

DEEP RUSTICATION IN CANTO CI

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Arriving roughly halfway through *Thrones*, Canto CI is pivotal not only to this decad but to Pound's entire project in *The Cantos*. The canto exhibits a fascination with the Na-Khi Chinese ethnic minority and its matriarchal social structures, modulated by glancing attention to the cultural heritage of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty. Interleaved within this complex Chinese terrain is further exploration of the Napoleonic era and the aftermath of Revolutionary ideals, and a passing glance at the lost cause of Fascist Italy. Whilst there exists some excellent, if strictly non-specialist scholarly work on the role of the Na-Khi of south-western China in this and other cantos within *Thrones*, the wider implications for *The Cantos* have yet to be fully explored. Pound's reading of Joseph Rock's botanical and ethnographic studies of the Na-Khi opens up some fertile biographical and historical space in which to think through Pound's latter-day internal exile at St Elizabeths. In this canto Pound engages one of his more striking strategies with regard to cultural and political commentary: he modulates an imperial centre (Napoleon) with a periphery (the Na-Khi). The added dynamism of the Mongolian Khanate itself shifts radically from periphery to centre and back again in its rise and decline within Chinese Imperial history, in turn reflecting the rise and fall of Mussolini's Italy. What is the reason for this strategy at this point in *The Cantos* beyond intellectual habit and long-standing meditation upon political power and its ephemeral agency?

The following commentary on the canto explores precisely how Pound works through a poetics of exile first glimpsed in Canto XLIX, the 'Seven Lakes' canto, and which reaches a lyrical apogee in the *Pisan Cantos*. Pound draws on an American literary precedent of politically imbued exile (epitomised in the figure of Henry David Thoreau) as well as his prior investigations into Chinese poetic and artistic traditions of exile, such as that of the Tang Dynasty poet Du

Fu and the 'Eight Views' genre of painting which arose in the Song Dynasty. This aesthetics of exile self-consciously appropriates the figure of the *literati*: the exiled courtier using his time 'fishing' in contemplation, awaiting recall to the imperial centre. Pound drew on this trope during the 1930s and in the *Pisan Cantos*, but his situation in St Elizabeths was markedly different, an entrenched internal exile with little hope of any symbolic imperial recall. His use of the Na-Khi material might then suggest a different complexion to his exile, one more in the spirit of Boethian consolation than deferred ambition. This in turn colours his treatment of Napoleon and especially Talleyrand in Canto CI and elsewhere in *Thrones*, confirming a more circumspect fusion of prosody and political exposition. The *paradiso terrestre* becomes very local indeed: occupying the place of writing and reading, a temporal and temporary salve to the 'enormous tragedy of the dream.'

CANTO CI AND ITS PLACE IN THE SERIES

A detailed assessment of the way Pound marshals his sources and themes in Canto CI will benefit from a brief gloss of its context in *Thrones* more generally. *Thrones* continues the project of *Rock-Drill* in establishing and examining aspirations of artistic, social and political progress throughout history, as well as critically reflecting upon various threats to this discourse of perfectibility. Following from the 'enormous tragedy of the dream' (LXXIV/445)¹ in the descent back into war in the *Pisan Cantos*, the postwar cantos offer a displaced glimpse of the *paradiso terrestre* in the knowledge of exile from the paradisaical state itself. Pound stated in an interview with Donald Hall that '*Thrones* concerns the states of mind of people responsible for something more than their personal conduct.' He compares his project with Dante's *Paradiso*, where the Florentine's thrones 'are for the spirits of the people who have been responsible for good government,' whilst Pound's thrones 'are an attempt to move out from egoism and to establish some definition of an order possible or at any rate conceivable on earth.'² The thematic focal points in the deced include: the civilization of Byzantium; matters of

¹ All quotations are taken from the fifteenth printing of *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1996) and are cited by canto and page number in the form (canto/page).

² Donald Hall, 'Ezra Pound, The Art of Poetry No. 5,' *Paris Review* 28 (Summer-Fall 1962), 49.

currency and its implication in political power throughout history (Byzantium, Abd-el-Malik in the time of Emperor Justinian II, the economic publications of Alexander Del Mar); the composition and content of the *Sacred Edict* of Confucian conduct composed by the fourth Qing emperor Kangxi in the seventeenth century and considerably enlarged by later scholars (Pound provides his own version of the text in Cantos XCVIII and XCIX); and paraphrase and examination of the *Institutions of the Laws of England* by Edward Coke, a leading Elizabethan jurist and Jacobean Attorney General and Chief Justice. Amidst these landmark events and texts, Pound induces moments of exile and rustication in his allusions to Na-Khi rituals, particularly those associated with the propitiation of Heaven. This pendular motion is familiar from earlier sequences in *The Cantos*, but the sense of displacement and exile runs deeper, reflecting Pound's own sense of internal exile at St Elizabeths. This dynamic is evident in the compositional structure of individual cantos and of *Thrones* as a whole.

