

CANTO I

Sources

Homer, *Odyssey* XI: the Nekyia passage in which the ghosts of the dead are called up and consulted about the future, in the ML translation of Andreas Divus of Justinopolis (Capodistria) and the First and Second Homeric Hymns to Aphrodite and the First Hymn to Hermes in the ML interpretation of Georgius Dartona of Crete, all published in the volume entitled *Homeri Odyssea ad verbum translata*, Andrea Divo Justinopolitano interprete, *Eiusdem Hymni Deorum XXXII*, Georgio Dartona Cretense interprete, Parisiis, In officina Christiani Wecheli, 1538.

Background

EP, Discarded Cantos: "Three Cantos" (1), *Poetry*, X, 5, 1917, "The Fourth Canto," *Dial*, LXVIII, 1920, "Three Cantos" (2), *Dial*, LXXI, 1921; P, "Mauberley I," "The Seafarer"; Cantos 23, 39, 47, 82, 90; L, 210 (to Homer Pound) and 274 (to W. H. D. Rouse); LE "Early Translators of Homer," "Notes on Elizabethan Classicists"; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

Exegeses

E. Glenn, *Analyst* I and VIII; Dekker, "Myth and Metamorphosis," JE, "The Inheritance of Tò Kalón," CB-R, "Lay me by Aurelie," GD, "Persephone's Ezra," Rachewiltz, "Pagan and Magic Elements in Ezra Pound's Works," HK, "Blood for the Ghosts," FR, "Pound, Joyce, and Flaubert: The Odysseans," all in EH, *Approaches*; CE, *Ideas*; HK, *Era*, 361.

Glossary

1. **Circe:** Goddess living on fabulous island of Aeaea who is powerful in magic; sister of Acoetes; daughter of Helios and Perse [*Od.* X, 210 ff.]. Witch-goddess, particularly associated with sexual regeneration and degeneration. Circe, Aphrodite, and Persephone form the archetypal triad of feminine deity: sorceress, lover, girl-identities "compene-trans." Also Circe Titania, Kirké, Kirkh. perpetually shrouded in mist and cloud [*Od.* XI, 14-19].
2. **Kimmerian lands:** Territory of the Cimmerians, a people whose city and land were
3. **Perimedes:** One of Odysseus's crew.
4. **Eurylochus:** "Great-hearted and godlike Eurylochus" was Odysseus's second-in-command. He was the leader of the first band of men who sought out Circe.
5. **pitkin:** Word invented by Pound: "little pit."

6. **Ithaca:** Island kingdom of Odysseus near coast of Hellas in Ionian Sea. Countertheme to Troy, the archetypal city that Odysseus helped to destroy. The epic “nostos” [return journey] of *The Cantos* is thus polarized between the destruction and the rediscovery of civilization and sovereignty.

7. **Tiresias:** Given the power of prophecy by Zeus, Tiresias was the Theban seer “Who even dead, yet hath his mind entire!” [cf. 47/236]. Associated with house of Cadmus and the founding of Thebes [cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus*; *Od. X, XI*; Ovid, *Meta. III*].

8. **Erebus:** Dark place through which souls must pass on way to Hades.

9. **dreory:** AS, “blood-dripping.”

10. **Pluto:** God of Hades, the underworld or hell. Also called Hades or Dis. Consort of Persephone for the winter months. Also the god of wealth, particularly of gold and all precious metals and stones below the earth’s surface [cf. 16, 31 below].

11. **Proserpine:** Daughter of Zeus and Demeter. She was condemned to live half the year in the underworld, but the Eleusinian rites brought her and all nature back to life in the spring. Also known as Persephone, Flora, Kore. She divides her time between Dis and Demeter, between the realm of death and the realm of vegetation. As the chthonic Persephone she is a goddess of death. The rising [*anodos*] of Persephone from the underworld was associated with the rising of Aphrodite from the sea in the Greater Eleusinian Mysteries. Persephone and Aphrodite were also closely linked in the myth of Adonis, who was the consort of chthonic Persephone for one-third of the year and of Aphrodite for the other two-thirds.

