

The Soundscape of the *Cantos*: Some Ideas of Music in the Poetry of Ezra Pound

by Stephen J. Adams

T.S. Eliot once remarked that "it is in the concert room rather than in the opera house that the germ of a poem may be quickened."¹ Eliot was discussing the two ways in which music may bear upon poetry by analogy: through the melodiousness of words, or through some kind of quasi-musical structure. Both of these analogies are relevant to Pound; but Pound also brings music into his poetry directly, as subject matter, even to the literal extreme of printing notes on his pages. Poetical attempts to deal with music as subject matter have rarely been noteworthy. One thinks of a few passages from Shakespeare, of Milton's "Solemn Music," perhaps of some poor essay in excitability like Hardy's "Lines to a Movement of Mozart's E-Flat Symphony." Music more than most arts seems resistant to evocation in words. But in the *Cantos* Pound created a context of allusion in which musical illustrations may be introduced as easily as any other. His musical images are assimilated to his larger themes: the "factive" personality, precision in art, the economically balanced civilization. By itself, music is not one of the chief concerns of the *Cantos*, but it is one of many subordinate motifs in a thickly woven tapestry of allusion.

Music functions in the *Cantos* on three distinct levels: the literal, or the aural surface of poetry; the historical, where music is an element in Pound's paradigm of cultural history; and the moral, where music is a measure for the values of individual sensibilities. Pound does not confine himself to music *per se* but draws from the full range of aural experience, merging from natural and human noises into the simplest song, and then to music in its most complex developments. His subject, the aural sensibility in history, is operative at all times but occasionally, in the best of times, it comes into focus as verbal melopoeia or as music.

While Pound's imagist technique is widely thought to be visual, Pound integrates aural imagery into his montage. The *Cantos* are filled with sounds of nature:

Fish scales over groin muscles,

lynx-purr amid sea (2/9)²

Human sounds continue from, rather than oppose, natural sound:

Na Khi talk made out of wind noise,
 And North Khi, not to be heard amid sounds of the forest
 but to fit in with them unperceived by the game (104/738)

Human voices may be hellish:

howling, as of a hen-yard in a printing house,
 the clatter of presses . . . ; (14/61)

or heavenly:

And Tian said, with his hand on the strings of his lute
 The low sounds continuing
 after his hand left the strings,
 And the sound went up like smoke, under the leaves,
 And he looked after the sound . . . ; (13/58)

or any of the human values between:

present Mr. G. Scott whistling Lili Marlene
 with positively less musical talent
 than that of any other man of colour
 whom I have ever encountered
 but with bonhomie and good humour (79/484)

The aural surface of the *Cantos*, however, is most distinguished by its simulation of voices, voices crowded on one another, speaking from any place or time in history. The *Cantos* are filled with sounds of a dozen or more languages, and the languages have their distinctive dialects:

8th October:

Si tuit li dolh el plor
 Angold τείθνηκε
 tuit lo pro, tuit lo bes
 Angold τείθνηκε
 "an doan you think he chop an' change all the time
 stubborn az a mule, sah, stubborn as a MULE (84/537)

Pound speaks through documents, through transcribed conversation; he impersonates, repeats anecdotes, poses as a bard, or moves into his impersonal lyric melopoeia. The poem is an exercise in tone, with as much meaning conveyed by inflection as by the words themselves. It defies a silent reading which would have the "thought" free from a sounding voice. This holds true equally in the "unpoetical" historic or economic passages as in the more conventionally lyric sections.

Pound's frustrated, defamatory rant against forces that he scarcely comprehends is far removed in tone from the measured anger of the *Usura Canto*. All of this is distant again from the Confucian serenity of the paradisaical lyrics. But Pound's well-defined speaking voice implies not only a speaker and a dramatic situation but also an audience. His voice is the one that dominates the gathering and holds it together, whether it is telling a story, or denouncing fraud, or reading from the historical chronicles. In this sense, Pound is a true epic bard, even if the culture for which he is spokesman exists only in centrifugal relationship to his own imagination.

As epic bard, Pound naturally takes Homer as a principal overseer of his poem. Homeric mythology provides one of his major motifs, beginning with Odysseus in the First Canto, Homer himself in the second, and, in the same space, the Homeric feminine powers—Aphrodite, Circe, the Sirens, and Helen.³ Pound's use of Homer contrasts strikingly with that of Yeats. Pound's hero is not the manic Achilles, impelled to tragic gaiety in battle, but the cunning Odysseus; and Pound's female figures are more complex. He explicitly rejects Yeats's faceless Helen, a mere sexual stimulus to masculine action:

"Sure they want war," said Bill Yeats,
"They want all the young gals fer themselves."
That llovely unconscious world
slop over slop, and blue ribbons . . . (41/205)

And he substitutes a dual-natured goddess, a Circe capable of independent action, who can be destructive or, to the factive hero, a source of strength and knowledge. Likewise Pound turns the legend of Homer's blindness to different ends. In Yeats, the blind Homer is vatic, a medium for the power of the Helen figure; in "The Tower," the song of the blind Raftery (who is paralleled to Homer), through a combined aural and sexual stimulation, drives a group of blinded young men out into the night, "and one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone"; throughout the poem the aural world is associated with forces that overpower their victims into passivity, while the eye remains the organ of vision and control. Pound also makes use of this pattern, as we shall see, but not in connection with Homer.

