

# **ezra in pisa**

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playwright



## **Ezra in Pisa**

EZRA POUND AND THE PISAN CANTOS

### **CHARACTERS**

Ezra Pound (*age about 60*)

Null-E, *Pound's alter ego & sometime Nemesis*

Dorothy Shakespear, *his wife (age 59)*

Olga Rudge, *his mistress (age 50)*

Mary de Rachewiltz, *his daughter by Olga (age 20)*

T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, William Carlos Williams, William Butler Yeats, *friends of Pound*

### CHORUS

*Poets, writers, artists, historical figures, and critics who were friends of Pound's or knew him, or who he admired:*

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska<sup>1</sup>, Ford Maddox Ford, James Joyce, Archibald MacLeish, Gertrude Stein, HD (Hilda Doolittle), Henry James, Randall Jarrall, Lewis Zukofsky, George Santayana, Bertolt Brecht, and such critics as Hugh Kenner and Wendy Stallard Flory.

*Military and governmental officials:*

Major Frank Amprim<sup>2</sup>, Lt. Colonel Steele<sup>3</sup>, J. Edgar Hoover, Base Censor, Charge of Quarters, Lieutenant, officers, soldiers, MPs, bureaucrats, prosecutor, U.S. Marshal, Attorney General Biddle, and camp sentries, orderlies and psychologists.

*Disciplinary Training Center inmates:*

St. Louis Till, Edwards, Green, Whiteside, Washington, Hobo Williams, Snag<sup>4</sup>.

*Historical figures involved with Pound:*

Julien Cornell<sup>5</sup>, Edd Johnson<sup>6</sup>, Frau Marcher<sup>7</sup>, Mussolini; Major C.H. Douglas<sup>8</sup>, A.R. Orage<sup>9</sup>, Mrs. Fenollosa<sup>10</sup>, Anita Pelligini<sup>11</sup>, reporters radio announcers (audio only), and newsmen, Italian officials, soldiers and partisans.

*Figures from history, mythology, and literature:*

Confucius<sup>12</sup>, President John Adams, Calypso, President Lincoln, William Patterson, Herr Krupp, Karl Marx, Arthur Griffith, William Jennings Bryan, Dionysus (boy and man), various sailors, Tiresias, Dante, and Virgil.

### *Notes*

Footnotes are provided for the major literary references, especially from Pound's Cantos. For readability, extensive footnotes on historical sources, and from letters, biographies and scholarly studies are not provided, but are available.

# **EZRA IN PISA**

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## OVERVIEW – EZRA IN PISA

Ezra Pound – brilliant, iconoclastic, temperamental, garrulous, hugely egotistic – has been brought to a humiliating and yet cathartic self-confrontation in the U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa, Italy. Pound has been a capering genius, generously promoting the work of unknown contemporaries to become giants of Western literature – Eliot, Joyce, Frost. Lending his unsurpassed ear, he has reinvented Chinese poetry for West, founded the Imagist movement, and discovered himself at the center of a vortex of creative imagination and light, first in London, then Paris, finally settling in Rapallo, Italy. He has begun “a long poem embodying history,” a series of Cantos which remain unfinished. A deeply sensual lover with high Provençal ideals of the feminine, Pound has become darkly entangled in a love triangle with his wife Dorothy Shakespear and life-long mistress, Olga Rudge, each of whom has given him a child whom he rarely sees. Watching the world dissolve twice in 25 years into the chaos of world war, he has convinced himself that he alone can revolutionize economics (as he did poetry) and save humankind from unending cycles of war fomented cynically for profit. Vexed and impatient, he harangues Europe and America in the cause of Social Credit, serving (as he sees it) social justice, a humane political economy, and a new governance of Confucian wisdom. Wildly loquacious in his hatred of Usury, he has mingled it with a most ill-considered and crude anti-Semitism, and has fallen into near-hero worship of the fascist dictator Mussolini, for whom he has taken up weekly broadcasts opposing the War over Rome Radio.

As Italy falls to the Allies, Pound betakes himself to the military authorities to explain his activities, and finds himself – already indicted for treason – placed like an animal into a cage of wire mesh where, as the play opens, he stands exposed both to the elements and to the self-recrimination of memory. Badly damaged by his own intemperance and poor judgment, he is suddenly forced to struggle for his very sanity, under assault not only from the brutal conditions of his incarceration and the imminent threat of possible execution, but also from figures that stand personified in memory and in his Cantos. His Cantos have invoked Dionysus and Odysseus in sublimations or subconscious figuring of himself. Though no hero himself, he is now, like these Gods and Heroes, dismembered and cast adrift on storm-tossed seas, seeking resurrection and a way home. His Cantos both provide him the raft that may save him and serve as his vehicle for self-confrontation over how he has failed his most deeply held Confucian and Provençal values (such as the charitable treatment of others, benevolence, and the wise and precise use of language to bring proper order to government and balance to the times).

Most of the play takes place during the first six weeks of Pound’s incarceration at the DTC, in conditions under which he ultimately breaks down. He begins the Pisan Cantos during these six weeks, weighted by remorse, memory, and self-judgment. In an examination of conscience, figures from memory and from his Cantos stand forth, coming to the cage to converse with him or confront him, at times reenacting with him scenes from his life. These moments bring him to face to face with himself, and sometimes with grace. He floats on the tiny raft of Cantos and memory in a maelstrom of social- and self-criticism, accused as a traitor, wrenching the hearts

of the two women he loves, seeking to survive the passage of his own *nekyia*<sup>13</sup> and night sea journey<sup>14</sup>.

He willfully descends, self-blinded, into personal evil, mediated by his own outsized egoism, narcissism, and prejudice – his silver tongue placed in service of vituperative venom. He experiences traumatic self-confrontation, self-dismantling and wandering like Odysseus, cast asea in wrack and storm alone on a raft made from the last bare boards of humility, remorse, and confession, from which only compassion and human love can save him. He clings to this raft in an over-towering storm of his own making, which he, like Prospero, whipped up to drive ashore on the island of his innermost being those parts of himself that had betrayed him. This raft is not only all he has left in the world, but all that is placed between him and unimaginable depths in which sanity itself could sink. Drenched, tossed, crying out to what Gods may be for mercy, he at last struggles back to ordinary human life and self-reconstruction in his own Odyssey of renewal rooted in art and madness<sup>15</sup>. His great passage “Pull Down Thy Vanity” from Canto 81 signals new integration and closure, bringing forth a man of greater wisdom, insight and humility. He is given little time to consolidate these fragile gains, as he is shortly extradited to America, to stand trial for treason as the play closes, to be picked up in the second play of the pair, *Ezra Agon*.

## SCENE SUMMARIES

### Act 1: Eucalyptus, that's for Memory

*Indictment, arrest and transport to prison (with WWI flashback and “Black Scene”)*

#### Scene 1 THE GORILLA CAGE AT PISA

Pound sits in what he called his “Gorilla Cage” on an upended crate, writing on a yellow tablet set on a makeshift table fashioned out of a packing crate. Camp prisoners, almost all of them black, are visible at hard labor. An older black bluesman sits nearby on a crate, playing a beat-up guitar and singing Robert Johnson’s lyrics (*Hellhound on My Trail*). Pound reflects on himself and the journey that has brought him to this cage, reading in his situation parallels to the wanderings of Odysseus and in the landscape around him ideograms of the Confucian “process” (akin to the Tao), the ideal City, and the perfect human order and plan of the universe, which was embodied (as he sees it) in the “Great Effort” of the Fascist vision in Italy. Musing, he encounters his own unconscious or alter ego, his sometime Nemesis, Null-E. He is visited by his oldest friends and colleagues (Williams, Eliot, Hemingway, Yeats) who discuss his present danger and way home. He concludes by thinking on Odysseus’ device to escape the Cyclops cave, naming himself “no man.”

#### Scene 2 ARREST & INDICTMENT

News of his arrest is broadcast, and his closest friends comment. A prosecutor questions Pound on his broadcasts. A U.S. Marshal reads Pound’s indictment and warrant for arrest. Olga is approached by muckrakers. His friends and detractors debate his putative treasonous activities.

### Scene 3 HELL/THE GREAT WAR

The roots of Pound's behavior and activities in the 1930s and the war years of the 1940s are illuminated in a flashback to WWI. The Hell Cantos and *Cathay* (popular with men at the front) illustrate the horrors and losses (e.g., of his friend, the young sculptor Henri Gaudier) that drove Pound to search out and hate the economic roots of war, particularly in his concept of usury. Ezra receives Fenallosa's manuscripts and translates *Cathay*, which is read by Gaudier at the front. Gaudier dies, blown into a trench where a sergeant jams him down among the corpses with his boot. Pound descends into Hell, sees visions from Dante and Blake, and is led back out by the Medusa shield, brought him by a figure of light.

### Scene 4 EUCALYPTUS FOR MEMORY

Rapallo is liberated. Pound attempts to contact American military authorities to explain his broadcasts and is turned away. Partisans arrest him at Sant' Ambrogio. He slips his Chinese Dictionary and copy of Confucius into his pocket and picks up a eucalyptus pip "for memory" on his way. Olga arrives too late and writes in haste to their daughter Mary, then catches up to Ezra. Mary is again left to shift for herself while her parents are absorbed in one another. The partisan commander frees him, and they turn themselves into the U.S. Army where Olga and Ezra read a paper and find out that he has been indicted for treason in America.

### Scene 5 INTERVIEWS

An interview is conducted by an American reporter (Pound's first interview after his arrest). Major Amprim, an undercover FBI agent, comments on the interview, reads instructions as to Pound's detention and visits Dorothy Pound at their Sant' Ambrogio apartment where he collects evidence. Pound, incredulous, is taken into custody.

### Scene 6 TRANSPORT TO DTC

Two officers read instructions for Pound's detention. Lt. Colonel Steele writes to his mother about Ezra while Major Amprim sits at his desk reading Pound's statement to himself in growing incredulity. Pound intersperses unsolicited explanatory comments from his cage.

### Scene 7 THE BLACK SCENE

Pound hands his first manuscript of *Pisan Cantos* to the base censor. He observes camp life and comments on the many black inmates, who engage in small talk. Edwards, who made Pound's table from a packing case, furtively approaches his cage to admire his handiwork and speak to Pound. With boogie woogie playing in the background a masque is enacted by four giant black laborers, allegorizing the mythical Wagadu from ancient Ghana. The DTC is converted for a moment into the perfectly ordered and governed ideal city of Canto 74. The scene ends with contemplation of slavery, unequal racist justice, and a descent into the dark night of the soul.

### Scene 8 Nullity

Pound's nemesis and alter ego, Null-E, appears to him. They argue and Pound banishes him.

## **Act 2: “Ezra Pound Speaking”**

*Pound’s broadcasts, usury, Fascism, and social credit*

### Scene 1– BIRDS ON A WIRE

The young Olga plays a piece imitating birdsong, which appears in the Pisan Cantos as Canto 75. A tiny pup tent has been ingeniously rigged within the cage, which Pound takes down, packing it up for the day. He observes the birds on the telephone wires above the camp.

### Scene 2 “EZRA POUND SPEAKING”

The scratchy sound of WWII radio is heard playing the official introduction that prefaced each of Pound’s broadcasts. A series of broadcasts are spoken while Yeats and others comment and debate whether they were treasonous, educational, or just incoherent.

### Scene 3 USURA

It is late evening and Pound’s cage has become a room in the camp medical dispensary, where he has been granted access to type in the evenings. He pounds away, two fingered typing angrily punching an old-fashioned Remington typewriter. The only person with him is the camp Charge of Quarters. Virgil recapitulates for Dante the nature of usury, and Ezra comments on its role in the Inferno. He speaks the Usura Canto and sets forth some of Major Douglas’s “social credit” theory. John Adams, Karl Marx and others comment on the nature of usury and debate the use and abuse of money and economics with Pound. The Chorus echoes economic themes that remain alive today.

### Scene 4 MUSSOLINI & FASCISM

Ezra explains to Amprim the greatness of Hitler and Mussolini, and ends up defending fascists and Nazis, and blaming the Allied war effort on the Jews. Played to a fast-paced boogie woogie, Pound exhibits his Fascist hero worship of a bored Mussolini, who receives him seated at a desk. Yeats satirizes and ironizes as Mussolini’s somewhat contemptuous dismissals go over Ezra’s head. Attempts to confront Ezra with the true nature of the fascism he supported fail.

## **Act 3: “Hast’ou Found A Softer Nest?”**

*Memory moves back over loved ones, entanglements, narcissism and the women in his life – Olga, Dorothy, and Mary*

### Scene 1 COME ON IN MY KITCHEN

The scene opens with the old bluesman playing the title song of the scene. The three women in his life, Olga, Mary and Dorothy, demand that he examine his conscience over them and not just over his theories and war activities. Ezra sends a martin to carry a message to Olga and ruminates on death and the departed.

### Scene 2 LETTERS IN CAPTIVITY

Ezra reads an Anthology of Great English and American Poetry found on the outhouse seat. Letters in Captivity exchanged between Ezra and Dorothy reveal her side of the story and her

part in his history. Olga and Mary comment and sometimes enter into the dialogue. Dorothy arrives for her first visit with Ezra since his arrest.

### Scene 3 LYNX

After Dorothy returns home, Ezra sends her his “Lynx Canto”, constructed around his metaphor for her, a token of his love. It is delayed for a time in the post, but arrives and they step outside of time to briefly rejoin through it in a tender love scene.

### Scene 4 HAST’OU FOUND A SOFTER NEST?

A ménage a trois is forced on Ezra, Dorothy and Olga as Ezra and Dorothy, as Ezra and Dorothy are evicted by the Nazis from their Rapallo apartment and move into Olga’s little cottage up the hill at Sant’ Ambrogio. Dialogue illustrates the estrangement and tension of that household. The scene briefly summarizes the history of their marriage and Olga’s arrival on the scene as Pound’s mistress. Ezra’s dialogue reveals his love of both woman, while theirs focuses on their loathing of one another set against the background of their devotion to him and their battle of wills over him. Mary comments on the difficult situation and Ezra again compares himself to Odysseus, moving from Calypso’s bed to Penelope’s.

### Scene 5 NARCISSUS

Ezra wakes on another morning and begins to sense a visitation of archetypal feminine eyes watching him; a sense that will continue to grow through his stay at Pisa. Dorothy and Olga squabble and Mary writes to tell him that she has met Omar, her half-brother, hidden from her for so many years. Olga complains about bearing his child and reveals her disappointment in Mary, beginning with her desire for a son. Vignettes from memory reveal the self-absorption of Ezra, Dorothy and Olga vis-à-vis their own children, whom they neglect in their overweening narcissism. All three treated their children like toys of which they quickly tired, and as extensions of themselves, to be domineered and corrected. Visits to the Tyrol farming family where Mary was “parked” are recalled, followed by Mary’s recollection of bittersweet memories of visits to Olga’s “Hidden Nest” in Venice.

### Scene 6 MEMORY & FORGETTING

The nature of memory itself takes the stage as Ezra continues to grapple with his memories and Mary continues her history told from her vantage point, including relationships with and between Olga and Dorothy. Dialogue shifts back and forth from the present, in which memories are recalled and spoken to one another, to reenacting the moment at the time it occurred. Ezra’s long trek to Mary in Gais after Italy fell is told and he begins to slip into an intensified consciousness that is at once delirium, poetry, and enlightenment.

## **Act 4: “Pull Down Thy Vanity”**

*Pivot and climax: Ezra’s inner world disintegrates under the pressure of memory and remorse, leading to self-renewal at a deeper level of insight. The metamorphosis is set within stories of Dionysus and Odysseus. On the outer level, Ezra’s ordeal in the cage leads to his mental breakdown and evaluation by the Camp Psychiatrist leading to recommendations for changes in his situation.*

### Scene 1 STONES IN MY PASSWAY

The old bluesman plays the scene's title song. Ezra and Olga turn again to memories and recall their first meeting. Ezra despairs at the losses that follow the path taken in the course of a life.

### Scene 2 AND OUT OF NOTHING, A BREATHING

The fear of death intensifies as Ezra reads of other traitors executed. He undergoes a Dionysian dissolution and reorganization. The exoskeleton he'd long built up to protect his sensitive and vulnerable parts begins to dissolve – a frightening thing. The rigid ranting persona no longer serves to protect him and things begin to metamorphose. His cage becomes a boat and he fantasizes the God Dionysus come aboard as a boy picked up by sailors who want to sell him as a slave. The story of Dionysus draws on Pound's story of the shape-shifting God in Canto 2. Nothing is what it seems. The God transforms the boat and nonbelievers in frightening ways, and instructs Ezra. Profound spiritual depths underlie ordinary experience, and he who does not realize this faces the trials and dangers of mistaking or misusing them.

### Scene 3 CALYPSO'S ISLAND

Ezra crosses through the dark to front center stage to sit on a rock, looking out to sea, his sharp hawk face trying to pierce the gloom that hides home from view. Olga appears, arranges a blanket over his shoulders and fades silently from stage as Dorothy appears as the Goddess Calypso, and stands silently behind him. She frees him to return home, as she did Odysseus, preparing for the pivotal Nykea scene that follows. Ezra hears Tiresias' prophecy and sets sail.

### Scene 4 CAST TO SEA ON A RAFT

Ezra slides into dissociation with reality, living out his role as a modern Odysseus, cast to sea on a raft where self-recrimination, remorse, and the terrible acknowledgement of the pain he has caused bring him to the edge of sanity and the limits of self-knowledge. The bars of light lift away or explode outward, leaving Pound exposed on the floor of his cell, now a raft pitching and tossing on wild seas that wash over him. He clings for survival to its sides all through the storm; at last the clouds part and he floats in moonless starlight. The Chorus speaks his great translation of the Old English Seafarer, as he tears down the structure of the old self to make way for new integration. Realizations about himself and his conduct push up through repression, driving inner change, the night sea journey undertaken, self-deconstruction and reconstruction, and the terrifying descent into madness, loss of control, the center does not hold.

### Scene 5 BREAKDOWN AND PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION

Dark comes on. Intense spotlights flood the cage. Pound rolls up in his blankets on the cement floor, pulling them over his head to avoid the glare, finding himself irremediably alone with his fate. We now see Pound's crisis from the outside. His friends comment and camp psychiatrists relate their evaluation of him and his need for transfer out of the gorilla cage.

### Scene 6 PULL DOWN THY VANITY

Pound is back in his new tent, better protected from the elements. He speaks the Pull Down Thy Vanity section of Canto 81. He has arrived at the eye of the great inner hurricane that

resolves into humility, remorse, and incipient recognition of what he has done. He converses with Confucius about what might be required to make good.

### Scene 7 EXTRADITION

Pound is back in the camp dispensary, typing out a love letter for one of the prisoners. His extradition and transfer to Washington D.C. is ordered. His friends sum up and ask whether and to what extent he should be condemned, and what we would need to know to do that.

## THE USE OF POETRY

*Ezra in Pisa* and *Ezra Agon* are not only plays by and about poets and poetry, but works that seek to use and reintroduce poetry of a Shakespearian quality to the stage. The poetry of Pound is joined by Whitman, William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, Elizabeth Bishop, Frost, Rilke, Keats, Dante, and original work – often worked into dialogue; sometimes directly quoted.

However, while Ezra Pound wrote limpid lines of great beauty, he also wrote obscure, elliptical cantos and he not infrequently condescended as little as possible to the ignorance of readers whom he at times seemed to consider bloody fools to whom he would little deign to explain (a criticism also leveled at his economic ramblings and propaganda broadcasts). And so, ironically, his poetry becomes perhaps a little easier to understand and engage when set in a framework such as theater affords.

## POUND'S CHARACTER & CONTEXT

Ezra Pound is not always a sympathetic character, and should not be made a hero or role model. He was deeply disturbed for some years, possibly traitorous, megalomaniac, rude, anti-Semitic, cynical, sneering, and self-absorbed. He fathered two children whom he neglected in childhood, abdicating all the hard work of fatherhood in favor of his creative interests. He involved two women who loathed one another in a life-long love triangle of unremitting pain. The plays remain ambivalent on these questions. How extreme was his narcissism? Was he psychotic? What were the roots of his anti-Semitism? Were they only a byproduct of his mental illness?

Yet many also described Pound as sweet, kind, and extraordinarily generous with his time and help. He was *the* poetic genius of his time. Pound made published poets out of people who might otherwise never have been heard. He met William Carlos Williams and Hilda Doolittle (HD) when the three were students at the University of Pennsylvania, and pulled them into poetry. He discovered Eliot, edited his early masterpiece (*The Wasteland*), and argued him into print. He secretaried for Yeats, befriended Joyce and put his *Ulysses* before the public by main force, buddied with Cocteau and Hemingway in Paris, and advocated for the young and ungrateful Robert Frost. He invented Imagism as a means to promote the over-looked work of friends in whom he recognized talent – and then wrote some of the finest short poems of the century to establish his invention far beyond the boundaries of mere device.

This is a play, not a history or a study, and though Ezra Pound and the figures and people in his life often speak for themselves (drawing on their actual words where they have been recorded or adapting their words to develop scenes from their lives reimagined or extended by imagination), this is a theater piece – a work of fiction about historical events and people – and has whatever truth fiction has.

Pound is a tragic figure in the classical sense, a man of great gifts brought low by his own pride, arrogance, and unredeemed egotism. He commands the same horrified fascination with which we regard such political figures as Richard Nixon or Donald Trump, or, on stage, a Richard III or a Hamlet, as they fail (and fall) moment by moment and inch by inch into consuming pits of their own excavation. More fundamentally, he is fascinating because we too make errors in our own lives, and we watch Pound with the same horror that we may then view ourselves. We search his story for clues that may allow us someday to live (as Rilke put it) into the answers to the questions that our lives become in the worst of those moments. These are plays about memory and forgetting and about how remorse and arrogance contend in the theater of memory. They are about ruin and forgiveness, the blues and human kindness, and the play of earthly and transcendent love in moments of absolute self-confrontation.

*Ezra in Pisa* is also a play about political economics and the impulse to “save the world” – the impulse to oppose social and economic injustice, and about how such ends may be carried out in ways that themselves become seriously questionable. It is about a quixotic quest against usurers and financiers who manipulate war to their profit, and a quest to restore integrity and dignity and self-sufficiency, to enable people to enjoy the fruits of their labor and the productivity of the earth. This ideal has a long tradition of going awry, be it in Stalinist Russia, the French Revolution, or even in the newborn slave-holding republic of the American Revolution. It is a story that continues unabated in the inequities and sense of injustice that drive today’s debates about taxes and the superrich “one percent”, whether argued by the Tea Party or the Occupy movement.

## **POUND’S VOICES**

Pound both hid behind the voices he adopted and made an exhibition of himself through them. Sometimes they were gratingly phony, overdone, or ostentatious in ways that fell flat, unnoticed – or at least unacknowledged – by him. He rarely worried about consistency, although he frequently used over-emphasized inflection and deliberate mispronunciation both to mock and to affect a cynical pose that tried to place itself beyond the injury of other’s judgment. Some of his voices include:

- 1) Cracker-barrel “Murkin” dialect (especially in his broadcasts and letters).
- 2) Garrulous smart-aleck, affecting cynicism, sneering, sardonic, judgmental. At his most slangy and profane when he most cared about something.
- 3) Naïve and credulous. “A talkative penchant for shooting himself in the foot.” Dada bravado.

- 4) A booming voice of oracular pronouncement.
- 5) The pushy, impatient, and arrogant tone of the hustler and promoter.
- 6) Wise, Confucian – mature, informed by the ages, far-seeing.
- 7) Army dialect, most often affected in his *Pisan Cantos* (see 77.203-10, 74.398-400, 77.269-75, 79.33-36).
- 8) Theatrical, flashy, as recorded in Donald Hall's interview (in *Ezra Agon*), he rolled his rrr's grandly and at the end of each sentence kept the pitch while he retained volume. This melody lent a coda to every sentence.
- 9) Achieving poetic unity by quick juxtapositions with an exchange of vocabularies among texts.

## STAGING

The stage in this play is a place of “negative capability” as Keats coined the term: “that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.”<sup>16</sup> It is largely undecorated, other than with such essentials as are required to enact scenes from Pound's memory. His cage itself should be made of bars of light. The stage is a fertile void, black, neutral and available for whatever action Pound's imagination and memory may bring to play upon it. It the fertile void where we go to sleep and escape from a pressing world – only to encounter it again in dreams. Like dreams, memories often stand forth against an indefinite background – what is happening is more important than the marginal questions of just where or when it happened, or how. We are where the action is, and scenes from memory can flow into one another without ostentatious displays of scene-setting and scene-changing, as they do in the mind. No one need care about literalist logic. The platform, in imagination, becomes a fluid medium in which anything can appear and disappear again. The action defines the space; places are where Pound's imagination puts them; often indefinite, they shift and reorganize into new scenes of memory. The stage is as unlimited as the mind and imagination.<sup>17</sup>

## CHORUS

This play also reclaims the chorus, made up of figures from the *Cantos* and Pound's life who comment, warn, chastise, debate, speak fragments of his poetry, and sometimes “read their own lines” from the *Cantos*. The chorus may be comprised of a small pool of actors who enter in many roles and may be costumed as desired. There are so many figures from his *Cantos* and his life who enter the play (and Ezra's mind as he sits in his cage), that actors must play multiple parts and move on and offstage as needed to assume new identities. Therefore, this script does not track every such entry or exit, nor does it always make the point that figures step forward from the Chorus.

Throughout the play these figures from the chorus approach the cage to confront or converse with Ezra, or manifest memory, remorse, or self-confrontation. At times he steps through the bars to reenact with them moments he recalls, or to reshape them through fantasy. As in the

Cantos, the story proceeds by bits and fragments – what Pound called “the luminous detail” – juxtapositions of memories and sudden intuitions or images interrupting the flow of present events. Ezra frequently moves from interaction with these characters as they come to him in memory, to their present manifestations before him, to the musing reverie of imagery from his Pisan Cantos (and other cantos). Again, notes and directions do not indicate every instance of shifting time, from time remembered to time present.

**ACT 1: EUCALYPTUS, THAT'S FOR MEMORY****Scene 1 THE GORILLA CAGE AT PISA**

MUSIC – SOFTLY “HELLHOUND ON MY TRAIL” BY ROBERT JOHNSON

*LYRICS* | got to keep moving, | got to keep moving  
Blues falling down like hail, blues falling down like hail  
Blues falling down like hail, blues falling down like hail  
And the day keeps on remindin' me, there's a hellhound on my trail  
Hellhound on my trail, hellhound on my trail  
  
| can tell the wind is risin', the leaves tremblin' on the tree  
Tremblin' on the tree  
| can tell the wind is risin', leaves tremblin' on the tree  
And the day keeps on remindin' me, there's a hellhound on my trail  
Hellhound on my trail, hellhound on my trail ...

*A cage about 6x6 is placed upstage on a raised platform. Though the original was made of wire mesh, this one should have bars that can be raised or dropped out of sight, ideally as shafts of light. Its base should be capable of shifting and tossing like a raft at sea.*

*A watchtower is visible at one corner of the stage; manned by an armed guard, who can non-verbally reflect or underscore the action. Ezra Pound sits within the cage on an upended crate, writing on a yellow tablet. A makeshift table is fashioned from another packing crate. There is no bed, only bedding on the ground. He has been given Army fatigues to wear but he has no belt, his trousers hang loose, his shoes unlaced. At times shifts in time may be emphasized by slipping on laced shoes and belting his pants.*

*Throughout the play he passes time in the cage by reading Confucius, writing, contemplating the landscape, shadow boxing, and playing with an old broom handle which he uses as a tennis racquet, billiard cue, baseball bat, fencing foil, and, when he is let out to walk, a stick which he swings out smartly to match his long stride.*

*Detainees, almost all black men, are visible at hard labor. They wear green uniforms with their names stenciled in white on the back. Occasionally one walks by Ezra's cage. An old bluesman sits on a crate nearby, playing a beat-up guitar and singing Robert Johnson's blues. He appears in the first scene of most acts.*

*A sentry stands outside, keeping a keen eye on Pound and surreptitiously listening in, gathering a free education in the classics – and half-baked economics. Downstage a chorus, comprised of Ezra's friends and critics, mill around shaking their heads, listening to radio news broadcasts, debating, and making small talk.*

*Bright lights flood the cage. Dust clouds the glare. Ezra periodically looks up, winces, shades his eyes from the blinding blaze, squints, returns to work. A black inmate walks by, points to the "desk" and grins. Ezra nods vigorously, points too and smiles. The man walks on; Ezra tips his head back to administer eye drops. Returning to his writing, he stops and drops his head into his hands, collapsed over his work.*

CHORUS: *(a group of old army buddies are gathered, hoisting a few beers and reminiscing)*

What do you remember?

