arc of both the culminating scene in Canto 81 and *The Pisan Cantos* as a whole. The consistent temporal framework of the climactic scene (past tense) corresponds to the grammatical form of the verb *eidos*, suggesting the ways in which the experience and its poetic expression are directly and organically bound.[93] By resorting to the past narrative tense mirroring the only available grammatical form of *eidos* as a verb, the poet positions the experience of vision (unlike the earlier "lynx choruses" narrated in the present tense) as one which the speaker has already had. To understand or comprehend such an experience, the poet seems to suggest, is to have had it. Such consistent temporal structure of the climactic scene also gestures towards the central narrative thread of the poem as an extended and intentional act of memory and recollection. In this way, *eidos* becomes a "precise definition"

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[91] Carroll Terrell in his indispensable *Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound* additionally draws attention to Pound's interest in the pre-Socratics, another of the possible sources for the poet's use of the concept. (453)

[92] The verb's present tense is unknown, but is found only in εἶδον, the aorist principal part of ὁράω "I see", and οἶδα "I know," a verb of Proto-Indo-European origin [from **weyd-* ("to see")]. Jean-Michel Rabaté draws attention to "the relatively strange orthography of *eidos: eidos* is grammatically a noun in Pound's sentence, but he spells it with an omega, which dissociates it from the normal form with an omicron (*o*), meaning form, vision, beauty. We have therefore moved away from the Platonic *eidos*" towards "a participle meaning aware, knowing" (167).

[93] Ronald Bush rightly reminds us that the *Cantos* strive for a "synthesis of two apparently disparate classical systems—Aristotle's rigorous definition of substance, matter and form, and the Neoplatonists' understanding of the emanation and return of divine intelligence, or *nous*" ("Pisa" 262).

(*The Pisan Cantos* 445) of the experience extending beyond the climactic moment of Canto 81. The multimodality of *eidos* suggests an intimate relationship between experience and language; it is the language itself that directs attention towards an experience of reality as its original source. The complex etymological, semantic and grammatical structure of *eidos* fundamentally affects both the narrative structure of the scene of vision-proper as well as that of the entire poem.

Eidos not only as a multi-layered linguistic unit, but also as a concept defining a type of perception—both "seeing" and "knowing"— is situated at the center of the climactic scene, subsuming and integrating the mental and internal life of the speaker with the experience of the senses. It finds its conceptual counterpart in "*atasal*" (479), the concept which originates in Pound's interest in the mystical tradition and defines a state of perfect union with the divine (Terrell 396: 117). Thus, it is as if "*eidos*" and "*atasal*" address the same reality from different vantage points. Respectively, they suggest a type of perception and a state (perhaps enabled by such an act of perception), in which the full knowledge of the "thing itself"–via a mutual *interpenetration* of subject and object, beyond appearances and into the essence—is possible. However, the two concepts also expose the complicated subject-object dynamic at the heart of *The Pisan Cantos*.

Signaling the state closest to mystical interpenetration of subject and object, fully possible in the ideal of *atasal*, the moments of heightened sensory awareness mark a proximity of such a mystical, visionary union. In the moments of nearly but "not yet *atasal*," intensified sensory experiences frame and signal the possibility and proximity of a full mystical union: "tangibility by no means *atasal* / but the crystal can be weighed in the hand / formal and passing within the sphere" (479). Yet, such moments of heightened sensory awareness, paradoxically,

also mark the separation of the subject (the speaker's self) from a divine object of such a union. One the one hand, the senses announce the nearness of *atasal*; on the other hand, they insistently highlight the degree of separation of the self from an object of visionary experience and draw attention to the distinct and separate identities of the subject and the object of the experience. In this way, the first-person embodied consciousness is, paradoxically, both essential to achieving such a state of union and preventing it from being carried out in full. Similarly, *eidos* as the type of perception in which human consciousness—through mind and senses simultaneously "seeing" and "knowing"—recognizes the fundamental nature of the object, cannot be abstracted from the first-person embodied perception. The emphasis on such a subjective and embodied moment of perception in the climactic scene of *The Pisan Cantos* serves to highlight the subject-object dynamics as the central conceptual axis of the poem.

In *The Pisan Cantos*, the principle of Pound's poetics and his theory of experience—the "direct treatment of a thing, whether subjective or objective" ("A Retrospect")—is most fully realized thanks to such particular, synthetic and phenomenological, acts of individual perception. However, the broader narrative of the *Cantos*, in general, and *The Pisan Cantos*, in particular, is also fundamentally preoccupied with the issue of the possibilities and the limitations of such a first-person embodied (thus, by definition, subjective) perspective. "Periplum,"[94] the concept defined by Pound in Canto 59 as "not as land looks on a map / But as sea board seen by men sailing" (324), best captures the notion of a dynamic subject-object relationship as conceived from the midst of experience. In the opening stanzas of *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound returns to this central concept to emphasize the existential situatedness of the speaker. *Periplum* as a concept—

[94] See also: "the great periplum brings in stars to our shore" (*Cantos* 445), or quoted in Terrell from Pound's *ABC of Reading*: "Pound said that the geography of the *Odyssey* 'is correct geography; not as you would find it if you had a geography book and a map, but as it would be in 'periplum,' that is, as a coasting sailor would find it." (362)

the shorthand for a subject-object relationship and the only available lens through which reality can be apprehended—combines the idea of the first person, embodied perspective with an image of the world enabled by it. Not unlike the concepts of *eidos* and *atasal*, it also implies both an object of experience and a type of dynamic perception through which such experience becomes possible for the subject.

However, such dynamic understanding of perception, expressed through the concept of *periplum*, illuminates yet another point of dramatic tension in *The Pisan Cantos*. In the late Canto 116, Pound writes: "some climbing / before the take-off, / to "see again," / the verb is "see," not "walk on" / i.e. it coheres all right / even if my notes do not cohere" (816-7). The poet contrasts two verbs: "to see" and "to walk on," as a way of separating two constitutive elements of *periplum*, which we have previously simply defined as a dynamic and forward oriented act of seeing. Through the juxtaposition between "to see" and "to walk on," the desire to act (or move forward, as the sailors evoked in the opening image of the *Cantos* do) is situated in counter-distinction to the activity expressed by means of the verb "to see." Later *Cantos* offer more evidence of such separation and Pound concludes the *Cantos* by reinforcing the opposition between the two: "Do not move / Let the wind speak / that is paradise" (notes for Canto 117, 822)[95]. This eventual separation of the two activities foregrounds the centrality of the issue of perception for Pound's epic project as a whole.

[95] Interestingly, here the poet entirely reverses his earlier position, expressed in "Vorticism," where he distinguishes between two types of men (and artistic "temperaments"): "There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man: firstly you may think of him as that towards which perception moves, as the toy of the circumstance, as the plastic substance receiving impressions; secondly, you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as conceiving instead of merely reflecting and observing. One does not claim that one way is better than the other, one notes the diversity of temperament. The two camps always exist." (287) Pound's purpose is to classify the movements of the European avant-garde and situate Vorticism in opposition to Futurism with which it has been falsely grouped. For Pound, futurism (along with impressionism) represents the first type of "temperament" while expressionism, neo-cubism and Vorticism-Imagism belong to the latter.

Obviously, such conclusion of Pound's the *Cantos* remains in a stark contrast with its opening. In the initial stanzas of Canto 1 the allusion to the *Odyssey* directly engages the *topos* of journey forward as central to epic tradition, simultaneously delineating the fundamental spatio-temporal thrust of Pound's narrative: "And then went down to the ship, / Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and / We set up mast and sail on" (3). The allusion to the *Odyssey* and the many references to the Western epic tradition to follow identify both the Homeric and Dantean epics as central subtexts for Pound's work, as well as its formal and structural foils. Such foregrounding of the issues of action and the quest of a hero, as expected thematic foci of an epic poem, helps to highlight the immediate existential and socio-political situatedness of the speaker of *The Pisan Cantos*.

The image of Mussolini's "twice-hanged" body—one of numerous powerful evocations of the reality of war—opens *The Pisan Cantos* and signals the ways in which the war and its violence are deeply woven into the fabric of this section of the *Cantos*. The poet's disastrous personal quest, his physical immobilization (sharply juxtaposed with the dynamism of an epic quest narrative), the bankruptcy of his political ideals and the scale of destruction brought by the war provide more than a secondary context for the work. Instead, the war is intimately intertwined with both thematic and formal considerations of Pound's poem as a neo-epic poem.

Ortega Y Gasset in his *Meditations on Quixote* argued that the epic "is not the name of a poetic form but of a basic poetic content which reaches fulfillment in the process of its expansion or manifestation" (113). Indeed, the original state of the world in which the hero of the *Odyssey* finds himself parallels, in striking and numerous ways, the reality of the speaker of *The Pisan Cantos*. Drawing on the narrative of the *Odyssey* as "the epic of the displaced person" (Steiner in Hoyle 62), Pound recasts his own *The Pisan Cantos* as a narrative of the world in transition,

while suggesting that the formal structure of his poetic work stems from the type of experience at its heart. By progressively shifting away from the consideration of action[96] and quest as traditionally central to the epic form and grounding his narrative in static perception and description—the processes which culminate in the moment of vision of Canto 81—Pound proposes a new type of epic, visionary realism, central to the project of *The Pisan Cantos*.

In Pound's modernist neo-epic, the problem of the transcendent object may not be abstracted from the considerations of the subjective mode of perception. Encountered through an integrated act of seeing / knowing, the object of transcendent vision becomes the reciprocating actor of a subject-object dynamic relationship, both looking and looked at. In fact, it is only through and within the constraints of such a moment of perception that the visionary experience may take place at all. Such transcendent "vision," understood as a type of subject-object relationship engaging both sensory and extra-sensory faculties of the speaker, provokes the radical shift in the narrative away from the question of dynamic expression, characterizing Pound's early work, towards the phenomenological description of "what appears." The poetic moment of transcendent vision enables and enacts integration of the previously dissociated elements of experience while drawing attention to the subject-object relationship as the central axis along which the experience of transcendent vision in the modernist neo-epic takes place. More broadly, however, the investigation of the constraints and possibilities of the first person embodied perception organizes the thematic and formal structure of Pound's war neo-epic. The form of *The Pisan Cantos*, as a way of exploration of the sensory and extra-sensory dimensions

[96] Leon Surette in *A Light from Eleusis: A Study of Ezra Pound's* Cantos, similarly argued that Pound's epic shifts away from the consideration of heroic action towards the consideration of civilizational transition: "Although epic is most commonly defined in terms of some hero, some representative of public virtues, or some heroic action, it would be more accurate to define it in terms of its concern with the fate of the cities, or human communities. The heroic action, after all, is not so much one that is peculiarly arduous, or that requires rare qualities or skills, as it is an action affecting all men." (119)

of experience, needs to be conceived in ontological (as Ortega Y Gasset suggests), rather than formalist terms; in the case of *The Pisan Cantos* the question of literary genre becomes, in fact, the question of ontology.[97]

In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which Pound's poetic and theoretical work, prior to *The Pisan Cantos,* originates and exposes thematic tensions at the heart of Pound's neo-epic. After Akiko Miyake[98], I take *The Spirit of Romance* and *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound's two most comprehensive and explicit expressions of his theory of vision, to be deeply connected. Consequently, these two works constitute conceptual and chronological bookends of this chapter. I will also draw on the later *Cantos* and some of Pound's early poetic and theoretical work in order to contextualize the argument of this chapter about the nature and function of vision in *The Pisan Cantos*.

I will consider Pound's theoretical work prior to *The Pisan Cantos,* where he fully investigates the subject of possibilities and limitations of embodied perception, as documenting the progressive evolution of his thinking towards the new mode of description of what appears. In particular, Pound's writing on the ontology of a work of art and his writing on the subject of literary realism anticipate in important ways the visionary realism of *The Pisan Cantos*. This

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[97] For a recent discussion of the "epic" as an ontological category see for example Louise Cowan's excellent and comprehensive overview, "Epic as Cosmopoesis" in *The Epic Cosmos*.

[98] In *Ezra Pound and the Mysteries of Love: A Plan for* The Cantos, Miyake observed:

> Readers of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* may be surprised to learn that, as early as 1840, Gabriele Rossetti had written five volumes of his *Il mister dell'amor platonico del medio evo*, which argued that the Provencal troubadours and the Italian poets of *dolce stil nuovo* inherited their concepts of mystical love from the Greek Elusinian Mysteries. Pound joined precisely these two themes of the Elusinian Mysteries and of Provencal and Italian poetry for the fundamental texture of *The Cantos*, interweaving into this texture his views on history and political economy. … We recall at once Eliot's famous question in 1928, "What does Mr. Pound believe?" and Pound's answer, "I believe that a light from Elusius persisted throughout the middle ages and set beauty in the song of Provence and of Italy" ("Credo" 1930, SP 53). (1)

In *The Spirit of Romance* and his later work, Pound indeed considered these two traditions to be a part of the same spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic current.

earlier theoretical work illuminates isolated aspects of Pound's later, synthetic theory of visionary experience as enacted within the constraints of a subject-object relationship.

Religion of *The Pisan Cantos*

Peter Liebregts suggests that Pound, having completed the Chinese and Adams Cantos:

> [F]elt that there now remained only one 'final volume to be done.' He had dealt adequately with 'dead matter and negations' as well as economics, and although he would still 'have to go condensing and restating,' he now was 'definitely onto questions of BELIEF' and 'Positive statements' (SL, 328). A letter to T.S. Eliot of 29 September 1929 demonstrates how in this regard Pound continued to model his epic on Dante's Commedia: 'There shd. Be about 100 cantos in all. The latter 29 will come slow as it is roughly the paradise. Having wiped up history I shall move on to philosophy and outline the kind of religion a healthy man can BELIEVE.' (249)

Reinforcing the sense that Dante's epic constitutes a central subtext for *The Pisan Cantos*, the critic reminds us that the spiritual and philosophical system underlying Pound's "paradise" *Cantos* is a highly curated and diverse collage of traditions, carefully constructed by the poet for a selected few "healthy" men.