In the opening of Canto ², for example, the blindness of Homer is set against the activities of a semi-divine seal, whose masterful gyrations make roads through the sea, just as "So-Shu, king of Soku, built roads"⁴ through his kingdom. The seal has "eyes of Picasso"—that is, eyes which create form; the sea is not chaos but "runs in the beach groove." Homer is first introduced as "poor old Homer blind," but Pound then pauses momentarily, breaks his cliché with a comma

("blind, as a bat"), and remembers that the ear can be a source of direction and creativity. Order is brought out of the chaos of word sounds through a significant pun on the name Eleanor or through measured verse. "Ear, ear for the sea-surge" is an exultation of triumph over blindness and chaos. The line, repeated in Canto 7, refers to a Poundian touchstone mentioned in a letter to W.H.D. Rouse:

Para thina poluphloisboio thalasses: the turn of the wave
and the scutter of receding pebbles. Years' work to get that.
Best I have been able to do is cross cut in Mauberley, led to:
imaginary

Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge,
which is totally different, and a different movement of water,
and inferior.⁵

Pound attempted the effect again in Canto 98:

Thinning their oar-blades
θίνω θαλάσσης
nothing there but an awareness (98/684)

Homer's Greek makes melody from the sound of the sea. His language is a nucleus of melopoeic form available to later poets, to Scotus Erigena, who "put greek tags in his excellent verses" (83/528), to Basinio, who did likewise (82/524), and of course to Pound.

Another curious use of Homeric melopoeia is revealed by drawing together two passages. In Canto 9 Sigismundo's ox carts make off with a quantity of marble

for the beautifying
of the *tempio* where was Santa Maria in Trivio
Where the same are now on the walls. Four hundred
ducats to be paid back to the abbazia by the said swindling
Cardinal or his heirs.

grnh! rrrnh, pthg (9/36)

The noises represent simultaneously the groaning of the oxen and the bestiality of the cardinal. Later, in Canto 39, Pound alludes to the first sighting of Circe by Odysseus' men:

Spring overborne into summer
Late spring in the leafy autumn

καλὸν ἀοιδιάει
KALON AOIDIAEI

Ἡ θεὸς ἦε γυνή . . . φθηγγώμεθα θῦσσον
e theos e guné . . . ptheggometha thasson

First honey and cheese

honey at first and then acorns (39/193-4)

Pound, it seems, has borrowed his typographic "pthg" from a nicely observed bit of Homeric sound effect, "phtheggometha thasson," spoken just before the men become swine. The point is minor, but once noticed it serves like the "sea-surge" touchstone to show how Homer can create meaningful form out of natural sound. This "form" gathers in the *Cantos* a moral centre of gravity: Homer's "ear for the sea-surge" is an instrument of creation, not of self-indulgence.

II

On the second, the historical, level of the *Cantos* music is one of the arts which measures historical sensibilities. Pound implies three "golden ages" of music: classical Greece, Provence, and, as a parallel, Confucian China. Each is a semi-mythical *paradiso terrestre*; each is accompanied by an idealized music which (conveniently) lies beyond the reach of the historical musicologist, its sound, the poet says, "as of the nightingale too far off to be heard" (20/90). Music of more accessible periods is touched on lightly and unsystematically, generally supporting notions of artistic and cultural decline. In all, however, musical *exempla* are subordinated to literature and the plastic arts which Pound knew better and found more tractable as subject matter. The history of music, moreover, does not coincide exactly with the Poundian curve of art history, his beloved Quattrocento, for example, being rather less than a great age of composition.

For the lost music of Greece Pound substitutes a mythic music drawn from the poets. His visionary choric dances combine leading paradisaical themes—vital artistic form, fertility of the soil, sexual fecundity—with the "beat, beat whirr, thud, in the soft turf" of the goddesses (4/13); so also the "castagnettes of the bassarids" in the magnificent invocation to the lynx ("keep the phylloxera from my grape vines") at the end of Canto 79. These visions have a counterpart in the recurrent festival processions, which ring noisily with secular hosannas celebrating the welfare of *paradiso terrestre*:

to the sound always of drums and trumpets
crying VIVA FERDINANDO and all in parts of the piazza
were flames in great number and grenades burning
to the sound of bombs and of mortaretti and the shooting of
guns and of pistols in the chapel of the Piazza (44/224)

In later cantos Pound adopts another myth of the form-giving divine, the myth of Amphion. The name first appears in the startling context of the John Adams cantos (52/348-9), and when it reappears in the Rock-Drill group it retains its political significance, since the musician who raised the walls of Thebes with his music is both archetypal musician and city-builder. In Cantos 90 and 93 he is builder of the temple:

yet listened to Fan-kouai
and had gone out of Hien-yang the palace, aroused.
And he told Siao-ho to edit the law code

Thereon the men in the vaudevilles
sang of peace and of empire
Au douce temps de pascor
And Tchang-tsong wrote of music, its principles
Sun-tong made record of rites (54/276-7)

Kao is a "hot lord," but he directs his "phallic heart" (99/697) by the force of his Confucian will, leaving the palace though aroused; the consequences, naturally, are a new edition of the laws and a musical revival, and the anecdote elicits an appropriate Provençal tag from Joios of Tolosa.