We were posted to the DTC –

It was the end of the war –

In Pisa –

We built cages for insubordinates –

Deserters and rapists –

Men given one last chance to reform –

But not the man accused of treason –

The one in the Gorilla Cage –

The guy who wouldn't shut up –

What was his name?

NULL-E: *(commenting aside)*

No man. A man of conscience – a damned fool. A man given the leisure, thanks to the U.S. Army, to examine his memories –

CHORUS:

And sort the black beans of remorse –

From the white ones –

That sprout thin shoots –

Like fingers reaching toward the light.

*(a great wind sweeps through)*

EZRA: *(gesturing to the guard tower)* Four giants guard the four corners.<sup>18</sup> Six gallows set up in the yard. That peak amidst cloud-drift looks like Taishan, Great Mountain

sacred in Shantung. The birds flit from wire to wire like notes on a treble clef; the ant wobbles on a blade of grass; the camp cat roams with no regard for bars. I read each of them – little ideograms of nature like Chinese characters, compact pictographs of sanity, each one a thought complete.

*(taking up his yellow writing tablet)* Myriad small moments visible from this Gorilla Cage poke up through the trackless wastes of life, luminous details like islands in the Mediterranean. They are like an archipelago dotting the sea in the middle of the earth, the sea around which the human story wraps, the sea through which Odysseus muddled his 20-year way home, following the long periplum of an inexhaustible coastline – a journey not unlike writing a long poem embodying history, wandering from whatever shore this raft is thrown upon – today here *(brandishing his tablet)* – Cantos in Pisa.

I ride the dragon ant; I read music in birds that settle on the wires; I pad stealthy as the night cat through the ruins of memory. I write so that we may remember. *(turning back to his writing)* Four towers – guarding what city? *(pondering)* Dioce's! – its terraces were the color of stars.<sup>19</sup> Dioce was an honest judge, so they *ee*-lected him ruler and he built Ecbatan, the Eternal City.

WILLIAMS: *(breaking in, exasperated)* Disneyland fairytale castles.

HEMINGWAY: Neuch-wan-stein.

EZRA: *(patiently, ignoring them)* The Eternal City, known by many names – Ithaca in Greece; in Ghana called Wagadu.

NULL-E: Wag it dude.

EZRA: We got started on it here in Italy – the Great Effort, Muss dubbed it – t'wud be in its twenty-third year now, were the Boss still at it. Muss won the people's hearts. *// Duce* – the Boss, Benito. Old Ben began to build here in Italy.

WILLIAMS: Pompous stuffed-shirt Fascist bully!

HEMINGWAY: Martinet. Popinjay. One good round in the ring – I'd flatten the SOB.

EZRA: *(ignoring them)* As always, the Jewsurers worked against us. But Ben had the stomach to take a drink of Juwce. Haaww! Ole Bull *Moose*-alini – a constructive intelligence rare in history. Waal, an' whadide get for it? Hung. W'ull see no *paradiso terrestre* now.<sup>20</sup> The *ee*-normous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders.<sup>21</sup> But building that City never stops – not even here, in sight of the guard towers, in the death cells at Pisa.

WILLIAMS: *(fingering the cage)* My God, they've welded airstrip mesh to his cage –

HEMINGWAY: What, the stuff they lay down to improvise runways? He'll be no run-away from this. Do they think he tears through metal?

WILLIAMS: Pointless. He's caged now as much by memory as mesh.

NULL-E: *Re-morse.*

EZRA: (*startled by Null-E but forging on, not yet really aware of the others, but correcting what Null-E said*) *Dis-course.* Even here, every detail corresponds to the plan of the universe, the perfect human order, our true home.

YEATS: (*approaching the cage*) Ah Ezra, we said it often enough, did we not? – of an evening in the stone cottage, dusk fading over emerald Ireland – we often said that with one day's reading a man may hold the key in his hands.

EZRA: Bill? Bill Yeats? D'yuh untimely wander the death cells, Bill? (*chortling*) D'yuh rattle the death shells Bill? They hold no sting for you? Cum t'see me home? (*Yeats fades back into the chorus*) Ghosts, is it? Ah then, call me up Jim – so's I can wander lost as Ulysses, all of a mazy day in Dublin.

HEMINGWAY: (*commenting aside*) Nothing compared to trying to find a way out of one of your Cantos.

EZRA: And if I cling to sanity like an ant to a blade of grass, what other path is there in these open cells exposed to sun and wind and rain?

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): (*coming near*) Rain is of the process, wind is of the process. Look into your heart. Act on what you see. That is the process.<sup>22</sup>

EZRA: The true man is like a tempered blade, he rings when struck; he does not crack.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): One temperate man may humanize the entire state. One intemperate man can drive a nation to chaos.<sup>23</sup> (*retires*)

NULL-E: Learn the difference –

EZRA: Ah Kung, I do, I did. I set out to humanize ... and ... some damned idiocy landed me here! If I'm hung or shot, who will carry on? Some adult must explain it or the damned Jew profiteers will work it up all over again and slaughter another ten million! And pocket another hunnert milli-yon. Only Muss and I and one or two others with horse sense have been payin' attention.

NULL-E: Summer is icumen in. Goddamm.<sup>24</sup>

EZRA: (*calming down*) I must get home. It may take time. No matter – Odysseus himself wandered 20 years and yet returned home. He circumnavigated the known world, a thousand miles of coast, all the small turns and inlets of the periplum.

HEMINGWAY: Pair-*ee*-plum.

WILLIAMS: You grope like a blind man, full of hate as a blood-gorged tick –

HEMINGWAY: Striking at the stars with your stick for having the temerity to become clouded and blaming every rocky headland for the personal insult done to your shin.

EZRA: (*waving them off as if they were annoying mosquitoes buzzing his face*) To error is to wander. To wander, to return again and again. The Grand Periplum brings in all the stars to shore.<sup>25</sup> You must follow the coastline if you cannot navigate by the fixed stars.

ELIOT: (*approaching the cage*) Your way may run a thousand miles longer than the straight road overland, but you better take it if you don't know the straight way home. For you it is the only way, and when you arrive, your end will be your beginning.<sup>26</sup>

EZRA: (*acknowledging them for the first time*) Ole Possum! Here tuh hep me find muh way out? As yuh *RE*-member I once did for you, through a wasteland.

NULL-E: Summer is icumen in. Goddamm, goddamm.

ELIOT: This isn't a poem Ezra.

HEMINGWAY: You've lost the way aw-rite.

WILLIAMS: The only way to find it now would be to lose yourself.

EZRA: Williams? – yuh old Mule! Hem? All come to spring me?

CHORUS (YEATS, ELIOT, HEMINGWAY, WILLIAMS):

There is no way out but through –

Think of it as a dance –

That once begun you cannot stop –

Until you've danced all the steps.

WILLIAMS: You've danced down that long hall, Comerado –

ELIOT: Beyond all reach of ours –

HEMINGWAY: But this, to advise you –

CHORUS (HEMINGWAY, WILLIAMS, ELIOT, YEATS): (*under the gallows*) See that you don't dance at the end of a rope.

EZRA: (*stepping through the bars to approach the empty gallows*) Only a fool would. The much-enduring Odysseus many times seemed trapped yet escaped home.

YEATS: When he'd been trapped by the Cyclops, the canny Odysseus told him "I am No Man."

ELIOT: And after he'd blinded the Cyclops, it gave a dreadful shriek, blood dripping from the burnt hole of its seared eye –

HEMINGWAY: And its brother Cyclops ran to his aid and asked "who did this to you?" –

WILLIAMS: And the Cyclops, tricked by the clever Odysseus, replied –

EZRA: No Man – (*beat*) my name is No Man.<sup>27</sup>

## **Scene 2 Arrest & Indictment**

CHORUS (NEWSMAN): (*downstage, phoning in his report from his notepad or heard over a loudspeaker radio*) We have word this morning that Ezra Pound, indicted *in absentia* for treason two years ago, has been apprehended in the small town of Rapallo, on the Italian coast. Pound is in custody today under close watch at the U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa, Italy. (*fade*) Pound was notorious for his virulent broadcasts over Mussolini's Rome Radio...

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): (*briskly approaching Ezra's cage*) What do you remember?

EZRA: Waal, that's why I wrote more'n 70 Cantos so far – so's we might remember. As Kung<sup>28</sup> said, "We are unknown."

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): Kung. He was your handler – for the *Fascisti*?

EZRA: Kung. Con-fu-cius. Fifth century (*beat*) B.C. Goddammit, dun't yew *read*?

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): Mr. Pound, do recall recording a broadcast for Mussolini over Rome Radio, on the twenty-ninth of January, 1942?

EZRA: Don't recall, particularly. I spake out often – Murka in the hands of Roosenfelt's Jew banker friends; England squat under that great toad Churchill – sum'un needed to.

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): Perhaps this will help refresh your memory. (*plays tape*)

EZRA: (*grabs his broomstick which he uses as a mike, miming while the tape broadcasts – scratchy WWII quality sound*) The United States has been for months ILLEGALLY at war, through the criminal acts of a president who belongs in a bug house. That Jew in the White House has sent American kids to die for the private interests of the usurious scum of the English earth. Jewsfeldt is the tool of the Jewry. This is Ezra Pound tryin' tuh tell you that you will be invaded because you have invaded.<sup>29</sup>

WILLIAMS: I wonder if he'll have the nerve to stand up and be shot if it comes to that.

HEMINGWAY: If Ezra has any sense he should shoot himself. Personally I think he should have shot himself somewhere along about the twelfth Canto, though maybe earlier.

CHORUS (U.S. MARSHAL): (*strides to center stage bearing Pound's indictment and warrant for arrest, from which he reads, holding it up before him*) Whoever, owing allegiance to the United States, levies war against them or adheres to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort within the United States or elsewhere, is guilty of treason.

WILLIAMS: Ezra, you have always insisted in the loudest terms on the brilliance and profundity of your own mind. You don't have a great mind and never did, but that doesn't make you any the less a damn good poet. Your stupidities and your overweening self-importance brought you to this. You had the most acute ear of our generation – a genius for the music of poetry, but you are also the biggest damn fool and faker in the business.

HEMINGWAY: You've been an ass, and though I'd pardon you if I could, I'd give you a kick in the pants and ask you to use your head, if you have one – and invite you to have a drink. Damn it, we will do everything possible to prevent your being hung, even if we all have to get up on the scaffold with you with ropes around our own necks.

YEATS: In Australia they tell the story of Wanjina, son of the rainbow snake God, Ungur. Wanina created the world by saying the names of things. But because he would not shut up, he made too many things, so his father removed his mouth.<sup>30</sup>

WILLIAMS: (*wearily indicating Ezra*) Who could shut *him* up?

HEMINGWAY: If he knew how to shut up he wouldn't be here.

YEATS: When one mouth is shut, others may open – and decide that they have a calling to take up the story.

CHORUS (REPORTER): (*approaching Olga*) I'd like to tell both sides of the Ezra Pound story –

OLGA: (*cutting him off and speaking aside*) Both sides? You root around like hogs after truffles. You ring my bell and announce that you're writing books that will "tell both sides." Both sides! What do you think we are? – flapjacks??

WILLIAMS: He helped Yeats, Eliot, and Joyce – and Mussolini, and Hitler.

YEATS: Is the proper comparison to Dante, or Judas, or Don Quixote?

HEMINGWAY: (*commenting*) He wrote unsurpassed poetry in the morning and racist economic tracts in the afternoon. Yet he helped so many young and unknown writers

and artists when no one else would, even while living on a shoestring himself. He loaned them money, sold their art, arranged concerts, wrote up reviews – and in the end few refrain from knifing him at the first opportunity.<sup>31</sup>

WILLIAMS: He made a thing of beauty, but made it too hard to find and then covered it over with a sickly odor of hate, the rant of an imbalanced mind.

HEMINGWAY: Europe prostrate, the war over at last, and Ezra got caught on the wrong side of it, and too close to a microphone (*Ezra perks up and looks at him shrewdly*).

CHORUS (AMPRIM): The man is a traitor.

WILLIAMS: The man is a damned fool.

CHORUS (MARSHAL): (*who has been observing with scant patience*) We indict Ezra Loomis Pound, a citizen of the United States who, though absent from our shores these 37 years, owes allegiance to the United States and has, in violation of this duty, knowingly, intentionally, willfully, unlawfully, feloniously, traitorously and treasonably adhered to enemies of the United States, to wit, the Kingdom of Italy, its counselors, armies, navies, secret agents, representatives, and subjects, with which the United States at all times since December 11, 1941 has been at war. (*strides offstage*)

CHORUS (ATTORNEY GENERAL BIDDLE): We base this indictment on the simple fact that this man freely elected, at a time when his country was at war, to devote his services to the cause of an enemy of the United States. He has betrayed the first and most sacred duty of American citizenship.

CHORUS (YEATS, ELIOT, HEMINGWAY, WILLIAMS):

Is he a traitor? Or did he merely pursue what he most cared about in a most disastrous manner?

Oblivious grandiosity married to an ugly prejudice – was that but “the temper of the times”?

Is the loud and badly expressed pursuit of opinionated, half-cooked social programs treason?

Should a man be arrested, threatened with being shot or hanged for treason, or put away in a nut house, all for being a damned fool?

Or perhaps for being ahead of his time.

### **Scene 3 Hell/THE GREAT WAR**<sup>32</sup>

*Downstage a WWI trench is roughed in.*

NULL-E: Come to Hell Mouth. You did not pass the Great War in the trenches, though you deeply empathized their hell. Soldiers up to their knees in mud, the stench of slaughter, the quick ecstasy of fumbling for the gasmask<sup>33</sup>. See how well those you laud have carried out the work you adjured.

EZRA: It was to prevent War! All my work these 20 years has been to keep the bastard innernational cabal of yid money-sqyeezers from foisting another of their goddamned profit-making wars on us!

*Dorothy comes to the cage.*

DOROTHY: It began so long ago. Who remembers the Great War now? We were in London; we were young and in love.

EZRA: O Lynx, my lovely lynx.<sup>34</sup>

YEATS: (*to Ezra*) We stood then at the very center of a creative vortex – one that you personally whipped up, the likes of which had not been seen since perhaps the Renaissance.

EZRA: It was about then that I decided to write a poem of immeasurable length, a long poem including history.

YEATS: Your Cantos.

DOROTHY: We lived in a vertigo of dissolving empires – a series of vortices over which no one had control.

EZRA: I was in a frenzy to hasten a Renaissance, when all around me it was collapsing.

CHORUS: (*in the background kettledrums and the relentless chant, War, War War*)

We fled like showers of comets –  
Flung from wobbling orbits –  
We caught what we thought –  
Was the trajectory toward brotherhood –  
And solidarity –  
Riding –  
We thought –  
Toward a New World –  
But that disintegrated too –

And we woke to caricature –  
Italian Fascism –  
Stalinist Communism –  
Nazis rising in Germany –  
Battling for Europe in the heart of Spain –  
We awoke –  
Heart-frozen –  
To the totalitarian state and the mass man.

EZRA: Usura was to blame.

NULL-E: There are no righteous wars.<sup>35</sup>

*Enter Gaudier- Brzeska in WWI doughboy garb*

EZRA: Henri!

NULL-E: The Great War did not end all wars – that we know too well. But it collapsed your vortex and killed the comrade closest to your heart, the young sculptor Henri Gaudier.

EZRA: Bereavement. Postwar bedlam. Economies collapsing. What to mourn?

CHORUS (GAUDIERS- BRZESKA): Write me the epitaph that only you can write.

EZRA: (*pounding an imaginary typewriter*) It is unpardonable. The greatest single loss to the arts of the entire War is the death of Henri Gaudier. We have the work of perhaps two or three years, but the uncreated went with him. (*breaking off to address Brzeska directly*) With a hundred fat rich men working late nights to start another war for their personal profit, it is very hard for me to write of you with the lavender tones of dispassionate reminiscence.

CHORUS (GAUDIERS- BRZESKA): This war is a paltry mechanism. It serves only to purge over-numerous humanity.

EZRA: (*gesturing to Gaudier*) He was the best company in the world. Some of my best days, the happiest and most interesting, were spent in his uncomfortable mud-floored studio when he was doing my bust.

YEATS: He was a lot like you – the feverish energy, the arrogant pose that hid a romantic and gentle disposition. He lived under great strain, in extreme poverty. He

rarely had enough food and slept on a mud floor so that he could work on his sculpture at night.

EZRA: He wrote a history of sculpture that I thought the most important document of the times – the original Vortex Manifesto. He was indescribably like someone met in the pages of some early Renaissance writing or forgotten painting. Had I lived in the *Quattrocento* I know I should have had no finer moment and found no better craftsman to fill it. And that is not a common thing to know.<sup>36</sup>

CHORUS (GAUDIER-BRZESKA): (*to Ezra*) Nothing I chiseled compares to the sculpture war makes of us. Imagine a dull dawn, two lines of trenches, and in between explosion upon explosion, clouds of black and yellow smoke, a ceaseless crackling from the rifles, a few heads and legs flying, and me standing up amidst it all like Mephisto, commanding, throwing a bomb, and again a volley.<sup>37</sup>

NULL-E: He had then seven days to live.

EZRA: Quick eyes gone under the earth's lid for two gross of broken statues.<sup>38</sup>

DOROTHY: Everything afterward seemed provisional.

YEATS: London was no longer the center of any vortex. No Ezra Pound would be drawn there again.

NULL-E: Look into Hell Mouth. Lake of bodies, *aqua morta*, limbs mingled like fish heaped in a bin. Here an arm upward, clutching a fragment of marble.

YEATS: A generation of young men lost, gone, Henri among them.

NULL-E: A mud-tide of bodies, the dead and dying on the battlefield.

YEATS: The guns of August, the guns of September and October, the guns of 52 interminable blood-drenched months destroyed a generation, destroyed Europe.

NULL-E: War is a great remedy, removing the unimportant rabble, the over-numerous masses who are toxic to the world's economy.

EZRA: (*looking where Null-E points, in a trance-like vision*) Embryos in flux – new inflow, trout submerged by eels; and from this bank many known and unknown can be seen for an instant, submerging, the face gone – generation.<sup>39</sup>

NULL-E: War makes a nice purgative.

EZRA: (*steps through the bars of his cage and gropes his way to the cavern mouth that leads to Hell*)

NULL-E: Go on in. There is no darkness but in ignorance.<sup>40</sup>

YEATS: Speak – what can be seen?

EZRA: We come to a place mute of all light.<sup>41</sup> And there in the stench of wet coal, politicians, their names rotted away to all but the last letter, wrists bound to their ankles, stand bare bum, *faeces* smeared, wide eye on flat buttock, bush hanging for beard, addressing crowds through their arse-holes; addressing the multitudes in the ooze, amid newts, water-slugs, and maggots.<sup>42</sup>

YEATS: Phew!

EZRA: We recognize the work of maggot politicians – I saw one, scrupulously clean napkin tucked under his penis, stiff-starched collars around both his pimply legs, the hairy skin pushing over the collar's edge, addressing a circle of lady golfers.<sup>43</sup>

CHORUS:<sup>44</sup>

Profiteers drinking blood sweetened with shit –

And behind them, the financiers lashing them with steel wires –

The swill full of toadies, bowing to the lords of the place, explaining its advantages, exclaiming that the shit used to be blacker and richer.

The perverters of language –

EZRA: The men of old, the true men, wanting to rectify their hearts, sought precise verbal definitions – the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot, the right word.<sup>45</sup>

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): Finding the apt word for the inarticulate heart's tone means not lying to oneself.

EZRA: But these fomenters of war are liars, perverters of language.

CHORUS:<sup>46</sup>

Perverts who set money-lust before the pleasures of the senses –

Howling, a hen-yard in a printing-house –

The clatter of presses, dry dust and paper blowing –

Foetor, sweat, the stench of stale oranges –

Dung, the last cesspool of the universe, mysterium, acid of sulphur –

EZRA: (*raving*) The pusillanimous, raging, plunged jewels in the mud and howled to find them unstained. Faces submerged under hams, black beetles burrowing into the shit, and above the hell-rot, the great arse-hole, broken with piles, hanging stalactites, greasy as the sky over Westminster. Slough of hate-filled liars, bog of malevolent

stupidities, the soil a living pus, full of vermin, dead maggots begetting live maggots, slum owners, usurers squeezing crab-lice, the air without refuge of silence.<sup>47</sup>

NULL-E: (*dryly*) So you went on, through a full canto and then another –

DOROTHY: (*disgusted*) Scatologically obsessed!

YEATS: But that came later. At the time, you were absorbed in beauty, left behind on the home front, translating from the Chinese the poems that became *Cathay*.

EZRA: I had come unexpectedly into possession of the life's work of one Ernest Fenollosa, an oriental scholar who died suddenly, leaving his widow with volumes of notebooks, hundreds of pages on Japanese plays and Chinese poetry.

CHORUS (MRS. FENOLLOSA): I read you in the pages of *Poetry* and realized immediately that here was the man to complete my husband's work. I handed it all over.

EZRA: Notebooks full of painstakingly translated ideograms, volumes on Japanese *Noh* drama, books filled with drafts of lectures on Chinese poetry.

YEATS: And so the opportunity to invent Chinese poetry for our time fell, not to some tin-eared scholar, but to a master.

EZRA: By the first winter of the war I had drafts; by April the full collection. Gaudier took it with him to the trenches in France.

NULL-E: Give us a reading, Henri, as you did your men at the front.

CHORUS (GAUDIER-BRZESKA): (*writing from the trenches*) Ezra, we are entrenched at the Marne. I keep the book in my breast pocket and read aloud from it to put courage in my men. (*he reads aloud from Cathay to his men*) "Here we grub the soft fern-shoots and say: when shall we get back to our country? Here we stay because we have the Mongols for our foes. When anyone says 'return' everyone is full of sorrow. Our defense is not yet made sure, so no one can let his friend return. We grub the old fern-stalks to stay alive and say, will we be let go back in October? There is no ease in royal affairs. Our sorrow is bitter, but we would not return to our country. The General's horses, even his horses, are tired. The enemy is swift, we must be careful. When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring. We come back in the snow. We go slowly, hungry, thirsty, our minds full of sorrow. Who will know of our grief?"<sup>48</sup>

EZRA: (*reading back to his friend*) "Light rain on the light dust. The willows of the inn yard will be going greener and greener. But you had better take some wine before you leave, for you will have no friends about you when you come to the Gates of Go."<sup>49</sup>

YEATS: It reads like the departure of a troop train.

CHORUS (GAUDIER-BRZESKA): (*writing*) Four months ago, in the marshes of the Aisne, we were a sight worthy of Dante. We stood two days and two nights in a foot of liquid mud at the bottom of a trench. Like the Bowmen of Shu, we would rather forage for fern shoots than go back now.

EZRA: "The fifth element – *mud*," said Napoleon.<sup>50</sup>

*An explosion hurls Gaudier and others into a ditch, covered with debris. A soldier from the Chorus packs them down into the earth-filled trench with his boot.*

NULL-E: The sergeant jammed down the cadavers at Verdun – the pit was not large enough to hold `em all, so he jammed `em down with his boot to get the place smooth for the Kaiser's review.<sup>51</sup>

CHORUS (DANTE): It is an entrance to Hell, but not the same that I found.

EZRA: (*looking into the trench stuffed with bodies*) But it is you I followed to it. It is like a river thick with mud. It is like the books of a bank whose profits flow like a river turgid with profit into the usurer's pocket.

NULL-E: Money flows like the thick blood of the dead, like a thick flood of bodies.

EZRA: I am sick with it.

CHORUS (DANTE): (*patiently*) My friend you look upon Hell. You have made the steep descent. Here is the river Styx. Watch for Charon's boat, the ferryman of the livid marsh who takes the lost souls across. I myself saw it shoot from the far bank when we came to the banks of the joyless river. The white-haired old boatman bawled "Woe!" as he bore down fiercely on the damned.<sup>52</sup> *You* see – all who flee Hell bear that look about them.

EZRA: I saw you there, standing on a precipice to the west – *Il Fiorentino*, Dante Alighieri; Virgil your guide.<sup>53</sup> And beyond you both, criminals lying in blue lakes of acid, rivers of filth, money flowing through trenches of bodies. (*grabbing Dante's arm*) Flee! (*he tries to run but it is as if he is running through thick mud – speaking feverishly*) Nightmare running without progress, through quicksand, the welsh of mud gripping, bog-suck like whirlpool.<sup>54</sup>

*A figure of light (Plotinus) comes to Ezra, bringing a shield with the Medusa's head set in its center, backed with a mirror.*

CHORUS (DANTE): It brings you the Gorgon shield, take it! Beware – don't look! – the terrible snake-haired Medusa's head in its center.

*Ezra, accompanied by Plotinus appearing as a Figure of Light, make slow laborious progress to escape from Hell, the WWI trench with bodies sunk in ooze*<sup>55</sup>

CHORUS (PLOTINUS): To the door – quick! Keep your eyes on the mirror, you may look no longer directly on this horror, it is not safe for you.

EZRA: I'm lost. Oh ill. Filthy usury swilling itself with the damned fluids of the dead.

CHORUS (PLOTINUS): Use the Medusa's head – it will harden the track before you. Force down the horrible head to petrify the mud.

EZRA: Medusa, we pray deliverance through you. (*thrusting the shield down toward the ground*)

CHORUS (PLOTINUS): See, the serpent heads rise from the shield hissing; their tongues graze the swill top, turning it to stone.

EZRA: Matter itself resists, the Gorgon head only half potent against the dern evil. Inch by inch, the way no wider than half the width of a sword blade, by this narrow passage we made our way back, now sinking, now clinging, holding the unsinkable shield.

*They come to the trench that served as Hell Mouth, and Ezra staggers forth, panting like a sick dog, into Dorothy's arms.*

EZRA: Bath me in alkali and acid. Clean me of ticks and scales and louse eggs. Sunlight blinds! My eyes are swollen. (*He sinks to the ground, mumbling and falls into deep sleep, the shield beneath him; the Figure of Light departs.*)

DOROTHY: He needs sleep.

NULL-E: "Ah sleep it is a blessed thing – beloved from pole to pole"<sup>56</sup>... Come, sweet oblivion.

CHORUS (RILKE): During long battles sleep is the promised truce. I watch the moon as it rises in my heart; soon it won't be so dark at my center. O provisional death, sweetness that does us in, sleep, in you, at its root, even my fear isn't fear. Sleep, don't make me dream and mingle tears with my laughter.<sup>57</sup>

CHORUS (KEATS): Save me, or the passed day will shine upon my pillow, breeding many woes – save me from curious conscience that still lords its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole; turn the key deftly and seal the hushed casket of my soul.<sup>58</sup>

YEATS: Sleep helps the mind forget what it needs to forget, so that we may remember what we need to remember and go on being who we are. It helps us forget and it helps us remember; it guides memories down the paths we need to follow, laying down patterns that become not merely *our* thoughts, but *we*, ourselves. And it helps us forget what would destroy the thin illusion of what we are. But an unlucky few do not forget.

