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# A Critical Edition of Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*

Problems and Solutions

*Ronald Bush and David Ten Eyck*

## ABSTRACT

If for no other reason the fact that all published editions of the *Pisan Cantos* have been unable to execute Ezra Pound's instructions for the insertion of Greek and have omitted over fifty sets of Chinese characters that he directed his publishers to include would be sufficient cause to re-edit the poem. But the case for a new edition is stronger than that. Owing to the extraordinary conditions of its composition and transmission, approximately five hundred corruptions of Pound's typescript text survived into the poem's first English and American publications. Pound's typescript of the *Pisan Cantos* was prepared during his incarceration in the US Army Disciplinary Training Center (DTC) an American military prison camp near Pisa during the summer and autumn of 1945, and was the product of the harsh conditions of his imprisonment (his wavering memory following a mental breakdown, his lack of books, and the many errors he inevitably produced typing at odd hours on unfamiliar typewriters). Just as seriously, many of Pound's emended carbons never reached his editors at *New Directions* and he was forced during his continued incarceration in the U.S. to delegate responsibility for many kinds of correction he would normally have made himself. He was also denied access to his originals at every stage proofing. Although there can never be a definitively "corrected edition" of the *Pisan Cantos* because Pound made inconsistent emendations on different typescript leaves and kept his publishers in the dark about which instances of idiosyncratic spelling, quotation, and punctuation he wished them to correct, this does not mean that an edition cannot be established that eliminates the corruptions that later crept into the text and that carries out Pound's implicit and explicit expectations for producing the poem, many of which his first editors never fully understood. A critical edition based on the typescripts Pound produced at Pisa and including a complete historical apparatus is currently in preparation with Oxford University Press and will not only achieve these aims but also make it possible to understand the deficiencies of the poem's currently circulating texts.

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IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THE FACT THAT ALL PUBLISHED EDITIONS of the *Pisan Cantos* have been unable to execute Ezra Pound's instructions for the insertion of Chinese and Greek and have omitted over fifty sets of Chinese characters that he directed his publishers to include would be suf-

ficient cause to re-edit the poem. But the case for a new edition is stronger than that. Owing to the extraordinary conditions of its composition and transmission, approximately five hundred corruptions of Pound's typescript text survived into the poem's first English and American publications. Pound's typescript of the *Pisan Cantos* was prepared during his incarceration in the U.S. Army Disciplinary Training Center (DTC) an American military prison camp near Pisa during the summer and autumn of 1945, and was the product of prison conditions that included two weeks in an open cage. By the time he started composing, Pound had suffered a mental breakdown, he lacked books to check his quotes, and, typing at odd hours on unfamiliar typewriters, he produced a gross of errors. Just as seriously, many of the emended carbons of the typescript Pound prepared at the DTC never reached his editors at New Directions and he was forced during his continued incarceration in the U.S. to delegate responsibility for the kinds of correction he would normally have made himself. He was also denied access to his original manuscript and typescript at every proofreading opportunity.

Not surprisingly, given these circumstances, Pound, his publishers, and his devoted readers soon sensed that something needed to be done with the published text, and tried to fix it for years after the poem's initial publication. Throughout the fifties and early sixties those most knowledgeable about Pound's work (Achilles Fang, Hugh Kenner, and Eva Hesse prominent among them) pointed up the need for what was variously called a "corrected" or "definitive" edition of the *Cantos* and proposed their own correction lists. For a while, corrections sheets (mostly composed of tangled lists of names and places) shuttled back and forth between the New Directions office in New York, Kenner in Santa Barbara, and Eva Hesse in Munich. Following a shift to offset printing that made emendation economically feasible, New Directions inserted a few of these corrections into later printings, and in the early sixties Laughlin and Kenner, in an effort to construct a "definitive edition" of the *Cantos*, visited Pound for guidance.

Pound's attitude toward such efforts, however, vacillated according to his mood and condition. Sometimes he responded enthusiastically and offered to accept or refuse specific readings. His own copies of the *Pisan Cantos* contain several of his own corrections lists, as well as a few items clearly marked in his hand for future revision. He once, responding to a letter from Achilles Fang, even spoke of the need to "keep textual corrections in order for [a future] utopian vol!" of *The Cantos* (BEINECKE YCAL MSS99, Box 2). But on the occasions when Laughlin and Kenner pressed him for clear guidance, he remained vague, and they went home disap-

pointed. Ultimately Laughlin, in part because of Pound's lack of cooperation and in part because of the large gap between Kenner's and Hesse's view of what constituted appropriate corrections to the *Cantos*, decided not to sanction further changes, and the text of the *Pisan Cantos* has remained more or less set since 1974.

Laughlin's decision amounted to a general consensus that "correcting" the text *ad seriatim* would open a Pandora's Box because the very meaning of "correction" in such a case is deeply unstable, rooted in a plaintive but misguided hope that the author might remember the intentions behind something he wrote long ago. Pound's modernist work is especially resistant to ordinary editorial efforts, being both hyper-conscious of the way texts metamorphose over time and partial to experimental techniques, such as defying standard syntax and punctuation, including but not limited to opening but not closing parentheses.