The allusive density and dispersed text surface of *Thrones* invites and resists formal propositions concerning its conceptual structure. The paradisaical tendency implied in its title is embodied in fragmented glimpses of the 'earthly paradise' of the Na-Khi, mediated by the texts of Joseph Rock and Peter Goullart.³ Peter

³ Joseph F. Rock's extensive contact with the Na-Khi began in 1922 when he worked for the United States Department of Agriculture and then the National Geographic society in Yunnan Province; he returned in 1927 under the auspices of Harvard University; and from 1930 to 1943 conducted his botanical and ethnographic studies without institutional patronage. During this latter time Rock translated and annotated some 700 manuscripts in both pictographic and syllabic scripts, detailing over a hundred distinct Na-Khi ceremonies, and provided synopses of over a thousand other manuscripts. Rock had prepared this work for publication in four volumes, with hundreds of photographic plates, but the entire work was lost when Japanese forces destroyed the printer's offices in Shanghai in 1941. Rock departed Yunnan for Calcutta with his manuscript notebooks amounting to over five thousand pages of translations, but these too were lost when the S. S. Richard Hovey, the vessel on which they were to be transported to the United States, was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine and 'twelve years of work were sent with it to the bottom of the Arabian Sea' [Joseph F. Rock, 'The ²Muan ¹Bpö Ceremony: or the Sacrifice to Heaven as Practices by the ¹Na-²Khi,' *Monumenta Serica* 13 (1948), 2]. Following the Second World War Rock returned to Yunnan under the auspices of the Harvard-Yenching Institute and reconstructed part of his work, published as *The Ancient Na-khi*

Makin associates the deep ecology of this world—suggested in the repeated references to oak, juniper, rhododendron, lichen, ravines, streams, meadows, and so on—with Pound’s more general pursuit of exotica in *The Cantos*. Esoteric markers of ecological or ritual significance, such fragments as ‘Forest thru ice into emerald [...] *Pinus armandi*’ (CI/743) are suspended from their source text.⁴ Such allusiveness combines with Pound’s incessant tendency to explain: ‘Hence the self-assertion against learned authority: hurling the library on to the page, challenging editorial professors. Hence also the manner of the technical note, as if jotted down by the expert in a hurry.’⁵ Makin discerns a cyclical balance between the various cantos of *Thrones*, where blocks of research are developed in two-canto segments and adumbrated with a gathering of fragments ‘shelved’ and reprised from earlier in Pound’s epic. Massimo Bacigalupo detects a ‘void’ of largely unassimilated material at the centre of *Thrones*, bookended by the heavily documentary Cantos XCVI-XCIX and CVII-CIX, with the moderate exception of Cantos CI and CII.⁶

The arrangement of text material in *Thrones* complements and reinforces its prosodic and bibliographic experimentation. *Rock-Drill* concludes with the first half of two lines of Homer, in Greek, in which Leucothea advises Odysseus to ‘get rid of paraphernalia’ and to save himself with her ‘bikini,’⁷ and *Thrones* begins by completing this citation. Canto XCVI enunciates Pound’s textual and documentary preoccupations in its subject matter and its physical arrangement on the page. Opening with a Roman numeral and two

Kingdom of Southwest China, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1947). Pound may have been introduced to Rock’s publications by P. H. Fang, a constant visitor to St Elizabeths from 1953 who was a native of Lijiang intimately familiar with Na-Khi ceremonies and pictographic writing. Pound also knew Peter Goullart’s study of the Na-Khi, *Forgotten Kingdom* (London: John Murray, 1955): letters between them survive in the Ezra Pound Collection in the Beinecke Library. See Zhaoming Qian, ed., *Ezra Pound’s Chinese Friends: Stories in Letters* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2008), 196-199.

⁴ Peter Makin, *Pound’s Cantos* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 256-7.

⁵ Makin, 260.

⁶ Massimo Bacigalupo, *The Forméd Trace: The Later Poetry of Ezra Pound* (New York: Columbia UP, 1980), 336.

⁷ Bacigalupo, 337.

lines in Greek, the canto shifts into the customary range of languages and scripts, where fragments and half-citations are modulated by extensive reference to its documentary sources: notably the *Sacred Edict* of Kangxi and the *History of the Lombards* by Paul the Deacon. At numerous points in *Thrones* Pound also arranges his text space to suggest polyglot glossaries between Greek, English and Chinese, and elsewhere aligns Chinese characters with English paraphrase or gloss.

The theme of currency and coinage is introduced in Canto XCVI with allusion to Abd-el-Malik defying the Roman Emperor Justinian II and striking coins bearing his own image. This theme unfolds across the ancient and medieval Mediterranean and beyond, including Offa, King of Mercia, and examples of Norse coinage. This is counterpointed with ceremonial allusion to imperial China, such as the ‘translation’ of the *Sacred Edict* in Cantos XCVIII and XCIX. Canto C shifts into early American history, territory familiar from *Eleven New Cantos XXXI-XVI* and the Adams Cantos in particular. Matters of Elizabethan diplomacy alternate with fragmented reference to Napoleonic France, nineteenth and twentieth-century geopolitics, conversations with some of Pound’s contemporaries (Jean Cocteau, George Santayana), and lists of ‘great thinkers’ and ‘state actors’ (John Scottus Eriugena, Anselm of Canterbury, Herbert of Cherbury and Charles de Rémusat), with glimpses back into Greek and Latin antiquity. This field of citation is physically punctuated with a cycling repetition of Chinese characters associated for Pound with light imagery (sunset, ‘white light’ and so on). The counterpoint between worldly political and economic influence, philosophical contemplation, and a paradisaical pastoral and agrarian vision sets the scene for Canto CI, in which Napoleonic diplomacy and economy is set beside the ²Müan ¹bpö ritual of the Na-Khi people of the Chinese Himalayan Province of Yunnan.

