Editing a Difficult Text with the TEI
The Case of *The Cantos*

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Abstract

We will herein identify and describe several kinds of difficulties encountered while creating an XML-TEI encoding of *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. This long poem, notoriously difficult for the lay reader, presents equally complex puzzles for its editor to solve.

One is linked with the openness of its form. An exemplary Modernist work, *The Cantos* displays virtuosic tendencies to question the received boundaries of the poetic form: its integration of peritextual elements, of prose quotations of various lengths, its unsystematic treatment of these "non-poetic" fragments don't leave untouched the traditional ontologies that underlie the TEI's standard representation of a poem. This questioning is pushed further, in the late sections of the poem, with the proliferation of non-Western writing systems (especially Chinese logographs), which not only contribute to dismantling the traditional order of reading but create (at the line, stanza and page levels) a new visual organization that must be accounted for with *sui generis* specifications of the TEI vocabulary. A third series of difficulties emerges with the delimitation of the numerous explicit quotations contained in the poem, whose extremely irregular typographical marking prevents any hope for automated annotation.

In all these cases, we argue, the encoding involves an interpretive dimension, which must be made explicit in order to solve various doubts and hesitations and justify case-by-case decisions. Ultimately, we claim that it is only through an exhaustive, philologically-informed genetic enquiry into the dossier of *The Cantos* that a reasonably accurate digital edition will be produced.

Our science is from the watching of shadows

(Ezra Pound, "Canto LXXXV")

Among the canonical heavyweights of modern literature, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* occupy an eminent position as a "difficult" work. Obstacles of various orders have, since the first installments of the poem, confronted typesetters, publishers, editors, and readers alike. Although the following pages will only concern themselves with a small subset of these difficulties, namely the ones encountered in the course of a XML-TEI encoding of *The Cantos* on the basis of the current (fourteenth) printing of the collection, it might not be entirely

useless to give a rough sketch of the obstacles the text confronts the lay reader with, since many editorial issues ensue from these.

First, of course, *The Cantos* is a big book, and a very long poem. Corollary to the sheer extent of the volume, the composition of text spans over five decades of its author's life: begun, in their definitive form, in 1915, they were published in eleven successive installments between 1925 and 1969; the last collective edition published in Pound's lifetime dates from 1970 but, since his death, the volume has known several important alterations (among them, the inclusion of the two "Italian Cantos," filling the gap purposely left by Pound between Cantos LXXI and LXXIV, and the addition, under the title "Fragment (1966)," of a short concluding poem), and its current incarnation is so problematic that the very notion of a definitive edition still looms far ahead.

Such considerations would, of course, hardly qualify as factors of difficulty *per se*, were it not for the fact that they drastically increase the intricacy of the impressively tight network of encyclopedic references that shapes the singular texture of the poem: made out of thousands of allusions and quotations, in more than twenty languages, and drawing on domains of human experience as variegated as – to name but a few – classical mythology and poetry, dynastic Chinese history from the legendary first sovereigns to the 17th Century, ancient and modern economic and juridical texts, Hermetic and Neoplatonic doctrines, the Italian Renaissance, its arts and politics, the birth and development of the United States, not to mention a plethora of memories, personal or reconstructed, involving much of the literary and artistic world of the first half of the century in England, France and the U.S.A., etc. – the size and variety of this referential network (including more than 10,000 proper names), the obscurity of its often stenographic notations and allusions, its riddles and inner inconsistencies have been felt and commented on (to be lauded or dismissed) since the earliest publications of the poem.

Editorial difficulties stem, to a large extent, from the incorporation of this unruly and massive documentation into the text of the poem: questions regarding the accuracy of the quotations and their sources, the transcriptions, transliterations or translations of foreign linguistic materials, the spelling of names, etc., have resulted in a singularly convoluted textual history, made even more complex by Pound's own oscillations between two antagonistic positions: the need to produce a corrected text and the retrospective condoning of errors as felicitous textual accidents.[1] To this day, the knowledge that the current state of the

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[1] Concerning the history of the text, a useful overview is provided by Eastman (1979) and Taylor (in Rainey 1997). The war between the antagonistic positions – one could call them respectively *emendationists* and *accidentalists* – has found a provisional ending in the moratorium from Pound's publisher, New Directions, which ratifies the accidentalist position, denying *ipso facto* the relevance of any philological enquiry into the text of *The Cantos*. The untenable character of integral accidentalism – nothing more, ultimately, than a fetishized editorial status quo – is illustrated, among others, by declarations such as this one, coming from the most astute of Pound's critics: "[Cantos 72 and 73 were]

text is the result of a series of more or less expedient, often incoherent decisions still haunts many an exegete on the threshold of their arguments. Kenner (quoted in Eastman 1979, xi), for instance, voices it as plainly as follows:

> The Joyce industry has been struggling for years with its knowledge that the text of *Ulysses* is a scandal, and that the master's very list of misprints in *Finnegans Wake* contains misprints.
> The text of the *Cantos* is in still worse shape.

These very reasons made the collection an ideal test-case for a digital encoding that was, from the start, conceived as trifold. It should: 1) offer a reliable digital counterpart to the current printed text, with the advantages inherent to digital texts (accuracy, searchability, possibilities of numbering and quantitative queries at various levels); 2) provide a basis for a future collation of the various editions and genetic materials, in order to prepare the ground for a long-awaited variorum edition of the collection; 3) enrich the text with a certain number of linguistic and semantic annotations (such as passages in languages other than English, proper names of various kinds, dates, quotations, etc.), thus incorporating and, if need be – and need often was – refining, rectifying and completing the existing exegetical glosses – the most comprehensive collections being Edwards and Vasse's *Annotated Index to the* Cantos of Ezra Pound and Terrell's *Companion to* The Cantos of Ezra Pound. It followed from such long-term aims, but also from the legal status of the text (in their present form, *The Cantos* will remain under copyright for a few decades), that our encoding was conceived as a vast groundwork and should not concern itself, at that stage, with visualization- or publication-related issues.[2]

The choice of an encoding framework was, therefore, dictated by philological considerations rather than by the prospect of a publicly accessible output. For such purposes, XML-TEI appeared in many respects like the most natural medium: its text-based format implied a certain number of material advantages (costlessness, portability and interoperability, simplicity of use) while the extensible character of the XML language ensured that successive layers of annotations could, as the work progressed, be added to the existing ones – and so, theoretically, *ad infinitum*.[3]

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never published. The gap left by their absence has now become part of the poem: a fault line, record of shifting masses" (Kenner 1971, 469). Alas, for the reader of the current printing, the prophecy has been disproven: with the reintegration, in 1985, of the missing cantos, Kenner's telluric metaphor falls flat.

[2] For an overview of the various efforts made over the years to provide a digital text of *The Cantos*, see Preda (2019). We would only object to her description of our own encoding that its aim, as stated above, was indeed to "develop the annotation to *The Cantos* from the bases laid out by scholars like Terrell or Sieburth," and not to "[use] the annotations as [we] found them" (2019, 262).

[3] About text encoding in general, see Renear (2004); for a step-by-step tour of the principles underlying XML (Extensible Markup Language) and their use in text encoding, see the TEI guidelines' "Gentle

Unsurprisingly, annotating a volume as massive and complex as *The Cantos* through semantic categories proved to be a long – very long – and arduous task, but it is another, less obvious kind of difficulty that will be addressed in these pages – the one raised by the mere delimitation and identification of the 'building blocks' or structural components of the text based on their typographical properties.

