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Driftworks, Pulseworks, Lightworks:

The Letter to Dr. Henderson

R. Bruce Elder

Editor's Introduction

The Dantean universe was once a domain of intense creativity. In the Empyrean, from which all the artistic or formative energy in Creation was supposed to spring, Divine Love could beget an excess of light in a brief “flash” [fulgore] (*Par.* 33.141).¹ What ever happened to the Empyrean? Was it swiftly bombed by the deicidal outrage of the twentieth century, or slowly smothered by what R. Bruce Elder calls “the anti-artistic animus of modern existence”?

If it was all a grand poetic fantasy – a *fantasia* in the Dantean sense – then there may still be hope for an empyreal revival. Since the tiniest ray of creative energy striking any part of the Whole has the potential to ignite a new life, a new vision, a new poem, a new art form, or a new world-order, even the dead old Empyrean may blaze forth again in our startled imaginations as a “Living Light” [vivo lume] (*Par.* 33.110).

Dante hints at the need for an incendiary *oltraggio* of creativity when he proclaims his faith in the artistic life at the conclusion of his aesthetic credo: “this is the spark which then dilates to a living flame and like a star in heaven shines within me” [quest’ è la favilla / che si dilata in fiamma poi vivace, / e come stella in cielo in me scintilla] (*Par.* 24.145-7). Implicit in this personal vocation statement is a political mission. His long-range meditations on cultural history had convinced him that creative excess is especially needed in times of spiritual destitution and deepening contempt for the arts. Without the quickening power of the arts to

actualize “the full intellectual potential of the human race” [humani generis...totam potentiam intellectus possibilis] (*Mon.* 1.4.1), we soon lose sight of “the purpose of human civilization as a whole” [finis totius humane civilitatis] (*Mon.* 1.3.1) which is the attainment of a beatific state of peace. In such a state, everyone participates in the vitality of “God Everlasting with his art, which is nature” [Deus eternus arte sua, que natura est] (*Mon.* 1.3.2). Hence the prophetic force of the Poet’s dictum: “A great flame follows a little spark” [Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda] (*Par.* 1.34).

If the creative process is difficult to explain for a “little spark” like Brakhage’s *The Dante Quartet*, it is especially so for a grand polysemous blaze of a work like Elder’s Dantean film cycle *The Book of All the Dead*. In the following letter, addressed to Dr. Archie Henderson, a lawyer and bibliographer of Poundiana, Elder musters all his philosophical *impeto* to articulate what went into the making of his maximum opus. Having heard that *The Book of All the Dead* was influenced by *The Cantos*, Henderson wrote to inquire about Elder’s specific allusions to Pound. “He sent me a few simple questions,” Elder wryly noted in an e-mail gloss on his letter, “and, taking the request as opportunity to reflect on my relationship to Pound’s magnum opus, I provided him with an extended response. Of course, these reflections included comments on Pound’s interest in Dante’s *Commedia*, and my own interest in that work.”

The response turns out to be not just a scholarly introduction to his film cycle but also an impassioned manifesto for the aesthetics of transgression. If *The Book of All the Dead* is Elder’s *Commedia*, then the Letter to Dr. Henderson is surely his *Epistle to Cangrande*. In case his correspondent should miss this analogy, the filmmaker refers to Dante’s famous epistle twice. Adopting the detached tone of an academic commentator, he first alludes to it in his hermeneutical introduction to the (then) unfinished cycle as an imaginatively complete work to be read on four levels; then, speaking with the resurgent excitement of a visionary artist, he

quotes it directly in his concluding reflections on the anagogic open-endedness of his “making.” Though caught up in Pound’s whirlwind of meditations on history, Elder is forthright in confessing his Dantean delight at the prospect of eternal release from temporal consciousness. His artistic trajectory is “outrageous”: it leads him to the preposterously unmodern goal of *trasumanar*. As Dante surpassed Virgil and Ovid in imitating the cinema-like “visible speech” of the Divine Artist [visibile parlare] (*Purg.* 10.95), so Elder proclaims his intention to out-Pound Pound through the transfiguring interplay of texts, sounds, and images in his film cycle: “The great ambition of *The Book of All the Dead* (not to say its colossal arrogance) is to attempt to go the full distance with him [Pound], and then to continue past him when he fails, so near to the goal, and to go where only the Poet [Dante] had been before.”

Going the full distance with Elder clearly means retracing the complete route of Dante’s pilgrimage, not just the anxious descent into Hell and the patient passage up Purgatory (which Pound retraced with modern steps in *The Cantos*) but also the exultant flight through the River of Light to Paradise (which modernity itself prevented Pound from recreating in his final “Drafts & Fragments”). Accordingly, *The Book of All the Dead* unfolds its massive length in three phases corresponding to the infernal, purgatorial, and paradisial stages of the *Commedia*. The custom of screening the cycle over three days highlights its Dantean structure in a simple and effective way, though the correspondences between canticles and screenings will always be complexly uneven owing to the variable lengths, styles, contents, and sequences of the films within each phase.

Certain descriptive terms employed by Elder in the letter suggest the different ways the films may “work,” on their own and in sequence, to build up the Dantean momentum of the cycle as a whole. When he initially refers to the “un-wholed” selves and discourses represented in the films as “driftworks,” for example, his allusion to the cultural theorist Jean-François Lyotard

evokes the infernal feelings of Dante's *smarrimento* – disorientation, bewilderment, instability, loss of direction – along with the postmodern experiences of fragmentation and freeplay. Later on, when the filmmaker relates his montage techniques to Pound's prosodic experimentation with rapidly modulating metres and line-lengths, his films take on the modernist (specifically Vorticist) character of energy patterns or "pulseworks." As such, their musical "kinetics" strategically accord with the rhythmic conditioning of the souls in Purgatory, whose meditations, prompted by their choral rituals of chanting and circling, lead to ecstatic union with the dance of the Blessed. Finally, after all his Poundian agitation and excitement, when Elder drives home his sublimely obvious conclusion that "there *is* light" (literally) shining through even the darkest stretches of the cycle, his films are freed from modern angst and postmodern anomie to stream over the screen as "lightworks" in a paradisial sense. This poetic compound turns up at the end of the letter as the name of his production company.

Though many different narratives are evoked in the various films composing the cycle, Elder insists that its ultimately paradisial form transcends the historical constraints of narrative. Consequently, the temptation to cast Elder in the starring role of Dante-pilgrim – with Pound as his Virgil, Olson as his Statius, Heidegger as his Aquinas, Brakhage as his Bernard, and Weil, perhaps, as his Beatrice – must be critically resisted from the start, though in the short run it is hard to resist even for the filmmaker, who explicitly locates himself in the Dark Wood when the cycle opens.

In the long run (the really long run, over forty hours of viewing) the typological impulse to read the cycle as a master-narrative of "everything" proves not only psychologically impossible to sustain but also aesthetically at odds with the filmmaker's mystically emergent design, an anagogic vortex in which visual images and textual fragments collide and coalesce to produce an exultantly altered state of consciousness in the viewer. Typological reading would

necessarily impose an earthbound dramatic structure on what is resolutely *not* a Hollywood-style “remake” of the Hero’s Vision Quest.

April 1, 1991

Dear Dr. Henderson,

I am sorry that it has taken me so long to respond to your letter. I am at work on four new films, all of which, by the way, contain a few bits of Pound’s *Cantos*.² Two of them had a strict and too-near deadline, which has made my life simply an agony for the last six months.

I wish I understood exactly what your needs are. Unfortunately, I have culled tiny bits and pieces from all over *The Cantos* and presented them in an order that has much more to do with the form of the work I am making than with the integrity of the structure Pound gave us. Moreover, the quotations appear in various forms: as supertitles overlaid on images; as intertitles presented between images; as texts read by an actor (myself) before the camera; and as sound-collages, usually accompanied by a welter of other sounds. Because most of the films are very long, there are usually many quotations in each. I think you wouldn’t really be interested in a complete list, as it would run on. (Am I wrong about this?)

Furthermore, since passages of *The Book of All the Dead* look backwards and forwards to other passages within it, specific phrases from *The Cantos* become associated in *The Book of All the Dead* with particular images, memories, and landscapes. It seems pointless to try to cite what portion of *The Cantos* appears where, for it is as though, in the making of *The Book of All the Dead*, an Ur-form of *The Cantos* had been shattered, the fragments spread out over a thousand different places, and the material from all these places reassembled in an order which, I hope, at once makes them new and preserves the meanings they had before they were

broken. The Gnostic apothegm Harold Bloom uses to open *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* – “Everything that can be broken should be broken,” with the supplementary formulae, “It must be broken; It must not bear having been broken; and It must seem to have been mended”³ – is the most precise and simple truth I know about making art. At the same time, it is the pithiest statement of the phases in the creation of an authentic self. To create either a poem or an authentic self, we must experience language or the self as “un-wholed.” We must experience the appalling truth that meaning or evidence of the self is lacking. We must be familiar with the withdrawal of fullness into emptiness and the estrangement of what is most intimate. We must perceive the lack of ratio between knowledge and desire, just as we must reckon with death – the death of love, the death of desire, the death of creative power. And we must face the fact that language and the self are menaced in their existence by the *apeiron*: they are adrift (truly are “driftworks”)⁴ in the Limitless.

But the discovery of the real truth of finitude takes place when limits seem to disappear, and one confronts the Unbounded Abyss. One who lives with the knowledge of death, of the deaths of love, desire, and creative power, abides from moment to moment with the horrible question, “Am I still a Poet?” and so must constantly reaffirm his or her vows. This question surely fuels the urge to make and to remake. A compositional method based on appropriation, allusion, quotation, and intertextual reference is one response to the terrible doubts this question instills in anyone whose self is identified with Creative Power. The breaking of the whole, the selection of the fragment, and its transformation into an utterly new whole are recognized phases in the psychological process of self-fashioning. But the same sequence of phases also occurs in the artistic process of incorporating intertextual references. Perceiving this correspondence helps us arrive at an answer to another chilling question provoked by acquaintance with the death of love – “Can I ever again love another as once I loved?” The

identification of one's own creativity with another's, and the taking of another's powers for oneself, provide a means (indisputably Freudian) of coping with the impact of this question on one's creative life.

