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Kindellan, M.R. orcid.org/0000-0001-8751-1433 (2016) Ownership and interpretation: on Ezra Pound's deluxe first editions. In: Coste, B., Delyfer, C. and Reynier, C., (eds.) Reconnecting Aestheticism and Modernism: Continuities, revisions, speculations. Routledge , London ISBN 9781138640771

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The Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania contains an undated, hitherto unpublished two-page typescript called 'ON FIRST EDITIONS' (figs. 1-2).¹ In it, Ezra Pound makes several connections between publishing and economics variously conceived. He opens the short tract, which reads very much as a response to a questionnaire, by asserting that 'the capitalist system has murdered 5(FIVE) million men and tried to suppress the arts. / Until readers rise sufficiently from the hog=pen to understand the rudiments of contemporary economics [...] all other discussion is out of place'. He then defines 'the problem of my time' in more personal terms as consisting in 'the feeding of the few authors who do honest work' and laments that 'Authors do not profit by the sale of their books second hand'. Pound calls it 'a disgrace to our pretended civilization that it can not produce books which are, AS MATERIAL OBJECTS, paper, printing etc. equal to those produced several centuries ago' and concludes by saying that 'The way to good first editions is VIA economic reform'. While Pound suggests that low-quality books and poor remuneration of authors are 'minor phases of the ECONOMIC DISEASE' whose 'cure is known' (i.e., stamp script and the theory of economic democracy espoused by C. H. Douglas), he also says that 'Until the readers of fine books are ready to sluice out the stable, it is [a] waste of time discussing details', clearly indicating that the first editions he has in mind are not trade paperbacks but in fact *deluxe* first editions. The further implication is that only those in the market for extravagant goods possess the capital (cultural and/or actual) to make necessary changes to the system that affords them such luxury to begin with.

Pound wrote this article in 1933 ('29 Sept / our XI', i.e., the 11th year of the *era fascista*) the same year his 'so-called "deluxe period"'² effectively ended with the publication of trade editions of *A Draft of XXX Cantos* by the newly-established publishing firm Farrar & Rinehart in New York and by Faber & Faber in London. So far as a book publication history of *The Cantos* is concerned, this deluxe period consists of *A Draft of XVI. Cantos*, published by William Bird's short-lived but highly influential Paris-based Three Mountains Press in 1925; *A Draft of Cantos 17-27*, published in 1928 by John's Rodker's eponymous press in London; and a limited first edition of *A Draft of XXX Cantos* published by Nancy Cunard's The Hours Press in 1930. As George Bornstein has noted, many of the cantos making up these first thirty show Pound concerned with the historical dimensions of text, so much so that he sought to have his poetry 'act out its own historical conventions' anchored in 'the events surrounding its own production'.³ Indeed for Bornstein, as for Jerome McGann with whose work the former agrees, the 'rich early [bibliographic and contextual] codes of the earliest printings' of the deluxe editions 'yield to thicker description than more recent "reprints"'.⁴ Like Miranda Hickman in 'Ezra Pound's Turn from the Deluxe', in what follows I too take a methodological cue from Bornstein's, McGann's and even Lawrence Rainey's 'commitment to materialist hermeneutics'⁵ whilst at the same time questioning some of the assumptions that govern their arguments. Unlike Hickman, whose particular beef is with McGann's claim that Pound's eventual publication of *The Cantos* with more commercial presses constitutes a lamentable 'descent' from an earlier, inherently more valuable "'thick" original textuality',⁶ I do not posit a pragmatic shift in Pound's thinking as responsible for this transition or suggest that 'even plain trade editions' merit 'attention to physical format'⁷ (though I believe both are true); instead, I want to unsettle (albeit circuitously) McGann's opposition between 'thick' and 'transparent'⁸ textuality by wondering about some aspects of the viability of this distinction as it pertains to *The Cantos*.

Bird's edition of Pound's *Draft of XVI. Cantos*, like Rodker's deluxe edition which intentionally copied its design, was issued in a large format (39.2 x 26.2 cm) in white vellum and on decorated paper, with gold lettering on the upper left-hand corner. The colophon page announces an edition of ninety copies consisting of 5 on Imperial Japan paper autographed by the author and lettered A through E; 15 on Whatman paper and 70 on Roma. Initials and headpieces were designed by the young American Henry Strater, a then 26-year-old artist from Louisville, Kentucky, whose work had appeared in the 1922 Paris Salon d'Autonne, where one of the judges (Georges Braque) insisted it be hung in a place of honour, making him into a kind of instant celebrity among American expatriates living in Paris at the time.⁹ Not much has been written about Strater, although he says in an amusing anecdote related to Michael Culver in a 1982 interview that his new status resulted in invitations from both Pound and Gertrude Stein to attend one of their competing Sunday open houses; he reports that those given a choice usually accepted Stein's invitation at Pound's expense because she served 'Scotch highballs while Pound served weak tea in cups with no handles'.¹⁰ The contrast is perhaps insignificant except to illustrate that Pound was issuing poetry in formats neither he nor his coterie could afford.

While for all intents and purposes excluded from the *consumption* of such luxury artefacts on the open market, Pound was not alienated exactly from his labour, exerting where possible considerable influence over the linguistic (obviously) and bibliographic (rather less obviously) details of his editions. McGann suggests that 'few of Pound's current readers are aware that Pound arranged and carefully oversaw the production of this book [*XVI. Cantos*] (and its uniform successor)'.¹¹ While the correspondence between Bird and Pound does attest to this fact – Pound vetted paper quality and personally appointed Henry Strater as designer of the volume's capitals – a particularly striking exchange in the spring of 1924 tells another side of the story. Upon receiving proof sheets of *XVI. Cantos*, Pound was, despite commissioning it, revolted by Strater's work, and flipped his proverbial wig over 'Canto IV' especially.¹² Strater's designs had not been submitted to Pound for (dis)approval but were sent directly to Bird who proceeded to make the cuts 'exactly according to his [Strater's] instructions'.¹³ Pound demanded Bird make certain editorial changes, with hammer and chisel if necessary. To Pound's enduring chagrin, Bird refused because he saw the deluxe edition as constituted by different but equal authorities: 'Text by Pound, decorations by Strater, and printing by Bird'.¹⁴ Undeterred, Pound hatched a plan to have only sixty or seventy copies of *XVI. Cantos* printed with Strater's capitals, '+ the rest with plain red letters'¹⁵ so that he could 'have a few copies of the book that won't turn my stomach'; 'as far as the collectors go', Pound continued in a fairly straightforward demonstration of supply-and-demand economic dogmatism Douglas was teaching him to rethink in theory just as the poor sales of *XVI. Cantos* would prompt him to disbelieve in practice,

the value of the book will be only higher - = there will be fewer ornamented copies + only those in the know will get the plain letter copies — authors [sic] approval + autograph = if the plain ones aren't snapped up at once – They will be sold at the tail end – when the price has been raised ANNY HOWE.¹⁶