Originating in the transposition from one type of document – the typeset page for which the text was originally intended, then more or less methodically adapted from one edition to the next, to fulfill specific physical requirements – into another type – the digital document, which doesn't share the same constraints (the material limitations of the printed page being erased and, with them, a certain number of typographical determinations) – many of these difficulties can appear to the literary scholar as lowly, *arrière-cuisine* questions, hardly noble enough to justify his time or attention: the accountancy of lines and stanzas, small-scale decisions concerning the textual or peritextual status of this or that part of the printed material, etc. Yet, beyond this flat-footed (if not philistine) approach, such practical questions may contribute to provide the framework for a more fundamental investigation, one concerning the methodological steps and tools that should prove relevant for a formalized analysis of modern literary texts. In other words, the constraints inherent to encoding vocabularies such as the TEI, inasmuch precisely as they cannot yield to the postmodern doxa of the incommensurability of the literary text but are normalizing instances, call for the constitution of corpora, of observables that are, in turn, to be constituted into objectivable objects of inquiry – allowing us to escape all form of "hermeneutic pleasure principle" (to borrow François Rastier's phrase).

With this ultimate goal in mind, we will focus on three sets of questions, corresponding to three levels of textual organization: in the first place, the question of the boundaries between text and peritext in *The Cantos* and their implication on that of the structural units informing the poem; second, the question of the line as the basic, fundamental unit of the poem and the way it gets complexified across the volume by Pound's idiosyncratic use of typography; finally, the question of the delimitation of implicit units, particularly thorny – and refractory to automated processing – in the case of direct speeches and quotations.[4]

Introduction to XML" (TEI Consortium 2024); about the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), see the "Editors' Introduction" in Burnard, O'Brien O'Keeffe and Unsworth (2007).

[4] As far as we know, very few investigations have been published on comparable questions – and certainly almost none concerning modern texts, since Barney's short piece on the Whitman Archive (2001). Quite popular among medievalists and scholars of the early modern period, the TEI remains conspicuously absent from the agenda of scholars of modernism. Issues related to copyright (the concrete impossibility to offer freely accessible texts over the web) may have played a part in refraining academic ardors but, more deeply, one can surmise that the very notion of philology of the modern text remains, for a vast majority of scholars of the period, a nonentity.

1. Text *versus* peritext: modernist writing and the erasure of textual boundaries

The Cantos display a certain amount of peritextual material, unambiguously distinguished by various typographical means from the body of the text, made of prosodic lines. Such is the case of prose paragraphs, tables, or lists situated before or after some of the poems: the note on the transliteration of Chinese names, for instance, that opens the third section of the collection, CANTOS LII-LXXI [5] (253), the table that immediately follows this note (254-5), [6] or the "Explication" appended to Canto LXXVII (496), which lists the ideograms present in the canto and offers a translation, etc. Such is also the case, albeit less conspicuous, of the single footnote in the collection, which can be found at the bottom of page 335:

```
IN time of common scarcity; to sell at the just price
in extraordinary let it be lent to the people
and in great calamities, give it free
                          Lieou-yu-y
                          Approved by the EMPEROR
(Un fontego *)
And in every town once a year
to the most honest citizens: a dinner
                          at expense of the emperor
no favour to men over women
Manchu custom very old, revived now by YONG  TCHING
An' woikinmen thought of. If proper in field work
get 8th degree button and
          right to sit at tea with the governor
One, european, a painter, one only admitted
And Pope's envoys got a melon
                    * Canto XXXV.
                      335
```

<div align="right">(LXI, l. 51-66).</div>

It is probably unnecessary to recall here the fact that, among the many possible ways of blurring textual boundaries (a centrifugal tendency coextensive with modernism), the inclusion, inside the text itself, of peritextual item[7] mimicking external editorial interventions

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[5] Throughout this article, small capitals will be used to refer to the ten sections of the poem, initially published (except for the last, posthumous one) as separate volumes before being collected into a single one – *The Cantos*. Quotations marks will be used where clusters or groups of cantos forming coherent sets, such as the "Chinese," "Adams" or "Malatesta cantos," traditionally acknowledged by Poundian criticism, are referred to. The individual cantos will be referred to, without quotation marks, by their Latin numerals.

[6] A table that is, in turn, followed by two other notes, in the form of two paragraphs fulfilling different functions: one identifies a reference in Canto LXXI, the other offers a reading instruction.

[7] We follow Genette's well-established terminology (1987, *passim*).

has been one of the favorite devices of modernist writing, exemplarily illustrated by the somewhat pontificating exegetical apparatus provided by Eliot to the reader of *The Waste Land* (1922), a device wittily parodied by young Zukofsky as early as 1927 in "Poem Beginning 'The.'" Joyce would soon, and not without irony either, use it in *Finnegans Wake* (II, 2), and Nabokov give it its full due, a few decades later, making it the very flesh of his sumptuous *Pale Fire* (1962). If it is, therefore, hardly surprising to find such a footnote in Canto LXI, published in 1940, one cannot but be tempted to compare it with the other "note" present in *The Cantos*; the latter can be found in ROCK-DRILL DE LOS CANTARES, published fifteen years later, in 1955:

> Adams and Clay were for entanglement.
> Right bank, which is in Virginia *
>   above bridge of the Little Falls
> ten paces

>   * where there was a law
>   against duelling.
> I alone knew how he meant to avoid that.

(LXXXVIII, l. 24-30, p. 597-98).

Here, remarkably, the content of the note has left the margins to rejoin the body of the page: the typographic marking of the repeated star is not equal to the task of disassociating text from peritext anymore, even less so since the content of the note is itself split into two lines, seamlessly caught in the visual movement of a three-step stanza. In the process, the legitimacy of the note as such has obviously ceased to be: unbound from its external anchoring, the "note" is not a note anymore, and the star a mere ironic reminder that what is now part of an encompassing whole would once have been disjoined, hierarchized and identified as material alien to the core 'text' – as if, among the many certitudes shattered between 1940 and 1955, was also that of the identity of the text to itself. This paradoxical tension towards an impossible, unreachable yet desirable order is, of course, one of the main and most constant themes in *The Cantos* – a leitmotiv embodied in figures as multifarious as Confucius, Sigismundo Malatesta, Leopold II of Tuscany, John Adams and Mussolini – but its pervasiveness on the text (be it lexicalized as "*chung*," "harmony," or "paradise") reaches much further, as this little pair of stars discreetly reminds the reader.

Of course, this divergence in the treatment of both notes could be assigned a more pedestrian origin; one could assume that the merely bibliographical content of the latter one called for its separation from the body of the page. But it is not the case – the hypothesis is invalidated not only by the many bibliographical references that are part of *The Cantos*

(caught in the flow of the poem as early as Canto I,[8] and, presented as such, in a transparently bibliographical format, as early as Canto X),[9] but, even more germane, of other explicit references made to *The Cantos* in *The Cantos* themselves. There are two occurrences, both in XCIX:

> Till the blue grass turn yellow
>   and the yellow leaves float in air
> And Iong Cheng (Canto 61)
>   of the line of Kang Hi
> by the silk cords of the sunlight
>   non disunia,
>
>   (l. 1-6, p. 714),

and a few pages later:

> But your females like to burn incense
> and buzz round in crowds and processions
>   (Mr Baller animadverts on the similarities
>   in all priestcraft
> (vide subject: "Missions" in Canto whatever)
>   (l. 211-215, p. 721).

