

CANTO CV: A DIVAGATION?

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The few commentators who have tackled it seem uneasy about Canto CV, an unease expressed in some equivocation about the value of the poem and in some striking language. Pound biographer James J. Wilhelm, who first argued for the importance of Canto CV by giving it a chapter in his valuable book, *The Later Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1977) seems unsure of its meaning. He sums up cautiously: “looking at the canto as a whole, one can see a great deal of order (“ordine” [CV/763]) as opposed to ‘brute force’” but this simple binary makes him wonder. “If this is not the ‘Anselm Canto’” then it must be “The Canto of the Betrayed,” (which is the direct opposite of the paradisaal tack Wilhelm has been taking in his reading). He gives the following schema:

Talleyrand was betrayed by	France
Bismark by	Germany
Mussolini by	Italy
Frederick II	the Church
Mozart by	patronless Austria
Lanfranc by	William I and England
Anselm by	William Rufus and England

“Are we not to add: Pound [betrayed] ...by whom?” Wilhelm concludes inconclusively (165-6). No reader of the late cantos can have much doubt that if Wilhelm is right and this is “The Canto of the Betrayed,” then Pound’s betrayers are FDR, the Jews, and their Communist minions—the representatives of *panourgia*—and, convened as the Warren court, the destroyers of the Constitution.

Carroll Terrell’s remarks show a similar hesitancy. His contradictory notes on the poem reflect the Canto’s compositional moment, noted in the poem’s deceptive opening line: “Feb. 1956” although the poem was finished later. It seems that Terrell did not

suspect Pound's essentially "Southern" ideology, and did not guess that the poem "divagates" from its epic task to intervene in contemporary politics, specifically, the racial integration of public schools as mandated by the *Brown v School Board of Topeka* decisions of 1954 and 1955. Only Peter Dale Scott has noticed Pound's radical political commitments in this poem, which he glances at in service of his larger argument revealing the ideological conflicts and contradictions that warp Pound's historical sense in *Thrones*. In fact, Canto CV is a heavily coded argument for States' Rights and was revised at the request of Pound acolyte John Kasper for use by arch-segregationist Admiral John Crommelin in his race for the Alabama Democratic Senate Primary of May 1956. Scott knows quite well that "Crommelin and Del Valle (like their associate John Kasper) have frequently been linked by investigative agencies and reporters to homicidal right-wing terror" (Scott 1990 58), including the 1963 Birmingham Church bombing that killed four little girls, the bombing of schools in Tennessee and the bombing of the Atlanta synagogue in 1958.

Some background: As I have detailed in a book called *John Kasper & Ezra Pound: Saving the Republic*, where I treat this poem, Pound's circle at St Elizabeths was dedicated to stopping the implementation of *Brown*, the landmark Supreme Court decision of May, 1954. Not just the notorious anti-integrationist and cross-burner, John Kasper, and the sick Jew hater Eustace Mullins, but a wide group of people centered around the Cadmus bookstore, which was headquarters for Kasper's Seaboard White Citizen's Council (SWCC) were committed to maintaining racial segregation. Robert Furniss, later Pound's personal lawyer, and Nora Devereaux, who managed the place in Kasper's absence, were active anti-integrationists. David Horton, Pound's link to the Defenders of the American Constitution, worked the right-wing radio airwaves (as did Furniss) trying to maintain school segregation in Alexandria Va.; David Gordon and Bill McNaughton, both later to become professors of Chinese, sometimes worked at the Cadmus; in Cleveland, Hollis Frampton (later to become the innovative filmmaker) was a supportive fellow-traveler with a mimeograph machine. Add the mysterious refugee from China, David Wang, who founded a splinter party called the North American Citizens for the Constitution, a party affiliated with Kasper's "Wheat in Bread Party," and one has a "vortex" of segregationist and racist politics

centered on Pound, dedicated to preserving the Constitution and overturning the liberal decisions of the Warren Court.

The “Wheat in Bread Party” (WHIB), named by Pound and organized by Kasper, ran segregationist candidates in Tennessee in 1958. Pound was also in touch with James J. Kilpatrick, editor of *The Richmond News Leader*, a leading advocate of States’ rights who proposed nullifying the Supreme Court ruling through the ingenious doctrine of “interposition.”¹

These preoccupations were reflected in Pound’s account of world and U.S. history and therefore, in *Thrones*. Although Canto CV was written at the outset of the anti-segregationist initiatives I have sketched here, it cannot be understood without reference to them.