Music declines, of course, from such ideals. Later in the Dynastic cantos we hear that "Y TSONG his son brought a jazz age" (55/292). Music in the western tradition follows a similar declining curve, though it is not traced chronologically. Arnold Dolmetsch, celebrated in the well-known "libretto" of Canto 81 his part in the revival of old music, may reappear in a Confucian context in Canto 99:

As Dolmetsch or Big Top
& that scholars read Odes
and turn conversation toward justice (99/704)

But the revival of lost musical values, the music of Dowland and Lawes (Canto 81), of Vivaldi (Canto 92), of Mozart (honoured above all other composers in the *Cantos*, except perhaps for Clement Janequin), threatens to be drowned by the louder music of "Spewcini the all too human" (80/510-1) and the "djassban":

Languor has cried unto languor
about the marshmallow roast
(Let us speak of the osmosis of persons)
The wail of the phonograph has penetrated their marrow
(Let us . . .
The wail of the pornograph) (29/143)

The "Djassban" is, perhaps surprisingly, associated with the languor of the marshmallow roast because its music is self-indulgent and passive. Prophetically, Pound hears in "the wail of the phonograph" the destruction of active listening; as "pornograph" it becomes a pacifier, a diversion of the honest sexuality of virgins and epebes. Pound refrains from any quasi-sophisticated indulgence in "pop," but his views on jazz may be contrasted with the African drums of Leo Frobenius:

The white man who made the tempest in Baluba
 Der im Baluba das Gewitter gemacht hat . . .
 they spell words with a drum beat. (38/189)

The drum beats here are not the frenetic surrender of jazz, nor the rectangular militarism of the "bumm drum" (79/485): they are precise enough to convey a verbal message. They are heard attentively, not luxuriously.

III

Pound once entitled an article "Music and Brains" in the hope, he said, "of avoiding the usual discussion of music and morals."⁷ Still, his views on music and his aesthetic in general assume in the *Cantos* a generally moral cast. Canto 13 sets the tone:

And Kung said, "Without character you will
 be unable to play on that instrument
 Or to execute the music fit for the Odes. (13/60)

"The function of music," says Pound, "is to present an example of order, or a less muddled congeries and proportion than we have yet about us in daily life. Hence the emphasis in Pythagoras and Confucius."⁸ This order creates an inner sense of well-being which is the source of creative energy; thus "the magic of music is in its effect on volition. A sudden clearing of the mind of rubbish and the re-establishment of a sense of proportion" (*Kulchur*, 283). "Awareness restful & fake is fatiguing," says Canto 85. The volition is expressed partly in the self-discipline required for technique. Hence the moralization of Pound's imagist credo, "I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity."⁹ In other words, "without character you will be unable to play on that instrument." The poet cannot expect to achieve mastery without devoting as much care to technique as the average piano teacher; the laws of physics are inexorable to the novice who fails to place his fingers correctly or produce a clear tone. Pound's paradisaic harmony, then, is less an impersonal cosmic metaphor than an expression of individual moral character: "A man's paradise is his good nature" (93/623).

But music has its threatening aspect as well. Its power is benign only when, in vorticist terms, it appeals to the active conceptual faculties rather than to the passive and receptive: "A tired man has the right to gentle oblivion. But the active man has also his right to lay up treasures in memory; to hang the walls of his mind with musical master work" ("Music and Brains"). Pound's "active man," obviously to be admired, argues here an aesthetic which meets the moral objections against music made by Plato, or by St. Augustine (who feared

C.13
 test of
 sincerity

that melody would seduce his attention from the holy words). Pound accepts their views, but as threats to an art which may otherwise resist hedonism.

This theme, elaborated in the *Cantos*, is first treated in a singularly inept poem called "Effects of Music upon a Company of People," which Pound printed once only, in *Ripostes* (1912). The first section of the poem contains two movements, "Temple qui fut" and "Poissons d'or":

1.

A soul curls back
Their souls like petals,
Then, long, spiral,
Like those of a chrysanthemum curl
Smoke-like up and back from the
Vavicol, the calyx,
Pale green, pale gold, transparent,
Green of plasma, rose-white,
Spirate like smoke,
Curled,
Vibrating,
Slowly, waving slowly.
O flower animate!
O crowd of foolish people!

2.

The petals!
On the tip of each the figure
Delicate
See, they dance, step to step.
Flora to festival,
Twine, bend, bow,
Frolic involve ye.
Woven the step,
Woven the thread, the moving.
Ribands they move,
Wave, bow to the centre.
Pause, rise, deepen in colour,
And fold in drowsily.

The second movement is "From a thing by Schumann":

Breast high, floating and welling
 Their soul, moving beneath the satin,
 Plied the gold threads,
 Pushed at the gauze above it.
 The notes beat upon this,
 Beat and indented it;
 Rain dropped and came and fell upon this,
 Hail and snow,
 My sight gone in the flurry!

And then across the white silken,
 Bellied up, as a sail bellies to the wind,
 Over the fluid tenuous, diaphanous,
 Over this curled a wave, greenish,
 Mounted and overwhelmed it.
 This membrane floated above,
 And bellied out by the up-pressing soul.

Then came a mer-host,
 And after them legion of Romans,
 The usual, dull, theatrical!