At this later stage, Pound doesn't show any reluctance to treat adventitious considerations on the same foot as the poetic "content," the poem having abandoned its seriated, thematically-centered sequential order to develop into a kind of brooding intellectual diary, eventually including whatever matter crosses the author's path. Like an ever-expanding organism, the machinery of *The Cantos*, now transforms everything into verse,[10] including metatextual comments such as the one closing the volume.

Let us consider the concluding page, entitled "Fragment (1966)," which, in spite of its brevity, was given by the editors of a posthumous printing the status of a section of its own in

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[8] I, l. 68-9, p. 5:   Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,
                              In officina Wecheli, 1538, out of Homer.
[9] X, l. 28-9, p. 42:   *Florence*, Archivio Storico, 4th Series t. iii, e
                              "La Guerra dei Senesi col conte di Pitigliano."
[10] This phenomenon, observable from the start of the Poundian project, takes, as it has been observed since the publication of THE PISAN CANTOS, a new turn after the war and during Pound's detention, first in the DTC camp in Pisa, and later in St. Elizabeths Hospital – and certainly some of its more remarkable aspects (such as the outbursts of autobiographical references in LXXIV and LXXX) cannot be fully understood without any reference to the author's confinement.

the table of contents though, contrary to the other sections of the poem, it is not preceded by its own title page:

FRAGMENT (1966)

That her acts
            Olga's acts
                        of beauty
            be remembered.

Her name was Courage
& is written Olga

These lines are for the
    ultimate CANTO

whatever I may write
    in the interim.

[*24 August 1966*]
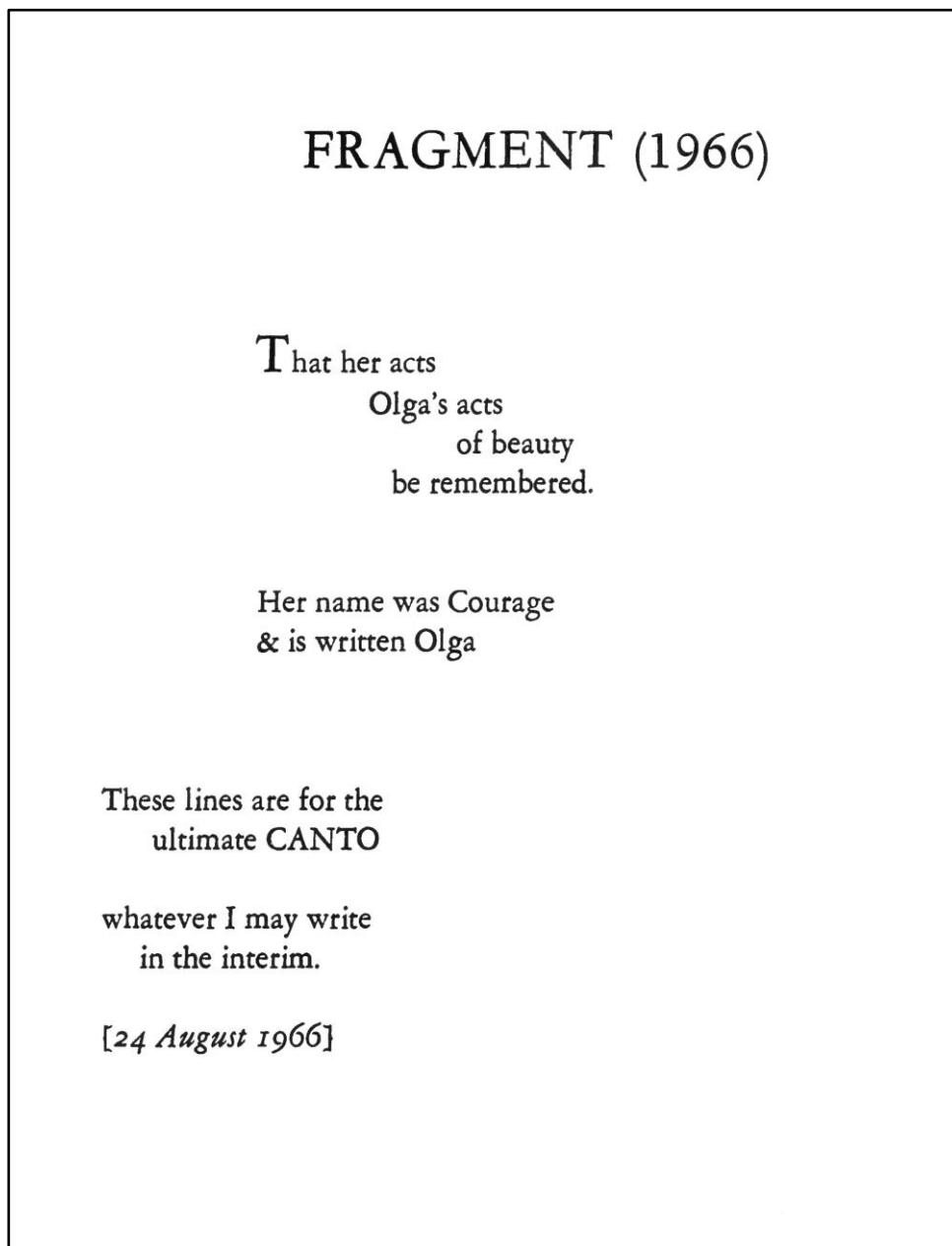
("Fragment (1966)," p. 824).

The poem is obviously split into two parts, made typographically more distinct by the triple blank line that separates them and the different disposition of each pair of stanzas (the lyrical three-step indentation, reminiscent of William Carlos Williams' maturity, is relatively rare in *The Cantos*, except in the hardly representative "Italian" Canto LXXIII, while the binary organization of the last couplets, with its indented second line, is a formal feature that runs throughout the collection and can be observed as early as Canto II); more: the "last word," since it is what the poem is about, is not strictly speaking the name of the loved one (unnamed and unmentioned until this posthumous last page), as one would expect from this sort of

retrospective dedication, but a comment framing the *ultima verba* themselves, four lines which instruct the editor, and, over his shoulder, the reader, sharing his situation of discovering these words from beyond the grave, on the treatment to give, in the economy of the volume, the first half of the poem. Yet, the layout itself makes the commentary undissociable from the lines it comments on, and, for us, must thus represent as many lines.

Meanwhile, this *interim* brings us, *by a commodius vicus of recirculation*, back to the date concluding Eleven New Cantos, second section of the collection:

> 120 million german fuses used by the allies to kill Germans
> British gunsights from Jena
> Schneider Creusot armed Turkey
> Copper from England thru Sweden... Mr Hatfield
> Patented his new shell in eight countries.
>
> ad interim 1933
>
> (XIL, p. 206)

– and, more generally, to the mock scribal devices, explicits or colophons, that close some of the poems or sections, such as:

> And in August that year died Pope Alessandro Borgia
> Il Papa mori.
>
> Explicit canto
> XXX
>
> (XXX, p. 149),

as well as:

> Bonaparte... knowing nothing of commerce....
> ... or paupers, who are about one fifth of the whole...
> (on the state of England in 1814).
>
> *Hic Explicit Cantus*
>
> (XXXI, p. 156),

and:

<div align="center">

Says Gridley: You keep very late hours!

End of this Canto.

(LXIV, p. 362).