Much else besides, this confirms that in Pound's mind deluxe editions address two distinct audiences: cognoscenti, to be supplied with copies in 'plain red capitals'; and those who might nevertheless still buy the expensive editions outright: 'fortunately for the financial side', Pound writes in the same 10 April letter, 'the book collectors are probably no better judges than Henry is himself'. But Bird stood firm, suggesting in a 14 April 1924 reply that if Pound really thought the decorated capitals could be removed he understood neither the mechanics of publishing nor the economics of running a press. Such a request would entail an unbelievable amount of work. Pound replied on 16 April:

As to work – I have had to scrap a full year's work more than once = that is what art is. + why it is so damn rare. // Mike [Henry Strater] may think he has spent a year on this job. but most of the year he spent on his private life [...] concentrate on ELIMINATION economical = and you leave Mike to me [...] As to how much time you are putting into job = = I think I can guess = as anybody who has ever made a good job of anything knows that the last 2% of excellence takes more time than the other 98% = that's why art + commerce never savvy one another.¹⁷

Here, Pound's conception of the work of art, in counterdistinction to commerce, literally entails a 'waste' of time and money. Such wastefulness signifies and in some ways guarantees a valuable work of art. The poem itself regularly sets in play competing conceptions of economic activity and the print cultures that support them; relevantly, 'Canto XII' contains a passage that specifically conjoins one *bad* kind of economics and equally *bad* kind of printing. After a few lines establishing the symbolic stage upon which the idiosyncratic anecdote will be recounted, we read:

Baldy Bacon

bought all the little copper pennies in Cuba:

Un centavo, dos centavos,

told his peons to "bring 'em in."

"Bring 'em in to the main shack," said Baldy,

And the peons brought 'em;

"to the main shack brought 'em,"

As Henry would have said.

Nicholas Castano in Habana,

He also had a few centavos, but the others

Had to pay a percentage.

Percentage when they wanted centavos,

Public centavos.

Baldy's interest

Was in money business.

"No interest in any other kind of uv bisnis,"

Said Baldy.

Sleeping with two buck niggers chained to him,

Guardia regia, chained to his waist

To keep 'em from slipping off in the night;

Being by now unpopular with the Cubans;
 By fever reduced to lbs. 108.
 Returned to Manhattan, ultimately to Manhattan.
 24 E. 47th, when I met him,
 Doing job printing, i.e., agent,
 going to his old acquaintances,
 His office in Nassau St., distributing jobs to the printers,
 Commercial stationery,
 and later, insurance,
 Employers' liability,
 odd sorts of insurance,
 Fire on brothels, etc., commission,
 Rising from 15 dollars a week,
 *Pollon d'anthropon iden*¹⁸

In this passage, Baldy Bacon seamlessly transitions from fiduciary fraud against the public by forming a non-state sanctioned monopoly over its currency – a precondition of usury ('A charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production'¹⁹) – to undertaking the only slightly less reprehensible job of printing commercial stationery, and later becomes an insurance salesman who gets a commission every time a brothel burns. Through middle-man intercessions, Baldy manipulates the processes of circulation for his own enrichment.²⁰

The language of this passage is *uneconomic* in the sense that it consists of several tautological repetitions; quotations reiterate or confirm claims already made in an expository voice; we are given all kinds of surplus information. For a poet whose guiding *ethos* supposed that 'poetry is the most concentrated form of verbal expression' and took 'Dichten = condensare'²¹ as his idiomatic slogan, it is strange to read such a lengthy and relatively prosaic narration unless we imagine the prosody itself approaches a kind of usurious state of unwarranted re-distribution that exceeds the measure of the line and duplicates needlessly certain nominations. Other instances of profligacy, in which Pound excoriates unequivocally profit based-printing, are not hard to find:

the betrayers of language
 n and the press gang
 And those who had lied for hire;
 the perverts, the perverters of language,
 the perverters, who have set money-lust
 Before the pleasures of the senses;

 howling, as of a hen-yard in a printing-house,
 the clatter of presses,
 the blowing of dry dust and stray paper,
 fœtor, sweat, the stench of stale oranges,
 dung, last cess-pool of the universe,
 mysterium, acid of sulphur,

the pusillanimous, raging;
plunging jewels in mud,
and howling to find them unstained[.]²²

A Draft of Cantos 17-27, too, frequently displays a 'self-consciousness about physical artefacts of textual transmission and about itself as such an artefact'²³ in a manner consistent with the first volume of deluxe cantos. Here, Pound recounts a meeting between himself, C. H. Douglas and John Maynard Keynes (renamed 'Mr. Bukos' with codex-pun intended), inflecting it with a personal import given his long battle against the degradations of *Palgrave's Golden Treasury*:

And C. H. said to the renowned Mr. Bukos:
"What is the cause of the H. C. L.?" and Mr. Bukos,
The economist consulted of nations, said:
"Lack of labour."

And there were two millions of men out of work.
And C. H. shut up, he said
He would save his breath to cool his own porridge,
But I didn't, and I went on plaguing Mr. Bukos
Who said finally: "I am an orthodox
"Economist."

Jesu Christo!

Standu nel paradiso terrestre
Pensando come si fesse compagna d'Adamo!!

And Mr H. B. wrote in to the office:
I would like to accept C. H.'s book
But it would make my own seem so out of date.

Heaven will protect

The lay reader. The whole fortune of
Mac Narpen and Company is founded
Upon Palgrave's Golden Treasury. Nel paradiso terrestre.