This poem exposes a disjunction, I think, between Pound's sense of artistic morality and his temperamental inclinations. The images do not draw on the programmes suggested by Debussy's titles (assuming in the first an allusion to "La Cathedrale Engloutie") but stand for subjective responses to the music, albeit of the naive, picture-making variety; the responses are attributed to an audience, while Pound turns away with scornful remarks, which, being unprepared however, are unconvincing. Like Tennyson's conclusion to "The Palace of Art," Pound's remarks too baldly contradict the feeling of the preceding imagery. The crowd is "foolish," one supposes, because it luxuriates in imagery which in the poem, however, carries no negative connotations. In "Temple qui fut" the audience is a collective "soul" which forms a chrysanthemum vaguely reminiscent of Dante's paradisaical rose; an earlier poem in *A Lume Spento*, "Anima Sola," had also combined "music" with "soul," but quite without irony:

I fly on the note that ye hear not,
 On the chord that ye cannot dream

The later soul-chrysanthemum is similarly languid, hypnotic, with its imagery of floating, either in air like smoke or perhaps in water; but Pound rejects it ill-naturedly. Are we assumed to share Pound's distaste for the incantatory? The flower imagery continues in "Poissons d'or," where the petals (originally goldfish) become dancers

in a floral dance somewhat like the recurrent choric dances in the *Cantos* but with the difference that the mood ends in drowsiness. Again, I suppose, the drowsiness is its own condemnation. To the unidentified Schumann work Pound once more attributes a programmatic reaction, again with images of floating in air or in water, now with luxuriating satins and increase of titillation; the senses are overwhelmed, submerged in the power of sound ("My sight gone in the flurry!"), so that Pound dismisses the music as if with embarrassment. ("Sir," said Johnson to Boswell, "I should never hear it, if it made me such a fool.") Pound in 1912 begins to brace himself against the destructive power of art, but not yet with conviction. In "Mauberley" (1917) the separation of hedonist from vorticist has proceeded further, but not, I think, to the degree reached in the *Cantos*.

Pound summed up his final attitude toward artistic hedonism in the "Lotophagoi" passage of Canto 20. Here much of the imagery from "Effects of Music upon a Company of People" reappears, but tinged throughout with a suitable ambivalence and set in a context of Homeric disaster. Music is no longer the central issue of the canto, as it was of the earlier poem, but it persists as one of the several unifying motifs. Beginning with "Ligur' aoide" (the fragment of Sirens' song) and a phrase from Bernart de Ventadorn, the canto then relates the charming anecdote of Pound's meeting with Provençalist Emil Levy—Pound bearing the Arnaut Daniel melodies he had uncovered in Milan, Levy suggesting an ingenious emendation of Arnaut's text, both men seeking to restore a lost music through their labours. Then follows a long, complex passage which Pound has annotated in a well-known letter to his father. Pound there misleads, I think, in using the term "general paradiso" (*Letters*, 210); the state of the Lotophagoi, both in Homer and in Pound, is ambiguous to say the least, so that any paradise must be considered illusory. The canto merges from Nicolo d'Este's delirium into a celebration of the female principle:

Jungle:
 Glaze green and red feathers, jungle,
 Basis of renewals, renewals;
 Rising over the soul, green virid, of the jungle

The female is variously identified thereafter, but the presiding spirit eventually becomes the Homeric Circe.

Several strands of imagery are woven into the texture: from "Effects of Music" come images of bodilessness or weightlessness, floating in water or air, overwhelming fragrance of incense, wafting like smoke, like flower petals, enjoying satiny cloths:

Floating. Below, sea churning shingle.
 Floating, each on invisible raft,
 On the high current, invisible fluid,
 Borne over the plain, recumbent,
 The right arm cast back,
 the right wrist for a pillow,
 The left hand like a calyx,
 Thumb held against finger, and third,
 The first fingers petal'd up, the hand as a lamp,
 A calyx.
 From toe to head
 The purple, pale-blue smoke as of incense;
 Wrapped each in burnous, smoke as the olibanum's

Passivity is reflected in the participial rhythms: there are no active verbs. The prominent calyx, borrowed from the earlier poem, is related to the whirlpool which appears presently, and also to "V shaped," and thus to female sexuality. As the "vortex" of vorticism it is the threat which, once mastered, becomes a source of energy—Circe, Charybdis, the cup of the lotos. But the Lotophagoi are overpowered; their wills destroyed, Pound devises for them a doom not found in Homer:

Each man on his cloth, as on raft, on
 The high invisible current;
 On toward the fall of water;
 And then over that cataract,
 In air, strong, the bright flames, V shaped;
 Nel fuoco
 D'amore mi mise, nel fuoco d'amore mi mise

The passive floating ends in disaster, waterfall and whirlpool, just as in the early poem it had ended in contempt:

And as the olibanum bursts into flame,
 The bodies so flamed in the air, took flame,
 "Mi mise, il mio sposo novello."
 Shot from stream into spiral,

 Or followed the water, Or looked back to the flowing;
 Others approaching that cataract