In the spring of 1956, John Kasper had gone south to work for Crommelin, becoming, as he wrote Pound, the Admiral’s “campaign staff.” Kasper had brought Crommelin to St. Elizabeth’s on January 26, 1956 to meet the poet and to get Pound’s blessing on his plan to go south and help the Admiral win the Democratic nomination for the senate over the incumbent, Sen. Lister Hill. Though Pound would have preferred that Kasper stay in Washington and start a newsheet—a perennial obsession of Pound’s—the poet was impressed by Crommelin and Kasper went off to Alabama with Pound’s blessing. Kasper wrote to Pound sometime in April, probably from Birmingham, Alabama, “Yr verses are sensational and thank you so much. [...] The pome will be used SOMEHOW.

¹ From the *Geneva Times*, Geneva, N.Y., Jan. 28, 1956, p. 7, “South Is Discussing ‘Interposition’ Plan”: “WASHINGTON – Interposition is a proposal to cancel the legal effect of the 1954 Supreme Court decision by putting the whole issue of school segregation to the states. Reverse strategy would be used....The Southern states would suggest a constitutional amendment barring segregation. The advocates of interposition assume—and few would dispute them – that such an amendment would have no chance of ratification by the necessary thirty-six states. Southern states would naturally oppose it, and those in the North would regard it as unnecessary....Once the amendment had failed, according to the framers of the interposition doctrine, the Southern States could argue that the country had rejected the Supreme Court interpretation of the constitution, and that the decision was null and void.... The leading proponent of the interposition idea has been James J. Kilpatrick, editor of *The Richmond Va. News Leader*, who has been editorializing on it for the last two months” (courtesy of Archie Henderson).

Received a bit late for tonights T.V., now over, though we have been VURRY FLEXIBLE. I am certain we are the only candidate in political history who has gone on T.V. time after time without exception with NO prepared text of any kind whatsoever” (JK to EP April 1956). Kasper does not say anything more about the poem, but it would seem to be Canto CV, or perhaps just that part of it which names “Crommelyn” and his ally on the extreme right, General Pedro Del Valle. If this bit of Canto CV is the poem sent to Kasper, Crommelin would have only to read four lines, Pound’s official endorsement: “With a Crommelyn at the breech-block/ or a del Valle,/ This is what the swine haven’t got/ with their/ πανουργία” (CV/771).² This pose of fighting to the last ditch is a familiar stance in *The Cantos*, but takes its immediate occasion from Kasper’s urgent letters from the southern front. It is useful to think of the poet envisioning heroic scenes from Currier and Ives prints of Civil War action while writing these lines.

Canto CV is a curious poem in that it is dated, “Feb. 1956” (though clearly finished months later) and asks of itself rhetorically, “Is this a divagation”—that is, it asks itself whether it is a deflection or distraction from the nominally paradisaical business of *Thrones* to comment on more local political issues. Alternatively, it may wonder whether by spending much time on St. Anselm and various Anglo-Saxon kings, the poem is a divagation from the mighty business now at hand of rescuing the Constitution and the nation from the Second Reconstruction of the South. However we decide; it is very tempting to read the canto as Pound’s response in “Aesopian language” (C/733) to what he considered the judicial usurpations of the Warren Court and renewed “northern aggression” against the south. The poem is “for something not brute force in government”; it is for “ordine” but not coercion (CV/769). This language echoes the language of the “Declaration of Constitutional principles” otherwise known as “Southern Manifesto” signed by 99 southern congressmen and senators promulgated in March, 1956 (just as the poem was being written) resisting the “naked power” of the Federal government to force integration on the southern public schools.

² PANURGIA is “villainy,” see (CIV/753); in the context of the Crommelin campaign these villains are the Jews behind the Civil Rights movement, plus drug-traffickers (CIV/759)

Crommelin and Del Valle make their appearance at the very end of the Canto, dropped arbitrarily into a list of Anglo-Saxon kings Pound had already written down in earlier drafts. In the published version, we find the lines “Gerbert at the astrolabe/ better than Ptolemy,” – ending with an unaccountable comma, which survives from the original list in the draft—followed by the new language: “A tenth tithe and a circet³ of corn./ With Crommelyn at breech-block/ or a del Valle, This is what the swine haven’t got/ with their/ πανουργία”. After “πανουργία” [panurgia, i.e. villainy], Pound resumes his original Anselm thread from the earlier draft, “Guido [Cavalcanti] had read the Proslogion/ as had, presumably, Villon” (CV/771) and the canto ends. There is no other even covert mention of Crommelin and Del Valle in the canto. And as the line beginning with Guido had immediately followed Ptolemy in the original drafts of the poem (see notebook #98, Beinecke), it seems Pound inserted them into after receiving Kasper’s appeal from Alabama dated April 10th 1956. “Dear Gramp,” Kasper wrote,

“COPY COPY. Can you write some short quotable slogans. Nothing highbrow. Stuff to stick in mass-mind. Repeated over and over so they don’t forget. And 5 minute speeches and 15 minute speeches on Segregation/ States Rights/ Mongrelization/ Separation of Races.