Thus, *The Book of All the Dead* has made passages of Pound its own, just as it has made passages of Martin Heidegger and Simone Weil its own. (The only text cited in *The Book of All the Dead* that resists such treatment is the Bible.) But Pound's work and thought have been incorporated into *The Book of All the Dead* in more ways than by simple quotation. Pound's poetics have had a fundamental effect on the forms of constructions I have used.

The following outline of my work may be of some use to you, without overburdening you with an unmanageable mound of details. The films about which you have asked are parts of an epic cycle entitled (as you have no doubt gathered) *The Book of All the Dead*. The major inspiration for the cycle is Dante's "*Divina*" *Commedia*.⁵ Whether Dante's great work is really an epic, or is completely *sui generis*, is of course a much contested issue, though I tend to side with those who believe it is *sui generis*. Like the *Commedia*, my epic operates on several levels. One level – Dante would have called it "the literal" – focuses attention on history, or to use a Poundian phrase, the "repeat in history."⁶ Like Pound, then, I wanted to create a work which would include history. In particular, *The Book of All the Dead* is concerned with the collapse of history into modernity, where, I have sometimes feared, it shall remain frozen in the dystopic realization of Hegel's "universal and homogeneous State."⁷ On a philosophical (allegorical) level, it is concerned with the question of how consciousness came to its present state and, more broadly, with questions concerning the fate of consciousness. On a theological (anagogic) level, it is concerned with the possibility of recovering those capacities of consciousness, now lost, that once enabled it to dwell in the light of the Good. The individual's quest presented on the personal or moral level of the cycle parallels Pound's own for the *paradiso terrestre*, and

suggests, finally, that the only way to recreate the *paradiso terrestre* is to understand and act on the maxim that “a man’s paradise is his good nature.”⁸ But, as the Gnostics well knew, our good nature derives from the High Holy One; and it was not just the Gnostics alone who knew this – after all, it is the point, in the Judaeo-Christian creation myth, of having God create human beings in His own image (Genesis 1:26).⁹

Moreover, like the “*Divina*” *Commedia*, *The Book of All the Dead* offers a description of stages in the transformation of consciousness:

- (1) from ordinary waking consciousness (in *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, the title of which I keep misspelling in the credits as “The Art of WORD-ly Wisdom” in order to suggest the conventional nature of the knowledge the film presents);
- (2) through consciousness of the workings of the awesome Divine within ordinary life (in *1857: Fool’s Gold*);
- (3) through the purging of our dreadful condition – i.e., from Hell into Purgatory (in *Illuminated Texts*);
- (4) to the comprehension of Pound’s “repeat in history,” i.e., the “Purgatory of human error”¹⁰ (in *The Dream of the Last Historian* – for, after all, it is recognition of the historical repeat that puts an end to the terrible vector of history so eloquently described in the Henry Adams sections of *Illuminated Texts* – and into parts of *The Sublime Calculation*);
- (5) and to the sporadic, faltering beginnings of the contemplation of the love

that leads one out of Purgatory (in *Consolations (Love is an Art of Time)*), first in its mode of absence (in *The Fugitive Gods*), then in the mode of possibility-to-be-made-once-again-present (in *The Lighted Clearing*, and especially in *The Body and the World*);

(6) and, finally, to the various stages of the beatific vision, beginning with an acknowledgement of the terrible powers of love (in *Flesh Angels*);

(7) followed by the eschewing of intellectual love (in *Newton and Me* – a title intended both to disjoin us, as many people, including William Blake, have thought of Newton as the exemplar of Reason and Intellectual Contemplation of the Divine, and to join us, as Newton forsook that paradigmatic activity of reason to reflect on apocalyptic literature. I also intend the title of this section of *The Book of All the Dead* to suggest the beginning of a new and dynamic cosmology);

(8) passing on to the peace of discovering the Divine Love in higher vision (in *Azure Serene: Mountains, Rivers, Sea and Sky*);

(9) and aspiring to the exalted knowledge of the love that permeates all things and sustains all things in their being (in *Exultations (In Light of the Great Giving)*).

Furthermore, the spiritual education the cycle describes is similar to that which Dante's *Commedia* presents – the growth towards the insight that everything given in experience truly is a gift. Though some of our experiences, like nightmare monsters wrought in the dark, may

seem like cruel repayments for our efforts to find God, even such cruel succubi turn out to disclose the Be-ing¹¹ of Goodness, if we wait long enough. Consciousness of the significance of the particular is enlarged until, at last, the poetry of experience is awakened, and an emotional experience is called forth that awakens one to our oneness with our “circumstance,” i.e., that which “stands around” us.

Just as Lucia in Dante’s great poem initiates the Poet into Purgatory with a grace that leads to *metanoia*, [spiritual illumination], so the coming of love in *Consolations* begins a process of transformation. *The Book of All the Dead* concerns the destitution of our time, when the Holy has departed and we live without an understanding of the Sacred. And how did Dante describe his times in “Doglia mi reca”?

Omo da sé vertù fatto ha lontana;
omo no, mala bestia ch’om simiglia.
O Deo, qual maraviglia
voler cadere in servo di signore,
o ver di vita in morte!

[Men have cut themselves off from virtue – no,
not men, but evil beasts in men’s likeness. O God,
how strange – to choose to fall from master to
slave, from life to death!] (*Rime* 83, 22-5)

I hasten to add that an important difference between *The Book of All the Dead* and the “*Divina*” *Commedia* is that, unlike Dante, I do not believe that freedom is the natural state of the soul;

rather, like the blessed Spinoza, I believe that everything that happens must happen, that the route to tranquillity is the contemplation of necessity, and that the route to enlightenment is the wilful submission to necessity. In fact, I accept only a very small part of Dante's Neoplatonism, largely because I find the Neoplatonists' propositions about matter, and, in particular, about the body, absolutely unacceptable. But Pound, too, believed that we who are living in the modern world have lost our reverence for sacred nature, and he, too, relates this deeply to the anti-artistic animus of modern existence.

The journey described in *The Book of All the Dead* is not a straight line. It circles back upon itself again and again, even though it steadfastly approaches its destination. Didn't Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite describe the route by which humans approach God as a spiral?¹² There is always the falling back, even as we draw nearer to the goal. But even Dante's great and holy poem, while one of the greatest testaments to the power of love, was also a truly a hateful poem. (In this, of course, it is no different from *The Cantos*.) Interpreted as a moral allegory, Dante's *Inferno* is a treatise on sin and a depiction of the punishments appropriate to each of the sins. Some of Dante's punishments – for example, having soothsayers' heads turned backward – are truly ingenious, and they are a great source of pleasure for us in those passages in which they appear. Furthermore, those few who continue reading the *Commedia* past the *Inferno* know that there is a turning point in his quest drama, and what we and the Poet first experience as evil, we, like him, come to understand as part of the Good.

So it is in *The Book of All the Dead*. *Illuminated Texts*, the very crux of the cycle's region of Hell, contains a scene that concerns our desire to invent punishments. Similarly, both *Illuminated Texts* and the two parts of *Lamentations* present images and texts which convey an impression that the torments the protagonist delights to imagine are visited on his or her

enemies. However, these scenes, cruel though they be, do serve the whole, and the whole would not be the same without them. In several of the burlesque scenes in *The Book of All the Dead*, I have striven as well to recreate the rickety, grim, desperate, and finally unfunny attempts at humour that appear in cantos such as *Inferno* 21 (where the action takes place by the lake of pitch). For I feel great sympathy with Dante at these moments. It is evident to me that his motivation for writing was a sense – against all his Christian convictions, including his belief that the God of Love orders the universe – of the inevitability that justice will not be done in all human affairs.

Furthermore, Dante gives a very prominent place to those who want to construct an Earthly Paradise unguided by considerations of virtue or the Good. Their representative in the *Inferno* is Ulysses. Their spirit is prominent in our own time, for it appears under the sign of technocracy. Accordingly, *The Book of All the Dead* gives them prominence. The idea that a technical form of thinking, not guided by any consideration of the Good, has become the only form within which we think, and that the loss of other modes of thought known to the ancients is the reason for our destitute condition is absolutely central to *The Book of All the Dead*.

There are also parallels between *The Book of All the Dead* and Dante's *oeuvre* taken as a whole, including the early love poems and the *Vita Nuova*. Like many of Dante's early poems, many of the earlier parts of my cycle are works that lament love's terrible wounding powers. Then, like Dante at the start of the *Vita Nuova*, I stopped bewailing my personal condition and consoled myself with poems in praise of love. Like Dante, too, I sorrowfully began to sing the praises of "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" [Ladies who have understanding of love] (*VN* 21.15; *Rime* 33, 1). This, of course, has been a source of much hostility towards the cycle. Near the end of *The Lighted Clearing*, I reach the state that Dante described in the last poem of the *Vita Nuova*:

Oltre la sfera che più larga gira
 passa 'l sospiro ch'esce del mio core:
 intelligenza nova, che l'Amore
 piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.

[Beyond the sphere that circles widest passes the sigh that issues
 from my heart: a new understanding which Love, lamenting,
 imparts to him draws him ever upwards.] (*VN* 51.10; *Rime* 57, 1-4)

The Book of All the Dead culminates in praises to Divine Love for sending down its “power from heaven” [Amor, che movi tua vertù da cielo] (*Rime* 67, 1). In the end, *The Book of All the Dead* depicts its protagonist’s consciousness passing over into the conscious love that permeates the universe, as did Dante’s desire and will at the end of *Paradiso*.