And all the material was used up, Jesu Christo,
And everything in its place, and nothing left over
To make una compagna d'Adamo.²⁴

This passage, as Tim Redman points out, shows 'how much Pound identified Douglas's struggle to reform economics with his own struggle to reform poetry'.²⁵ More specifically, Pound's complaint regards the conflation of efficiency and total consumption: Baldy's scheme works because he 'bought *all* the little copper pennies in Cuba'; John A. Hobson – 'Mr. H. B.' – refuses to publish Douglas's *Economic Democracy* because it will compete with his own book just as an agent refused Pound's anthology of new verse because it might replace 'that doddard Palgrave' whose '*whole* fortune' relied upon its *Golden*

*Treasury*²⁶ – a titular designation surely not lost on Pound. In the gloomy, monopolised market of commercial publishing, the *Treasury* gathers gold against itself.

*

While it remains irrefutable that *deficit* (i.e., greater liability than income) proved a financial reality for Bird and for Rodker largely *because* they took on Pound's deluxe projects – John Rodker wrote to Pound on 14 September 1928 that 'there are plenty of copies of the CANTOS over [...] at the moment the value of the copies sold is, I calculate, some £50 less than what it cost'²⁷ – for Pound deficit in general took on a moral value signalling the artistic integrity of the work. In a 1922 advertisement selling subscriptions to what became known as the 'Inquest' series, we learn that 'Under the editorial direction of Mr. Ezra Pound' Three Mountains Press was soon to issue books 'printed on hand-made paper, [in an] edition limited to 300 numbered copies'. More importantly:

the aim of the press is to free prose writers from the necessity of presenting their work in the stock-sized volumes of commerce. A book is often a unity without filling 250 pages. By printing T. E. Hulme's poems at the end of *Ripostes* [a collection of Pound's verse published in 1912 by Stephen Swift & Co.] and by arranging the first collection of *Imagistes* Mr. Pound asserted the principle that a man might write a few good poems without of necessity writing a volume of the size demanded by publishers, and at the same time present an individuality or a body of work worthy of more permanent form than that offered by magazine publication (fig. 4).²⁸

The 'permanent form' of limited editions is explicitly contrasted with little magazines, the ephemerality of whose bibliographic environments did not predict modernism's impending success. The material form of these editions expects, or at least ostentatiously desires, a certain resilience in the face of commercial adversity (something it also expects) mostly because it refuses the 'stock-sizes' demanded by volumes of commerce, preferring merely 'a few good poems' to, presumably, a lot of mediocre or bad ones; a limited edition in the broadest sense of that phrase is somehow, according to this logic, uniquely better positioned and able to 'present an individuality'. Here *less* is, if not exactly *more*, definitely *better* in terms of quality, function and purpose. Furthermore, the emphasis on the implicit value of limited editions forms something of a piece with Pound's 'philological poetics'²⁹ that presented texts excluded on ideological and aesthetic grounds from *curricula* through processes of excessive rarefaction imposed by capitalists Pound would later call 'historic black-out'.³⁰

As Lawrence Rainey argued some years ago, 'modernism's ambiguous achievement' was 'to probe the interstices dividing that variegated field and to forge within it a strange and unprecedented space for cultural production, one that did indeed entail a certain retreat from the domain of public culture'.³¹ Such a retreat, however, should not mean we straightforwardly construe modernism as a history of artistic endeavour resistant to commodification or as a history of aesthetic autonomy.³² Instead, according to Rainey, it may be correct to say that:

just the opposite may be a more accurate account: that modernism, among other things, is a strategy whereby the work of art invites and solicits its commodification,

but does so in such a way that it becomes a commodity of a special sort, one that is temporarily exempted from the exigencies of immediate consumption prevalent within the larger cultural economy, and instead is integrated into a different economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation and investment.³³

Rainey's contention that high modernist artefacts (Sylvia Beach's edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* in particular) entered the consumer economy in deluxe formats as means of deferring their consumption makes sense as far as the economic lives of those particular collectors' items are concerned – and in this sense Pound's deluxe editions are no different from anyone else's – but this deferral is quite at odds with the structures of value that shaped Pound's poetics: in the 'Direct treatment of the "thing"'³⁴ is an implicit claim about the importance of limited *immediacy*, a claim that persisted in Pound's aforementioned 'philological poetics', that is, the 'laborious appropriation' of recondite medieval texts into his own poetry.³⁵ Pound's aesthetics, in other words, are grounded in the idea that the past is valuable *for* the present, rather than in the idea that the present is valuable for the future. Or, put less abstractly, authors do not profit by the sale of their books second hand.

Still, Pound's intended insinuation into a luxury market economy did allow him to make some implicit critiques about the *consumption* of literature by means of its conspicuous *production*. Returning to McGann's influential line of reasoning, we can detect therein an unspoken assumption that bibliographic codes always strengthen understandings of linguistic codes they carry – the material environment of a text, in other words, invariably only *helps* and never hinders reading because it constantly complements the semantic text, somehow *doing* what the words are also *saying*. But it might be the case, especially in a poem like *The Cantos* whose object is the essential chaos (and not the coherence) of human understanding, that its deluxe editions in some ways obscure rather than elucidate the meaning of the poetry they convey. Put otherwise, the 'difficulty' of *The Cantos* – whose 'language and structure of its presentation are unusually cross-linked [and] fragmented' and 'dense with ideas and response-patterns that challenge the reader's powers of recognition'³⁶ – is exacerbated not diminished by the 'work's primary material level':³⁷ page layout, decorations, typeface, ink and paper. These aspects of Pound's texts, I am trying to suggest, while always legible, contain within them something of a prompt for misreading: when it came to publishing his poetry, Pound very often got what he adamantly did not want (this in a nutshell might be the story of his texts). The debacle over the capital of 'Canto IV' being a case in point. McGann's social theory of texts ignores by design the distinction between what an author wanted (his intention) and what he got (the text as produced). While this is a fully legitimate reversal-cum-critique of Greg-Bowers editorial theory, he cannot then rightfully reinvest the 'text' of *The Cantos* with Pound's unique agency, thus: 'One of Pound's greatest contributions to poetry lies concealed in his attentiveness to the smallest details of his texts' bibliographic codes'.³⁸ This is true. Pound cared about the physical aspect of his books. He says so in 'On First Editions' and in apoplectic letters to Bird demanding the revision—in fact, the recension—of Strater's work. But it is therefore incorrect to say that the 'scale of [Pound's] textual vision appears with great clarity in the ornamental features of those early books of 1925, 1928, and 1930'³⁹ because those features, in some cases, precisely *obscure* the very vision of the text Pound fought so fruitlessly to fulfil.