NIGGERS

And JEWS: the Admiral has taken up THE Question openly and it hasn’t hurt him. The kike behind the nigger. (JK to EP 4/10/ [1956])

³ Church dues, called in Anglo-Saxon *Cyric sceat*, and in the Domesday Book *Circisset*, *circet*, *cirsette*, *circieti*, *circset*, was a *shot* or payment, or contribution, due to the Church in certain places, not apparently very frequent of occurrence. The amount varies considerably, and is sometimes expressed as a money payment; at others, as on the lands of Pershore Abbey, a *summa*, seam, or load of corn, as first fruits of the harvest, was due at Martinmas for each hide held by a *homo francus*. [...] How far the Church dues were connected with tithes has not been determined. (Walter De Gray Birch, *Domesday Book: A Popular Account of the Exchequer Manuscript So Called, with Notices of the Principal Points of General Interest which it contains* [London: SPCK, 1887], p. 272, courtesy Archie Henderson.)

Kasper added in reference to the burgeoning Suez crisis, “No war to save Israel,” and concluded, “Awful busy here. Things look very good. The farmers are ON.”

If Pound did send something along with his usual gists and slogans, the lines of Canto CV quoted above are a good fit for Kasper’s prompts. The more so, as these lines do not appear in Beinecke notebook 98—number 50 by Pound’s reckoning (5 Feb 1956–23 March 1956), but they do appear in the first typescript. Unfortunately Pound’s notebook number 51 for April 1956 is missing from the Beinecke sequence, which resumes with notebook 99, (Pound’s notebook 52), which begins in May 2 –June 19, 1956. Assuming Pound did draft the Crommelin and Del Valle lines in response to Kasper’s plea in April, the first versions should be found in the missing notebook. There is no reference to the military men or to any southern events in notebook 98, which is labeled “Anselmo” and is mostly about St. Anselm and William Rufus, with a few digs at FDR and the Jews along the way. Although speculation about what was in the missing April notebook is risky, we can say that three moments relevant to my reading which appear in the first typescript of the canto were not present in earlier notebooks 97 or 98. These are the overt references to Crommelin and Del Valle, both active in the anti-integration movement; the reference to the dream-vision of Charles of the Suevi with the odd “noose of light” draped over his shoulder; and a significant revision concerning the sheep on Rham plain, which are mentioned in notebook 98.

We know that Crommelin was actively engaged in Right-wing racial politics at the time of writing, while Del Valle in an earlier bid for Governor of Maryland in March 1954, had moved to “Outlaw the Communist conspiracy” and had struck a very Poundian note arguing for “Local Control Over Local Affairs.” Pound marked this phrase on a piece of Del Valle’s campaign literature and used a variant himself (“Local Control over Local Purchasing Power”). Bryant Bowles, perhaps the first “outside agitator” against school integration and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP) was using it in his crusade against the integration of the Milford, Delaware schools as early as September 1954, which might seem to be Del Valle’s source, but it may be the other way round, as Del Valle uses it in March, seven months earlier, in resistance to *Brown*, which had been decided just

weeks before the Maryland primary.⁴ If Bowles got the slogan from Del Valle, then Del Valle may have gotten it from Pound, via Dave Horton, the liaison between Del Valle’s Defenders of the American Constitution (DAC) and the poet, though there is no direct evidence of this.

The swine backed with their *panurgia* refers, I am sorry to think, to Pound’s and Kasper’s shared view of “The kike behind the nigger.” Heavily influenced by Louis Agassiz’s low opinion of black people—Agassiz suspected that they were quite possibly a different species (see Menand 104-5)—Pound did not believe that Americans of African descent would have been motivated to assert their rights as citizens without prompting from the Jews (and Communists) who ran the NAACP. This theme is reiterated throughout the later cantos: “freemen,” Pound insists (always in a southern context) “do not look upward for bounties” (LXXXVIII/604, C/735) but *Freedom* might; “freedom not favored by tenantry” he reiterates (LXXXIX/610). In his opinion slavery was not the key issue that caused the American Civil War: “The slaves were red-herring” he asserts in Canto CIII (CIII/752); instead Pound claims in Canto 89 that, “The Civil War rooted in tariff” (LXXXIX/616). Financial machinations, not conflicting modes of production and labor systems caused the war. In fact, in Pound’s view, they caused all wars. In sum, African-Americans were unlikely to fight for their own rights; other people with financial stakes in the outcome had put them up to it.