While the original project of *The Pisan Cantos*, as conceived by Pound before the outbreak of the Second World War, inevitably undergoes some serious conceptual revisions, the work retains the stamp of its original theological and philosophical syncretism. In this way, *The Pisan Cantos* constitute a challenge to the recent critical work attempting to develop a stable discourse about the relationship of Anglo-American modernism and religion or about the modernist "religious experience." *The Pisan Cantos* demands instead a more precise definition

of the concept of "religion." The poem also insistently challenges the causal power of any conventionalized or codified religious ritual (including the one instituted and enacted by the speaker of the poem himself) as a means of evoking visionary experience. In fact, Pound's understanding of the visionary and its vital context resists being subsumed under the dispensation of a single, coherent religious system. Drawing on elements germane to mythology, ritual and symbolism of several religious traditions, Pound undeniably attempts to realize his original project by identifying the essential and non-essential elements of a "sane man's" religion. However, he rejects any one of them as a fundamental framework for the speaker's quest for vision transcending the material world. Instead, in Canto 81 the speaker of *The Pisan Cantos* resorts to the language of philosophy (*eidos*), rather than theology, to describe the act of perception of a "thing itself" through a union between man's sensory and extra-sensory faculties. Pound's insistence on the fundamental "sanity" of the system of *The Pisan Cantos* and his reliance on the language of philosophy suggest his belief in such philosophical language (and, more importantly, the philosophical, rather than theological conceptual framework) as more nuanced and wide-ranging. Such a framework grounds the speaker's quest for transcendent vision primarily in the realm of philosophical rationality, while shifting attention away from the issue of personal belief or a subjective "religious experience."

Mind and Senses in Pound's Work

"Dissociation of sensibility," a central concept of some Anglo-American modernist criticism, was famously articulated in Eliot's 1921 essay "The Metaphysical Poets." Subsequently, Allen Austin characterized Eliot's poetic goal as the re-integration of dissociated aspects of experience involving "not only the integration of sensation and idea…but also a special kind of thought—a detached intellectuality combined with passion" ("T. S. Eliot's

Theory of Dissociation" 3).[99] Pound largely embraces Eliot's diagnosis of the modern condition (in poetry, but not only) and, similarly, attempts to overcome it. Not unlike T.S. Eliot, Pound also seeks to pinpoint a broader cultural malaise by drawing attention to the distance between discourses of sense perception and those of empirical sciences. However, while both Pound and Eliot highlight the fundamental divorce of thought and feeling, the human mind and the senses, as endemic to the experience of a modern poet, Eliot focuses more on the direct experience of *thought*, while Pound foregrounds the "direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective" ("A Retrospect" 252).[100]

Pound's diagnosis of the fundamentally modern experience, analogous to Eliot's formulation about the "dissociation of sensibility," inscribes itself into a broader philosophical debate of the time. For example, Pound's reflection on the relationship between the contingent (a spatio-temporally situated experience) and the essential (or idea) aspects of any object, parallels, in crucial ways, Edmund Husserl's philosophical formulations. Pound's early intuition about the fundamental complexity of a poetic image, which later also contributes to his reflection on *eidos* in the moment of transcendent vision in *Canto 81*, resonates with Husserl's early articulation of the phenomenological method. Husserl posited that each individual object is a contingent reality, yet it also owns an essence, or as Husserl said, "a pure" *eidos*. [101] In this context, Joseph M. Bocheński has shown that that for Husserl the "ultimate, legitimate source of all rational statements is seeing" or "that prime consciousness which presents the given immediately"

[99] Eliot argues that Tennyson and Browning are "poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose." While Eliot reads the integration of thought and emotion *through* the metaphor of the sensory, Pound in his doctrine of an Image seeks to integrate the discourses of interiority and exteriority, the senses and mental life, a feeling and an actual object.

[100] The essay was first published in *Poetry* in March 1913.

[101] See Husserl's *Logical Investigations 1*.

(133).[102] However, Husserl also criticized the errors of the positivist equation of vision only with sensible or visual perception.

Similarly, Henri Bergson insisted that nineteenth-century scientism and positivism—two reductionist and dominant intellectual currents—presented a new metaphysics for the ignorant, under a mask of science.[103] Pound, who throughout his poetic career remained a committed rationalist and rejected the metaphysical irrationalism of Bergson,[104] certainly shared the philosopher's diagnosis of the conceptual limitations, but also expansionism, of nineteenth-century scientism. He also rejects what he calls the "tyranny of affects".[105] Consequently, launching his critique of radical empiricism and psychologism, Pound argues that the rejection of both is a necessary prerequisite for the type of perception at the heart of his poetics. For Pound, both the essential and the contingent aspects of an object (as well as both its material and immaterial dimensions), contribute to its status as "real" because known directly ("Vorticism" 283).

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[102] Husserl argues that "[i]mmediate 'seeing,' not merely sensuous, experiential seeing, but seeing in the universal sense as an originally presenting consciousness of any kind whatever, is the ultimate legitimizing source of all rational assertions" (*Ideas* 36).

[103] For more details on the subject of Bergson and, more generally, the reaction of late nineteenth-century French thought to positivism see, for instance, Mario De Caro's "Beyond Scientism" in *New Perspectives on Pragmatism and Analytic Philosophy*.

[104] See, for instance, the correspondence of Wyndham Lewis and Pound in *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*.

[105] Pound writes:

> Borrowing a terminology from Spinoza, we might say: The function of an art is to free the intellect from the tyranny of the affects, or, leaning on terms, neither technical nor metaphysical: the function of an art is to strengthen the perceptive faculties and free them from encumbrance, such encumbrances, for instance, as set moods, set ideas, conventions; from the results of experience which is common but unnecessary, experience induced by the stupidity of the experiencer and not by inevitable laws of nature. ("The Wisdom of Poetry" 191)

Although Pound rejects the reductive positivist understanding of reality as merely a series of material facts, his early theories fail to fully transcend its methodological paradigm. In his reflection on the subject of vision in *The Spirit of Romance*[106] and his lecture "Psychology and Troubadours" (later incorporated into the second edition of *The Spirit of Romance*), Pound describes factors producing visionary experience from a decidedly materialist and naturalist vantage point. Pound constructs an image of a perfect society of "the servants of Amor" (204) in which vision abounds:

> Yet there is, in what I have called the 'natural course of events,' the exalted moment, the vision unsought, or at least vision gained without machination. Though the servants of Amor went pale and wept and suffered heat and cold, they came on nothing so apparently morbid as the 'dark night.' The electric current gives light where it meets resistance. I suggest that the living conditions of Provence gave the necessary restraint, produced the tension sufficient for the results, a tension unattainable under, let us say, the living conditions of imperial Rome. ("Psychology and Troubadours" 204-5)

The passage is a part of a longer lecture delivered to the theosophical *Quest* society founded by G.R. S. Mead,[107] an organization focusing on investigating vital connections between science and spiritual experience, and striving for a synthesis of natural sciences and mystical knowledge. This fact encourages an interpretation of Pound's naturalist images ("electric current", "living conditions of Provence") as more than just metaphors. Rather, these images

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[106] The visionary culture of Troubadours was the subject of *The Spirit of Romance*. "Psychology and Troubadours" Pound's lecture delivered to *The Quest Society* and published in 1912 issue of *The Quest* (Longenbach 22) as "Psychology and Troubadours" was added to the second, 1932 edition of the work.

[107] Pound returns to the period of his affiliation with Mead in *The Pisan Cantos*, for example in the opening Canto 74. For more on the subject of *The Quest Society* see, for example, the excellent and comprehensive *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, particularly the chapter "Culture and the Occult at the Fin de *Siècle*" by Alex Owen.

draw attention to both the metaphorical and the actual arrangement of the object world through which vision materializes and becomes possible. In this early text, the organization of purely material reality—"the electric current" meeting the proper type of "resistance"—is a necessary prerequisite for visionary experience, which is conceived here also as a result of the convergence of purely physical causes. Thus, Pound's description emphasizes the organic connections between earth and soul, landscape and vision.

Conversely, Pound's iteration of visionary experience in *The Pisan Cantos* abandons the materialist rhetoric of his early theory of vision. It retains, however, the early empiricist edge, now conceived in terms of a broader discourse of multi-sensory experience. The early stanzas of Canto 74, through the evocation of Ussel, return to the mythical land of troubadours, and, in this way, to some of the considerations of *The Spirit of Romance*. However, the simultaneous acknowledgement of the speaker's *periplum*—the existential vantage point of a prisoner outside Pisa, Italy—gives this reference to troubadour culture a decidedly different tone from that adopted in *The Spirit of Romance*. Although equally preoccupied with material reality as a condition for visionary experience, in Canto 74 the poet's perspective immediately transcends the spatio-temporal material setting of the scene:

> Butterflies, mint and Lesbia's sparrows,
> the voiceless with bumm drum and banners,
> and the ideogram of the guard roosts
> el triste pensier si volge
> ad Ussel. (448)

Instead, this carefully executed act of poetic recollection focuses on the ways in which the multiple elements of speaker's *periplum* coexist and reinforce one another. The complex and personal imagery of this passage exemplifies the shift in Pound's perspective and his new

understanding of the nature of an act of perception as subsuming both material objects and psychical facts.

All elements of the passage compose an "emotional complex" triggered by, yet immediately transcending, the spatio-temporal context of the scene. The visual-olfactory complex evoked in the first line should be associated with the specific situatedness of the speaker and must be taken literally. Yet, it also includes a veiled reference to the reality of vision (suggested by the symbolic dimension of the images of "butterflies" and "mint"). This first-person ordinary embodied experience (and a symbol at the same time) transports the speaker. Similarly, the memory of a particular geographic location ("el triste pensier si volge / ad Ussel") should be taken literally, as a reference to a particular geographic location, and as an allusion the land of the troubadours,[108] described by Pound in *The Spirit of Romance*. In this way, lines 1 and 5 frame the passage evoking the reality of vision by referencing the material context and sensations of the speaker. However, the direct reference to Ussel should also be viewed in another context; Ussel is one of the multiple 'lost' cities and places of the poet's youth, repeatedly recalled throughout *The Pisan Cantos*. Thus, the "sad thought" of the speaker returns to Ussel, but also subsumes Paris and London, the cities which suffered greatly in the Second World War and have proven equally instrumental in the formation of Pound's artistic sensibility. Such a reading is reinforced by the second line of the passage ("the ideogram of the moving army"); the image situates the passage in the immediate context of the Second World War.

[108] Details on the subject can be found in Pound's own account published as *A Walking Tour in Southern France: Ezra Pound among the Troubadours*, ed. Richard Sieburth.

Similarly, in the climactic scene in Canto 81, in which the moment of transcendent vision arrives accompanied by the sound of the "gentle murmur": "Ed ascoltando il leggier mormorio / there came new subtlety of eyes into my tent" (540), both sound and image are registered by the consciousness of the poet as initial, external conditions of the material reality. They also announce the approaching visionary experience. The sensory, image-sound complex received and analyzed by the speaker highlights the external character of such a vision, which "comes" (as the previous passage suggests, unannounced) to the speaker's tent, *accompanied* by a "gentle" murmur (rather than rhythmic drumming which Pound evokes repeatedly in the context of ritual or the "bumm drum" sounds of war). The multi-sensory character of the opening image highlights the received character of vision, yet it also draws attention away from the visual, central to Pound's earlier theory, as a primary empirical tool of ocular modernity, and its particular (and limited) vision of rationality and rational thought.

"Accurate reports" of Art

While both nominally and in actuality, Pound's theory of the poetic image and his early theory of vision remain preoccupied with the sense of sight[109] and with visuality, Pound's writings continuously suggest attempts of *integration* of various, dissociated aspects of

[109] Critics such as Daniel Tiffany, Rebecca Beadsley and Douglas Mao have drawn attention to the problematic role of the visual and the visible in Pound's work. While Beadsley argues for the broader philosophical considerations endemic to the visual culture of modernism as central for Pound's poetics and inseparable from its conceptual content, Mao calls Pound's Image "visually concrete" thus drawing attention to the natural movement of the poetic Image towards the reality of a solid, three-dimensional and, perhaps even, tactile thing. This suggests the expansion of the purely visual designation of the poetic Image. Tiffany, similarly, identifies the "misleading equation of Image and visuality—an equation that inhibits recognition of the reciprocal relations between artifactuality, perception and subjectivity in the discursive formation of the Image." (23) Tiffany correctly point out that "[c]ritical attention to Pound's writings on the subject of the Image almost invariably equates the Image with visuality and the origins of a particular strain of modern poetry dominated by the sense of sight. In addition, this critical history has been for the most part fixated on the nature of the Image as sign or representation, or preoccupied with a vague conception of "immediacy" that falls somewhere between the realms of perception and representation. (22)

experience, while retaining the rationalist and empiricist[110] edge characteristic for the total body of his work.[111] The goal is to arrive at a new, unified theory of art at once more precise, complex and spacious than the already existing ones.

Pound initially conceives of his own theory as, simultaneously, a more nuanced and multi-dimensional expression of a "scientific" theory of poetry, and a more precise iteration of Symbolism. In fact, he largely embraces poetic methods of Symbolism, speaking of his own Imagism as a "symbolism" "in its profounder sense" ("Vorticism" 281). In particular, he admires the evocative complexity of the poetics of Symbolism and its interest in a natural object. Yet, Pound also considers symbolist poetics to be too imprecise; he argues that Symbolism "degrade[s]" a symbol into "a sort of allusion, almost… [an] allegory," reduces the profundity of a symbol to a mere "word" ("Vorticism" 281) and, ultimately, forsakes its primary referent in a visible, material thing. For Pound himself the complex task of producing a multi-modal poetic image "which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" and provides a sense of "sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits" ("A Retrospect" 253) is rooted in a careful precision, heightened *consciousness* and the exactitude of

[110] Scott Hamilton in *Ezra Pound and the Symbolist Inheritance* correctly points out that throughout the course of his entire poetic career Pound remains an "empiricist." Yet, in his reading of *The Pisan Cantos* the critic considers idea and sense as existing independently in Pound's work. Thus, while correctly identifying two strands of thinking central to Pound's entire poetic career, the critic incorrectly attributes the atomization (endemic to Pound's early poetic theory) to *The Pisan Cantos*. In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound shows that the climactic act of perception *exposes* or *reveals* the idea and sense to be always already deeply unified. *The Pisan Cantos*, unlike Pound's earlier analytic-minded theory, enact the concept of a unified (and unifying) act of perception as resisting the atomization of experience.

[111] I take Pound's early theory to be accumulative in character. While "A Retrospect" and "Vorticism" are most often discussed as the fullest expressions of Imagism and Vorticism respectively, it seems necessary to consider his lesser known theoretical texts as illuminating the multi-dimensionality and evolution of Pound's theoretical ideas. Pound's frequent use of the same rhetoric and, often, the verbatim reiteration of ideas in these various, thematically often distant, essays speaks in favor of examining them as elements of the same larger theory, in constant conversation with one another.

the poet. According to Pound, this approach is analogous to the spirit in which a scientist approaches her own subject matter.