**Scene 4 EUCALYPTUS FOR MEMORY**

*Ezra's cage has become his apartment in Sant' Ambrogio in the quiet hills above Rapallo, Italy. He sits alone. Again, he is typing. He has belted pants and laced boots.*

RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT: Dateline: April 25, 1945. Good morning. Rumors of liberation were embodied suddenly this morning in advance units of the American Fifth Army materializing on the outskirts of Rapallo. Reports are widespread that the partisans have arisen and the Nazis are falling back.

EZRA: (*walking briskly downstage, he crosses to intersect two American MP's*) I am Ezra Pound – you may have heard my broadcasts. (*they shake heads*) No?? Waal, I need to see your commanding officer (*MP's shake puzzled heads again*) – to explain. (*they wave him off and Ezra shouts after them*) I have critical information to give the State Department!

OLGA: No one seemed to understand who you were or what you wanted.

EZRA: (*returning to his apartment to reseal himself and resume his work*) So I went home to Sant' Ambrogio and resumed my work, translating Confucius. "If the root be in confusion, nothing will be well governed".<sup>59</sup>

*Suddenly the butts of guns hammer at the door and it is kicked open. Two partisans brandishing tommy guns brusquely push in.*

CHORUS (FIRST PARTISAN): *Sono di* Ezra Pound?

EZRA: *Sono.* (*aside*) These were rough men, ready to shoot if I made a wrong move. I did not know then that there was money on my head, but I saw that bitch from downstairs with that look in her eye, already turning over in her mind what she would do with the reward.

CHORUS (FIRST PARTISAN): *Seguici, traditore!*<sup>60</sup>

*Ezra stands wearily, unhurriedly dons his overcoat, examines his desktop and slips two small books into his overcoat pockets.*

CHORUS (SECOND PARTISAN): *Che cosa?*

EZRA: (*showing the partisan*) *Dizionario Chinese.* Confucius.

*The partisans smirk at one another, shaking their heads. Ezra turns, leading the way. Stepping out, he locks the door and tosses the key to an old peasant woman. Raising his inverted hands to simulate a noose around his neck, he grimaces. On his way down the hill (downstage) he stoops and picks up a eucalyptus pip from the ground.*

EZRA: Eucalyptus – that's for memory.

*As they move downstage, ushering Ezra into a waiting room, Olga rushes in upstage out of breath.*

OLGA: Caro?? Caro!

CHORUS (ANITA PELLIGINI): (*through tears*) They have taken *il poeta* to Zoagli!

OLGA: I'll find him. I'll bring him back. Could you post a quick note to Mary for me? (*sits, writing in haste*) Mary, this morning I went down again to the U.S. Army Command Headquarters at Zoagli. When I climbed back up the hill, the door to Casa 60 was locked! They've taken your father! Anita Pellegrini, the peasant woman who lives on the ground floor, was there – she told me.

EZRA: (*speaking downstage*) They marched me to their headquarters. When I saw the blood-stained walls, I thought I was finished then and there.

OLGA: I overheard the partisans talking threats at Zoagli so I asked the Colonel for protection. Would you believe it – when he gave orders, the impertinent boy gave him the communist salute! The Army did little enough – the partisans tried to break in through the upper windows with ladders but dear Anita held them off until Dorothy came, and then they forced her to unlock the door. She says they took away only one old scrapbook – his political and economic articles from the fascist journals.

CHORUS (PARTISAN COMMANDER): (*downstage, speaking to Ezra's partisan captors*) He is *il poeta, amico d'Italia*. (*the partisans look confused*) *Our friend* – I will not imprison him without an order. (*turning to Ezra*) You are free to go.

EZRA: So I went back to the American authorities to explain. I met Olga on the way.

OLGA: (*arriving downstage*) Caro!

*Olga and Ezra find another MP to surrender to, and are marched back to the cage, now a waiting room at a US Army post, and ordered to sit.*

OLGA: (*writing again to Mary*) Mary, I have found him. I think I understand the seriousness of our situation better than your father. I caught up to him at Zoagli. They brought us into a large hall and ordered us to sit. In the next room I could hear people crying; God knows what they were doing to them. It got to be nine, ten, eleven o'clock at night.

MARY: (*entering opposite downstage, a distant correspondent*) They left you there all night, just sitting on those hard chairs until late the next afternoon before they brought you in to question.

EZRA: (*to Mary*) In the midst of the flurry, your sainted *pro-genetrix* (*gesturing to Olga*) went foraging and reappeared with DEELicious ham sandwiches. And if anyone says beer cans cannot be opened with a bayonet, they lie.

OLGA: (*writing again to Mary*) I don't know what will become of us. I've enclosed a list of people you may rely on. Turn to Mr. Eliot for advice. Our papers are in my little dispatch case. Your passport is expired – try to get a new one as soon as you can. You know what jewelry I have. Be sure you protect the large seal ring that has the intaglio of Babbo's head! (*Mary turns the ring over in her hands*). There are also three gold bracelets, and the glass medallion that has your hair and the tiny gold coin. In the trunk in Venice are my Japanese gown – the one with the brocade sash and – most important! – my violin. Take care of it! (*afterthought*) – and take care of yourself; try to forget the war and be happy. Read your father's works; study them well. I believe happy times will come for you.

MARY: (*they both turn away*) And with that you once again left me on my own while you stood by my father. (*speaking to the seal ring in her hand*) Will you bring me back to Babbo? Most precious, tenuous link! Oh Babbo, may I see you alive again! You always said that a righteous man who tries to save the world is prey to evil.

OLGA: (*meanwhile, upstage, opening an Italian newspaper*) They have been settling old scores. Caro! They have condemned you as a traitor *in absentia*! See here!

EZRA: (*astounded*) But I spoke to *enlighten* – about the folly of making war on Italy and that Jew Roosevelt's misguided economics!

### **Scene 5 INTERVIEWS**

*American newspaper reporter Edd <sup>61</sup>Johnson enters and waves Ezra over to be interviewed.*

CHORUS (EDD JOHNSON): (*old-time American radio is heard over the loudspeaker; he speaks low into the mike as if calling a game*) Dateline: May 8, 1945. Genoa, Italy. Ezra Pound was taken into custody Saturday near Genoa by American authorities on charges of treason. Pound was indicted for broadcasting anti-American, pro-fascist propaganda beamed to America over Mussolini's Rome Radio. I talked with Pound at Army Headquarters, a large stone building overlooking the main square of war-battered Genoa. He had this to say about Roosevelt and Hitler:

EZRA: I think Roosevelt ought to be jailed *if* a committee of doctors thinks him responsible for his actions. Or if NOT, put him in a high-walled gook house or insane asylum. Adolf Hitler was a Joan of Arc, a saint. He was a martyr. Like many martyrs, he held extreme views.

CHORUS (EDD JOHNSON): And when I asked him ... Your views of Mussolini, Mr. Pound?

EZRA: Muss? (*laughs*) – Old Ben? I saw Old Ben only briefly – didn't have time to explain economics to the man. Very humane, imperfect as we all are – lost his head a bit. Poor old Benito erred all right – if only he had my translation of Confucius in time

to reform his government! Il Duce stands with the lovers of order. We will need that kind of will in America.

CHORUS (EDD JOHNSON): Yet he relies on the American sense of justice, after all the scorn and contempt he has heaped on us in more than one hundred broadcasts.

EZRA: I rely on the American sense of justice. I never spoke against my country, but against a system which creates one war after another. I have not spoken to the troops, I haven't suggested mutiny. They should be better informed, by men not tied to special interests. A war between the U.S. and Italy is monstrous; it should not have occurred. And a peace without justice is no peace, but prelude to future wars.

*Amprim enters downstage, reading aloud to himself from a cable:*

CHORUS (AMPRIM): "American civilian, Ezra Loomis Pound, reference Fifth Army cable two-zero-zero-six, under federal grand jury indictment for treason.

"Transfer without delay under guard to Mediterranean Theatre of Operations Disciplinary Training Center for confinement pending disposition instructions.

"Exercise utmost security measures to prevent escape or suicide.

"No press interviews authorized. Accord NO preferential treatment."

*Amprim pivots and strides off.*

CHORUS (EDD JOHNSON): Do you really believe President Truman or Premier Stalin would be interested in seeing you?

EZRA: If I am not shot for treason, I think my chances of seeing Truman are good. But they won't try me – (*confidentially*) I have too much on 'em. Certain highly placed people in Washington.

*Amprim reenters downstage, waves off the reporter. Meeting Dorothy Pound, entering opposite, he hands her a letter.*

DOROTHY: It's from Ezra!

EZRA: (*speaking as she reads the letter*) I trust this man. He is convinced I tell the truth and with great care is collecting far more proof than I could have got at. The war years have been such a drought – what a pleasure to have the attention of an intelligent man..."

DOROTHY: (*exasperated*) oh Ezra, you naïve, silly – !

CHORUS (AMPRIM): (*aside*) Yeah I believe him – and with his own help I'll see to it that the judge believes him too!

EZRA: (*continuing to speak the letter to Dorothy*) The Department of Justice investigator expressed his conviction that I am telling the absolute truth. He says he will consider my last 30 years of work. My instinct is to leave the whole matter with the U.S. Department of Justice, the good faith of whose agent I have no reason to doubt.

DOROTHY: (*reading as she talks to Amprim*) I am to give you access to search all his papers. And a list of things to turn over. One copy of the *Causes of War* for you, one I am to keep. There were several, he thinks. Some in his room, one in mine, at least one on the big shelves in the dining room...

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Did he have a typewriter with a misaligned "t"?

*Two large MP's box and haul away large envelopes stuffed with papers, folders, manuscripts, books, Pound's typewriter with the misaligned "t" etc. Moving to Ezra upstage, they indicate by gesture that he is to remove his belt, necktie, even his shoelaces. Ezra is incredulous but complies. He is then handcuffed to one of the MP's*

EZRA: (*incredulous*) Do they know who I am?

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Yes they do, Mr. Pound.

*All exit downstage and Ezra reenters shortly upstage, escorted by MP's and handcuffed this time to a huge black prisoner. They place him in his cage.*

## **Scene 6 TRANSPORT TO DTC**

*American Military Intelligence HQ in Genoa. Two officers enter.*

CHORUS (OFFICER 1): (*reading cable*) Where's Steele? At Fifth HQ? We have a transfer – a dangerous one. They've ordered utmost security...

CHORUS (OFFICER 2): (*reading over his shoulder*) "...prevent escape or suicide" – put him in one of the death cells. We'd better reinforce it. Have one of the trainees weld on some airstrip mesh.

CHORUS (OFFICER 1): (*awed*) What, the stuff we lay down for temporary runways??

CHORUS (OFFICER 2): Above all, he's to be held incommunicado. Absolutely no verbal contact.

CHORUS (OFFICER 1): No one? Nothing?

CHORUS (OFFICER 2): Let him see the Camp Chaplain daily.

YEATS: And so at the age of 60, after a lifetime of ripostes and 110 treasonous broadcasts, all recorded by the FCC, Ezra was actually forced to shut up – and so began to listen to the sounds and especially the voices around him.

EZRA: (*quoting*) "If you had a fuckin' brain you'd be dangerous" – remarks by one Romano Ramona to a (by him) designated "cocksucker" in the scabies ward. The Army vocabulary contains almost 48 words – one verb and participle, one substantive ("shit"), one adjective and one phrase, sexless, that is used as a sort of pronoun for a watchman's club to a vamp or fair lady.

*Lt. Colonel Steele and Major Amprim enter and sit at their desks:*

CHORUS (STEELE): (*writing to his mother*) Mother, I last wrote you about our new prisoner, Ezra Pound. He's a dreamer if I ever saw one – absolutely sold on his own ideas. To hear him talk, a lot of pretty well known people (to whom he refers by their first names) are "criminally stupid." Instead of spending his time organizing whatever defense he may think he has, he wastes it pottering away at translating some Chinese philosopher. He still figures on saving the world if he can only get enough people to listen to him – provided they are reasonably bright, by which he means they agree with him. I am letting him use the typewriter after hours because I think his mental health depends on being able to write and mail out his literary compositions.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): (*reading to himself and shaking his head, incredulous*) Demands to cable Truman ... offers his services to *personally* negotiate a just peace with Japan! ... indignant it wasn't sent! Good god – wants airtime: *airtime* mind you – to broadcast his personal final statement to Europe. Specially prepared, he says – "Ashes of Europe Calling" ... (*mumbling*) show justice to the vanquished Axis...keep their economic gains?!...and Japan to keep her conquered territories?? You'll get ashes alright...

EZRA: (*overtopping Amprim from his cage*) ...never spoke against my conscience as an American citizen – error, not guilt.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Post-war foreign policy recommendations...leniency to Germany! ...Oh and here he recommends a Jewish state in Palestine. Incredible...sonuva bitch...this is rich: Mussolini – a "New Deal" for Italy??

EZRA: ...making a test case for freedom of speech...

CHORUS (AMPRIM): *Six pages* it takes him to give his sworn statement. More gadfly oral diarrhea. What's this? *Appendices??* A history of banking malfeasance?? ...He admires Lenin? Jesus, Mary and Joseph, he wants to learn Georgian so he can go instruct Stalin!!

EZRA: What is the use of talking to a man such as Stalin through an interpreter? I'm only trying to tell the people of Europe and America how they could avoid war by learning the facts about money. Points I've been trying to make for 25 years – and though I rashly did not stop when caught off-sides, in reach of a microphone, I hope my errors will be considered in relation to the main picture.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): (*growing increasingly confused*) Some bank in Siena – fifteen-hundred-something ... Confucian principles of government? (*sarcasm at last overtakes*) *And* a bibliography to guide our further reading. Oh MUCH appreciated, we're very grateful Ezra Pound!

EZRA: They detain me here only until air transport can be arranged to fly me to Washington and straighten out Truman. Or perhaps Rome to organize an Italo-American army.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Here's today's cable from our eminent author:

"President Truman, Washington. Beg you cable me. Minimum terms just peace with Japan. Let me negotiate via Japanese embassy. Recently accredited, Italian Social Republic, Lago Di Garda. Fenollosa's executor and translator of Confucius. Can what violence cannot. China will obey voice of Confucius. Ezra Pound."

EZRA: You may understand from my Cantos on the Chinese Dynasties that Confucius lay at their root, their enduring success – the ONLY basis on which a world order can be built. The Chinese Empire offers the only working model that can possibly serve. This may sound like a large order, but we have come through a large war, and someone has got to start usin' Adult intelligence to deal with the world problem.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): ...he's *credentialed*, he thinks, because he once met a couple of staff from the Japanese embassy at Salo in 1943 who were surprised to learn he was familiar with Confucius – !

EZRA: The sincere man finds the unwobbling axis of the world without forcing himself. He arrives without thinking and goes along naturally in the process. If I could bring the slaughter in the Pacific to a sane and speedy end, I should have justified my existence.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Good gawd, he's applied for parole.

EZRA: Well it is only common sense that as a writer, no man of my position would be ass enough to try to do his work or have it published if he were a fugitive from justice. It doesn't make sense. Anyway, well known as I am, it would be as hard for me to slip away from Rapallo as escape from here. I think you will find the prison officers ready to take me at my word, if you would only check.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): Well *of course*.

### **Scene 7 THE BLACK SCENE<sup>62</sup>**

*Ezra passes a large envelope containing first drafts of his initial Pisan Cantos through the bars of his cage to the base censor, to be sent out to Dorothy for retyping.*

CHORUS (BASE CENSOR): (*flipping through pages*) What's this bunkum then?

EZRA: (*explaining*) The life of the DTC passing OUTSIDE the main scheme of my poem cannot but break into the main flow. See here are the names of men on sick call passing my tent. It is a very brief allusion to a further study in names that I will undertake sometime; you see the prevalence of early American names, either whites of the old tradition – more from the early Presidents than any others – or descendants of slaves who took the name of their masters. By contrast names from the melting pot are scarce.

CHORUS (BASE CENSOR): (*already fatigued, waves him off*) Awright, awright...

*A large black inmate, Edwards, furtively approaches Ezra's cage and passes him a makeshift table constructed from a packing box. Meanwhile, sick call. A bored orderly calls names and inmates respond "here", "yo" etc. Ezra and Null-E comment while inmates lounge or carry out orders outside his cage.*

CHORUS (ORDERLY): Washington ... Adams ... Monroe ... Polk ... Tyler

EZRA: (*as the next man passes*) And I suppose you're Lincoln?

NULL-E: Slaves who took their masters names carried the Presidential lineage into places Presidents never knew but should have known, to see the things that Presidents never saw but should have seen.

CHORUS (GREEN): Heeyyy, St. Louis Till, over here!

CHORUS (ST. LOUIS TILL): All the goddamned motherfucking generals, cocksuckers all of `em fascists.

EZRA: ...and the *guards'* opinion of the generals was lower than that of the prisoners. (*musings on the view from his cage*) Niggers scaling the obstacle course in the middle distance. Kikes in the woodpile. Cloud over mountain, mountain over the cloud. The wind is part of the process. The rain is part of the process.

NULL-E: The nigger is part of the process. The kike is part of the process.

CHORUS (GREEN): (*exchanging rations with Till for cigarettes*) Fer a bag o' Dukes the things I sayan' doo. (*gesturing toward Ezra, who is now shadow boxing in his cage*) What's he trainin' for?

WILLIAMS: The detainees took to calling you "Ezra." You were a hero of sorts for the way you befuddled the camp psychiatrist. Rumors flew around the camp about it. You turned the questions around so that the psychiatrist was the one who was confused and you were the sane one.

HEMINGWAY: In the end the psychiatrist found you sane, though "a little exotic." You found him boring.

CHORUS (ST. LOUIS TILL): Yuh heah abo' his talk w'a camp shrink?

CHORUS (GREEN): I hearn. He turn him aroun' till that boy doan' know which way up. He make a fool a' that boy.

CHORUS (HOBO WILLIAMS): Hey Snag, what's in the Bibl'? What are the books of the Bibl'? Name 'em! Don't bullshit me!

CHORUS (ST. LOUIS TILL): (*to Green*) Hobo Williams, the queen of 'em all!

EZRA: Here comes into view from the death cell a lion-colored pup bringing fleas.

CHORUS (WHITESIDE): (*to a dog, offstage*) Ah certainly dew lak dawgs an' ah goin' tuh wash you.

EZRA: Ah certainly dew lak a certain number of shades in my landscape. (*gesturing*) Mr. G. Scott whistling *Lili Marlene* with positively less musical talent than any other man of color I have ever encountered – but with bonhomie and good humor.

CHORUS (ST. LOUIS TILL): (*singing a popular song of the times*) My girl's got great big tits, just like Jack Dempsey's mitts.

EZRA: Big jugs – like those two mountains there, cut by the Arno...they look like Amy Lowell's. I remember Gaudier's eye on the telluric mass of Miss Lowell; she was hosting a dinner to celebrate her having aye-ppropriated the corpse of our *Imagiste* movement – well after it had died a natural death, y'unnerstan' – and, having SAT her consid'rble weight on Imagism, she claimed it for her own. Yuh'd've thunk she *hatched* it, clucking like a surprised boody hen. She must'a bin, that time, 300, mebbe 350 pounds. I watched Gaudier measuring her, figuring the planes and angles...

CHORUS (SNAG): If we weren't dumb, we wouldn't be in here.

EZRA: And here's Mr. Edwards, superb in green and brown, a jacent benignity of the Baluba mask. Soldiers yusta to come up to the cage just to look at me. Ol' Ez was a prize EXHIBIT.

CHORUS (EDWARDS): (*slipping up to Ezra's cage*) Now doan you tell no one I made you that table.

EZRA: And the greatest charity is to be found among those who have not observed regulations – to wit, this table, ex packing box –

CHORUS (EDWARDS): (*grinning*) It'll git you offn th' groun'.

CHORUS (SENTRY): (*speaking to other sentries*) You guys bin to college? Y'think yuh know somethin'? I *never* been to college, but I *hearn*, I knows thin's y'c'n on'y larn en colludge: ChinESE idya-grams, Cunfuksis, Yew-sura. I bin t' the *Ezu*-versity!

EZRA: (*gesturing to Edwards' face*) A Benin mask as fine as any in the Frankfurt Frobenius museum. A face worthy of the legendary city of Wagadu, map and blueprint of perfect human order, unifying nature and civilization, corresponding in every detail with the plan of the universe. Wagadu – lost four times through human folly, but now *in the mind* indestructible.

CHORUS (BLACK INMATE): (*downstage, intoning*) In Ghana they tell the tale of the Lute of Gassir and the eternal city of Wagadu. *Hoo Fasa.*

*Four giant black men form a party made up from the camp inmates, take up shovels, and dig a drainage trench around the 4 sides of Pound's cage. Background, Boogie Woogie piano: Boogie Woogie Stomp by Alberts Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis.*

EZRA: Four giants digged a ditch `roun me, lest the damp gnaw ol' Ez's bones.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): King Kaja Maja founded Wagadu! (*repeated in rhythm, as they dig*) Hoooo ... Wagadu ... Hooo Fasa ... Gassir ... Hooooo ...

EZRA: Four times the city was rebuilt.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORER # 1): Four times Wagadu stood in all her splendor.

EZRA: Now in the mind indestructible.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): King Kaja Maja founded Wagadu!

CHORUS (BLACK LABORER # 1): Four times Wagadu disappeared and was lost to human sight.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS):

Lost once through vanity  
once through falsehood  
once through greed  
and once through dissension.

EZRA: Now in the mind indestructible.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): King Kaja Maja founded Wagadu!

CHORUS (BLACK LABORER # 1): Four times Wagadu changed her name.

EZRA: With four gates in the four walls and a terrace the color of stars.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS):

First called Dierra  
then Agada  
then Ganna  
then Silla.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORER # 1): Four times she turned her face.

EZRA: Now in the mind indestructible.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): (*in unison*) King Kaja Maja founded Wagadu  
*indestructible!*

(*singly*) Once to the north  
once to the west  
once to the south  
once to the east.

EZRA: With two larks *contrapunto* as the sunset softens and a terrace pale as the dawn cloud, with the moon, *la Luna*, thin as Demeter's hair, off to the left of the guard tower, I saw her, the City... (*softly trailing off*) who forgets, lets fall his very self.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): Wagadu, whenever men have seen her, has always had four gates -

North, west, south, east.  
The directions whence her strength comes –  
The strength in which she endures –  
No matter whether built of stone or wood or earth or wind.  
Wagadu lives as a shadow in the mind –  
And a longing in her children.  
For really, Wagadu is not of stone!  
Nor of wood!  
Nor of earth!  
Nor of wind! No –  
(*all*) Wagadu is the strength which lives in the hearts of men.

EZRA: Should she ever wake again...

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS):

Sometimes she is visible because eyes see her –

And ears hear the clash of swords and ring of shields.

And sometimes she is invisible because men overtire her –

So that she sleeps.

Sleep came to Wagadu for the first time through vanity.

The second time through falsehood.

The third time through greed.

And the fourth time through dissension.

EZRA: Wagadu was lost four times, found three. A kingdom a great might must first smite itself, before others can smite it. Would that I could reconstruct her. Wagadu reposes like the rose that lies, all potential, in the iron filings randomly sprinkled on a glass plate – the rose forms when the magnet is brought near from beneath, showing the form that was always already there – *la magneta rosa*. The universal order stands ready to spring into beauty again the moment we are ready to see it. I am the magnet and my Cantos are the rose, sprung from the filings of history and culture.

CHORUS (BLACK LABORERS): King Kaja Maja founded Wagadu indestructible! And should she ever be found for the fourth time she will live so forcefully in the minds of men that she will never be lost again. (*throwing down their shovels with contempt, all turn and go*)

EZRA: There are gods in continents unknown.

NULL-E: In this heart of darkness, fate uncertain, identity uncertain – we cast our lot with the slaves.

EZRA: The slaves were freed on a Wednesday.<sup>63</sup> Night grew huge leaning over me – I lay with Barabbas and two thieves beside me, wards of a slave ship – and I glimpsed there Mr. Edwards, Hudson, Henry, *comrades miseriae*, *Comites Kernes*, Green and Tom Wilson. And here's God's messenger, Whiteside.

CHORUS (WHITESIDE): (*arrives balancing food pans, turning the key to Pound's cage door*) Chow, Mistuh Poun'.

EZRA: Till was hung yesterday for murder and rape with trimmings.

CHORUS (ST. LOUIS TILL): The ewe had such a pretty look in her eyes.

**Scene 8 Nullity**

NULL-E: Six gallows in the yard, such graceful swings.

EZRA: (*surprised but unsure who spoke*) Who the hell are you?

NULL-E: A writer.

EZRA: Not you – *I* write counter-history to the world's ill-told story, name beauty where memory stands –

NULL-E: – where the wasp stings the spider and lays eggs that, when they hatch, will eat it alive from the inside out.

EZRA: What goddam parasite are you?

NULL-E: Not-you. Null-E. Not-Ezra. A nullity.

EZRA: Nonentity.

NULL-E: Verity.

EZRA: Goddam!

NULL-E: And who are you?

EZRA: Jeremiah.

NULL-E: Liar. Where does evil lie?

EZRA: The Jews, usurers, the banks –

NULL-E: You lie.

EZRA: Where then?

NULL-E: Within me. In you. In fantasy.

EZRA: Imagery.

NULL-E: Memory.

EZRA: Goddamned heap of refuse.

NULL-E: Refuse.

EZRA: What?

NULL-E: I am what you refuse, but can't do without.

EZRA: You're nothing but a super-size black garbage bag.

NULL-E: I hold everything you've thrown out.

EZRA: Goddamn! I hold no truck with a non-entity.

NULL-E: (*admiring the gallows*) Playground swings never had such lovely use.

EZRA: (*turning away, aside*) Woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.

NULL-E: We are never alone among slaves learning slavery.

*Lights dim, the bars of Pound's cage turn to flashing streams of light and he holds the floor, a raft tossed with storm-wrack on wild seas with flashes of lightening and booms of thunder.*

NULL-E: Is it black? Was it blacker? Night of the Soul. Is there a blacker, or was it merely San Juan with a belly ache writing to posterity? In short shall we look for a deeper or is this the bottom?

## ACT 2: "EZRA POUND SPEAKING"

### Scene 1 BIRDS ON A WIRE

MUSIC – GERHART MÜNCH'S ARRANGEMENT FOR THE VIOLIN OF FRANCESCO DA MILANO'S 16TH CENTURY VERSION OF LE CHANT DES OISEAUX BY FRENCH COMPOSER CLÉMENT JANNEQUIN <sup>64</sup>

*The young Olga enters with her violin, bows to the audience, and performs a bit of Münch's arrangement, a piece imitating birdsong. A tiny pup tent can be seen rigged by ingenious contrivances within Ezra's cage. While she plays, Ezra begins to take it down from within, emerging to complete the disassembly and pack it up for the day.*

EZRA: *(watching birds overhead alight on the power and telephone wires strung along the road to Pisa.)* Eight birds on a wire. Or three wires. Five now on two wires ... seven on four. F, F, D, G – the birds write their treble scale.<sup>65</sup> *Im Western nichts neues.* A day is a thousand years.<sup>66</sup>

### Scene 2 "EZRA POUND SPEAKING"<sup>67</sup>

*In delirium, Ezra paces his cage upstage, broadcasting with his broomstick-mike, hallucinating the trial he fears will come. A judge sits on a high stool downstage and various figures step forward from the Chorus to speak, interspersed with his broadcasts.*

*The scratchy sound of a radio broadcast is heard, the official introduction to Pound's Italian broadcasts after war was declared. A large, official, and polished voice:*

RECORDED INTRODUCTION: Rome Radio, acting in accordance with the Fascist policy of intellectual freedom and free expression of opinion *by those who are qualified to hold it*, has offered Dr. Ezra Pound the use of the microphone twice a week. It is understood that he will not be asked to say anything whatsoever that goes against his conscience, or anything incompatible with his duties as a citizen of the United States of America.