Charles of the Suevi does not appear in notebook 98. When he does appear in the first typescript he has been placed in a position allied to that formerly occupied by “Adolph,” which despite the misspelling, is almost certainly Adolf Hitler. In the notebook on page 36 we find this passage:

ut amictus luminae
 or Adolph on [uncertain, catholics?]]
 + that Swedenborg is
 full of good sense—

⁴ A card from the Del Valle for Governor Club marked by Pound is reproduced in *Ezra Pound: A Selected Catalog* published by Hamilton College p. 58. Early protests against school integration in Maryland led by Bryant Bowles were defended in Court by Robert Furniss, later Pound’s personal lawyer.

In the published Canto we find the more cryptic and mystical simple translation of the Latin, “lumine ut amictus/ with light as an army-cloak” (CV/768). Adolph has been dropped, but now a military cloak of light resonates with the reference on the next page to “Charles of the Suevi / a noose of light looped over his shoulder” (CV/769),⁵ followed two pages later by

Egbert left local laws.

“Looping the light over my shoulder,”

(Charles of the Suevi)

“Drew me over fiery mountains”

As is left in Hariulf’s Chronicle. Thus dreamed it.

(CV/771)

If we allow the imago of the earlier draft to seep through, Charles of the Swabians replaces Adolf of the Aryans as the noose of light replaces the army cloak of light. Pound frequently uses “Aesopian language” (C/733) and subject rhyme to refer to Hitler in the late Cantos, as the comparison of “the Fuhrer of Macedon” (XCVII/696)—i.e. Alexander the Great—to Hitler suggests. It is likely that Charles of the Suevi is a similar coded displacement. As we learn from Wilhelm’s foundational research into this canto, Pound found an account in the obscure “Hariulf’s Chronicle” that Charles (better known to most as the Charles the Fat, a son of Charlemagne) had a dream-vision of a descent into hell (Wilhelm 164-5). After Charles tells of how he saw sinners being punished, he says that when some devils tried to get hold of him, his spirit-guide “threw a thread of light upon my shoulders ...and drew me along strongly behind him, so that we thus ascended the highest fiery mountains” (Wilhelm 165, and see Liebrechts 366). The thread is translated by Pound as “noose” on CV/769⁶—which suggests a pun on the neo-platonic “*nous*”—the second emanation from the neo-Platonic One, the “intellectual principle,” and “cognitive activity” (Liebrechts 24); in Canto CIV (and in the notebook that underwrites most of that canto, notebook 97) Pound writes, “False middles serve neither

⁵ Both resonate with an earlier moment in Canto CIV “And if the stars be but unicorns/ light for lasso” (CIV/761).

⁶ He quotes it differently on p. 769, as “Looping the light over my shoulder”

commerce/ nor the NOOS in activity” (CIV/764), so the pun with noose and the emphasis on action was not far away. In the *Cantos*, Adolf Hitler–“furious from perception” (CIV/761) was just such an actor, who did not hesitate to use the noose to draw Europe away from the hell of Usura, Jewry and Bolshevism.

In the particular context of the civil rights struggle in which I wish to place canto CV however, the *noose* of light also becomes a metonym for lynch-law in resistance to federal usurpation of local customs and local laws, the very “consuetudines” and “consuetudo diversa” –diverse customs–invoked as “*libertates*” celebrated in the canto (CV/768, 769). Appeal to “local custom” was the usual defense used to resist efforts by President Eisenhower to desegregate the military after his election in 1952, for example. Although Eisenhower has been portrayed as lukewarm to the idea of racial equality, recent scholarship reveals his interest in desegregating the United States, starting with the military, which remained unreconstructed (despite Pres. Truman’s orders) when he took office. Thus we find the chief medical director of the U.S. Navy, J.T. Boone, attempted to resist orders to integrate VA hospitals by urging the White House “to permit the individual hospitals to be guided by local customs of the areas in which they are located”; another VA man argued it was “medically advantageous to give some recognition to local custom”; the Secretary of the Navy defended the segregated Navy on the grounds of political realism claiming that the Navy must “recognize the customs and usages prevailing in certain geographical areas of our country which the Navy had no part in creating” (qtd. Nichols 45, 46). Though Pound would not have known of these particular statements, he could hardly have been unaware that the resort to “local custom” was the watch-word for defenders of Jim Crow folk-ways. The on-going and ultimately successful attempt to desegregate the military and its facilities had been much in the news throughout 1953. It also informs the “Southern Manifesto,” which regarded the “separate but equal” doctrine enshrined by *Plessy* and “restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the States and confirmed their habits, traditions, and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and commonsense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children.” (“Southern Manifesto”) An inveterate reader of newspapers now tormented by the constant racket of televisions in

the wards of the mental hospital, Pound would have been quite familiar with the discourse of “local custom.” It haunts canto CV.

