

A L I R E Z A F A R A H B A K H S H

The Anti-Modernist Quality of Ezra Pound's *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (Cantos XLII—LI)

A mong other tenets, Modernist literature is more closely associated with form and the manners of presentation than with content or the purpose of presentation. Modernist's typical techniques in writing, such as "stream of consciousness," "interior monologue," and other innovative modes of narration, drive the text into a timeless, even escapist zone, draining its traditional didactic qualities. The general outlook is that Modernist literature characteristically has little sympathy with propagandist, ideology-loaded texts, and instead, it favors more universal or more impersonal subject matters. It does not follow that Modernists were indifferent to human suffering (after all, they had witnessed two World Wars and their painful consequences); rather, it means that they expressed their frustration and their solutions in an indirect and self-effacing manner. The result is a kind of literature which is experimental, form-based, and non-instructive.

While upholding this tendency in Modernist literature, the present paper argues that Modernist texts, even at their best, may encompass such anti-Modernist elements as overt and authoritative didacticism and prescriptivism, reminiscent of Neoclassical texts. In other words, it asserts that even a Modernist poet who is typically interested in timelessness, implicit representation of gloominess, or 'Art for Art's Sake' dictum, may also actively, and even dogmatically, respond to the realistic plights of the world around him/her. To attest this assertion, a rather small

section of *The Cantos*, a clearly Modernist work, if not its best representative, by one of the best, if not the best, spokesmen of Modernist writing, namely Ezra Pound, is discussed here in an attempt to identify its didactic, prescriptive, and hence its anti-Modernist attributes. The poems for analysis are cantos XLII—LI, better known as *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (1937). This comparatively short section, in which Pound poured his economic and political views, is nevertheless one of the most significant sections of the entire *Cantos* since it contains the summarizing and unifying canto of the whole book—"With Usura" (canto XLV). Pound's recommendations concerning Major C. H. Douglas's Social Credit Theory, his Confucian remedies, his support for Mussolini and his fascist party, and his fervent anti-Semitism are stable motifs both in *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* and other sections of his *Cantos* as a whole. His fanatical ideological views, expressed in an assertive fashion, make this Modernist epic anti-Modernist in content (even though form-wise it is evidently a Modernist text, and even though a good number of his other (Imagist) poems are both formally and semantically Modernist). In the following passages, the didactic thrust of a number of cantos Pound wrote a few years before the outbreak of World War II as well as their anti-Modernist content is explored.

In *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, as in other sections of *The Cantos*, Pound seems to be openly concerned not only with contemporary cultural decay, but with the possible sources of cultural renewal. Pound's poetic imagination embraces multifarious examples of humanity and multiple ideas of order set by both Eastern and Western economists and politicians. There is a quest at the basis of all of Pound's cantos, including *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, which, as Pound suggests now and again, is analogous to Odysseus's ten-year quest in search of his homeland (which in Pound's case, it is his much-loved Europe, not as he saw it, but as a peaceful and prosperous land). The significant difference, however, is that Pound's

government and codes of behaviour like Confucius and Jefferson, and some of the examples of primitive religious feeling recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." (1990, 79)

Throughout *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (as elsewhere in *The Cantos*), Pound's economic and political ideologies are so closely intertwined that one cannot discuss either of them independently of the other. World War I, as Pound saw it, had been caused by the rivalries of international capitalists. He thought that he had found a solution to the evils of unchecked capitalism, one especially favorable to the arts, in Confucius and in the Social Credit Theory of Major C. H. Douglas, who, in his *Credit Power and Democracy* (1921), argued that a system of state credit could increase purchasing power in the population at large, thus promoting creativity and removing power from bankers and financiers. For long years, Pound occupied himself with studying various books and essays on economy. Among others, he read Marx's *Kapital* and admired his passion for social justice, but he came to the conclusion that Marx never properly understood the nature of money. Obviously, Marx's classless society had no place in Pound's fascist ideology.