By way of conclusion I offer an final example not from outside – which would simply but unhelpfully oppose one methodology with another and thereby reassert the segregation between textual scholarship and literary criticism McGann *et alia* have worked so brilliantly to dismantle – but from within

the remit of materialist hermeneutics: in several letters to different correspondents Pound conceded that deluxe editions were *not* made to be read by those rich enough to buy them. Ownership of said artefacts therefore actually entailed a radical exclusion from any engagement with the texts whatsoever. Pound ridicules this fact in 'Canto XXVIII':


" Buk! " said the Second Baronet, " eh...
" Thass a funny lookin' buk " said the Baronet
Looking at Bayle, folio, 4 vols. in gilt leather, " Ah...
" Wu... Wu... wot you goin' eh to do with ah...
" ... ah read-it? "

Sic loquitur eques.⁴⁰

This canto, it is probably important to note, was the first to appear in an edition *not* sumptuously decorated by either Three Mountains or John Rodker, but in the more measured richness of *A Draft of XXX Cantos*, published by Nancy Cunard's Hours Press. At 21.2 x 14.8 cm the format was much smaller than the previous two deluxe editions of *A Draft of XVI. Cantos* and *A Draft of the Cantos 17-27*. The head-pieces – or ornamental designs at the beginnings of cantos – were absent; the initials of each canto were instead drawn by Dorothy Shakespear Pound, in a style reminiscent of Edward Wadsworth's vorticist woodcuts (fig. 5). The typeface, like that of the previous two instalments of deluxe *Cantos*, is a modernised Caslon. As the imprint on page 143 indicates the text was set and printed by Maître Imprimeur François Bernouard, whose reputation as a printer not only of fine books but also of good ones was known to Pound, who in fact actively encouraged Cunard to solicit his services: using several different monikers, Bernouard had by 1928 already printed works by Gérard de Nerval, Émile Zola, Blaise Cendrars, Pierre Reverdy and Henri Matisse. As the 'justification' on the colophon explains, the impression consisted of 212 copies divided into three qualitative categories, as follows: 200 copies were printed on Canson-Mongolfier Soleil velin M. R. V. paper, mounted on coarse natural linen boards lettered in red on the front, costing 40 shillings (the sale-price is not noted on the colophon but is a matter of historical record); 10 signed copies in red-orange leather boards lettered in gold numbered I-X printed on Texas Mountain paper costing 5 guineas each; and finally, the impression included two copies on real vellum that were 'not for sale' (fig. 6).

Though Pound was keen to be involved in the whole production process – Cunard conscientiously canvassed his preferences about the size of the book, its typeface, page layouts and of course used Dorothy's capital designs – much of extant correspondence (most of Cunard's papers were destroyed by German soldiers during WWII) shows that he was primarily concerned with the two vellum copies, to be produced for his *private* collection and at his personal expense. Despite the fact that *A Draft of XXX Cantos* sold well – not set for release until August, by June 1930 Cunard reported 88 copies were already sold by advance subscription; by September 101 'regular' *XXX Cantos* had sold – in October Cunard lamented that Pound 'should get only £35 or thereabouts for the WHOLE CANTOS is a very depressing depression'.⁴¹ While such an amount is certainly not nothing, considering the fact that in July Bernouard presented Cunard with a bill of 1,150 francs for the vellum alone (which at that time was equivalent to about £15), which she duly passed directly onto Pound,⁴² it does represent a relatively large investment compared to overall remittances. Yet for Pound the cost of producing poetry this way, not the recuperation of cost, was the salient issue.⁴³ Pragmatically, this is a luxury afforded to someone

who never put his money where his mouth was and opened his own press. Symbolically, at least as far as the two vellum copies are concerned, Pound, Cunard and Bernouard had produced a luxury object that was simultaneously announced as extant and withheld from would-be acquisition. This might be the grandstanding, theatrical gesture that it seems—after all, as Pound’s bibliographer Donald Gallup reminds us, Pound reported to his mother in 1920 that two or three of the initial fifteen vellum copies theoretically ‘not for sale’ of *Mauberley* (Ovid Press) were still available for £3/3.⁴⁴ Certainly such concerns persisted throughout Pound’s publishing life; but by the time he found himself incarcerated in St. Elizabeths hospital this bibliographic and economic fact had become also an aesthetic and moral one. The point is underlined most emphatically in ‘Canto 97’:

“All true,” said Griffith
“but I can’t move ‘em with it.”
Ownership? Use? there is a difference.
The temple  is not for sale.⁴⁵

Commenting upon this canto, the second poem in Pound’s recondite volume *Thrones* (1959), Richard Sieburth writes that ‘the economy of this text is virtually autistic. Pound seems to have wilfully withdrawn his poem from circulation and deposited its signs in a secret account whose arcane dividends are accessible only to the initiate. If there is an economy to this text, then, it is primarily self-referential, autarkic: the reader is more or less precluded from participating in its hermetic systems of exchange’.⁴⁶ There is more than a conceptual relation between the studied intractability of Pound’s ‘late’ verse that sought, in my view, to neutralise critical attention through a kind of proleptic esotericism and the creation of a bibliographic artefact as rarefied as a deluxe edition. A poem describing itself as a ‘draft’ asks its readers to suspend their judgment; as a bibliographic act, inscribing drafts on vellum asserts their value as something conceptually prior to interpretation. In a way, the thick descriptiveness of these, Pound’s most exclusively deluxe, editions partly precludes the hermeneutical materialist from participating in its hermetic systems of exchange especially if the decision is made to discuss the semiotic potentials of binding and the exegetical possibilities of typeface at the expense of anything the poems actually say (Bornstein at times almost takes Strater’s and Gladys Hynes’s 1928 designs as surrogates for the cantos they illustrate). There is a risk that critics working in accordance with materialist hermeneutics will, as it were, not see or somehow ignore what is nominally still the object of reading. The poem effectively recedes from view. And the rarer the book, the more distracted the analysis becomes by such rarefaction *per se*. Interpretation by such ‘readers of fine books’ is impeded not facilitated by a concern for textual materiality, a respect for which begins to look suspiciously like proxy-ownership. ‘Wot you goin’ eh to do with ah? / Ah read-it?’