How then to re-edit the *Pisan Cantos* without creating a monster, or a monstrosity? A lead was in fact provided by one of the fathers of modern textual criticism, Fredson Bowers. Bowers was a member of the English faculty when Hugh Kenner visited the University of Virginia in 1963, and when Kenner showed him a "proposed procedure for establishing the text of the *Cantos*" Bowers noted that the most appropriate way to establish a new text of the poem would be to go back to "the author's typescripts [and use them as] copy-text".

In 1963, however, this advice was nearly impossible to follow. As Kenner's document acknowledges, many of the *Pisan* typescripts were available only at Pound's daughter's mountain aerie "at Brunnenburg" and would need to be "microfilmed so that they [could] be consulted when needed"—a matter of no little inconvenience. Because of the difficulty, Kenner disregarded Bowers' advice and in his policy statement proposed a pragmatic alternative: to "collate" the New Directions and Faber editions of the *Cantos* and to run a "usual check on foreign languages, proper names, etc.". This proposal, though, would have resolved neither of the two fundamental difficulties facing a new edition of the poem the question of what constituted an appropriate "correction", and the problem of how to resolve the textual deficiencies stemming from Pound's imprisonment and shared by *both* the New Directions and the Faber editions.

With nearly all of Pound's materials now available in the great university libraries of America, however, the situation has radically altered, and it is now possible to construct a critical edition based on the archival materials that were unavailable to or indecipherable by New Directions as it prepared the poem for publication between 1945 and 1948. Our critical edition of the

*Pisan Cantos*, to be published by Oxford University Press, will document all variants contained on the various top copy and carbon leaves of the typescript Pound produced at the DTC along with every emendation generated during Pound's editorial exchanges with *New Directions*. The edition will also include an accompanying volume, entitled *Prolegomenon to A Critical Edition of Ezra Pound's Pisan Cantos*, that will excavate the genesis of the sequence (in part from heretofore unpublished wartime drafts in Italian) and provide an annotated facing page transcript of Pound's manuscript and first typescript texts.

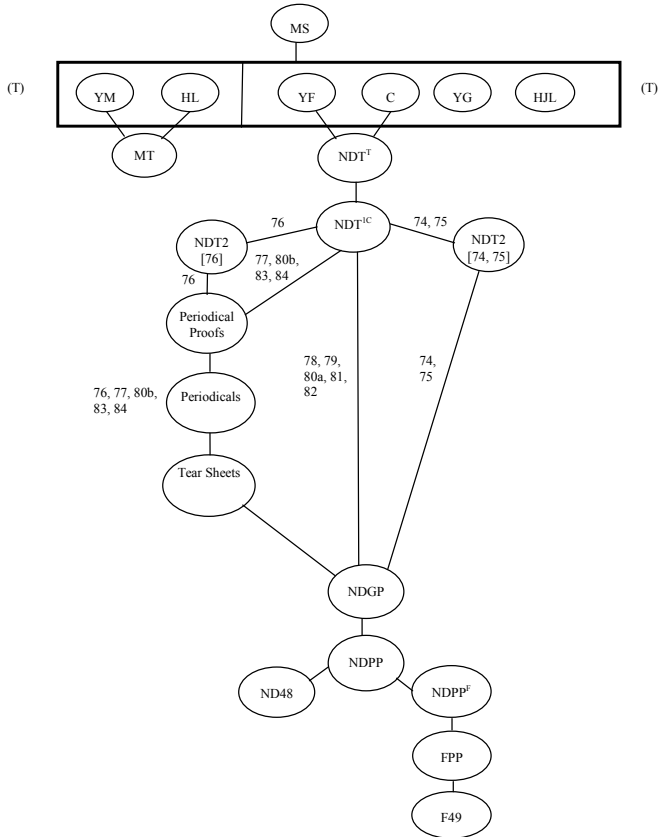
One thing, however, has not changed since 1963. A definitively "corrected edition" of the *Pisan Cantos* cannot be compiled, in part because Pound never established a "master copy" of his DTC typescript and emended different leaves differently, and in part because he (after admonishing his editors that they should correct all mistakes) left conflicting instructions about how a variety of textual features were to be handled (above all about which instances of idiosyncratic spelling, quotation, and punctuation he wished to have corrected and which, in a phrase he employed on more than one occasion, were to be preserved as "evidence of his own ignorance" [FABER]). Our critical edition of the *Pisan Cantos* therefore, though it can and will eliminate the corruptions that crept into the text and carry out Pound's implicit and explicit expectations for producing the poem (many of which his first editors never fully understood), does not present itself as a "corrected text". It can only pretend to be one of many texts that could be produced from a complicated textual record according to different editorial principles. The new text should not be taken as a substitute for the one that *New Directions* produced in 1948, but rather as a complement to it.

To the literary historian, the most important feature of the critical edition will be the apparatus that accompanies the text, which provides a step by step account of the poem's evolution from Pound's holograph and typescript through to the latest published editions. This apparatus signals the provenance and authority of every change that *New Directions* made to Pound's typescript and enumerates all alterations to the 1948 *New Directions* and 1949 Faber and Faber texts. Regarding the first, it distinguishes by bold typeface Pound's active revisions from those inserted by *New Directions* (or other participants in the publication process) and passively accepted by Pound (see Figure 1).