On the other hand, Douglas, Pound believed, had rightly diagnosed the principal problems that had caused economic setbacks in Europe and pushed Europe to the brink of another large-scale war. Fascinated by Douglas's economic theories and Mussolini's energy and promises of monetary reform as well as his anti-Semitic measures modeled on Hitler's anti-Semitic campaign, Pound naïvely assumed that the Italian leader could be persuaded to put Douglas's theory into practice. Like Confucian emperors, the Italian Duce had successfully controlled taxation, usury, and unemployment in his country, and Pound was certain that Mussolini's directives could rid European nations of similar problems, guarantee economic solidity, lessen the strain that existed in rival governments, and most importantly, secure world peace.

Elaborating on Douglas's economic standpoint and his influence of Pound, Nadel writes:

C. H. Douglas ... sought to correct the inequitable distribution of wealth, purchasing power and credit. The control and exploitation of credit by private banks was for Douglas—and soon for Pound—the main culprit. Because banks charge excessive interest ... for the use of money and credit, prices would always be higher than purchasing power. Government

control of credit and interest rates and the issuance of “national dividends” directly to the consumers was the Social Credit answer. (1999, 10)

Hugh Witemeyer explains that both in Pound’s and Douglas’s view, poverty and war resulted from the inequitable distribution of consumer purchasing power in a capitalist economy. What distorted an ideal distribution of purchasing power was the control of credit by private banks as well as the charging of exorbitant interest or usury for the use of credit. There would be no end to poverty and war if credit were not nationalized in the public interest (1969, 167). In the same vein, Peter Makin writes that for Douglas and Pound, “the seed of friction and war was not the capitalist mode of production, but systems of accountancy, and above all, credit ... Decentralised local authorities should take away the administering of credit from private interest; and the state should create and distribute purchasing-power to make up inevitable deficiencies” (1985, 106). On the same matter, Wendy Flory has contended that in Pound’s view, Douglas’s “economic program would remove one of the major causes of war by minimizing both reliance on debt-financing, and hence “loan-capital,” and competition for overseas markets” (1980, 75).

Flawed banking systems, Pound thought, caused economic crisis and drove nations into a fierce competition for resources and credit, an inevitable result of which was war. Facing the shaky foundation of their economy as a result of war, governments would have no choice but to levy taxes on people and pump money into their countries from overseas markets and would soon find themselves in a full-fledged war against any potential and actual rival. This is the very root of Pound’s deep hatred of the Jews; in his eyes, this vicious circle, which started and ended with usurious, Jewish banks, was what triggered World War I and what was forcing European nations into another one. Before the 1930s, Pound’s main economic concern in his *Cantos* is ‘usury,’ which is evidently a stable term throughout *The Cantos*. However, as discernible in his *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, in the 1930s, the usurers he condemns are usually Jewish, and his language is vitiated by virulent anti-Semitism.

Also in the 1930s, in addition to Douglas’s Social Credit doctrine, the writings of Confucius exerted a long-lived impact on Pound’s political and economic thought. Tim Redman has argued that

During the period of the late 1930s and particularly during the Second World War, Pound became convinced that the philosophy of Confucius, along with the economic reform, offered the best hope for an enduring

and just social order, and he worked to translate Confucius into Italian and publish his work in Italy. (1991, 126)

Pound found Confucian economic and political philosophy, with its emphasis on rational order, very much to his liking. He also disliked what he saw as the superstitious pseudo-mysticism promulgated by both Buddhists and Taoists for he was of the opinion that their passivity posed a threat on pragmatic and rational politics. Pound's Confucian view of wealth, as discernible in his *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, is mixed with his desire for stability rooted in productivity, natural abundance, and a correct form of government. What Pound wants is a stable base for economy that would allow real wealth to be, in David Murray's words, "the fixed element in a series of transformations of value" (in Bell, 1982). In his *Guide to Kulchur*, Pound remarks that "Kung [Confucius] is modern in his interest in folk-lore," in his concern with "the living" rather than with "the dead," and in his stress on direct knowledge and personal experience, which could be obtained through traveling and commerce, and be used as a "good antidote for theories" or abstraction. All these aspects of Confucius appear to Pound "to be in conformity with the best modern views" (1952, 272-74). The emphasis of his allusions to Confucius, therefore, is not on the past but on the present; Pound tried to reflect the merits and demerits of various Chinese dynasties in order to warn the present politicians and economists against the detrimental effects of excessive taxation, usury, and chaos, and reiterate the need for a strong leader to address the 20th century fiscal and cultural problems—a figure like Mussolini. Confucius, who set about to promote social order from a rational and practical, rather than an abstract or idealistic perspective, is one of the first names one comes across with in Pound's *Cantos*. In *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, too, Confucius and his principles keep recurring in various ways, especially in the concluding cantos.