Much of *The Book of All the Dead* evokes a tension not unlike that which Dante’s poem elicits between carnal love and intellectual love. Like the *Commedia*, it seeks after the Love that binds the scattered pages of the universe into one volume, after an understanding of all relations as “a simple light” [un semplice lume] (*Par.* 33.90). And like the conclusion of *Paradiso*, the end of *The Book of All the Dead* presents a vision of the cosmos held together by the three forces of light, reason, and love, which, in the end, are all understood to be identical. As Beatrice tells the Poet, the Empyrean is made up of light, reason, and love – “pure light: intellectual light, full of love; love of true good, full of happiness” [pura luce: / luce intellettüal, piena d’amore / amor di vero ben, pien di letizia] (*Par.* 33.39-41).

One measure of Pound’s strength as a poet was that he came very close to traversing

the full range covered by Dante in the *Commedia*. Guy Davenport points out that, in *The Waste Land*, Eliot went with the Poet in his descent into Hell.¹³ In “Ash Wednesday” and *Four Quartets*, Eliot stumbled through Ante-Purgatory into Purgatory itself. Joyce gave our century a depiction of the modern city as Hell in *Ulysses*, and then, in *Finnegan’s Wake*, brought us into a cyclical Purgatory from which there is no escape. Pound alone went the whole stretch – or nearly. The great ambition of *The Book of All the Dead* (not to say its colossal arrogance) is to attempt to go the full distance with him, and then to continue past him when he fails, so near to the goal, and to go where only the Poet had been before.

Doubtless you can see, even from this superficial description of *The Book of All the Dead*, that my epic is both thematically and genetically related to Pound’s *Cantos*. Like Dante’s long poem, and Pound’s, mine begins in the Dark Wood (so described in my catalogue note for *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, a description which, not surprisingly, was promptly ignored).¹⁴ There my protagonist begins a journey into the world of the dead (the past and the tradition, including the knowledge that it has piled up) in order to acquire gnosis or salvific knowledge. Like the *Cantos*, too, my epic includes a transformation involving wine, a Renaissance nativity scene, the birth of a goddess from sea foam who comes to be identified with Beatrice, and so on. (When will people even begin to see this?) Imagine someone trying to do *The Cantos* on film, and taking Heidegger rather than Major C. H. Douglas¹⁵ as the most profound analyst of the destitution of his or her times, and you would, I believe, generate a work resembling *The Book of All the Dead*.

The similarity of our “long poems” extends to the formal methods we employ. For one thing, the montage constructions I use in *The Book of All the Dead* are based on the ideogrammic method.¹⁶ That method seems to me, as it did to Sergei Eisenstein (who, like Pound, was inspired by the writings of Fenollosa)¹⁷ to suit the film medium, as do most of the

other paratactical forms that Pound favoured. One reason they are appropriate to the film medium is that the device relies on the use of concrete particulars. An affinity for concrete particulars is one of the special strengths of film, for through the power of concretion, things bear witness. When things present themselves concretely, as luminous particulars, they manifest the originary Be-ing that begets them. Film derives its power from its very similar power of disclosure. Furthermore, the complex associations amongst the particulars presented ideogrammically has something of the density, the complexity, the suggestivity, and the mysteriousness of reality. Concrete images activate the imagination and impel us to undergo feelings. Thus, they confer a rudimentary form of knowledge – or, more exactly, the *basis* of a rudimentary knowledge – for they penetrate us, maintain a witness in memory, and form the feelings from which intuitive knowledge develops. This is why that which has lost touch with particularity is untrustworthy. “Go in fear of abstractions” was Pound’s counsel, I recall.¹⁸

Pound noted the capacity of the ideogrammic method to speak concretely of universal powers. The juxtaposition of an image of the sun and the moon reveals “the total light process, the radiation, reception, and reflection of light; hence the intelligence. Bright, brightness, shining.”¹⁹ Between two details a meaning is discerned, and what is depicted in these two details is discovered to be as dependent on what relates them as the meaning of the composite sign is upon the written strokes that support that meaning. It is everything that Eisenstein said – through the juxtaposition of two elements in montage, a new thing arises that is not present in elements taken either individually or serially – and more, for the materialism that Eisenstein espoused in at least his first years as an aesthetician prevented him from acknowledging the constitutive role of mind in the process, or, for that matter, from admitting the crucial role that the process of discerning a meaning between two juxtaposed particulars plays in the very constitution of Mind itself.²⁰

There is another reason why Pound's paratactical method fits film so well. Words, Pound has taught us, are the "primary pigment" of literature.²¹ Recognition of their reality, in all its concreteness, opened me to the possibility of radical juxtapositions of highly disparate elements without the use of the "smoothing" factors of syntax. Kenneth Rexroth, a poet whose works I loved before I loved Pound's and whose works I love still, summed up the method best as he commented on the cubist method he used in making his own early poems: "It is the conscious, deliberate dissociation and recombination of elements into a new artistic entity made self-sufficient by its rigorous architecture."²² The material qualities of the "primary pigment" of literature are effectively highlighted by the radical decomposition of texts into their component elements, each with its own metre and texture, and by the rejection of devices that smooth the differences amongst the elements. There is a strong emphasis in Poundian poetics on "the world as such" – on the sign both as material and as representation. Crucial to such an enterprise is a trope that was essential to Pound's own method, namely, ellipsis. The elision of action is a primary feature of the style of *The Book of All the Dead*, as is the use of discontinuous, seemingly abrupt (because "off-metre") transitions.

Thus, in *Illuminated Texts, Lamentations* (both parts), and *Consolations* (all three parts), I have tried to arrange the shots, titles, and sounds in my films into patterns in which themes occur and recur in a quasi-fugal form, creating ever new relations among the repeating elements. *The Book of All the Dead* presents juxtaposed images and allusions with no narrative or syntactic connection for its "phalanx of particulars," just as "knowledge is build up from a rain of factual atoms...A scrap here, a scrap there; always pertinent, linked to safety, or nutrition or pleasure," as Pound stated (though, I think, with only partial correctness).²³ The concatenated texts have different tenses and operate on various scales – the personal, the historical, the philosophical, the anagogic. Each particular possesses its own metre. When such various

particulars are combined and recombined in shifting juxtapositions, meaning is generated, and this happens because the form encourages people to discover likenesses amongst dissimilar and unexpected things. Voices, images, fragments of documents, literary texts, and scientific works are put in a significant order, but it is up to the viewer of the films to discover the principles that decide how they are assembled, and why one thing is near or adjacent to another.

When presented with two concrete particulars in a sequence, the mind strives to discover their meaning. The effect is also self-reflexive: the heightened mental activity that viewers experience makes them acutely aware of the conditions of their consciousness so that they explore possible interrelations of meaning among the images and sounds and words presented to them. The difference in meanings a fragment takes on when it appears in different contexts also reveals the dependency of the particular on all that surrounds it. And, just as life does not comment on the particulars it gives us to experience, neither do *The Cantos*, and neither does *The Book of All the Dead*. The viewer is required to participate in the process through which meaning is constituted. The being of the viewer who constitutes the meaning emerges together with meaning. In the end, subjectivity becomes a function of textuality. The tumult of voices that speak through the cycle suggests a terrifyingly labile subject whose existence depends upon the apprehension of meaning, moment by moment. This meaning is to be found not in what is in the image or sounds, but what is amongst them. And, just as meaning is not given in the image, the subject is not given to the world, for it is dependent upon and belongs to what is beyond the world.

If the subject is a function of meaning, then the task of composition is the very important one of fashioning a language to think in. Pound called this creative process “logopoeia,” which he defined as “the dance of the intellect among words.”²⁴ Such a language must be able to

present the processes of the mind, the movements of memory, the phenomenological activities of seeing or hearing, of remembering or anticipating, of speculating or fretting — the rapid shifts of attention from moment to moment. The endeavour to construct such a language also involves the examination of language as a system for representing thinking, of the process of inscription itself — an examination of the possibilities that film’s own “primary pigment” can serve as a system of meanings.

The juxtaposition of different compositional styles, different metres, or different intensities is a basic stylistic feature of *The Book of All the Dead*. It serves less to foreground the “primary pigment” that constitutes the material of the work than to inventory the potential forms of a language to think in — to think in the profoundest way, as these different styles all present that which endures as important. Because the collage of styles makes *The Book of All the Dead* a film about the “language” of film and of thought, it has the capacity to criticize both the various styles that constitute it and its own composite style. The limitations inherent in an involvement with concrete particulars is a constant theme of the cycle.

A further effect of the collage style of *The Book of All the Dead* is that its protagonist, like those of Pound’s *Cantos* and William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson* and Charles Olson’s *Maximus* poems, is fragmented into pieces of text. Moments of his or her insight (for, like the angels, our protagonist is sexless) appear and disappear amongst a jostle of voices. Epiphanic revelations occur and are swept away in the vortex of more words from many more speakers. There is no single, unified voice impressed on every utterance in the cycle, and so no single voice can be identified as the authorial voice. Thus, only in a limited sense, is the protagonist of *The Book of All the Dead* modelled after Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey* or the Poet in Dante’s *Commedia*. The protagonist of *The Book of All the Dead* is more like Intelligence exploring through all the ages to find the way that would lead to its abode, the place where existents are restored to

conformity with the Order of Things. He or she spends much of the time in Hell, because s/he does not know what it would require to proceed towards home.

Because the protagonist lacks even a clear understanding of where home is and what it is like, there is not much potential for drama in the cycle. I consider this wholly good. Whether in our dealings with art or in our everyday experience, the desire for conflict and drama is a major factor preventing us from engaging in contemplative attention to particulars and from abiding in wonder with that which is presented as a gift of Be-ing. Hence, I avoid drama in order to avail myself more fully of the process by which form emerges out of the ongoing experience of things in their concrete particularity. Rather, I rely on my faith that in the process of comparing many people, places, civilizations, and ways of thinking, an order will emerge – one that depends upon the phenomena compared, rather than on external conditions imposed upon them. I believe that if one gives his or her attention fully to contemplating the emergent order charted in *The Book of All the Dead*, or in any long work created through this method, he or she would appreciate what comes forth in this order as gifts of Be-ing constituting the Order of Values. If one can engage with the Order of Values, one will remain true to things in their concrete complexity. The contradictions that arise in experience can be incorporated into the artistic form that emerges through this process of engaging with the Order of Values. Hence, the form that this emergent order produces can accommodate the spirit that Keats calls “negative capability.”²⁵ At the same time, however, the values exposed in repetitions and contrasts in textures between the various parts of the experience the form incorporates provide coherence to the piece.