### **The Textual History of the *Pisan Cantos***

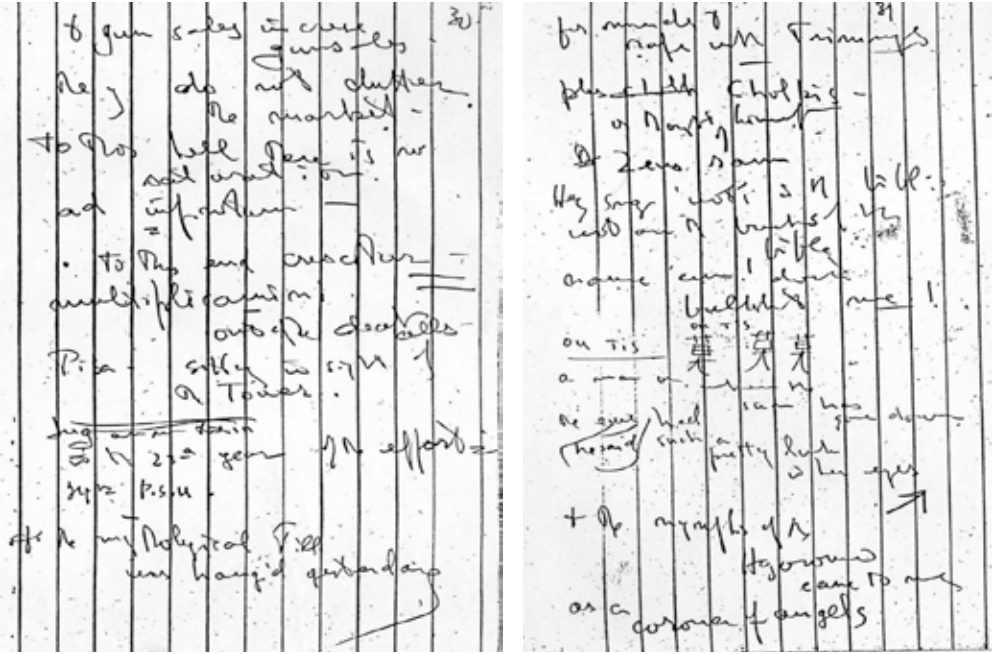
The new edition's apparatus can provide a nearly complete history of the *Pisan Cantos* because, the destructive forces of the Second World War not-





- MS:** Authorial notebook manuscript produced at the DTC.
- T:** Refers collectively to the full set of Pound's DTC typescripts. Extant subsets (top-copy, first and second carbons mixed) are identified according to their current provenance:
- YF:** Yale Fitts; full mixed typescript, assembled by Pound at the DTC and given by James Laughlin to Dudley Fitts.
  - C:** Columbia; nearly complete mixed typescript (missing fifteen leaves), assembled by Pound and now at Columbia University.
  - YM:** Yale Mary; partial mixed typescript consisting of pages sent by Pound to his daughter from the DTC.
  - HL:** Harvard La Drière; small segment, originally part of *YM*, containing most of Canto 79 and the beginning of Canto 80. Given by Dorothy Pound to Craig La Drière and now at Harvard.
  - HLL:** Harvard James Laughlin; 23 unsent leaves associated with *YM*, some "reserved" because of censorship. Held separate and never used to generate *NDT*.
  - YG:** Yale Folder 'G'; small segment of the last Cantos and deleted pages of *T*. Never used to generate *NDT*.
- MT:** (Unused) Typescript produced by Pound's daughter Mary from *YM* and *HLL*. Pages distributed to, e.g., T.S. Eliot and James Laughlin, in December 1945.
- NDT:** Refers collectively to the top-copy and first carbon of the clean New Directions typescript prepared by Hubert Creekmore from *YF* and *C*.
- NDT¹:** Top copy of the clean New Directions typescript prepared by Hubert Creekmore from *YF* and *C*. Corrected by Pound without access to *MS* or *T*.
- NDT¹ᶜ:** First carbon of the clean New Directions typescript prepared by Hubert Creekmore from *YF* and *C*, onto which Pound's revisions to *NDT¹* were transferred and upon which Dudley Fitts inserted corrections.
- NDT2:** Second clean New Directions typescript of Cantos 74-76, prepared by Hubert Creekmore in response to Pound's corrections to *NDT¹*.
- NDGP:** Galley proofs of 1948 New Directions book publication of *The Pisan Cantos*. Corrected by Pound.
- NDPP:** New Directions Page proofs (printed as galleys). Used as setting copy for the 1948 New Directions book publication of the *Pisan Cantos*.
- NDPP¹:** New Directions page proofs (printed as galleys), second state. *NDPP* was delivered to Faber and Faber in London, after a few further corrections by Pound. Faber then made still further emendations to the document, before producing their own set of page proofs. The abbreviation *NDPPᶠ* refers exclusively to the Faber and Faber emendations to *NDPP*.
- ND48:** First U.S. edition of the *Pisan Cantos*, New York: New Directions, 1948.
- FPP:** Page proofs for the 1949 Faber and Faber first edition of the *Pisan Cantos*. Now missing.
- F49:** First British edition of the *Pisan Cantos*, London: Faber and Faber, 1949.