The opening cantos of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (cantos XLII and XLIII) praise a Sieneese bank named Monte dei Paschi. Under the rule of the Arch Duke Pietro Lopoldo, this became a low-interest, not-for-profit credit institution whose funds were based on local productivity as represented by the natural increase generated by the grazing of sheep on community land (the "BANK of the grassland" of Canto XIII). As such, it represents a Poundian non-capitalist ideal:

That the Mount of Pity (or Hock Shop)
municipal of Siena has lent only on pledges,
that is on stuff actually hocked ... wd be we believe useful

and beneficent that there be place to lend licitly
Money to receive licitly money
at moderate and legitimate interest ... (1996, 218 - 19)

Here, the bank is figured as an image of fiscal solidity based on its deployment not of the abstract and speculative structure of capitalist finance but of the produce from the local land. In Monte dei Paschi, as Peter Nicholls has contended, “money is seen as the instrument of productive activity” (1984, 75). Pound plays with the word “Monte” to emphasize its substantiality—“A mount, a bank, a fund a bottom” (217 and 228). A few lines further down the canto, it is given additional weight through capitalization (“MOUNTAIN”). According to Ian F. Bell, the reasons for Pound’s admiration of the “BANK of the grassland” are

First, it marks a moment prior to the breach between use-value and exchange-value (the division which characterizes the practices of industrial capitalism) where specie is loaned ... for immediate rather than speculative benefit. Secondly, the bank’s success depends not upon the usurious manipulation of money but upon what Pound views as “real” wealth, a “guarantee of the income from grazing.” (in Nadel, 92-93)

The “guarantee” for Pound is that of nature in which grass is “nowhere out of place” (228) and which mirrors human order. Thus, the “fruit of nature” is united with “the whole will of the people” (227) so that money may be freely available at little cost since the bank made only a minimal handling charge. This union denotes what is perhaps the key term for understanding the relationship among nature, money, and man as suggested in cantos XLII and XLIII: the relationship of responsibility, or as Pound has repeated it twice, “REE- / sponsibility” (226 and 227). The capitalization or the lexical solidity reflects Pound’s view of the ideal bank as a “mountain,” as “a base, a fondo, a deep, a sure and a certain” institution (228). Such a bank is the ultimate foundation of a sound economy, and Pound, by locating it at the beginning of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, seems to introduce it as the source of a proper and healthy relation among nature, money, and human life.

In Canto XLIII, there is an implicit allusion to Douglas’s Social Credit Theory in the lines

because there was shortage of coin, in November
because of taxes, exchanges, tax layings and usuries

legitimate consumption impeded
ten thousand on the office of pasturage ... (1996, 225)

Here, Pound is echoing Douglas's assertion that increases in productivity and the need for profit always lead to the inability of a capitalist system to clear its markets. This, in turn, results in dumping and layoffs, trade wars, and high taxes. To counter the "shortage of coin," Douglas proposes that additional money be injected into the economic body of the country through the payment of an annual Social Credit dividend to all citizens.

Canto XLIV opens with Pietro Leopoldo's economic reforms on debt and tax management:

... and thou shalt not
sequestrate for debt any farm implement
nor any yoke ox nor
any peasant while he works with the same.

Pietro Leopoldo

Heavy grain crop unsold
never had the Mount lacked for specie, cut rate to four and $\frac{1}{3}$ rd ... (233)

Leopoldo returns in the final page of the canto: "And before him had been Pietro Leopoldo / who wished state debt brought to an end ... / who ended gaolings for debt; / who said thou shalt not sell public offices" (238). Pound sustains his support for the Monte dei Paschi and once again views it as a source of stability. Pound ends the canto with a quotation by Nicol Piccolomini, the bank's manager: "The foundation, Siena, has been to keep bridle on usury" (238). What defiles a decent banking system, here and elsewhere, is usury.