This is really (though not exclusively) a question of legibility. As McGann has argued, William Morris of the Kelmscott Press years (1891-1896) provides an immediate and (for McGann) obvious precedent for the *bibliographic codes* of Pound’s deluxe editions. As McGann tells it, the patent medievalism of the Kelmscott Press recalls through a craft-based production of texts an ‘historical moment when a newly discovered tool of mechanical reproduction – the printing press – had not yet become an engine of cultural alienation’.⁴⁷ Alert to the irreversibility of that development, Pound sought to exchange the ‘Kelmscott mess of illegibility’⁴⁸ – that is, a beautiful but convoluted textual environment – for a clear-

reading text whose patent transparency stood in sharp contrast to the to the obscure difficulty of the poetry itself. To be sure, Pound was attempting to realise the historical rarity of medieval manuscripts outright, and in this he shares attitudinal affinity with Morris (poetically, however, Pound and Morris could not have been more different, so much so that what objective material traces remain serve only to forcefully convey the thoroughness of their disarticulation). In Pound's late modernism, the planned scarcity of the media at its 'thickest' converts items of analysis into sacred objects akin to holy relics, in the most literal way: it is well known that Pound had *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones* published in fine but not deluxe first editions by Vanni Scheiwiller's All'insegna del pesce d'oro; rather less well known is that Pound strenuously attempted to realise deluxe limited editions of these instalments as well, albeit ones strictly and unostentatiously intended for his *private* collection. On 14 January 1955, Pound wrote to Mary de Rachewiltz: 'Of course IF the right kind of pergamena [parchment] can be found, and IF it costs 35 \$ per copy for materiale [sic], we wd/ have to reduce from 4 copies [of *Rock-Drill*] to 2. The temple is holy because it is not for sale'.⁴⁹ In published versions of these supremely ascetic texts, the vanished thickness of the media is replaced by the convolutions of message, convolutions whose opacity commemorates the very materiality they exhibit as lack:

The production IS the beloved.
And Gladstone took a little packet of tea to
Miss What's-her-name, Palmerston's fancy
but did not sell England
for four million quid to . . . (deleted . . .
Suez Canal shares
Said Hollis (Christopher)
Regius . . . (deleted) Professorships
for falsification
and Coke disappeared from curricula.⁵⁰

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- ¹ Ezra Pound Research Collection, 1916-1948, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Box 1, Folder 14. The finding aid erroneously says this items consists of six leaves, not the extant two. The author gratefully acknowledges Mary de Rachewiltz for permission to print this and other extracts from Pound's unpublished archives. Thanks are owed also to Kislak Center curator Nancy M. Shawcross for her generous assistance. A carbon copy of 'On First Editions' exists in the Beinecke Manuscript and Rare Books Library, Yale University, though it lacks Pound's manuscript emendations which are extant on the Kislak Center copy, reproduced below.
- ² Nikolova, Olga. 'Ezra Pound's Cantos De Luxe'. *Modernism/modernity* 15.1 (January 2008): 155-77. p. 156.
- ³ Bornstein, George. 'The Book as Artefact: Historicizing Ezra Pound's First Thirty Cantos'. *Variants 4: The Books as Artefact, Text and Border*. Ed. Anne Mette Hansen, Roger Lüdeke, Wolfgang Streit, Cristina Urchueguía and Peter Shillingsburg. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 151-64. p. 151.
- ⁴ Bornstein, pp. 152; 151.
- ⁵ Hickman, Miranda. "To Facilitate the Traffic' (or, 'Damn Deluxe Editions'): Ezra Pound's Turn from the Deluxe'. *Paideuma* 28. 2-3 (Fall and Winter 1999): 173-92. p. 176.
- ⁶ McGann, Jerome. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. p. 135.
- ⁷ Hickman, p. 175.
- ⁸ McGann, p. 131.
- ⁹ Culver, Michael. 'The Art of Henry Strater: An Examination of the Illustrations for Pound's *A Draft of XVI Cantos*'. *Paideuma* 12 (1983): 447-479. p. 448.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in Culver, p. 448.
- ¹¹ McGann, p. 130.
- ¹² A long-winded and rather amusing back and forth between the two ensued in regard to what Pound called the 'love knots on the lower right hand corner' (fig. 3): in response to Pound's designation, in a 14 April 1924 letter Bird referred to it as "a phallic symbol in repose"; he was consequently lambasted by Pound – intent on precise terminology – about the difference between and significance of a phallus, a cock, a eunuch's penis, a curley cue and a knotted condom (16 April 1924). These unpublished correspondences are accessed courtesy of The William Bird Manuscripts. The Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. The author gratefully acknowledges XXX for permission to quote from this and other material in the collection.
- ¹³ Bird, 'Letter to Dorothy Pound'. 9 April 1924. Unpublished letter.
- ¹⁴ Bird, 'Letter to Dorothy Pound'. 9 April 1924. Unpublished letter.
- ¹⁵ Pound, Ezra. 'Letter to William Bird'. 10 April 1924. Unpublished letter.
- ¹⁶ Pound, 'Letter to William Bird'. 10 April 1924. Unpublished letter.
- ¹⁷ Pound, 'Letter to William Bird'. 16 April 1924. This letter is partly reproduced in: Pound, Ezra. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907-1941*. Ed. D. D. Paige. New York: New Directions, 1950. p. 188.
- ¹⁸ Pound, Ezra. *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions, 1975. pp. 53-4.
- ¹⁹ Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 230.
- ²⁰ That said, Peter Nicholls is surely right to notice that though this fiscal parable can be construed, as Hugh Kenner does, as an indictment of usury, 'Pound seems to have admired Bacon', likening the serious artist to the expert who grasps the particulars of their different cases. Pound, Nicholls continues, ignores the social repercussions of Baldy's cornering the market, seeing in him instead an 'evocation of the pioneer spirit [that] harks back to an earlier period of American capitalism in which individual freedom apparently coincided with the socio-economic structure'. See; Nicholls, Peter. *Politics, Economics and Writing: A Study of The Cantos*. London: Macmillan, 1984. pp. 30; 32.
- ²¹ Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. [1934]. New York: New Directions, 1960. p. 36.
- ²² Pound, *The Cantos*, pp. 61-2.
- ²³ Bornstein, p. 162.
- ²⁴ Pound, *The Cantos*, pp. 101-2.
- ²⁵ Redman, Tim. 'Pound's Politics and Economics'. *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*. Ed. Ira B. Nadel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 249-63. p. 253.
- ²⁶ Terrell, Carroll F. *A Companion to The Canto of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. p. 90, note 12.
- ²⁷ Ezra Pound Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Box 45, Folder 1924. The author gratefully acknowledges The Estate of John Rodker for permission to quote from this unpublished letter.
- ²⁸ Three Mountains Press. 'Under the editorial direction of Mr. Ezra Pound'. 1922. Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke.
- ²⁹ Sutherland, Keston. *J. H. Prynne and Philology*. Cambridge: Unpublished dissertation, 2004. p. 4.
- ³⁰ Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 595.
- ³¹ Rainey, Lawrence. *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. p.3.