**Figure 2.** General stemma of the *Pisan Cantos* with explanatory notes. It should be noted that the record of different cantos (in regard, for example, to the little magazines in which they were originally published) differs case by case.



and gun sales itself lead to more gun sales  
they do not clutter the market for gunnery  
there is no saturation

Pisa, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the effort in sight of the tower

and Till was hung yesterday  
for murder and rape with trinnings plus Sholkis  
plus mythology, thought he was Zeus ran or another one

Key Sams wets in the bibl' ?  
wet are the books of the bible & ?  
Name 'am, don't bullshit ME.

ου τισ 天

Figure 3. Pages 30 and 31 of Pound's manuscript, with the corresponding passage from his typescript. Note that the lineation of the passage was only established when it was typed; that Pound inserted the Greek words and Chinese character onto the page in white space left for that purpose after removing the paper from the typewriter; and that Pound experienced difficulty in reproducing the exclamation points from manuscript page 31 on his typescript (one of these he seemingly considered changing to a comma, mistyped as "m", before making a further handwritten revision).



dations have also been preserved. The general stemma of the *Pisan Cantos* provided in Figure 2 offers a concise summary of this textual history.

The limitations of a critical edition of the *Pisan Cantos* are thus mostly unrelated to gaps in the documentary record. They rather concern the liabilities as a copy text of every extant textual layer of the poem. The notebook manuscript, for example, lacks definite punctuation and line breaks, and was produced in haste and under conditions so difficult that it was in places indecipherable even to Pound himself as he typed it. Pound own typescript on the other hand, which was produced as a top copy with two carbons in place on strangely configured typewriters, is unsurprisingly filled with typographical errors that required correction after the leaves were removed. Pound habitually separated the leaves of every page after he removed them from the machine and then had to correct each leaf separately. And, as the spirit moved him, he revised and corrected inconsistently, not always remembering what he had already inserted on corresponding leaves. (He was also required to insert by hand on each leaf the accents and foreign characters that the camp typewriter could not supply, and he did so in an equally unsystematic way.)

The typescript record produced the largest number of inconsistencies in regard to punctuation. Pound worked at night, in the prison camp dispensary, on two different typewriters whose keyboards were configured differently from that of his own machine at home, and his lack of familiarity with these keyboards led him to regularly mistype: “m” in place of commas, “2” in place of quotation marks, “8” in place of apostrophes, “9” and “0” in place of beginning and end parentheses, and so on. Only sometimes did Pound notice these problems and appropriately correct them, and when he turned the typescript leaves over to his publishers many punctuation marks fell out of the poem because his editors didn’t realize the significance of his “m”s, “8”s, and “2”s. (Figure 3 offers a comparison between Pound’s manuscript and typescript). Exclamation points also posed a problem, since producing them on the camp typewriter meant typing a period, backspacing, and then typing an apostrophe. In general Pound avoided this cumbersome effort by employing a slash as shorthand, but since he also used slashes as punctuation in their own right the shortcut just produced more recurrent confusion.

These problems were then compounded when not all of Pound’s typescript leaves reached New Directions. As Pound revised what he had typed, he sent sets of leaves out of the DTC to a team composed of his wife Dorothy, his daughter Mary, and his companion Olga Rudge. His plan was for these pages to be carefully retyped by Mary, and for Mary and Dorothy to

check and neatly inscribe Greek and Chinese onto the new typescript, the former in lower case script and the latter complete with references to a Chinese dictionary to make it easier for New Directions or Faber to produce them (see POUND 1999, 123–186). None of the typescript sets that Pound assembled out of mixed top copies, first, and second carbons, either to send to his family or to keep in the camp, were conceived of as a master set. Unfortunately, however, some of his most attentive corrections belonged to the set he mailed off for Mary to retype and distribute. These were lost to his editors when these leaves and Mary's clean typescript of them failed to reach New Directions. The leaves that did reach New York were those that Pound carried with him when he was suddenly transported from the DTC to Washington D.C. in November 1945. He handed these over to his lawyer Julien Cornell, who relayed them to James Laughlin.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence of this complicated history, when New Directions produced a clean typescript of the poem it had recourse to a little more than half of the leaves Pound had prepared and revised in Italy: one full set of pages (the "Fitts typescript" now preserved at the Beinecke Library), and one partial set (now preserved at the Butler Library).

Moreover (a situation whose importance to the first edition of the poem cannot be overstated) Pound, from the time he passed his manuscript and typescript to Cornell, never again had access to the documents he himself had produced. Although he was given the opportunity to emend the clean typescript that Laughlin's assistant at New Directions, Hubert Creekmore, prepared, and to proof the poem's periodical and book publication, he was forced to do so without his own materials, a fact that qualifies the significance of all of the authorial revisions he made after his return to the United States.