This compositional method makes one’s life co-extensive with the quest that the work recounts, and so art and life become one, for it relies on the faith (what else could it be?) that in the form-making process, a subject does emerge – a voice that, while not the commanding the

authorial presence of traditional texts, nonetheless coheres. One begins with the faith that in the process of creating the work, one will become the person capable of bringing it to closure. Like all faith, this one brings its own rewards, as revealed in *The Cantos*. A subject does emerge there, most forcefully in *The Pisan Cantos*, which may be regarded as Pound's *Paradiso* (though, as is well known, Pound later expressed doubts, in a very moving fashion, that he really had achieved this state in his spiritual education).²⁶ I believe that a voice similarly emerges in the *Paradiso* regions of *The Book of All the Dead*, especially in the *Newton and Me* section. (This was one reason I gave it that very immodest title.) Furthermore, I believe that this voice arises, as does Pound's, from the midst of crisis. Thus the adjacency of Hell and Paradise is a theme of these sections of the film, as it is of *The Pisan Cantos*.

Pound showed me the way towards such a form, and he was astute enough to recognize that the classification procedures of the biologist provide a good metaphor for the process. Pound's remarkable faith in both the form-making and the human-making potential of such a compositional process has been great inspiration to me. His recognition of the advantages of the type of form that emerges from such a creative process has been one of his greatest contributions to twentieth-century art and had enormous influence on one of America's greatest poets of more recent times, Charles Olson.

Because the paratactical method presents each moment as nearly autonomous, as distinct from each preceding and succeeding moment, these works possess an open structure. They present themselves as being "in process," for in their composition they are subject to continual, on-going reassessment. This flux, too, is characteristic of consciousness itself. Yet the method of presenting concrete particulars in *The Book of All the Dead* is not mimetic, any more than it is in *The Cantos*. Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, uses fragments to depict the character of modern consciousness, for the serial presentation of the fragments that constitute that work

enact the frenetic movement of modern consciousness. Thus, he uses the method of the presentation of fragments in order to reproduce an interior monologue, the formal features of which are to be taken as a demonstration of the disturbed condition of modern consciousness. I cannot accept Eliot's ideas about "the dissociation of consciousness" upon which he based his practice (though I do believe that consciousness has forsaken certain of its primary powers, including contemplation, by the exercise of which alone the Good can be known). I think that Life has always presented itself to Mind as fragmentary, incoherent, and inscrutable. But, like Pound, I have ample faith that the world does have meaning, and that to know the meaning of the world is to know that what exists is not all there is. Recognition that we are dependent (something about which the heart's desire to be in bondage speaks unceasingly) leads us beyond what exists to the meaning of the world, for the meaning of the world can be known only from outside the world.

This is another reason for my objective use of the ideogrammic method. Luminous details afford "sudden insight into circumjacent conditions, into their causes, their effects, into sequence and law," as Pound noted.²⁷ Sometimes when this happens the luminous details transform themselves into a background which lights up the conditions that brought them to presence. Something of that which is beyond all presences shows itself when all that is recedes into the background and becomes a foil against which Nothing paradoxically manifests itself.

The activity in which we contemplate the meaning of the world is prayer. In prayer, we empty our minds of abstract thoughts and give ourselves over wholly to perception, to seeing a thing for what it is. This activity discloses what Heidegger would call "the giving of things," the Be-ing through which beings come into presence. It reveals that everything in existence is a gift. It consists in allowing the concrete particular to fill the mind entirely and in giving ourselves over to wonder that it has come to be. This leads us into a state in which we know through

feelings that whatever is in world is dependent on what has brought them to be. Feelings inform us that all we know is wholly contingent, and this feeling for things leads us ultimately into a state in which a significant ratio of beings is grasped, a ratio according to which beings are to their meanings as the material support of a sign is to its meaning. This is the knowledge that emerges from the contemplation of particulars. Acquaintance with this miracle plays a part in my interest in Pound's method of presenting concrete particulars.

Fenollosa pointed out another very important consequence of the paratactical method, as important to me as it was to Pound: namely, it resists the Western logic of the "schoolmen" who "despised the 'thing' as a mere 'particular'" – something useful only for getting to abstractions.²⁸ While the ideogrammic method of presenting concrete particulars in juxtaposition does not commit one to use the internal monologue form, it does constitute a way of thinking. The monolinear sequence of logical thinking is only one way of knowing, and its prospects are narrowly circumscribed, as the attempts to model creativity with logical programming languages show. The mind's natural way of knowing is to heap up an assortment of facts until, at last, it intuits what connects. This is how we ordinarily learn even a systematic science such as linear algebra or the calculus. We peruse books and articles, reading the parts we like, and after a few months, hardly realizing we were making any effort, we find it easy to find the integral of a complex function. *The Book of All the Dead* is a vast exercise in this form of learning. But there are very many passages in Dante's *Commedia*, too, that imitate earlier writers.

I also share Pound's interest in pressing other texts into the service of my own, and I employ the strategy of appropriation in the service of ends that I think Pound also would have been familiar with – for example, constructing a genealogy of consciousness and excavating evidence of modes of consciousness lost to us moderns. The leavings and middens of a

civilization amount to only a few snippets of special intelligence. From those bits which come to our attention, we attempt to reconstruct the form of thought of that civilization – really, its form of life – rather as an archaeologist attempts to reconstruct an economy, a religion, and a complex web of social conventions from shards of pottery, wooden carvings, foundation stones, and the like. The formal principle on which this operation is based is synecdoche, by which a whole is understood through its parts. From the few remnants of the documents a culture produces, we intuit a particular form of the life of the mind, and it becomes for us a living reality. Though the form of life we intuit is perhaps not the same form of life as that which was the provenance of the fragments, still, as Pound realized, we can have faith (for it has been borne out again and again) that a few dozen luminous details give us, in a way, a better sense of the intelligence of the period than what might be gleaned from an enormous number of inert pieces of information. Despite appearing outside their original context – a context which undoubtedly contributed to their meaning – the luminous details left to us by the incendiary intelligences of their time retain the power to inform us. This is not because their significance has been trapped in their form as a fly has been trapped, forever unchanging, in amber. Their illuminative power depends on their being complexly integrated unities. The persistence of their truths, abraded by time as they may be, is the result of the persistence of the patterns through which these complex unities emerge. Though time demands that these details pay it homage, both in their appearance and in their disappearance, the power of these details to reveal the workings of Be-ing are not lessened as they are obscured; for, in spite of everything, they are perfect wholes that belong to another order than the site of their origin, and so draw those who attend to them contemplatively into the lighted clearing of their Be-ing. The withdrawal of once-present meaning is only further testimony to the workings of time in relation to Be-ing, which advances through retreating and is unconcealed as present existents (or once-present meanings) withdraw into concealment. The

truths these complexly integrated wholes disclose thus are not those of an *archē* or origin; rather they are truths disclosed in their distance from an origin that can never be recovered. (Our inability to return to the origin was a major theme of my film *Lamentations: A Monument to the Dead World*.) In the same way that the power of language to call things into their ordained order discloses to those who attend to the gaps and absences and silences within language what is concealed by the vocation that issues forth from language, namely Nothing, the distance of the fragment from its unrecoverable origin shows us the forfeiture implicit in the coming-to-be of things, a sacrifice which (recalling that today is the beginning of Lent) is undeniably productive and creative.

The antitheses Order/Disorder and Being(s)/Nothing are disclosed just at the moment when they come to pass. Thereafter, there is only the forgetting and oblivion of the Be-ing that first brought on this event. But as I kept suggesting in *Consolations (Love is An Art of Time)*, the sacrifice is associated with the gift, as is the gift with the sacrifice; so the re-collection of the fragments of texts which no longer present their first meanings shows the power of time through which they first were. It shows the errancy of Be-ing, for it makes manifest those features of the relation of language to time and Be-ing which would remain forever in concealment were it not for the forfeits of time, for the testimony to time that the fragment bears – and bears just because it is “un-wholed.” In the same manner as the order of language always testifies to disorder, chaos, and Nothing, creation is always accompanied by destruction. Those destructive questions I began with, and the Nothingness they compel us to confront, are necessary to creative activity. All of this is revealed by compositional processes based on the destruction of an ordinary textual integrity, the s/election of some of the resulting fragments, and recreation of a textual unity which incorporates the fragments – that is, by a compositional process based on intertextual reference. Such a compositional method is thus destructive, for it

disperses, dismantles, and liquidates beings in bringing once-present meaning to Nothing. It thus enables renewal and “re-creation” in the most profound sense of that word.

Thus, what is at stake in the collage of quotations and allusions I have constructed is more than the simultaneous presence of various represented times in a film – more even than any theory of time which that co-presence might suggest, though these are both important. The incorporation of various forms of consciousness transforms a work of art into a meta-work (a second-order or nth-order work which both incorporates and reflects on earlier works in the “Tradition”). It is the particular power of a meta-work to demonstrate how enduring are certain patterns of intelligence.