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- ³² Bornstein seems to do precisely this: 'Just as the finely crafted industrial products of Canto 22 challenged the inferior mass products encouraged by industrial capitalism, so do the editions produced by William Bird, John Rodker, and Nancy Cunard challenge standards of modern book production and exemplify a live counter-tradition, one that goes back through Morris and other late Victorian and early Modernist printers to their distinguished predecessors in the Middle Ages and renaissance. The book as object as well as the text that it contains constitutes Pound's challenge to the modern world' (p. 164).
- ³³ Rainey, p.3.
- ³⁴ Pound, Ezra. 'A Retrospect'. *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Ed. T. S. Eliot. London: Faber, 1960. pp. 3-14. p. 3.
- ³⁵ Sutherland, p. 13.
- ³⁶ Prynne, J. H. 'Difficulties in the Translation of "Difficult" Poems'. *The Cambridge Literary Review* 1/3 (Easter 2010): 151-66. p. 160, note 1.
- ³⁷ McGann, p. 130.
- ³⁸ McGann, p. 137.
- ³⁹ McGann, p. 137.
- ⁴⁰ Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 139.
- ⁴¹ Cunard, Nancy. 'Letter to Ezra Pound'. 21 October 1930. Unpublished Letter. Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke. The Author would like to thank XXX for permission to quote from this unpublished correspondence.
- ⁴² Cunard, 'Letter to Ezra Pound'. Letter 13 July 1930. Beinecke.
- ⁴³ As one prominent Pound scholar colourfully rephrased this point during a recent conversation, 'Pound never gave a shit about the cost of publishing'.
- ⁴⁴ Gallup, Donald. *Ezra Pound: A Bibliography*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1983. p. 30.
- ⁴⁵ Pound, *The Cantos*, p. 678. The 'it' people cannot be moved with is 'a cold thing like economics'.
- ⁴⁶ Sieburth, Richard. 'In Pound We Trust: The Economy of Poetry / The Poetry of Economics'. *Critical Inquiry* 14.1 (Autumn 1987): 142-72. p. 144.
- ⁴⁷ McGann, p. 139.
- ⁴⁸ Pound, *Selected Letters*, p. 187.
- ⁴⁹ Pound, Ezra. 'Letter to Mary de Rachewiltz'. 14 January 1955. Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke.
- ⁵⁰ Pound, *Cantos*, p. 742.