WILLIAMS: So we are to understand that what you *did* say, did *not* go against your conscience?

EZRA: *(broadcasting)* Europe calling, Ezra Pound speaking. For the United States to be making war on Italy is just plain damn nonsense. You ought not to be giving or ever to have given the slightest or most picayune aid to any man or nation engaged in waging war against Italy. You are doing it for the sake of a false accounting system. You are not going to win this war. None of your best minds ever thought you could win it. You have never had a chance in this war.

CHORUS (NEWSPAPER EDITOR): What kind of man can mouth such treason while all Europe lies in ruins that are monuments to the arch fiends he admires? Where is there scorn enough for him?

CHORUS (BUREAUCRAT): (*enters reading from a large law book. Looking up:*) There is some confusion as to whether utterances per se can ever constitute treason. Can the spoken word constitute aid and comfort to the enemy to the extent required by law?

CHORUS (SOLDIER): I confess that it is hard for me to disentangle Pound from the war. I associate his voice with a certain shack in the African heat, and even more with a narrow, brilliantly lit radio tunnel under Plymouth Harbor. There, while the invasion was on, we dialed the short-wave whenever we had a break, and Pound would be good for five minutes of entertainment. That was all it was, and none of us felt anything but amusement, though he went on and on and we did not take him kindly.

EZRA: But my aim was to teach!

HEMINGWAY: So you say. But you thoroughly embarrassed yourself as an ardent ass of a Fascist and anti-Semite...when you weren't entirely incoherent.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) Every hour that you go on with this war is an hour lost to you and your children. And every sane act you commit – every reform, every lurch towards the just price, toward the control of the market, is an act of homage to Mussolini and Hitler. They are your leaders, however much you think you are conducted by Roosevelt or Churchill.

CHORUS (BUREAUCRAT): (*reading from his law book*) "Words oral, written or printed, however treasonable, seditious or criminal, of themselves do not constitute an overt act of treason ... until disloyalty is developed by some open and provable act." (*looking up*) Broadcasting. That was his act.

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): (*steps forward to address the bench*) Your Honor, he made no call for action against the United States. The specific actions Pound advocated appear now to be rather mild.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) AND there is NO time like the present to STOP being such asses as you have been. As nobody is likely to believe me, I suggest that you start thinking it out for yourself. Use personal influence with your Congressmen and particularly your Senators. The actions of the Ruse-a-felt government may be due to sheer imbecility and not to ingrained rascality. *Go to it.* Diagnose 'em, don't shoot 'em. *Analyze* their behavior.

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): He broadcast no criticism of the Allied war effort; he said nothing to discourage or disturb American soldiers or their families. His main concern was with usury and other economic sins that he conceived were being committed by an international conspiracy of Jewish bankers whom he believed to be the powers behind the throne of England and who had duped the government of the United States.

EZRA: (*breaking in*) As to the investors I don't care a two-penny damn whether they are Jews, Anglican frogs, or Britons. I stand equally ready to shoot Quakers or Calvinists – it is usury I hate.

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): (*trying to ignore his client*) It is true he was highly critical of the course of American government since Hamilton, but his broadcasts were in essence lectures in history, politics and economics. He believed the American people did not understand what was going on in Europe and, if they did, they would realize that war was unnecessary.

HEMINGWAY: (*to Ezra*) You served up a confused mix of Fascist apologetics, economic theory, anti-Semitism, literary judgment, and personal memory. An unholy brew of ambiguity, obscurity, and virulent vituperation – though with a few pearls of unexpected wisdom.

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): Anti-Semitism was widespread in America at the time – and it wasn't just Ford or Lindberg. It was endemic among the patricians of the eastern seaboard.

WILLIAMS: Eliot didn't just pick it up with the English accent and citizenship.

ELIOT: (*reading from his own verse*) My house is decayed, and the Jew squats on the window-sill, the owner, spawned in some estiment of Antwerp. The rats are underneath the piles. The Jew is underneath the lot.<sup>68</sup>

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): These opinions are old opinions. He had been saying this stuff for years. Some of it he said merely to be outrageous.

EZRA: (*breaking in again*) The Jewish character is formed by cir-cum-cision. History is written and character made by whether and HOW the male foreskin produces an effect of glorious sunrise or annoyance – ask 'em about it; it drives 'em up the wall.

CHORUS (JULIEN CORNELL): (*doggedly ignoring him*) Old-fashioned Yankee independence and craftsmanship wane. Usury leads to war. That sort of stuff.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) I have in fact been trying for more than 20 years to get a little serious attention – tryin' tuh persuade you to direct a little serious attention to a few serious subjects. The nature of money and its mode of use – (*drawing it out*) *use-you-ree*. The cry was NOT: tell us more. No, the outcry was: be quiet! It is indecent for a man of letters to touch the subject. And now you are in a mess.

CHORUS (GERTRUDE STEIN): He is a village explainer. Excellent if you were a village, but if you were not, not.

WILLIAMS: Nonsense – he is so muddled that he can hardly explain anything unless you already know it.

ELIOT: A man trying very hard to a very deaf person the fact that the house is on fire.

EZRA: Do any of `em know I was using MY OWN stuff? – not taking orders from anyone?

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): Did you not say, in your April 30, 1942 broadcast, that old-fashioned pogroms killing small Jews at the bottom of the heap were ineffective, and that a man of genius would begin the pogrom at the top?

EZRA: Memory fails me. As individuals, Jews were my friends, but banning the Jew from public life and the economy – the Nazi's did the right thing. The whole war was Europe's rebellion against the pervasive, ubiquitous Yidd!

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): (*satirical*) The "Jewspapers" and Franklin Finkelstein Roosevelt are to blame. It is offensive, odious stuff. "Kikes", "sheenies", he even endorses the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Mein Kampf! (*turning to Ezra*) Mr. Pound, do you advocate racial purity?

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) The Italians have at last translated Mein Kampf. What are the main points of the Hitler program? The health of the race. That is point one. Breed well and preserve the race, conserve the best of the race. That means eugenics and it does not please the Jews who want to drive all other races into wage slavery. Your Jew government had taken over Germany; the Germans had to get rid of it or die.

WILLIAMS: (*to Ezra*) You were in many ways the prototypical bigot of the age: capable of saying the most appalling things about the races in general, yet treating individuals with every courtesy.

CHORUS (LEWIS ZUKOFSKY): As a Jew, I personally never felt the least trace of anti-Semitism in his presence. Nothing he ever said to me made me feel the embarrassment I always have for the Goy in whom a residue of antagonism to the Jew remains.

EZRA: Usurers have no race. From the time of Moses, the Jewish people have had rules against usury – neshek. How long they are to be made sacrificial goats for the usurer I know not.

CHORUS (PROSECUTOR): Mr. Pound, your answer?

EZRA: Seems fairly clear that you fix a breed by LIMITING the amount of contamination. You make a race by avoiding inbreeding. You like it in dogs and horses.

*The judge and court pick up their stools and go.*

HEMINGWAY: You stuck your arms into that tar baby up to the elbow and to the astonishment of no one but you, here you sit and soon enough you will find yourself

hauled off, still stuck to it, headed to trial back home where you may choose between hanging or at best perhaps an asylum for the criminally insane.

CHORUS (LITERARY GROUPIE): Well he certainly belongs there. Do you know I visited Rapallo in the 30's and, after a vigorous game of tennis, Ezra confided to me that the hills above the tennis court were thick with spies from Wall Street, training their binoculars to keep an eye on him – him, the famous iconoclast whose economic ideas would ruin their conspiratorial hold on the world's wealth.

EZRA: (*morosely*) Whom God would destroy he first sends to the bug house.

HEMINGWAY: Well your broadcasts *were* buggy – disjointed and vague. It was often difficult to follow the thread. They were rambling, repetitious and fatuous.

WILLIAMS: Even by the lowest standards they were completely ineffective.

HEMINGWAY: (*to Williams*) That will save him, if anything does. No jury on earth could think this kind of drivel would influence anybody to do anything, anywhere, at any time. Treason is a little too serious, a little too dignified a crime for a man who has made such an incredible ass of himself and accomplished so little in the process.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) Be you headed for a cheap ten cent type, Blumenstein, Zukor tawdry imitation of Nazism, or say for the moment, of Fascism, void of all vital content, and if you mean to imitate it are you going to emulate or defy, are you going to try to have as good a brand of a corporate state as is now provided in Europe? Where do you go from here? Thirty years intensive production of synthetic products in order to attack the Japanese colony of Australia in 1947 or 1971. And in the interim, what of your internal government? Are you going to have any syndical organization? Or just Russian mess and chaos? Just Soviets run by the Warburgs? Shucks, is there any American consciousness as distinct from that paper fortune and the New Yorker hysteria with any what's-his-name, Wool-cott, weeping into the microphone, or the lowest common denominator, Mr. Swinge, whining into the atmosphere that the Americans are humiliated?

HEMINGWAY: Who wouldn't be confused? And not only the FBI poured over your recordings:

CHORUS (ITALIAN OFFICIAL): (*confused and worried*) I can't make this out. Is he a spy, transmitting code under our noses?

HEMINGWAY: One wonders what the Propaganda Ministry thought it was accomplishing by allowing this stuff on the air. Even then doubts were raised in official circles as to your sanity. No one knew what to make of your work, and they don't know now. Not even the censors. Especially not the censors.

CHORUS (CENSOR): (*stamping Pound's books*) Censored: "Japanese No Dames"

HEMINGWAY: Japanese *No Dames?* The Japanese *Noh* is among the oldest existing forms of theater, growing during the 14th century out of Chinese performing arts and traditional Japanese dance. Inscrutable, reserved to the aristocracy – commoners were forbidden to learn the *Noh*. Ezra inherited notebooks full of it from Fenollosa, fell in love with it, and brought out translations and commentary on 14 *Noh* plays. (*shaking his head*) Japanese *No Dames?* Japanese *Noh* Plays? Y'think?

EZRA: The nymph of the *Noh* came to me. She left hanging on a bush her Hagoromo<sup>69</sup> – her feather-cloak that she wore to transform herself into a graceful swan. I found it and would give it back only if she taught me her dance. In Pisa I saw her one day in a corona of angels, spread over the death cells – clouds banked on Taishan, or in a glory of sunset – and I, the tovarish blessed without aim, wept in the rain-ditch at evening. All things that are, are light. The stone *wants* to be carved; the sculptor must listen. That I learned from Henri. We are destroyed only when we first destroy ourselves.<sup>70</sup>

HEMINGWAY: Were you crazy? Or were the FBI and the bureaucratic gnomes simply unprepared to understand you? It seems to me your approach to each broadcast was reasonably straightforward. You expressed some central idea in your title or opening line; you built upon illustrations and anecdotes, told stories, talked that colloquial slang you loved to affect – your notion of a cracker-barrel “Murkin” dialect – but always working to inject your ideas of values and economics. You might move a few steps off center, hurl epithets, insult a few choice targets, but you always pulled yourself back. You spoke on an elementary level – these were “Poor Man’s Cantos”. Anyone listening would have grasped your main point, but probably few of your allusions. Again and again you recurred to your central themes: “You must learn this”, you would say, “and I will keep repeating it until you do.” There was some method to this madness.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) There is no item in this present talk that I have not mentioned before, but the historical importance of every one of these items is so tremendous and the difficulty of getting them into the public head is so daunting that I should be justified in repeating them ten times over.

HEMINGWAY: But repetition is boring, so you pegged your ideas to the daily news. You were a commentator, not a newscaster – your broadcasts were replete with references to what you were reading (not ignoring your own works), the doings of your relatives, the acts of distinguished personalities, current events.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) A chair has been established in the Sorbonne to study modern Jewish history – that is, the role of the kike.

HEMINGWAY: Name-calling was a favorite activity, and you could be vicious and mean-spirited. Roosevelt became (*Ezra intervenes to call the names*) Rosenfelt, Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Kike Shek. But some of your warnings must have elicited an uncomfortable resonance even then.

EZRA: (*broadcasting*) You call in the bloody Russian savages to smash the whole of European civilization. Russia is NOT your ally but your enemy. The supreme betrayal of Western civilization is manifest in the alliance with Russia. You are tied up to Moscow and have not the faintest conception of what that union means. Do you know that Stalin's regime considers humanity as nothing more than raw material? "Deliver so many carloads of human material at the consumption point". That is the logic of materialism. And that old train robber Stalin is perfectly logical. You can ask yourselves whether you intend to be slaves – lifelong slaves, hereditary slaves to machinery, and whether you propose to sell your children and your children's children into long-lasting slavery to usurers and to machinery.

HEMINGWAY: How did you let poetic genius run off the rails? Were your friends and family unable to take you in hand? When your fire-bombed thought consumed the city of perfect order – no longer in the mind indestructible – your words went up in flame and you and they were left lying in ruins, like Warsaw or Berlin at war's end, overrun by bombast, magnified by insanity, turning their faces in their dying breaths toward the sunset of fascism.

### **Scene 3 Usura**

*Late evening. Ezra's cage is now a room in the camp medical dispensary, where he has been granted access to type in the evenings. He pounds away, two-finger typing, angrily punching an old-fashioned Remington, accompanied by a strange high-pitched humming and plenty of profanity at typing errors. The only person with him is the camp Charge of Quarters.*

CHORUS (CHARGE OF QUARTERS): The constant clanging and banging of that bloody typewriter! And the damnable humming he makes while the carriage races the bell. What the hell does he have to say that's worth all that, I'd like to know?<sup>71</sup>

EZRA: "The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning." (*leaning back to comment*) And there's no need for the Xtians to pretend that they wrote it; it's in Leviticus.<sup>72</sup>

WILLIAMS: The Bible – an unexpected seminal source for contemporary economics.

EZRA: Dante's whole Hell reeks with money. Deepest hell is reached on the back of Geryon – that is, fraud – and for ten cantos thereafter the damned are all of them damned for money. They howl – not for justice, but because they cannot stain their damned jewels in their mud – because they can't bring 'em along! Billionaire con men are slated for that Great Depression.

*Dante and Virgil cross downstage, making their way to the brink of the descent to the Seventh Circle of Hell, where they pause a moment as Virgil explains the arrangement of Hell.*

CHORUS (VIRGIL): Rome never saw the spectacle of its government trying to support the price of corn by destroying it on the ground, leaving the people to starve as their wages fell.<sup>73</sup>

CHORUS (DANTE): (*to Virgil*) Just once again, return to where you spoke of usury as a crime against God's bounty – ravel me out that knot.

CHORUS (VIRGIL): By Art and by Nature, if you recall how Genesis begins, man ought to get his bread, and make prosperity for all. But the usurer contrives a third way, corrupts Art and scorns Nature, sets his hope on making money breed.<sup>74</sup>

CHORUS (DANTE): The only thing needful would be to remove the exploiters.

*The poets pass and exit.*

EZRA: (*leaning back from his typewriter to recite*)<sup>75</sup>

With Usura hath no man a house of good stone, each block cut smooth and well fitting, that design might cover their face.

With Usura hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall – where virgin receiveth message and halo projects from incision.

With Usura no man sees frescoed his heirs and his concubines. No picture is made to endure nor to live with, but is made to sell and sell quickly.

With Usura – sin against nature – is thy bread ever more of stale rags, is thy bread dry as paper, with no mountain wheat, no strong flour.

With Usura the line grows thick – with Usura is no clear demarcation and no man can find site for his dwelling. Stonecutter is kept from his stone, weaver is kept from his loom.

WITH USURA wool comes not to market, sheep bring no gain with Usura, Usura is a murrain, Usura blunts the needle in the maid's hand and stops the spinner's cunning.

Dante came not by Usura, nor came the great paintings that endure, though the painter's name is no longer known; came no church of cut stone signed *Adamo me fecit*: Adam made me.

Usura rusts the chisel. It rusts the craft and the craftsman. It gnaws the thread in the loom. None learn to weave gold in her pattern.

Usura slays the child in the womb. It stays the young man's courting. It brings palsy to bed, it lies between the young bride and her bridegroom.

CONTRA NATURAM they have brought whores for Eleusis, corpses are set to banquet at behest of Usura.

WILLIAMS: When wealth is diverted into a few pockets it gives the lie to that old canard, that great wealth accrues to us all as it diffuses.

EZRA: The practice of allowing money to earn money will always generate – like worms in a barrel of rainwater – a predatory, parasitic class that rigs up the economy to sluice gluttony.

WILLIAMS: We have imbibed the supreme principle of political economy: selfishness –

HEMINGWAY: – and the three cardinal virtues that serve it: paranoia, deception, and avarice.

EZRA: Social credit is the only way out. Give all who need it the national dividend – a share in the wealth of the nation, a universal basic income.

WILLIAMS: It would all work so well – if we still lived in a simple rural civilization, say in medieval times or even during the four thousand years of the Chinese dynasties.

EZRA: It is of the process! Read Kung! Rhythm of seasons gives order to government! When spring recurs, there is birthing in the fields – natural offspring and the land's own good yield. This is true prosperity, the commonwealth! The foundation of the Eternal City of man!

WILLIAMS: It might even have worked in America, when she was building herself out of the Revolution.

EZRA: Read the letters of John Adams!

CHORUS (JOHN ADAMS): Few of us in history have had such an opportunity, to make our own election of a government new on the face of the earth. We ought to make the most of it, so that the common man is no longer a mere dupe, an underworker, a purchaser in trust for some tyrant.<sup>76</sup>

HEMINGWAY: What is this "Social Credit"?

EZRA: (*in broadcasting mode*) Cat piss and porcupines!  $A + B$ , man!  $A$  – your wages.  $B$  – factory costs. The price of goods:  $A + B$ . Your wages make up but one part of the cost, so they will never be enough to buy the whole.<sup>77</sup>

(*Hemingway looks blank*) Dammit, the entire output of factories can never be bought by wages that make up only a part of their cost of production! So you turn to money-lenders, and one percent eat up the rest. It's a rigged game! The privileged take food from your tables! Sell you drugs at ghoulish prices and trade on your deaths! Educate their children at the elite schools you could never afford, whose diplomas are the *sine qua non* to govern! Occupy their temples, which are their banks – occupy Wall Street!

Occupy their realms and thrones and throw 'em down. Issue stamp scrip! Tax their surplus!

*A debate breaks out among the chorus downstage. Background: Sade "Feel No Pain"*

CHORUS:

Listen to that guy!

Occupy Wall Street??

So we should – tear 'em down –

Theym bankers, them financiers!

Theym too big to fail??

Theym brought the whole building down on our heads!

Too big to fail??

Theym a'ready pulled it all down on us!

Them self-serving money-breeders

Self-feeders!

Theym don't serve us!

Don't d'surve us –

We the real economy –

Start businesses, hire workers!

Theym don't put *their* money out to work!

Us lose our jobs –

Never did got back to work.

Theym jus' sit on it –

Run it around through strange loops –

Breed it like rabbits –

Chortle like Babbitts –

Eayt the increase.

Breed'n muney!

Molest that there chile!  
Us they *charge* for saving!  
Circulating money is our lifeblood –  
Them just rig it to run down their throats –  
Bank in the shadows –  
Pass the profit han' to han' –  
Make big bets –  
That us have to pay off when they lose.  
One percent get fat –  
Us get drippings and grow gaunt.  
A few own half the world!  
Why should them have so much?  
More'n ever'body else?  
– combined!

*A few rich fat cats set up a soap box to speak to the mob with educational observations on morality and money.*

CHORUS (CARNIGIE):<sup>78</sup> Not evil but great good has come from the accumulation of wealth by those who have proven their ability to produce it and put it to good use. Evil comes from indulging the weak and lazy – who are doomed, anyway, to pass away. It would be a criminal waste to fritter wealth away by vainly trying to help those who cannot help themselves – even were they our own children!

CHORUS (TEDDY ROOSEVELT): In war, to pardon the coward is to do cruel injustice to the brave man whom his cowardice jeopardizes; so in civil affairs it is revolting to every principal of justice to rob the braver, abler, more successful man of what he has earned just to give it to the lazy, the vicious, the feeble or the dull-witted.

CHORUS (CARNIGIE): I would as soon leave my son a curse as the almighty dollar. The law of competition is hard, but best for the race because it ensures that the fittest survive. Those of us who have proven ourselves fit by amassing great wealth are the only ones suited to wield it.

CHORUS (TEDDY ROOSEVELT): Only the vigorous and hardy should be nourished. The only effective way to help a man is to let him help himself – to rise if he can or die

if he must. The worst lesson to teach them is that they can rely on help at the expense of someone else.

CHORUS (CARNIGIE): Even the poorest can be made to see that far more benefit accrues to them when great men amass vast sums – they alone have proven themselves capable of wisely administering such responsibility, and they will distribute to the poor such small sums as will not corrupt their poor souls. Far better we use it to do great things than scatter trifles among them.

CHORUS (PRINCE KROPOTKIN): (*stepping out of the mob*) If we ask Nature, “Who are the fittest? Those continually at war with each other? Or those who support one another?”, we see at once that those who engage in mutual aid undoubtedly have a better chance to survive and rise. Mutual aid is as much a law among living things as mutual struggle, and is far more important if we wish the greatest welfare to be enjoyed by the greatest number.

CHORUS:

Them fat cats, they just laugh ‘en write ‘emselves ‘nother check.

Them smart cats deposit ‘nother big bonus – whatta heck!

We need ‘nother Tea Party – throw ‘em overboard!

‘nother Tea Party! – them folks as dumb as a board!

Them fat cats run down to Washuntun an’ spend and spend

Them smart cats get too hot, run home to Wall Street – and lend!

Cushy jobs with huge pay.

Near good as a hot lay.

Damned purists got no sense to pay the bills when they come due.

Damned pols make promises like backdoor men come to woo.

Knew them security promises wouldn’t keep.

Knew whenna bill came, they’d maik a leap.

Them don’ make nothin’ productive, jus’ munny.

*Make* money? Wishit were that HEE-larious, that funny!

BUNNY money makin’ money – that’s sick.

Funny-money porn – honey, that’s their shtick.

Bankers s'posed to save the real economy – that's us!

Our jobs, our savings – not worth the fuss.

The bulls 'r throwing a party.

The pigs 'r gorgin 'emselves farty.

EZRA: They put in five percent of their own money and make up the other 95 percent outta thin air. Leverage us to the ears, push loans on people they *know* can't pay 'em back, and then take their homes out from unner 'em when they don't. And then DEE-mand the government reimburse *them* the cost of the stick-up. It's crashed before – you think it won't again? It'll go on crashing, and every time it does who d'yuh think gets richer? And who gets poor?

WILLIAMS: Ezra, who appointed you guardian of world economics? That you led the vanguard in poetry in no way qualifies you in economics – though you conduct both with the same energetic abandon that you apply to your game of tennis –

HEMINGWAY: That is to say, like an inebriated kangaroo.

EZRA: I am an expert on unemployment, having lived nearly all my adult life among the unemployed.

HEMINGWAY: Unemployed leisure – the blessing of a man with a rich wife.

WILLIAMS: You had a dogma – what did you need with the technics of economics? Not you; you had a message – and a love of fool's errands.

EZRA: If the facts are correctly surveyed they will spring irresistibly into a symmetry as lovely and profound as the rose that springs from iron filings when a magnet is brought near.

WILLIAMS: Ah yes – your magnetic mind.

EZRA: (*unruffled*) The city of perfect order and governance – now in the mind indestructible.

CHORUS (SANTAYANA): You remind me of old friends who were spasmodic rebels, full of scraps of culture, but lost, lost, lost in the intellectual world.

EZRA: If I don't know the academic detail what does it matter?

HEMINGWAY: Because your passion did not persuade, but turned cranky.

WILLIAMS: Triggered by some detail, off you went, ticking off the same old grievances, tick, tick, tick – the blame, the anger, over and over, as if they count for logic.

EZRA: (*back to broadcasting*) Perverters of language! Stupidity teaching the stupid! Idiotic legislating! Unnatural offspring of dunghill usurers! War made for gold – usury and monopoly! Gold, debt, monopoly – and gross indifference and contempt for humanity. The American people have been swindled. War can be avoided if only the true nature of money is understood.

CHORUS (SANTAYANA): You began with a shaky understanding, and then reduced *that* to a crude outline.

EZRA: I can do better than that – I can boil it all down to one word.

CHORUS (SANTAYANA): What's that?

EZRA: Usury!

WILLIAMS: At least tell us what you mean by that.

EZRA:<sup>79</sup> *Usura* is a charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production. A factory pays wages that gives people the power to buy. And this power is *less*, damn blast your intellex, *less* than the total – wages, raw materials, bank charges that all goes into the price of what you must buy. *That* is the whole, that total is the price of goods as they come from any damn factory, and so the power to buy 'em can *never* catch up with their price because your purchasing power, your wages, is only one of the costs embodied in the price! And so you turn to moneylenders, who manipulate you even into war, to their profit.

CHORUS (KEYNES): He had it too – the correct conclusion: that is, not enough money in circulation – but none of us would credit him because the analysis that got him there itself was not just wrong, but wrong in the most juvenile ways.

CHORUS (BRECHT): Not to mention, a starving man needs food, not instruction.

EZRA: That kind of theorizing is why communism failed! Absurd instruction AND poor food! Look, the immediate enemy is not malice or famine so much as ee-normous stupidity. An inept and unregulated system of finance condemns millions to misery while a few prosper. That's where evil comes in – one percent corner the money and are satisfied to sacrifice the many in wars that feed their profit. To understand this needs instruction.

CHORUS (MAJOR DOUGLAS): To repair the system, money must be made a medium of exchange again, not a commodity. Forbid trade in currency!

EZRA:<sup>80</sup> But the *State* – the State can lend money. In Siena, por example, they founded their own bank, the *Monte Dei Paschi* – founded it on the abundance of nature and the credit of the whole people. *That* is abundance, you see – prosperity shared by all, the problem of production solved.

NULL-E: Send word to Joe Stalin; tell him, you need not take over the means of production. It remains only to see that the natural abundance is divided in just and adequate parts among all.

CHORUS (KARL MARX): Money has been perverted into a visible divinity – all natural and human properties are transformed into their opposites.

EZRA: Money is not a product of nature, but an invention of man. What man has made he can unmake. (*Marx nods approval*)

WILIAMS: Say how this began.

CHORUS (WILLIAM PATTERSON): (*reading from a charter*) We shall call it the Bank of England, and the bank hath profit of the interest on all the moneys that it creates out of nothing.

EZRA: There! – the founding text of usury. (*rips the charter from Patterson's hands and tears it to shreds*)

CHORUS (JOHN ADAMS): A downright swindle, robbing the public for private gain.

EZRA: The elite acquire wealth beyond imagining and exploit their financial power to substitute *their* special privilege for *our* equality. If you cannot control that, your democracy is lost. Even Lincoln knew that, even in the midst of a war to free slaves –

CHORUS (LINCOLN): As a result of our civil war, corporations have become enthroned. An era of corruption in high places will follow and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed. I feel more anxiety for my country than ever before, even in the midst of war.

CHORUS (JOHN ADAMS): A swindle devised to enrich particular individuals at the public expense.

EZRA:<sup>81</sup> And having got `em (advantages, that is, privilege) there is nothing, italics, *nothing*, they will not do to retain `em. And the Yidd is the stimulant and the Goyim are cattle in great proportion, and go to saleable slaughter with the maximum of docility.

CHORUS (JOHN ADAMS):<sup>82</sup> All the perplexities, confusion, and distress in America arise from downright ignorance of coin, credit, and circulation. Funds and banks I never approved. I ever abhorred our whole banking system. But an attempt to abolish all funding in the present state of the world would be as romantic as any adventure in Don Quixote. Every bank of discount is downright corruption, taxing the public for private gain. And if I say this in my will the American people would pronounce that I died crazy.