It was on the basis of a Poundian precedent that I formulated the idea that there are advantages to be gained by recreating the forms of antecedent works. Pound discussed the vortex as a pattern of energy made visible to us by reason – “our kinship to the vital universe...of fluid force.”²⁹ He realized that the Mind of the West, which we ordinarily call Tradition, is made up of semi-stable patterns of energy. As fresh minds create in new circumstances, with new materials, the same complexly integrated wholes occur and recur. Such patterns of intelligence we call by the names Odysseus, Romulus and Remus, the Bridegroom, Helen, Roland, and Thomas. Particularities differ, details of the configurations change, but the patterns remain essentially intact. The brave one – the city’s founder, the lover, the leader men long for – strives to return home, and both the hero and those who long for him pay the price of that longing. “Hast ’ou seen the rose in the steel dust,” asked Pound, “(or swansdown ever?)”³⁰ The *Nekuia*, Homer’s tale of Odysseus’s visit to the land of the dead, was put into Latin in the sixteenth century by Andreas Divus Justinopolitanus. Divus’s rendering chants out: “At postquam ad navem descendimus, et mare....”³¹ Pound purchased a copy of Divus’s translation at a bookstall on a quay in Paris. The vortex whirled.

The Book of All the Dead, accordingly, is not a version of Pound (or of Dante), but a demonstration of the endurance of a particular pattern of intelligence – a pattern to which we might give the name *Nekuia* after Homer's text. *The Commedia* is one manifestation of this stable pattern of intelligence, *The Cantos* are another, and *The Book of All the Dead* yet another. But my cycle is not only a manifestation of this energy pattern. It is also about it – hence the cycle's ironic texture. This is also why *The Book of All the Dead* is very allusive, almost as allusive as the *Commedia* and *The Cantos*. *The Book of All the Dead*, like its great predecessors, contains allusions to literary works, to the sacred places of the epic tradition, to history, to philosophy, and to religion. Many of these allusions take the form of direct incorporation. The incorporation is accomplished by the cinematograph. The cinematograph itself is a manifestation of the Intelligence of an age – an age that now is rapidly receding into the past. But it has also become a form in which we think. This form, brought forth from the Intelligence of an age, became the form in which the thoughts that made it move were recorded. More than that, it gave form to the thoughts of the age that was emerging when it was given birth. Our age's self-knowledge is given form by the moving images in which we have attempted to embody our most inward thoughts and feelings. As the Intelligence of our age and the agency through which we discover our inner being, the cinematograph has looked outward to the history that constituted its fate, and so it now, in its own inner being, reflects the patterns that endure through history. Thus it is that our personal experience has now become part of that which is "now in the mind indestructible," as Pound put it.³²

A film that includes history thus contains more than elements in recurrence. It also figures a Uniting Intelligence in which, occasionally, our own minds are able to participate, and through our participation, to discover the Order of Things. It reveals the transfiguring power of Intelligence, that by which all particulars are made an everlasting one. Works that manifest the

enduring patterns of Intelligence themselves join a semi-permanent order of existence. Because they partake of some features of the enduring Order of Things, they have the power to console us. *The Cantos* and, I hope, *The Book of All the Dead*, manifest the co-existence of works in this higher Order of Things and the co-presence of all such works even in the Intelligence of our own miserably destitute times. This is cause for thanksgiving.

It may also be useful to know that I am fascinated by the social and spiritual implications of Pound's ambition to create a work that could serve as a compendium of history. Pound was characteristically precise and profound when he defined knowledge as what remains when all the facts are forgotten. We can reconcile the apparent paradox inherent in the combination of his definition of knowledge and his insistence on the importance of particulars by recognizing that the concrete existent is important only as a manifestation of the power of the Be-ing that has brought it into presence. The best part of this knowledge of things concerns their correlations and connections. I have attempted to convey something of this power in the tumult of voices and images that make up *The Book of All the Dead*. Without the example of *The Cantos*, I should never even have imagined how to attempt this.

Thus *The Book of All the Dead* attempts to make its predecessors speak again, just as *The Cantos* were designed to do. Consider, for example, how Cantos XXIV-XXVI "write over" scenes from Dante's *Inferno* in order to intensify Pound's sense of the hellish lack of reverence for sacred nature, the blighting of natural human affection, and the consequent corruption of art by unnatural greed, sloth, and ruthlessness in the modern world. Dante, of course, also reused the material of his predecessors. For his descent into Hell (e.g. the Charon episode and the Limbo scenes in *Inf.* 3-4) Dante found many "luminous details" in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, where Virgil had modelled Aeneas's journey to the Underworld on Odysseus's visit to Hades. Dante did not merely imitate these Virgilian reshapings of Homer's *Nekuia*: he recast them for

his own purposes, fashioning a universe of Christian meanings out of them. Dante used several other classical *auctores* – most notably Ovid – in a similar way, though not as extensively.

That Pound understood his profound debt to his predecessors is clear from the way he highlighted his borrowings in *The Cantos*. For instance, he constructed an explicitly Ovidian second canto to follow his Homeric/Virgilian first canto. And yet – and this is one of Pound’s more brilliant turns in his opening performance – he realizes that, though we may read Homer, Virgil, and Ovid in the original, their works appear to us only through mediation: that is to say, the post-classical writers in the Western tradition who overwrote the *Nekuia*, especially Dante, have forever changed the ways we perceive and interpret the classical tradition. All successful allusions are effectively acts of overwriting. There is no such thing as a simple reference between texts, for the later text always corrupts the original by symbolically “erasing” it while letting parts of it shine through beneath the superscription. This is why I refer to allusive texts as “palimpsests.”

But one should not think that because the words, images, and sounds in *The Book of All the Dead* overwrite other texts, the cycle as a whole is devoid of personal significance. In fact, the context from which words, images, and sounds are derived can give them added emotional weight in a palimpsest. Consider the title page of T. S. Eliot’s *Prufrock and Other Observations*, which includes the dedication “For Jean Verdenal, 1889-1915, mort aux Dardanelles” and the following epigraph:

la quantitate

Puote veder del amor che a te mi scalda,

Quando dismento nostra vanitate

Trattando l'ombre come cosa salda.

It appears just so, italicized and untranslated, presumably in order to conceal (and to highlight the concealed) feelings which might otherwise appear too raw or embarrassingly “sincere” if he allowed them to show through his pose of literary detachment.³³ Pound similarly uses foreign terms in *The Cantos* to prevent us from discovering him in a moment of emotional vulnerability. What feelings did Eliot feel the need to conceal? The epigraph means something like: “You can see how great my love for you is when I ignore our emptiness and treat a shade as a real thing.” If that were all there were to the quotation, and if we had to take it literally rather than allusively, its message would simply be that Eliot so loved Verdenal that he refuses to accept that he is gone, and treats him as though he were still alive. Most of us are acquainted from our early years with such pathos, and so, even taken this way, it is not without strength. But how much greater is its power when we recognize the source and context of the quotation. It is from Dante, whose second guide, the Latin poet Statius, utters it on the occasion of the most moving of the many joyous meetings in Purgatory. When Statius first encounters Virgil in Dante’s company, without knowing whom he has met, he humbly identifies himself as a reader of poetry who became a poet because of his intense admiration for the *Aeneid*:

Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville,
 che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma
 onde sono allumati più di mille;

de l’Eneïda dico, la qual mamma
 fummi, e fummi nutrice, poetando:
 sanz’ essa non fermai peso di dramma.

E per esser vivuto di là quando
 visse Virgilio, assentirei un sole
 più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando.

Which may be rendered approximately thus:

The sparks that warmed me, the seeds of my ardour,
 were from the holy fire – the same that gave
 more than a thousand poets light and flame.

I speak of the *Aeneid*; it was mother to me,
 and it was nurse to me as a poet;
 my work without it would not amount to an ounce in weight.

And to have lived on earth when Virgil lived –
 for that I would extend by a whole revolution of the sun
 the time I owe before the end of my exile. (*Purg.* 21.92-102)

Stattius notices a smile on the face of Dante's guide, and despite Virgil's request that the pilgrim keep quiet, he tells Stattius the reason. Stattius is awestruck, and Virgil instructs him: "Brother, do not do so, for you are a shade, and it is a shade that you see" [Frate, / non far, ché tu se' ombra e ombra vedi] (*Purg.* 21.131-2). That is when Stattius replies with the verses cited by Eliot: "You can see how great my love for you is when I ignore our emptiness and treat a shade

as a real thing” (*Purg.* 21.133-6).³⁴ Knowing the context makes the quotation heart-rending, for we then understand something about the relationship Eliot had with Verdenal, and this understanding enables us to feel more of the passion Eliot harboured for him. Remembering that Dante’s main reason for introducing Statius was to present an account of the conversion experience through the reading of poetry – an account recalling St. Augustine’s conversion through the reading of a scriptural verse (*Confessions* 9.12.29) – makes the epigraph all the more poignant.

The art I practise is commonly called “cinema” (from Greek *kinēma*, “motion”). You shouldn’t be surprised, then, by my fascination with Pound’s interest in the *kinetics* of art – an aspect of Poundian poetics elaborated in Olson’s theory of Open Form. The movement of existents, how beings are transformed in every moment of their existence, greatly intrigues me. Fascination with speed and with compression has made me use elision to the utmost extent conceivable. The energy transmitted by the unfinished unit to the reader – who picks up the momentum of forward drive – also deeply interests me, for I believe this momentum excites feelings which, under the right conditions, can turn into knowledge. Pound defined the Vortex in terms of energy. I am fascinated by the flow of energy in cinema and awestruck by the potential for every moment of a film to spin myriad words, sounds, and images through itself, for every moment in a film to be a vortex whirled in the larger vortex that is the whole film.

Through a single image circulates a number of different times: the time when the image is seen; the time when it was shot; the time when the text that is overlaid onto image was written; and even the “whole time” when the construction of image-text-sound was assembled (i.e., its entire cultural context) in relation to our own time. Paratactical constructions thus replace the single moment – which, according to the conceits of the lyrical poem, reflects the eternal “Now” – with a multiplicity of fugitive moments. As each moment surges into presence

and then rushes away, we come to realize that a work constructed on the principle of parataxis must accept the fact of its earthly condition. But it is through beings, after all, that we come to know Be-ing. Parataxis suits the epic form with its consonance between structure and technique because the paratactical must come down out of the heavens and open itself to history, to change, and to death. Epic accepts the force of the negative as lyric does. Yet, if the abundance of energies succeeds in uniting the multiple times of epic, then these times are all made one through it, and the work as a whole manifests the energies of Be-ing coming to presence in beings and events. Unfortunately, epics succeed all too rarely, but how *maraviglioso* it is when they do!