</div>

As many marks that, caught as they are in this blurring of boundaries separating text and peritext, call for an interpretive choice: they can be read as already prefiguring the *anything goes (in)* of the later sections of the poem, and integrated in an all-encompassing notion of text (i.e., in the present case, *lines*, our basic units), according to the well-known conundrum of Nietzsche's laundry bills, or, on the contrary, re-situated in the progression that characterizes the poetic economy of the collection, and dealt with as testifying that, in their context (the early phases of development of *The Cantos* as a form), the separation between text and peritext was still operational. Founding our decision on the typographical evidence – their spacing offers a stark contrast with the relative stability of the pages layout through the first half of the volume, where they appear – we have chosen the second solution, and encoded these marks as paragraphs, external to the verse. As a result, our XML tree comprises not only a well-ordered one-to-several series of successive ramifications:

> collection >   title
>
> >   >   SECTIONS >   title
> >
> > >   >   CANTOS   >   LINE GROUPS   >   LINES[11]

as well as whitespaces, but a series of adventitious peritextual branches that can appear at every level of the XML tree: inside a line element (the aforementioned footnote on page 335); inside a line group (such as the marginal chronological indications placed in front of specific lines in Cantos LIII-LIX, mimicking the marginal running chronology in Mailla's *Histoire de la Chine*, Pound's primary source for the "Chinese cantos"); inside a canto (the pseudo-scribal notes concluding Cantos XXX, XXXI, and XLI; the "Explication" following Canto LXXVII; the note to Canto LXXXV; the epigraphs to Cantos XXXVIII and XC) and inside a section (the notes and table opening CANTOS LII-LXXI).

A case of ambiguity is provided by our "ad interim 1933," which can be read as concluding the poem (Canto LIX), or the section (ELEVEN NEW CANTOS). In favor of the first interpretation, one can invoke the parallelism with the other closing devices; against it, the fact that, contrary to the other cases, the unit it encompasses is not mentioned, and that the date also signs the closing and publication of the section, which appeared first as a separate volume (it could even be argued that, in its first occurrence, at the end of Canto XXX, the

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[11] Capitals denote multiple elements (realized or not) and lowercase single ones.

scribal mark, though explicitly referring to the canto,[12] is actually, from its mere position and uniqueness in the section – which was once a separate volume, a fact that one should keep in mind in order to make sense of many a negligence and inconsistency observable throughout the collected volume – underlining its completion as well as self-enclosure). We have chosen the second reading.
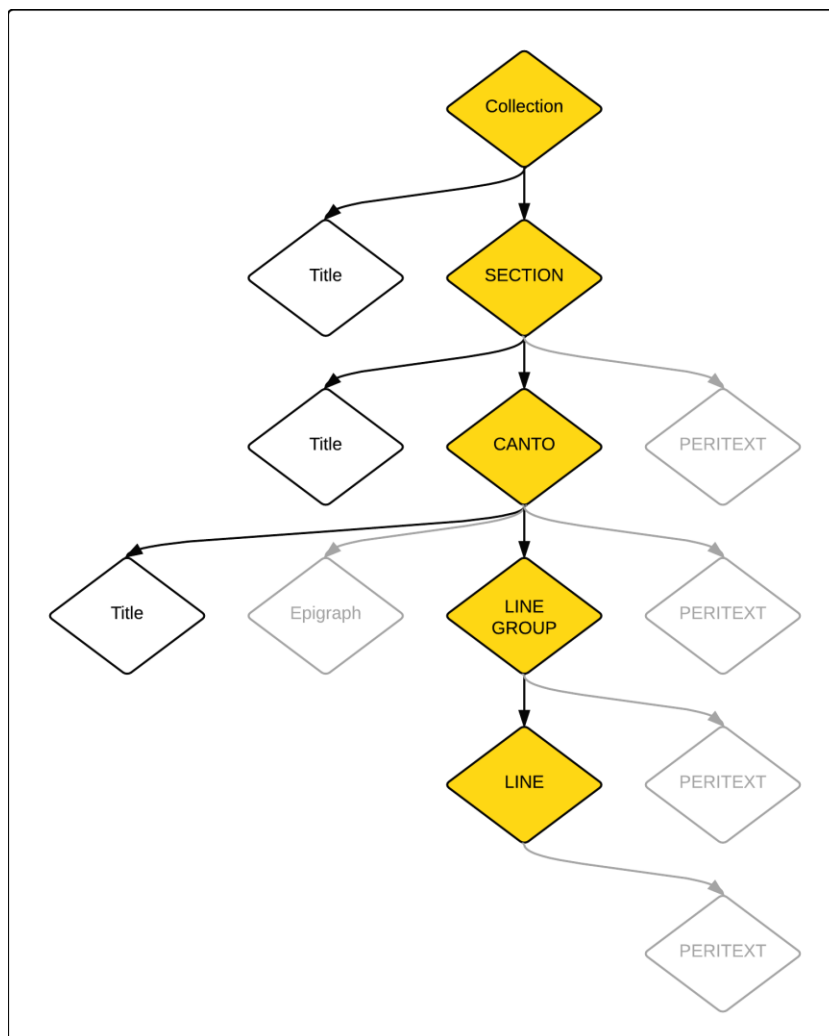

Fig. 1: Provisional encoding schema

Fig. 1 represents this structural tree, which is nothing more than the simplified version of our primitive XML schema.[13]

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[12] Unless "*cantus*" is taken in a metonymic sense to refer to the poem as a whole.

[13] Multiple elements (observed or potential) are in capitals; facultative elements are in grey; on an orange background is the "spine" of the structure, the "poem" or collection – indeed, a doubt remains, concerning the genre of *The Cantos*: even if the plural comes more spontaneously, it is seldom without a momentary (if post-factum) doubt about the propriety of this plural repeatedly denounced by Pound ("poEM, not poems"). The epigraphs have been isolated, in conformity with their default representation in TEI. All other peritextual elements are, in our file, represented by <note/> or <table/> elements, depending on the disposition of their contents. The title of each canto is simply its number, except in the case of LXXIII, which bears the title "*Cavalcanti / Corrispondenza Repubblicana*," and the strange double titling, Roman and Arabic, of "CANTO 104   CIV" (a blatant misprint, dating from the 1970 collected edition and persisting through reprints, since, in the separate 1959 edition of THRONES, each canto was numbered with Arabic numerals).

Nothing really surprising at this point – but the reader may be reassured: more complications are to follow.

2. What is a line? (1) – Prose in verse

For things are, of course, actually a little more complicated. Indeed, if the previous schema adequately describes the vast majority of the cantos, the reader opening the volume at random may also find the following:

Quincey Nov. 13, 1815

Is that despotism
or absolute power...unlimited sovereignty,
is the same in a majority of a popular assembly,
..... an aristocratical council, an oligarchical junto,
and a single emperor, equally arbitrary, bloody,
and in every respect diabolical. Wherever it has resided
has never failed to destroy all records, memorials,
all histories which it did not like, and to corrupt
those it was cunning enough to preserve.....

If the troops cd. be fed upon long letters, I believe the gent. at
    the head of that dept. (in this country) wd. be the best
    commissary on earth. But till I see him determined to act,
    not to write; to sacrifice his domestic ease to the duties
    of his appointment, and apply the resources of this country,
    wheresoever they are to be had, I must entertain a different
    opinion of him.

T. J. to P. Henry, March '79.

(XXXIII, p. 160).

As one can observe from this fragment, after the stanza-like preamble, congruent with the versification of the Adams-Jefferson correspondence in the previous two cantos, Pound switches to the strange prosaic disposition illustrated by the second paragraph (a disposition that will be maintained in the rest of the canto), with each first line hanging, most of the paragraphs being separated by a blank line.