CANTO CI: A DOCUMENTARY RUSTICATION

The opening lines of Canto CI alternate between two disparate cultural spheres: the Napoleonic court of Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, his confidante Charles de Rémusat, and Charles’s mother Madame de Rémusat, on one hand; and the ceremonial rites of the Na-Khi ethnic group, on the other. The poetic orbit traced out between these unlikely twin stars describes and embodies some of the well-documented techniques of historical and

thematic assemblage evident in *Thrones* and in *The Cantos* generally. Pound's characteristic telescoping of varied historical, thematic and aesthetic sources into 'subject rhymes' and 'ideograms' is familiar enough. But the same technique in this canto can be read as a critical evaluation of the writing position implied in it. The turn from the policies and functioning of the imperial Chinese court to an agrarian non-Han ethnic group at the borderlands of empire is a significant change of focus for Pound, implying shifting priorities of history and cultural development in the poem, and reflected in its augmented tone.⁸ The quietistic Confucianism of Canto XIII and the Dao-inflected rustication of Canto XLIX find their tonal counterpart here. In giving such symbolic weight to the Na-Khi, Pound suggests a turn from matters of central power per se and an exploration of alternate models for human perfectibility: the praise of those who seek to improve the world in which they find themselves, as the ethos of *Thrones* would have it.

These alternating patterns of allusion build a kind of contrapuntal effect into the reading experience of Canto CI. What appears at first disorienting becomes a rhythmic gloss of Eastern and Western history, of political power, economy, and ceremony.

Finding scarcely anyone save Monsieur de Rémusat
Who could understand him
(junipers, south side) M. Talleyrand
spruce and fir take the North
Chalais, Aubeterre,
Snow-flakes at a hand's breadth, and rain.
Trees line the banks, mostly willows, Kublai,
Te Te of Ch'eng, called Timur, 1247, came hither

⁸ The Na-Khi are thought to have settled in their ancestral region some time between the Han and Tang Dynasties, due to pressures exerted upon them by frontier policies of the dominant Han population. The Na-Khi group is closely related to the Mo-so ethnic group, and share traits of Tibetan spiritual practices, particularly those of the Bön religion. They are also distinguished by virtue of a complex pictographic writing system (some ten thousand individual manuscripts are known to exist in Western archives), and an unusually high suicide rate that became ritualised (the *Har-la-llü k'ö* rite) at a time coincident with the Chinese intervention of 1723. See Anthony Jackson, *Na-Khi Religion: An Analytical Appraisal of the Na-Khi Ritual Texts*, Religion and Society 8 (The Hague, Paris and New York: Mouton, 1979), 46-52.

Forest thru ice into emerald

in 田 Tan (dawn, that is)

larix, corayana and berberis,
 after 2 stages A-tun-tzu
 a distance of one hundred *li*
 (CI/743)

Following the Plotinian intimations of transcendence in the concluding lines of Canto C, this canto begins *in medias verba* (with a present participle, no less, signifying a continuing state of affairs), a phrase qualifying an unrecorded thought or action. Bereft a governing verb, the reader does not know what Talleyrand has said or done in reaction to his limited lines of communication, just that he is suspended in a condition of frustrated dialogue. The next line is suspended grammatically by way of parentheses before the reader arrives at Talleyrand's name. The reference to juniper is separated from the text immediately surrounding it, shifting the locale from Napoleonic political machinery to a bucolic topos—the deep ecology of the Na-Khi, whose ceremonial use of juniper in the ²Müan ¹bpö ritual, the propitiation of Heaven, becomes a dominant strand of the canto.⁹ Juniper grows on the shaded southern slopes of the Yunnan mountains, and it also functions as the central arboreal prop in the ceremony, flanked by two oak trees which are themselves flanked each by two oak sticks called *ma-lo* and *yi-lo*.¹⁰ The juniper is said to represent the deity (until the Na-Khi were subsumed into the Chinese empire, when it came to represent the Emperor) and the

⁹ The ²Müan ¹bpö ceremony propitiates Heaven, whilst the ²Ndaw ¹bpö ceremony propitiates Earth, customarily figured as male and female respectively. Pound adverts to the centrality of these rituals within the Na-Khi cosmos in *Drafts & Fragments*: 'If we did not perform ²Ndaw ¹bpö / nothing is solid / without ²Müan ¹bpö / no reality' (CXII/804). Canto CXII continues with a catalogue of ceremonial accoutrements, with juniper again at the centre: 'Agility, that is from the juniper' (804). For further details see Lionello Lanciotti, 'The Na-Khi Religious Tradition and Ezra Pound,' *East and West* 20.3 (1970), 375-9.