Pound's theorizations of both Imagism and Vorticism attempt to translate that precision available to the methodologies of science into the art of poetry. Yet, they also reveal the poet's commitment to such poetic "empiricism" to be quite complicated. For example, in his 1912 essay "The Wisdom of Poetry," Pound argues against "the scientists" of poetry (those who reduce a literary work of art to a set of scientific principles) and the conceptual reduction to which their paradigm subjects the object of their study. Pound rejects the narrowness of such a "scientific" attitude, while embracing the precision and rationalism fundamental to it:

> [O]ur scientist shows himself incapable of distinguishing between poetry and a sort of florid rhetorical bombast, but the definitions quoted … betray rather his confused mode of thought and his nescience of the very nature of the definition. I shall assume that any definition to be 'scientific' or 'satisfactory' should have at least four parts; it should define with regard to purpose or function; to relation; to substance; to properties. (191)

Simply put, a narrow "scientific" approach is unable to distinguish between the art of poetry and a flowery rhetoric; seeking extreme precision and exactitude, it paradoxically fails to account for the differences between poetry and (in Pound's view) its exact antithesis. Importantly, however, Pound does not seek to overthrow this "scientific" paradigm—simply to nuance and expand it.

While Pound's early theory draws attention to the representational complexity and clarity of the mental and emotional experiences of a subject, the poet certainly does not by-pass the issue of sense perception. Pound's own declaration that precision is, in fact, a very "touchstone" of every art ("The Serious Artist" 241) should be understood in broad terms, as it refers to the

mental as well as the sensory experiences of both an artist and an audience. The poet insists that the scientific precision and accuracy of a poetic language must be bound to a similar precision in perception.[112] By foregrounding the broadly conceived issues of "consciousness" (particularly in "Vorticism"), Pound escapes from the narrow empiricist approach to sense experience. At the same time, by emphasizing precision, he also departs from the "metonymic" and "associative" ("Vorticism" 281) discourses of Symbolism and its reliance on synaesthesia.[113]

Critics[114] who discuss Pound's relationship to Symbolism often do not pay much attention to the discourse on sensory experience which Pound develops throughout his reflection on the movement. Yet, Pound's theory stands clearly in opposition to the symbolist destabilization of the self[115] and its verbal alchemy founded on the synaesthetic transference of sensory impressions and the giving up of the precise designation of a thing by a word. While symbolist techniques embrace a slippage between a word and a thing as welcome and creatively

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[112] In his essay, "The Serious Artist," Pound considers the fields of science and arts as related, and methodologically akin, disciplines: "The arts give us a great percentage of the lasting and unassailable data regarding the nature of man, of immaterial man, of man considered as a sentient and thinking creature. They begin where the science of medicine leaves off or rather they overlap with science. The borders of the two arts overcross." (234)

[113] Critics do acknowledge the legacy of (primarily, though not solely) French Symbolism, particularly Laforgue, as a formative influence on the theory of the poetic Image. For example, Leon Surette points out that Pound and H.D were influenced by Maurice Maeterlinck, whom both read in translation during their courting years. ("Ezra Pound and Richard Hovey" 93)

[114] Sieburth draws attention to the fact that particularly Remy de Gourmont's Symbolism constitutes an important subtext for considering Pound's theory of poetic Imagism: "Since the sensations are sequential, the language is sequential. Homer describes a fact, then compares it to another analogous fact: the two images always remain distinct, although they can be roughly superimposed… Homer is exact because of his inability to lie. He cannot lie: impressions strike him one by one, he describes them in succession, without confusion." A modern writer such as Flaubert, Sieburth continues, "whose general sensibility is excessively developed…"perceives the world not in literal, sequential fashion but rather in a more complex simultaneous metaphoric manner." (Gourmont in Sieburth *Instigations* 105)

[115] Richard Sieburth and Peter Nicholls draw attention to Pound's complicated relationship with the philosophical legacy of the French Symbolism. Nicholls points out that Pound embraced the "anecdotal" side of Rimbaud over his ecstatic and visionary perspectives expressed in "Drunken Boat" (28). Nicholls also argues that, in Symbolism (particularly Arthur Rimbaud's, but also Baudelaire's), the "disjunction between words and things no longer generates feelings of loss and anxiety but provides a sort of mandate for a creative destruction of the world…. Rimbaud seems determined to destroy the very axis of the self" (29) and relates it to his adoption of synaesthesia (30).

productive, for Pound the precise work of the senses fundamentally contributes to the notion of imagist[116] (later also vorticist) "accurate" art. Pound writes: "Don't mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possibly exceptions" ("A Retrospect" 257).

Conversely, a moment of perception central to the poetics of Imagism renders an original object clearly:

> I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that *a* sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk. ("A Retrospect" 259)

Pound's doctrine of a "visually concrete" (Mao) poetic image is predicated on the possibility of achieving a sense of clarity, in both intellectual and sensory terms, by means of an empiricist-like precision but without reducing the complexity of an object to a set of mere physical facts. Pound argues that the moment producing a poetic image is always characterized by an extreme clarity "a swiftness, almost a violence, and certainly a vividness" and always defies "elaboration" or "complication" ("The Serious Artist" 246).

Yet, Imagism's "permanent metaphor" ("Vorticism" 281) is also founded on the ability of the consciousness and the senses to discover a network of pre-existing relations. Pound's new poetic formula is a fundamentally relational one—it renders a natural, real world object (or a set of objects) as enveloped in a pre-existing, broad network of relationships.

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[116] Richard Sieburth argues that Pound's poetic techniques "involved "more than mere *ut pictura poesis*" and their "impulses lay much nearer to the exact visual immediacies of Homer than to the synaesthetic cohorts and elephants of Salammbô" (*Instigations* 105).

> The apt use of metaphor, arising, as it does, from a swift perception of relations, is the hall-mark of genius": thus says Aristotle. I use the term "comparison" to include metaphor, simile (which is a more leisurely expression of a kindred variety of thought), and the "language beyond metaphor," that is, the more compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception, such as antithesis suggested or implied in verbs and adjectives; for we find adjectives of two sorts, thus, adjectives of pure quality, as: white, cold, ancient; and adjectives which are comparative, as: lordly. Epithets may also be distinguished as epithets of primary and secondary apparition. By epithets of primary apparition I mean those which describe what is actually presented to the sense or vision. (*The Spirit of Romance* 158)

Pound's notion of a "language beyond metaphor"—a type of "compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception such as antithesis"—suggests the great evocative range and complexity of the poet's relational understanding of a poetic metaphor. Such a metaphor may even suggest a paradox (containing both a thesis and its "antithesis") in order to suggest a greater complexity of an object which escapes simpler evocative or descriptive phrases. Pound returns to this poetic technique in *The Pisan Cantos*, most emphatically in Canto 81, where in the moment of transcendent vision he "super-position[s]" ("Vorticism" 286) on one another several (ostensibly conflicting) meanings of *eidos*.

Although Pound views the process which initiates the poetic image as neither fully internal nor entirely outwardly directed, he increasingly draws attention to the importance of a careful observation of *external* relations existing within and between *objects themselves* rather than *a priori* relations existing in the mind of the observer. Pound's translation of "The Chinese Written

Character as a Medium for Poetry" includes Fenollosa's statement about a metaphor as a use of "material images to suggest immaterial relations":

> The whole delicate substance of speech is built upon a substrata of metaphor. Abstract terms, pressed by etymology, reveal their ancient roots still embedded in direct action. But the primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary *subjective* processes. They are possible only because they follow objective lines of relations in nature herself. (320)

The statement is footnoted by Pound with a line from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "Swift perception of relations, hallmark of genius" (n320 in Nadel), suggesting his recognition of a shared relational pattern in Fenollosa's philological rendition of Chinese ideograms and the ancient Greek text.

At the same time, Pound's sustained reflection on the value of material objects in the context of war sheds a new light on his doctrine of poetic precision. Perhaps most explicitly, Pound's observations about Chinese poetry, published in 1918, explore ethical implications of the form of "realism" he recognizes in several Chinese poems, particularly in the Chinese poem about the Mongol attack on China. Pound's reading of these works continues to emphasize the "precise" presentation of a thing as a fundamental prerequisite of any work of art. Now, however, Pound fully articulates an ethical dimension of such an intellectual and aesthetic precision.

Pound focuses particular attention on the works which he takes to be most explicitly "war poem[s]" ("Chinese Poetry" 299) and paramount examples of "a directness and realism such [as] we find only in early Saxon verse and in the Poema del Cid, and in Homer, or rather in what Homer would be if he wrote without epithet" ("Chinese Poetry" 299). The poet-translator is also

quick to qualify this clarity and "realism"; he points towards a new ethical dimension of his earlier claims that good art can "provide data for ethics" ("The Serious Artist" 235):

> There you have no mellifluous circumlocution, no sentimentalizing of men who have never seen a battlefield and who wouldn't fight if they had to. You have war, campaigning, as it has always been, tragedy, hardship, no illusions. There are two other fine war poems … one reputed to be by Bunno: a plodding of feet, soldiers living on fern-shoots, generals with outworn horses; another by Rihaku, supposedly spoken by sentinel watching over a long-ruined village. There are no walls, there are decaying bones, enduring desolation. ("Chinese Poetry" 300)

By emphasizing the ways in which these poems represent the actual physical hardships of the soldiers, the passage casts a new light on Pound's older theory by positioning it in a new existential and historical context.

Similarly, though treating the subject of war indirectly,[117] Pound's series of translations from Chinese, published in 1915 as *Cathay*, reflects on the reality of the Great War and its existential implications. Pound's observations about these "war poems" are not only strikingly revealing about the extent to which Pound conceives of *Cathay* as a book of war poetry in a "mask"; [118] they also highlight the role that the Great War as an experience and, more generally, war as a subject, have played in the "exteriorization"[119] of Pound's poetic sensibility. The poet's

[117] The book has been rightly categorized by critics such as Santanu Das as a collection of war poems.

[118] See Pound's *Gaudier-Brzeska. A Memoir*.

[119] Pound's initial observations about the "exteriorization of sensibility" are expressed in his pre-war essay about the culture of troubadours:

> The problem, in so far as it concerns Provence, is simply this: Did this 'chivalric love,' this exotic, take on mediumistic properties? Stimulated by the color or quality of emotion did that 'color' take forms

increasing and careful attention is directed towards the question of the value of the physical and the material, not simply as a way "to suggest immaterial relations" ("The Chinese Written Character" 320), but rather in and of itself.

In 1913 Pound wrote:

> Bad art is inaccurate art. It is art that makes false reports. If a scientist falsifies a report either deliberately of through negligence we consider him as either a criminal or a bad scientist according to the enormity of his offence, and he is punished and despised accordingly.…
>
> If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, that or the other, of god if god exists, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, … then that artist lies.…His offence is of the same nature as the physician's and according to his position he is responsible for future oppressions and for future misconceptions. ("The Serious Artist" 235-6)

The imperative to be like a "physician" and render the external reality *as it is* (seen) is re-adapted to negotiate a new, actual and devastating experience—the Great War masked as and channeled through the substance of Chinese war poems. In the context of war, the question about the accuracy of an artist's reports about reality becomes an urgent ethical issue. Pound's earlier,

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interpretive of the divine order? Did it lead to an 'exteriorization of the sensibility,' and interpretation of cosmos by feeling? ("Psychology and Troubadours"202)

The context of war and the experience of translating the Chinese war poems modify those initial observations. In his reading of Chinese war poetry, Pound poses the issue of "exteriorization of sensibility" as an ethical dilemma, emerging out of the particular existential context of the Great War and relates it to the material world. He no longer views the material simply as a metaphor for "immaterial" and the more fundamental. Rather, he foregrounds the value of the material world in itself.

and more general, statements about ethical implications of "precise" art as "wholly a thing of virtue" are situated in the existential context of the First World War, in which such good, precise art can and does "[bear] a true witness" ("The Serious Artist" 237).

This new historical context also sheds light on Pound's lasting attitude towards symbolist imprecision and the aesthetics of synaesthesia. Seen now in the wider context of the historical development of Pound's theory, synaesthetic transference of sensory impressions and the deliberate destabilization of the relationship between the self and the object continue to contradict Pound's fundamental philosophical goals. Throughout *The Pisan Cantos* Pound repeatedly returns to the notion of a drug-induced "artificial paradise" of Baudelaire's *Les Paradis artificiels*, offering an insight into the lasting power and continued influence of Pound's early critique of the symbolist tradition on his epic work. In *The Pisan Cantos*, not only does Pound reject Baudelaire's idea of an artificially induced paradise; he also juxtaposes it with his own idea of an "Elysium." In the stanzas directly following the climactic moment of vision in Canto 81, the poet re-affirms the importance of the clarity of sense perception by situating the sensory experience of "Elysium" on a temporal continuum: "first came the seen, than the palpable / Elysium though it were in the halls of hell" (541). The speaker's own, non-artificial paradise ["Le Paradis n'est pas aritficiel" (458)], is announced and nearly accessible through the series of sensory impressions, carefully separated and enumerated, rather than synaesthetically transferred.

"Objectivity and again objectivity": Literary Realism and Pound's Theory of Genre

Reflection on the problem of perception is also germane to Pound's theory of literary genre. In particular, Pound's sustained interest in prose realism represented by Flaubert (earlier

Homer), and reinterpreted by Henry James and James Joyce,[120] allows him to situate his own poetic project in the broader tradition of "accurate art." However, Pound also radically departs[121] from this tradition of "fine" prose ("The Serious Artist" 247) of the previous century, the tradition that he initially wholeheartedly embraces.

In developing his theory of a literary genre, Pound emphasizes the specific structure of a moment of perception which is the origin of various forms of literary expression. In his 1912 essay, "The Serious Artist," Pound contrasts a series of poetic fragments from several poetic traditions with Flaubert's prose fragments to observe that the poetic fragments are all "perfect as fine prose is perfect" (247). However, Pound also contends they are "in some way different from the clear statements of the observer" (247). In this context, he draws attention to the subject–object dynamics, distinct for each genre: "[in] the verse something has come upon the intelligence, in the prose, the intelligence has found a subject for its observations. The poetic fact pre-exists" ("The Serious Artist" 247).[122] While the discursive praxis of the "fine prose"

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[120] Pound carefully separates the work of Henry James from the realism of James Joyce's work. According to Pound, in James's novels the author's consciousness completely infuses the represented world. Pound writes that "James (H.) speaks with his own so beautiful voice, even sometimes when his creations should be using *their* own." ("Paris Letter" 337). He continues to assert that "Laforgue's *Salomé* is the real criticism of Salammbô; Joyce and perhaps Henry James are critics of Flaubert" (338). In an earlier reflection on Joyce's *Portrait*, Pound argues that "James Joyce produces the nearest thing to Flaubertian prose that we have now in English" (331); the poet continues:

> Apart from Mr. Joyce's realism—the school-life, the life in the University, the family dinner with the discussion of Parnell depicted in the novel—apart from, or of a piece with, all this is the style, the actual writing: hard, clear-cut, with no waste of words, no bundling up of useless phrases, no filling in with pages of slosh.
>
> It is very important that there should be clear, unexaggerated, realistic literature. ("James Joyce, At Last the Novel Appears" 331-2)

[121] See his remarks about "realism" (182) in "The New Sculpture," published originally in 1914 in *The Egoist.*

[122] In "The Serious Artist," Pound argues that the words and "their sense must be such as fit the emotion. Or, from the other side, ideas, or fragments of ideas, the emotion and the concomitant emotions of this 'Intellectual and Emotional Complex' (for we have come to the intellectual and emotional complex) must be in harmony, they must form an organism, they must be an oak sprung from an acorn." (245)

foregrounds the sustained engagement of "the intellect" of a writer with the object world, the *instantaneity*, clarity, "almost violence" (246) of the poetic image is predicated on "that passionate simplicity which is beyond the precision of the intellect" ("The Serious Artist" 247). The poet's intelligence (Pound also refers to it as *consciousness*)[123] does not seek or originate a *thing*; it unexpectedly *encounters* it. Pound's theory emphasizes different modes of encounter of a thing—the "other"—with a writer's consciousness as a fundamental difference between poetry and prose.