This canto and a few other passages in the collection tend to prove apagogically that, from Canto XXV onwards (i.e. with the end of the systematic capitalization of each line's first letter, prevalent until then), the irregular line break is the only evidence of the fact that we are in presence of verse. In particular, since these first "American cantos" are almost entirely made

of quotations from Adams and Jefferson's (prose) letters, the nature of the source-text is, in itself, completely irrelevant to the identification of the poem *qua* genre.

There is no need to insist on the radically de-ontologizing character operated by the dismembering of the inner rules of versification, which, following Verlaine, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, have induced the main shift in the history of verse, dismantling a series of metrical and prosodic constraints, ruled by the ear, in favor of a fundamentally visually driven regime in which the blank space on the printed page becomes a defining element – a shift of which the modern, then postmodern fate has been to draw, configure and map all possible consequences. Still, the requirements of an XML encoding of a text such as *The Cantos* forces us to consider the ways in which the very notion of structural unit is touched by this shift. What can be the intended difference between the free-form "stanza" that opens Canto XXXIII and the following series of paragraphs? We wouldn't be surprised if an answer, however whimsical, anecdotal or circumstantial were to be found dormant in the publisher's archives or an unpublished correspondence.[14]

Let us take another example. The majority of the prose passages in *The Cantos* are found in two of the "Malatesta cantos": IX (passages from letters that Sigismundo's enemies discover in the post-bag snatched from a courier) and X. The latter is a quotation from Pius II's *Commentarii*, given, according to Pound's text itself, after Yriarte's biography of Sigismundo, separated from the rest of the text by lines of dots:

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14 Hans Walter Gabler (private communication) expressed the view that Pound, poet of the typewriter age *par excellence* could not refrain to experiment in any possible way with the typographic display. We subscribe to this view entirely: beyond the appearance of the printed page, a "variation principle" seems to us to constitute one of the tenets of the Poundian poetics.

> ET SCRIPTURA EX ORE PRODIIT, QUAE DICERET:
>   SIGISMUNDUS HIC EGO SUM
> MALATESTA, FILIUS PANDULPHI, REX PRODITORUM,
> DEO ATQUE HOMINIBUS INFESTUS, SACRI CENSURA SENATUS
> IGNI DAMNATUS;
>
>   SCRIPTURAM
> MULTI LEGERUNT.   DEINDE ASTANTE POPULO, IGNE IMMISSO,
> ET PYRA SIMULACRUM REPENTE FLAGRAVIT.
>   *Com. Pio II, Liv. VII, p. 85.*
>   *Yriarte, p. 288.*
>
> . . . .
>
> So that in the end that pot-scraping little runt Andreas
>   Benzi, da Siena
> Got up to spout out the bunkum
> That that monstrous swollen, swelling s. o. b.
>   Papa Pio Secundo
>   Æneas Silvius Piccolomini
>   da Siena
> Had told him to spout, in their best bear's-greased latinity;

(X, p. 43-44).

The discrepancy between this passage and its surroundings is triply marked: by the dotted lines that frame it, by the use of small capitals, and by its prose disposition. Such a layout makes all the more martial its relation of the death sentence that has been pronounced against Sigismundo and is being carried on his effigy (*imago*). The "testimonial" effect of the layout – as though the reader were directly confronted to the sources the author had under his eyes while transcribing them – is the same that was used by Pound in the post-bag episode (IX), and that will be used, much later, in the three prose paragraphs of XCVI, the first canto in THRONES, two of which are quotations from the dense columns of Migne's *Patrologie*, whose form they imitate – the intrusion, inside Pound's text, of alien textual shapes, as blatantly irrupting and disrupting the verse continuity as Drummond's *"pedra no meio do caminho."* And indeed, thus isolated and magnified, the ominous description by Pius II of the torment inflicted on his enemy seems to be conveyed to the reader directly from some stone or other *arida materia* it would have been carved in. Yet, interestingly, even inside this marmoreal block of prose, an unruly spacing reemerges, as a trace of inextinguishable tension towards the versified form. It happens first with the description of the inscribed sign (*scriptura*) carried by Sigismundo's dummy, displaying for the edification of the Roman crowd his fictitious direct speech ("I am this Sigismundo / Malatesta, son of Pandolph, king of traitors"…), with a

strange re-alignment of the second line, as if the urge towards the verse was disputing from the inside the prosaicism of the passage. The line break following "damnatus" marks the end of this pseudo-direct speech identifying the burning effigy – but, where one would expect standard prose disposition to reclaim its rights, "*scripturam,*" at the very end of the line, not quite justified on the right but floating, as if caught in between two typographical regimes, leaves us with an incertitude: are we reading prose, or verse that would have, the better to deceive us, taken the appearance of prose? Which is more, the reader curious to check whether Pound merely imitates here the typographical layout of his source will find that it is not at all the case: Yriarte quotes Pius' *Commentary* as any other of his sources: a continuous block of prose, in lowercase italics, without any of the marking and spacing present in Pound's text.

If variations on questions such as "what is a line?" may sound somewhat rhetorical, or even idle, when raised inside a frame that aimed precisely to explore the boundaries of traditional verse, it should be noted that, although the question is not raised by most pages of *The Cantos*, this unsettling of the standard prosodic regime does occur, localized in a few passages of the collection that, if not necessarily central in terms of Poundian poetics, suffice to cast a doubt on the 'naturality' of the prosodic-typographic line as the structuring unit of the poem. More fundamentally, we will argue, these quirks, caprices or impulses (were they to be rationalized, even, by reduction to a sloppy proofreading) are part, as well as Pound's taste for imitation of the formal features of his sources, of a vast *principle of variation* that runs throughout *The Cantos* and is particularly visible in the poet's treatment of proper names.[15]

In any case, the presence of prose passages does not leave untouched our intended structural encoding. For, if each canto is *most generally* made of line groups, and each line group made of lines, how should the encoder deal with such prose paragraphs? They cannot, assuredly, be treated as lines in the sense of prosodic lines and encoded as such without distorting both the commonly received notion of line and the TEI tags.

Since one of the goals of the encoding was to provide the reader with a consistent text, the difference between prose and verse had to be marked; however, it would have been an unduly conceptualist view to deal with each of these paragraphs as logical lines (which they certainly are – but not only, since they are also, at least, signs of disruption of the 'poetic order' which presides over the poem as an ensemble), and are inscribed as such on the page. As a consequence, we opted for a pragmatic compromise, consisting in a division of the paragraphs into typographical lines, referenced (as <span/>s) in the continuity of the 'real' (logical) lines.

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[15] Such a principle is by itself not exclusive, it should be noted, from a certain flamboyant sloppiness, consistent with Pound's anti-philological agenda.

Such a mixture of essential and accidental[16] is not fully satisfactory on theoretical grounds, and tends to give our witness, the fourteenth printing (whose legitimacy lies only in the fact that it is the current standard incarnation of the text, deemed satisfactory by the publisher and the Pound estate, and accepted as such by the community of readers) a weight that shouldn't bear on the encoding itself.

This ambiguity concerning the status of the printed text (which is, in last instance, only an incarnation, among other possible ones, of *The Cantos*) brings us back once more to the necessary distinction, proposed by Rastier (2012), between text, document, and work ("*œuvre*"). Our encoding is an encoding of the *work*, *The Cantos*, on the basis of a *document* (the 14th printing), assuredly, but the process itself results in the creation of another *document*, which is not a mere duplicate of its source, in spite of the identity of their respective *texts*.