¹⁰ Joseph F. Rock, 'The ²Müan ¹Bpö Ceremony: or the Sacrifice to Heaven as Practices by the ¹Na-²Khi,' *Monumenta Serica* 13 (1948), 14; see also Jackson, 108.

two oaks Heaven and Earth.¹¹ The ceremony itself lasts for several days and is performed in a deep pit or *'d'a* outside of the village. A series of sacrifices are made to the oak and juniper trees and to the stones in the *'d'a*: wine, chickens, rice, eggs, pig (including the distribution of its entrails and sprinkling of its blood), wheat and various flowering plants. The attentive reader will find that juniper is to figure centrally in the Na-Khi material to come, but the ecological lines of demarcation are still being drawn in this canto: the spruce and fir trees grow on the hillside that receives greater direct sunlight, the North, which might also signify the hyperborean, winter, night, and death, in direct counterpoint to the fertility cycles implied in the ²Mûaṅ ¹bpö ceremony. Alternately, Chalais and Aubeterre invoke regional strongholds of the Talleyrand family, where both towns are located in the temperate south of France, slightly north of Bordeaux in the Charente department.

Chinese pastoral scenes within *The Cantos* comprise a well-established topos: firstly in Canto XLIX, the 'Seven Lakes' canto, and then at particular moments in the China Cantos (LII-LXI). The 'Seven Lakes' canto rehearses an ancient trope of rustication, which stems from the topos of loss and mourning, but which accrues political implications in its poetic and artistic uses in the Tang and Song Dynasties. The initial myth concerns the death of the daughters of Emperor Yao, who mourn the death of their husband, Shun (Yao's imperial successor) near the Xiang river.¹² Their tears of blood stain the local bamboo, giving rise to the originating myth of spotted bamboo. Both Yao and Shun figure prominently in Pound's gloss of early Chinese history in Canto LIII (LII/262-4; see also LVI/302-3) and belong to the group of mythical rulers known as the Three Sovereigns and the Five Emperors in the third millennium BCE. This topos of mourning and loss is transformed by the Tang poet Du Fu in the eighth century, who adapts his descriptions of the Xiao and Xiang rivers near modern-day Changsha into a subtle narrative of political exile, where one 'fishes' (and paints and composes poetry) in wait for the call to return to the Imperial court.

¹¹ Rock 1948, 18. Juniper stands were significant natural features of the Na-Khi ancestral nomadic homelands on the Tibetan plateau, and Rock speculates that the ceremony itself grew out of ancient rites performed in these sacred spaces. See Rock 1948, 8.

¹² Zhaoming Qian, *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens* (Charlottesville and London: U of Virginia P, 2003), 136-7.

In the Song Dynasty, in turn, this poetic tradition was codified in painting and poetry, following the cycle painted by Song Di in the eleventh century.¹³ The consequent system of pastoral imagery—flocking geese, a fishing village at sunset, the smoke from a mountainside temple—is embodied in Pound’s ekphrastic lines in Canto XLIX (itself an ekphrastic adaptation of a Japanese album of calligraphy and painting given to him by his parents), which is surrounded by cantos dealing with the bustle of history, principally the fiscal progress instituted by Duke Leopold of Siena as well as the establishment of the United States. Pound was able to engender a ‘still point’ within the *Fifth Decad of Cantos XLII-LI*, whereby the pastoral mode is motivated by the politics of exile but which occludes it from direct view by way of the genre’s formal schema.

The alternation between the milieu of Talleyrand and Rémusat, on the one hand, and the bucolic scene of fertility rites in the world of the Na-Khi, on the other, comprises a cognate expression of the pastoral form exhibited in Canto XLIX and in the *Pisan Cantos*.¹⁴ However, the poem soon demarcates its difference from these earlier examples—some of the most famous passages in all of *The Cantos*—by figuring exile and rustication not from an imperial centre, but in a sense altogether apart from it. The Na-Khi do not belong to the dominant Han ethnic group, they write using a highly developed pictographic system (and syllabary) in no way comparable to classical or simplified Chinese scripts, and from the Tang Dynasty they suffered incursions from neighbouring groups and the burdens of frontier fealty to the imperial centre. Their nomadic traditions came under intense pressure even earlier, during the Han Dynasty, and eventually yielded to an agricultural way of life, although remnant aspects of this earlier tradition remain in the Na-Khi manuscripts. Where Pound had previously deployed a topos of rustication within an imperial context (and indeed the topos is predicated on the desire for return to the Imperial court), Canto CI implies a more radical sense of estrangement and displacement.

¹³ Baker, Jennifer, ‘The *Eight Views*: From its Origin in the Xiao and Xiang Rivers to Hiroshige,’ MA Thesis (College of Arts at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, 2010), 10.

¹⁴ Bacigalupo discerns a thread of allusion and association between the pastoral organicism of the Na-Khi and Pound’s increasing preoccupations with agrarian utopianism in *Thrones*, in which he cites classical Greece, medieval Provence, Napoleonic France and Mussolini’s Italy. See Bacigalupo, 401.

Pound's intensive work in paideutics and propaganda from the mid-1930s and through the Second World War enabled him to cultivate a poetic persona of neglected political acumen, conducive to the rustication genre, whereas the writing of *Thrones* during his internal exile in Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C. only heightens the true distance between the author and political agency, in ironic counterpoint to its geographical proximity. Thus Canto CI draws from Joseph Rock's recently published *Ancient Na-Khi Kingdom of Southwest China*¹⁵ in such lines as 'snow-flakes at a hand's breadth, and rain,' and 'Forest thru ice into emerald,' describing Rock's firsthand experience of the mountainous terrain. This citation is intersected by glancing reference to the most significant Mongol visitants to the region in the personage of Kublai Khan (reigned 1260-1294) and Temür Öljejtü Khan, also known as Emperor Chengzong of Yuan (1294-1307), presenting a much more complex interplay of political power: the Yuan Dynasty was a Mongol imposition upon the erstwhile Han hegemony, one of several 'barbarian' historical incursions lamented in the China Cantos, and Pound's appropriation of Na-Khi pastoral and ceremonial imagery installs a deep exile within the boundaries of the empire but at radical remove from its articulation of power.