FIGURE 1

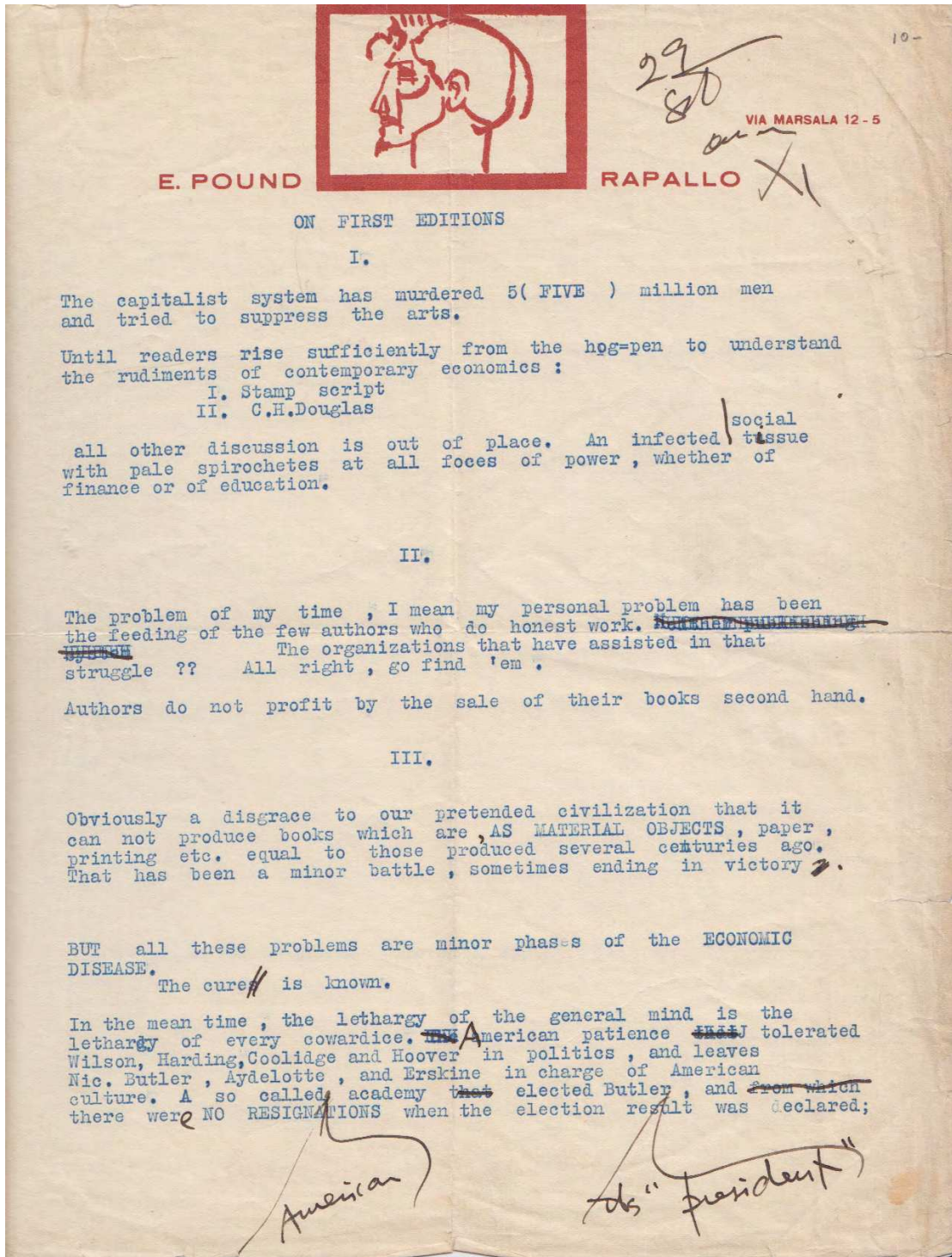
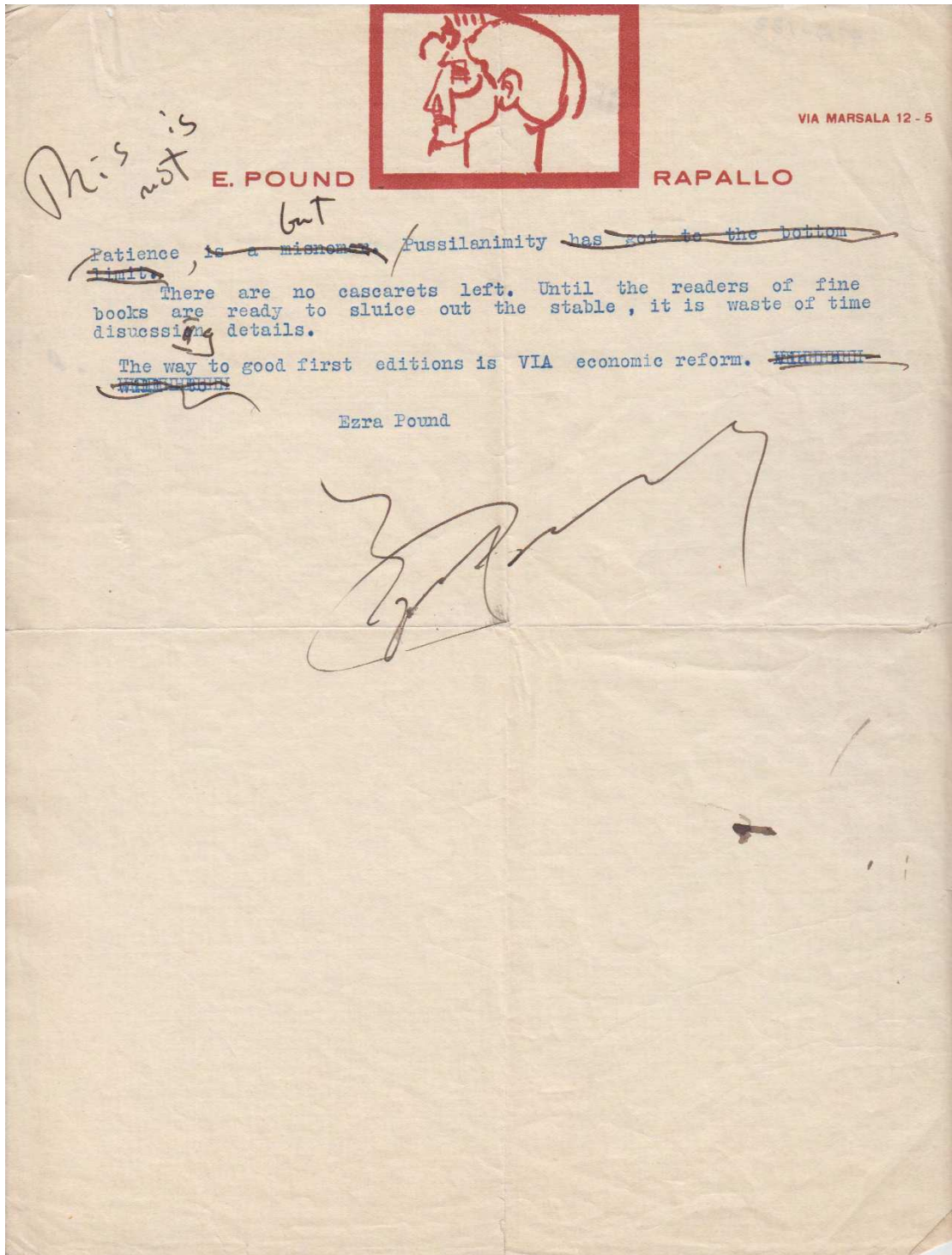


FIGURE 2



This is not



VIA MARSALA 12 - 5

E. POUND

RAPALLO

but

~~Patience is a micronomy. Fussilanimity has not to the bottom limits.~~

There are no cascavets left. Until the readers of fine books are ready to sluice out the stable, it is waste of time disussing details.

~~The way to good first editions is VIA economic reform. XXXXXXXXX~~

Ezra Pound

[Large handwritten signature]