Yet, only a careful and comprehensive philological investigation would allow us to solve some of these thorny, if statistically marginal, riddles.[17] Meanwhile, the "lines" (most of them written and read as such; a few of them, accidental incarnations of the constant width of the printed page) will be, in the rest of this analysis, our most frequent unit of reference.
Our completed schema reads as in Fig. 2, below.

A final specification: since we had to depart from a strictly coherent ontological model in adopting this typographical criterion, we chose to extend our agnosticism to the non verbal elements, and thus encode our two dotted lines in Canto X as lines (<span/> with an @l attribute). Not having done so would have raised insurmountable questions as to the nature of other non-verbal elements also present in the collection and proven to be a kind of Pandora's box.

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[16] Essential are the line breaks in the verse, decided by the author and, in an overwhelming majority of cases, reproduced as such in the printed text. Accidental is the constant width of the printed page, and thus the layout of the prose passages (when they occupy the whole width of the page).

[17] A comparable case is offered by the many running lines, that one can suspect to have been split for mere reasons of length – particularly in the early cantos, where the use of blank space is still hesitant, some very short typographical lines, aligned on the right, tend to imply that they were split for materials reasons only. Here too, only a careful investigation of the sources would allow us to solve some of these doubts through case-by-case arguments.

Fig. 2: Revised encoding schema[18]

3. What is a line? (2) – The ideogrammatic model

If the standard unmetered line of modernism governs most of *The Cantos*, yet another questioning of this norm is enacted in a second dimension, with the appearance, fugitive in Canto XXXIV, more insistent in the "Chinese Cantos," and proliferating between the PISAN CANTOS and THRONES, of Chinese logograms, which induces a breach in the linearity of alphabetical scripts. On the one hand, the double modality (vertical and horizontal) of the Chinese writing disrupts the repeated scanning of successive lines associated with Western writing systems:

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[18] The blue arrows and respectively depending elements indicate the exclusive alternative between line groups and paragraphs in Cantos IX, X, XXXIII, and XCVI.

Thus, for example, this passage, from page 576:

Iterum dico

太   T'AI MEOU   1637
                        1562

戊

武   OU TING   1324
                        1265

丁

cognovit aerumnas

Here the eye – if one, that is, accepts the notion that the Chinese characters are not just embellishments, but are also to be *read* – is offered hardly compatible courses:

(1) ⟶
(2?) ↓   (3?) ⟶↓
(4?) ↓   (5?) ⟶↓
(6?) ⟶

or perhaps:

(1) ⟶
(2?) ↓   (3?) ⟶↓
(4?) ↓
(5?) ↓   (6?) ⟶↓
(7?) ↓
(8?) ⟶

etc. – an undecidability that doesn't leave untouched our notion of what 'a line' is, and how it should be read. More, as we can infer from the vertical alignment of the dates in the previous passage, the influence of the Chinese writing system extends beyond the logograms themselves and end up transforming radically the composition of the printed page. Thus, if we were invited to assume, because of the presence of dates, that the capitalized words ("T'ai Meou" and "Ou Ting") were anthroponyms, and guess, in turn, that they merely transliterated both pairs of logograms, presenting us with an alternative, function of our (in)capacity to read the Chinese script, this diffracted ordering can take the proportion of more complex visual riddles. The top of page 564, for instance, reads:

and jump to the winning side

                (turbae)

II. 9. have scopes and beginnings   tchōung

仁   智   chèu

jen^2 chih^4 i-li

are called chung$^{1-4}$

Here, no more biunivocal relation between scripts. And, even if, after due consultation of the experts, we are able to identify, as our typographical intuition would have invited us to do, "仁" to "jen^2" and "智" to "chih^4," and even if we were able to formulate a "user's manual" for a passage such as this, and to generalize its teachings to the many other passages of similarly intricate layout, we probably would still be clueless as to the units here at play that could be convincingly described as 'lines.' Should we count
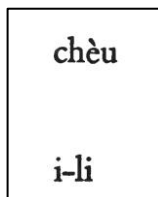
仁

jen^2

or

智

chih^4

as units, since they seem to respond ('vertically,' one could say) to so many other 'horizontal' transliteration glosses, such as

our 中 chung[1]

(LXXXIV, p. 560),

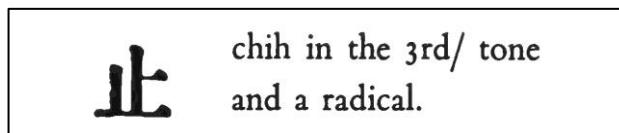for instance? And, were we to do so, should we also consider

chèu

i-li

as a single 'prosodic line' on the basis of the disposition, parallel to the other two columns? Should it, then, also include "tchōung" on the grounds of vertical alignment? But what about "(turbae)," which is part of the same alignment (bilingual lines, after all, are far from infrequent in *The Cantos*)? As one can easily conceive, here lies another conundrum. We have thus chosen to remain agnostic and adopt, provisionally at least, the commonsensical solution consisting in considering the (horizontal) typographical line as a basic unit, at the risk of dismembering semantic units (such as "T'ai Meou" and "Ou Ting" in the abovementioned passage), or of contradicting the constellation-like explosion of the prosodic line into discrete units. Thus, the passage is annotated as:

[15]   and jump to the winning side

[16]   (turbae)

[17] II. 9. have scopes and beginnings   tchōung

[18] 仁   智   chèu

[19] jen[2]   chih[4]   i-li

[20] are called chung[1-4]

A solution which is obviously unsatisfactory from a theoretical point of view, but allows indexing tasks otherwise almost impossible, and, above all, spares us hazardous and costly ontological speculations on the nature of the line in a biscriptal context. On the other hand, it should be noted that this convention makes the encoding of vertical sequences of sinographs, names for instance (such as the previously mentioned passage from p. 576), impossible as a
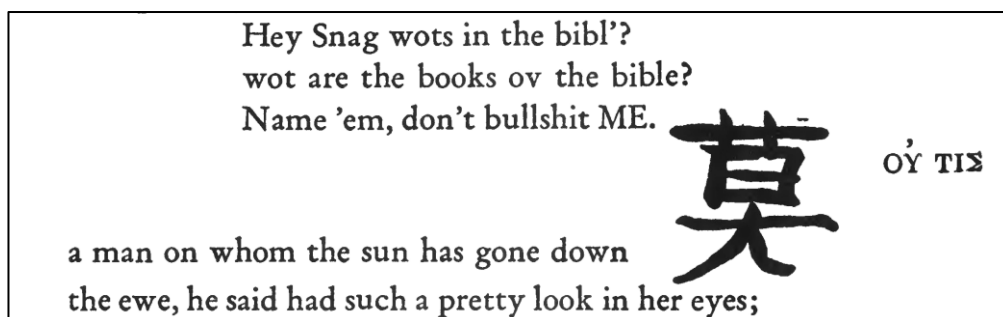
unique element. They had to be split and given special attributes (@prev and @next), in order to link them without overlap.

A recurring difficulty stemming from this option and from the particular plastic qualities of the Chinese script, which Pound systematically displays as very large characters, is that of the case (extremely frequent) where a single logogram is aligned with at least two lines of Roman text, such as:

止 chih in the 3rd/ tone and a radical.

(LXXXVII, p. 591),

or even more ambiguously, as:

Hey Snag wots in the bibl'?
wot are the books ov the bible?
Name 'em, don't bullshit ME.