However, Pound's most furious attack on usury and the Jews in his entire *Cantos* is canto XLV ("With Usura," re-written in canto LI). In it, Pound's angry and obsessive hatred uncontrollably spills over into his poetry. The canto equates the Jews with usurers and catalogues the pernicious effects of usury in Western culture, carrying strong fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies throughout. It is, as Pound admits himself, the centerpiece of his *Cantos* because it incorporates the highlights of his political and economic theories. It is curious to see an acknowledged masterpiece of Modernism so traditional in its diction and cadence and so dogmatic and moralizing in content.

The central word of the canto, as its title indicates, is usury. In her *A Guide to Ezra Pound's Selected Poems*, Christine Froula explains that the poem bears an allusion to The Old Testament disapproval of the effects of usury on natural life. The traditional definition of usury is the lending of money at high interest rates, which Deuteronomy (Old Testament, 23:19-20) forbade in the following terms:

Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:

Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it. (in Froula, 1983, 115)

Pound's definition is more specific; in his footnote to his canto XLV, he defines usury as "A charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production; often without regard to the possibilities of production" (240). In canto XLV, one can discern four separate aspects of Pound's critique of usury. First, he seems to be arguing that usury is detrimental to the general provision of basic goods of decent quality ("With usury hath no man a house of good stone"). Second, it retards or makes impossible the production of works of great art ("no picture is made to endure nor to live with"). Third, it has a generally debilitating effect on human life in general, and on sexuality in particular ("Usura slayeth the child ... / It stayeth the young man's courting"). Fourth, usury results in underproduction and unemployment ("wool comes not to market" and "stonecutter is kept from his stone").

In alignment with Confucian precept, Pound views money not as "a product of nature but an invention of man" (1973, 316), and views work as an activity which is set by use, the rhythm of nature, and task rather than by time or profiteering. Ian F. Bell asserts that what is important in Pound's conception of labor, as a value defined by task rather than clock, is the extent to which it offers release from pressure and the horology (in Nadel, 1999, 103). The shift from the natural to the unnatural and the normal to the abnormal can be observed in the etymology of the word 'usury' that witnesses, as George Kearns has written, "a perversion of its basic meaning, which begins in the *use* of things—a shift from use-value to profit value" (1989, 122). Kearns goes on saying that

Pound is less concerned with quibbles over interest rates than with the perversion of *use*—of a man’s time, of the fruits of the earth. The usurer wants more than he can decently use, and to get it, he ‘stoppeth’ other people’s use of things. (1989, 122)

Pound holds that if the government retains control over money/credit, the interest which goes to private banks would be available to public benefit. Depending on government expenses, then, there might be no need to impose taxes; in fact, the government might even pay its citizens dividends. Pound complains that European governments betrayed their people by authorizing private banks (mainly Jewish), which demanded high interest rates. In “With Usura,” Pound puts usury against human values and contends that good houses, good bread, good art, and natural fertility, as the emblems of human civilization, are debased by a culture that supports usury and the Jews. Commenting on canto XLV in *The Genealogy of Demons: Anti-Semitism, Fascism, and the Myths of Ezra Pound*, Robert Casillo asserts that

... while Pound is by no means hostile to all forms of money, he obsessively attacks that form of it—namely usury—which he thinks the Jews created and which figures in economics as the virtual equivalent of the abstract and monopolistic Jewish God ... At the same time, Pound is certain that Jewish usurers exploit honest labor and impede the forces of production. He believes implicitly that the Jews, for whom labor is “the curse of Adam,” reject the principle of work. The usurers, in Pound’s view, are against the natural increase of agriculture or of any productive work. (1988, 216)

Discussing canto XLV in his *A Guide to the Cantos of Ezra Pound*, William Cookson has written that the canto “is a passionate denunciation of the most potent force of evil in *The Cantos*. Usury, or avarice, which treats money as a commodity ..., destroys civilization and degrades the mysteries of sex and nature” (2001, 63). Similarly, in his *The Genesis of Ezra Pound’s Cantos*, Ronald Bush argues that the usurers of Canto XLV owe their identities to Douglas’s historical analysis, although we can also trace their characteristics in Dante’s *Inferno* XIV, where usurers squat “like dogs in summer ... now snout, now paw, when they are bitten by fleas or gnats or flies.” Dante combined with Douglas in Pound’s mind to make usury not just a contemporary problem but the canto’s most important emblem of the fall of the ‘green world’ of natural bounty. The canto condemns usury not

simply because it interferes with an artist's creation, but because it perverts the bounty and sustenance of God's art, which is nature (1976, 134). That is why in the last lines of the canto, Pound uses the phrase "CONTRA NATURA," meaning "against nature."