However, Pound's sustained interest in the tradition of the realist "fine" prose represented by Flaubert, later reinterpreted by Henry James and James Joyce,[124] allows him to situate his own work in a broader tradition of literary realism, in a manner analogous to the ways in which his "empirically" accurate poetics of Image dialogues with the tradition of Symbolism.[125] The reflection on the social and "optical" regime central to the nineteenth-century realist novel which Martin Jay associates with "the stubborn persistence of a certain faith in the power of observation in the 'the literature of images'" (110) helps Pound to articulate his own visionary realism in a manner which absorbs the perceptual and representational precision of the tradition of realist prose, while nuancing and expanding its goals.

Already in his early poems, such as the 1912 "Portrait d'une Femme," Pound turns a critical eye on that tradition. In "Portrait" Pound explores the subject of realism by staging a complex relationship between the content, form and title of the poem, which simultaneously

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[123] See for example his essay "Vorticism."

[124] See more on the subject in Pound's "Paris Letter" or "James Joyce, At Last the Novel Appears" in Pound's *Early Writings,* ed. Ira Nadel.

[125] It must be noted that Pound rejects only certain aesthetic and intellectual tendencies of Symbolism. On the other hand, he also repeatedly expresses his admiration for Remy de Gourmont.

reference Henry James' novel and the medium of painting (more specifically, portraiture). Primarily, Pound's early poem explores the potential of the techniques of such a prose realism in the context of a lyric form.[126] On this occasion, Pound also articulates a series of questions about such realism's claims to "objectivity and again objectivity" (Pound, *Letters* 49). However, it is not until "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"[127] that Pound's reflection on the techniques of literary realism allows him to distinguish it sharply from the aesthetic and intellectual goals of his own poetic project.

Pound's long poem, which Whittier-Ferguson calls "a two-part suite of eighteen poems that is best read as an extended assessment of the state of modern letters in general and, with particular point, Pound's own poetic career up to 1920" (218), opens with a dual allusion to Flaubert and the *Odyssey*. This opening clearly points towards the genealogy of a "visual" realism previously elaborated by Pound—from the tradition of the Homeric epos all the way to the French prose of Stendhal and Flaubert. In his long poem, Pound situates such literary realism and its representation of reality –a "series of precise statements as to what was visible" (Pound in Sieburth *I* 248)[128]—as necessary in the development of the precise language of his poetry, but eventually casts it aside as "colorless" ("Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"137).

The opening allusion both introduces the epic theme and draws attention to some parallels between Flaubert's prose and Homeric epic:

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[126] Hugh Kenner suggested that Pound admired James's realism because James "made not stories but 'things,' and did not write them but 'did' them…. He was helped by conceiving that he did not tell but make: making objects, substantial as statues and heavy framed pictures are substantial." (27).

[127] Whittier-Ferguson argues that "Between 1920 and 1922, Pound has trouble progressing with his long poem but, for a variety of reasons, including the examples set by Eliot and Joyce, he begins a newly intense and fruitful period of work on the *Cantos* again in 1922." (218)

[128] See Pound-Joyce correspondence in Sieburth's *Instigations* (248).

His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials. (127)

Emphasizing the tension between material objects and the qualities they represent Pound introduces the theme of fragmentation. Aesthetic beauty and history are mediated through material objects, "hair" and inscriptions on "sun-dials." As a structural principle organizing the imagery of the poem, fragmentation also represents a malaise endemic to modern civilization.

The images of fragmentation are echoed in Pound's description of the Great War—his reflection on both its causes and consequences:

Died some, pro partia,
non "dulce" non "et décor"…
walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving [.] (130)

The poet continues the reflection in the following section:

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,
…….
For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books. (130)

Pound's striking image of soldiers who "walked *eye*-deep in hell" [emphasis mine] simultaneously zooms in on a *visual organ* and draws attention to the fragmentation of bodies during total war. Yet, this splintering and destruction of bodies and objects is not just the

consequence of the Great War; the following lines reveal that fragmentation is endemic to a broader cultural condition (the soldiers fought for "battered books").

Indeed, in "Siena Mi Fe" the images of fragmentation, previously situated by Pound in the context of the Great War and material destruction, resonate in his descriptions of the nineteenth-century cultural, scientific and spiritual milieu. The imagery of the poem repeatedly draws connections between these two historical moments.[129] The lyric "I" in "Siena Mi Fe" mocks Monsieur Verog— "the last scion of the / Senatorial families of Strasbourg" and one of the many peculiar characters populating the poem. In describing Verog, Pound evokes the phrase which echoes with the earlier characterization of Mauberley himself. Like Mauberley who is "out of key with his time" (125), Monsieur Verog is "out of step with the decade" (132); he desires to catalogue, systematize and, in this way, fragment. The lyric "I" mocks Verog's propensity to organize physical specimens of "the pickled fetuses and bottled bones" and his engagement in "perfecting the catalogue" (131-2). Not unlike Verog, Mauberley uses scientist's tools—"sieve" and "seismograph" (138)—to grasp reality by equating comprehension with empirical measurement and quantitative data. In drawing these parallels Pound appears also to turn a critical eye back on himself and his own earlier theoretical and philosophical "scientific" affinities.

In the following lines of "Siena Mi Fe," Pound suggests that the religious and *spiritual* life of the century is affected by the same malaise of fragmentation. The dissociation of the physical and the spiritual, the scientific and the experiential, is underscored by a deep-running confusion regarding the causes, sources and goals of a spiritual act. Pound first draws attention to

[129] See Modris Eksteins's *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* for a similar, contemporary historical argument about the causes of the Great War.

the process of fragmentation of bodies to which they are subjected by natural scientists: "the autopsy, privately performed-- / Tissue preserved" (132). Later, he also exposes the fundamental dissociation of the bodily and the spiritual and a deep-running confusion regarding goals and methods of ostensibly religious acts: "The pure mind / Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed" (132). The "pure mind" of the British converts into Roman Catholicism[130] of the previous century rises towards the wrong object (Cardinal Newman rather than god) by means of a physical substance and as a result of intoxication ("whiskey warmed"). Pound highlights the fundamental futility of these ostensibly religious but, in fact, purely hallucinatory acts. The image of these clueless converts also anticipates one of the central questions of *The Pisan Cantos* about the origins, actual status of the experience of transcendent vision, and its relation to the real. The episode also re-confirms Pound's rejection of a traditional, codified religion as a means of arriving at such an experience.

The closing section of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" re-articulates the problem of vision and previews the visionary imagery of *The Pisan Cantos*. In these scenes, the poet juxtaposes the labor of a maker-engraver with the mysterious, spontaneous final apparition of a face on an engraved medallion. The poet creates a sharp contrast between Mauberley's flat, two-dimensional "art in profile" and the final appearance of the medallion. The unique character of the final apparition is amplified by the detailed, rich description of the medallion ("honey-red", "amber", "gold-yellow"), in contrast to Mauberley own "colorless" work. Pound's use of active

[130] Pound references the wave of the turn of the century conversions to Roman Catholicism, widely credited by the historians of religion to the influence of Cardinal John Henry Newman. The phenomenon sometimes referred to as the "second spring" (after one of Newman's sermons) has been a subject of a number of historical studies. See for example the informative introduction to Adam Schwartz's *The Third Spring*.

verb forms ("sleek head emerges," "the eyes turn topaz") highlights the question about the original source of those actions.

Yet, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," by intricately weaving together various linguistic, visual and conceptual motifs, also anticipates the poetic (fugue) form of *The Pisan Cantos*. The formal structure of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" suggests a relationship between the two images: the opening allusion to the tradition of literary realism ("his Penelope was Flaubert") and the closing remarks on the two-dimensional, engraving-like (perhaps mass-produced) art in "profile." The two images delineate the discursive arc of the poem and constitute its bookends. Opening with the reflection on the epic and prose realist traditions, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" draws attention to the relationship between the scientist philosophy of the nineteenth century propounding the limited notions of objectivity (Verog episode) and its belief in the power of vision. He also links them to the dominant forms of aesthetic expressions (literary and visual[131]). This complex observation is enabled by the formal structure of the poem. By drawing analogies between the discourses of the literary and visual arts, Pound pointedly gestures towards his own interests in the tradition of literary realism. The image of Mauberley's own "art in profile" resonates all the way back to the opening reference to Flaubert and Homer and, retrospectively, invites its re-examination.

Not only in his long poem, but also in his later *Guide to Kulchur* Pound carefully re-examines the "realism" of the Homeric epos. [132] While Pound indeed opens the *Cantos* with an

[131] I discuss the subject of engraving at length in chapter 1. In particular, Merleau-Ponty's formulation about engraving and the culture of vision is relevant to Pound's reflection in the final sections of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." I also return to the subject in in my discussion of H.D.'s *Paint It Today* and Merleau-Ponty's notion of a "philosophy" of painting as a "metaphysic" in chapter two.

[132] Tim Redman and Maria Luisa Ardizzone have observed that it is Dante's *Commedia*, rather than the Homeric epic, that should be viewed as the main structural subtext of the *Cantos*. Indeed, *Guide to Kulchur* makes it clear why Pound chooses Dantean, rather than Homeric, epic as a model for his own "Paradise" Cantos.

allusion to the *Odyssey* and, consequently, adopts the topos of a journey as central to the Homeric epic, he also seems to put Homer's central philosophical tenets—particularly his philosophy of perception—into question. Pound increasingly suggests a thematic, rather than philosophical or structural, affinity of the *Cantos* with the *Odyssey*. In *Guide to Kulchur*, characterizing the world of Homer as "very human," the poet argues that the *Odyssey* is a "high water mark for the adventure story" (38). However, according to Pound, Homer's work lacks the sense of "communal responsibilities" or the sense of "coordination of the individual in a milieu" (38). It is also missing a sense of structured and recognizable morals which could be used as a ground for a just society (38). In this way, Pound both reveals his deep interest in the communal dimension of the epic and suggests many incompatibilities between the Homeric epic and his own poetic project.

Whittier-Ferguson has recently observed that the *Cantos* constitute Pound's "lifetime's consideration of the means by which and the conditions under which an epic might be written" (219).[133] Indeed, Pound constantly negotiates Dante's proto-imagism ("Vorticism" 283) and Homer's epic realism to fix his own position within the epic tradition. Auerbach has helpfully characterized Homer's realism as avoiding "subjectivistic - perspectivistic procedure" which creates "a foreground and the background, resulting in the present lying open to the depths of the past" (7). Instead, Homer's style "knows only a foreground, only a uniformly illuminated, uniformly objective present" (7). Importantly, Pound himself distinguishes between Dante and

[133] Whittier-Ferguson highlights the difficultly of offering a single interpretation of the poetic project of the *Cantos*. The critic argues that the poem is characterized by "the centrifugal form" and is, fundamentally, a "capacious works in-progress" (214).

Homer's epic projects as representing two distinct traditions of thinking about the visible and the *invisible*.[134]

Although opening with an allusion to the *Odyssey*, Pound's *The Pisan Cantos* pursue the original project of the "Paradise Cantos,"[135] influenced by the deep structure of Dante's *Comedy*.[136] Consequently, Pound's epic—its narrative structure and imagery—are informed by the medieval poet's careful valorization and arrangement of all compositional elements of his epic world and his understanding of the relationship between its visible and invisible elements. In the early work on the culture of the troubadours, Pound calls the *Divine Comedy* "a single elaborated metaphor of life" and "an accumulation of fine discriminations arranged in orderly sequence" ("Psychology and Troubadours" 196). Drawing a parallel between Dante's epic and his own modernist poetics, Pound's re-emphasizes the fundamental role of sensory accuracy, supreme precision of Dante's "vulgar tongue" and his masterful, coherent, construction of the relationship between the poetic fragment and the whole.

In this context, Pound also addresses the issue of representation and realism. He observes that the poet-narrator in Dante's *Commedia* insistently directs attention towards a subject-object relationship other than that between the narrator and the represented world:

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[134] Michael Tiffany observed that Pound's "modernist poetic Image is […] nonvisual, insofar as it resists contests, and mediates the experience of visuality, but also in its occupation with the invisible" (22).

[135] Ronald Bush cites the 1945 conversation of Pound with his daughter Mary in which the poet said that his desire for such a shape of the last third of the poem grew out of his struggle to edit and interpret Cavalcanti's "Donna mi prega" ("Pisa" 261). Maria Ardizzone has also helpfully observed that for Pound "Cavalcanti and Dante are two sides of the same coin in that they articulate complementary aspects of the culture of the Middle Ages: philosophy and science in Cavalcanti, theology in Dante" (*Guido Cavalcanti: The Other Middle Ages* 10).

[136] Pound calls Dante's *Paradiso* "the most wonderful *image*" ("Vorticism" 283).

> As Dante writes of the sunlight coming through the clouds from a hidden source and illuminating part of a field, long before the painters had depicted such effects of light and shade, so are later writers on the alert for color perceptions of a subtler sort, neither affirming them to be 'astral' or 'spiritual' nor denying the formulae of philosophy. ("The Wisdom of Poetry" 193)

In Dante's epic poem, the narrator's consciousness is carefully situated to mediate the relationship between the represented world and the (invisible, "hidden") source of light. Dante's strategy foregrounds the ways in which the visible gestures towards the invisible and the seen suggests the unseen and the mysterious. Conversely, in Flaubert's fiction "the words, objects, characters" must "speak for themselves" while their author, "like God in creation remains invisible, albeit omniscient, omnipresent" (Sieburth *Instigations* 109). Unlike in Dante's *Commedia*, in Flaubert's literary realism the consciousness of the author—the "invisible" omniscience—becomes the center of the work.