Pound's rhythmic, too, have been a major source of inspiration for my filmmaking. Of particular importance has been Pound's advice to allow lines and even phrases to follow the rhythm of the musical phrase, not of the metronome. It is empty counsel, in a sense, for even musical phrases can, and most often do, follow a metre as strict and unbending as the tick of the metronome. That most glorious of interpreters of Bach, Glenn Gould, has given us marvellous proof of how strictly Bach's metres and tempi should be kept, of how out of place rubato is in performing Bach's work and Baroque music generally. Even more importantly, he has allowed us to glimpse the reason for that strictness, namely, that the strict form of the music, as precise as the order of number, reflects the Order of Being. But Pound was speaking polemically when he condemned metronomic verse, probably in response to the performance practice of the period just before his own, a period that resonated with the thumping hoof-beat rhythms of Algernon Charles Swinburne (a poet he admired and I detest):

Before the beginning of years

There came to the making of man

Time, with a gift of tears;
 Grief, with a glass that ran;
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
 Summer, with flowers that fell;
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,
 And madness fallen risen from hell;
 Strength without hands to smite;
 Love that endures for a breath;
 Night, the shadow of light,
 And life, the shadow of death.

(*Atalanta in Calydon* 314-25)³⁵

The Swinburne stomp is a dunning three-beat accentual metre with a variable number of syllables per line. Though the lines may skitter through eight syllables (ta-BOOM-ta-BOOM-ta-ta-BOOM-ta: “Remembrance fallen from heaven”) or march through only six (BOOM-ta-BOOM-ta-ta-BOOM: “Night, the shadow of light”), what the ear soon anticipates is the triplet of strong stresses in each line. And note how ten out of twelve lines begin with a noun (or “and” along with a noun) usually followed by a participial or prepositional phrase. This syntactic sameness reinforces the unvarying, bass-drum BOOM.

How far that fixed kind of metre is from the flow of Pound’s *vers libre*:

Thus was it in time.
 And the small stars now fall from the olive branch,
 Forked shadow falls dark on the terrace

More black than the floating martin
 that has no care for your presence,
 His wing-print is black on the roof tiles
 And the print is gone with his cry.
 So light is thy weight on Tellus
 Thy notch no deeper indented
 Thy weight less than the shadow
 Yet hast thou gnawed through the mountain,
 Scylla's white teeth less sharp.

(The Cantos XLVII 237-8)

There is no echo of the hoof-beat here, no stomping foot. Even when his song is most “inspired” (most on-the-breath), he avoided stomping out the metre as though he were inveighing in a hateful tantrum or marshalling his anger to do battle against the usurers:

And Brancusi repeating: je peux commencer

une chose tous les jours, mais

fiiniiir

(The Cantos LXXXVI 560)

How that sad sigh slides so gently from the first doubled “i” to the quadrupled “i” with its expression of heavy regret over the work still undone! There’s no heavy thump here, no resonance of Swinburne’s bass-drum or Handel’s military rhythms.

This contrast does not arise simply because Pound’s metric system is quantitative or

in the mind's make-up
 est agens and functions dust to a fountain pan otherwise
 Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust
 (or swansdown ever?)
 so light is the urging, so ordered the dark petals of iron
 we who have passed over Lethe.

(*The Cantos* LXXIV 449)

Passages like this provide me with a poetic analogue for the use of a rapidly modulating pulse in my filmmaking, a pulse that changes from one textual element to the next. This particular passage also provides evidence that Pound saw the mind as part of reality, and that he felt that our memories are responses to a gentle ordering force emanating from reality, just as iron filings are ordered by a magnetic field. Reality, of course, is the Tradition and the Order of Being. Or as Pound suggested, we can expand on this point by linking it with the history of the Ontological Argument:

Guido C. had read "Monologion"
 vera imago
 and via mind is the nearest you'll get to it,
 "rationalem"
 said Anselm.
 Guido: "intenzione".
 Ratio,
 luna,
 speculum non est imago,

mirrou, not image;

Sapor, the flavour,

pulchritudo

ne divisibilis intellectu

not to be split by syllogization

to the blessed isles (insulis fortunatis)

(*The Cantos* CV 747-6)

In as early a work as his first translations of the poet Guido Calvacanti, Pound made formidable claims for the powers of rhythm. "I believe in an ultimate and absolute rhythm," he avowed,

as I believe in an absolute symbol or metaphor. The perception of the intellect is given in the word, that of the emotions in the cadence. It is only, then, in perfect rhythm joined to the perfect word that the two-fold vision can be recorded. I would liken Guido's cadence to nothing less powerful than line in Blake's drawing.³⁷

Two aspects of this text, in particular, have inspired my filmmaking. The first is an idea that it conveys by implication, namely, that emotion and idea must be at one in a work of art. The second is the notion that when a filmmaker perfects the relation between rhythm and image (as a poet perfects the relation between rhythm and word), emotion and idea will become identical. In the same text, Pound went on to speculate that

it should be possible to show that any given rhythm implies about it a complete musical form — fugue, sonata, I cannot say what form, but a form, perfect, complete. Ergo, the rhythm set in a line of poetry connotes its symphony, which, had we but a little more skill, we could score for orchestra. *Sequitur*, or rather *inest*: the rhythm of any poetic line corresponds to emotion.

It is the poet's business that this correspondence be exact, i.e. that it be the emotion which surrounds the thought expressed.³⁸

Pound taught that musical dynamics carry the emotional and conceptual freight of a work of art, and that all musical dynamics originate in rhythm. I have taken these teachings to heart in the creation of my cinematic “pulseworks.” Finding the exact rhythm to convey the desired emotion/idea has become *the* primary consideration of my making. Rhythm, as Pound himself pointed out, has the power to remind us of “the most primal of all things known to us.”³⁹

In Pound's thought, the two points, rhythm and emotion, together with the measure of rhythm's vectorial power, triangulate with a third point, namely, time. In the “Treatise on Metrics” (appended to *The ABC of Reading*), Pound states that “Rhythm is a form cut into time, as a design is determined space.”⁴⁰ The medium through which the filmmaker cuts his design in “time” is not the “articulate sounds” of language but rather the kinetics of the shot, including those that derive from its design, which conducts the eye through space, putting obstacles and complexities in its way to slow it down or removing them to speed it up, and the various gravities (i.e., weights-of-movements) of its colours. I would say, paraphrasing Pound, that *the* primary failing of a bad film results from the filmmaker's lack of a keen sense of time, and a bad

filmmaker is a bore because he or she does not perceive time and time relations and cannot therefore delimit them in an interesting manner, by gentler or sharper movements, by more ponderous or more sprightly colours, and by various other qualities of movement inseparable from the image. I have learned from Pound that the primary consideration in filmmaking is creating a design in time which is absolutely accurate to the emotion/idea that the filmmaker wishes to convey.

Pound's courage in reversing the paradigmatic Romantic topos of placing events in time has also been a great inspiration to me. The nineteenth century was a period obsessed with time, with evolution (Darwin and Spencer), with the mind's recovery of past time (Proust and Freud), and with the history through which things come to be as they are (Hegel, the Young Hegelians and their offspring, the Marxists-Leninists and the legion of historicizing and relativizing sociologists). The potency of history must never be overlooked; learning to dwell here among purely contingent beings and to cherish, even amidst our inevitable mourning and remorse, the doomed beauty of all that is, is one of the principal lessons the wise person learns. But Mind can cancel the dislocations and disassociations that time creates, and it can restore relations amongst phenomena. Like Blake, we can learn to experience time as a space in which all that was once present is now and eternally present. Then time becomes exactly as film has it, a narrow ribbon on which is plotted the record of a sequence of crossings from one dimension of space to another and another. The notion that all artists are living authors in a literal sense is yet another reason for the chorus of voices that speak (as living presences, not just as ghosts) through my films.

There are further complexities in Pound's views on time that I have tried to capture in the form of *The Book of All the Dead*. In a letter to his father written in 1927, Ezra Pound provided a sketch of the outline of *The Cantos*. "Have I ever given you outline of the main scheme:::[sic] or

whatever it is?" he asks, immediately providing an answer to capture its essentially musical character or form: "1. Rather like, or unlike subject and response and counter subject in fugue."

Then, becoming more specific, he expounds the different moments of the work:

A. A. Live man goes down into world of Dead

C. B. The "repeat in history"

B. C. The "magic moment" or moment of metamorphosis, bust

thru from quotidien into "divine or permanent world." Gods, etc.⁴¹

Elsewhere, in 1944, he informed his readers that:

For forty years, I have schooled myself, not to write an economic history of the U.S. or any other country, but to write an epic poem which begins "In the Dark Forest[.]" crosses the Purgatory of human error, and ends in the light, and "fra i maestri di color che sanno" [among the masters of those who know]. I have had to understand the NATURE of error.⁴²

This Dantean sequence also applies to *The Book of All the Dead*:

1.) The protagonist of the cycle finds himself in a moral, emotional, and spiritual crisis which brings him to the Gates of Death. A harrowing confusion of voices launches him on a journey down to the dead, back through the past, in a quest for the knowledge that might save us. This descent into the Underworld also holds out hope for a vocation, hope that in the midst of the tumult of voices a

voice, like that which saved Augustine, will be heard. But who can serve as the true guide? And how will the Poet come into his own? (These are Dante's questions);

2.) Beneath the surface differences among cultures are beliefs and actions that are repeated almost identically across cultures: for instance, the *Nekuia* or Underworld Journey. *The Book of All the Dead* is a quest film from beginning to end; the portrayal of the journey across deserts and over plains and into the mountains is, perhaps, the only constant of the entire cycle. It reveals these durable (if not permanent) patterns as recurring states of mind. Thus, by the end of *Lamentations*, the journey reveals that history is vectorial. There is no return to the past, no exit out of modernity, no way to resurrect the modes of thought that once apprised us of the Good. The vestiges of the past inhabit the present as mere simulacra. Yet, it is as forms rather than as actual instances (to go back to the Neoplatonism from which I distanced myself earlier in this letter) that the past lives in the present's knowledge, for the recurrent patterns known by consciousness constitute the unchanging objects of true knowledge. History may be a vector, but as it moves, it drags the past with it. Nothing is ever wholly lost. (This is the lesson of *Consolations (Love is an Art of Time)*.) Thus, in the end, the historical permanence of consciousness becomes the source of hope. It is in the realm of the Intellect that the permanence of that which passes is evident, and nowhere else. Intellect furnishes us with an image of eternity, though it is only an image we know, and not Eternity itself. Still, the image of what perdures does open toward the Divine. The ancients were right about this, too, namely,

that it is Mind that leads us to the only knowledge that really is worth having, the knowledge that can save us. In this way, the quest described in *Lamentations* really is Purgatory, a space in which human error is cleansed.