莫 ΟΥ ΤΙΣ

a man on whom the sun has gone down
the ewe, he said had such a pretty look in her eyes;

(LXXIV, p. 450).

Here again, we have considered all existing typographical lines as units, and tried to integrate the logograms in their continuum, situating them, whenever possible, at the same level than their transliteration or alphabetic equivalent. In the last case, for instance, the character "莫" (the negation) is semantically as well as typographically paired with "ΟΎ ΤΙΣ" (Οὖτις, "no-one," the pseudonym with which Odysseus answers Polyphemus' question), and the Chinese and Greek tokens were thus counted as a single, autonomous line.

In passing, we cannot but remark how much the irruption of sinographs, with their specific size and disposition, contributes to challenging another structural level of the poem: the stanza. Their incommensurability with the fixed size of Roman and Greek alphabetical types gives rise to a permanent uncertainty as to which blank lines are intentionally empty, and which are a mere physical consequence of this plurality of graphic systems. Let us consider, for instance, the case of page 679, which offers a series of words from the *Eparch's Book*, translations into English and (presumably) Chinese equivalent or associated ideas, we are facing, in the form of a table:

and the idea of just price is somewhere,
          the haggling, somewhere,
also
     ἀλογίστους quite beautifully used
               tho' utopian   紫   tzu³

καπηλεύων   or   之   chih¹

στομύλος   that is "mouthy"   奪   to²⁻⁵
ἀγοραῖος   forensic

λάλος   babbler   朱   chu¹

ταραχώδης   as on the East bank from Beaucaire
μὴ τῇ τοῦ ἐπάρχου ἐσφραγισμένον

(XCVI, p. 679).

In spite of the tabular layout, the notion that the right-side columns would consist in translations or equivalents of the Greek tokens on the left soon vanishes when one starts considering the text at close range: "or" is not a translation of "καπηλεύων," no more than "as on the East bank from Beaucaire" could be in any way equivalent to "ταραχώδης" and the same suspicion naturally comes to involve the sinographs. But the very organization of the elements on the page, with the double line ("στομύλος / ἀγοραῖος" and the English corresponding tokens) to which respond the single character "to²⁻⁵" suffices to give away the fact that we are not facing here a proper tabular series of equivalences. Pound may have had in mind to emulate, as with the columns from Migne, the disposition of Nicolle's edition of *The Book of the Eparch*[19] and the first two columns might be a remnant of some previous organization (possibly in the form of notes or marginalia) of the source material, but the Chinese characters, under the same guise, transform the whole logic of the page.

Thus, the stanzaic organization itself, that structured in the first half of the volume, ultimately becomes obsolete. In this respect, the publication history is witness to the progressive displacement and extension of the role played by sinographs in the poem: while their presence at the end of some of the "Chinese cantos" was still a mere embellishment, and

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[19] "In 1891, he translated it into both modern Greek and Latin in parallel columns," notes Terrell (1985, 604).

depended, primarily, of the amount of blank space remaining at the end of each section,[20] they become central features of the layout from the PISAN CANTOS onwards, and contribute largely to the shift towards a Mallarméan-like space, an atomization of the lines and correlative fragmentation of the text.

4. Of direct speeches, quotations, and resulting punctuational fireworks

Another objective of our encoding is to identify all speech instances that are not referred to the "*ego scriptor cantilenae*" (XXIV, LXII, LXIV), also mentioned as "E. P." (XLII), without consideration of the Protean juxtaposition of *personae* he successively endorses, in other words all direct speeches and quotations present in *The Cantos*. Such a task is, of course, a long term one, and we have, for the time being, primarily focused on *explicit* quotations, by which we mean those typographically separated from the unmarked text by quotation marks (and which are also generally introduced by speech verbs such as *said*, *says*, etc. accompanied by colons).

This formal criterion could seem a reasonable point of departure for a semi-automated tagging, consisting in inserting automatically beginning and end-tags through a search for quotation marks, followed by a manual correction of the results thus gathered. Alas, even a cursory look at a random page from *The Cantos* reminds us that this criterion is far from being consistent – if even present. There are indeed many quotes distinguished as such, for instance, but the marking can alternate between double and single quotes as in:

"quel naszhong" said the gamin to Ed

(XCI, l. 134, p. 634)

versus:

'I am pro-Tcheou' said Confucius

(LIII, l. 177, p. 268).

Worse, in a multitude of other cases, quotes are not isolated by any mark at all:

So I sez: Wot is the matter?

(XXII, l. 94, p. 103),

so that their delimitation is left to the discrimination of the reader.

Conversely, of course, not all the fragments isolated by quotation marks can be assumed to be quotations; among those we find different kinds of proper names:

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[20] See the Pound-Faber & Faber correspondence in Taylor (in Rainey 1997).

- pseudonyms or *noms-de-plume*;[21]
- names of ships;[22]
- names of organizations;[23]
- titles;[24]
- phonetic transcriptions;[25]
- passages in foreign languages;[26]
- translations;[27]
- words in mention;[28]

and all the array of words or expressions which the author wants to keep at a distance, making clear that, to some extent at least, they aren't *his* words:

> And Sigismundo got up a few arches,
>
> And stole that marble in Classe, "stole" that is,
>
> (IX, l. 71-72, p. 36),

or:

> And [Kung] said nothing of the "life after death."
>
> (XIII, l. 54, p. 59).

Reciprocally, none of these categories is consistently distinguished from the rest of the text by being printed between quotes. From the start, then, we could not consider passages between quotation marks as more that separated *for some reason left to be determined* from the rest of the text.[29]

---

[21] *E.g.* LXXVIII, l. 120, p. 500:
  Tailhade and "Willy" (Gauthier-Villars) […].
[22] *E.g.* XXXI, l. 28, p. 153:
  the 'Maryland' […].
[23] *E.g.* XLII, l. 86, p. 211:
  'The Abundance' […].
[24] *E.g.* III, l. 4, p. 11:
  the Buccentoro twenty yards off, howling "Stretti" […].
  or LXXVI, l. 230, p. 480:
  le bozze "A Lume Spento" […].
[25] *E.g.* XLVIII, l. 59, p. 241:
  Galileo; pronounced 'Garry Yeo' […].
[26] *E.g.* LXXX, l. 31, P. 514:
  Do they sell such old brass still in "Las Américas" […].
[27] *E.g.* XCVI, l. 243, p. 679:
  στομύλος that is "mouthy" […].
[28] *E.g.* CXVI, 54, p. 816:
  the verb is "see," not "walk on" […].
[29] Their default markup in TEI would thus be a <hi/> or <emph/> tag.

And while such questions arise in the case of quotes whose extent is lesser or equal to a single line, they become much more arduous when quotes extend over a line break; there, three standard cases can be observed:

- a marking of both beginning and end, leaving the intermediary lines to be added as part of the quotation:

    "Observed that the paint was

    Three quarters of an inch thick and concluded,

    As they were being rammed through, the age of that

    Cruiser."

    (XXVII, l. 7-10, p. 129),

- a series of opening quotes in front of each line, to which correspond only a single closing quote:

    "No, we are Croat merchants, commercianti,

    "There is nothing strange in our history."

    (XXVII, l. 42-3, p. 130),

- an explicit marking of the entirety of the quoted text:

    "J'ai obtenu" said M. Curie, or some other scientist

    "A burn that cost me six months in curing,"

    (XXVII, l. 18-9, p. 129).