Modern Sculpture: Approaching "the infinite by form"

While Pound places a natural object in its rich experiential context at the heart of his imagist theory, his vorticist writing consistently stages the tension between the discourse of abstraction and representation. Reed Way Dasenbrock[137] revealingly argued that by using the style of abstraction Vorticism seeks to render the "essence [of an object], stripped of the clutter of detail" (70). Indeed, initially Pound seems to be interested in the "essence" of an object expressed by

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[137] Dasenbrock argues:

> Vorticism obeyed Worringer's urge to abstraction but its painting was representational. It held onto subject matter, and, as I will show, developed its own theory of representation…. The originality and importance of Vorticism lies in the fact that, among the movements that arrived at total abstraction, as it did in certain works, it was the first movement to stop short, to abandon painting's new evolutionary path, and retaining subject matter, to attempt fusion of the new abstract style with the old task of representation. (64-5)

means of the vorticist formal experiment. Increasingly, however, his attention shifts to consideration of the materiality of the medium of stone sculpture superimposed on the metaphysical or spiritual ambitions of sculptural form as an expression of a complex relationship among the absolute and the contingent, the material and the immaterial. In *The Pisan Cantos* Pound reiterates his complex theory of sculpture by insisting that "the stone know[s] the form which the carver imparts it, / the stone knows the form" (450); here, he positions an artist as the one whose act of creation is, in actuality, an act of recovery of an ur-quality—a latent essence of an object—by stripping away rather than *making* in any traditional sense.

While vorticist art articulates itself against simplified notions of a "realism" as preoccupied with "analogy," "likeness" or "mimicry" ("Blast" 152), the notion of "pure" form is seen by Pound as equally reductive. In his pre-vorticist writing, Pound positions sculpture as the most complete and accessible—one might say, democratic—expression of his ideas about form. Pound argues that "few of us are capable of forming any precise mental image of things [which are], in their particular way, more beautiful than this statue or this building" ("The Serious Artist" 237). More broadly, his theory of sculpture also resists the notion of sculptural form as a formation of a pure, isolated and refined intellect:

> People talk about "abstract sculpture" without realising the various degrees of abstraction which can obtain and have obtained in great sculpture. We will never have active sculptural criteria until more critics understand the extent to which a good sculptor "abstracts" form, takes form from natural objects, and puts it together again in his work. ("Gaudier: A Postscript 1934" 197)

In contrast to a pure mathematical ideality "free of space and time limits" which is "universal, existing in perfection, in freedom from space and time" ("Vorticism" 289), Pound is interested in the type of mathematical formula which compels material "form" into being.

Dasenbrock observes that Vorticism embraces the idea of "using abstraction to interpret the world" through "a synthesis of abstraction and representation, which will move beyond abstraction's formalism to a new dynamic conception of art's relation to the world" (68-9). Indeed, Pound argues:

> [I]n analytics we come upon a new way of dealing with form. It is in this way that art handles life. The difference between art and analytical geometry is of subject-matter only. Art is more interesting in proportion as life and the human consciousness are more complex and more interesting than forms and numbers. ("Vorticism" 289)

Pound's incremental, mathematical formula of the vorticist form—proceeding from algebra towards analytic geometry—illuminates his consistent desire for quantifiable "precision" and "value" ("Gaudier: A Postscript 1934" 195) in a work of art. Yet, based on a complex mathematical formula and rooted in *both* existing and newly "conceived" relations between objects, a vorticist work of art relies both on the artist's *ability to see clearly* and its power to *transform* perception. Pound remarks that as he "watched a friend's parrot outlined against a hard grey-silver twilight" this moment of perception helped him discover "a new detail or a new correlation with Mr. Epstein's stone birds. I saw anew that something masterful had been done" ("Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery" 183)**.** This short reflection foregrounds the mutual co-dependence between a work of art and the world, the perceptions of an artist and her audience.

Highlighting the fundamental ontological difference between pure mathematical abstraction and spatio-temporal entities, Pound's proposes that vorticist sculpture articulates a more "precise" form of realism[138] by representing a tension between the material and the immaterial, the ideal and the concrete. Pound emphasizes this central, immanent paradox of modern abstract sculpture. The physicality of stone as a material and the spiritual-minded gesture of its abstract form taken together embody an antithetical relationship between the finite and the infinite. In his short essay published in the autumn 1921 issue of *The Little Review*—a comparative study and an homage to Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Constantin Brancusi—Pound reflects on how Brancusi's sculptural work creates an impression of a gradual ascent towards pure ideality, always already frustrated as an attempt to materialize the abstract and non-material ideal in three-dimensional space.

Pound views Brancusi's formal experiment as a metaphysical statement—a desire to find an "elixir or philosopher's stone" by means of "the alchemical sublimation of the medium; the elimination of accidentals and imperfections" (212):

> If I say that Brancusi's ideal form should be equally interesting from all angles, this does not quite imply that one should stand an ideal temple on its head, but it probably implies a discontent with any combination of proportions which can't be conceived as beautiful even if, in the case of the temple, some earthquake should stand it up intact and

[138] While discussing the relation of art to reality in his commentary on a vorticist exhibition published in *The Egoist*, Pound suggests that Gaudier-Brzeska "is as much concerned with representing certain phases of animal life as is Epstein with presenting some austere permanence; some relation of life and yet outside it" gesturing towards a realm of Platonic ideas ("Exhibition at the Goupil Gallery" 182). In the same essay, he also argues that the works of Epstein represent "Mr. Epstein has taken count of all the facts. He is in the best sense realist" (183).

> end-ways or turned-turtle. Here I think the concept differs from Gaudier's, as indubitably the metaphysic of Brancusi is outside and unrelated to vorticist manners of thinking….
>
> In the case of the ovoid, I take it [that] Brancusi is meditating upon pure form free from all terrestrial gravitation; form as free in its own life as the form of the analytic geometers; and the measure of his success in this experiment (unfinished and probably unfinishable) is that from some angles at least the ovoid does come to life and appear ready to levitate. ("Brancusi" 213)

Brancusi's goal to produce a synthetic, "ideal" sculptural form which is "equally interesting from all angles" and capable of resisting a disaster is realized through a strenuous sculptural process resulting in a three-dimensional object extended in space. Such a work attempts to represent the relation between the ideal and the material not as dialectical, but rather as situated on a continuum. In the same essay, Pound also declares that his work approaches "the infinite by form" ("Brancusi" 214).[139]

Rejecting the notion of a work of art as a fetish, a cult object or a commodity, Pound challenges the idea that a sculptor's "vision" may be a product of an artificially or hypnotically induced state:

> Crystal-gazing?? No. Admitting the possibility of self-hypnosis by means of highly polished brass surfaces, the polish, from the sculptural point of view, results merely from a desire for greater precision of the form, it is also a transient glory. But the contemplation of form or of formal beauty leading to the infinite must be dissociated from the dazzle if crystal; there is a sort of relation, but there is a more important

[139] Originally published in *The Little Review* (Autumn 1921).

> divergence; with the crystal it is a hypnosis, or a contemplative fixation of thought, or an excitement of "the sub-conscious" or unconscious (whatever the devil they may be), and with the ideal form in marble, it is an approach to the infinite by form, by precisely the highest possible degree of consciousness of formal perfection; as free from accident as any of the philosophical demands of a "Paradiso" can make it. ("Brancusi" 213-4)

Here, Pound reiterates intelligibility, precision and conscious clarity as shared goals of vorticist art and Brancusi's sculpture alike. However, the above passage also reveals Pound's consideration of abstract form as deeply engaged not only in metaphysical or formal questions, but also in its own the existential (even immediately historical) context. Thus, in his 1921 essay, Pound, strikingly, views Brancusi's "impossible" sculpture which approaches "the infinite" in three-dimensional space in the context of a calamity—an "earthquake"—which such absolute form could potentially survive toppled or repositioned, yet, fundamentally, intact.

The antithesis of a hypnotic state and an irrational fixation, Brancusi's lucid work becomes for Pound the "one temple of quiet" in the post-war France. In his later notes on Brancusi's work, Pound again foregrounds the qualities of lucidity and luminosity of Brancusi's sculpture as a way of resistance against the chaos and disorder of the post-war world:

> There was one refuge of the eternal calm that is no longer in the Christian religion. There was one place where you cd. take your mind and have it sluiced clean….
>
> The white stillness of marble. The rough eternity of the tree trunks. No mystic shilly shally, no spooks, no god damn Celtic Twilight, no Freud, no Viennese complex, no attempt to cure disease of the age by pasting up pimple. And no god damn aesthetics,

> as the term is understood in Bloomsbury and similar cloacae. And oh, yes, yes, and very certainly NO CLOACAL OBSESSION. […]
>
> Had he got the synthesis of African sculpture, or the virtues or merits of African sculpture; nicely canned, potted, condensed and synthesized into.…
>
> I damn well think he has? But what of it. Did he stop there. No! Damn the African sculpture, full of fetishism, black magic, *chichi*. To hell. Was that any use to a man in 1923? [.] ("Brancusi and Human Sculpture" 307)

This rejection of irrationalism, the consistent trait of Pound's theory, here reiterated in the context of the destruction of the Great War, is used to re-evaluate some of the tenets of Pound's own early avant-garde allegiances, including his interest in the various mystical and occult traditions. Pound ultimately rejects what he takes to be their investment in the non-conscious and the irrational. In opposition to those tendencies, Brancusi's sculptural form is a product of conscious "contemplation" "by precisely the highest possible degree of consciousness of formal perfection" ("Brancusi" 214).

The Pisan Cantos

The theoretical principles and conceptual idiom which Pound introduces in his critical writings about sculpture become central to his articulation of the visionary realism of *The Pisan Cantos*. The image of a crystal reappears in *The Pisan Cantos* (as well as in the later Cantos); it is particularly prominent in Canto 76 where a "crystal" signifies both an ordinary material thing and a symbolic designation of vision to which the speaker of the poem is not yet granted full access: "tangibility by no means *atasal /* but the crystal can be weighed in the hand / formal and passing within the sphere" (479). The image of the physical object which is "weighed" and

touched confirms the role of the senses in ushering and enabling visionary experience. Pound's final Cantos return to the image of a crystal: "I have brought the great ball of crystal; / who can lift it? / Can you enter the great acorn of light?" (CXVI 815).

In these late stanzas, the poet re-articulates the tension between the acts of creation and perception, and highlights the distance between the first-person, embodied perspective and the absolute object. By resorting to verbs which signify embodied actions—"brought," "lift" and "enter"—Pound yet again illuminates the dramatic paradox of human physicality and the limitations of embodied, first person perception. In *The Pisan Cantos*, the embodied, sensory experience enables a state near to a mystical union ("tangibility not yet *atasal*"), yet prevents it from being carried out in full. In this late Canto (CXVI), the tension created between the three verbs allows the poet to re-iterate the complicated role of human physicality. While the speaker-poet "brought" the "ball of crystal" (the verb decidedly points to a physical, embodied act), he immediately questions the ability of anyone to "lift" it. Here Pound alludes to the divine omnipotence paradox addressed in the twelfth century by Averroës and Thomas Aquinas ("Can an omnipotent being create a stone so heavy that even he could not lift it?"). Pound does not allude to this philosophical riddle in order to position himself as a figure of a deity; in fact, he immediately explains: "And I am not a demigod, / I cannot make it cohere" (816). Rather, these lines gesture towards the central problem of *The Pisan Cantos* and the later *Cantos*—a visionary encounter of an embodied human subject with the absolute object.

The complicated nature of near-mystical experiences taking place along the subject-object axis is re-emphasized in the final, paradoxical, reference to the role of the human body in a mystical union. The object—"the great acorn of light"—can be seen and described; yet, it cannot, it seems, be fully "entered" by the "you." The image of an "acorn of light" certainly

constitutes an allusion to Neo-Platonic light philosophy.[140] Yet, it also paradoxically combines the imagery of a solid (ordinary acorn) and a non-solid (light), suggesting that a mystical union with the absolute object is not yet fully available to the first person embodied experience of either the "you" or the speaker. Mapped on Pound's emphasis on physical action—"brought," "lift" and "enter"— this image amplifies the tension between the spiritual and the physical. It also anticipates the final contrast staged by the poet—that between "to see" and to "walk on":

> and some climbing
>
> before the take-off,
>
> to "see again,"
>
> the verb is "see," not "walk on"
>
> i.e. it coheres all right
>
> even if my notes do not cohere. (816-7)

Separating two constitutive elements of *periplum*—first defined as a dynamic and forward-oriented act of seeing—Pound re-emphasizes the role of static, careful observation ("to see") over the dynamic action of a subject ("to walk on"). Retrospectively, this final contrast also sheds light on the function of the separation, rather than synaesthetic transference, of the various sensory impressions insistently highlighted by Pound in *The Pisan Cantos*. "Touch" as the sense of a direct contact with an object is related to, but distinct from, a more detached act of "seeing." Each sense, Pound seems to argue, provides a qualitatively different experience of a thing.[141]

Opening Canto 74 of *The Pisan Cantos* ushers in the problem of perception through the images of the tragic consequences of the misperception and misapprehension of reality.

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[140] See Peter Liebregts seminal *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism*, Ronald Bush's "La filosofica famiglia: Cavalcanti, Avicenna, and the "Form" of Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*" or Mark Byron's "Aristotelean Crescent."

[141] See Aristotle's *De Anima* and Susan Stewart's recent discussion of Aristotle's notion of sensory experience in "Remembering the Senses" for a broader context. Pound's emphasis on multi-sensory experience appears to confirm his lasting interest in Aristotelean philosophy.

Interweaving the stories of the speaker and another man, "Till," the poet draws attention to numerous parallels between them:

> and Till was hung yesterday
> for murder and rape with trimmings plus Cholkis
> plus mythology, thought he was Zeus ram or another one [.] (450)

The poet continues:

> OÝ TIΣ
> a man on whom the sun has gone down
> the ewe, he said had such a pretty look in her eyes;
> and the nymph of the Hogoromo came to me,
> as a corona of angels
> one day were clouds banked on Taishan
> or in glory of sunset [.] (450)

Till's war rape, an act of sexual violence which results in his execution, originates in his fundamental misperception of reality—Pound implies that Till hallucinates both the woman's consent and his own role in the experience (the woman had "such a pretty *look* in her eyes;" Till thinks he is the Greek god, Zeus). Yet, the speaker immediately interjects "and the nymph of the Hogoromo came to *me,* / as a corona of angels" [emphasis mine], similarly taking the apparition for a moment of vision.