12. **Elpenor:** Youngest of Odysseus’s men; drunk when Odysseus left Aeaea, he fell down a ladder, broke his neck, and “his spirit went down to the house of Hades” [Loeb]. Stands for luckless incidental companion of the hero (or poet) whose only fame after death rests in the fact that the hero has placed his name on record.

13. **ingle:** Inglenook. LSc, “chimney corner,” *ingle* being derived from SGae *aingeal*, “fire.” Pound is using the vocabulary of Gavin Douglas’s translation of *Aeneid* where, however, “ingle” by itself always means “fire.”

14. **Avernus:** Pound’s Ovidian translation of Andreas Divus’s *infernus*. Homer’s Hades, “A deep lake near Puteoli. . . its reputed immense depth, and its situation amid gloomy-looking woods and mephitic exhalations inspired the belief that it led to the underworld” [*OCD*].

15. **Anticlea:** Mother of Odysseus. She died during his absence.

16. **golden wand:** A double of the golden bough, key to the underworld, and of the caduceus with which Hermes summoned the souls of the dying to the underworld. The golden bough belongs to the artificial vegetation of Persephone’s underground garden [cf. 10 above and 31 below; *Aeneid VI*, 141 ff.].

17. “A second time?”: Pound’s translation of Andreas Divus’s Latin translation of the Greek word *διγυμος* which was apparently printed in place of the now accepted *διουγενές* in line 92 of Book XI of the *Odyssey*. Divus was probably using a corrupt Renaissance edition of the Greek text. Scholarly regularized editions still place this line in square brackets to indicate restoration of a corrupt text. Whereas *διγυμος* means twice-born or double, *διουγενές* means “sprung from Zeus” or, in a general sense, “noble,” as used in the above line with reference to Laertes [cf. *LE*, 262; 48/241, 74/425, 449, 77/472; also Virgil, *Aeneid VI*, 134 ff.] [EH].

18. **fosse:** ME, “ditch.”

19. **bever:** LSc, “drink” [cf. beverage].

20. **Neptune:** Roman god of water identified with the Greek Poseidon, whose son, Polyphemus, held Odysseus and his men captive in a cave. Odysseus blinded Polyphemus while he was in a drunken sleep in order to escape [*Od. IX*, 106 ff.]. Neptune, for ven-

geance, sought to oppose Odysseus's homecoming in every way.

21. **Divus:** Andreas D. of Justinopolis (originally Aegida, renamed J after Justinian I; now Capodistria) [cf. *LE*, 259].

22. **In officina Wecheli:** ML "In the workshop of Wechelus," Paris publisher of Divus.

23. **Homer:** Greek epic poet regarded by Pound as the originator of the epic tradition he sought to continue with *The Cantos*.

24. **Sirens:** Inhabitants of island near Scylla and Charybdis. Sailors lured by their song land and perish. In ancient times they were depicted as harpies or bird-women waiting to carry off the souls of men. Pound, however, sees them as mermaids. The specific lure of their song becomes clear in 79/488 ("as the fish-tails said to Odysseus"): it is praise for his past achievements. Pound is thinking of the line [*Od.* XII, 189] which he has also quoted in *Mauberley* ("we shall tell you of all that happened at Troy") [cf. *Od.* XII, 39 ff., 142-200].

25. **Venerandam:** ML, "worthy of veneration." Beginning of Georgius Dartona's ML interpretation of the Second Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite [*LE*, 266].

26. **Aphrodite:** Goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. Born of blood and seafoam. She supported the Trojans against the Greeks until the end of the war, opposing Athena, defender of the Greeks. Also called Kypris after her island of Cyprus, Cytherea after her island of Cythera, as well as Venus, Venere, and Dione/Diona (i.e., the daughter of Dione and Zeus invoked in the *Pervigilium Veneris* as the spring goddess of vegetation) [cf. *SR*, 19-20, 39/195]. Her birth [*anados*] from the sea rhymes with Persephone-Kore's ascent from the earth's nether regions celebrated at Eleusis and the original of the late canto motif of "Reina" rising from the deeps [91/610]. She was also the mother of Aeneas who, after Troy's fall, set out like Odysseus to found the archetypal city anew under her protection. Her voyage in *The Cantos* is a double of that of Odys-

seus, but unlike his it is undertaken in a spirit of serene confidence.