The clean typescript that Hubert Creekmore produced therefore formed the basis for the entire subsequent development of the text of the *Pisan Cantos*. Given the fact that he worked from a disorganized clutch of man-

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2. For a narrative of Cornell's interaction with Pound following his return to the United States see CORNELL. On November 28, 1945, ten days after Pound's arrival in Washington, Cornell wrote Laughlin (who was in Utah at the time dealing with the final illness of his father-in-law) that "I have brought back with me [to New York] all of Ezra's unpublished manuscripts, including the latest instalment of the Cantos and his translations from Confucius which have been published in cheap paper editions in the Italian version, but have not yet been published in English. He wants you to publish these and thinks that publication in England might also be arranged through Faber & Faber" (BEINECKE YCAL MSS 176, Box 1, Folder 14).

uscripts and typescripts and without specific instructions from Pound, Creekmore's efforts proved admirable. Yet several factors suggest that his work now needs to be redone. First, since Pound made inconsistent revisions to different leaves of the same typescript page in the DTC, and since Creekmore did not have access to some of Pound's most carefully corrected leaves (the ones that went to Dorothy and Mary), Creekmore never incorporated a number of Pound's emendations. Second, Creekmore's clean typescript introduced a number of new errors into the poem which Pound (by his own admission a bad proof-reader at the best of times) did not, without access to his own texts, always catch. Third, although the spacing and indentations on Pound's Pisan typescript were meant to be regularized on the clean typescript, Creekmore never established a coherent policy for how to handle these matters. Fourth, Creekmore did not always understand Pound's instructions for finishing and correcting his text (for example, the fact that Pound wanted the capitalized English transliterations of all Greek words to be cancelled and converted into lower case Greek script). Finally, New Directions' decision to postpone inserting onto the clean typescript features of Pound's text that could not be reproduced mechanically (including all the Chinese and all the Greek) resulted in a great many of these features being left out of the published text.

Regarding New Directions' failure to produce the *Pisan Cantos* according to Pound's implied or explicit instructions about how to finish the text, it is instructive to compare the clean typescript from which New Directions worked with the one that his daughter Mary had prepared a few months earlier, each working from leaves that Pound prepared in the DTC. Mary's typescript also lacked access to all of the emendations Pound made at Pisa (in fact she was forced to rely on only one leaf of Pound's pages while Creekmore often possessed two leaves). Yet her familiarity with her father's practice enabled her to execute Pound's sometimes implicit expectations for spacing and indentation, his desire to substitute accurate lower case Greek script for typed transliterations of Greek words and phrases, and his wish to place Chinese characters in the text in the positions indicated by his own typescript (see Figure 4).

The clean typescript that Pound received to review on February 14, 1946 (only one day after he had been declared mentally unfit to stand trial for treason) was thus substantially different both from the one he had himself produced and from his explicit and implicit expectations of the way he wanted the poem published. He revised the clean copy in these difficult conditions, paying close attention mainly to matters for which access

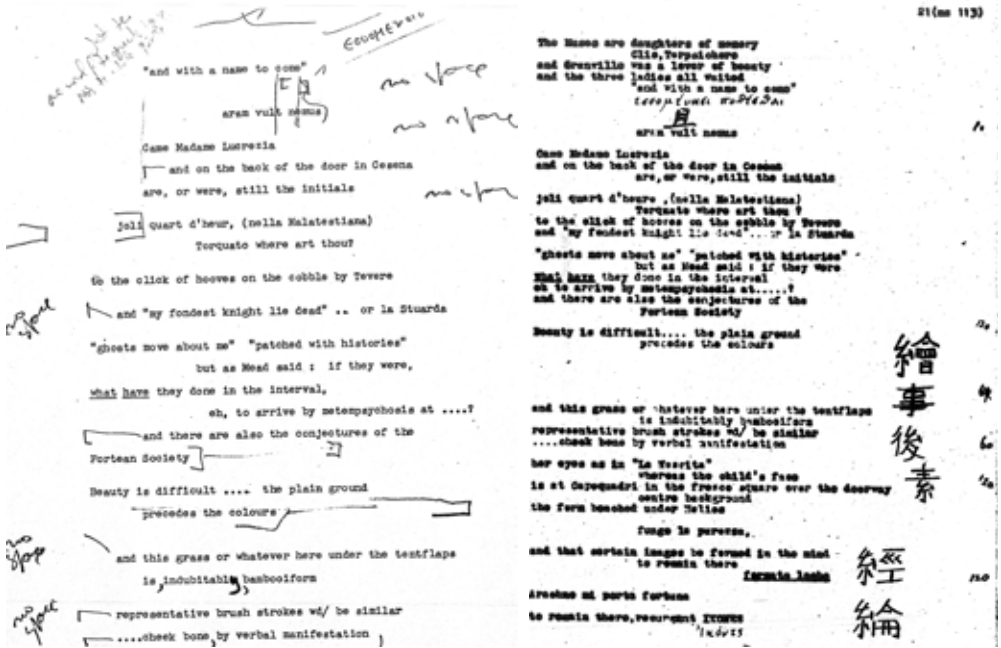


Figure 4. A comparison of Creekmore's "clean typescript" with Pound's revisions (left) and Mary's typescript with Dorothy Pound's Chinese and Olga Rudge's Greek (right). Note the differences with regard to spacing and indentation, as well as the absence of non-Roman lettering in the Creekmore typescript (Pound restored some of the Greek at the top of the page from memory when he revised the typescript).

to his originals was less important, such as spacing and punctuation (see Figure 4, above). He also made a few substantive changes, most notably tightening the lyric in Canto 81 (he never quite finished the job, and later regretted some lines he had cut) and adding the final couplet of Canto 84, remembered from another page he had typed shortly before his return to the United States.<sup>3</sup>

3. Charles Olson reports that Pound did a substantial portion of the proofreading of the clean typescript in a single morning: "[he] came in with his bounce back, carrying the Pisa Cantos in his hand which Laughlin had delivered to him [that] morning. He had already corrected the typed copies of Cantos 74 and 75 (1 page job with music) and wanted me either to send them on or put them in JL's hands if he were still in town. Which he was. And which I did later in the afternoon" (OLSON 1975, 72).