EZRA:<sup>83</sup> And when I read *that*, the light became so bright and blindin' in this layer of paradise that this old man was bewildered. Now it comes clear how wars are made for profit. Old Krupp knew it.

CHORUS (KRUPP): Guns are a merchandise. I approach 'em from the industrial end.<sup>84</sup>

EZRA:<sup>85</sup> And look here: gun sales don't saturate the market, they just lead to more gun sales. War is mainly for money-lending, gun-runners and three or four metal monopolies. Dorothy sold the munitions stocks she'd inherited so as not to be implicated in the blood. There are those who do not want war to come to an end. Only a sap thinks he knows any history before he understands economics.

WILLIAMS: So you say we have the government we deserve, the one our bellies crave?<sup>86</sup>

EZRA: Wars are made to make debt, and the late one started by that ambulating dunghill Roosenstein has been amply successful. Look, ten volumes of treasury reports lately sent me – you suckers paid \$10 billion for gold that you already *owned* by sovereign right. Is that clear, or do you want DEEtails? Sovereignty inheres in the POWER to issue money. Don't let me crowd you here. If there is anything OBskewer, speak up.<sup>87</sup>

ELIOT: But you've done away with intense *personal* moral struggle and replaced it with this notion that the world could become as good as anyone could require through benevolence and the redistribution of purchasing power!

NULL-E: Assisted, of course by an intellectual elite.

EZRA: I know of no subject in which it is harder to arouse any interest whatsoever.

HEMINGWAY: Perfectly true, it's a question of feeling – can't move 'em with a cold thing like economics.

WILLIAMS: But an epic struggle between the forces of light and dark, over money – *that* would move 'em.

EZRA: All other sins are open – Usura alone is not understood.<sup>88</sup>

WILLIAMS: So you added the wrath of an Old Testament prophet to the barbs you drove home with the fire of a prosecuting attorney and the maddening detail of a professorial historian.

EZRA: (*ranting*) The Evil is Usury, *Nescheck*, the serpent; *Nescheck* whose name is known, the defiler, beyond race and against race; the defiler – the core of evil, the burning hell without let-up, the canker corrupting all things; Fafnir the worm, Syphilis of the State, of all kingdoms, Wart of the commonweal, Wenn-maker, corrupter of all things. Darkness the defiler, twin evil of envy; Bida, the seven-headed snake that

threatened Wagadu; Hydra, entering all things, passing the doors of temples, defiling the Grove of Paphos; *Nescheck*, the crawling evil, slime, the corrupter of all things, poisoner of the font, of all fountains, *Neschek*, the serpent, evil against Nature's increase, against beauty, a thousand dead in his folds, in the eel-fisher's basket.<sup>89</sup>

#### **Scene 4 Mussolini & Fascism**

EZRA: Does anyone realize that free speech was preserved precisely where it was least expected, namely in Fascist Italy, by a few unknown liberals? Did anyone actually hear my broadcasts? Did they do any good? Did they contribute to a better understanding of economic fundamentals? I do not know whether the public HEARD –

NULL-E: – or if they did, whether they understood one single word –

EZRA: – my talks.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): What's that bit about us forcing war on Hitler and Mussolini?

EZRA: This was a war of aggression on the part of England, who roped us in. There are NO wars not caused by economics.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): You're talking which war?

EZRA: Blast it! Hitler and Muss-o-lini were tryin' to set up usury-free economies. Churchill and Roosenfelt were in bed with the Jewsurers and the gun-makers. They wanted war for profit – they were willing to *lose* for profit; they went to war to front the international conspiracy of financiers and munition-makers.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): So Mussolini ... ?

EZRA: Was attacked.

CHORUS (AMPRIM): And Hitler?

EZRA: Defending the just economic order. Listen, either there is and was a plot to ruin all the Goyim, or some people are stark raving nuts.

HEMINGWAY: Amen to that, brother.

WILLIAMS: GEZUS CHRERRRIST – you're missing your strokes Comerado! This ain't the old Ez I used to know. You're in the wrong bin. Your arse is congealed. Your cock fell in the jello. Wake up!

CHORUS (RECORDED VOICE OF CHURCHCILL): (*background broadcast*) I can offer you nothing but blood, sweat and tears...

EZRA: Why the hell don't it occur to you that the lousy Jews who run yer fahrt of an empire steal seven cents to the dollar from yer own royalties?

WILLIAMS: You build up a myth that only you get the inside dope and nobody else knows anything. Your math is as bad as your myth. You're slipping bud, you're a sapper to sanity.

ELIOT: (*commenting*) Neither you nor Olga could hear. You were too invested in Mussolini.

EZRA: Dammit, D-Day was an Allied blitzkrieg to take over a Europe that knew its best hope for economic justice and cultural freedom lay with Mussolini – and Hitler.

OLGA: (*enraptured*) We heard him speak from a balcony on the occasion of the invasion of Abyssinia, *Il Duce!* (*to Ezra*) You were in a fury to inscribe your sympathy in a testament.

EZRA: I met him once...

*Ezra is shown into a room in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome (it was early on a January evening), where Mussolini receives him seated behind a desk. In the background, a piano plays Boogie Woogie – such as Silvan Zingg, Ciribiribin Boogie.*

CHORUS (MUSSOLINI): (*aside, to aide*) An importunate man.

EZRA: (*to Mussolini*) My Cantos...?

CHORUS (MUSSOLINI): (*waving*) *Divertimento*.

ELIOT: Having not turned so much as a page of them, no doubt.

EZRA: I must put my thoughts in order...

CHORUS (MUSSOLINI): (*yawning*) Why must you put your thoughts in order?

EZRA: (*breathless*) How Confucian! – he goes directly to the main point! Way before the aesthetes get there! And when I told him about Social Credit, he said ...

CHORUS (MUSSOLINI): One would have to think about that.

ELIOT: A politician's brush-off.

CHORUS (MUSSOLINI): (*speechifying*) We will have a government in which there are responsible persons, who have a last name, a first name and an address.

*(Mussolini waves Ezra out, an aide shows him the door and he returns to his cage)*

OLGA: I met him too. He complemented my violin technique – rare in a woman, he said. And we agreed that Vivaldi was the greatest composer of all time. He had the manners of an archbishop.

NULL-E: Your little circle closed in like revelers barricading themselves against the Red Death, meaning to pass your time producing the full 310 concerti of Vivaldi. Outside, the rising storm of Nazis and Fascists crescendoed unheeded.

EZRA:<sup>90</sup> No! Muss was at work on it – the just economy. He drained the marshes! The working poor, the unjustified rich – they would find themselves confronted with a male of the species. I framed my official summons to meet the Boss and hung it on my study wall. A bull, all man – fully armed to face down Jew bankers, a black-shirt hero. He wasn't a dictator but an artist.

NULL-E: And though he was hanged before his time we continue to dream the Republic, a city in the mind indestructible – because it is impossible.

WILLIAMS: Every single thing you reviled and blasted in your first thirty cantos was happening around you in Italy– corruption, oppression, murder, with the added vulgarity of Fascism.

EZRA: (*waving his hand before his face as if shooin' off a fly*) The *squadrismo*, the love of parades and uniforms and the masses shouting at the Boss's speeches – just trappings. I am heartily opposed to Fascism OUTSIDE Italy. (*broadcasting again*) The heritage of Jefferson, Quincy Adams, old John Adams, Jackson, Van Buren was HERE, NOW in the Italian peninsula at the beginning of the second fascist decennio – not in Massachusetts or Delaware.

WILLIAMS: Thank God.

EZRA: I wrote to 'em, suggested plans to replace the League of Nations and wrote pamphlets to make Americans understand the sympathy that our greatest leaders would have had with Fascism.

HEMINGWAY: Jefferson a closet Fascist? Adams a Fascist? What could trump that?

CHORUS (ITALIAN OFFICIAL): The man is incomprehensible – the only thing clear is that he is mentally unbalanced.

EZRA: I suggested that as it cost me 30 cents to write to America, it would con-VEEN-ience me to use the air instead. The *Ministro* eyed me and said perlite words to the effect: 'Ez' (or probably he said '*Mio Caro Signore*') 'if you think you can use OUR air to monkey in their INTERNAL politics you got another one comin'.

CHORUS (ITALIAN OFFICIAL): He is a gifted and cultured man with excellent impulses towards us, but he is a bungler in politics. He has fantastical ideas about economics and finance in which he has no expertise. And he carries no weight at home.

EZRA: It took me TWO years wangling to GET HOLD of their microphone.

ELIOT: Far better you had not.

HEMINGWAY: Reading 'em aloud did not improve the comprehensibility of your scrawls – they were a torture to me. Get your waiter at your hotel to write your stuff for you.

WILLIAMS: You wrote economics the way you wrote the Cantos – as if you were so irritated with your readers for failing to understand anything so important that you refused to enlighten them at all.

HEMINGWAY: Your style is calculated to give the impression that you are condescending to tell bloody fools what they're too dumb to get on their own. You shove it in their face that you'll give yourself damned little more trouble than it takes to spit it out and get it off your chest. Not likely to win readers. You couldn't collect an Apostle's dozen.

WILLIAMS: You really are such a bleeding fool when you are doing anything except writing verse. If it weren't for Eliot none of this tripe would have seen the light of day.

EZRA: Gaudier shaped stone, I words, Muss a nation. He *got things done*. Drained swamps! Corrected the scribblers!

WILLIAMS: Oh give me a break. Starry-eyed hero worship – drained swamps for god sake! The local County Commissioner does as much. You read Mussolini as selectively as you read all texts. And what about the censorship?

EZRA: A great deal of the yawp about free press proves on examination to be a mere howl for irresponsibility. I know of only one or two American poets who wouldn't improve by drowning. Muss was right to put his first emphasis on getting a government strong enough to dose out real justice. There is too much future and nobody but me and Muss and a few others to attend to it.

HEMINGWAY: How little you admit to knowing of the black-shirts, the violence and repressiveness of Italian fascism.

NULL-E: Hatred is such a convenient megaphone. Jerking off the collective primal scream.

CONFUCIUS: The true man and poet leaves the poisoned heart.

NULL-E: As did those bright, vital human beings who left broken and tortured bodies scattered like frozen boards in the camps.

WILLIAMS: I detest your bastardly Italy. If anyone needs a new view point, it's you. You can't even smell the stink you're in anymore. You want to crush resistance against an economic set-up that you yourself oppose. It happens not to be your particular shade of pink, so you approve their destruction.

EZRA: Any thorough judgment of the Boss will be an act of faith; it will depend on what you *believe* the man means, what you *believe* he wanted to accomplish. To hell with

the censor! (*he rips new paper into his typewriter and pounds furiously at it, revising the first Pisan Canto*) – maggot *partigiani* – I'll give him proper homage! (*leans back, reading aloud*) The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent shoulders: Ben and la Clara *a Milano* – hung up by the heels at Milano.<sup>91</sup>

NULL-E: That maggots should eat the dead bullock!

HEMINGWAY: So at a single stroke you transformed elegy into violent sacrifice, and your Pisan Cantos no longer set forth under the lovely eyes of a Goddess but beneath the swaying corpses of Ben and la Clara, hung up by their heels like sides of beef in the public square, Clara's skirt falling down over her waist.<sup>92</sup>

EZRA: Yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper. This is the way the world ends, with a bang not a whimper.<sup>93</sup>

**ACT 3: HAST'OU FOUND A SOFTER NEST?****Scene 1 COME ON IN MY KITCHEN**

MUSIC – “COME ON IN MY KITCHEN” BY ROBERT JOHNSON

*LYRICS* You better come on in my kitchen  
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.  
 Ah the woman I love, took from my best friend  
 Some joker got lucky, stole her back again  
 You better come on in my kitchen  
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

Oh, she's gone, I know she won't be comin' back  
 I took the last nickel outa her ration sack  
 You better come on in my kitchen  
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.  
 Can't you hear that wind howl?  
 Oh can't you hear that wind a-howl?  
 You better come on in my kitchen  
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

When a woman gets in trouble, ever'body throws her down  
 Lookin' for her good friend, cain't none be found  
 You better come on in my kitchen  
 Babe, it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.  
 Wintertime's comin', it gon' be slow  
 You can't make the winter, babe so  
 You better come on in my kitchen  
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

MARY: All this moralizing – but what of us – the people in your life? (*small voice*) What of me?

DOROTHY: What of you? What of *me*? – you use me without a second thought. Remember *me*.

OLGA: (*squawk*) Used you!

NULL-E: Not on treason alone should you examine your conscience, nor on economics alone ponder deeply. Where stands memory?

*Ezra is back in his cage, lying on his cot and whiling away time watching the birds.*

EZRA: *Amo ego sum*. I love, therefore I am. O white-chested martin, goddamn it, as no one else will carry a message, say to *La Cara: amo*.<sup>94</sup>

OLGA: (*downstage, speaking to Ezra far away*) What are you thinking about?

EZRA: Sophocles – the old man lived into his nineties and thought he saw his way to the light, thought he saw meaning in death. But as he grew old he asked himself, does it mean that? And he decided, “It doesn’t. It just means I die.” Yet the old man also wrote, “Splendor. It all coheres.” (*beat*) It does not cohere. I die, that’s all. When I saw the jagged mesh they cut to weld my cage, I knew they were inviting me to suicide.

OLGA: Ezra, Ezra. Think of something better.

EZRA:<sup>95</sup> (*lost in memory*) I remember lordly men to the earth o’ergiven. Fordie, who wrote of giants. Jim Joyce singing “Blarrney castle me darling, you’re nothing now but a StOWne.” Plarr who loved mathematics and Jepson who loved jade. Henry James shielding himself with his housekeeper, Mrs. Hawkesby, as if a bowl could shield itself with a walking stick.

DOROTHY: (*writing from an opposite corner*) Dear Sir, I am writing to inquire about my husband, Ezra Pound...

## **Scene 2 Letters in Captivity**

*Ezra in his cage, bends over a beat-up paperback. Throughout this scene the characters read and speak from letters they are exchanging. The communication is chaotic, reflecting the crossing of letters lost or delayed.*

EZRA: The loneliness of death came upon me for an instant at three in the afternoon.<sup>96</sup> From the death cells, condemned men pray to the gallows set up in the yard – may death absolve us all. <sup>97</sup> (*bitterly*) Laval, Quisling – they’ll come for me next. (*holding up a pocket book of poetry*) But then today, found this cheap edition left on the jo-house seat (*reading the title*) *Anthology of Great English and American Poems*.<sup>98</sup> (*musings*) Memory awash with scraps of Greek, Latin, Provençal, Italian, French. Odysseus sails into port at last – the wanderer returned! The mother tongue gathers me in – I can no longer think of myself as alone. Yet how it changes. Even words have histories.

CHORUS (BASE CENSOR): (*officially, to Dorothy*) To: Mrs. Dorothy Pound. 24 August 1945. In reply to your letter of 31 July, please be advised that your husband is at present detained in the Disciplinary Training Center near Pisa. This letter authorizes you to visit your husband and bring him clothing.

EZRA: My long poem containing history went off the rails, did a face-plant into history – history as shape-shifting as language, unable to tell change from error. Now I tell those who believe in endings where all wandering comes in from error, don’t be alarmed. Epics come to no end, there is no paradise where wandering ceases and error is redeemed. There’s nothing ahead but the story, open-ended, where errors become

footprints of unfinished wandering, appearing one and by one, leading on, into the discomfort of our lives, until it all changes into history.<sup>99</sup>

CHORUS (GUARD): (*handing Ezra a slip of paper through the bars of his cage*) Stop that damn talkin' to y'self alla time. Here.

EZRA: (*he reads aloud*) Ehem. Routing slip. Subject: Correspondence. Number each memo consecutively. Fill in each column. Initial and draw one line across the sheet. Pen or pencil may be used. Number: 1. Date: 20 September 1945. From: CEE-OH. To: Ezra Pound.

DOROTHY: (*writing alone, from her room*) Should this reach you, you may imagine that I am thinking of you always, though I do not worry all the time.

CHORUS (STEELE): Correspondence between yourself and Mrs. Pound is authorized subject to the usual censorship. Mrs. Pound has also been authorized to visit.

EZRA: (*looking up*) But not Olga. Of course not Olga. (*addressing and beginning a letter*) Mao: Notice received this evening that YOU are authorized to write to me and to visit me for an half an hour in the presence of an officer. Permit to write given due to my gittin' excited on the 14<sup>th</sup>, yer birthday – remembered the date. Naturally I have no news except that I am here and living in a gorilla cage. Send news! Does ANYthing still exist?

CHORUS (BASE CENSOR): (*to Ezra*) Anything you want to go out this week, get it to me now.

EZRA: (*writing to Dorothy*) I enclose the first bit of new Cantos from Pisa. Hadda begun 'em on TOILET PAPER. I've done a Decad, which don't seem any worse'n the first 70. Don't know whether intelligible but anyhow more human than a dull letter – and in parts mild enough to suit Mother. (*hands in his stuff to the censor*)

DOROTHY: (*handed letter brought by a boy*) Oh Mao! Glory be! I burnt incense to Apollo several times for help. At last! Prayer has been valid – a letter from you AND permission to visit. I've spent considerable energy trying to locate a truck to get to you. Transport is difficult – 2000 lire to Pisa. BUT – I'm on my way!

EZRA: A blessed comfort to get your letters. I don't know whether your birthday Lynx went to you direct or via the base censor.

*Dorothy is escorted to the cage, his first visitor since he was arrested.*

EZRA: O lithe lynx.<sup>100</sup>

DOROTHY: O Mao! Bright Ming! I've been so worried – (*noticing his sagging pants*) where is your belt?

EZRA: (*tugging on his waistband*) I hold 'em up with Army food – being fed vurry solid. Back up to 166 – something like? T'eny rate nothing like the pre-war BULGE. But I'm famished for news.

DOROTHY: (*fading to indistinguishable chat*). I heard from Omar! He says he's happy in the Army and when he gets out he wants to study psychology...

*Their murmur is shortly interrupted by an officer who indicates that the visit is over. Dorothy returns downstage, to speak again through her correspondence.*

EZRA: (*writing*) HE<sup>101</sup> hopes SHE didn't get drowned with rain at 3 a.m. goin' home or snowed under on the Bracco Pass. HE is grateful fer HER heroick voyage. O Mao, love – and HE hopes SHE didn't git soaked and fruz.

DOROTHY:<sup>102</sup> Mao, I couldn't sleep, thinking about you there. I lit candles and tried writing it out – a few scribbles of my own: (*she reads*) "Black huts, dark tents behind; leveled arid flatness. Great drafts pushing down from the mountains, sweeping over the walks – all curtained by a quick rain obliterating the hasty clasp, our sudden glow of intimacy." To be joined again after five months of half-life!

EZRA: You have given me 30 years peace clear as blue feldspar and I am grateful. In the drenched tent tonight there is quiet. Seared eyes at rest. The rain beats with the color of feldspar, blue as the flying fish off Zoagli.<sup>103</sup>

### **Scene 3 Lynx**<sup>104</sup>

EZRA: (*to Dorothy*) Have you received the Lynx Canto yet? HE ought to have sent it for HER birthday, but permission wasn't granted till the 20<sup>th</sup> anyhow.

DOROTHY: (*replying*) No Lynx Canto has ever turned up. That lynx must have been devoured by the Post Office. But I've had the scrappiest of notes from Olga, saying there was nothing new.

EZRA: Write me when you have it. I have been visited by the Lynx. We stared at each other for minutes that may have stretched into centuries.

DOROTHY: Today's your birthday! – it's pouring torrents, after three years' drought. And washed in on the deluge: three letters from you, *and* – the Lynx! Escaped early this evening to read Lynx quietly in bed.

*As Dorothy takes up the manuscript, she and Ezra move dreamily toward one another, and lie down tenderly together. These sensual lines from Pound are heavily allusive.*

EZRA: Who sleeps in a field of lynxes?

DOROTHY: Asleep amid serried lynxes, set wreathes on Priapus.

EZRA: We will await sunrise here, and the next sunrise and the next, withdrawn three nights among lynxes. The sunbreaks we'll call Heliads.

DOROTHY: (*opening a pomegranate*) Here love, a pomegranate.

EZRA: This fruit has a fire within it. They call it Melagrana. Persephone was warned, eat not of it in the underworld or you may not return. It is the color of passion when it inflames your most hidden center.

DOROTHY: (*holding up a pip*) Fire in winter should be so, with aromas of fig wood, with cedar and pine burrs. Each under his fig tree or with the smell of fig leaves burning.

EZRA: O Lynx, watch over my fire. Keep the rust from my vines. Guard this orchard, keep watch on this orchard that is named Melagrana, the pomegranate field.

DOROTHY: Here there are lynxes.

EZRA: Is there a sound in the forest of leaves moving? Does a lynx pass? Will the scrub-oak burst into flower? There is a rose vine in this underbrush – a color as when the pomegranate opens and the light falls half through it. Lynx, beware the vine-thorns. O Lynx, with gleaming eyes coming up from the olive yards – there is a stir of dust from old leaves.

DOROTHY: Will you trade roses for acorns? Do lynxes eat thorn leaves?

EZRA: Nymphs move among lynxes; how many? See? – there? More under the oak trees. No vine lacks flower, no lynx lacks a flower rope, no Maelid minus a wine jar in this forest named Melagrana. O lynx keep the edge on my cider, keep it clear without cloud.

DOROTHY: What have you in that jar? A drink, for lynxes?

EZRA: Lie amid calicanthus and sword-flower, Heliads caught in wild rose vine, the smell of pine mingling with rose leaves. O lynx, be many – of spotted fur and sharp ears. My lynx, have your eyes gone yellow? Lynx guard my vineyard as the grape swells under vine leaf. Helios, the sun is come to our mountain. There is a red glow in the carpet of pine spikes.

*They take leave of one another*

DOROTHY: (*returning to her desk where she finishes her reply to Ezra*) I love my lynxes all through! Thank you for such a generous quantity of lynxes! I imagine lynxes leave a good smell, crushing the thyme and mint and marjoram with their paws out on the open mountain. (*she gathers up the manuscripts she has received and takes them to Mary*)

EZRA: (*bemused, in no hurry to return to his cage*) Who sleeps in a field of lynxes? When the morning sun lit up the battalions of the West, cloud over cloud, old Ez folded his blankets. Neither Eos nor Hesperus, the morning and the evening stars, suffered wrong at my hands. Lynx, I call you: wake the men here; wake up Silenus and Casey so that they may pass my cage – Polk, Tyler, half the Presidents – and Calhoun. The sea is not clearer than your eyes in azure, nor do the Heliads bring more light.

#### **Scene 4 HAST 'OU FOUND A SOFTER NEST?**

MARY: (*dashing off a note as she passes on the manuscripts to Olga*) Dorothy has sent me, and I am forwarding to you, the *third* large brown envelope of Cantos from Pisa! (*to Ezra*) Have you put us in among the metal and the eels? Sing of us, Babbo!

OLGA: (*appearing before Ezra*) Well! The best thing they could have done for the Cantos was to shut you up for awhile. SHE is glad HE has begun to sing again.

EZRA:<sup>105</sup> It is by memory that this spirit appears. Your eyes two slay me suddenly. I may the beauty of them not sustain ... pale sea-green your eyes. No, (*to Dorothy*) yours were azure and (*to Olga*) yours periwinkle. But green-eyed she arose from the sea, her eyes come to the surface from the deep where they were sunken, come forth from their caves – the green deep of the sea-cave. Her eyes alight, crystal waves weaving together, great healing, light, and flowing crystal – ah! the green deep of an eye. Or sometimes black as Demeter's gown, or (*back to Olga*) yours, violet. Eyes that cannot be probed. A match flares in the eyes' hearth, then darkness. So slow is the rose to open.

DOROTHY: (*to Olga*) I have been to see him. It was the most awful journey and I was allowed only one hour. He looks wonderfully well in khaki, with plenty of woolens underneath. He is working on Confucius and has done more Cantos. He is allowed to *receive* correspondence – subject of course to censorship – but he is only permitted to write to me. (*Olga ignores Dorothy and drifts into Ezra's cage and arms, a memory*)

EZRA:<sup>106</sup> (*still moving slowly toward his cage, softly to himself*) Hast'ou found a softer nest? Or a better rest? – Hast'ou a deeper planting, doth thy death year bring swifter shoot? Hast'ou entered more deeply the mountain? The light has entered the cave. Io! Io! The light has gone down into the cave, splendor on splendor! By prong I have entered these hills: that the grass grow from my body, that I hear the roots speaking together, the air is new on my life, the forked boughs shake with the wind. By this door have I entered the hill. Think thus of thy plowing when the seven stars go down to their rest.

OLGA: (*coming to him*) Do you remember the little perch you found me on the hillside above Rapallo?

MARY: (*gently*) Babbo, you were in such a lather to remake the world – but what about the ones you lived in it with? How did we live in your thought?

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): There is, for the small man living unobserved, no iniquity that he will not carry to the limit.<sup>107</sup>

MARY: What of the great man living where all can see? When I was small you were so grand!

NULL-E: It is fine to think such grand thoughts, to live so larger-than-life. But when your little life belies the largeness?

*Ezra finds himself back at his cage where Dorothy rejoins him, transformed now to the small Rapallo apartment he shared with her at Via Marsala.*

CHORUS (ITALIAN SOLDIER): (*walks quickly to Ezra and Dorothy's apartment and knocks to enter*) The Nazi's are fortifying the coastal defenses. They will confiscate your home – you must move. All your furnishings! You have twenty-four hours!

EZRA: We have lived here 20 years. (*looks around*) It is only a small seafront apartment.

CHORUS (ITALIAN SOLDIER): You are foreigners – the Nazis will not allow you to stay. Do you have someplace you can go?

EZRA: (*turning to Dorothy*) We can move in with Olga, in Sant' Ambrogio. It is only a short way up the hill... and SHE can look out over Rapallo and the harbor.

DOROTHY: But it is so tiny! And it has no phone, no electricity. (*sniffs*) A tin hip-bath filled with rainwater, shared by three families, a cow and goats! A short way! – it's a steep half-hour's climb!

OLGA: (*pointing to Dorothy*) It would have been a kindness to your mother if *she* moved in with her. She could have gone there for weekends, at least.

DOROTHY: (*indicating Olga*) Can't *she* go to Venice?

EZRA: (*to Dorothy*) The Nazis have sequestered her Hidden Nest. She no longer has access to it.

OLGA: (*gesturing to Dorothy*) Her parents are dead. There's no need to keep up the pretense any longer out of respect for *their* feelings. HE has put HER off every time SHE has tried to get HIM to consider the triangle. HE said HE doesn't believe in marriage, but now with the war on, HE wants to adopt the *Leoncina*<sup>108</sup> (*gesturing toward Mary*). Well that would make *it*<sup>109</sup> over to her (*gesturing to Dorothy*), and I would lose every right – to her! No! SHE won't have it.

EZRA: (*sighing*) Where rancor endures, resentment knifes the heart.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): The mind attains no precision.<sup>110</sup>

EZRA: I have walked where three roads cross, between Rapollo and Sant' Ambrogio.<sup>111</sup>

*Whiteside interrupts, bringing Army chow*

CHORUS (WHITESIDE): (*cheerfully*) Chow, Mistuh Poun'.

EZRA: Army grub. Oh but I'm hungry for the old restaurants – where we fed when we were young, in Paris.

OLGA: (*far away again*) Do they feed you enough?