Such an attitude, as already mentioned, is, explicitly or implicitly, present in all of Pound's cantos. In his *The Genealogy of Demons*, Casillo insists that Pound's political philosophy at the time of composing his 1930s cantos was characteristic of Pound from the beginning. Casillo frequently quotes passages from Pound's pre-1930s compositions and gives a reading of their underlying anti-Semitic meaning. According to him,

Point by point Pound's ideas and values figure unmistakably within that wide current of proto-fascist and fascist thought which culminates at Auschwitz and Buchenwald ... [T]he role of Anti-Semitism and fascism within the verbal economy and structure of *The Cantos*, shows above all else that the fascist ideology is indispensable to the poem's linguistic strategies and formal development. (1988, 154)

Canto XLV and similar cantos, along with his feverish Rome Radio broadcasts during World War II, in which he overtly condemned the Jews as well as American involvement in the war, make Pound one of the most notorious fascist and anti-Semite writers of the 20th century. Although Pound's indictment for treason against the American government was dropped and his support for Mussolini for some is still a matter of controversy, a good number of his cantos and quite a few of his radio speeches include passages that strongly suggest his deep hatred of the Jews, a hatred which he was soon to regret and for which he was to be bitterly criticized, both by himself and others.

The next canto, Canto XLVI, contrasts what had gone before in cantos XLII and XLIII (the opening cantos of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*) regarding the bank of Monte dei Paschi with the practices of institutions such as the Bank of England that are designed to exploit the issuing of credit to make profit, thereby, in Pound's view, contributing to poverty, social deprivation, crime, and the production of "bad" art as exemplified by the baroque. In canto XLVI, Major Douglas's theory is for the first time explicitly cited in this series of cantos:

An' the fuzzy bloke sez (legs no pants ever wd. fit) 'IF
that is so, any government worth a damn can

pay dividends?’
The major chewed it a bit and sez: ‘Y–es, eh ...
You mean instead of collecting taxes?’
‘Instead of collecting taxes.’ That office? (241)

Here, Pound seems to be suggesting that by adopting Major Douglas’s guidelines, governments could grow so economically solid that they could stop taxation and, instead, pay dividends to their citizens. Like canto XLV, this canto criticizes usury: “the moneys which it, the bank, creates out of nothing” (243). Also, he criticizes, and expresses regret over, people’s indifference to its detrimental consequences, and worse, their participation in it:

Very few people
will understand this. Those who do will be occupied
getting profits. The general public will probably not
see it’s against their interest. (243)

In Canto XLVII, we read about the island of Circe and Odysseus who is about to “sail after knowledge.” There follows a long lyrical passage which is given mythic dimensions through allusions to Tammuz and Adonis. The canto portrays a visionary world that for Pound could function as a foil for the contemporary world broken by usury and war. Like Odysseus, Pound seems to be desperately searching order and safety in a hostile world.

Canto XLVIII presents more instances of what Pound considers to be usury:

And if the money be rented
Who shd pay rent on that money?
Some fellow who has it on rent day,
or some bloke who has not? (250)

There are also a number of lines which display signs of his anti-Semitic position (an example is: “Bismark / blamed american civil war on the jews”). The canto moves via Montsegur to the village of St-Bertrand-de-Comminges, which stands on the site of the ancient city of Lugdunum Convenarum. The destruction of this city represents, for the poet, the treatment of civilization by barbarous usurers.

Canto XII takes us back to the tranquility offered earlier in canto XLVII. The canto is based on a series of paintings and poems of river scenes in an old Japanese

book owned by Pound's parents. The clear and peaceful landscape, orchestrated by the seasons, foregrounds a major theme in *The Fifth Decad Cantos*—the relationship between natural time and work, which reflects Pound's fascination with Confucian mindset. Canto L moves from John Adams to the failure of the Medici bank and more general images of European decay since the time of Napoleon. As usual, Pound blames the Jews for such a failure since "In their souls was usura and in their hearts cowardice / In their minds was stink and corruption" (259). In the canto, Leopoldo's reforms are tested against other European commercial practices in the 18th and 19th centuries and are seen to be comparable with the ideals of the American Revolution.