To return to the noose. In 1952 the official Platform of the Republican Party, which brazenly charged the Democrats with treason and corruption, offended Southern sensibilities by supporting unspecified “Federal action toward eliminating lynching”⁷—a quaint local custom. In the previous election of 1948 an anti-lynching plank put forward as part of the Democratic Civil and Labor Rights initiatives proposed under Truman had prompted the “Dixiecrats” to split the party (Jacoway 13). Wary of a repeat, the Democrats said almost nothing about Civil Rights in their 1952 program. With nothing to lose in the South, the Republicans hoped to capture the votes of northern blacks, who in those days were likely to vote for the party of Lincoln and Emancipation, by including the anti-lynching statement. “The noose of light” could seem, in this context, to endorse “the noose” as the expression of local resistance to federal mandates. Lest this seem too harsh a judgment, there is Pound’s advice to Crommelin and Kasper: “leave local option in principle, but make it unbearable in fact. metaphor and tradition: refusal of water and fire. ostracize ‘em. Surro[u]nd ‘em, cut ‘em off, but don’t MIX principles for an immediate advantage” (EP to JK April-May 1956). This image of encirclement is also a noose of light drawn tight around local pockets of darkness: “ostracize ‘em. Surro[u]nd ‘em, cut ‘em off...” A year and half later during his second Tennessee campaign, Kasper would flourish a hanging noose as a Nashville rally—that same night, an elementary school was largely destroyed by dynamite.⁸ As Alex Houen notes, Kasper’s

⁷ <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25837> and see Nichols 17.

⁸ “From the steps of the state capitol Frederick John Kasper, 27, the tall, hawk-faced agitator from Camden, N.J., began to whip up the crowd. “The Constitution of the U.S. gives you the right to carry arms,” he said. “If one of these niggers pulls a razor or a gun on us, we’ll give it to ‘em . . . When they fool with the white race they’re fooling with the strongest race in the world, the most bloodthirsty race in the world.” Hot-eyed Rabble-rouser John Kasper mentioned the name of one of Nashville’s Negro civic leaders and dramatically held up a rope, then talked hazily about dynamite. . . . Half an hour after midnight the city was rocked by a thunderous dynamite blast that shattered a wing of the seven-year-old, \$500,000 Hattie Cotton Elementary School where one five-year-old Negro girl had registered the day before. The blast ripped doors off hinges, cracked plaster and scattered

Christmas card for 1956, which hopes for a “healthy, vindictive bloody, paradisaical New Year,” is embellished with drawings of dynamite, a dagger and a tree with a noose (qtd. Houen 183).⁹

The third moment of change from notebook 98 to the finished canto, concerns the reversal of a note about “sheep on “Rham plains”—the reference is to a photograph of Tibetan mountain sheep near Rham Lake high in the Himalayas, in a book by L.A. Waddell¹⁰—to a remark that needs to be read in the stark back-lighting afforded by the references to Crommelin and Del Valle at the end of the canto. In notebook 98 on page 22 we find

sheep on Rham plains
 have no special names
 for their colouring (Pound’s emphasis)

This moment in the first typescript is reversed to become “sheep on Rham plains have special names for their colours,” eventually becoming in the published *Cantos* “and the sheep on Rham plain

bricks and glass in thick, ugly layers across the surrounding schoolyard and walks. *Time Magazine* “The Battle of Nashville” Sept. 23, 1957.

⁹ The rhetoric of the noose was common. In ruling against racist groups opposing integration of the Hoxie, Arkansas schools quoted an un-named agitator as praising lynching to prevent social intermixing of the races, because “it saved the cost of trial and execution.” Referring to a recent lynching, “the white supremacist said the total cost of the lynching was a ‘5-cent’ piece of rope.” This article has no bearing on Pound’s letter or poem, but he would have seen it next to the item on a cross-burning undertaken by Kasper in Charlottesville, Aug. 23, 1956 and reported in *The Washington Post and Times Independent* 8/25/56. See “Integration Fight Backed” p. (Courtesy of Archie Henderson).