Pound is able to develop a paradisaical aura in his use of Rock's Na-Khi research. He glosses Rock's botanical precision in citing 'larix, corayana and berberis,' a fragment of esoterica from a larger discussion of climate and species variation signifying the shift from juniper and oak to pine forests at a particular altitude near the village of I-chia-p'o.¹⁶ Rock's personal impressions of the landscape combined with his acute observations of climate and ecology are visually punctuated in Canto CI by the return of an iconic ideogram for Pound: 旦 (*tan / dan*) signifying dawn. This ideogram is one that did survive the perilous journey into print in the *Pisan Cantos*, where in Canto LXXVII it is seen by Pound to embody in its form the object it linguistically represents (the sun on the horizon) and is given an additional, demotic signifying function of the start of day:

¹⁵ Joseph F. Rock, *The Ancient Na-khi Kingdom of Southwest China*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1947).

¹⁶ Rock 1947, 345.

‘Bright dawn  on the sht house’

(LXXVII/486)

At this point in Pound’s project the ideogram bears an ironic silhouette of the ‘shadow of the gibbets’ in the Pisan Detention Training Center, at once functioning as a pictogram, a character, and a kind of visual gloss on the poetic text. Pound’s immediate future is captured in an ideogram of optimism (dawn, renewal), and illustrated, in the ideogram’s shape, to be entirely contingent upon the military and judicial proceedings against him (indictment by Grand Jury on the capital charge of treason). The *tan / dan* ideogram bears outsized resonance for Pound in *The Cantos*: in addition to its symbolic / visual deployment in *The Pisan Cantos*, it appears twice in *Rock-Drill* and four times in *Thrones*, three times in Canto XCVII alone. The first canto in *Drafts & Fragments* exercises discretion by omitting the Han character in revisiting the serene ecology of the Na-Khi, simply observing: ‘mountain lakes in the dawn’ (CX/798).¹⁷

The logic that governs the cycling between Napoleonic France and the detemporalised world of the Na-Khi in the opening lines of Canto CI establishes a locale for poetic expression under circumstances of severe privation. Movements across time, space and culture disorient the reader—especially as the quotations from Rock’s expeditions in Yunnan Province are unattributed, fragmentary and esoteric in terms of their textual provenance—but the combination is consistently and deliberately marked out by repetition and return. Human history and European imperial ambition are telescoped into the distance of a hundred *li* separating two Na-Khi villages, not so much shrinking the world as much as invoking a different ethos of its measurement. Rather than functioning as a tableau, a respite from the world of diplomacy, war and economy as Canto XLIX functions for *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, the topos of East Asian rustication in the case of the Na-Khi functions

¹⁷ Sean Pryor proposes that the repetition of *tan / dan* and its romanised gloss in Canto XCVII can be read to function as a paideutic reminder of its presence in Canto XCI (XI/635): the earlier example concerns the ability of those ‘who are skilled in fire’ to absorb the lessons of their teachers, in this case, Pound’s poetic persona. See Sean Pryor, ‘Particularly Dangerous Feats: The Difficult Reader of the Difficult Late Cantos,’ *Paideuma* 36 (2007-2009), 31.

as an index of deep displacement from an imperial centre. Following Rock's identification of the species of pine forest on his walk between villages—'Pinus armandi'—the canto reverts to Talleyrand and Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), another public figure involved in policy analysis throughout France's turbulent nineteenth century. The spheres of empire and indigenous nation converge at this point, with the seals, patents and 'a gold belt / inlaid with flowers' representing the gifts brought to the Na-Khi by their Mongol / Yuan and Ming overlords. These lines conform to the presiding tone of the canto (and indeed of *Thrones* in its entirety), which is to say without evident irony. The topos of deep rustication with which Pound figures the Na-Khi places in sharp relief the gifts and trinkets brought by their imperial visitors. Just what the Na-Khi would make of 'chair-coolies' and horses remains unstated, but comic absurdity frames this *unheimlich* picture of two worlds of vastly different dimensions coming into contact and exchange.

Many critics have rightly viewed *The Cantos* as a great epic of reading and annotating, across languages, scripts and philosophical and cultural traditions. From Canto I the reader is provided with bibliographic data from which to engineer a path through the text's dense network of associations: the Homeric opening of the poem is famously informed by Andreas Divus's 1538 edition of Homer's *Odyssey*, 'In officiana Wecheli' (I/5). The China Cantos, the Adams Cantos, citations of Malatesta, Stesichorus, Eriugena, Apollonius of Tyana, Sappho's dialect, and of course the Na-Khi, all arrive and develop in the poem by way of Pound's specific sources, some of them identifiably idiosyncratic. The *Pisan Cantos* demands a different relation between poet and source material, given the privations Pound suffered in the Pisan DTC. His access was restricted to James Legge's Four Books of Confucius, a rudimentary Chinese-English dictionary, a US Army issue bible and M. E. Spears's *Pocket Book of Verse*. The lyric intensity of these cantos is an index of this documentary privation, perhaps most strikingly emblematised in Pound's typescript instructions to T. S. Eliot to insert Gerhart Münch's arrangement for violin of Clément Jannequin's *Chant des oiseaux*, published by Ronald Duncan before the war and intended to comprise most of Canto LXXV. The relative sparsity of source material is counterpointed by the lyric flow of the verse, and fittingly, a renewed engagement with the topos of rustication in a syncretic Italian-American-Chinese pastoral mode. During the composition of *Thrones* Pound is not deprived of