3.) Occasionally visions of light, of divine energy, break through. The eternal comes into history and halts the movement of time. The root from which such visions grow is the sense of the mysterious communion of self and nature. As in Pound's work, so in mine: the vision of Paradise does not disdain erotic experience, but rather exalts it, for this, too, is a mode of experience which stops the frightful movement of time. Eros binds human beings to nature. Thus, in erotic experience, it is possible to recover, if only briefly, the Ovidian knowledge that one energy passes through gods and humans alike, that one energy connects all things with everything else. And there *is* light – the same manifestation of the Divine we find in Pound, in Dante, in Cavalcanti, in the Neoplatonic philosophers, in Grosseteste, in the Languedoc poets, and even, as Pound points out, in Confucius. From light we learn that all things derive from one source. Thus *The Book of All the Dead* can be said (albeit with facetious exaggeration) to be about everything, but more accurately about that Be-ing through which all existents come into presence. Consciousness discovers, as *Azure Serene* joins with *The Cantos* in saying, that light “fills the nine fields / to heaven”⁴³; and so it turns towards prayer, towards the contemplation of the gift of the given and towards the state of wonder that discloses “the giving of things.” The culminating work in this section of the cycle is *Exultations (In Light of the Great Giving)*. Here the gods show themselves again.

But only briefly. Not even Dante, as mighty as he was, could sustain the knowledge that was vouchsafed him at the climax of his ascent. Speaking of himself in the third person in his much-cited *Epistle to Cangrande*, Dante blamed the limitations of his memory for his failure to comprehend and express the full vision of the Empyrean:

Et postquam dixit quod fuit in loco illo Paradisi per suam circumlocutionem, prosequitur dicens se vidisse aliqua que recitare non potest qui descendit. Et reddit causam dicens “quod intellectus in tantum profundat se” in ipsum “desiderium suum,” quod est Deus, “quod memoria sequi non potest.” Ad que intelligenda sciendum est quod intellectus humanus in hac vita, propter connaturalitatem et affinitatem quam habet ad substantiam intellectualem separatam, quando elevatur, in tantum elevatur, ut memoria post reditum deficiat propter transcendisse humanum modum.

[And after he has said that he was in that place of Paradise which he describes by circumlocution, he goes on to say that he saw certain things which he who descends therefrom is powerless to relate. And he gives the reason, saying that “the intellect plunges itself to such depth” in its very longing, which is for God, “that the memory cannot follow.” For the understanding of which it must be noted that the human intellect in this life, by reason of its

connaturality and affinity to the separate intellectual substance,
 when in exaltation, reaches such a height of exaltation that after
 its return to itself memory fails, since it has transcended the range
 of human faculty.] (*Epistola X/XIII* 28)

Nor could Pound hold the experience of Paradise fast (“Charity I have had sometimes, / I cannot make it flow thru”).⁴⁴ I believe that it was the lack of permanence of our experience of what does not change that made Pound abandon his poem while it was still uncompleted. He could convey the experience only in “Drafts & Fragments” of an extremely tentative character. Even Dante’s marvellous conclusion really doesn’t make clear that our experience of Paradise comes only in fleeting glimpses, only in “magic moments” and “luminous details” that open up to something beyond the quotidian. I have tried to radicalize the ideogrammic form precisely to convey that sense.

Still, even if our knowledge of the paradisaical realm is only partial and fleeting, the testimony of art and the testimony of the “masters of those who know”⁴⁵ at least give the wisdom a place to dwell, a place for it to abide until the time of discovery.

A final connection between my work and Pound’s may be noted. The form of *The Book of All the Dead* invites a similar response to that called for by the allusively vortiginous form of *The Cantos*. Donald Davie gets at this best when he urges us to listen for

the large scale rhythms that ride through *The Cantos* in our
 experience of them when we read one at a time and fast. And this
 is just the sort of reading we ought to give them – not just to begin
 with, either. This, indeed, is what irritates so many readers and

fascinates an elect few – that *The Cantos*, erudite as they are, consistently frustrate the sort of reading that is synonymous with “study,” reading such as goes on in the seminar room or the discussion group. It is hopeless to go at them cannily, not moving on to line three until one is sure of line two. They must be taken in big gulps or not at all. Does this mean reading without comprehension? Yes, if by comprehension we mean a set of propositions that can be laid end to end. We are in the position of not knowing “whether we have had any idea or not.” Just so. Which is not to deny that some teasing out of quite short excerpts, even some hunting up of sources and allusions, is profitable at some stage. For *The Cantos* are a poem to be lived with, over years. Yet after many years, each new reading – if it is a reading of many pages at a time, as it should be – is a new bewilderment. So it should be, for it was meant to be. After all, some kinds of bewilderment are fruitful. To one such kind we give the name “awe” – not at the poet’s accomplishment, his energy, or his erudition but at the energies, some human and some nonhuman, which interact, climb, spiral, reverse themselves and disperse, in the forming and re-forming spectacles which the poet’s art presents to us or reminds us of.⁴⁶

I would be delighted if someday somebody were to write similarly of *The Book of All the Dead*.

Certainly, it is one reason I have constructed a form that plays theme against theme

successively, in a quasi-fugal form, not unlike that which Pound employed in *The Cantos*. They are, as Davie suggests, energies that “interact, climb, spiral, reverse themselves and disperse.”

Then again, there’s also Wagner’s *Gesamkunstwerk* as a formal model for my cycle. *The Book of All the Dead* begins with the emergence of nature out of Nothing and ends with the New Beginning. Its main theme is the irreconcilability of Love and Power (World-Domination). Its social mission is to rescue a world presided over by degenerate idols, which is certainly Wagnerian. But enough of this!

As to your specific questions:

1) What were the names of the production company for *1857: Fool’s Gold* and *Consolations*?

All my films are produced by my production company, Lightworks.

2) Which texts from *The Cantos* were used in *1857: Fool’s Gold*?

Too many to list, I fear. I do have a copy of the texts I used, if you require them, but they are many and usually consist of just a few words.

3) Which texts from *The Cantos* did you read in *Consolations*?

Again, too many to list.

4) Would it be accurate to describe Alexa-Frances Shaw as the co-director of *Consolations*?

As regards film production credits, the term “director” makes less than accurate reference to the work done by most so-called experimental filmmakers, including myself.

It suggests that the major responsibility of the principal figure amongst those involved in

making a film is blocking action, directing actors, interpreting a script, and overseeing a set. Like many others who work in “experimental” film, I really can’t accept the division of labour that is customary amongst Hollywood filmmakers or even, for that matter, amongst so-called European art-filmmakers. It seems to me important to hold the camera in my own hands, to have my own body push it through space, to carve up the pieces it produces myself, to assemble them myself, to produce the sounds the film incorporates myself, and to assemble the sounds into a finished sound-structure myself, to decide on and to construct the sound/image relations myself. Thus, I call myself a “filmmaker” rather than a “director.” However, *Consolations* was a massive endeavour. I had to find someone to help me. Ms. Shaw was familiar with my previous work, and she is very capable. She carried an enormous burden, shooting bits and pieces of the film, editing some passages, and creating many of the sound collages according to my less-than-precise instructions. She also did all the optical printing in accordance with my suggestions, which were similarly loose. She did so not only with diligence but with imagination. Her work belonged to a creative order beyond what’s produced by those who carry out assigned work, however skilfully or painstakingly. Consequently she suffered many of the miseries of a creator. Thus the place she occupied in the making of the film seems well-described by the term “co-maker.” She certainly merits an important credit.

5) What is the running time of *Consolations*?

Consolations is actually three quasi-independent films:

- i) *The Fugitive Gods*;
- ii) *The Lighted Clearing*;

iii) *The Body and the World*.

As near as I know, their running times are, respectively, 4 1/4 hours, 4 1/2 hours, and 4 1/2 hours. You might be interested to know that the names of the four new films that contain little bits of material from *The Cantos* are:

i) *Flesh Angels*;

ii) *Newton and Me*;

iii) *Azure Serene: Mountains, Rivers, Sea and Sky*;

iv) *Exultations (In Light of the Great Giving)*.

Their running times are 117 minutes, 115 minutes, 95 minutes and 121 minutes, respectively.

6) Are these films available for rental on video?

I'm afraid not. They are just not the same on video.

I hope all this is of some use to you. If you would like more information, or if you really do want more specific information on any of this, do not hesitate to inquire. I should hope that I could respond more quickly.

Yours sincerely,

R. Bruce Elder

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Some conventions in these notes (RBE)

Heidegger 1963 is Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1963.