¹⁰ L.A. Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries—With a Record of the English Tibetan Expedition 1903-1904* (1905) p. 176. Several books by Waddell, an eccentric Aryanist and linguist, are sources for late cantos. Robert Cassilo writes: Perhaps the most important contributor to Pound’s anti-Semitic “arcanum” in the later *Cantos* is L. A. Waddell, whose works Pound discovered at St. Elizabeths, and who both confirmed and supplemented many of Pound’s cultural and racial ideas. An explorer, historian, philologist, and amateur Orientalist, Waddell enabled Pound to encrypt within The *Cantos* an underground tradition of Aryan kingship and empire, of agrarianism and solar worship extending from Sargon’s Sumeria to Hitler” Robert Casillo, Ezra Pound, L. A. Waddell, and the Aryan Tradition of “The *Cantos*.” *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 1985), p. 66.

have different names/ according to colour,/ nouns, not one noun plus an adjective “(CV/767).¹¹ In and of itself there is nothing ominous about this remark; however, given the political context in which the canto was written we need to ask if Pound felt there was something insufficiently particular in the designations black sheep and white sheep, and by extension black man and white man. To the extreme racist the term black man, adjective-fronting noun, is a *non sequitur*. In the run up to the Civil War, it was argued by southern defenders of slavery that the “peculiar institution” did not “violate the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, on grounds that Jefferson’s term ‘all men’ did not, scientifically, mean blacks;” Louis Menand quotes a southern physician of the time, the medical ideologue Samuel Cartwright; “The abolition delusion is founded upon the error of using the word *man* in a generic sense, instead of restricting it to its primary specific sense” (Menand 112). There is no evidence that Pound was aware of this remark, but he thinks the same thought, which is inevitable given Pound’s new assumptions about black people learned from Agassiz and reinforced by Kasper. In his April letters from Alabama Kasper preferred the term he had learned from Crommelin, “the Nigra.” Commenting on Crommelin’s refusal to distribute a scurrilous cartoon by future American Nazi-Party leader George Rockwell, which had been printed up as campaign literature, Kasper wrote Pound:

The Admiral, however put his foot down and refused to let it circulate on the grounds that white people as well as the Nigra would say he hated the Nigras, which he doesn’t. That is a very delicate matter here and the races have lived with separate but equal facilities in harmony for 85 years. The Jews (NAACP) are trying to drive a wedge in the south and what has taken years to build is being destroyed in 2 or 3. (JK letters 206).

¹¹ Pound made a number of odd reversals as he revised the canto that contribute to its unsteadiness as a poem. Inexplicably, he reversed “Loans to Tibet” to the unlikely “Loans *from* Tibet (CV/761) in the typescript. Likewise a remark Pound attributes to the Irish Pope Paschal to Anselm in the notebook “And we bijayzus **respect** your damn bishops/ **have lied,**” which survives into the first typescript, is changed to the incomprehensible we... reject your damn bishops” in later typescripts and the published poem (CV/769).

I'm afraid that it is in the light of this kind of information that Pound may have revised the passage about the sheep. At first glance, these lines would seem to be an instance of "right naming" or *cheng ming*, but the Kasper letters ask us to put the worst possible interpretation on Pound's revision; a reading quite justified, however, by the references to Crommelin and Del Valle as defenders of the American Constitution at the end of the canto. Moreover, just a few lines above in Canto CV, Pound quotes phrases from Anselm's *Monologion* 'non pares, not equal in dignity/ rerum naturas' (CV/766-7)—not equal, not equal in dignity/ in the nature of things," phrases which ostensibly refer to the Trinity, but which rendered into plain English can also be construed as relevant to current events. If so, they would seem to confirm Agassiz's insistence on natural Negro inferiority, explicit in the Dred Scott decision and tacitly the philosophical and scientific basis for *Plessy vs. Ferguson*.¹²

This linkage of Anselm and the racial situation in the United States might seem far-fetched were it not for the otherwise wholly inexplicable passage about the sheep. Any alternative best construction on the sheep passage has led to no extant commentary at all. Only Terrell notices the sheep, and at that, misleadingly as a comment on language usage.¹³ But Pound's praise of this misplaced precision is unmistakable, and congruent with his insistence on other more reasonable dissociations throughout the late cantos. Here, however, it fits altogether too well with Pound's program for Crommelin from the same letter quoted above: "Nothing is more damnably harmful to everyone, white AND black than miscegenation, bastardization and mongrelization of EVERYTHING. less sense in breeding humans (eugenics) than is used for cattle and sheep" (EP to JK April-May 1956). In any case, the reference to Crommelin and Del Valle was not merely tactical. When Pound got his *Selected Cantos* together in 1966, he included the lines about the two segregationist military men (though not the lines about the sheep) in the section selected from canto CV (see SC 110-111).