Once Creekmore had neatly transferred Pound's emendations onto a carbon of the clean typescript, *New Directions*, with Pound's blessing, sought expert help to ensure that there were no errors in Pound's foreign languages, particularly in his Greek. Supplied by Dudley Fitts (James Laughlin's classics teacher at Choate), however, this expert correction did not ease the burden of subsequent editions of the text. As Fitts himself soon realized, how to "correctly" present Pound's Greek poses a larger problem even than presenting the Chinese characters, almost all of which were taken directly from Legge's edition of the Confucian classics. Pound himself was conflicted about how to present Greek words in the poem in particular, undecided about whether he wanted to reproduce specific texts or to represent what he calls, in response to one of Fitts's surviving queries, "echoes" that answer to the rhythms of his own poem.<sup>4</sup> About two weeks after Fitts started work on the text he opined to Laughlin in a masterpiece of comic despair dated May 11 1946:

I do not think that Ez manages to spell one Greek word correctly from beginning to end of these cantos, either when transliterating, or when he is (godhelpus) using Gk script. That wd be all v. well; Shakspere couldn't spell, either, and neither can your son or mine; but when to this kakography he adds (1) impossible word forms; (2) non-existent words; (3) mangled memories of heaven knows what lines then, the fun begins and the aspirins dwindle. (HOUGHTON 576)

Soon afterwards, Fitts took his final stabs at correcting Pound's Greek and returned to *New Directions* what was then considered a clean and corrected typescript of the full sequence. This text, which had undergone only one authorial revision under less than ideal conditions, then served as setting copy either for periodical publication (in these instances the corrected tearsheets of the periodicals superseded it) or for the 1948 *New Directions* book publication itself. (See the stemma reproduced in Figure 2.) Pound was given the opportunity to read proof both for periodical and book publications, but his efforts at this stage continued to be hampered not only by the absence of his own manuscript and typescript, but also by the attrition of time, which gradually made his earlier texts less vivid in his mind and rendered him less motivated to push for the poem to be published according to his original expectations. By 1948, his impatience to see the

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4. Pound's comments on Fitts's work are contained on a small set of query slips now preserved at Columbia University's Butler Library (BUTLER MS#1018).

sequence published after what he saw as unreasonable delay all but effaced his objections to the New Directions text.<sup>5</sup>

## A New Edition of the *Pisan Cantos*

Neither the current New Directions text, then, nor the last Faber and Faber text of the *Pisan Cantos*<sup>6</sup> was ever worked into definitive form by its author, either on his own documents or in documents prepared in cooperation with his editors. Pound had expected the inconsistencies that stemmed from the difficult conditions in which the poem was composed to be resolved during the publication process. But after more than two years of delay, he finally gave up on much of what he had expected to be addressed.

Under these conditions, it is difficult to justify using any of the published editions as a copy text for a critical edition of the poem. It is certainly true that Pound proofread the New Directions text (albeit erratically) at various stages of production, and that he accepted the correction of a number of typos and mistakes in spelling, etc., and made a number of substantial authorial revisions of his own (as, for example, to Canto 81), all well after the text had passed under New Directions' control. Even so, however, the process of transmission of the New Directions and Faber and Faber editions had been corroded by the circumstances already discussed: the failure of many of Pound's emended typescript leaves to reach his editors, their misunderstanding of critical features of the text and of Pound's expectations about how they should proceed, and Pound's lack of access to his original manuscript and typescript at every stage that he proofread the text.

On the other hand, Pound's hastily emended typescript was always meant as a starting point for an editorial process that would correct the text according to his guidance and was never intended to be used as a setting copy. How then to proceed?

The following summarizes the editorial policy adopted by the critical edition in light of this dilemma. In line with Fredson Bowers' 1963

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5. Pound wrote to Laughlin on April 6, 1947, for example: "If statement made [. . .] that you weren't sending *Cantos* to press till Sept is authentic—my patience will finally break—you said—as I recall LAST autumn—& then early in 47". And in another letter from roughly the same time: "Wotterell. These mag. printers merely put in a few errors & the next prttrs will do the same & you lose a month on each & xpect me to korekt without the original" (HOUGHTON 1371).
  6. In 1975 Faber and Faber abandoned their text of the poem and began using the New Directions text (see EASTMAN 1979, 37).

advice to Hugh Kenner, the critical edition returns to a moment before the erosions of the New Directions editorial process began and takes as its copy text the typescript that Pound himself prepared in Italy. Whatever the shortcomings of Pound's Pisan typescript as setting copy, it represents the last version of the poem over which he exercised complete control. (Pound's typescript is, for the purposes of the edition, taken to include the numerous and sometimes inconsistent emendations he made on the top copy, first, and second carbon leaves of each page.)