EZRA:<sup>112</sup> (*falling into reverie*) Sirdar, that was the name of the restaurant we used to visit. And there was Bouiller, the open-air dance place; Fordie's *Review* staff would go there – and, let me see – Les Lilas. Or Dieudonné's in London, or Voisin's. And the cake shops on the Nevsky Prospekt. Schönners in Vienna. Not to mention der Greif at Bolsano in the Tyrol. And, (*indicating himself*) *la patronne* getting older, I went back to see the old New York haunts after 30 years: Mouquin's and Robert's. That was '39, the year I sailed back to try to talk some sense into Roosenfelt.<sup>113</sup>

MARY: There were three of them in a tiny apartment – someone had to cook.

DOROTHY: (*speaking to Olga as if she were the hired help*) I do not cook.

MARY: (*gesturing to Olga*) Mamile had no flair for it – she liked to arrange the table, but not to cook. So if anyone wanted anything tasty, Babbo had to cook.<sup>114</sup>

EZRA:<sup>115</sup> (*shrugging*) Some cook, some do not cook. Some things cannot be altered. (*turning over an Army biscuit*) The old restaurants have changed hands. The chefs dead and buried. Dieudonné. La Rupa is no longer La Rupa, *finito*...

OLGA: One solid year *she* made use of me to the fullest, shared my house while I worked like a slave – cooking, cleaning, finding food – which I undertook *only* owing to her incapacity, so that HE would not suffer.

EZRA: (*gesturing to the DTC prisoners*) Ask them about slaving.

OLGA: (*petulant*) Of course *she* took Mary's room – it had the best furniture. I made it as comfortable for her as I could – spent a day hauling *her* possessions up the hill. It was awkward that first evening, the three of us forced to converse after a tiring day. (*picking up her violin*) I thought you would like me to show that I was minding my own business so I went to my room and played the Mozart Concerto in A major – as well as I've ever done. (*begins a dramatic rendition*)

DOROTHY: (*to Ezra*) Whatever is she doing in there?

OLGA: And not a word from either of you! So I never played there again.

MARY: Whatever civilized appearances were kept up, hatred and tension permeated that house. Oh Babbo, pent up two years with two women who loved you, whom you loved, who coldly hated each other.

EZRA:<sup>116</sup> I don't know how humanity stands it – with a painted paradise at the end of it; without a painted paradise at the end of it. That love be the cause of hate, something twists. What home should I return to? A usury of souls. We think ourselves fit to be among Gods and then one day events uncover who we really are.

NULL-E: 'I have done that', says memory. 'I could not have done it', says pride. And memory yields.<sup>117</sup> You've struggled in your cage for years, to invent myths that might redeem memories – your own and an entire civilization's. You place them in your Cantos, sometimes like the slow accretions of stalagmites, sometimes like the last Jack carefully placed on a wobbly house of cards. You stage them all in a theater of memory – and forgetting.

EZRA:<sup>118</sup> White clouds, *cielo di Pisa* – out of all this beauty something must come. They move about me, ghostly, like histories patched with memories.

MARY: I watched that bad blood seep into the Cantos like a wound bleeding into a rag, and I saw the blood remade into myth.

EZRA: (*shaking his head at Olga and Dorothy*) Heart-scalded. Sound judgment trodden beneath suspicion and fear.<sup>119</sup> (*turning back to inner thoughts*)<sup>120</sup> Hast'ou found a softer nest? To the cave thou art called, Odysseus – little respite. A man on whom the sun has gone down. Flying from Calypso to Penelope, freed from one bed to return to the other. I too make my weary way back and forth between 'em. *In coitu illuminato?* Begin thy plowing when the Pleiades go down to their rest – by this gate you are measured. Your day lies between a door and a door. Two oxen are yoked for plowing.

NULL-E: The female is a chaos, an octopus, a biological process.

OLGA: (*interrupting*) So! SHE is HIS *convenient* mistress? SHE feels HE ought – yes *ought* – to notice the difference between one woman and another before HE damns them all wholesale. What good is HIS Henry James admiration for them if HE can *see* them only in images?

EZRA: No, you goddamn fool, it is your vampirism. Your always wanting *more*. What damn pleasure is there in ANYTHING if someone is always telling you what you *ought*, what you *owe*? The only reason people can live near each other is because they let each other *alone*.

DOROTHY: Yes you ought to let her alone.

OLGA: The meanness of her behavior – always afraid that *I* would gain some advantage over *her*. With all her income from the war years' saved up and waiting for her, her family and a legal advisor to fall back on, the right to appeal to any of your

friends for help, *her* child provided for with no trouble – ! But I – left with no rights of any kind, my income completely knocked out by the war, high and dry in a country I would never have lived in except to be near you, left to my own devices to improvise a living with Mary – !

DOROTHY: (*ignoring Olga*) After you were taken away I did move in with your mother. Though her octogenarian primness could be trying, that was a mild *purgatorio* compared to the HELL of No. 60 Sant' Ambrogio.

NULL-E: Nothing is more outwardly visible than the secrets of the heart, nothing more obvious than what one attempts to conceal.<sup>121</sup>

OLGA: I loathed that woman. I could not have borne another season crammed together with her in that tiny apartment. Porcelain skin, ice-blue eyes – a beautiful picture that never came to life.

CHORUS (HILDA DOOLITTLE, "HD"): (*downstage, commenting to a friend*) Yes, he is married. It is pretty generally known that she is not "awakened." Very English you know, very cold. Never easily made a warm friend with man or woman. And loathes children! – *she* says. She can't be very sensitive, or she would never have stuck Ezra.

CHORUS (HENRY JAMES): (*caught in the midst of telling a description*) Carried herself delicately, with the air, always, of a young Victorian lady out skating.

OLGA: (*chiming in*) Just sat there like a beautiful ornament, silent most of the time. (*turning to Ezra*) And when SHE saw *her* in the street, SHE had to tell her when HE was coming home!

EZRA:<sup>122</sup> Petty pride, jealousy, possessiveness – the three pains of hell. If love be not in the house, there is nothing.

### **Scene 5 DONNA MI PREGA**

EZRA:<sup>123</sup> Beauty walks in forms made flesh. A tangent of light deflects off her curve formed in the hand's cup. Ole Bull Williams wrote, "Love waits, that the mind shall declare itself not alone."

OLGA: Explain this wild emotion, so often proud.

EZRA: Because a Lady asks, I will answer. I need no reason but that she asks. Even those who deny it cannot help but hear its call. It's no use speaking to those who don't already know. The base and vulgar have no hope to know – and I have no desire to bring proof, or say where it was born, or how or why it has its power. Its being and every moving, the delight whereby it is called love, speaks to all whether or not a man can show it to sight.

Love is a thing of memory. Love is a light that always rises. Love is its own effect

unendingly, not some mere plaything to delight, but a vision held in an ardor of thought that its base likeness never kindles.

Love is not some virtue, but virtue's source. Love is not reasoned out, though its reasons are perfect. Love cares nothing for your salvation; but rules, whether you will be saved or not. Though love is often deadly in the end, still you cannot resist.

Love takes nothing from your life, but if you fail it by even a little – if you show yourself unworthy – it leaves without a thought. Love comes to life only when will twists out of all natural measure and leaves you no rest in its service. Love moves changing color, changing state – a shadow of light thrown upon a shade is all you see.

Men and women who have seen it stare into space, minds hopelessly lost. Love rouses thirst to break into flame. No one can imagine love who has not loved. Love doesn't move, it draws in. Love does not turn a step aside for delight, or for great knowledge, or to revenge.

No one cowers near such beauty but, once caught, falls straight upon its impaling spike. He proceeds well who ignores beautiful form, following something intangible beyond color, in the midst of darkness, light giving off light, no question of false or true, faith awoken, alone worthy of faith, where suddenly compassion is born.

There are enough beautiful women in hell. And beauty is not eternal – no man has that fortune! But you become beautiful as I come to know you. I once thought your face homely. But today I know you as I remember you. Light descends from your quiet eyes. All parts of you give off light. Your memory stands hidden by bright light. So I name you to myself constantly, drawing you back to me.

Memory finds the rose in the steel dust, constantly drives life into form, craves sense to know beauty, never still, ever turning.

Light tensile, light immaculate, the sun's chord, her eyes. She generates light like a stone that knows what the sculptor wants before he carves.

She can be found in a brothel, in squalor in a city on the far side of the seas one crosses to leave civilization. In that seaport you stumble upon her on a one-night shore leave, half drunk, and you are sobered a moment by her unsurpassable beauty, and then you are pitched headlong into a three-week drunk from which she is the only thing that emerges unmarred, like the human soul fallen into matter – only matter corrupts and rots, while she is like pieces of gold that show through the clods of mud shat out along the side of the road.

Purchase her freedom, try to bring her back with you – you'll only throw down the suddenly narrow and fragile walls of the city you've called home. The fat-butt priest knows nothing of the love that passes between you, that death, that rising.

**Scene 6 NARCISSIS**<sup>124</sup>

*Ezra, in his tent, turns to memories of his daughter, Mary. Mary and Olga try to ignore each other but cannot avoid being thrown back on one another.*

EZRA:<sup>125</sup> If hoar frost grips your tent, you will give thanks when night is spent. The sun is a golden eye between dark cloud and mountain. The camp cat walks the top bar of the railing that bounds the death cells, and I hear water flowing in ever-moving diminutive poluphliosboios, outlasting all wars. Listen to the murmur – is it not as if a new subtlety of eyes came into my tent? Whether spirit or the thing itself I cannot say, but careless, almost unaware, they move in and take the whole tent's room. Green of the mountain pool shines from unmasked eyes in half-mask's space.

DOROTHY: (*breaking in on his reverie*) Olga has been up here again to make an appalling scene.

OLGA: (*lecturing*) It is of vital importance to safeguard Ezra's reputation in every way. That cannot be done by bickering among ourselves. We must show a united front.

DOROTHY: (*avoiding direct reply; complaining instead to Ezra*) That is exactly why I've asked those who know where you are not to give the address to Olga. She'll go rushing about making a furor and ruining any chance of success.

EZRA: Oh let an old man rest.<sup>126</sup>

OLGA: (*to Mary*) I had a letter from *her* with a detailed account of his woolen underwear, but no mention of important matters, such as whether he still insists on conducting his own defense.

EZRA: (*writing to Dorothy*) Please tell Olga that I am not yet allowed to write, and see that she has enough money. And get me leave to write direct to her if you can – it would be easier for me.

DOROTHY: (*frigidly, to Olga*) I am enclosing one of the thousand lira notes I found in his room soon after he was taken away. This, as you may remember, was *his* money, not mine. We never had a joint account. Mine in London is *blocked*.

MARY: (*writing to Ezra*) Babbo! Just imagine! – we went to Café Yolanda to meet your friend Drummond, who has been advising Mamile and Dorothy, and he was just telling them that they both have claims on you and how he hoped they would work things through when – can you imagine! – whether by design or an Act of God, a very young-looking G.I. came in. He had dark hair and wore glasses, and looked a bit shy. Drummond called him over and made introductions – so *this* was Omar, my half-brother!<sup>127</sup> We had never met, never in nearly 20 years! And now I know him! He is in the U.S. Army of Occupation and was on leave in Rapallo with Dorothy. For the first time – the four of us in one room!

CHORUS (OMAR): (*shyly*) Are you well? Is he well?

DOROTHY: (*ignoring her son, with affected languor, to Ezra*) When I met Mary for the first time, it was she who recognized me across the street. I told her I would be coming to you again soon, (*supercilious*) and she *must* let me know if I could do anything for her. She is certainly a *large*, healthy object – and your mother likes her. I expect there's *some* charm.

OLGA: (*to Ezra*) As early as 1923 SHE said SHE'd like HIS child. A boy was what SHE wanted – a boy in HIS image. SHE would not have suggested it except that after 10 years Dorothy wanted none – never wanted one – and at *her* age I thought it unlikely. Until she ran off to Egypt and came home pregnant. Of course you claimed that offspring even so.

EZRA: Wasn't warm to the idea was I?

OLGA: The whole notion of having a child was repugnant to HIM, as if SHE had suggested having a chow dog! So SHE had it alone, in a little town in the Italian Tyrol, where no one would know. And when the *Leoncina* was born (*gesturing towards Mary*) – *a girl* – SHE felt the boy she wanted had died. SHE reconciled HERSELF to the loss. SHE wished HE were there.

MARY: When not referred to as "it", a *thing*, you called me the *Leoncina*, the little lion – for my golden mane, thick as Babbo's.

OLGA: (*to Ezra*) You were right in not wanting a child. I was wrong, and no way to clean up the mess. I was alone with an infant that no one wanted. I sent you news.

EZRA: (*returning in time to 1925, reading Olga's letter telling of Mary's birth*) Wot! Feet first through the roof, same as Hercules and Julius Caesar – wot-t-ell?? HE hopes SHE is OK. How long SHE expect to take recov'rin?

OLGA: I faint all over the place so it's not much use getting up. *Kindt ist besser* – no grinning bear look about it now. It yawns with HIS abandon and howls with rage until it gets what it wants, then shuts up tight. We live in separate cages, so I don't see much of it. The girl who looks after it is very competent – I think I can leave it here. Oh IT depresses me!

MARY: (*to Olga*) "It." When you had to fill out the Certificate of Birth, you gave your dead brother's name as the father – because you couldn't name Babbo. What did I want with your brother's name? I despised it. Later you gave me his blanket as a keepsake. I threw it down the well.

OLGA: (*ignoring Mary, continuing to address Ezra*) No, not worried about *it*. Mainly worried that I can't and *won't* appear anywhere until I can play the violin again at least as well as *prima*. Does HE expect HER to travel with an infant?? SHE won't consider it. I can't look after it. As to HIS coming – SHE never expected HE would. But if HE wants to

see it, HE'd better come soon – there's very little left of it. It just doesn't catch on. The doctor says perhaps if SHE had consented to nurse it – SHE did try, once.

EZRA:<sup>128</sup> (*distracted, flapping away her news with one hand and trying to ignore her*) New set of odd noises traced to kat climbin' the tent flaps. (*playing with his Eucalyptus pip*) I can see here a cat's head and the Maltese Cross, and a figure of the sun. (*speaking to the camp cat*) Prowling night-puss, leave my hard squares alone. They are in no case cat food. If you had sense you would come here at meal time – you can eat neither manuscript nor Confucius nor even the Hebrew scriptures – no use nosing that bacon box! It's now converted to my wardrobe. The cat-faced eucalyptus I have placed where you cannot get at it.

OLGA: (*breaking in, pulling Ezra back into the 1920's*) Ezra! I *said*, I have found a young woman here, a Frau Marcher, who has lost her baby – she can take *it* in. She lives in a village nearby – Gais. They are simple people, uneducated, but I've had a look and the kitchen is clean – a farm, country life, fresh air: it will be healthier to place it there.

MARY: (*appropriating some corner of the stage to be the Tyrolian village of Gais*) I grew up one of them, the Marchers, good farmers of the Tyrol. After a hard day's work we would gather for Knödl and Speck, sing songs, tell stories. Frau Marcher was Mamme to me; my own mother I had to call "Mamile".

EZRA: (*to Olga*) HE is glad to hear SHE has found a sympathetic and wholesome place to set it.

OLGA: What an ordeal just to make you go and see it! We must do something about the *Leoncina*. SHE doesn't want to lose HER freedom. And besides, SHE'LL soon be 40.

EZRA: Well HE is 40 and more, so it's just as hard on HIM. And tots are so damn idiotic. HE won't tolerate 'em.

OLGA: It's been a year and a half since *anyone* has seen the kid. It will come to feel that it's been abandoned. It's dark infant soul holds a grudge against the female parent. SHE only wants to be sure that her duty to the offspring is not going to lose HIM.

EZRA: 'orr right, 'orr right – HE'll *go*. SHE arrange it and HE will try to accommodate.

*Olga makes noises of exasperation as Ezra goes to Mary, holds her lovingly for a brief moment, then abruptly hands her back to Frau Marcher and returns to his cage.*

EZRA: (*reporting back to Olga*) Coming unexpected in midsummer, the Frau had just laid out 40 loaves for baking. I have now seen it under the WORST circumstances – it got 'ick. But HE observed it was not in the least spotted or flea-bitten. Should have planned to stay longer I s'pose – two hours just gives it just time to get used to one.

OLGA: The *Leoncina* makes Frau Marcher do just what *it* wants – won't do anything someone else suggests. Just like *HIM*.

EZRA: Waal I 'spose *someone* will have to smack it, but Lord knoze oo. The kussink and swearink is, as you say, hereditary.

OLGA: If HE is going up to Gais again in April, SHE hopes HE does not intend to take *anyone else* with him (*staring hard at Dorothy*). SHE considers *that HER* private life and would very much resent *her* intrusion.

DOROTHY: I wouldn't be caught dead.

*Olga arrives in Gais dressed like a fine lady, joining Mary and Frau Marcher*

MARY: I'm told the first thing I ever called Mamile was *Fock*, a dialect which she luckily did not understand.

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): (*explaining*) In Gais, only loose women did not wear full-length skirts.

MARY: And the Fraus have their heavy winter woolen stockings tied behind their grubby knees with a string. (*a young child again, she peeks inquisitively at Olga's attire*)

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): So when you pointed at the lady's legs, I wasn't surprised. And when the lady asked what you said, I toned it down to a question about the nylons.

MARY: At which the lady had me run my hands over them, and I said "Oh well, if you will wear them of glass!" And they all laughed.

OLGA: (*to Ezra*) SHE'S worried. It is growing up to be a simple, unmannered child from the Tyrol.

MARY: (*to Olga, still a child*) You scare me Mamile. I don't think I like you. You are incomprehensible and huge as an ancient God with a grudge. You hold a dark resentment against me as though I were permanently doing you wrong.

OLGA: Nothing for it but to bear the cross.

MARY: But with Babbo I always felt safe. Maybe because you were an inveterate feeder of stray cats. My Gais father I called Tatte, (*to Ezra*) and they told me to call you Tatile. I always imagined you like a huge glowing sun at the end of a white road, but I never dared look at it for too long because I knew that a dark cloud of dust would come and enfold it or it would blind me. You were my real parents but you were both unreal to me.

OLGA: (*to Ezra*) If you loved me, you'd have come seen me at that hospital – even for five minutes in a corridor. No one could believe how you humiliated me when I wanted

a child and how I had to choose between IT and you. You never noticed IT until IT was old enough to please you.

EZRA: (*to Mary*) I told my father of your existence, but not my mother. She would not have understood. I asked, "Should the nature child be brought into civilization?" He advised to go slow; "It would kill her – the plant is too tender to be uprooted". When you were older we brought you every year to the Hidden Nest in Venice.

MARY: I was four, I think, the first time you brought me there, to that house of elegance charged with tension. And right away Mamile said (*they all return to that time*)

OLGA: – you must speak Italian. Call your father "Babbo".

MARY: I didn't understand what you called work. It wasn't tending the barnyard or harvesting the crops.

EZRA: (*explaining to Mary*) I've rented a room where it's quiet enough for me to write. I'll only be gone for the mornings.

*They move back and forth in time, from Venice to the gorilla cage.*

MARY: I would wait impatiently for the sound of your return – the tapping of your Malacca cane, a rattle of keys, then a loud, prolonged *Miao*. From upstairs, another *Miao* would answer back and it was time for us to go shopping.

EZRA: Our first stop was usually the American Bar under the clock at San Marco for a small sandwich and an orangeade. The miser hurts all – money *must* be spent.

MARY: Nowhere else in the world have the sandwiches tasted so good.

EZRA: Then up the *Mercerie* to the small coffeeshop.

MARY: You would select the beans and have them ground, and the smell was heavenly and lingering. And you would buy blocks of dark bitter chocolate and then we would go to the pastry shop for *apfelstrudel*. There was a white-haired man who was your special friend and the conversations were so long! Your friends were everywhere, at the newspaper kiosk and the baker and the fruit shop. I thought we would never get home.

EZRA: Last, we would sometimes stop at the *drogheria* for a packet of mints.

MARY: And then – returning, laden with parcels! From down the street I could hear the sound of Mamile's violin, practicing. Again *Miao*, and the music would stop, and she'd come down, and we would make a light lunch – a salad of plum tomatoes and white beans perhaps, with cheese and artichokes and peaches, and fresh-baked bread.

EZRA: Paradise is not artificial – though broken, apparently.<sup>129</sup>

MARY: Most of the time you discussed matters of importance, much too adult for me – culture, people you knew and their music and sculpture and writing, long tedious conversations I could not follow, that you would interrupt only to tell me –

OLGA: Drink the soup from the spoon; never stick it into your mouth, hold it sideways; always tip the plate away from you.

MARY: How could I satisfy you?

OLGA: But I would read to you.

MARY: Yes, after lunch you would stretch on your big velvet couch and read me stories in English that I couldn't understand.

OLGA: (*disapproving*) Your first language was German. You had not mastered Italian and you couldn't understand English.

MARY: I was hopeless at learning your languages, your music, any of the things you did with the bearing of a Goddess. I was growing into a clumsy peasant girl instead of the graceful bright sprig you imagined. And you seemed so distant, beautiful and mysterious – like a queen.

OLGA: You were hopeless. (*to Ezra*) SHE can't even speak the same language!

MARY: I never felt safe. All of a sudden you might ask me to repeat a word in English or make me retell a story in Italian. My mind just ... stopped – and you were not patient.

OLGA: Hopeless at English and Italian! Obtuse and pigheaded!

EZRA: Words that go out awry, pettishly, will return as turmoil.<sup>130</sup>

MARY: (*stamping her foot*) I want to go home to Gais! (*adult again*) I was homesick. (*to Ezra*) When you came home there would be long whispered conversations in the kitchen about me. You needn't have whispered – I didn't understand the language anyhow. But it needed no words to sense your disappointment and your great capacity for suffering my failures, and your forebodings so dark that you conjured them into reality on the spot.

OLGA: (*briskly*) It is time for our siesta and my practice time; you must stay in your room. (*she picks up her violin and begins to practice softly as Mary speaks*)

MARY: On late afternoons, trapped on the top steps, I heard you practice your violin for hours and an inexplicable sadness would take me. You were both strangers and I would never be able to return home. A wall as thick and impenetrable as the one outside that faced right up against my bedroom window, separating me from my home at Gais.

OLGA: (*dropping the violin from her shoulder in exasperation*) You should have learned the violin. I never got around to teaching you – that gnawed at my heart.

MARY: When I finally got home to Gais, you sent me my own little violin and I bashed it hard on the chicken coop, creating a great fracas among the fluttering hens. It was taken from me.

EZRA: (*kindly, to Mary*) We swam one day at the Lido, and you confided in me –

MARY: I'm needed at home. There's so much work on the farm and in the fields this time of year, and there are littler ones that need looking after.

EZRA: Do want to go *a casa*?

MARY: I wasn't sure which you meant – the Hidden Nest here in Venice? Or home to Gais? so I answered – (*to Ezra*) *Presto!*

EZRA: I knew at once which one you meant. So HE talked to HER when we got home.

MARY: It seemed interminable. Finally you turned to me –

OLGA: (*tartly*) So, you want to go back so soon?

MARY: And the room filled with repulsion and hostility. A solid blackness. (*a girl again, she answers weakly*) *Si.*

OLGA: (*crying*) I started to cry.

MARY: I could see the resentment in your disappointed eyes, like thunderheads overclouding the sun. I did not understand – I'd seen tears before of course, but they had been provoked by real pain: losing a baby, physical suffering, cold and hunger. What were these deeper bruises from phantom feelings?

EZRA: Ah well, I s'pose you'd better go then.

MARY: I had an uncomfortable inkling that I'd been betrayed – why hadn't you smoothed out my blunder and made it all okay? I learned then that to feel safe I would need to keep my feet firmly planted on Gais ground. Even when I was sent off to school, years later, I kept that umbilical cord through long, long letters in which I poured out my heart to Frau Marcher, my real Mamme.

OLGA: (*to Mary*) After all I'd sacrificed!

MARY: (*answering Olga*) In Gais no one ever mentions "sacrifice." People do things naturally, as they're needed. Now it began to seem that parents and teachers were constantly forcing themselves to do things they hated to do, as though the love of God alone could move them to such lengths!

*Olga and Ezra wave "good-bye, good-bye" to the young Mary*

MARY: After you brought me back home and all the cheerful waving goodbye was over, I felt left behind. Not that I wanted to go with you. But it was all out of joint. I did not belong at home in the Tyrol, in Gais anymore; I did not belong anywhere. You dragged me out of my real world, made me wear clothes and assume manners that were of no use to me in my real life. You changed me, yet I think I saw you for less than three weeks all told in 13 years.

### **Scene 7 MEMORY & FORGETTING**

*Ezra sits working in his cage, making his peculiar hum.*

CHORUS: How do memories come to us, in the stream of time? Skittering along axons, sledding down some lengthless Iditarod Trail, mushing through a lonely wilderness whose vastness could only be human. And what if on that trail – made of nothing more than its many connections – the sled overturns? Dogs dashing out of sight, the parka marking out a series of snow-embryos as our intent rolls slowly to a halt at the foot of some slope made important only by the fact that it is here and nowhere else in all eternity that it has been forgotten.<sup>131</sup>

MARY: I remember that hum. Often you were pensive, thinking, and then I would wait and not talk. There was a joyous wild sense of expectation until you broke into a kind of chant that sometimes went on for hours. I could never imitate it – it was like a ventriloquism, some alien power rumbling in your chest in a language not human. Then it would move up into your head and become nasal, almost metallic. It was as if Athena were banging her glistening helmet around inside Zeus's skull, clamoring to be let out. And then would come a hasty scribbling on a piece of paper, a tearing out of newspaper clippings, a frantic annotation in a book – some new truth, a new line, a new melody. You would assault your typewriter with vigor – so hard that you had to keep two of them because one was always in repair.

EZRA:<sup>132</sup> (*musings again, lost in memory*) I remember playing checkers back in the 1890's when I was a boy, with black Jim, on a barrel top at Uncle Ezra's old boardinghouse – the Ritz-Carlton squats on it now ... and Mrs. Chittenden's lofty air – she was a transient resident, the remains of the old South tide-washed to Manhattan ... the outer front stair led to Moquin's ... old George Train, set out on the pavement like a plant in his plain wooden chair ... I remember a fella throwing a knife 50 feet in the air after a fleeing thief, past baskets and bushels of peaches at \$1 the bushel ... and the cool of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Tunnel. Periplum – the seacoast of memory, so much more interesting to follow than the straight road.

CHORUS (WILLIAMS): In old age the mind casts off rebelliously – an eagle from its crag. The angle of a forehead – or far less – makes him remember, when he thought he had forgot – remember confidently only a moment, only for a fleeting moment – with a smile of recognition.<sup>133</sup>

DOROTHY: (*looking up from the manuscript she's been reading*) Of course these last scraps of Cantos from Pisa are yourself, the memories that make up a person. Is one then only a bunch of memories? Remains of contacts with other people? God but it might be reason to be more pleasant to them.

EZRA: (*to Dorothy*) What a brute one is, the way one forgets people. Do write poor old Viola<sup>134</sup> and say that I have survived one month in the death cells, four months solitary, and that you have finally seen me and that I am recovered mentally and physically. (*beat, then faintly*) ...and that my memory is ok.

MARY: (*spoken with a whisper, with such great longing as to belie the claim*) Over the chaos hovers one certainty: that I, the child, was wanted.

NULL-E: Such hope for the past. Converted to a memory.

MARY: (*to Olga*) I remember when I was 14, I moved into Sant'Ambrogio with you for a time, and I heard you play Bach's Chaconne for Babbo just before he left for the United States; that was in 1939.

EZRA: (*interrupting, pontificating from that moment in 1939*) If I can get anyone to listen to me over there, if I can talk some sense into the President, perhaps I can stop him from allowing the country to be run by crooks and Jews.