As elsewhere in the *Cantos*, the drugs and incense of the Lotophagoi are images for destroyed volition. Compare the Buddhist incense in the Chinese history cantos, or in the Pisan Cantos the inversion from Baudelaire, "Le paradis n'est pas artificiel" (76/460). The voluptuousness of the Lotophagoi is in fact a deceit. Their rafts are "invisible," and so is the fluid in which they suppose themselves to

float; they float indiscriminately in water, in air, or as flames; the recurrent "as" ("as of incense," "as if joyous") suggests that their pleasure is mere deranged imagining. The "love" they feel is autoerotic. And the music they hear is the untransmuted gibberish of the sea:

And the blue water dusky beneath them,
pouring there into the cataract,
With noise of sea over shingle,
striking with:
hah hah ahah thmm, thunb, ah
woh woh araha thumm, bhaaa

Writing about Arnold Dolmetsch, Pound once made a distinction, relevant here, between "pattern" music (or abstract music) and "emotion" music, which he says is "like a drug":

you must have more drug, and more noise each time or this effect, this impression which works from the outside, in from the nerves and sensorium upon the self—is no use, its effect is constantly weaker and weaker (*Literary Essays*, 434)

"Emotion" music is a variety of program music, merely imitative, merely pleasure-seeking; like drugs, it works upon a passive sensorium, and its effects fade with familiarity. Such music is the object of St. Augustine's fears. But there is another kind of music, a "pattern" music which can focus the volition and order the disciplined mind.

The Lotophagoi are not villains. They pronounce judgement upon themselves in a brief speech:

Reclining,
With the silver spilla,
The ball as of melted amber, coiled, caught up, and turned.
Lotophagoi of the suave nails, quiet, scornful,
Voce profundo:
"Feared neither death nor pain for this beauty;
"If harm, harm to ourselves."

Pound admires their single-mindedness, their courage, just as he is perilously attracted by their mirage of beauty. Unlike the usurer, the Lotophagoi have not hurt others. Their sin is not malice but surrender of will. Pound later makes the point more explicitly, echoing Canto 20:

All other signs are open, usura,
 This alone not yet understood.
 Opium Shanghai, Opium Singapore
 "with the silver spilla . . .
 amber, caught up and turned . . .
 Lotophagoi. (100/799)

Pound's hell does not contain as many gradations as Dante's, but the fate of the Lotophagoi marks one of his most basic distinctions. A tired man "has his right to gentle oblivion." These sinners are at least harmless.

Contrasted with the Lotophagoi are the companions of Odysseus, who answer their own speech:

"What gain with Odysseus,
 "They that died in the whirlpool
 "And after many vain labours,
 "Living by stolen meat, chained to the rowingbench,
 "That he should have a great fame
 "And lie by night with the goddess?
 "Their names are not written in bronze
 "Nor their rowing sticks set with Elpenor's;
 "Nor have they mound by sea-board.
 "That saw never the olives under Spārtha
 "With the leaves green and then not green,
 "The click of light in their branches;
 "That saw not the bronze hall nor the ingle
 "Nor lay there with the queen's waiting maids,
 "Nor had they Circe to couch-mate, Circe Titania,
 "Nor had they meats of Kalupso
 "Or her silk skirts brushing their thighs.
 "Give! What were they given?

Ear-wax.

"Poison and ear-wax,

and a salt grave by the bull-field,

"*neson amumona*, their heads like sea crows in the foam,
 "Black splotches, sea-weed under lightning;
 "Canned beef of Apollo, ten cans for a boat load."
 Ligur' aoide.

These figures are more pathetic. They have followed in the wake of Odysseus, but have failed; their sin, if any, is unclear, at least in Pound's version; they may well look with envy on the doomed but contented Lotophagoi.

Pound bases his imagery on Homer, but conflates several episodes. The voices speak in the end as the companions destroyed by Apollo for stealing the sacred cattle, and yet those men had indeed lain with the queen's waiting maids. Those that saw not Circe's ingle

had been slain by Polyphemus or the Laistrygones; the only men ever chained to the rowing-bench were those dragged off from the Loto-phagoi; the whirlpool is Charybdis, but the six lost in that episode were in fact devoured by Scylla; the "poison" is Circe's drug, from which all but Elpenor were in fact delivered; the "clear bones" are perhaps those seen scattered about the Sirens, not those of the companions at all. The voices are thus generalized, share a common fate. All die except the hero. He masters the sea, masters Circe, and most importantly for the present discussion, he masters the Sirens' song. The Sirens' singing is "keen," "song with an edge on it" (*Letters*, 210), a kind of song which we might expect Pound to approve. Yet it threatens. Singing is associated with destructive sexuality; it was the singing in Circe's house that lured the companions to their near destruction (as Pound mentions in Canto 39). Odysseus is allowed to hear the Sirens, for the hero must experience the most powerful music known; he masters it through trickery and a fore-knowledge of its dangers, while lesser men must be given ear-wax. The "ligur' aoidé" which closes the passage as it had begun it thus gathers up in all its ambiguity the peril and reward of artistic adventure.