27. **Cypri munimenta sortita est:** ML, [who] "held sway over [all] the Cyprian heights." Continuation of Georgius Dartona's ML interpretation [*LE*, 266]. The reference is still to Aphrodite, later referred to in *The Cantos* as the Cyprian goddess.

28. **mirthful:** Pound's translation of Georgius Dartona's *hilariter*.

29. **orichalchi:** ML, "of copper." The Latin word for copper is *Cyprium*, the "Cyprian metal," which takes its name from the island of Cyprus, center of the Aphrodite cult. In his ML interpretation of the Second Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, Georgius Dartona uses the word *orichalchi* with reference to Aphrodite's earrings. Pound later uses it to describe the color of her eyes as being of "copper and wine" [cf. 25, 26 above and 102/730 ff., 93/631, 97/675].

30. **with golden / Girdles and breast bands, thou with dark eyelids:** Pound's translation of Georgius Dartona's "Collum autem molle, apectora argentea / Monilibus aureis ornabant"; the "dark eyelids" come from Dartona's interpretation *nigras . . . palpebras* for the Greek *elikoblephare*, a word of uncertain meaning which is generally taken to mean "flashing eyes."

31. **Bearing the golden bough of Argicida:** Pound's mistranslation of Georgius Dartona's *habens auream virgam Argicida* in his interpretation of the First Hymn to Aphrodite (v. 117), where Aphrodite relates that she has been abducted by *chrisórrapis 'Argeiphóntes*, i.e., 'Argeiphóntes (Slayer of Argos, the epithet for Hermes) with the golden bough or wand. Dartona translates *'Argeiphóntes* as "Argicida," the epithet for Mercury which likewise has the literal meaning "Slayer of Argos." The golden bough later came to be associated with Aeneas, who was required to find one as an offering for Proserpine before he could descend to Hades (*Aeneid* VI); still later it reappeared as the Golden Bough of Aricia, a region in the Alban Hills south of Rome consisting of a grove and a lake (now known as Nemi) asso-

ciated with Diana Nemorensis (Diana of the Wood) [4:16].

32. **Argicida**: L, "Slayer of Greeks" as in Greek term *'Argeiphóntes*. A reference to

Aphrodite's championship of the Trojans and especially of Aeneas against Greeks and against Odysseus. The epithet indicates that Aphrodite is associated with Persephone as the goddess of death.

CANTO II

Sources

Ovid, *Meta.* III, 511-733; X, 560-707; Euripides, *Bacchae*; Homeric Hymn to Dionysos; R. Browning, *Sordello*; Homer, *Od.* XI, 235-259; *Iliad* III, 139-160; *Mabinogion*; Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*; Arthur Golding, *P. Ovidius Naso: The XV Books, entitled Metamorphosis*; Camille Chabaneau, *Les Biographies des Troubadours en Langue Provençale*, Toulouse, 1885; Fenollosa Notebooks (inedit.), University of Virginia Library.

Background

EP, SR, 16, 132; *Quia Pauper Amavi*; "Three Cantos, II," *Poetry*, 1917 [Discarded Cantos]; "Famam Librosque Cano," "Mesmerism" in *P*; Dante, *Pur.* 6, 7; Mary de Rachewiltz, *Discretions*, Boston and Toronto, 1971; La Chronique de Rains, in *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. E. Noble Stone, Seattle, 1939.

Exegeses

E. Glenn, *Analyst* XVIII; N. C. de Nagy, "Pound and Browning," and Dekker, "Myth and Metamorphosis," both in EH, *Approaches*; CE, *Ideas*; EH, *Pai*, 7, 1 & 2, 179-180.