MARY: (*continuing*) But just then I wasn't thinking about Babbo – how he knew more about Italy than any American officials and had a remedy for the war if anyone would just listen. Someone new stood in front of me – I was seeing you through Babbo's eyes. You were playing for him, going away on a long journey overseas. I saw no shade of darkness, no resentment. Your violet-blue eyes were clear and luminous and for one moment I saw into your world together. But as soon as the music stopped you resumed your empress manner and switched into your strange third-person language.

OLGA: HE take *it* for a walk and show the child the neighborhood.

EZRA: Yes ma'am.

OLGA: (*to Mary*) You go and talk to Babbo.

MARY: (*to Ezra*) Later, we saw you to the boat. (*turning back to Olga*) I remember, late that evening you and I climbed back up that steep hill to Sant'Ambrogio. The trek in the dark had something unfathomable about it, something fluid, almost eerie. You seemed familiar with each stone, but you would flash a torch for me in the spots where sky and sea were hidden and fireflies provided the only specks of light, until we came back out from the enclosing trees into the high dark, suddenly open to the sky, where bright pricks of lights were reflected from the bay and faint light shone down from the stars above.

That image of you clung to me. Alone on the hill path in the middle of the night, climbing with your violin slung over your back, carrying in one hand your music case and your high-heeled shoes, perhaps golden or satin, and holding up your long evening gown with the other, and on your feet a pair of old *espadrilles*. And all you would say, after the endless practice and the walk down and the climb back alone, would be "Gee it's awful when it rains – the violin is so sensitive."

EZRA: (*commenting*) The real artist in the family is your mother.

OLGA: I remember. I did have a pair of old *espadrilles* hidden at the bottom. (*speaking now to Mary directly out of that moment in time*) That's what all the peasant women of the hills do when they have to go to town – you can't walk on these stones in dress shoes. After concerts I sling my violin over my shoulder, you see – I need both hands free to carry my music and the shoes and hold up my gown. Tomorrow we will have tea with friends – they have a delightful garden. Whew. That's the last flight of those stone stairs. Let's sit here under the church – that narrow bench there, in front of the long gray stone house at the top. I always have to sit down here. Gee I'm tired sometimes.

MARY: (*to Ezra*) And I remember another evening we'd gone to see a Ginger Rogers-Fred Astaire movie, and came home late. All the way home you leapt and danced and encouraged me to "get nimble." Mamile laughed and we were very gay.

OLGA: As we started to undress we heard a loud fracas from your room – you had thrown off your coat and jacket to leap and tap dance more freely.

EZRA: (*dancing in his cage*) What a lot of trouble you had to quiet me down!

OLGA: Caro! *I* refrain from practicing for fear of disturbing the neighbors and you bring the house down in the middle of the night!

MARY: (*to Olga*) It was hard for him to stop until he'd danced it all out. Soon after, you took me to Rome. Meeting so many people! – I spun like a top. I think it was then that you recorded your first broadcasts. I remember what you told me:

EZRA: (*speechifying*) A responsible citizen must do everything in his power to prevent his country from entering an unjust war.

MARY: And you spoke of ignorance –

EZRA: The enemy is ignorance.

MARY: Your opinion on any subject became dogma to me.

EZRA: (*suddenly collapsing back into the present*) All of which leads to the death cells.<sup>135</sup>

MARY: Those were hard years, the war years. I remember that you no longer arrived laden with parcels, yet you never came empty-handed. A few roast chestnuts, or, in an old envelope – scraps for the cat. We were your first audience – you read aloud your drafts for the radio.

EZRA: (*his broadcast voice*) Damn it all, if you presented a single-minded objection to violence you could have prevented this war.

MARY: You were in Rome when the regime fell in 1943; I was back living in Gais then. And as resistance collapsed and the Americans came, you walked all the way to Gais to come to me. I remember I had been to Uttenheim on my bicycle – a carefree and lovely September day. Pedaling home, at a distance I saw Mamme.

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): I was standing at the corner on the lookout for you, wrapping my hands in my apron –

MARY: Which you always did when you were upset.

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): *Der Herr! Tatile ist gekommen!* He valked into die Küche and I did not recognize him. Vat new beggar hier ist, I said to myself.

EZRA: (*striding in from his long trek*) *Grüss Gott.*

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): And *ich kennt* his voice: *Der Herr!*

EZRA: Where is Mary?

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): *Auf Uttenheim – (gesturing as she stumbles with English) Sie kommt bald –* back soon. Vash – vash! *Sie sind mit dust bedeckt, wie ein beggar! Sie essen müssen.*<sup>136</sup>

EZRA: *Nein, nein – danke. Ich bin müde.*<sup>137</sup>

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): (*to Mary*) *Er liegt auf dem bett. Schnell, geh zu ihm!*<sup>138</sup>

MARY: I ran to you. (*a long, silent embrace*) Finally I could speak: How did you get here, where from?

EZRA: I took two eggs and walked out of Rome.

MARY: All the way to Gais?

EZRA: It was all confusion. I traded my wide brimmed hat for something narrow that would attract no attention. See this map? (*chuckles*) Only once I got to Verona did it dawn on me that this is a military map, and if they caught me with it they would hang me for a spy. Even the boots I borrowed didn't fit. Blisters. And my ankles are swollen.

MARY: Here is supper. And Mamme and Tatte have come to say good-night

CHORUS (FRAU MARCHER): *Vir sind – (helpless)*

MARY: – utterly perplexed.

EZRA: Sit down. Put out the light. I will tell you how it is. The King has surrendered Italy and deposed Mussolini.

MARY: It was three in the morning by the time you finished. And this was the first time I learned that in Rapallo there was also a wife. And a son in England, my cousin. And of a certainty, Mamile had wanted a son – it would be impossible to win her affection. Falsification of records. Falsification of history.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): (*aside*) If a man has not put himself in order, his family will not act with due order.

MARY: One disloyalty provokes another. Elder's pain is one's curse and one's character and one's doom. (*to Ezra*) But it cannot change my love for you. But why did you continue the deception for so long? But there is no rogue in this play. Only sorrow. Perhaps tragedy turns to farce.

You returned to Rapallo and went on working. And you printed up poster-sized strips that you posted on the walls of Rapallo.

EZRA: (*reading one of his posters*) Honesty is the treasure of states. Live in such a way that your descendants will be grateful.

MARY: When you remember me, remember my gratitude.

EZRA: Has it all passed into memory – all, already? How? Olga, Mary, Dorothy – only memories?

MARY: Do we choose to live on into a future that forgets the ones we love because they too have changed and moved on, so that if we stayed we'd be living in a ruin alone?

EZRA: The ones I love best have to put up with me, scratchy as a touchy old cat.

OLGA: (*to Mary*) Come back to Rapallo with all your things. I don't know where they have taken Babbo. I hear nothing.

MARY: So I packed a trunk and (*to Ezra*) took your seal ring, and hitched south. A supply truck stopped to give me a lift. The drivers were two burly, taciturn men who cursed the war at every pothole. They threw my trunk in the back and said not to worry. On the way we hit a bump and there was a terrible thump and the driver laughed. (*horrified*) They had arranged to drop my trunk off the back to some confederate, and all was lost.

OLGA: But you still have Babbo's ring??

MARY: No.

OLGA: (*weeping*) Wicked girl! I knew you couldn't be trusted. It is a sign – oh it is an ill omen. This is a sign, a bad sign.

MARY: (*to Olga*) I told you then that I would go back home to my foster family in Gais. (*speaking from the moment again*) It would be better for me to become a good farmer.

OLGA: (*hurt and angry*) On the flyleaf of the journal you left behind you wrote the lines that Shylock's daughter left him when she eloped: "Farewell and if my fortune be not crost, I have a mother, you a daughter, lost".<sup>139</sup> It was the *only* thing you left me before returning to Gais.

EZRA: (*to Mary*) You know, it is your mother who has saved me from stupidities – she is blessed with a greater sense of reality than I. She has made me see that I should not babble and joke about being the American Lord Haw-Haw.

NULL-E: Your babbling is what got you here.

EZRA: More corrosive than bile – to feel truth break from the tongue and know that speaking it may create enemies of those closest to the heart.

NULL: Perhaps you should consider your truth less and your friends more.

EZRA:<sup>140</sup> It *breaks* from tongue and lip, it *will* be spoken – it is truth. (*lightly raving*) But nothing is irreparable – except death. Will they shoot Quisling? No, no, they've shot him. "The evil men do lives after them" – Shakespeare – *Julius Caesar*. Fordie, Bill Yeats, Joyce and the rest – all of them gone before the world was o'ergiven to war a second time.

MARY: What shall live after you in my heart will be your memory.

EZRA: When you are very old my girl, remember that I have remembered, and pass on the tradition. Out of my solitude let them come. Men have – I don't know what strange fear of beauty. So very difficult, Yeats said, beauty. Symons wrote "I am the flame and what is it to me if the moth die of me?"

(*beat*) How soft the wind is under Taishan where the sea is remembered out of hell, out of the dust and glare – east wind, west wind; wind is of the process. A wind mad as Cassandra, whose eyes were like tigers with no word written in them.

NULL-E: You and I on a raft washing up on ill shores – is there no end to the journey?

**ACT 4: PULL DOWN THY VANITY****Scene 1 STONES IN MY PASSWAY**

MUSIC – SOFTLY IN BACKGROUND “STONES IN MY PASSWAY” BY ROBERT JOHNSON

*LYRICS* | got stones in my passway, and my road seem dark as night  
 | got stones in my passway, and my road seem dark as night  
 | have pains in my heart, they have taken my appetite  
 | have a bird to whistle, and | have a bird to sing  
 | have a bird to whistle, and | have a bird to sing  
 | got a woman that |'m lovin', but she don't mean a thing  
 My enemies have betrayed me, have overtaken poor Ez at last  
 My enemies have betrayed me, have overtaken poor Ez at last  
 And there's one thing certainly, they have put stones all in my pass  
 Now you tryin' to take my life, and all my lovin' too  
 You laid a passway for me, now what are you trying to do?  
 |'m confused. Please let us be friends  
 And when you hear me howlin' in my passway, rider, please open your door and let me in  
 | got three lanes to truck home, please don't block my road  
 | got three lanes to truck home, please don't block my road  
 |'ve been feelin' ashamed 'bout my rider, babe, |'m booked and | got to go

*Ezra alone in his cage with his memories again.*

EZRA: There is a fatigue deeper than the grave. In limbo there are no victors. Between decks of a slaver nothing matters but the quality of affection that has carved its trace in the mind.<sup>141</sup>

NULL-E: *Dove sta memoria.* Where memory stands.

OLGA: What are you remembering?

EZRA: Your eyes, like the clouds over Taishan when some of the rain has fallen and half remains yet to fall.

OLGA: The day we first met you told me that they were violet or periwinkle blue.

EZRA: You wore your red silk jacket embroidered with dragons. We talked of my work on the Chinese.

OLGA: You wore your brown velvet jacket, with your beret and a flowing tie.

EZRA:<sup>142</sup> Clouds gather and the rain falls. The eight ply of the heavens fold into one darkness and the wide flat road stretches out. We may see those old roads again, but nothing appears less likely. Those days are gone forever. We have walked our path,

sealed in our nature, and that is the process of heaven. The rain falls, the wind comes down out of the mountain. Will the world ever take up its course again?

OLGA: What road my love, how far ahead? Don't walk so fast, I never could keep up with your long legs.

NULL-E: Loss is of the process.<sup>143</sup> You read it once in a poet you did not praise, and only now it comes home: a panther paces a narrow cage, an impulse leaps to its eye and is extinguished to nothing.<sup>144</sup>

CHORUS:

Orpheus turns to look back.

No hero.

A wanderer –

Who committed many errors.

Odysseus sails past sirens bound to the mast.

The beauty of their song does not redeem n-

But burns.

Dionysus is crucified –

Dismembered –

And resurrected.

## **Scene 2 AND OUT OF NOTHING, A BREATHING**

EZRA: (*reading Time Magazine*) Laval shot, though he defended himself eloquently. Vidkun Quisling, executed. Lord Haw-Haw hanged. If I go down, who will carry on? (*beat*)

NULL-E: The twice crucified: where in history will you find him?<sup>145</sup>

EZRA: I wouldn't mind going were it not that the illuminated moment is only now coming clear to me. Such ordinary moments that I scarcely thought of them till now. Memories hang like bunches of grapes; memory itself a liquid sunshine, a light mist lit from behind by slanting sun – drops so fine they can barely be felt but so heavy that they pull down the ripe clusters to hang before my eye.

*Ezra's cage becomes a boat. He raves.*<sup>146</sup>

EZRA: We took on a cargo of wine; the ship landed in Scios, the men wanting spring water. By the rock pool – a boy slept, loggy with vine-must.

CHORUS (BOY/DIONYSUS): (*waking to see sailors around him*) Take me to Naxos?

CHORUS (SAILOR): Naxos? Yes lad, we'll take you. Cum `long, hop aboard.

EZRA: When they brought the boy aboard, I said "He has a god in him, though I do not know which one" – and they kicked me into the forestays. I have seen what I have seen.

*The boy runs to the tiller and is knocked to the deck.*

CHORUS (BOY/DIONYSUS): Naxos is not that way!

CHORUS (SAILOR): Aye, Naxos, that way.

EZRA: I told `em, "This is a straight ship." And an ex-con out of Italy knocked me into the forestays – the whole twenty against me, mad for a little slave money. So they took her out of Scios and off course. The boy came to again and looked out over the bows, eastward, back toward the Naxos passage.

NULL-E: (*standing by Ezra, as if leaning over the rail together*) God-sleight then, god-sleight: ship stock fast in sea-swirl, ivy upon the oars, grapes with no seed but sea-foam, ivy in the scupper-hole.

EZRA: I stood there and the god by me, water cutting under the keel, sea-break from stern forrards, wake running off the bow.

NULL-E: And where there had been gunn'l now was vine-trunk, and tethril where cordage had been, grape-leaves on the oarlocks, heavy vine on the oar shafts.

EZRA: And out of nothing, a breathing, hot breath on my ankles, beasts like shadows in glass, a furred tail upon nothingness.

CHORUS:

Lynx-purr –

Heathery smell of beasts –

Where tar-smell had been –

Sniff and foot-pad of beasts –

Eye-glitter out of black air –

The sky overshot, dry –

With no tempest.

EZRA: Fur brushing knee-skin, rustle of airy sheaths, dry forms in the ether.

CHORUS:

And the ship like a keel in the ship-yard –  
Slung like an ox in a smith's sling –  
Ribs stuck fast in the stays –  
Grape-cluster over pin-rack.

EZRA: I said "the boy has a god in him" and they knocked me into the middle of next week.

CHORUS:

Men panicked overboard –  
Grape vine wound limbs –  
Arms shrunk into fins –  
Fish-scales over groin muscles –  
Medon's face like a dory –  
Not a man of them left.

EZRA: Lifeless air become sinewed, feline leisure of panthers, leopards sniffing the grape shoots by scupper-hole, crouched panthers by fore-hatch, and the sea blue-deep about us, green-ruddy in shadows. And the dying, rising God standing there, leaning over the siderail with me, looking toward Naxos, as if we two were on some pleasure cruise, taking the air and talking.

CHORUS (DIONYSUS): (*to Ezra*) Remember this; do not presume. From now on, no trading in slaves. From today, no war profiteering. From this moment, no sloganeering that sends peasants and tradesmen to the front, who don't know why they die. Henceforth, no trade in usury that steals sustenance from life.

Starting now, my alters. Misuse this – misuse poetry, misuse light. Fear no bondage, no cat of the wood, be safe with my lynxes. Feed them grape-must but know what intoxication is, and what it is to be used for. Olibanum is my incense, the vines grow in my homage. Bind fast your tongue to respect human love.

EZRA: And the vines burst from my fingers. Bees weighted with pollen moved heavily in the vine-shoots. Heavy in the air: chirr – chirr – chir-rikk – a purring sound, and the birds sleepily in the branches sang out welcome to Zagreus. I have seen what I have seen. What it is to die and riseThe Gods have not returned – they never left us.<sup>147</sup>

NULL-E: And when the men came to, they threw us off the ship – marooned us on a small island, as they thought.

### **Scene 3 CALYPSO'S ISLAND**

*Ezra crosses through the dark and comes forward to sit on a rock, looking out to sea, his sharp hawk face fierce and piercing. Olga appears, arranges a blanket over his shoulders and fades silently from stage as Dorothy appears as the Goddess Calypso, to stand silently behind him.*

EZRA: Ear, ear for the sea surge. Murmur of old men's voices.<sup>148</sup>

YEATS: For seven years Odysseus, marooned on Calypso's island, looked homeward and watched the dazzle of sunlight on sea waves.

HEMINGWAY: Odysseus, wanting nothing more than to be cast to sea on a raft.

WILLIAMS: It would be crossing a desert, for all that water.

EZRA:<sup>149</sup> Mind half-eaten by worry like shorebirds by little crabs, patience never nearer exhausted, fears flying out into the future like small birds that migrate by wing over vast seas and drop to the deck from exhaustion.

ELIOT: The mind like a wounded animal shoves through the bush, fainting from loss of blood.

YEATS: A little shadow runs across the barren land where something lifts its head – some huge beast lying exhausted on its side in the sand.

EZRA:<sup>150</sup> (*thumbing toward Dorothy/Calypso*) I saw her coming from her house of smooth stone. I knew not which goddess; she was like that. The light blazed behind her, nor was this the sunset. One struggles to keep thought from damming the flow of light. Her body, surrounded by the soul's aura. Her eyes – violet, sea green, cerulean blue, there is no name, no dullness. Circe's were not, having fire behind them. A match flares in the eyes' hearth, then darkness.

CALYPSO (DOROTHY): My stricken friend, there is no need to go on like this. No need to prolong your miseries or waste any more of your life on this island.

EZRA: Let me go. The life I feared to lose has already become a smoke that has risen, dissolved into transparency and blown away.

CALYPSO (DOROTHY): You have no inkling of the sorrow you are bound to endure before you reach your home.

EZRA:<sup>151</sup> What if the Gods wreck me on the wine-dark sea? Let new disaster come. It makes only one more. I am No Man.

CHORUS:<sup>152</sup> A man on whom the sun has gone down. A man of no fortune and a name to come.

*Calypso hands him fragrant clothing, which Ezra inhales deeply, and two wineskins. She gestures to call a warm and gentle breeze and then turning, leaves without a further glance.*

EZRA: Shall I return safely across the heaving seas? If I dig a trench, pour blood, keep off the impetuous dead, I may hear Tiresias.<sup>153</sup>

CHORUS (TIRESIAS): (*nasally rasps out his short, sharp prophesy, turns dismissively, and abruptly leaves*) ... shall return through spiteful Neptune, lose all companions ...<sup>154</sup>

NULL-E: "First go the road to Hell ..."<sup>155</sup>

EZRA: Set sail from the death cells, in sight of Mt. Taishan at Pisa.

#### **Scene 4 CAST TO SEA ON A RAFT**

*Ezra returns in the dark to lie on the floor of his cell. The bars of his cage lift away or explode outward, leaving Ezra exposed on the floor of his cell, now a raft pitching and tossing on wild seas that wash over him. He clings for dear life to its sides all through the storm; at last the clouds part and he floats in moonless starlight.*

EZRA: Raft-tossed on seas of memory. Storm of remorse, agony of remembering. What has been and not been, done and not done. And the loss of memory, the loss of self if memory go, the loss of continuity and identity. White seas reach out white arms. I could not follow Dante into Paradise. He called to those trailing behind –

CHORUS (DANTE): You there, in your little bark astern, following my singing ship – do not commit yourself to these open waters, for if you lost me you would remain beyond recall. The water I take was never coursed before.<sup>156</sup>

EZRA:<sup>157</sup> I lost his wake, and am cast up in time's wreckage. Hast'ou swum in a sea of air ... through an aeon of nothingness? The end of limits is the loss of meaning. Only the discipline of memory returns to shore. From time's wreckage shored, these fragments shored against ruin.

NULL-E: Confusion. The essential struggle turned out not to be the one you thought you lost, the fight against economic and social corruption, but the one you fight yet, between belligerence and benevolence. The well-governed state is founded first on that, and only then the other.

EZRA: The raft broke, the waters went over me... Tears flood me – late, very late have I known.<sup>158</sup> Sanity itself can sink in these deeps – the bright things of conscious and conscience sink out of sight like luminous jewels, self-lit, disappearing into black deep,

slowly fading from brilliance to become obscure dim lanterns that at last wink out altogether.

NULL-E: The soul, imprisoned in a cage of its own making. Psyche, a butterfly of ineffable beauty, capable of knowing a light beyond all translation, is not caged. You delicately let her flutter in your Cantos. These things – a raft to which the drowning man clings, tossing until – breaking through to mysterious seas of origin – he is awed, silenced, and healed.

*Pitching and tossing on his raft, he comes to a moment of calm*

EZRA:<sup>159</sup> Moment of calm, tempest abates – the ants seem to wobble as the morning sun catches their shadows. Shadows enter my tent, men pass between me and the sunrise – beyond the eastern barbed wire wall there pass by the dozen those who would show no weight on a scale ... men already hung, queuing at sunrise for sick call. White, *grazie*; Edwards, *molte grazie*.

NULL-E: Dorothy's shadow like a porcelain doll falling off your shelf. Olga's shadow, arms raised toward you – arms the might of love might have wielded. Mary a shadow, head down, as if she were no more than a cowbird's egg shoved into a foster parents' nest. The lot of you, selfish with each other, selfish toward your children. Go down to self-centered oblivion, your children cast off like toys, played with when convenient, otherwise ignored and neglected. Go on down, greet self-oblivion with never a glance toward the women you forced to live together until they came to loath one another.

EZRA: No, no. Whirl all their griefs and laments into one deluge – they would not out-shriek my own heart's call. Whirl my light raft, tear oar from hand, break mast and yardarm, draw me down. Boreas, toss this raft to splinters and blow me to thistle-down. Torn to rags, tossed on a grayblue sea that stretches beyond all horizon, hanging to unraveling ropes made from the threads of work done long ago – nothing but a drowning seafarer.

CHORUS:<sup>160</sup> May I for own self song's truth reckon  
 Journey's jargon, how I in harsh days  
 Hardship endured oft  
 Bitter breast-cares abided,  
 Known on my keel many care's hold,  
 And dire sea-surge, and there oft spent  
 Narrow nightwatch nigh the ship's head  
 While she tossed close to cliffs. Coldly afflicted,  
 My feet by frost benumbed.  
 Chill its chains; chafing sighs  
 Hew my heart round and hunger begot  
 Mere-weary mood. Lest man know not  
 That he on dry land loveliest liveth,  
 List how I care-wretched, on ice-cold sea,

Weathered the winter, wretched outcast  
Deprived of my kinsman;  
Hung with hard ice-flakes, where hail-scur flew,  
There I heard naught save harsh sea  
And ice-cold wave, at whiles the swan cries  
Did for my games the gannet's clamour,  
Sea-fowls' loudness was for me laughter,  
The mews' singing all my mead.  
Storms, on the stone-cliffs beaten, fell on the stern  
In icy feathers; full oft the eagle screamed  
With spray on his pinion...

*Staggering to the raft's mast, one of the corner posts of his cage, Ezra looks up into the blinding driven rain.*

EZRA:<sup>161</sup> Gray storm over grayer water. The sail's torn. Hold the ragged pieces together – they flap in winds that rise out of me, rising through the tear. The torn soul flaps like a sail, the edges flutter in gusts, sobbing sea-rage. Hold the rent pieces together. From the depths gusts rise, great heaving winds that never die down, tearing the tent of life, opening the rip to a great flapping tear like a tongue that repeats and repeats, what have I done? What have I done? What have I done?

*He pitches from the raft into the sea, swimming hard*

NULL-E: Swim the black sea of poison hoarded all your life, spewing bellicose bigotry, willing to ignore a holocaust, apologist for a tyrant, vituperative to your own nation, paranoiac flailing through webs of non-existent conspiracy, damned fool abusing all others for being fools, benighted poet singing of a light that lit no step of your way in the only world wherein you actually walk.

EZRA: The loud seabirds' mews drown my cries – is there not some rock on which I can haul out and shiver myself to death? On a black starless night, come to myself to find the heart black like a sponge marinating in a glass dish of printer's ink, the ink a poison, the heart oozing black and blue.<sup>162</sup>

NULL-E: Abandon the raft; swim to safety.

*He drags himself out on a stone where he sits shivering*

EZRA:<sup>163</sup> Broken pieces of raft sank, fragments of myself, though some were buoyant. She came to me then, transformed into a white bird, Olga, I knew not which goddess but she had that look. She took pity on me and threw me the end of her scarf before she plunged again in the surging deep like a sea-mew, the waves hid her, the dark mass of a great wave.

NULL-E: Heaved onto the rocks, to sit shivering alone on a ledge above a faintly wailing sea while the poisoned heart soaks in its inky well of misery.<sup>164</sup>

**Scene 5 BREAKDOWN AND PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION**

*Dark comes on, then intense spotlights flood the cage. Pound rolls up in his blankets on the cement floor of the gorilla cage, pulling them over his head to avoid the glare.*

EZRA: alone by day, alone day by day, alone by day by day, alone alone<sup>165</sup>

*He is surrounded by friends helpless to help.*

CHORUS (HEMINGWAY, WILLIAMS, YEATS, ELIOT):

Fate is what life brings us,  
strained through the muslin of small acts –  
the residue of what we thought to make of our life.  
It happened while we were busy with other plans.  
It is what, inborn, overcomes itself,  
to help us become the one who had the fate.<sup>166</sup>

WILLIAMS: Your Cantos present a frighteningly candid picture of a mind scarcely able to fit anything together –

HEMINGWAY: Unable to distinguish significant from trivial –

YEATS: Or convey your own inner workings to the world.

ELIOT: A broken bundle of mirrors.

HEMINGWAY: He thinks he's being terribly profound – frowningly serious.

WILLIAMS: And all he's doing is building blocks –

ELIOT: And it's lovely.

EZRA: (*anguished*) A man of no fortune and a name to come.<sup>167</sup>

DOROTHY: O Mao!

OLGA: You are losing control over what most matters to you –

MARY: Your own words.

CHORUS (STEELE): (*directing two black inmates*) Get him out of there and over to the infirmary. I want him evaluated.

*Ezra is hustled off; two psychiatrists enter, bringing their notepads*

CHORUS (PSYCHIATRISTS):

*(dryly, reporting back)*

Patient claims to have difficulty concentrating.

States that he has been confined in a small space –  
and has become afraid of the lock on his cell door.

Worries he will forget some message that he wishes to tell someone.

EZRA:<sup>168</sup> When the mind swings by a grass-blade an ant's forefoot shall save you. The larks squawky over the death cells.

CHORUS OF PSYCHIATRISTS:

He complains of temporary confusion –

Anxiety –

Feelings of frustration –

And excessive fatigue.

EZRA:<sup>169</sup> Beyond the stockade is chaos and nothingness. In the caged panther's eyes: nothing. The Eternal City reduced to jungle. A lone ant from a broken anthill, the wreckage of Europe. Nothing you can do. Green pool under jungle green, the green eyes of a black prisoner: nothing you can do. Blacks that die in captivity; their eyes tell all. Night green, the pupils of their eyes, green as grape flesh and sea wave, luminous and translucent. Nor can he who has passed a month in the death cells believe in capital punishment. No man who has passed a month in the death cells believes in cages for beasts.

*Psychiatrists confer among themselves*

CHORUS OF PSYCHIATRISTS:

His speech wanders –

But though he is verbose and repetitive –

On the whole coherent.

He defends his broadcasts.

But there is no evidence of hallucinations or delusions

... unless *that is?*

EZRA: (*suddenly starting up*) In view of the situation in China and Japan, it seems to me that the bottling of my knowledge now amounts to suppression of military information.

CHORUS OF PSYCHIATRISTS:

He is emotional –

But not depressed.

He is certainly passionate –

Excitable –

But his intellectual powers are superior.