IV

Pound's most impressive display of music as a constructive force is Canto 75. After the long, chaotic canto preceding, in which Pound seems to shake his head and regain consciousness after the war, these two pages of printed music with a bare seven lines of text stand as a monument to sanity and permanence:

Out of Phlegethon!
out of Phlegethon,
Gerhart
art thou come forth out of Phlegethon?
with Buxtehude and Klages in your satchel, with the
Standebuch of Sachs in yr/ luggage
—not of one bird but of many. (75/450)

Then follows, in Gerhart Munch's hand, the violin part of the Janequin "Chanson des Oiseaux," which pianist Munch had arranged for Pound's series of concerts in Rapallo. Phlegethon, in Dante the river of boiling blood where the violent are tormented, is a fitting synecdoche for the war; it connects the canto with the last phrase of the preceding, "we who have passed over Lethe." Pound asks, as he has asked about others, whether Munch is still alive; and he recalls Munch's last visit to Rapallo, taking time from his duties of entertaining the German troops, and bearing evidences of his culture in his luggage. Buxtehude, admired by Bach, was scarcely more than a name

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 in the 1930's. Klages is obscure, but most likely he is Charles Klage (d. 1850), a French guitarist, pianist, and composer, who made keyboard arrangements of Haydn symphonies.¹⁰ Pound nowhere attaches special significance to either name, so that one infers that here they simply represent Munch's curiosity, and hence a possibility for the survival of culture in Europe. Likewise Hans Sachs, though as a German troubadour he fits more closely with Pound's usual preoccupations. Perhaps there is a hint that Pound would substitute the sane, historical Sachs for Wagner's glamorization.

The last line of the text represents Olga Rudge's first response to the Janequin:

The gist, the pith, the unbreakable fact is there in the two pages of violin part (whether Munch has shown greater talent in his later editing of Vivaldi is beside the point). The point is "not one bird but a lot of birds" as our violinist said on first playing it.¹¹

The Janequin work bore immense personal significance to Pound. It epitomized the entire Rapallo experiment, being the first on the first program of the first concert series (October 10, 1933). The dual purpose of these concerts was to promulgate the treasure of music at hand in manuscript in Italy, and to demonstrate, as an "application of Douglasite principles to a concrete situation in space and time,"¹² what a small town could do to produce good music. Working with Munch and Olga Rudge, plus local and occasionally visiting musicians, Pound in the 1933-34 season alone produced no fewer than twenty-three concerts. His programs concentrated on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music, highlights being a cycle of newly edited sonatas by William Young (the first modern performances), a collection of thirteenth-century *laude* edited by Fernando Liuzzi, and a great deal of music specially arranged by Munch from the private collection of Oscar Chilesotti (a specialist in Italian lute music who had died in 1916). The Janequin piece had turned up in the Chilesotti material in a lute transcription by Francesco da Milano. Munch arranged another group of lute pieces as a suite under the title "Kalendamaja," after a well-known twelfth-century *estampie*; Pound, who called the suite "un dono a un repertorio permanente" and tried to have it published in Paris, refers to it in Canto 113.¹³ The complex history of the Janequin *chanson* is significant; transcribed first by Francesco da Milano, then by Gerhart Munch, it retains through each metamorphosis its innate *forma*:

These sounds would have no literary or poetic value if you took the music away, but when Francesco da Milano reduced it for the lute, the birds were still in the music. And when Munch transcribed it for modern instruments the birds were still there. They ARE still there in the violin part.¹⁴

The medium by which the music is printed is itself significant, for on discovering hoards of music still in manuscript, first in the Chilesotti collection and later in the Vivaldi material at Turin, Pound agitated for an inexpensive means of publication: "The micro-photographic edition of music shd. NOT be delayed. It OUGHT, in a decent world, to be WELL under weigh before this present booklet gets to the print shop" (*Kulchur*, 151-52). Pound's urgency to make this music available in an economically feasible format is demonstrated and can still be felt in the pages of Canto 75.

Pound, somewhat perversely, seemed to prefer Munch's transcription of the "Chanson des Oiseaux" even to Janequin's original. Having secured a copy of Henry Expert's edition of five Janequin chansons (*Les Maîtres Musiciens de la Renaissance Française*, vol. 7), Pound persuaded a local choral society to perform them:

At the risk of thumping the pulpit, I reassert this distinction between art made for USE—that is painting to have painted into the plaster and stay while one lives there—and painting to stick in an exhibition to catch the eye of the passing possible buyer or vendor; music for who can play it and distinct from music made from the least common, and most vulgar, denominator of the herd in the largest possible hall. Having heard the original Janequin sung badly, I am inclined to wonder whether any chorus was ever sufficiently perfect in execution to give the intervals with the clarity of the fiddle, or if F. da Milano's lute could have rendered them effectively. There is no valid reason for idolatry or antiquolatry. There is no reason why the recreation of beauty should fall always below the original¹⁵

The Janequin, as Pound and the Savona Singers discovered, presents formidable difficulties to the choir; Munch's version, however, is easily accessible to the amateur. But Pound, even more perversely, evidently preferred the violin part alone, as he must have heard Olga Rudge practise it. "If the piano obscures the fiddle," he said, "I have a perfect right to HEAR Janequin's intervals, his melodic conjunctions from the violin solo" (*Kulchur*, 151). Thus he refashions the work to fit with his ideal of musical beauty, melody unadorned, uncomplicated by counterpoint (for which the negligible verbal values of the original were sacrificed anyway) or harmony. "The statement is in the violin part, which stands as food for the critical eye (or ear, better say ear) even without the 'accompaniment'" ("Janequin, Francesco").