Since the Pisan typescript was never intended as a fully corrected setting copy, however, the new edition then proceeds to edit the typescript according to an understanding of Pound's stated and implied guidance as to how to prepare the text, whether or not that guidance was understood and followed between 1945 and 1948 by his editors at New Directions and Faber and Faber. In cases in which Pound's first editors understood his wishes, this amounts simply to retaining the corrections and revisions that Pound actively made or passively accepted on the New Directions clean typescript or its successors, since these entered the text as part of an informed editorial procedure. In those cases, however, where his editors were misinformed either about Pound's texts or his expectations (as well as in those more clear-cut cases where the editors mistranscribed the text without Pound noticing), the critical edition edits the typescript in line with an expanded understanding of Pound's materials and expectations. Technically, therefore, the critical text is an edition of Pound's typescript rather than of the first published edition. As such, although it maintains many of them, it acknowledges no automatic responsibility to retain the variants of the published editions simply because they passed under Pound's eyes.<sup>7</sup>

Consider: As described above, Pound's Pisan typescript contains several hundred mistypings of crucial marks of punctuation (usually related to the shift key). This punctuation is restored in the text of the critical edition. Pound's typescript also specifies many more Chinese characters than were successfully entered into the New Directions or Faber text, and

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7. Whether or not a given emendation is accepted in the new critical text, it is included in (and recoverable from) the historical apparatus at the bottom of each page of the new edition of the poem. Pound's own Pisan emendations are also represented in the edition's accompanying volume, *A Prolegomenon to A Critical Edition of Ezra Pound's Pisan Cantos*, which exhibits on facing pages full transcriptions of Pound's manuscript and typescript, including all of his revisions and corrections. The edition's principles for choosing between variants of the copy-text are developed in the *Prolegomenon* and restated in the introduction to the critical text.

in positions the instructions for which Pound's publishers either did not understand or did not have the technical or financial means to replicate. Based on Pound's repeatedly expressed desire to include these materials, they have been inserted in the critical text in the positions they occupied on his typescript. Pound's typescript in a number of instances also records transliterations of Greek words in Roman capitals, with the consistent expectation that they be replaced by lower case Greek script. These expectations were only intermittently and inconsistently honoured by his editors at New Directions, but they have been fulfilled in the critical edition. (Where Pound's guidance was unclear, however, as for example in the many instances of uncapitalized proper nouns or of unclosed parenthesis and quotation marks, the newly edited text has not imposed further alterations.)

In the most difficult instances in which New Directions can be shown to have ignored or misinterpreted Pound's typescript—those where Pound, sensing a gap, proposed an alternative reading at a later stage of production—the text of the critical edition follows the earlier typescript reading. For example, Canto 77 contains several Chinese characters that Pound added to the poem at the periodical galley proof stage. Since he had no access to his earlier typescripts and could not always remember what he had previously written, he sometimes supplied alternative characters on the proof. So, on the typescript, line 77.68<sup>8</sup> reads “mouth, is the sun that is god's mouth 意” (POUND 2003). Pound had formed strong opinions about the Chinese character “yì” (意, which can mean idea, wish, desire) as he worked on his translations of the Confucian classics. Interpreting the character by way of a literal juxtaposition of its constituent elements, Pound viewed it as expressing a notion of sounds (音) from the heart (心) and their expression in the mind. He drew attention to this association in his translation of the *Great Learning* where he appends a gloss on the character to elaborate a crucial passage: “wanting to rectify their hearts, they sought precise verbal definitions of their inarticulate thoughts [the tones given off by the heart]” (POUND 1969, 31). When after a long delay Pound sought to restore Canto 77's Chinese characters to a periodical publication, however, he forgot what he had previously written. He inserted the character “rì” (日, sun), which he later revised to “kǒu” (口, mouth), each a simplified mirror of the English line. Given this history, though, the text of the critical edition follows the typescript and reinstates “意”, recording the later revisions in the apparatus.

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8. The line numbers given here and elsewhere are those supplied by Richard Sieburth in POUND 2003.



The cumulative result of these policies will be a rigorously edited text, complemented by an apparatus (including the companion volume) that fully and concisely encapsulates the genesis of every line of the poem. The newly edited clean text reflects Pound's final authorial readings at the DTC, eliminates all subsequent corruptions, and incorporates Pound's later revisions unless they are themselves the product of editorial corruption. It also strictly follows the editorial guidelines established by New Directions with the full approval of the author whenever these are known. The critical edition will also include: 1) an "editorial rationale table" that glosses all difficult cases by examining the archival record; 2) a table that records instances where spacing within and between lines differs from that of the current New Directions text of the poem; 3) and a table that lists all instances in which the new edition departs from the most recent text of the poem published by New Directions. (Leaving aside changes to lineation and spacing, there are 562 such instances in the newly edited text.)

It should be clear from this account that, although the critical edition represents a radical re-examination of the text of the *Pisan Cantos*, it is in many ways quite conservative. Even in the case of glaring "howlers" that Pound would quite possibly have corrected had he noticed them, no changes are made to the text unless triggered by a previously "correct" reading in the documentary record.