In this way, Pound both draws attention to the tragic consequences of misperception and foregrounds the existential urgency of the issue of visionary experience; the image of the "nymph" anticipates the moment of transcendent vision in Canto 81 and the apparition of three pairs of female eyes in the speaker's tent. Canto 74 introduces the visionary theme by posing a series of questions about the nature of unusual perceptual experiences, such as Till's and the speaker's own: are all "subjective" visions simply hallucinations? What is their relationship to

the "objective"? What are their consequences? The central tension between an individual experience and the possibility that one's mind and senses may access something "objective" is amplified by the contrast between the intentions of the characters and the calamitous results of their actions. Finally, it is solidified by the closing lines of the scene: "Sunt lumina / that the drama is wholly subjective / the stone knowing the form which the carver imparts it / the stone knows the form" (450).[142] Here, the reference to sculptural form-- the "stone" which "knows the form," at the same time that the maker carves it— is offered as a counterbalance to the confusion of the experience of the first person embodied perception (of both Till and the speaker). It also positions sculptural form as a literary figure of the ideal.

Pound does not articulate the questions about the relationships of the real to the hallucinated in an existential vacuum. Emphatically, Till's was an act of a war rape for which he was court-martialed and already "hung yesterday" (450). These images resonate in the context of the Second World War, Italy's recent defeat, the death of Mussolini and the bankruptcy of Pound's own political ideals. The reality of the Second World War and the speaker's personal situation are intertwined in the allusion to Remarque's seminal First World War novel and its famously impersonal lines following the death of the protagonist: "im Westen nichts neues" ("nothing new on the Western Front") (446), again amplifying the contrast among the subjective and the objective, the greater social and historical forces and personal experiences. In this context, the poet refers to the rhetoric of the enemy politicians, contrasting it with the "whiteness" (445) and clarity of the natural world. These images of "whiteness" and clarity reverberate with the image of stone sculpture which "knows the form" (450) posing further questions about the merits,

[142] "Sunt lumina" (there are lights) is a statement of John Scottus Eriugena, a Neo-Platonist. Pound's passage goes from the abstract and transcendent ("light exists") to the "wholly subjective" to the paradoxical simultaneity of objective and subjective knowledge.

intentions and results of human actions. The interweaving of these several distinct yet related and periodically reiterated images and statements (critics refer to this structure by resorting to an analogy with a musical fugue; Pound in "Vorticism" calls these dynamic and related images "emotional *motif* [s]" [290]) illuminates the simultaneously personal and social, historically situated and a-historical aspects of the current military conflict. The image of "militarism progressing westward" (446) is dramatically juxtaposed with that of the flowing water "in diminutive poluphloisboios" (447) and "the stillness outlasting all wars" (447).

In Canto 74, the speaker identifies himself first with the character from the *Odyssey*, OΫ́ TIΣ, "I am noman, my name is noman" (446), and then with the god Wanjina, a maker and a speaker, whose father removed his mouth "because he made too many things" (447). An ability to speak as a basic right and obligation of a poet is contrasted by Pound with more fundamental, searching questions about an artist's role in the world: "what whiteness will you add to this whiteness, / what candor?" (445). The process of adding objects to the world, "making things" (447) parallels the noise and clutter of political speeches and is, in fact, antithetical to a sculptor's work, which involves *recovering* the "essence [of an object], stripped of the clutter of detail" (Dasenbrock 70) and removing any such "clutter."

Critics[143] have often discussed Pound's sustained interest in sculpture and architecture as the fullest practical applications of his ideas of beauty and order. Recently, Ronald Bush has also drawn attention to the fact that *The Pisan Cantos* were fundamentally inspired by the reports of the destruction of Italian art and architecture during the Allied bombings; Bush tells us that Pound read those reports while drafting the poem (262-3). Indeed, the opening Canto 74 recalls

[143] On Pound's understanding of the relationship between architecture and ethics see for example Stephen Kite's "Architecture as *Virtù*: Adrian Stokes, Ezra Pound and the Ethics of 'Patterned Energy'."

"a precise definition / transmitted thus Sigisimundo / thus Duccio, thus Zuan Bellin, or trastevere with La Sposa / Sponsa Christi in mosaic till our time" (445). We learn from Terrell that Pound ascribed great importance to this *particular* mosaic and remarked in 1942 that it "recall[ed] a wisdom lost by scholasticism, an understanding denied to Aquinas" (Terrell 363). Yet, the poet also positions this specific mosaic as an exemplification of many similar objects being irretrievably destroyed. In the same manner, the poet references a number of vorticist art works—similarly irreplaceable, unique, destroyed or lost.[144] The references to these objects ground the poem in the immediate historical context of the current military conflict and, simultaneously, suggest the role of those art works as material expressions and "precise definition[s]" (*The Pisan Cantos* 445) of the absolute ideal.

Pound's insistent references to these objects enable the notions of memory and history, the past and the present, to coalesce on a single temporal plane in *The Pisan Cantos*. Transcending distinctions between the absolute epic past and contemporaneity as a domain of history and epistemology (such as offered in the influential account of Bakhtin), Pound challenges the strict dualism of such a temporal frame. The references to London and Vorticism help him draw parallels between the Great War and the Second World War, but also, more broadly, establish a connection between all past and current wars. In *The Pisan Cantos*, all these time frames intersect and equally weigh on the temporal framework of Pound's epic poem. However, it is the condition of the present, rather than the rich history of these art objects, which interests Pound the most.

[144] The Great War took a great toll on Vorticism; the majority of all vorticist works was destroyed or irreplaceably lost (Antliff)

The annihilation of the ancient mosaics and modern sculptures—unique and irreplaceable objects which the poet held dear—without regard for their value, provokes the poet to rethink the realism-idealism question. Critics such as James Longenbach, Peter Liebregts or Leon Surette have very persuasively discussed the many ways in which Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought deeply informs Pound's theoretical writings and his poetic oeuvre; indeed, Plato's idea of absolute form as an important aspect of the moment of vision (*eidos*) is situated at the heart of *The Pisan Cantos*. However, the experience of total material destruction appears to provoke Pound's to re-examine his own Platonism. Pound's long, insistent catalogues of destroyed objects draw attention to the question of the source of their value: does it, ultimately, lie in the absolute forms which they, however imperfectly, embody? or in the civic ideals which they express? What does it mean that they are being irretrievably lost? This problem of the value of the material world, already posed in Pound's writing on the subject of Chinese war poetry, resonates again in his meticulous catalogues of lost and misplaced art objects in *The Pisan Cantos*. In this way, the neo-epic rearticulates the earlier problem and establishes a connection between Pound's remarks on the "realism" of Chinese war poetry and on the more general philosophical problem of ontology.[145]

Of course, Pound confronts this complex ontological issue most explicitly in Canto 81, where he stages the moment of tension between various historical, linguistic and philosophical meanings of *eidos*. However, throughout the poem, Pound repeatedly situates Platonic ideas in a

[145] The difference between the two positions might be briefly summarized in the following manner: while philosophical idealism implies that objects and the physical world exist only as an appearance to or expression of mind and consciousness (or are somehow mental in their inner essence), philosophical realism implies that objects and the physical world exist independently of mind and consciousness and of the way in which these latter experience the former. Husserl defines his own position as a "transcendental idealism," which provokes protests from some of his early students', most notably Roman Ingarden and Edith Stein's, both realist phenomenologists. Both view this turn as, in fact, departure from the early spirit of phenomenology.

complicated spatio-temporal context in order to probe them in relation to the material world and lived experience. This investigation reveals the material not as a mere veneer of the ideal and absolute, but deeply meaningful in its own right. The unusual situatedness of the speaker of the poem (a prisoner confined to a tent) allows him to visualize Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" as directly incorporated into his lived experience; the speaker's own positioning strikingly parallels the image constructed by Plato in *The Republic*. Thus, in Canto 74 the speaker describes immaterial "ghosts" appearing inside his tent as *shades* of the *material* world. In Canto 76, echoing spatial relationships from the previous scene, Pound again alludes to Plato's allegory; now shadows do enter the tent, while real men are heard moving outside it: "Only shadows enter my tent / as men pass between me and the sunset[,]" (535). These two poetic moments evoke the Platonic dichotomy between the material world of shadows and the ideal, immaterial reality of absolute forms. More importantly, however, Pound's images draw attention to the unusual positioning of the speaker and the function of his unique perspective for the narrative of *The Pisan Cantos*. The speaker of the poem as a "noman"—a man in a liminal space between life and death— is confined, unlike Odysseus or the poet of Dante's *Commedia*, to a single spatio-temporal setting. Yet, this very same peculiar setting grants him an unusual power of insight, perhaps unavailable or dismissed in ordinary circumstances. To paraphrase the late Canto 116, the speaker's inability to "walk on" or journey forward like an epic hero would, grants him a new and heightened ability to "see."

Returning in the moment of vision of Canto 81, the allusion to Plato's allegory again gestures towards the transcendent reality of the ideal. The moment of climactic vision takes place in the closed, confined space of a tent. The fact that the three pairs of eyes appear in this specific, material and spatio-temporal location echoes both the imagery of the previous Cantos (shadows

moving inside the speaker's tent in Canto 74 and 76) and the Platonic image. Yet, the speaker's insistence that "my tent" which is not a "place for a full *eidos*" is nevertheless exactly where the visionary experience takes place, also inverts and troubles the strict division between the material world of shadows and the absolute reality of (absolutely transcendent) ideas. Pound's description of the moment of e*idos* (suggestive of the reality of the essence itself) as possible through the interaction with the "eyes" which unexpectedly enter the space of the material world highlights the ordinariness and limitations of the spatio-temporal context ("half-masked space"). Yet, Pound also emphasizes the centrality of the embodied and the perceptual for the transcendent vision of the speaker.

The "eyes" reveal their nature ("unmasked eyes"), not despite, but *through* this containment within and presence in the material world. Pound draws attention to the fact that the eyes look and are being looked at, in this way highlighting the central subject- object(s) perceptual dynamics of the scene. Similarly, by drawing on the visual effect of chiaroscuro, Pound's description of the eyes foregrounds a visual paradox: the eyes cast "but shade beyond the other lights" (540). The nature of their presence reveals the strict binaries among lights and shadows, spirit and matter, to be insufficient as a means of describing the nature of the experience. The contrast signalled by the effect of chiaroscuro – amplifying and solidifying the thesis- antithesis structure of the climactic paradox—points to another, deeper, layer of perception.

Pound's repeated insistence on the "contrapuntal" organization of the imagery of *The Pisan Cantos* anticipates the many paradoxes of the climactic scene in Canto 81:

> some minds take pleasure in counterpoint
> pleasure in counterpoint
> and the later Beethoven on the new Bechstein,
> or in the Piazza S. Marco for example

finds a certain concordance of size

not in the concert hall [.] (505)

The broader compositional method adopted in the *Cantos*—the interweaving of many harmonically independent voices and philosophical insights which nevertheless form a coherent whole in the end—resonates powerfully in the climactic moment of vision. While in Canto 81 Pound renders the visionary experience by evoking the conceptual richness of *eidos*, the scene does not settle squarely on one of the many meanings of the concept. The poet also does not find an objective correlative or a straightforward natural image to capture the experience. Instead, Pound highlights the moment of the high tension between various conceptual and philosophical pathways elaborated and intersecting throughout the poem; in his description of the moment of transcendent vision, the poet allows them to converge in a striking and *paradoxical* manner.

Ostensibly a moment of an *aporia* and a cacophony of the converging philosophical perspectives and experiences, the vision in Canto 81 draws on Pound's earlier reflection on the theory of metaphor. In Canto 81 the metaphysical positions expressed in Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotle's theory of forms powerfully resonate with the third, unifying meaning of *eidos*, "I knew" or "I saw." While from the point of view of the history of classical metaphysics (idealist and realist), the theories propounded by Plato and Aristotle[146] regarding the notion of *eidos* are (in many ways) antithetical, in the moment of vision in Canto 81 they appear momentarily reconciled by being held in a productive tension. I believe that such an interpretation of Pound's rather puzzling foregrounding of *eidos*—a single, conceptually rich word as a sole explanation of the nature of the experience of transcendent vision– is suggested by his earlier reflection of the theory of a "permanent" metaphor in *The Spirit of Romance* (reiterated in "Vorticism").

[146] For recent critical work on Pound's interest in Aristotle see Mark Byron's excellent paper "The Aristotelian Crescent: Medieval Islamic Philosophy in the Poetics of Ezra Pound."

According to Pound, "the more compressed or elliptical expression of metaphorical perception" (*SR* 158) can often be captured through an "antithesis" (*SR* 158). This early observation anticipates, in important ways, the conceptual richness and complexity of the climactic moment of transcendent vision and helps interpret it.

In Canto 81 the superimposition of the diverse ontological[147] meanings of *eidos* suggests an unknown layer or configuration of reality revealed in and through the visionary experience; a thesis and an antithesis together indicate a more searching and revealing moment of perception which apprehends a new aspect of reality hidden under the veneer of the paradox. This new insight is not fully available to the language of classical metaphysics (understood in positive, descriptive terms); it one can only be captured be means of a paradoxical statement.

On the other hand, however, the depth and richness of the experience of transcendent vision *is* available to the first person, embodied perception and the "I" of the speaker. Emphatically, the vision in Canto 81 remains an embodied, first person moment of perception. This fact is emphasized by the linguistic and etymological dimension of *eidos* as a verb ("I saw" and "I knew"). The visionary experience as a moment of an embodied perceptual act reconciles and subsumes the supposedly distinct and irreconcilable sensory and mental activities of the speaker. Pound's description also indicates that in such a vision the objective[148] and the first person embodied experience are, somehow, momentarily reconciled. While the first person embodied perception as a source of lasting knowledge or adequate moral judgment is dramatically challenged in the opening of *The Pisan Cantos*, the experience of vision seems to vindicate it. In

[147] Pound continues to ponder this paradox in later Cantos, for example in Canto 105, where he reflects on Anselm of Canterbury's Ontological Argument for the Existence of God.

[148] The idiom of classical metaphysics refers the reader to the ultimate essence beyond the veneer—however defined—of appearances.

a similar manner, the moment of vision reveals the qualities which Pound struggles to reconcile in his work on Vorticism (ideal form and matter), Imagism (essential and contingent attributes of an experience of a "thing" whether "objective or subjective") or the richness of Dante's poetic language (his "vulgar tongue" which combines insights into the eternal with the necessities of the specific historical and cultural moment) to be already deeply intertwined. Such a function of transcendent vision is highlighted by the correspondence of the past tense in which the scene is narrated and the only available grammatical form of *eidos* (first person, past tense), suggesting the union which has already taken place, affecting the present as well as, retrospectively, in a single sweeping epic gesture, shedding a new light on the past.