Canto CV has received little commentary. Scott's insight about Pound's "refusal to separate his fixation on damnation from his

¹² See Benjamin Muse, *Ten Years of Prelude*, p. 4-5.

¹³ "Some dialects are very difficult because the word for a 'white dog' may have no etymological connection at all with the word for 'black dog' etc." (Terrell Vol. 2 684).

fixation on paradise” notes that “many critics, faced with this flagrant doubleness, have simply ignored or discounted the latter” (Scott 1990 47) James Wilhelm in *The Later Cantos* gives it a short chapter entitled “In Praise of Anselm and a Vital Christian Humanism” (156-166) but concentrates on the paradisaic core of the poem, as does Peter Liebrechts in *Ezra Pound and Neo-Platonism*—neither comment of Crommelin or Del Valle. George Kearns, who was a frequenter of “The Make It New Bookshop” in the Village in the early ‘50s only acknowledges “indirect contact” between the Admiral and General Del Valle, noting laconically, “they were retired from military duty and were involved in conservative politics” (Kearns 241). Peter Makin doesn’t touch Canto CV. Cookson in his *Guide* clearly has no idea who Crommelin was (see Cookson 249); both he and Terrell depend heavily on Wilhelm in their guides (as does Liebrechts).

Commentators understandably spend their energy on the truly recondite material that makes up the bulk of the canto, the “life and works of the Italian-born St. Anselm (c. 1033-1109)” (Cookson 246) and his philosophical work *Monologion*. Anselm appears in Dante’s *Paradiso* XII and he was Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of William Rufus—so it makes some sense to find him in *Thrones*. Still, the guides’ uncertainty does show that the canto can be construed as commenting on the contemporary political situation in the United States in 1956. Cookson comments that Anselm “is important in *Thrones* both in his respect for reason and precise terminology and because, in his struggle against William Rufus, he represents an important stage in the evolution of the rights of the individual against arbitrary power” (Cookson 246). This correctly expresses Pound’s view of the drift of the United States away from republicanism into tyranny during the course of the 20th century—a process culminating in the enforced integration of the South and the consequent destruction of the American way of life that had produced the sacred Constitution. As he wrote to Olivia Agresti April 3, 1956, when composing canto CV, ““But charter, division of powers starts, or can be studied as emerging from Anselm vs/ Wm. H. Roosevelt Rufus” (EP/ORA 228), neatly linking the power struggle to FDR and the federal usurpation called the New Deal.¹⁴

¹⁴ Notebook #98 contains these scurrilous lines on p. 61, “Wm Rufus a punk/ [like?] FDR/ + his crab louse/ Hopkins” (Beinecke YCAL MSS 43 box 120. A further reference in the EP/ORA correspondence links FDR/Rufus to the “The FILTH of the First Crusade”..I.has anyone “noticed

Cookson also notes that Pound exploits the subject-rhyme with Thomas à Becket (Cookson 246); that there is also a subject rhyme between Anselm and Crommelin and Del Valle does not occur to him. Terrell notes in his pocket biography of Anselm that Pound found Anselm “a significant figure in the development of democratic freedoms” and he quotes the poet’s endorsement in the Bridgson interview in *New Directions 17*: “You can be damn well be thankful to St, Anselm, because all your liberties back before ‘Maggie Carter’ as they used to call her in the law schools of America—I mean the fight between him and William Rufus, the dirty bandit—all your liberties come out of that” (qtd. Terrell 2 683).

For Cookson and Terrell this theme in Canto CV is a run-up for “the great climax of the Magna Carta cantos 107-109 (Terrell 683), where Pound will trace this struggle “from the Anglo-Saxons, via *Magna Carta*, to Sir Edward Coke’s fight for the independence of the judiciary at the time of James I” (Cookson 246), a monarch Pound double-damns as the overseer of the King James Version of *The Bible*, which the poet affects to disdain (see CVII/771, 772, 774) because it endorsed obfuscation in English writing (Notebook 99 and see EP/ORA 210). James’s double function as threat to the judiciary and promulgator of the foundational text of British Puritanism means that he partook in that Judaicizing tendency within Christianity, the Puritan retreat to the Old Testament and, at the same time, the Puritan embrace of modern capitalism and thus, usury. Scott, I may add, is excellent on Pound’s ‘sick’ involvement in these ancient tangles and the dark side of Sir Edward Coke (Scott 1990, 52); a darkness that suits Pound’s involvement with the terrorists of his own time.