Furthermore, Pound in scattered remarks forces an historical link between Janequin and the unharmonized bird lyrics of the Provençal troubadours. "Sentire Francesco non è semplicemente sentire Janequin su un altre strumento," he explained to his Rapallo audience: "Ridotta oggi per uno strumento ad arco noi quando sentiamo la Rudge, sentiamo forse una musica più arcaica che non la sentisse l'uditorio

Cinquecentesco."¹⁶ Janequin's birds come "out of Arnaut (possibly), out of immemorial and unknown . . . ;" it is possible to trace a single tradition "from Arnaut and his crew down to Janequin, where a different susceptibility has replaced it" (*Kulchur*, 250-51 and 60). Janequin replaced, that is, the verbal values of the troubadours with counterpoint that obscures the words—hence the more "archaic" feeling of the work when played on a single violin.

Pound's linking of Janequin with Arnaut raises the old aesthetic problem of programme music. Pound's attitude was divided: his vorticist principles favoured non-representational forms, and yet he retained a naive fascination for both representational music like Janequin's and mimetic onomatopoeia like Arnaut Daniel's. To rationalize, he declared that music may properly represent only one subject matter—sound (*Kulchur*, 152-53). Sound is still the "primary pigment" (as he called it) of music,¹⁷ and Pound condemned romantic or impressionist music which sought pictorial or even graphically emotional effects. The range of acceptable program music is thus even more severely restricted than in the usual course of things; yet Pound sometimes speaks as if the tradition were on an equal footing with abstract music: "Hindemith's music is as different from Stravinsky as Bach is from Janequin, or as Picasso's most cubist and abstract work was from Douanier Rousseau's portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire."¹⁸ The valid programme music tradition runs from the troubadour mimetics through Janequin who, like an imagist poet, may be praised for accurate representation, though only so long as he attempts to represent only sounds such as bird song. His accuracy is implied in Olga Rudge's recognition, "not of one bird but of many."

In another Italian article, Pound further elaborates his distinction between the valid program music of Janequin or Vivaldi and the representationalism of the romantics, the impressionists, or even the futurists led by Marinetti and Luigi Russolo: Janequin, he says, draws strength from a tradition of bird music, as did Vivaldi after him; but in Janequin, the words have no importance, even being reduced to inarticulate noises ("gnouf gnouf" for the stag in the "Canzone della caccia"). Instrumental transcription, however, allows us to reach back to a period three centuries before Janequin.¹⁹ Janequin's art marks a dividing line. The *chansons* which disappointed Pound (hoping to have uncovered a later Arnaut) are a decadence, "un distacco netto e chiaro" from Provence. The relation of Janequin to Arnaut is almost that of Petrarch to Dante. Words are sacrificed to counterpoint; the programme overrides the text ("gnouf gnouf") and injures melody. Arnaut's melodies had been clear: "The best smith, as Dante called Arnaut Daniel, made the birds sing IN HIS WORDS; I don't mean that he merely referred to birds singing" (*ABC of Reading*, 53). Yet in

the version for solo violin some of these anterior virtues may still be heard at the intervals of Janequin. The mimetics, separated from text and voice, remain melodic: the bird song is not just notated, music is made from it. A modern orchestra may reproduce the sounds of "una fiera di campagna," or even a futuristic "sinfonia di gatti," but at the cost of melody. The melodic fragments, whether mimetic or abstract, become like the "short hard bits of rhythm hammered down, worn down so that they are indestructible and unbendable" (*Kulchur*, 94-95), that a Stravinsky or a George Antheil would recombine to make new musical forms in our own century. In this sense, Janequin's music in the successive transcriptions of Francesco da Milano and Gerhart Munch is superior to the original.

The transmutation of bird song into art is a persistent motif in the *Cantos* that has not been much noticed. Form is wrought out of flux; Homer heard the sea and wrote of the *poluphloisboio thalasses*; Arnaut Daniel, Janequin, listened to the birds and, rather than allowing themselves to be merely lulled by the sounds, invented new ways of putting sounds together. The bird population of the *Cantos* is numerous, and many passages lend resonance to the song of Canto LXXV:

2 on 2
 what's the name of the bastard? D'Arezzo, Gui d'Arezzo
 notation

3 on 3
 chiacchierona the yellow bird
 to rest 3 months in bottle

(auctor)

by the two breasts of Tellus. (79/487)

The birds are the natural source of song, and (playfully) of musical notation as they perch on the wires outside the prison camp at Pisa; but they are semi-ordered only, like the noise of the young horse that "whinnies against the sound of the bumm band" a few lines later. Pound's mind plays among these associations without bringing order to them:

Be welcome, O cricket my grillo, but you must not
 sing after taps.

Another singer, the cricket, though undaunted by regulations, is subject to artistic metamorphosis:

So Salzburg reopens
 Qui suona Wolfgang grillo
 P^o viola da gamba. (78/480)

The sounds of nature require human shapings, the quasi-moral discipline of art:

Be glad poor beaste, love follows after thee
 Till the cricket hops
 but does not chirrp in the drill field
 8th day of September
 f f
 d g write the birds in their treble scale
 Terreus! Terreus! (82/525)

The birds sing, they spell their music on the wires, but they make no more meaning than the "terreu" of mute Philomela.