FIGURE 3

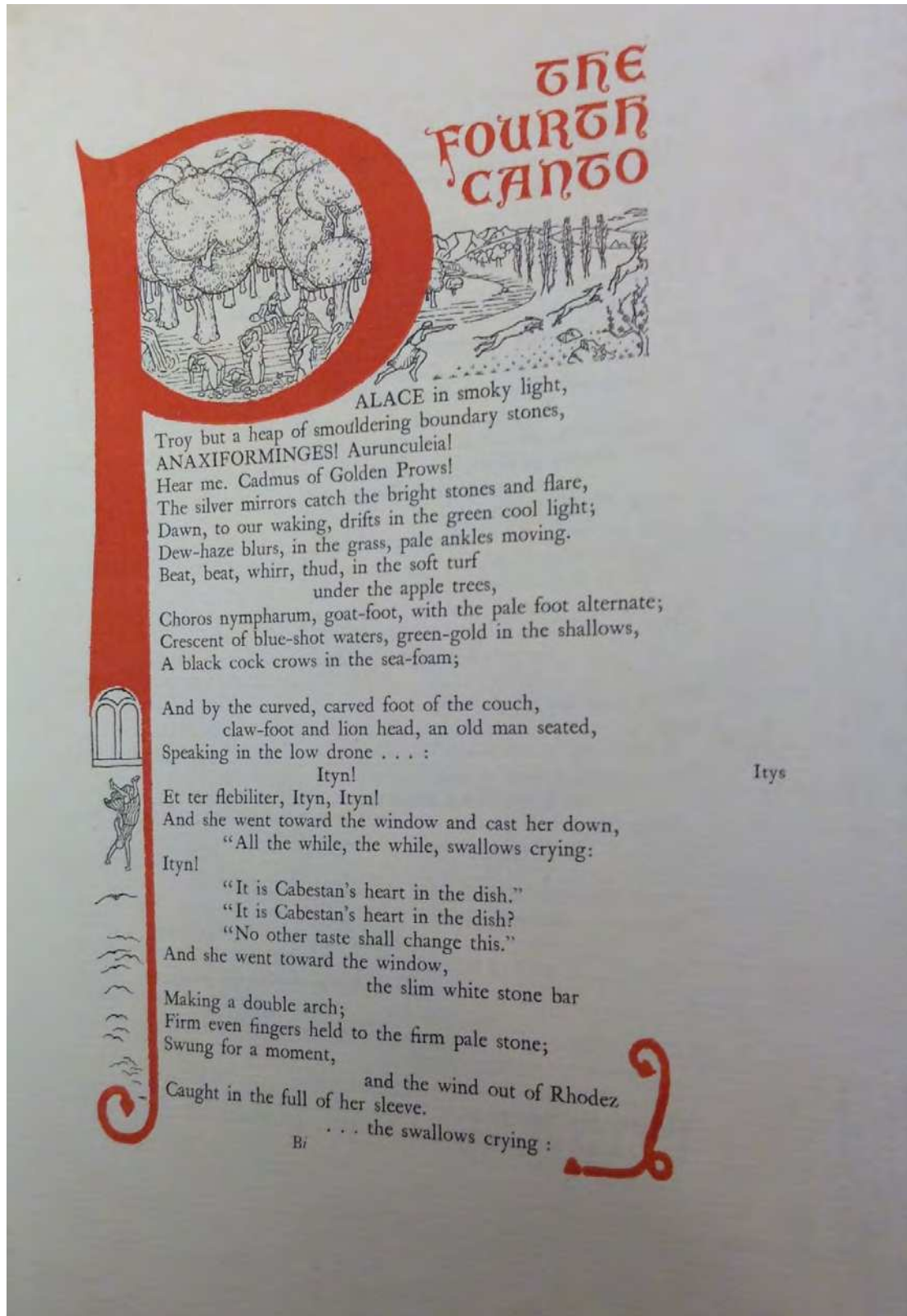


FIGURE 4

Under the Editorial Direction of
MR. EZRA POUND

The
Three Mountains
Press

is about to issue the following books:


INDISCRETIONS	<i>by</i> EZRA POUND
WOMEN AND MEN	<i>by</i> FORD MADOX HUEFFER
ELIMUS	<i>by</i> B. C. WINDELER
THE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL	<i>by</i> WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
ENGLAND	<i>by</i> B. M. G-ADAMS
BLANK	<i>by</i> ERNEST M. HEMINGWAY

These books will be printed on hand-made paper, edition limited to 300 numbered copies.

The aim of the press is to free prose writers from the necessity of presenting their work in the stock-sized volume of commerce. A book is often a unity without filling 250 pages. By printing T. E. Hulme's poems at the end of *Riposte* and by arranging the first collection of *Imagistes* Mr. Pound asserted the principle that a man might write a few good poems without of necessity writing a volume of the size demanded by publishers, and at the same time present an individuality or a body of work worthy of more permanent form than that offered by magazine publication.

We here assert the same principle for prose. The present opening series of books will contain from forty to eighty pages each, the series constituting a critical enquiry into the state of prose in 1922-3; in accordance with the view that abstract criticism is merely a preliminary excitement, an arrangement of ideas which the writer must or may make for himself before writing—but which is of no great value until he have produced a work in accord or in disaccord with it.

The present prose is Jamesian, Impressionist, Vorticist, if these terms are given a vague enough meaning. At least here are six books which we have ourselves read without being bored, and which we believe to have some durable value as literature, or at any rate to have, as a series, the value of a landmark as had the *Des Imagistes* volume in 1912, the Vorticist manifestoes in 1913, or, in 1917, the grouping of writers in the *Little Review*.



Subscriptions

are now being received, at \$2 (or 8s. 6d.) per volume, payable on publication. The publishers reserve the right to raise the price of the last 40 copies of any volume. Address subscriptions and inquiries to:

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19 Rue d'Antin, Paris

**Or to Mr. F. B. NEUMAYER, Bookseller, 70, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2.

FIGURE 5

A
I
 ND then went down to the ship,
 Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and
 We set up mast and sail on that swart ship,
 Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies also
 Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward
 Bore us out onward with belying canvas,
 Circe's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess.
 Then sat we amidships, wind jamming the tiller,
 Thus with stretched sail, we went over sea till day's end.
 Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean,
 Came we then to the bounds of deepest water,
 To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled cities
 Covered with close-webbed mist, unpierced ever
 With glitter of sun-ray
 Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven
 Swartest night stretched over wretched men there.
 The ocean flowing backward, came we then to the place
 Aforesaid by Circe.
 Here did they rites, Perimedes and Eurylochus,
 And drawing sword from my hip
 I dug the ell-square pitkin;
 Poured we libations unto each the dead,
 First mead and then sweet wine, water mixed with white flour.
 Then prayed I many a prayer to the sickly death's-heads;
 As set in Ithaca, sterile bulls of the best
 For sacrifice, heaping the pyre with goods,
 A sheep to Tiresias only, black and a bell-sheep.
 Dark blood flowed in the fosse,
 Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides
 Of youths and of the old who had borne much;
 Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,
 Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads,
 Battle spoil, bearing yet dreory arms,
 These many crowded about me; with shouting,
 Pallor upon me, cried to my men for more beasts;
 Slaughtered the herds, sheep slain of bronze;
 Poured ointment, cried to the gods,

FIGURE 6

Justification

2 Copies real vellum

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10 Copies on Texas Mountain Paper signed and numbered

I - X

200 copies on Canson-Mongolfier
Soleil velin M. R. V. Paper

I - 200

5

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