At the same time, by accentuating the imagery of light and darkness, day and night, Pound also suggests the centrality of sensory perception (*eidos* as "I saw") for his epic vision. Consequently, the vision in Canto 81 as an unusual and rich insight into the relationship between appearance and essence does not dismiss sight, touch or taste as granting a solely illusory access to a mere surface of the "real." Instead, the arrival of vision is marked by the intensification of ordinary sensations which Pound renders as sequential.[149]

For the early Pound, the status of a poetic image—communicable and directly available "in consciousness"—is predicated upon a complex and immediate act of perception which subsumes both a mutable and *eideic* aspect of the object perceived.[150] Pound also insists that the poet "*must*

[149] Sieburth also suggests Pound's intellectual and aesthetic affinity with Remy de Gourmont. Gourmont insists that the sequentiality of sensations is reflected in the sequentiality of language. He argues that Homer describes "a fact, then compares it to another analogous fact: the two images always remain distinct, although they can be roughly superimposed." He also asserts that "Homer is exact because of his inability to lie. He cannot lie: impressions strike him one by one, he describes them in succession, without confusion. (Gourmont in Sieburth I 105)

[150] Recently, drawing attention to Pound's theory of perception, Ming-Qian Ma has recently argued that Pound's Cantos can be read as "a poetic rendition of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception" (61). The critic suggests that Pound's theory of Imagism is analogous to the formulations about "timing or presencing" of the French phenomenologist (61).

use his *image* because he sees it or feels it, not because he thinks he can use it to back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics" ("Vorticism" 283) [emphasis mine]. Such a poetic image is a "complex"[151] immediately transcending both the particular space and time from which its founding act of perception originates. While it constitutes a complex synthesis of the contingent and the essential, the circumstantial and the permanent, the psychic and the physical, it must, nevertheless, remain *precise*.

In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound's repeated, emphatic rejection of Baudelaire's idea of a drug-induced, "artificial" paradise re-iterates the fundamental function of sensory precision as central to his poetic method. Such a precision can be applied to represent, gauge and validate the status of any (also visionary) perceptual experience. The speaker insists (following the moment of vision in Canto 81) that "First came the seen, then thus the palpable / Elysium" (541), drawing attention to the centrality of the sensory for transcendent vision. However, the scene also delineates a particular order or even teleology of the experience. Pound emphasizes the role of the senses as a means of access to vision which is, at the same time, received (it "came") rather than being self-induced. He also situates his own "Elysium" in contrast to the notion of an "artificial" paradise elaborated by Baudelaire. The sequential, rather than simultaneous, character of these sensations accentuates their distinctness and clarity (as opposed to the synaesthetic effects desired by French Symbolism). On the other hand, Pound also clearly highlights the ways in which these sensations unfold along a temporal axis. This process of temporalizing sensations

[151]In "A Retrospect" Pound defines his use of the term 'complex' "rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart, though we might not agree absolutely in our application. It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art" (253).

draws attention to the requirements of an epic narrative as a temporal construction;[152] it also suggests an expansion of Pound's earlier "instantaneous" formula of imagist poetics.

The acuity of sense perception remains fundamental not only to each isolated moment of poetic description in *The Pisan Cantos,* but also to the larger narrative structure of the work. Pound's "realism" continuously draws on precision and the situatedness of the speaker in the world of physical sensations and matter. Consequently, the quest for transcendent vision in *The Pisan Cantos* (as in Dante's epic) is not a purely spiritual, "visionary" journey. At the same time, the poet does not reduce the experience merely to a series of physical facts. In fact, in the moments of poetic description in *The Pisan Cantos* Pound resists those theories which position an act of perception as fundamentally fragmented and atomized, consisting of either ideas *or* sense-data. Instead, in *The Pisan Canto*s, each moment of sense perception is deeply integrated into other, non-sensory aspects of experience. By situating each object within multiple frames of reference simultaneously, Pound draws attention to the complexity of any given act of perception required to apprehend it. These issues, thanks to the fugue-like construction of the poem, are elaborated over time.

As early as in 1912, Pound argued that "it is nonsense" to consider words as "the only essentials to thought'' as "some people think in terms of objects themselves, some in pictures, diagrams, or in musical sounds, and perception by symbolic vision is swifter and more complex than by ratiocination" ("Wisdom of Poetry" 190-1). His 1929 *ABC of Reading* reemphasizes the

[152] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his 1776 *Laocoön*: *An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* argues that an artwork, in order to be successful, needs to adhere to the stylistic properties specific to its medium. Lessing defines painting as a spatial art and poetry as temporal; he makes his argument by constructing a series of binaries between painting (a spatial and instantaneous medium) and poetry (a temporal medium).

experientially responsive character of poetic langue as embracing both sensory and non-sensory aspects of experience. Pound suggests that the conceptual, mental layers of language are deeply intertwined with physical reality. The many modes in which poetic language operates (phanopoeia, logopoeia and melopoeia) are for him affected by physical movement, material shape, melody or visual images. This categorization draws attention to the intermixing of various modes of perception as primary for each distinct mode of poetic utterance, but also to the close intertwining of the faculties of body and mind in the language of poetic description.

One finds many indications of this earlier theorization of the relationship between poetry and sense perception in the distinct and idiosyncratic typographic structure of many scenes in *The Pisan Cantos*. Pound evokes and enacts the complex interplay between the conceptual and the sensory, particularly the auditory and the visual, as informing each dimension of his neo-epic (the use of capital letters, visual pauses, etc.). One can certainly hear a faint echo of the early avant-garde experiments such as Mallarmé*'*s *The Book* or the Futurist tactile poems in these typographic experiments. However, Pound also suggests another, more fundamental, dimension of the relationship between poetic language and sensory perception—one which transcends this basic material layer with which a poem's typography (or accompanying illustrations) may appeal to the human senses. In fact, the experiments with the use of typography (including Pound's own "Blast" manifesto) central for some of the avant-gardes do not seem to fundamentally affect the fabric of Pound's epic poem. He is interested *less* in the materiality of his poem as a "real" object and more in the ways in which a moment of an encounter between the human consciousness and an object can be conveyed in a literary work of art through a secondary, verbal and mediated, rather than a primary and direct appeal to the sensory order.

In *The Pisan Cantos* Pound persistently thinks across various attributes of physical objects and the ways in which they make themselves available to literary representation. In the brief moment of description the poet introduces the idea of in-"between": "There is a rose vine in this underbrush / Red? white? No, but a colour between them / When the pomegranate is open and the light falls / half thru it" (510) By drawing attention to a quality "between"[153] two known colors, yet not labeling it with any specific color-designation, Pound gestures towards a complicated relationship between human consciousness, language and sense experience. The ambiguity of this space "between" colors—neither red, nor white, but "a colour between them"—may suggest a visual halo or a synthesis originating from the convergence of two original colors. However, this moment of ambiguity also highlights the fact that language lacks an adequate name for the color, which is nevertheless available to perception. In this way, Pound points to the inherent difficulty of translating one type of experience into another.

Elizabeth Grosz's recent reflection on the idea of "thinking architecturally" as an intellectual project seeking for "a shared space in which [philosophy and architecture] can interact without hierarchy" (xv) may be helpful in illuminating Pound's repeated references to the idea of "between" or "diastasis." Grosz insists that the exploration of the intersections between architecture and philosophy would not result in a "literal spatial fact, but rather a [new] cognitive and critical model," different from those which define similar "shared" spaces in other media, like painting or music. Commenting on Grosz's concept, Peter Eisenman observed that in painting, "the junction between two color fields can create a halation—an afterimage at the contiguous edges of the fields that produces a retinal stimulation" while the "in-between in

[153] See also Pound's repeated references to "diastasis" in *The Pisan Cantos* and "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (138).

architectural space is not a literal perceptual or audile sensation, but an affective somatic response that is felt by the body in space" (xiv).

Grosz's phenomenological exploration of the concept at the intersection of the conceptual and the embodied, the mental and the sensory, is helpful in understanding Pound's articulation of the in-"between" spaces in his poem. The poet draws attention to the fact that even a visual quality as seemingly straight-forward as a color resists a stable linguistic designation. Instead of describing the mixture of white and red as simply "pink" (or any other known, available color for that matter), the poet confronts the speaker of *The Pisan Cantos* and his faculties with a familiar object. Unlike in the moment of transcendent vision, the object itself is certainly neither unknown nor awesome (which could perhaps justify a sublime feeling and a temporary loss of descriptive abilities). Rather, it is a "flower"—an ordinary, "natural" object at the heart of Pound's poetics of Imagism. Rather, the notion of "between" draws attention to any moment of encounter of the human senses and perceptual faculties with an external 'thing.' Pound, like Grosz, seeks for a new perceptual and conceptual model in which the mental and the sensory, language and embodied experience could "interact without hierarchy." Yet, by the same token, the poet also emphasizes the tension between this particular perceptual experience and the idiom available to describe it.

Similarly, the complex topography of several scenes in *The Pisan Cantos* suggests the enmeshing of the conceptual and the sensory (and kinesthetic). Pound consistently highlights not only the visual or auditory properties of objects, but also their structural, physical and spatial relationships to other objects. For example, Pound offers the following long moment of recollection:

Came Madame Lucrezia

……

Torquato where art thou?
to the click of hooves on the cobbles by Tevere
and “my fondest knight lie dead”.. or la Stuarda
“ghosts move about me” “patched with histories”
but as Mead said: if they were,
what have they done in the interval,
eh, to arrive by metempsychosis at....?
and there are also the conjectures of the Fortean Society
Beauty is difficult.... the plain ground
precedes the colours
and this grass and whatever here under the tentflaps
is, undubitably, bambooiform
representative brush strokes wd / be similar
.... cheek bone, by verbal manifestation,
her eyes as in "La Nascita"
whereas the child's face
is at Capoquadri in the fresco square over the doorway
centre background
the form beached under Helios
funge la purezza,
and that certain images be formed in the mind
to remain there
formato locho
Arachne mi porta fortuna
……..
and the medallions
to forge Achaia [.] (466-7)

These images, carefully selected by the poet through the agency of his memory, combine various temporal and spatial frameworks. Traversing these various dimensions, the speaker annihilates distinctions among facts and fictions—the personal, the mythical and the literary. The evocation of the intimate experience of "playing checquers with black Jim" (467) which immediately follows this passage, is positioned right alongside the references to Torquato Tasso and his epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*. Pound, yet again, alludes to the epic tradition represented by the Italian poet and the poetic rendition of the historical event of the First Crusade. In this way, he also suggests a connection between "black Jim" (an Allied soldier) and the medieval knights participating in the siege of Jerusalem, pointing to war as one of the permanent dimensions of human experience.

Careful examination of the above passage reveals that the ostensibly strictly literary allusions in fact point in two directions. For example, the line "Arachne mi porta fortuna" refers to the myth of Arachne and Athena; at the same time, it may also be closely related to the spatio-temporal positioning of the speaker ("Spider brings me luck"). In this way, the line traverses the mythical and the ordinary. The language of the literary allusion becomes a "precise definition" of the speaker's own sentiment and may refer to an actual insect—a stray spider. This and many similar experiences which transcend boundaries of time and space, though rendered by someone else, become fully integrated into the conceptual and formal fabric of *The Pisan Cantos*. The ability of the language of poetic description to both evoke and transcend the immediate spatio-temporal context is highlighted by the reference to "metempsychosis"—a process of transmigration which transcends the limitations of time, space and individual physical bodies.

Yet, in the context of Pound's assertions that a poetic work of art constitutes a complex act of communication and that the epic is, indeed, the tale of the tribe (*Guide to Kulchur*) one might

ask: what do these often obscure allusions communicate? Are they meaningful to anyone but the speaker-poet himself? Whittier-Ferguson has recently argued:

> [L]ike all modern epics, the *Cantos* is pre-eminently a textual production, fundamentally and ostentatiously a product of the library rather than the battlefield, the mead hall, or the court. … The paramount achievement recorded in the modern epic is not the justification of God's or gods' ways with us, or a hero's battles, or journey, or the foundation of a nation or an empire. It is an aesthetic act that may or may not have some social, cultural, political, or theological ramifications: the author's unlikely writing of the book we read. (211-2)

The critic is certainly right to characterize modern epics as predominantly "aesthetic" acts. He is also fundamentally correct to point out that the complex network of erudite (often even obscure) references carefully constructed by Pound and constituting the basic fabric of the *Cantos* requires a slow, careful and informed act of exegesis. Yet, while the above lines taken from *The Pisan Cantos* seem to contain nothing but quotations and self-quotations ("cheek bone, by verbal manifestation" and "medallion" are references to "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"), they, in fact, call for a more careful examination of Pound's self-conscious textuality.

The above scene highlights two distinct but intersecting frames of reference which also organize the broader structure of Pound's neo-epic. One frame is governed by the network of cultural, literary and textual references (often obscure or deeply personal); the other frame references the more accessible structure of ordinary perception and kinesthetic relations. Interestingly, while the speaker in *The Pisan Cantos* moves freely through space and time, he also pedantically identifies certain spatial relationships and specific geographic references. Consequently, they often constitute the most concrete and recognizable elements of the speaker's

periplum. Roman Ingarden, in his *Ontology of a Work of Art*, argues that each work of art possesses the places of "determinacy" and "indeterminacy":

> [In paintings] things in their materiality and in the many-sidedness of their qualitative determinations attain to presentation in a picture, but they are apprehended on the basis of their visual properties, and are brought to explicit presentation in their other kinds of properties only so far as the latter can be co-presented in the visual properties. These things distinguish themselves from material things in nature in that they are not determined in certain respects, such as odor, taste or warmth. They contain, in other words, certain 'places of indeterminacy.' (146)

In *The Pisan Cantos*, the interplay between the indeterminate and the concrete results in a complex textual synthesis. Instead of simply suggesting "immaterial relations" ("The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" 320) by means of the material ones, the constant *tension* between the concrete and the abstract in *The Pisan Cantos* concretizes and grounds the speaker's observations and recollections in an embodied, first-person, physical experience. The intricate spatial architecture of *The Pisan Cantos* also emphasizes the role of the sensory and the kinesthetic as central to the task of the communicability of Pound's epic project.[154] These references to the reality of the body and the senses solidify and concretize the speaker's unique *periplum*, and, simultaneously, refer the reader (the constantly reappearing "you" or "thou") to a type of (embodied) experience which is, indeed, at least partly communicable and may be shared.

[154] Husserl asserts that "we 'view the mental processes of others' on the basis of the perception of their outward manifestation in the organism" (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* 6).