Miller (1986) is James Miller, *Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. (A wonderful book! RBE)

Inwood is Michael Inwood, *Heidegger*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Editor's Notes

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1. Unless otherwise noted, the text of Dante's *Commedia* is from the edition by Petrocchi with translations by Charles Singleton (1970–5). The components of the *Commedia* cited from include *Inferno* (*Inf.*), *Purgatorio* (*Purg.*), and *Paradiso* (*Par.*). Also cited are *Vita Nuova* (*VN*), the *Epistle to Cangrande* (*Epistola X/XIII*), *Monarchia* (*Mon.*), and *Rime*. The title "Driftworks, Pulseworks, Lightworks" is an editorial addition to the letter.

 2. The four films – *Flesh Angels*, *Newton and Me*, *Azure Serene: Mountains, Rivers, Sea and Sky*, and *Exultations (In Light of the Great Giving)* – are briefly discussed at the end of the letter. An unannotated version of the letter was published in *Spleen 4* (Winter/Spring 1992), a magazine edited by Innis College students at the University of

Toronto. The issue is unpaginated. It appeared in tabloid format, with densely packed print, as a supplement to the Innis Film Society's program booklet.

3. Bloom (1977), 1. The Gnostic dictum and its three variations are italicized in their original context.
4. This compound implicitly "postmodernizes" Elder's understanding of his project, for he has borrowed the term from Lyotard (1984). Elsewhere in the letter, especially in his discussion of the impact of Pound's Vorticism on his practice as a filmmaker, he implies that the cycle is deeply rooted in modernist poetics.
5. The quotation marks in the title are Elder's addition. Perhaps they are intended to signal his skeptical response to Dante's claim that the composition of the poem was directly inspired by God. Or do they merely serve to remind his reader that "Divine" was not part of the original title? Dante himself referred to his masterwork as the "Comedy" [comedia] (*Inf.* 16.128, 21.2) or as the "sacred poem" [sacrato poema, poema sacro] (*Par.* 23.62, 25.1). The honorific epithet would not appear in the title until 1555 with the publication of the Ludovico Dolce edition in Venice. See Vallone (1981) and (2000), 184.
6. Dante's four levels of interpretation – *literalis* (literal or historical), *allegoricus* (allegorical or typological), *moralis* (moral or tropological), and *anagogicus* (anagogic or apocalyptic) – are spelled out in the *Epistle to Cangrande* (*Epistole* X/XIII 7, 20–22). Elder adapts the Dantean version of the fourfold method of interpretation to his Poundian project by redefining the second level as "philosophical" and relating it to the development of consciousness under modernity. Note his strategic downplaying of

medieval typological interpretation on level two. Pound refers to the typological patterning of (sacred) historical narrative as the “repeat in history” in Letter 224: To Homer L. Pound, 285.

7. This Hegelian-sounding phrase comes from Hegel’s French commentator Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968). See Kojève (1969), 231: “It is in and by the final Fight, in which the working ex-slave acts as a combatant for the sake of glory alone, that the free citizen of the universal and homogeneous State is created; being both Master and Slave, he is no longer either the one or the other, but is the unique ‘synthetical’ or ‘total’ Man, in whom the thesis of Mastery and the antithesis of Slavery are dialectically ‘overcome’”
8. *The Cantos* XCIII 623, XCIX 699. All references to *The Cantos* are by canto number (in Roman numerals), and by page number (in Arabic numerals) from the 1970 New Directions edition.
9. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....” All biblical references are from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted.
10. For the sources of these phrases, see notes 41 (“repeat in history”) and 42 (“Purgatory of human error”).
11. Elder typically capitalizes and hyphenates this word when he is referring to Martin Heidegger’s notoriously difficult concept of *Sein* (literally “to be” or the gerund “being”). Heidegger drew a fundamental ontological distinction between *Dasein* (“temporal existence” or “being-there” in the world”) and *Sein* (the miraculous activity of existence as it shows up phenomenologically to those existents or entities, e.g., human

beings, to whom it is intelligible, and in whose temporal existence-in-the-world it is grounded). See Heidegger (1963) and Inwood (1997).

12. According to Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names* IV.8–10, angelic minds move “with spiral motion, because, even while providentially guiding their inferiors, they remain immutably in their self-identity, turning unceasingly around the Beautiful and Good whence all identity is sprung,” while the human soul moves “with a spiral motion whensoever (according to its capacity) it is enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge, not in the special unity of its being but by process of its discursive reason and by mingled and alternative activities.” On the origin of the mystic spiral in Platonic cosmology and Neoplatonic psychology, see Miller (1986), 497–8.
13. Davenport (1981), 57–8.
14. For the catalogue note on *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, see Bart Testa’s essay in this volume, note 29.
15. Major Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879–1952) invented the notion of social credit in the 1920s and went on to write a series of controversial books applying his monetary theory to economic and political issues in the 1930s. His influence on Pound’s polemics against usury and profiteering is evident in the Hell Cantos, XIV and XV. As Douglas was for Pound, so the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) has been for Elder – an authoritative shaper of his world-view – though Heidegger’s influence on the filmmaker remains primarily in the domains of metaphysics and aesthetics rather than economics and politics.
16. Originally developed in the 1920s as a technique for writing poetry in the Imagist

style, the “ideogrammic method” entails the associative linking of poetic fragments, quotations, images, and “luminous details” to represent (rather than simply to express) emotionally charged thought. Pound believed that readers should not passively receive meaning from a poem, but like biologists comparing slides under a microscope, actively generate it through engagement with the disparate specimens of poetry laid before their eyes by the poet. For a full exposition of the ideogrammic method, see its two Poundian manifestos, *ABC of Reading* (1934) and *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). For a critical account of its impact on Pound’s own work, especially *The Cantos*, see Kenner (1971). Elder has extended the application of this compositional method from verbal images in poetry to visual images in film.

17. Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) was an American orientalist whose papers, including translations of Chinese poetry and the essay “The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,” were posthumously edited by Pound. The essay first appeared as an addendum to Pound’s *Instigations* (1920), but it was later republished as a small book (1936) because of its seminal influence on Imagist poetics. Following Fenollosa’s psycholinguistic theory of “picture writing” (now widely disputed by sinologists), Pound came to believe that Chinese ideograms, in so far as they presented images of the emotionally charged experiences from which concepts were derived, provided a more direct medium for poetic communication than the alphabets of Western languages.
18. “A Retrospect,” *Literary Essays*, 5.
19. “The ideogrammic method,” Pound instructed in *Guide to Kulchur*, 51, “consists

-
- of presenting one facet and then another until at one point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register." On Chinese characters as "energy-packets" providing Pound with a model for the ideogrammic method, see Kenner (1971), 160-1.
20. On the development of Eisenstein's film aesthetics, see Eisenstein (1949) and O'Pray (1993), 211–18.
21. *Gaudier-Brzeska*, 88: "...my experience in Paris should have gone into paint. If instead of colour I had perceived sound or planes in relation, I should have expressed it in music or in sculpture. Colour was, in that instance, the 'primary pigment'; I mean that it was the first adequate equation that came into consciousness. The Vorticist uses the 'primary pigment.' Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity, into elaboration and secondary application."
22. Rexroth (1969), vi.
23. *The Cantos* LXXIV 441: "philosophy is not for young men...their generalities cannot be born from a phalanx / of particulars."
24. "How to Read," *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 25.
25. Letter 32: To George and Thomas Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, 71.
26. These doubts are expressed throughout "Drafts & Fragments," most explicitly in his concluding plea for forgiveness in the final lines of *The Cantos* (CXX 803): "I have tried to write Paradise / Do not move / Let the wind speak / that is paradise. / Let the Gods forgive what I / have made / Let those I love try to forgive / what I have made."

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27. Pound first proclaimed “the method of the Luminous Detail” in his essay series “I gather the Limbs of Osiris” (1911): see *Selected Prose*, 21.
28. Fenollosa (1936), 12.
29. “Psychology and Troubadours,” *The Spirit of Romance*, 92.
30. *The Cantos* LXXIV 449.
31. On Pound’s interest in Divus, see “Translators of Greek,” *Make It New*, 137–46. The Latin verse from Divus’s rendering of Homer’s *Nekuia* (*Odyssey* XI.1) is taken from *Make It New*, 138. For a facsimile of the original pages containing the opening lines of Divus’s translation of the *Nekuia*, see Kenner (1971), 352–3.
32. *The Cantos* LXXIV 430, 442.
33. On Eliot’s influential distinction between “sincere” and “significant” (i.e., poetically transmuted) emotions, see “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *Selected Essays* (1969), 20–2.
34. The text of Statius’s speech in Petrocchi’s edition [puoi la quantitate / comprender de l’amor ch’a te mi scalda, / quand’ io dismento nostra vanitate, / trattando l’ombre come cosa salda] differs considerably from the wording of Eliot’s Italian epigraph [la quantitate / Puote veder del amor che a te mi scalda, / Quando dismento nostra vanitate / Trattando l’ombre come cosa salda].
35. This excerpt is the opening stanza of a chorus. Swinburne’s tragedy *Atalanta in Calydon* was first published in 1865.
36. “A Retrospect,” *Literary Essays*, 3.
37. “The ‘Introduction’ to *Sonnets and Ballate*,” *Pound’s Cavalcanti*, 18.

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38. “The ‘Introduction’ to *Sonnets and Ballate*,” *Pound’s Cavalcanti*, 18–19.
39. “The ‘Introduction’ to *Sonnets and Ballate*,” *Pound’s Cavalcanti*, 18. Pound argues, in fact, that rhythm itself is perhaps “the most primal thing known to us.”
40. “Treatise on Metre,” *ABC of Reading*, 198.
41. Letter 224: To Homer L. Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, 284–5.
42. “An Introduction to the Economic Nature of the United States,” *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, 167. On this pamphlet, see Kenner (1971), 475.
43. *The Cantos* LXXXIII 531: “it [the dawn sun] shines and divides / it nourishes by its rectitude / does no injury / overstanding the earth it fills the nine fields / to heaven.”
44. *The Cantos* CXVI 797.
45. Cf. *Inf.* 4.131: “the Master of those who know” [’l maestro di color che sanno] is Aristotle.
46. Davie (1975), 84–5.