At the same time, the text that results from these principles is in some cases strikingly new. The inclusion of the numerous Chinese characters that fell out of the New Directions edition, for example, or the shifting of previously included characters into positions that Pound established in his typescript, clarifies obscurities in the relations between textual elements and visually transforms the format and spacing of the New Directions text (see Figures 5 and 6).

### **The Importance of a New Critical Edition of the *Pisan Cantos***

The critical text of the *Pisan Cantos* will provide for the first time a stable basis upon which critical debate about the poem can proceed a basis that has previously been unavailable because of the imperfections of both the New Directions and Faber and Faber editions of the poem.

A simple example of the way in which inadequate understanding of the poem's textual history has distorted critical debate involves the issue of spacing and lineation. As his work on the *Cantos* progressed, Pound



became increasingly attentive to the layout of his poetic page. And as he gave greater importance to non-Roman characters in the later cantos (especially, though not exclusively, to Chinese and Greek), he devoted more and more attention to the visual relation between these features, the surrounding English text, and the surrounding white space. By the time of *Drafts & Fragments*, even cantos that do not include non-Roman characters prominently call attention to the play of text and space.

The *Pisan Cantos* mark an important stage in the evolution of Pound's handling of such matters. In a recent article, Mark Byron describes his practice in the following terms:

Notions of clarity and whiteness emerge throughout the text of the *Pisan Cantos* in the relation of light to "precise definition". These notions are intimately a part of the material constitution and transmission of the text, and trace out a dimension of its history. From the typescripts through to the published editions, whiteness and clarity coincide with tracts of space on the page. These areas compress an internal history of the text into meaningful, if sparse, text material. Areas of white space also trouble the precarious distinction between the framing space of the text and its surrounding marginal space on the printed page: the latter incurs upon the former, in a hermeneutic as well as a physical gesture. (2003, 234)

However, it is impossible to found a critical dialogue on this matter exclusively on the basis of the published versions of the *Pisan Cantos*. Both the New Directions and Faber editions contain numerous instances of exaggerated or erratic spacing introduced by Pound's typescripts to accommodate Greek words or Chinese characters that, through the accidents of the text's history, failed to appear in the published text. Similarly, Chinese characters that were restored at a later stage in the publication process (especially in Canto 77) were placed in different positions from the ones they occupied on Pound's typescript. The critical text of the new edition will facilitate a view of Pound's experimental spacing and layout, undistorted by the accidents that produced the current editions of the poem (including vestiges of page breaks created in the intermediate stages of the poem's production).

The new edition will also serve to clarify critical debate concerning a handful of famously obscure passages. For example, lines 242–43 of Canto 76 have long puzzled readers: "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel / States of mind are inexplicable to us" (POUND 2003, 76.242-43). As early as 1969, Hugh Witemeyer drew attention to the seeming contradiction these lines suggest:

What emerges most clearly from Pound's "Axiomata" is the high value he places upon states of consciousness themselves as the ultimate knowable truths. We have no way of knowing whether our epiphanies are purely subjective or whether they proceed from an objective *theos*. "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel", but "States of mind are inexplicable to us". (1969, 26)

The problem Witemeyer evokes here is, of course, one with which Pound really wrestled: i.e., whether states of mind are entirely subjective or have some basis in objective reality. Yet this dilemma does not easily map onto the two lines from Canto 76. For one thing, to express doubt as to whether states of mind have an objective basis is not the same thing as to say that they are "inexplicable". For another, it is extremely unlikely that Canto 76, which opposes the Paradise that endures in memory's "trace in the mind" (POUND 2003, 76.159) against the chaos of the Second World War, would at the same time concede that such states are "inexplicable".

In a 2010 article on lyric experience in the *Pisan Cantos*, Ayon Maharaj continues to wonder about this apparent contradiction. The line "States of mind are inexplicable to us", he writes:

seems almost to invite misinterpretation [. . .]. On a positivist reading, the line would suggest that since heightened states of mind are inexplicable, they simply do not exist or, even if they do exist, they are not worth talking about. On a mystical reading, by contrast, the line would assert that such states of mind certainly do exist but that they are so radically other with respect to the empirical world that even poetry is incapable of comprehending or eliciting such states. (2010, 81–82)

The difficulty of these lines, however, stems not from one of Pound's exquisite distinctions, but from a publisher's error that began in New Directions' clean typescript. In the DTC Pound had typed: "States of mind are inexplicably to us". The punctuation of his manuscript clarifies the meaning of the line even further: "States of mind are, inexplicably, to us". Hence, unlike the variant introduced in the clean typescript, which asserts that such states are simply incomprehensible, Pound's own typescript considers the mysterious manner in which mental states become properties of one's identity.<sup>9</sup> Possibly misled by the absence of Pound's original commas around

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9. Or, possibly Pound expected his reader to complete the passage as previously given in Canto 74 and supply the word "spezzato".

“inexplicably”, the typist at New Directions gave the line an entirely new sense, and succeeded in drastically altering Pound’s implication.

A critical edition of the *Pisan Cantos* will bring discussion about points such as these out of the realm of conjecture. It will not resolve the ambiguities of a supremely difficult poem, but it may make it possible to concentrate with new confidence on what Pound actually wrote.

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