The repeated evocations of various modes of perception and spatial relationships anchor poetic description in the material reality of the known shapes: "the child's face / is at Capoquadiri in the fresco square over the doorway / centre background," sounds ("click of hooves on the cobbles by Tevere") and physical movement through space. These concrete references, often given in a form of meticulous directions, appear throughout The *Pisan Cantos* as a way of revealing the concrete dimension of the seemingly unstructured flux of poetic images. They, yet again, expose the enmeshing of the sensory and the extra-sensory as fundamental to the formation of each poetic moment in *The Pisan Cantos*. Likewise, meticulous evocations of material forms of the works of art and their exact positioning in space are used to render more concrete poetic images: "rain, Ussel, / To the left of la bella Torre the tower of Ugolino / in the tower to the left of the tower / chewed his son's head" (456). Here the elaborate geographical positioning functions to frame and magnify Ugolino eating his son.

The interplay between the mental and the sensory is also central to Pound's representation of the climactic transcendent vision as a special moment of perception. In particular, the poet's reflection on the origins of the medieval troubadour culture and its relation to medieval philosophy and theology provides an insight into his broader theory of transcendent vision.[155] For example, he views Hugo St. Victor's theory of knowledge as based on a more adequate "gradation process" consisting of "(1) the aimless flitting of the mind, (2) the systematic circling of the attention around the object, (3) contemplation, the identification of the consciousness WITH the object" (328). He also declares that "600 pages [of] parenthesis" would be needed to

[155] William Pratt has recently observed that Pound consciously attempts to situate the *Cantos* in the broad scope of troubadour culture (42). Pratt also argues that "it seems that all of the great *Pisan Cantos* are troubadour songs, picturing the wandering American in his prison-exile" (42).

discuss the full implications of the confrontation of St. Victor's concept "with remarks on arabic ideas about *atasal*, the union with the divine" [sic] (*Guide to Kulchur* 328).

In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound again links the theological concept of St. Victor and the idea of *atasal*. However, his neo-epic persistently returns to the idea of *atasal* not only in the context of intellectual contemplation but also the sensory experiences that accompany the moments of anticipation of a mystical union. Pound's earlier remarks about the supplementary, rather than contradictory, character of the theory of Hugo St. Victor and the Arabic *atasal* resonate in *The Pisan Cantos*. Here, he superimposes the concept of *atasal* on Hugo St. Victor's gradual theory of knowledge to draw attention to the role of the senses as central to such a mystical union. In *The Pisan Cantos*, the idea of *atasal* is first introduced by means of an intermediary image of touching crystal: "tangibility by no means *atasal* / but the crystal can be weighed in the hand / formal and passing within the sphere" (479). The purely physical sensation of touching marks both the proximity of the absolute reality, and the degree of its separation from the speaker. Both dimensions of the experience are signalled by this reference to the sensation of touching, which simultaneously connects and highlights the degree of separation between the subject and the object.

The image of a crystal—in the most basic sense a solid object—allows the speaker not only to reflect on the modalities of sense perception as central to the experience of transcendent vision, but also to re-examine the issue of a sensory illusion. Two images preceding the declaration "tangibility not yet *atasal*" evoke the appearance or an image of a crystal mediated through two different substances. The poet describes:

> Lay in soft grass by the cliff's edge
> with the sea 30 metres below this

and at hand's span, at cubit's reach moving,
the crystalline, as inverse of water,
clear over rock bed [.] (477)

Same in appearance, different in substance (solid and the mysterious substance which is neither "rock" nor liquid, but "an inverse of water"), these images appeal not only to vision, but also to the tactile perception and the spatial sense of the subject.

In the final experience of vision the speaker mobilizes, similarly, a diverse set of faculties:

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 *Εἴδως*
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. (540)

The central space of indeterminacy-- "diastasis"—as well as other such spaces in the scene, ("saw but the eyes and stance between the eyes") signal the insufficiency of available categories to capture the nature of the object in full. The speaker's desire to merge his consciousness with that of the divine object—marking the ultimate degree of knowledge in the theory delineated by St. Victor—is initiated by a sensation "saw." The experience ultimately leads to a momentary erasure of an ego. This annihilation of the ego is marked by the *ostensible* absence of the pronoun "I" from the scene. On the other hand, however, the impermanence of

such a union, but also the centrality of the subject-object relationship to its fundamental dynamics, is marked by the evocation of *eidos*—"*I* saw" and "*I* knew." In this way, the scene paradoxically suggests both the state of such a union (highlighted by means of two verbs: "interpass" and "penetrate") and the fundamental separation of the identities of the speaker and the absolute object.

Finally, Canto 83 suggests that the moment of vision permanently alters the speaker's perception. In this way, the quest which begins in Canto 74 amongst the cacophony of sounds and the chaos of conflicting, solipsistic points of view is, in fact, completed. Pound offers the following description:

> A fat moon rises lop-sided over the mountain
> The eyes, this time my world,
> But pass and look from mine
> between my lids
> sea, sky, and pool,
> alternate
> pool, sky, sea [.] (555)

The "pool, sky, sea" allude to the colors of the eyes of the three female goddesses in Canto 81, but also refer to ordinary physical objects. The moment of *eidos* grants the speaker a new insight into the physical world and its relations. Ordinary seeing and transcendent vision are integrated as two mutually reinforcing structures. Ultimately, the permanence of the insight about perception is confirmed in the late Cantos, particularly in Canto 113, where the poet declares "God's eye art 'ou, do not surrender perception" (810).

Ronald Bush has recently reminded us that Pound's *Cantos* strive for a "synthesis of two apparently disparate classical systems—Aristotle's rigorous definition of substance, matter and form, and the Neoplatonists' understanding of the emanation and return of divine intelligence, or

nous" ("Pisa" 262). Indeed, Pound's later *Cantos* testify to the continued difficulty of completing such a gargantuan task. Yet, in Canto 81, Pound suggests a new relationship between these two positions which appear momentarily reconciled in the moment of a careful, phenomenological description of the embodied perceptual experience of transcendent vision. The climactic visionary scene in *The Pisan Cantos* gestures towards some new, unknown aspect of an "essence" beyond all previously elaborated essences (Platonic and Aristotelean alike) and, in this way, suggests a tentative synthesis of the two positions through and in the moment of poetic description.

While Pound in his later work continues to emphasize the inability to circumvent the body and its senses in the process of the return to the "divine *nous*" (Canto 116 explicitly positions the issue as a problem), his insights into the value of sense perception, the human body as the site of the senses, and, more generally, the value of the material world expressed in the context of war result in the series of complex poetic moments in *The Pisan Cantos*. In Canto 81 one such moment of poetic description of "what appears" seems to, even if momentarily, broach the many philosophical divisions and disparities which will continue to shape Pound's poetic work beyond *The Pisan Cantos*.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have sought to offer a new perspective on the engagement of Anglo-American literary modernism with questions of religion and religious experience. The poetic, theoretical and visual work of the three major modernist poets I examined represents a broad spectrum of spiritual and religious attitudes and illuminates vital, but so far overlooked, continuities between religious and non-religious strands of literary modernism. Ezra Pound, David Jones, and H.D. neither advocate secular attitudes, nor confront directly the issues of a specific religion or dogma. Rather, they carefully construct climactic moments of transcendent vision in their mature long poems as dynamic, sensory and extra-sensory, encounters between a speaker and a transcendent object.

My project has drawn attention to classical phenomenology as a hermeneutic tool that lends itself particularly well to explicating the structure of those encounters. Pound in *The Pisan Cantos*, Jones in *In Parenthesis* and H.D. in *Trilogy* draw no sharp line between sensory and non-sensory aspects of experience. Rather, they rely on the phenomenological description of what appears in rendering their epic worlds as complex syntheses of the material and the immaterial. The poets ask: what does it mean to have an experience of vision? What makes it "authentic"? What does such an experience entail and reveal? *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* constitute aesthetic and philosophical investigations into those questions.

Phenomenology helps us to explain these poets' consideration of the problem of transcendent vision as a type of perceptual experience. It also allows us to observe fundamental similarities in their approach to this issue. Jones, Pound, and H.D. posit that the experience of transcendent vision is an encounter of a human subject with a transcendent object and that such an object is given in experience. In *In Parenthesis*, *Trilogy* and *The Pisan Cantos* the human

senses fundamentally usher in experiences of vision and validate their status. Jones, H.D. and Pound actively seek to communicate those visionary experiences—climactic points of their epic narratives—to the community of readers. Ultimately, they draw on the human sensory apparatus as a primary means of enabling and facilitating such an act of communication.

In each of those poems, the insistent foregrounding of the issue of sense perception has important philosophical and aesthetic consequences. On the one hand, descriptions of sensory experiences frame moments of transcendent vision and point to their status as real experiences. For all three poets (though to a varying degree), the senses constitute a primary point of encounter between a human subject and the world of external objects. Consequently, the object of vision, too, is construed as external, and the experience itself framed as given, rather than simply self-generated. On the other hand, in *In Parenthesis*, *The Pisan Cantos* and *Trilogy*, these descriptions of vision as both sensory and extrasensory become a part of a complex representational strategy—a method of establishing communication with a reader by drawing on the sensory as a shared domain of experience.

Suspending both religious belief and disbelief, Jones, H.D. and Pound render climactic experiences of vision as extensions of ordinary moments of perception. In this way, they highlight experiential and ontological continuities between those extraordinary moments of "vision" and ordinary experiences of their speakers and characters. Each poet rejects claims about absolute separation of those visionary experiences from other aspects of experience and questions claims about their exclusively private and internal status. Instead, by consistently *evoking* the senses (rather than religious symbols, unified mythological frameworks or dogmatic pronouncements) as a shared platform of experience, the poets ask us to take seriously the purely empirical aspect of those experiences. In this way, they certainly invite readers to reconsider

those visionary experiences outside of orthodox religious and devotional frameworks. Yet, conversely, they also demand that readers suspend conventional skeptical attitudes which would automatically write those experiences out as mere hallucinations.

As I suggested, there are many powerful similarities in these poets' approach to the issue of vision as an aesthetic, philosophical and religious problem. A careful examination of the specific perspectives from which each of those poets approaches visionary experiences reveals the depth of insight and nuance with which Anglo-American poetic modernism in general tackles the problem of vision. In *In Parenthesis*, David Jones asks: can we trust the evidence of our senses? If we trust an eye-witness's account of the destruction of war, can we also believe his account of the experience of transcendent vision? In the climactic scene, Jones highlights, rather than erases, differences between the speaker of the poem, who is a mere eye-witness, and the dying soldiers actively involved in exchanges with the Queen of the Woods. In this way, the poet draws attention to the problem of the degree of participation and the communal character of those experiences. Ultimately, for Jones the level of comprehension of the climactic experience depends on the degree of embodied, sensory participation in it.

Similarly, *Trilogy* draws attention to both the individual and communal character of the experience of vision. For H.D., the problem of engagement and participation, already outlined for us by Jones, is two-fold. On the one hand, H.D. insists that a fully realized experience of vision not only fully engages but also unifies an otherwise fragmented human self. Such an experience allows body, mind and spirit to operate in consort. The narrative trajectory of *Trilogy* marks the process of a literal and figurative recovery of the human body as a full participant in the experience of vision. On the other hand, however, H.D. shows that the experience of vision

must necessarily find its outward expression in a ritual that externalizes and formalizes it and, in this way, makes it available to others, facilitating the formation of a community.

Like H.D. in *Trilogy*, Pound in *The Pisan Cantos* reflects on the practical implications of the experience of vision. He asks not only what it means to have such an experience, but also how the reality revealed via such an experience ought to affect human action. In other words, Pound tasks himself with considering the ethical implications of such experiences. Fundamentally, the poet posits that any proper action stems from accurate perception of the world. Beginning the narrative of *The Pisan Cantos* by reflecting on the tragic consequences of the misperception of reality, the poet-speaker sets out on a quest to comprehend and reconcile his private vision of the world with the world as it is. Consequently, the climactic visionary experience in Canto 81 momentarily synthesizes previously disparate faculties—seeing and knowing—into a comprehensive act of perception and results in a moment of rich phenomenological description of what appears. In this way, Pound also suggests that the art of poetry can contain and reconcile within itself that which perhaps still remains splintered and separated in reality.

The phenomenological lens allows Jones, Pound and H.D. to render complex phenomena on the border between the external world and consciousness. As a critical tool, it also is helpful in accounting for the differences among those poets. H.D. in *Trilogy* suggests that the experience of vision is neither exclusively mental (thus fully internal), nor fully external. Rather, Kaspar's vision takes place in the liminal space between the self and the external world. Conversely, Jones in the climactic scene of *In Parenthesis* represents the Queen of the Woods as an object fully external to the self; ultimately, it is a purely physical distance that bars the narrator from hearing, thus fully comprehending, the content of the Queen's message. This moment of sensory

deprivation highlights the status of the Queen as a material, external and three-dimensional object. The speaker's inability to hear the content of her message draws attention to the affinities between her and ordinary three-dimensional objects located in space, carefully foregrounded and discussed earlier in the narrative. Final moments of description emphasize and legitimize the Queen's status as akin to such ordinary objects. Yet, they also differentiate closing scenes of *In Parenthesis* from H.D.'s rich description of Kaspar's multi-sensory experience of vision in "The Flowering of the Rod."

Pound, like Jones, emphasizes the process of reconciliation of the mental life of the speaker with the evidence of his senses. For Jones, the experience of transcendent vision operates on two interrelated planes; it functions as a vision gesturing beyond the strictly material world and, simultaneously, as an ordinary act of perception. Yet, Jones also seems to suggest that there are fundamental correspondences between human faculties used to apprehend objects and those objects' ontological structure. Thus, the speaker's mind and body are engaged correspondingly and adequately by material and immaterial aspects of the lived reality. Pound in *The Pisan Cantos* espouses a similar approach, as the speaker of *The Pisan Cantos* confronts the task of reconciling the faculties of *seeing* and *knowing*, the mind and the senses in his quest for a comprehensive model of perception. In this way, Jones' founding, *a priori*, philosophical assumption seems to be transformed by Pound into the goal of the speaker's quest in *The Pisan Cantos* and the central purpose of his journey.

I hope that in the previous chapters I have managed to demonstrate that the question of transcendence does not get obliterated, as suggested by Lukács and others, by the fact of separation of modern man from stable communities of believers and traditional forms of worship. Rather, I believe that Pound, H.D. and Jones powerfully rearticulate a range of

questions in Western tradition traditionally associated with metaphysics and various forms of religious devotion and practice. These modernist poets address those questions with great philosophical seriousness and focus yet, perhaps paradoxically, by means available to a modern, secular artist, immersed in a secular habitus. The recent history fraught with religious unrest draws attention to the indelibility of the questions they confront. Perhaps, it should also prompt us to reexamine the visionary aspect of the works of Pound, Jones and H.D. with a renewed interest and intent.

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