In the very last lines of the *Cantos*, however—so often misread as a simple admission of failure—in the fragment headed "Notes for Canto 97 et seq.," the birds return in a paradisaal setting:

For the blue flash and the moments
 benedetta
 the young for the old
 that is tragedy
 And for one beautiful day there was peace
 Brancusi's bird
 in the hollow of pine trunks
 or when the snow was like sea foam
 Twilit sky leaded with elm boughs. (117/801)

Brancusi, cited near the beginning of Pound's *Paradiso* in Canto 85 ("One of those days . . . when I would not have given 15 minutes of my time for anything under heaven") returns in the last, having turned the natural bird into artistic permanence. Likewise the Bernart de Ventadorn of "Can vei la lauzeta mover":

La faillite de Francois Bernouard, Paris
 or a field of larks at Allegre,
 "es laissa cader"
 so high toward the sun and then falling,
 "di joi sas alas"
 to set here the roads of France. (117/802)

"In avibus intellige studia spiritualia," said Richard of St. Victor: "Watch birds to understand how spiritual things move."²⁰ Order is instilled in the mind sympathetically. The magic of music is in its effect on volition. The roads of France, set there by the creative will of rational government, make a paradisaal Provence as accessible as the sun rays to the lark.

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NOTES

1. "The Music of Poetry," *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957), p. 38.
2. All references to the *Cantos* are cited from *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, rev. ed., 1972); 2/9 means Canto 2, page 9.
3. See Daniel Pearlman's analysis of the Sirens, Circe, and Aphrodite in Canto 1, *The Barb of Time: On the Unity of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 41-45.
4. *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (1935; New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 100; see also Hugh Kenner, *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* (1951; New York: Kraus, 1968), p. 318.
5. *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, 1950), pp. 274-75.
6. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), p. 330.
7. "Music and Brains," *Listener*, 16 (2 December 1936), p. 1068.
8. *Guide to Kulchur* (1938; New Directions, 1952), p. 255.
9. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1954), p. 9.
10. Louisann Oakes, "An Explication of Canto LXXV," *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, 5 (1964), p. 105. According to Fétis, Klage lived for a time in Gerhart Munch's native Dresden, published songs, arrangements of symphonies (especially Haydn's), and a handbook of music theory.
11. "Janequin, Francesco da Milano," *Townsman*, 1 (January 1938), p. 18.
12. "Music and Money," *New English Weekly*, 7 (2 May 1935), p. 60.
13. "Calda accoglienza ai musicisti Tigullini a Genova," *Il Mare* (25 November 1933), p. 2. Detailed discussion of the Rapallo concerts may be found in my doctoral dissertation *Ezra Pound and Music* (University of Toronto, 1974).
14. *ABC of Reading* (1934; New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 54.
15. *Polite Essays* (London: Faber, 1937), p. 195.
16. "Inverno Musicale: Il secondo concerto: Martedì 14 novembre . . .," *Il Mare* (11 November 1933), p. 3.
17. *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1917; Hesse: Marvell Press, 1960), pp. 81-94, summarizes Pound's theory of "primary pigment" and draws relationships with abstract and programmatic music.

18. "Ligurian View of a Venetian Festival," *Music & Letters*, 18 (January 1937), p. 40.

19. A questo proposito tocco due tasti: primo, il cosiddetto "Program Music" di Vivaldi, cioè la musica che non è pura costruzione matematica ed emozionale, ma che "dipinge."

Nella letteratura, dopo Flaubert, si discute lungamente delle virtù. Cerco di imprimere questa differenza. Esiste della musica che suggerisce certe cose, ad esempio una fiera di campagna. Con l'orchestra moderna si fanno delle sonorità imitative, ad esempio una sinfonia di gatti. Esiste nello sviluppo della musica un distacco netto e chiaro fra medioevo e il Rinascimento. Una differenza netta come fra l'epoca di Pier della Francesca e Pisanello e la pittura di Raffaello.

Ascoltiamo una musica rappresentativa del Vivaldi, ad esempio: il cuculo. L'uccello si sente chiaramente fra gli altri suoni. Ma questa non è una scoperta del Vivaldi, anzi una eredità culturale. Vivaldi, Couperin, Dacquin facevano queste cose dilettevoli. Se invece ascoltiamo uno studio anteriore, apprendiamo fin dove arrivava quest'arte due secoli prima.

Arriviamo con questo processo a Janequin Sentendo il violino solo, si raggiunge un'epoca almeno tre secoli anteriore a Janequin, nato verso il 1475 e pubblicato nel '500.

Arnaldo Daniello . . . ha lasciato poesie dove si registra il suono degli uccelli nelle parole stesse. La musica è perduta, ma tutta la grande arte degli antichi trovatori si vantava di congiungere parola e nota. Quindi la musica, per essere esaltata dai contemporanei e da Dante . . . era per forza coerente colle parole. Fra Arnaldo e Janequin distinguiamo una decadenza e uno sviluppo. Le parole di Arnaldo sono poesia, il senso essendo congiunto alla frase. Per Janequin le parole non hanno grande importanza e si riducono—nel coro—a suoni inarticolati, per esempio: "gnouf, gnouf" per il cervo nella "Canzoni della caccia." Questo genere d'arte ai nostri giorni si illustrò magnificamente nel "Quand j'oi la tambourine" di Debussy, colle parole di Charles d'Orleans "Studi Tigulliani," *Il Mare* (25 April 1936), p. 1.

20. *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973), p. 73.