Glossary

1. **Robert Browning**: 1812-1889, author of the epic poem, *Sordello*, based on the life of the Italian troubadour of that name who wrote in Provençal. Browning gives an unconventional image of the troubadour as a lyrical persona or mask of himself (a "dra-

matic monologue"), just as Pound later uses him and other historical characters. The point is that there is no way of seeing the personality of *Sordello* objectively but only of seeing subjective perspectives of the facts. Browning's *Sordello* is, for Pound, the last

instance of the epic tradition in the English language, which he intends to take up from there on. Pound traces his personal literary lineage back to Browning in *L* [letter to R. Taupin of May 1928 ("Und überhaupt ich stamm aus Browning. Pourquoi nier son père?")], but he intends to include the mythological dimension as well. In introducing the persona "Sordello" and the epic of Browning, he is recycling material from the discarded cantos which is now subsumed into the persona of Odysseus and the epic of Homer [cf. *SR*, 132; *LE*, 33; *ABCR*, 78, 188-191; and letter to W. C. Williams, *L*, 7].

2. **Sordello:** ?1180-?1255, Italian troubadour, son of a poor cavalier, who came to the court of Count Ricciardo de San Bonifazio, fell in love with the count's wife, Cunizza da Romano, and abducted her at the behest of her brothers. He then lived with Cunizza and was forced to flee to Provence. Later on he performed military service for Charles I of Anjou, Naples, and Sicily, who rewarded him with five castles which, however, he returned, considering himself far richer through his poetry [cf. *LE*, 97-98; Browning's *Sordello*; *Pur*. 6, 7].

3. **Lo Sordels . . . :** P, "Sordello is from Mantua." Direct translation from a *vida* (P, "life") of Sordello in Chabaneau, which begins "Lo Sordels si fo de Mantoana, de Sirier, fils d'un paubre cavallier que avia nom sier el Cort. E deletava se en cansos aprendre & en trobar, e briguet com los bons homes de cort, & apres tot so qu'el poc; e fetz coblas e sirventes. E venc s'en a la cort del comte de San Bonifaci; el coms l'onret molt; & enamoret se de la moiller del comte a forma de solatz, & ella de lui. Et avenc si quel coms estet mal com los fraires d'ella, e si s'estranej d'ella. E sier Icellis e sier Albrics, li fraire d'ella, si la feiren envolar al comte a sier Sordel; e s'en venc estar com lor en gran benanansa. E pois s'en anet en Proensa, on el receup grans honors de totz los bos homes, e del comte e de la comtessa, que li deron un bon castel e moiller gentil." For Pound's translation, see *LE* 97 ff. [EH].

4. **So-shu:** Corruption of Shiba Shōjo, Japa-

nese name for Chinese Han dynasty poet, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (179-117), a representative of the rhyme-prose school criticized by Li Po in an allegory from which the line quoted is derived via a translation by Fenollosa in the Fenollosa Notebooks (inedit.). Li Po scouts Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, an imitator of Ch'u Yüan, for creating foam instead of waves. Pound quotes from Fenollosa's notes: "Yoyu and Shojo stirred up decayed (enervated) waves. Open current flows about in bubbles, does not move in wave lengths" [*Affirmations*, Jan. 28, 1916]. Not to be confused with "So-shu" in "Ancient Wisdom, Rather Cosmic" (*P*), which is a Japanese transliteration of the name of the Chinese philosopher Chuang Chou (more commonly known as Chuang Tzu), or with "So Shu, king of Soku," in *J/M* (p. 100), where "So Shu" is an incorrect Japanese transliteration of the Chinese name Ts'an Ts'ung, the first king of Shu (now Szechwan) in W China, earlier referred to as "Sanso, King of Shoku," in the motto to Li Po's poem "Leave-taking near Shoku" in *Cathay* [*P*, 138] [EH].

5. **Lir:** Old Celtic sea-god. Pound regards seals as being Lir's daughters [cf. chapter "Branwen the Daughter of Llyr" in *Mabinogion*, where Branwen means "White Crow"].

6. **Picasso:** The reference to Picasso's seal's eyes evokes the artist's faculty for changing the shape of the things he sees. In ancient mythology the seal is the animal most closely linked with Proteus, who among other things used to assume the shape of a seal [cf. 30 below].

7. **Eleanor:** Helen of Troy, also Elena, Telus-Helena, Helen of Tyre, Tyndarida. Also Eleanor of Aquitaine [cf. 9 below].