The fact that these three different types of marking can occur in the same canto, barely at a page distance, is quite emblematic of the lack of systematicity that can be observed throughout the volume, which obviously results in a series of interpretive riddles – how to interpret the vast stretches of the poem that are made of such quotes, if one is in the dark concerning the possibility to identify the speakers. Even when a formal pattern is prevalent, or an alternation between concurring models identifiable, the technique of collage can create, by a mere juxtaposition of voices, a doubt about the extension of the quotes:

> "That are in San Samuele (young ladies)
>
>   are all to go to Rialto
>
> And to wear yellow kerchief, as are also
>
> Their matrons (ruffiane)."
>
> "Ambassador, for his great wisdom and money,
>
> "That had been here as an exile, Cosimo
>
> "Pater."
>
> "Lord Luigi Gonzaga, to be given Casa Giustinian."
>
> (XXVI, l. 116-23, p. 124).

For, to these more or less regular cases, should be added the vast number of quotations whose beginning only is marked, but no end. In some cases, the text is explicit enough to allow the reader to supply the missing instructions:

with comment:

' and is surely very humane IF we estimate

the coalheaver's expectation: two years on an average

and the 50,000 girls on the streets, at three years' of life

' for the better securing of the plantations' trade

whereas divers acts 7th and 8th William Third

in preamble for Chapter the twenty second

Don't it remind you of alderman Bekford

instructing his overseers

(treat 'em rough) in the West Indies

Adams to William Tudor

1818

(LXXI, l. 232-42, p. 420-1).

Here, the mention of the correspondents provides a *terminus ad quem*, although the content of the previous line may legitimately be thought a Poundian comment rather than a faithful transcription of his source; but some cases are more difficult to interpret. See for instance, at the bottom of page 341:

> Born 1735; 19th Oct. old style; 30th new style John Adams
> its emolument gave but a bare scanty subsistence.
> ' Passion of orthodoxy in fear, Calvinism has no other agent
> study of theology
>   wd/ involve me in endless altercation
> to no purpose, of no design and do no good to
>   any man whatsoever...
> not less of order than liberty...
>   Burke, Gibbon, beautifiers of figures...
> middle path, resource of second-rate statesmen...
>   produced not in Britain:
>   *tcha*
> tax falls on the colonists.   茶

(LII, l. 22-32).

Here, only the sources could help us identify the end of the quotation – if such a thing can be decided, that is, in a context entirely made of unmarked quotations; if not, the question of the meaning of the opening quote remains to be determined.

A passage of XLVI (l. 43-64, p. 232) offers, in barely twenty lines, an enlightening condensation of the obstacles that the hope of an automated encoding would meet:

<blockquote>

19 years on this case, suburban garden,

‘Greeks!’ sez John Marmaduke ‘a couple of art tricks!

[45]   ‘What else? never could set up a NATION!’

‘Wouldn’t convert me, dwn’t HAVE me converted,

‘Said “I know I didn’t ask you, your father sent you here

“to be trained. I know what I’d feel.

“send my son to England and have him come back a christian!

[50]   “what wd. I feel?”’ Suburban garden

Said Abdul Baha: “I said ‘let us speak of religion.’

“Camel driver said: I must milk my camel.

“So when he had milked his camel I said ‘let us speak of religion.’

And the camel driver said: It is time to drink milk.

[55]   ‘Will you have some?’ For politeness I tried to join him.

Have you ever tasted milk from a camel?

I was unable to drink camel’s milk. I have never been able.

So he drank all of the milk, and I said: let us speak of religion.

‘I have drunk my milk. I must dance.’ said the driver.

[60]   We did not speak of religion.” Thus Abdul Baha

Third vice-gerent of the First Abdul or whatever Baha,

the Sage, the Uniter, the founder of a religion,

in a garden at Uberton, Gubberton, or mebbe it was some

other damned suburb, but at any rate a suburban suburb […].

</blockquote>

Two direct speeches are transcribed on this page, the first one assigned to “John Marmaduke” (l. 44-50) and the second to “Abdul Baha” (l. 51-60). The parallelism in the construction is reinforced by three framing mentions of the “suburban garden” (l. 43, 50 and 63-64) between which each speech is inserted. But immediately noticeable is the fact that their utterances are not marked through the same typographical means: Marmaduke’s speech is introduced by single quotes (*more Britannico*), whereas Abdul Baha’s is by double quotes (*more Americano*). This discrepancy is enough to force us to consider both graphemes in our search for explicit

reported speeches; yet, the problem reaches a new level of complexity when we notice that both speeches contain in turn direct speeches (that we could call *second degree direct speeches*), which are themselves marked with the type of quote available in the context of the first degree speech, i.e. double quotes for Marmaduke's speech and single quote for Abdul Baha's – and not quite so, even, since, in the latter, only the interlocutor's words are between quotes, whereas the words of Abdul Baha (quoting himself) are not, and are only formally marked by colons. Now, if we turn back to Marmaduke's speech, we realize that the second-degree speech (attributed to an unspecified speaker) is introduced without colons.

A third level of complexity, shattering all hopes for an automated recognition, comes from the marking of the beginning of typographical lines. We have mentioned the fact that Pound's practice alternates between a logical marking of direct speeches, with marks before and after the quoted passage, and the repetition of an opening quotation mark at the beginning of each quoted line. Here, both systems coexist in a rather unruly way. In Marmaduke's speech, each line is marked (with single quotes, then) – until the opening of the second-degree speech, when running double quotes replace the single ones, instead of being framed by them (as one would expect); on the other hand, Abdul Baha's speech starts with this running opening quote, but it gets interrupted after two lines, and only the logical closing quote will reappear at the end of the speech. No script, however cautious or sophisticated, can possibly account for such textual playfulness.

Such considerations, as trivial as they may appear to whom considers poetics a matter of *big picture*, are nevertheless, we believe, relevant on several grounds. First, they provide, through a scale model, an assessment of the kind of complexity that any automated treatment of the literary text is liable to face if its goal is to produce fine-grained textual analyses, rather than some dubious 'information extraction,' based on the oblivion of the generic constraints that inform literature *qua* literature (especially in the recent past, where the myth of the 'big data' has taken an overpowering weight in authorized circles); it is precisely because literature is the locus of the elaboration of meanings through an ever-renewed confrontation with linguistic materials – see Mallarmé's famous reply to Degas, reported by Valéry: "[I]t is not with ideas that one writes verse… *It is with words.*"[30] – that the interpretive dimension of reading (and of that explicitly formalized reading, namely encoding) cannot be overridden.

Second, such usage of discrepancies, irregularities, incoherencies, omnipresent through the poem, brings us back, once more, to philological questions. A large amount of the inconsistencies that an XML encoding unwillingly reveals in the printed version of *The Cantos*, some of which would probably escape even professionally trained eyes, are the result of a complex and problematic publishing history. Some of these decisions having been taken

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[30] "[C]e n'est point avec des idées que l'on fait des vers… *C'est avec des mots.*" (Valéry 1960, 1208).

after Pound's death, and a great deal more during his last years, at a point where it seems that he neither assented nor dissented to the proposed changes, there is no reason to believe that the history of the text is closed. On the contrary, one can be certain that a systematic exploration of the genetic archive will reveal, to quote Kenner's metaphor, the "fault line[s], record[s] of shifting masses," in the history of textual transmission, and allow editors to provide a text of *The Cantos* unencumbered or at least partly freed from the sediments of errors that fifty years of incoherent editorial interventions have deposited on its surface.

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Dehradun, December 18, 2024

Acknowledgements

Bionote

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