The final canto in *The Fifth Decad Cantos*, canto LI, returns to the "usura" litany of Canto XLV ("With Usura"), followed by detailed instructions on fishing and ends with the first Chinese word (Confucius) to appear in *The Cantos*, perhaps to herald the beginning of the subsequent series of cantos called *The Chinese Cantos* (cantos LII - LXI). There are obvious similarities between cantos LI and XLV, whose central theme is clearly usury; several lines of the former canto are even rewritten in the latter:

With usury has no man a good house
made of stone, no paradise on his church wall
With usury the stone cutter is kept from his stone
the weaver is kept from his loom by usura
Wool does not come into market
the peasant does not eat his own grain
The girl's needle goes blunt in her hand
The looms are hushed one after another
ten thousand after ten thousand ... (261)

Commenting on canto LI, Ian F. Bell asserts that the canto recasts the message of canto XLV about usury into a more contemporary idiom. Just as the landscape of canto XLIX owes its peaceful atmosphere to canto XLVII, here the description of cultural deterioration caused by usury receives visual clarity by the marvelously detailed account of the seasonal and temporal manufacture of flies for trout fishing. Such a manufacture is rendered free from cultural and moral deterioration by its observances of natural time and work (in Nadel, 94). Cookson has commented that the concluding canto of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* "is a restatement of the main theme of XLII—LI: usury against the natural order and splendour of the universe"

(2001, 71). On a larger scale, this canto restates not only what has gone before in canto XLV or other cantos of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, but the main concerns of the entire *Cantos*, which are economy, politics, and anti-Semitism.

These recurrent themes, along with concept, names, and details associated with them, make Pound's *Cantos* in general, and *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* in particular, a blatantly theme-based, didactic, and even dogmatic text. In these poems, Pound does not hesitate to insult, condemn, instruct, and prescribe at will and in an exceptionally biased language, uncharacteristic of Modernist poetry. In his *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Carroll F. Terrell has contended that because of the repugnant ideological load of *The Cantos*,

In the mind of the public [Pound] is a man who endorsed and promoted the Fascist cause; who sponsored and propagandized for bizarre theories of economics, money, and banking; who was identified as a rabid anti-Semite ...; who made pejorative statements about organized religions, including Christianity (both Catholic and Protestant) and Buddhism; and who became the henchman of Mussolini and used all the means at his disposal in seeking the defeat of the Allies in World War II and was therefore guilty of treason. (1993, ix)

Although it is not possible to make a complete and satisfactory statement about all of the themes of Pound's *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, it can be confidently claimed that economics and politics are among the central themes of these cantos. Pound's anti-Semitism and his support for Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism, which caused deep resentment against him as well as his poetry, are literally ubiquitous motifs not only in *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, but throughout *The Cantos*. The purpose of the present study is not to argue whether Pound was right in his assertion that the end justified the means and authoritative leaders like Mussolini and Hitler could maintain peace in Europe and avoid the outburst of a second international war, whether he was right in his diagnosis of the root of all social evils, or whether he was right in viewing the Jews as the sole culprit of wars and depravity throughout history—issues which are still controversial and which have constantly aroused double feelings of sympathy and dislike in his readers and critics. What concerns us here is the proposition that despite Pound's centrality in the Modernist literature and the tremendous influence he exerted on his contemporary as well as future Modernist writers, and despite his remarkable formal innovations, a small section of his *Cantos*, namely *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, is clearly not Modernist in

content. Pound's political and economic commitment in *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* does not comply with 'Imagism,' championed by Pound himself, or Eliot's 'objective correlative,' 'impersonal poetry,' and 'dissociation of sensibility,' all of which are fundamental and seminal notions in Modernist poetry. After all, one does not expect to read a Modernist text, written by one of the pioneers of Modernist literature, for its evident, authoritative propaganda. Perhaps a compromise would be: *The Fifth Decad of Cantos*, and on a larger scale, *The Cantos* as a whole, is Modernist in form, but anti-Modernist in content. This means that even at its best, Modernist literature may be traditional in its intention, in the sense that its innovative, unconventional formal techniques may serve simply as instruments in bringing home pre-meditated and deliberated messages, only in novel ways.

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