bibliographic material, but suffers a relative impoverishment of lived experience for which he attempts to compensate: ‘He was deprived of new sensory experience, waves, fields tilled, men working, ‘men’s minds and their cities’ (*Odyssey*, 1.3); and instead flooded with all the printed matter he could wish for, from that Tower of Babel of universal information, the nearby Library of Congress.’¹⁸ The interplay between different historical and cultural spheres in Canto CI already suggest a problem to be worked through, an ambiguous speaking position. By invoking the exotic sphere of knowledge governing the Na-Khi, Pound finds the most effective expression of this ambiguity: the Na-Khi are literate but write pictographically, and radically abbreviate their ritual texts in a system of mnemonics; they embody animist practices cognate with the ‘Mediterranean sanity’ underlying Troubadour lyric and Italian Christianity; and those practices are heavily ritualised, less reliant on written forms of instruction (in direct counterpoint to *The Sacred Edict* of Cantos XCVIII and XCIX), and more on ceremonial memory and direct embodied experience.

The canto attempts to mediate these countervailing forces, demonstrating a conceptual rift in its fabric that at once prompts and disrupts certain kinds of reading. Following the exchange of tributes and gifts between the Na-Khi and the Yuan and Ming hegemonic powers, the canto shifts this imagined focus to remembered fragments from Pound’s reading and his lived experience in St Elizabeths. Commentators lightly annotate these lines in the canto, finding little in them worth examining: George Kennan’s expertise on Siberia and his reputation as intrepid explorer giving him authority to diminish contemporary writing as ‘not scholarship’ (743); the Italian anthropologist and agriculturalist Giulio del Pelo Pardi who ‘discovered’ ancient canals (‘cunicoli’) near Rome; and the St Elizabeths resident Peabody—no relation to the industrialist family operating Peabody Coke and Coal—who was fond of the proposition to ‘unscrew the inscrutable.’¹⁹ Whilst these lines contain a greater weight of spoken material, Pound quickly seeks recourse in documentary sources, in attributing to the intellectual historian Ernest Renan the view that ‘la bêtise humaine’ (‘human stupidity’) is the best indirect evidence of the infinite.

¹⁸ Makin, 254.

¹⁹ Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1984), 654.

The canto then returns to the Napoleonic era, with citations from Madame de Rémusat's memoirs.²⁰ This bibliographical strategy functions in concert with Joseph Rock's Na-Khi material, despite the Na-Khi representing a world radically displaced from but hardly impervious to imperial power. Talleyrand's complaint at the sharp fee entailed in exchanging banknotes for gold initiates a sequence of citations from Madame de Rémusat's memoirs in which matters of finance and economy ('Marbois and then Mollien at the Treasury') are intermingled with matters of state ('A constitution given to Italy') and military action (refuting that 'a great mind could seek glory in war') at the height of Napoleon's power. These allusions, drawn from the *Memoirs*, are readily documented, but it is the nature of allusion that demands attention: whilst these lines do not paraphrase extensive passages from source material as occurs in the China and Adams Cantos, they function in contrast to the earlier patterns of allusion in the canto, whereby reference circulates between radically divergent zones of cultural and historical activity. The idyllic draw of the Na-Khi, mediated by Rock's research publications, is not sufficient to retain the poet's attention, now turned to matters of international finance and its implicit relation to modern European militancy. Pound's documentary technique is unusually reliant upon historical and ethnographic scholarship, and the fragmentary form of *Thrones* implies a heightened level of autodidactic research on behalf of the reader. By citing passages in the *Memoirs* in which academic pursuits at Jena are permitted to continue under military protection, next to another passage twenty pages on in the *Memoirs* in which Napoleon's views of liberty are made plain—'for a small privileged class'—the implication is made that imperial power runs against education's democratic impulses.²¹ The resonance with Pound's own circumstances in St Elizabeths is clear enough, with the machinery of state providing him a tenuous line to the Library of Congress. Pound then draws an immediate association with the corrupting influences of private banking—Hottenguer and Neufelize—which becomes the 'shirt of fire' for the

²⁰ M. Paul de Rémusat, *Memoirs of Madame de Rémusat, 1802-1808*, 2 vols., trans. Cashel Hoey and John Lillie (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1880).

²¹ For an account of Pound's extended Rémusat-Talleyrand 'ideogram,' see Ben D. Kimpel and T. C. Duncan Eaves, 'Ezra Pound's Use of Sources as Illustrated by His Use of Nineteenth-Century French History,' *Modern Philology* 80.1 (1982), 39-40.

Napoleonic finance ministry. By this method of selective quotation from a single source, Pound manages to weave his private circumstances and doctrines into a portrait of social anxiety, class privilege, access to learning, and the role of private banking and public fiscal policy in the Napoleonic age.