8. 'ελέναυς and 'ελέπολις!: H, *helenaus* and *heleptolis*, "ship-destroying and city-destroying." Aeschylus's puns on the name of Helen in *Agamemnon*, 689.

9. **Eleanor:** E. of Aquitaine, 1122-1204. Like Helen of Troy, Eleanor was the archetype of the femme fatale, inspiring both strife and poetry. She was the granddaughter

of Guillaume of Poitiers, 1071-1127, 9th Duke of Aquitaine, who, according to Pound, superimposed the music of Moresco Spain upon the poetry of S France, an important cultural synthesis of different ethnic elements such as Eleanor was also destined to bring about and which Pound too had hoped to achieve for America. Eleanor married Louis VII of France and accompanied him on a crusade to the Holy Land, where she allegedly had an affair with Saladin, the great Kurdish Moslem warrior, a tale invented by her enemies and spread, for instance, in the *Chronique de Rains*. Louis divorced her and a few months later she married Henry II of England, bringing him all Aquitaine as dowry. When Henry II proved untrue and even held Eleanor captive, she turned her sons, notably the "young king" Henry and Richard (later the Lion-Heart), against their father. Her political activities and the legal tangles resulting from her two marriages were the cause of the Hundred Years War between England and France. Thus, she was truly a "Helen," agent of both love and death.

10. **Let her go . . .** : [*Iliad* III, 139-160]. The fear that the elders of Troy, the old men (the husks of life), experienced when confronted with Helen's living but death-bringing beauty [7:3, 5, 32, 35, 37].

11. **Schoeney . . .** : Schoeneus, father of Atalanta who, like Helen, through her beauty caused the death of many men. Pound is misremembering Arthur Golding's spelling, Schoenyes, in his translation of Ovid [*Meta*. X, 566-707]. For Pound an instance of the metamorphosis and transmission of beauty by translation. Refractions of ephemeral beauty through time [cf. *LE*, 235-236; 7:29; 102/730].

12. **Tyro**: Daughter of Salmoneus. She became enamored of the divine river, Enipeus. Poseidon, at the mouth of the river, took on Enipeus's form, shed sleep upon her, and, while a dark wave rose like a mountain to screen him, raped her [*Od*. XI, 235-259].

13. **Scios**: Ancient Chios, modern Scio, Aegian island about 70 miles north and slightly east of Naxos.

14. **Naxos**: Largest island of the Cyclades, famous for its wine. The island was a center of the Dionysus cult [cf. *Meta*. III, 636-637, and Homeric Hymn to Dionysos].

15. **young boy**: The young god, Bacchus, Dionysus, Zagreus, Iacchus, Lyaeus, originally Cretan, god of wine, fertility, and ecstasy whose cult arose to challenge that of Apollo. He is on his way to Naxos.

16. **vine-must**: New wine.

17. **King Pentheus**: Grandson of Cadmus. Refusing to worship Dionysus he was torn to pieces by Dionysus's followers, the Maenads, led by Pentheus's mother, who wrenched off his head and carried it home in triumph. Acoetes is telling the story of his crew's attempt to kidnap the god as a warning to Pentheus.

18. **Acoetes**: A Lydian of humble parents, skilled in navigation, captain of the ship.

19. **Lyaeus**: Refers to Dionysus in his function as the god of wine and ecstasy.

20. **Olibanum**: L, "frankincense." The Romans believed Bacchus responsible for the use of incense in ritual [cf. Ovid, *Fasti* III, 727].

21. **Lycabs and Medon**: Other members of Odysseus's crew. Ovid lists more names.

22. **dory**: The *Zeus faber*, a kind of fish.

23. **Tiresias**: Theban seer. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, he appears with Cadmus on the way up the mountain to join the women in *orgia* and worship of the god. Given the power of prophecy, he advises Pentheus to worship the god also. Pentheus pays no heed [1:7].

24. **Cadmus**: Son of Phoenician King Agenor. Europa, sister of Cadmus, was carried off by Zeus, who took the form of a bull. Sent by his father to find her, Cadmus