It is possible, though overt textual evidence is lacking, that Pound’s interest in Coke and an independent judiciary was rekindled by Eisenhower’s careful shaping of a Supreme Court that would support desegregation. Eisenhower presided over five Supreme Court appointments and took an active interest in creating a progressive judiciary. His first and most important appointment of California governor Earl Warren in late September 1953 was made with the pending *Brown* decision in mind. According to David A.

the ‘baros metetz en gage’ or the pawning of castles in Normandy and consequent rise of taxes in England/ that real Roosevelt Wm/Rufus etc.” (June, 21, 1957, EP/ORA 248).

Nichols, “No subsequent president has made a judicial appointment of greater consequence for civil rights” (Nichols 55). Because it was a “recess appointment” and Warren had no prior judicial experience, skeptics on the Right, like Pound, could be excused for seeing Eisenhower as “packing” the Supreme Court as FDR had been accused of doing before him; Pound opens canto 100 with Senator Wheeler’s charge against FDR that “He has packed the Supreme Court/ so they will declare anything he does constitutional” (C/733). Just below these lines Pound quotes Lenin re. “Aesopian language” so that ““where I wrote ‘Japan’ you may read ‘Russia’” (C/733) Are we free to read Wheeler on FDR as Pound on Ike? If the problem of an independent judiciary addressed by Coke in Cantos CVIII and CIX, “rhymes” with Anselm on investiture in Canto CV, then the appointments of Chief Justice Warren, and John Marshall Harlan II, the grandson and namesake of the judge who had dissented from *Plessy*, in March 1955, and William Joseph Brennan in September 1956, yet another recess appointment (Nichols 80), might well be a kind of rhyme. The appointments could be construed from the anti-integrationist camp as an intolerable seizure of judicial power by the executive branch--just what Coke opposed in King James and what Anselm opposed in the theological realm in the investiture struggle with William Rufus. For Pound, it is not too much to say that, “that slobbering bugger Jim First” (CVII/777) was, like Rufus, also a kind of seventeenth-century FDR; that is to say, in Pound’s rabid political cosmos, an agent of international usury. Following Dante, Pound always links buggery and usury.

Carroll Terrell did not understand Pound’s aversion to Rufus. He argues (mistakenly) that William Rufus “opposed” Anselm in the “investiture controversy” that pitted state and Church against each other at the time “on the grounds of states’ rights” (Terrell 2 685); whereas, Pound’s Rufus is a red-headed FDR. So, contrary to Wilhelm, the Bridgson interview and the general thrust of the canto as a whole as well as Terrell’s own implicit reading of Canto CV in other notes, if Rufus opposes Anselm and the Church on the grounds of states’ rights, it would appear that Pound approves of Rufus’s resistance, since the poem comments on current events and supports states’ rights against federal encroachment in the United States. In opposition, Terrell’s Rufus is the smaller, local power resisting the dictates of the Holy and Catholic (universal) Church, where any doctrinal deviation comparable to states’ rights would be

heretical. But, as we have seen, it is clear that Pound disapproves of Rufus, who Terrell also condemns implicitly by quoting Pound's line that he "raised rent [from] 5 to 40" (CV/769, Terrell 2 685). So there is a contradiction in Terrell's notes. Possibly, Terrell's own politics may get in the way of his interpretation here; to New Englanders like Terrell and me, "States Rights" is resonant with Southern recalcitrance, racism and rebellion.

Pound's late cantos are troubled texts, hard to read and often enough nonsensical because of editing errors, presumably by Pound himself. Particularly striking to me are the reversals of meaning between what he originally wrote in his notebooks and what appears in the printed poem, as I noted in passing above. Why change "loans to Tibet" as he had written in Canto LXXXVII (LXXXVII/596) to "loans from Tibet"? It's hard to understand how Pound could let that pass, despite his oft professed boredom with proofreading and his careless spelling (zb. Crommelyn for Crommelin, spelled correctly in drafts). Perhaps his habit of writing in code was part of the problem. Juggling "Aesopian" nomenclatures may also have led Pound to reversals of meaning—unintentionally or intentionally. It is important to remember that the cantos from Pisa onwards are prison literature, subject to surveillance, censorship and later, scrutiny by psychologists and others to determine Pound's sanity. If Pound's intention was to evade the censors, as Lenin did in his Aesopian encryptions, then he succeeded—perhaps too well. Still, if we steep ourselves in the immediate political context of these late poems—and canto CV is just one salient example—one can make sense of them, Pound's best efforts to the contrary.

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