He has developed a transitory anxiety –

But that is to be expected –

Under close confinement –

And should clear up if his conditions are improved.

He shows no evidence of psychosis or neurosis.

Due to the patient's age –

And loss of personality resistance –

Prolonged exposure in the present environment –

May precipitate a full mental breakdown.

Premonitory symptoms are discernible.

Early transfer to the United States –

Or to an institution in this theater –

For care is recommended.

EZRA: (*interspersed among the psychiatrists findings and recommendations, in a mumbling hysteria of terror*) ... lesion on my mind ... bust a mainspring ... (*reciting from Villon*) remember that I have remembered ... pass on the tradition ... Ben, Ben ... fire collapsed the building...

**Scene 6 PULL DOWN THY VANITY**

*Ezra's new tent is pyramidal and has a smokehole at the top through which Pound, lying on his back, watches the ascent of butterflies and the procession of the constellations.*

HEMINGWAY: So they moved you out of the cell and gave you a new and larger tent.

WILLIAMS: That seemed to be just the ticket.

YEATS:<sup>170</sup> You could lie on your back and watch the ascent of butterflies and the procession of the constellations.

EZRA: (*musings on the landscape*) There was a smell of mint under the tent flaps, especially after rain, and a white ox on the road toward Pisa, as if facing the tower...<sup>171</sup>

ELIOT: (*bantering*) Williams would have put in a cart, too – to go with the ox.<sup>172</sup>

WILLIAMS: (*from New Jersey*) Were I not to write you, you would probably never know that the daffodils and forsythia are out – although it began to snow at about ten o'clock this morning and has continued to snow heavily all day. Curious to see the yellow standing out against the white snow.<sup>173</sup>

EZRA:<sup>174</sup> Dark sheep like little slaps of paint in the drill field on wet days. Clouds in the mountains roll down under the guard roosts. A lizard upheld me, wild birds would not eat the white bread, from Mt. Taishan to the sunset the air was as fresh as a door opened in spring, made open for Kuanon to come, the goddess of mercy, the clement, compassionate one. Old friends taught me – the basic virtue is compassion. And that truth lies in kindness.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS):<sup>175</sup> Right action gains the people and gives one the state. Lose the people, lose the state. Woe to them that conquer with armies and whose only right is their power.

EZRA: If only I could've swung the state from kike to Kung! To place dictatorship in your hands! Your wisdom would've been benevolent.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): No – this is not right thinking. Stand at the point of the unwobbling pivot and you will be unmoved by this rancor you suffer. From there benevolence flows. Quite humble or simple people can do this. No dictator needed.

EZRA: (*to Confucius*) I do not know that I would have gotten to the center of your meaning if I had not been down under the collapse of the regime. Too late to advise Benito.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): The archer, when he misses the bulls-eye, seeks the cause in himself. In cutting an axe handle, the model is not far off.<sup>176</sup>

EZRA: I couldn't see that I was the handle being cut, not the model. I had pity for others, but not enough.<sup>177</sup>

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): To study with the white wings of time passing, is this not our delight? Not caring that we are untrumpeted? To have friends come from far countries?<sup>178</sup>

EZRA:<sup>179</sup> Trumpery paves a road to suffering. Paradise is not artificial, but hell can be artificed. Where memory lives, there stand both – here in my cell, making the light shimmer between me and the olive. Past it I see the coast road like an old woman who shuffles the long way toward Pisa ... One day they will remember ol' Ez, a wanderer like Odysseus. A lone ant, refugee from a ravaged ant-hill, trembling over the wreckage of Europe. Olga ... Mary ... Dorothy.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): And so we remember that our affections lie at the root of the process.<sup>180</sup>

NULL-E: See the white bones of the sage, washed in the river – they glisten in the sun. The olive-gray leaves blow white.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): What white will you add to this whiteness? What candor?<sup>181</sup>

EZRA:<sup>182</sup> More and more becomes diaphanous. The morning sun lifts the mist from the young willows. Taishan has no base but the brightness in which everything rests. Poplar tips float in brightness. Only the stockade posts stand. The ants seem to stagger as the dawn sun traps their shadows. Breath wholly covers the mountains, it shines and divides, it nourishes, it does no injury. It fills the fields to heaven. It joins the process. Without it, there is only vanity, inanity.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): The small man takes risks, walking on the edge of the precipice, trying to fool his own luck and outwit hazard. The true man remains calm and awaits destiny.<sup>183</sup>

EZRA:<sup>184</sup> The light here is not of the sun – light pervades the universe. This light is liquid delight – threads of light to me descending. In its crystal jet – the bright ball that the fountain tosses. All things that are, are light. Where love is, is the eye. Tensile light unmixed; there is no end to its action. God's eye art 'ou, God's eye, do not surrender perception.

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): What you can depart from is not the way.

EZRA:<sup>185</sup> How soft the wind under Taishan where the sea is remembered out of hell, the pit out of the dust and glare evil – the east and west winds. This liquid is certainly a property of the mind, not an accident but an element in the mind's makeup. Dust to a fountain pan otherwise. Have you seen? The rose in the steel dust? Or swan's down ever? So light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron – to we who have passed over Lethe.

CHORUS (BEN JONSON): Have you felt the wool of the beaver? Or swan's down ever? Or smelt of the bud of the briar? Or the nard in the fire?

CHORUS (CONFUCIUS): What is the way?

EZRA:<sup>186</sup> What thou lov'st well remains, the rest is dross. What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee. What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage.<sup>187</sup>

The ant's a centaur in his dragon world. Pull down thy vanity, it is not man made courage, or order, or grace. Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.

Learn of the green world what can be thy place. In scaled invention or true artistry, pull down thy vanity. The green casque has outdone your elegance.

Master thyself, then others shall bear thee. Pull down thy vanity. You are a beaten dog beneath the hail, a swollen magpie in a fitful sun, half black half white. Nor do you know wing from tail. Pull down thy vanity. How mean your hates, fostered in falsity. Pull down thy vanity. Wrath to destroy, niggard in charity, pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.

But to have done instead of not doing, this is not vanity. To have gathered from the air a live tradition or from a fine old eye the unconquered flame, this is not vanity. Here error is all in the not done, in the diffidence that faltered.<sup>188</sup>

### **Scene 7 EXTRADITION**

*Pound's cage is now a room in the dispensary, he sits typing, commenting and reading aloud what he types. A trainee leans over his shoulder dictating a letter to his girlfriend. As evening falls, taps are sounded. An officer enters and sits at the desk next to Pound.*

CHORUS (SNAG): Write, "you are the light of my life" (*Ezra rolls his eyes, but types*)

EZRA: How about this? "All things that are, are light, and you are that." (*enthusiastic nods from Washington; Ezra pulls out the letter and giving it to the trainee*): Ok, that's it now. I've got to write to Dorothy. (*Washington thanks Ezra and exits.*)

(*musings*) I heard it in the shithouse – a suitable place to hear that the war was over.<sup>189</sup> (*he picks up a book and begins to read, commenting from time to time to the desk officer*)

CHORUS (J. EDGAR HOOVER): (*downstage, reading a memo he has written*) It is anticipated that Pound will be brought back to this country within the next few weeks to stand trial. Special Agent Amprim has acquired a large volume of material he has written in Italian. Please arrange have the enclosed translated: *Testimento di Confucio*. It is expected to be essential evidence at trial.

WILLIAMS: The *Testament of Confucius* essential at trial?

HEMINGWAY: Ezra would have agreed with him there.

*The dispensary door opens suddenly and two lieutenants enter.*

EZRA: (*starts up*) Am I going...?

CHORUS (LIEUTENANT): (*addressing Ezra*) You'll fly to Washington tonight. You have one hour to gather your personal effects. (*They turn and leave abruptly*)

*Ezra hands the book to the desk officer, thanking him for his kindness. He walks to the door of the room, turns with a half-smile, and again puts both hands around his neck to form a noose and jerks up his chin, then exits.*

HEMINGWAY, WILLIAMS, ELIOT, YEATS:

Shall we condemn him?

As what? – the epitome of a long American tradition of politics as blind and bull-headed as he was? – all trumpery, conceit, prejudice, and denial?

A blustering buffoon trumpeting his idiocy for all to see? When won't we see that again?

Is all redeemed in the service, as he saw it, of the people, justice, and wise government for the prosperity of all?

In the fearless, unfaltering opposition to war and the horrors it visits?

In the unsparing confrontation of those who grow rich on war and the accumulated poverty of the many?

Here was the fearless plunge toward the heart of the matter – heedless of consistency or consequences.

There was perhaps too much urge to simplify and instruct –

But there was real concern for the welfare of the people and an exasperation with the stupidity of their economics and their politics.

There was perhaps too much flair for dramatic hyperbole and a desire to shock –

Too much of a fancy for the blatant enigma –

But these are extremes that war provokes.

When we consider the tar baby that he himself exuberantly fashioned of naïve bombast and idiosyncratic ideology –

Why should a soul capable of such beauty have taken such pains to arrange its own suffering?

Was his treason to a Nation-State? Or to the human soul?  
Or to himself?  
Of that we can judge only when we know what he loved –  
And to judge that we must know what we love.

## Sources & Annotations

*This play draws on Pound's poetry, prose, broadcasts, and letters to capture his speech in his own words as much as possible. Throughout the play the Pisan Cantos and other Cantos are mined or adapted for incidents and dialogue, together with his translations and a host of academic, biographical and classical sources. A variety of period news sources and archival documents are employed to elucidate Pound's economics and construct the story of Pound's capture and extradition.*

*There was once a closely annotated copy of the play, although that was many versions ago and would require some work to reconnect the dots. However a preponderance of citations interrupts the flow of the play, so citations have been retained only where sources are directly quoted or explanation is needed, and a list of principal sources is given below.*

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- \_\_\_\_\_. **B** *The American Ezra Pound*. Yale University Press (1989)
- \_\_\_\_\_. **C** "Confucius Against Confusion: Ezra Pound and the Catholic Chaplin at Pisa" pp. 143-162 *in Ezra Pound and China*. Zhaomin Qian ed. University of Michigan Press (2003)
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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> A French sculptor living in England, killed in WWI
- <sup>2</sup> Special agent assigned to Pound's case by the FBI
- <sup>3</sup> Stockade Commander, U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Center in Pisa
- <sup>4</sup> Names are from Pounds Pisan Cantos. Stenciled in white on the backs of their green uniforms, like football jerseys. Four of these become the Black Laborers of Act 1, Scene 7
- <sup>5</sup> Later Pound's Attorney in America
- <sup>6</sup> American Reporter, first to interview Pound in Geneva after his arrest
- <sup>7</sup> Surrogate mother to Mary, in Gais (Olga placed Mary in her care as an infant)
- <sup>8</sup> Seminal social credit theorist
- <sup>9</sup> Philosopher and social credit theorist who held Pound's wilder extremes in check while he lived (see Flory B)
- <sup>10</sup> Widow of Ernest Fenollosa, who gave his oriental manuscripts to Pound to edit
- <sup>11</sup> Neighbor at Sant' Ambrogio
- <sup>12</sup> Confucius is called "Kung" by Pound – see Canto 13:7
- <sup>13</sup> In ancient Greece, the nekylia (ἡ νέκυια) was the rite by which ghosts were called up and questioned about the future.
- <sup>14</sup> See Jung: "The night sea journey is a kind of *descensus ad inferos* – a descent into Hades and a journey to the land of ghosts somewhere beyond this world, beyond consciousness, hence an immersion in the unconscious. ["The Psychology of the Transference," CW 16, par. 455.] A transformative journey through the underworld of oneself.
- <sup>15</sup> See for example, John Weir Perry *The Roots of Renewal in Myth and Madness*
- <sup>16</sup> Keats' *Letters*, Vol. 1, ed. Hyder E. Rollings, December 1817 letter to brothers George and Tom Keats.
- <sup>17</sup> See John C. Meagher's discussion of Shakespeare's stage in *Pursuing Shakespeare's Dramaturgy*, pp. 102-110.
- <sup>18</sup> see Canto 74:146
- <sup>19</sup> Canto 74:11
- <sup>20</sup> from Notes for CXVII et seq.
- <sup>21</sup> from Notes for CXVII et seq.
- <sup>22</sup> See *The Great Digest* 1, p. 27. *Unwobbling Pivot* 1.3, p. 101. Both trans. by Ezra Pound; referenced throughout the Cantos, e.g., 74:13
- <sup>23</sup> from *The Great Digest*, IX.3, p. 59
- <sup>24</sup> Riffing off Pound, "Ancient Music" in *Lustra* (1916) – itself a parody of an ancient British song, "Summer is Icumen In"
- <sup>25</sup> Canto 74:19
- <sup>26</sup> See T.S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets*, Little Gidding V
- <sup>27</sup> a frequent refrain of the Cantos, see Canto 74:11-25 and 61-63 (the first of the Pisan Cantos). Originally from *The Odyssey*, Book IX (see Penguin edition, 1946, trans. E. Vieu, p. 149)
- <sup>28</sup> **Kung is Confucius**
- <sup>29</sup> Amalgam from broadcasts of 29 January 1942, 19 February 1942, and 9 April 1942 (see Doob), and Carpenter p. 568.
- <sup>30</sup> from Canto 74:64-74
- <sup>31</sup> Wilhelm, *Ezra Pound: The Tragic Years*. p. 11
- <sup>32</sup> Much of the portion of this scene dealing with the visit to hell or visions of hell is adapted at length from Canto 14.
- <sup>33</sup> see Wilfred Owen "Dulce et Decorum est Pro Patria Mora"
- <sup>34</sup> Canto 79:136
- <sup>35</sup> Canto 78:225
- <sup>36</sup> *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*. NY [New Directions] 1970:47
- <sup>37</sup> See Kenner, p. 249
- <sup>38</sup> from Pound's *Mauberly*, (see Kenner p. 259)
- <sup>39</sup> Canto 16/69
- <sup>40</sup> from Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 4.2.46-47
- <sup>41</sup> Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Inferno*, Canto 5:28
- <sup>42</sup> Canto 14:2-11
- <sup>43</sup> from Canto 14:13-20; Canto 15:14
- <sup>44</sup> from Canto 14:21-27
- <sup>45</sup> *The Great Digest* 5, p. 33
- <sup>46</sup> Canto 14:30-38
- <sup>47</sup> Canto 14:45-78
- <sup>48</sup> Slightly adapted from *Cathay*, "The Bowman of Shu" (quoted at length)
- <sup>49</sup> *Cathay*, from the notes of Fenollosa, used as an epigraph to "Four Poems of Departure".

- <sup>50</sup> Canto 51:6
- <sup>51</sup> Adapted from Canto 48/240
- <sup>52</sup> from Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 3:82-84
- <sup>53</sup> See Canto 16/68
- <sup>54</sup> from Canto 15:66-67
- <sup>55</sup> the escape from Hell is described in Canto 15:65-106, rearranged and adapted in the following lines
- <sup>56</sup> Coleridge, Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner
- <sup>57</sup> Rilke, "Affectionate Taxes to France, 1: The Sleeper" in *The Astonishment of Origins*, trans. A. Poulin Jr.
- <sup>58</sup> from Keats, "To Sleep"
- <sup>59</sup> See Canto 13
- <sup>60</sup> Translation: Come with us, traitor
- <sup>61</sup> This is the correct spelling
- <sup>62</sup> This scene draws at length on the Legend of Wagadu, see Leo Frobenius and Douglas Fox, *African Genesis: Folk Tales and Myths of Africa* (also Terrell, p. 370). It draws and sometimes adapts Pound's observations and images from Cantos 74:92-94, 98, 103, 146-149, 171-178, 197-222, 315-324, 336, 393-99, 400-402, 409, 449-452; Canto 77:149-170, 164, 224; Canto 79:19-23, 31-36,
- <sup>63</sup> modified from Canto 6:60, referring to one of Pound's "luminous details from history", the act by Cunizza da Romano in freeing her brothers slaves on April 1, 1265. See Terrell 6:34.
- <sup>64</sup> Canto 75 is comprised largely of Jaquin's Song of the Birds. Pound heard the songbirds in the piece and thought of it while watching the birds outside his cage in Pisa.
- <sup>65</sup> Cantos 79:37-38, 79:74-75, 82:76-80
- <sup>66</sup> Canto 74:52 (reference to All Quiet on the Western Front); Canto 74:228
- <sup>67</sup> Broadcasts spoken by Ezra in this and subsequent scenes are taken from *Ezra Pound Speaking: Speeches of WWII*. Leonard W. Doob (ed.) Praeger (1978)
- <sup>68</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion", "Burbank with a Baedeker"
- <sup>69</sup> Both the name of a classical one-act Noh play and the name for the feather-mantle or cloak. Cf. Terrell 74:124.
- <sup>70</sup> This sequence of thoughts and images occurs at Canto 74:180-196. "All things that are, are light" is a frequently quoted passage from Erigena.
- <sup>71</sup> Pound was not allowed a typewriter in his cage due to the dust, but later was allowed use of the one in the dispensary in the evenings. Robert Allen, "The Cage" in *A Casebook on Ezra Pound*, p. 36
- <sup>72</sup> Canto 76/454 (see Kearns, p. 91)
- <sup>73</sup> cf. Federal attempts to prop up the prices of agricultural commodities during the Great Depression
- <sup>74</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 11:94-96, 106-111 (adapted from the Sayers translation, Penguin Classics [1949] pp. 136-137)
- <sup>75</sup> Adapted from Canto 45.
- <sup>76</sup> Canto 78/395
- <sup>77</sup> Major C.H. Douglas theory of Social Credit is based on this proposition, the A+B Theorum.
- <sup>78</sup> Dialogue between Carnegie and Roosevelt (and Kropotkin) draws on *The Gospel of Wealth* by Carnegie and *Biological Analogies in History* by Roosevelt (1900). Kropotkin's concluding remark is from *Mutual Aid*.
- <sup>79</sup> Adapted from Canto 38:110-129
- <sup>80</sup> *Guide to Kulchur*, 157 (see Kearns, p. 88), Canto 74:43-44 and 216
- <sup>81</sup> from Canto 74:511-513 and Canto 77:15-16
- <sup>82</sup> Canto 71/416
- <sup>83</sup> Alluding to Dante, *Paradiso* – Canto 38 (see Kearns, p. 87)
- <sup>84</sup> Canto 38:133-134
- <sup>85</sup> Canto 74:167-169, 78:13-14, 84:84-86
- <sup>86</sup> Williams, *Paterson*, Book V, Part II
- <sup>87</sup> Williams, *Paterson*, Book V, Part II
- <sup>88</sup> Cantos: Addendum for C/818-19
- <sup>89</sup> Cantos: Addendum for C/818-19
- <sup>90</sup> Canto 78/478 and 78/482
- <sup>91</sup> Canto 74:1-6
- <sup>92</sup> Imagery from Canto 74:4-6
- <sup>93</sup> Adapted from Canto 74:9-10, with reference to Eliot's *Wasteland* (Pound affectionately referenced to Eliot as "Ol' Possum")
- <sup>94</sup> Canto 76:233-235
- <sup>95</sup> Canto 74:267-275. (the James memory ll. 298-299)

- <sup>96</sup> Canto 82:128-129 – echoing of Garcia Lorca’s poem *Llanto por Ignacio Sanchez Mejias*
- <sup>97</sup> from Canto 74:96-97
- <sup>98</sup> Canto 80:661-664
- <sup>99</sup> See Froula, *To Write Paradises: Style and Error in Pound’s Cantos*, Ch.3 “The Limits of Authority in the Modern Epic” esp. pp. 153-170.
- <sup>100</sup> Canto 79:136
- <sup>101</sup> Pound cultivated an idiom of writing in the third person when he wrote to the women in his life, using male pronouns to refer to himself and female pronouns for the woman he addressed. The idiom is preserved here, using the format he/him/his for Ezra and her/she for his communication partner, and this special formatting in small caps to distinguish this use of these pronouns to refer to the parties who would otherwise normally be referenced by the speaker in the first and second person.
- <sup>102</sup> See *Letters in Captivity*, p. 161 which includes Dorothy’s poem reflecting on her visit.
- <sup>103</sup> Canto 83:30-33
- <sup>104</sup> Lynx sequence is adapted from Canto 79 (ll. 135-281)
- <sup>105</sup> Pieced together from numerous references to eyes in the Cantos
- <sup>106</sup> Canto 47:74-97
- <sup>107</sup> *The Great Digest*, VI.2, pp. 47-49
- <sup>108</sup> A pet name for Mary
- <sup>109</sup> Olga often referred to her daughter as if she were an “it”
- <sup>110</sup> adapted from *The Great Digest* VII.1, pp. 51-53 (Ezra and Confucius lines)
- <sup>111</sup> Canto 76.13
- <sup>112</sup> The restaurant memories from Canto 74:286-291
- <sup>113</sup> The restaurant memories from Canto 74:286-291
- <sup>114</sup> Olga sometimes required Mary to refer to her as Mamile; she referred to Ezra as Babbo.
- <sup>115</sup> Canto 81:63-64; Cante 83:184
- <sup>116</sup> Canto 110:4-5; Canto 74:391-392
- <sup>117</sup> Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 68
- <sup>118</sup> Canto 74:732; Canto 84:70-72. The Italian means “sky of Pisa”
- <sup>119</sup> adapted from *The Great Digest* VII.1, pp. 51-53
- <sup>120</sup> Ruminations adapted from Canto 47:42-43; Canto 74:361; Canto 47:48-58
- <sup>121</sup> *The Unwobbling Pivot* 3, p. 101 (all quotations taken from Pound trans.)
- <sup>122</sup> Canto 113:43-44; Canto 116:30
- <sup>123</sup> Adapted in part from Cavalcanti’s Canzone, *Donna Mi Prega*, originally translated by Pound in 1932 and rewritten for Canto 36:1-88. See also James Wilhelm, *Dante and Pound: The Epic of Judgment*, Chapter 5 and Surette *A Light from Eleusis*, esp. pp. 200-201, which have been used to modify the *Donna mi Prega*, together with scenes from Williams’ *Paterson* Book IV, Part II, lines modified from Canto 76, quoted by Surette, *A Light from Eleusis*, p. 202, and lines from Canto 74:455.
- <sup>124</sup> Much of this scene is adapted from Conover’s biography of Olga and Mary’s autobiography.
- <sup>125</sup> Canto 84:118-119; Canto 83:106-107; Canto 74:76-85; Canto 81:117-133
- <sup>126</sup> Canto 83:235
- <sup>127</sup> Ostensibly Ezra’s son by Dorothy though possibly conceived by another lover when she was in Egypt.
- <sup>128</sup> Canto 80:184-196
- <sup>129</sup> *Canto*74:457-458
- <sup>130</sup> *Great Digest* X.10, p. 73
- <sup>131</sup> Jeremy Pratt, “How Do Memories Come to Us?” in *I Come Back on a Day that is Always Today*, unpublished
- <sup>132</sup> from Canto 74:759-774
- <sup>133</sup> Williams, *Paterson*, Book V, Part 1.
- <sup>134</sup> A girl whom Ezra met around 1905 at Hamilton College, and corresponded with until old age.
- <sup>135</sup> Canto 74:576
- <sup>136</sup> Translation: She is in Uttenheim. She is coming soon. You are covered with dust like a beggar. You must eat.
- <sup>137</sup> I am tired.
- <sup>138</sup> He’s lying down on the bed. Quick, go to him.
- <sup>139</sup> Shakespeare, the Merchant of Venice, Act Scene 5, p. 3
- <sup>140</sup> In this and Ezra’s following speech are scattered pieces from Canto 80:36, 44, 449-454, 593, 609, 618; Canto 74:829-832; Canto 77:318; Canto 78:6-10
- <sup>141</sup> Canto 76/457
- <sup>142</sup> Canto 76:210-211; 76:38; 83:184

- <sup>143</sup> Canto 74:13-14
- <sup>144</sup> Reference Rilke's poem, *The Panther*
- <sup>145</sup> Canto 74:7-8; a reference to Dionysius appropriated by Pound to Mussolini to open the Pisan Cantos
- <sup>146</sup> The following is adapted at length from Canto 2
- <sup>147</sup> Canto 113: 40
- <sup>148</sup> Canto 2:13
- <sup>149</sup> See Canto 65:263, 423
- <sup>150</sup> variously pieced from Canto 106
- <sup>151</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, Penguin Classics Edition, 1946, pp. 92-93 and *passim*, Tale of the Cyclops
- <sup>152</sup> Odysseus, echoed repeatedly throughout the Pisan Cantos; see Canto 1:55.
- <sup>153</sup> See Canto 1, particularly 11. 40-41
- <sup>154</sup> Canto 1:65-66
- <sup>155</sup> Canto 47:3-6
- <sup>156</sup> Dante *Paradiso* II:1-6
- <sup>157</sup> Canto 80.665-67; Canto 110:28-29
- <sup>158</sup> Canto 80:674-675 (quoting Villon)
- <sup>159</sup> Canto 80:677-679, 682-684, 754
- <sup>160</sup> Modified from Ezra Pound's translation of "The Seafarer" first published by Pound in *New Age*, November 30, 1911. "The Seafarer" is an Old English poem recorded in the 10<sup>th</sup>-century Exeter Book, one of the major surviving mss of Old English poetry.
- <sup>161</sup> from Jeremy Pratt, "Torn Sail" in *Mowing in Failing Light*, unpublished
- <sup>162</sup> from Jeremy Pratt, "The Black Sea" in *The Poisoned Heart*, unpublished
- <sup>163</sup> Canto 95/667; Canto 96/671; *Odysseus* V:351 – the sea goddess Leucothea gave Odysseus a veil to buoy himself when Poseidon in a great storm destroyed the raft on which he made his escape from Calypso's island.
- <sup>164</sup> from Jeremy Pratt "The Poisoned Heart" in *The Poisoned Heart*, unpublished
- <sup>165</sup> From Pound's original mss. (see Sieburth p. xxv)
- <sup>166</sup> Jeremy Pratt, "Fate" in *Late Depending Branches*, unpublished
- <sup>167</sup> from *Odyssey*, quoted by Pound in Letter 21 to Dorothy, *Letters in Captivity*, p. 123
- <sup>168</sup> Canto 83:144-145; Canto 74:50
- <sup>169</sup> Canto 80:284; Canto 76/458; Canto 83:60-63; Canto 74:242-244; Canto 83:64-67
- <sup>170</sup> See, e.g., Canto 76:288
- <sup>171</sup> Canto 74:120-122
- <sup>172</sup> Canto 78/503
- <sup>173</sup> *Pound:Williams Selected Letters*, 90.TLS-3 April 6, 1938, p. 193-194
- <sup>174</sup> Canto 74:124-131; Canto 111:34-35; Canto 114:83
- <sup>175</sup> *The Great Digest* X.5, p. 71; Canto 76:336-337
- <sup>176</sup> *The Unwobbling Pivot*, Pound's preface, p. 95
- <sup>177</sup> Canto 76:246-247
- <sup>178</sup> Canto 74:435-440
- <sup>179</sup> Canto 76:244-251, 3-20, 208-209; Canto 74:61
- <sup>180</sup> Canto 74:435-440
- <sup>181</sup> Canto 74:14-19
- <sup>182</sup> from Canto 83:81-97
- <sup>183</sup> Canto 17/76; Canto 90/541; Canto 106:110, 113-120; *The Unwobbling Pivot* XIV.4, p. 127
- <sup>184</sup> *The Unwobbling Pivot* XXVI.10, p. 187; Canto 74:826-827
- <sup>185</sup> Canto 74:829-842; and from Erigena, quoted by Pound
- <sup>186</sup> This speech taken from Canto 81:145-174 and notes for CVXII et seq.
- <sup>187</sup> Canto 81:136,144
- <sup>188</sup> Notes for Canto CXVII et seq.:27-34
- <sup>189</sup> Canto 77:91-92