This sustained sequence of citational fragments, largely from Madame de Rémusat's *Memoirs*, conforms to Pound's documentary compositional methods, but also demonstrates an unlikely degree of prosodic regularity. Many longer lines are either punctuated by a comma ('Xmas day of that year, Bonaparte's maximum') or are otherwise self-contained phrases in quotation ('Liberty for a small privilege class') with a cadence regulated by dactylic feet; and shorter lines are interposed for declarative force ('non-sectarian,' 'a necessity'). This medial prosody—located somewhere between historical prose and lyric poetry—changes as soon as the subject matter returns to the Na-Khi. The lyric intensity compels a turn from world affairs to the immediate locus of ceremonial action: 'under Kuanon's eye there is oak-wood. Sengper ga-mu, / To him we burn pine with white smoke, / morning and evening' (CI745). The dactylic echo of 'Sengper ga-mu' in 'morning and evening' produces a more concentrated effect of the rise-fall-rise pattern in each of the lines. Pound chooses his quotations from Rock judiciously, where community in nature ensures that bears are free to roam and pilfer agricultural produce. The canto then introduces subject rhymes from the geography of ancient Greece or Langue d'oc, where the 'hills [...] blue-green with juniper' frame a stream akin to Greece's longest river, the Achelous, and where a terrain in which 'one man can hold the whole pass' induces the image of Mont Ségur, stronghold of the Cathars until their fall during the Albigensian Crusade following the siege of 1242-44.²² The topographical similarity between Mont Ségur and the unnamed Yunnan hill requires a corresponding material ingenuity in the form of bamboo ropes to allow passage across rivers. Pound renders this material transformation bibliographically, by giving its name in Roman

²² Peter Liebrechts detects a strong association between the mountain god Sengper ga-mu, the Bodhisattva of mercy, Kuanon (Guanyin), and Leucothea, whose veil (or 'bikini' as Pound would have it) saves Odysseus in Book V of the *Odyssey*, cited by Pound in Cantos XCI, XCV, XCVI, XCVIII, C and CXII. See Peter Liebrechts, *Ezra Pound and Neoplatonism* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2004), 355.

capital letters and as an outsized character 笮 (*tso / zuo*), meaning cable or rope, and then a brief note on the fact of its citation:

[...] at Mont Ségur the chief's cell

you can enter it sideways only, TSO 笮 is here named
 from the rope bridge, hemp rope? a reed rope?
 (CI/745)

Pound's materialist poetics embeds his sources in a number of ways: firstly the Wade-Giles transliteration of the character is consistent with his usage elsewhere; secondly, Pound's source (Rock) provides this word in Chinese script rather than Na-Khi pictographic script, undermining the sense of autonomy and security described in the topography of and access to the chief's cell in the first place. Lastly, the character *tso / zuo* can mean either rope or cable, depending upon the context in which it is used, but the reader is not given sufficient context to tell. Such ambiguities reflect the imperfect nature of Pound's Chinese, but they also reinforce several themes at the centre of the canto, of *Thrones*, and of *The Cantos*: the relation between imperial centres and peripheries, and the forms of control attempted by the former over the latter; the power implied in the means of inscription (here, employing the Chinese script to describe a Na-Khi strategic defense); and consequently, the power of historical judgment implied in access to source materials, both those officially enshrined and those displaced or occluded for reasons of reputation or the maintenance of cultural prestige. Here Pound's ideogram draws a thread across to Procopius's *Secret History*, Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, and all manner of Pound's chosen economic texts.

The canto's preoccupation with tribal and state security in these lines briefly turns to matters of economy (the finance writer R. McNair Wilson) and of Napoleonic military valour in the Battle of Marengo of 1800 in Piedmont, with the epithet 'KALON KAGATHON'²³ provided in Roman script. The theatre of

²³ Terrell glosses this contraction of the phrase καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός as an Homeric epithet meaning 'noble and brave' (657), although its appearance elsewhere in *The Cantos* (XXXIII and CIV) is glossed as 'beautiful and well-born' (130, 680). Originally a Spartan term to describe good character, especially upstanding military conduct, καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός was later absorbed

operations shifts from terrestrial battlefields to matters of transcendence and celestial knowledge: following a series of alchemical formulae, in which precious materials (gold, diamond) inhere in base matter to be released by the ‘red flash’ of fire, a syncretic list of proper names implies the pursuit of occluded knowledge: Apollonius of Tyana (a Neopythagorean contemporary of Christ, who also appears in Cantos XCI, XCIV and XCVII), Porphyry (a third-century disciple of Plotinus and editor of his *Enneads*), Anselm (‘Father of Scholasticism’ and Archbishop of Canterbury, 1093-1109), and Plotinus (the most significant Neoplatonist of late antiquity). The Plotinian view of the celestial sphere was schematic rather than eclectic, thus he divulged ‘one vision only’ instead of the ‘unicorns’ and ‘antilopes’ of other more fanciful and syncretic theories. Pound ranges through a chain of associations at this point in the canto, moving from the Plotinian zoological critique of fellow astrologers, to the animals the Ming emperor Hs’uan Tsung (Wade-Giles) or Xuande (Era name) painted in his accomplished artworks, several of which are held at the National Palace Museum in Taipei and at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of Asian Art at Harvard University. Further fragments in this associative chain concern art—such as Sheri Martinelli’s brother ogling the works in the ‘Mellon Gallery,’ the National Gallery of Art founded by Andrew W. Mellon—culminating in the dress of the Na-Khi women, which functions both as artwork for the Western viewer and celestial referent for their wearers:

With the sun and moon on her shoulders,
the star-discs sewn on her coat
at Li Chiang, the snow range,
a wide meadow
and the ²dto – ¹mba’s face (exorcist’s)
muy simpático

by Herodotus, among others, into Athenian Greek. Plato developed the meaning most familiar to modern readers in many of his texts, that of the ‘beautiful and good,’ and in Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* it denotes ‘admirable and good.’ See J. E. Tiles, *Moral Measures: An Introduction to Ethics East and West* (London: Routledge, 2000), 220 and 230. However it is worth noting that Socrates reverts to the Spartan martial usage in Plato’s *Laches* when discussing the characters of Thucydides and Areistides. See T. H. Irwin, ‘Common Sense and Socratic Method,’ in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Jyl Gentzler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 37-40.

ecological spirituality of the Na-Khi. He first cites Edmondo R. Rossoni, the minister for agriculture and forestry in Mussolini's government, who endorses Silvio Gesell's model of stamp scrip—'Rossoni: "così lo stato ..." etcetera' [thus the state ...] (CI/746)—immediately followed by Carlo Delcroix, a Fascist radical and biographer of Mussolini who advocated alliance with Nazi Germany²⁴—'Delcroix: "che magnifica!" / (prescrittibile)' (CI/746). The significance of these brief references can be more fully appreciated when it is remembered that Canto CI was first published in 1959 in Oswald Mosley's journal *The European*: indeed these lines were to appear on the last page of the journal's final number.²⁵ Pound draws these Italian Fascist references together with the agricultural and forestry themes running through the canto ('Elzéard has made the forest at Vergons'), the control of natural resources, and the relation of social structures to the natural world in the particularities of Na-Khi ceremony. The final lines of the canto return to the world of the Na-Khi with a sustained focus, emphasising the unity of ceremony and the natural world:

The green spur, the white meadow
 "May their pond be full;
 The son have his father's arm
 And good hearing;
 (noun graph upright; adjective sideways)
 "His horse's mane flowing
 His body and soul are at peace."
(CI/746-7)

The pastoral mode signified in the first line provides an entry point into a foreign rite: the *D'a nv* ('courageous man') rite following the death of a warrior. During this rite, the priest blesses members of the family and in particular the deceased man's children in the hope of

²⁴ See Matteo di Figlia, 'The Blind Bard and the Unflagging Hierarchy: Memories of War and Self-Representations in Fascist Italy,' *War and Remembrance*, spec. ed. of *Western Croatian History Journal* 8 (2013), 13-32.

²⁵ See Matthew Feldman, 'Ezra Pound's Political Faith from First to Second Generation: or, "It is 1956 Fascism",' in *Modernism, Christianity and Apocalypse*, ed. Erik Tønning, Matthew Feldman and David Addyman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 292-3.

a propitious legacy of courage and horsemanship.²⁶ The final lines of the canto capture the tone of the ceremony in epigram, sending the deceased into the afterlife by way of horseback. This imagery neatly combines the Tibetan Tantric influences on the Na-Khi cosmology with the familiar equine imagery associated with the Mongols, thus fusing geography and imperial interchange glossed earlier in the canto. The parenthetical gesture towards Na-Khi pictographic inscription is the first mention of this group's written representation of their cultural heritage: according to Terrell the two pictographs represent 'rich warrior funeral,' with the first set sideways in the likeness of two rows of teeth and representing wealth, the second vertical and figuring the deceased, and the third taking on an equine resemblance.²⁷ Pound is conflating different Rock texts at his disposal concerning the very complex array of Na-Khi funeral ceremonies. The gesture towards horseback also echoes the periodic Mongol and Tartar threats to the Middle Kingdom described in the China Cantos.

Pound concludes Canto CI by returning to the world of the Na-Khi. By now it has exceeded its identification within the rustication topos, just as the 'enormous tragedy of the dream' of Mussolini's Italy is dimming in historical memory. The reader has come into a funeral ceremony, a passage of hope and wisdom from warrior father to son in which the legacy of courage is fused with the continuity of horsemanship in the concluding elegiac lyric note. The transmission of cultural knowledge is mediated by documents and texts, most significantly in the scholarship of Joseph Rock upon which Pound draws for direct citation and allusion, as well as a description of Na-Khi pictographic writing. Finally, the rustication topos itself has transformed from one of waiting in exile in 'the South' for imperial recall, as in the 'Seven Lakes' canto, to a metaphysical rustication (thus Apollonius, Plotinus and Porphyry) whereby transmission to an afterlife is equally a return to the soil and the material practices of the culture. The Na-Khi offer Pound a last chance to glimpse his *paradiso terrestre*, away from empire, currency economy and international politics. This world in Yunnan Province also bears deep scars in its history of interaction with the

²⁶ For further information see Joseph F. Rock, 'The D'a Nv Funeral Ceremony with Special Reference to the Origin of Na-Khi Weapons,' *Anthropos* 50.1-3 (1955), 1-31.

²⁷ Terrell, 658.

imperial centre, but it persists in its ceremonial return to the land, and the spirit world, one reflected in the other.

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