



# “Tempus Tacendi, Tempus Loquendi”: Manifestations of Madness in “Canto 74”

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**ABSTRACT**

On May 24, 1945, Ezra Pound was arrested for treason by the US Army authorities near Pisa and confined in a gorilla cage for two and a half weeks. He spent a total of 6 months in a prison camp. After being brought to America on December 21, 1945, he was declared medically unfit for trial and was committed to St. Elizabeths Hospital. However, there was a group of skeptical people who claimed that the poet was in fact quite sane. Studies about Pound's life after his imprisonment and years at St. Elizabeths portray the poet as either an old delusional man who was once a prominent poet or as a great schemer who followed the advice of his lawyer and faked madness. Pound's biographers pointed out that during his years at St. Elizabeths, the place became a literary mecca for aspiring poets, implying that the poet was in a rational state of mind. After more than 70 years since the poet entered the hospital, it is crucial to investigate not whether the poet was mad but rather how the poet's words in “Canto 74” were utilized as evidence to persuade the jury and doctors of his insanity. This article aims to analyze “Canto 74” in light of Foucault's approaches to madness and its relation to language. It further explores why *The Pisan Cantos*, which was declared the Bollingen prize winner in 1948, could be mistaken for the rambling manifestations of a madman.

**Keywords:** “Canto 74,” Ezra Pound, language of madness, modernist poetry, poetry and madness



## Introduction

Pound's journey from the United States to Europe and back again has been one of the most controversial topics in American literary history. A journey that started with a young, aspiring poet in search of a new poetics ended with charges of treason against the United States. This was prompted by his publications in support of fascism and his broadcasts on Radio Rome that favored Mussolini against American troops entering Italy. Pound returned to the US in 1945 as an old man, an ardent supporter of Italian Fascism, and an anti-Semite. Twenty-one years earlier, in 1924, Pound had gone to Rapallo with the aspiration to pursue his dream of an artistic revolution supported by the state as he believed that Mussolini would help him achieve his dream. His propaganda broadcasts on Radio Rome and publications supporting Mussolini's cause led to a total of 19 counts of treason. All of these charges were circumvented by his lawyer's argument that he was "unfit to stand trial." He was declared "insane" by a group of doctors, including Dr. Wilfred Overholser, the chief psychiatrist at St. Elizabeths (Chace, 1987, pp.134–138; Feldman, 2012, p.86; Torrey, 1984, p. 4). Most of the critical works about Pound's arrest in Italy, his imprisonment in a gorilla cage near Pisa, the charges of treason and hearing, and his institutionalization at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington DC. deal with similar questions: Was he guilty? Was he mad? Was he putting on an act? Was he treated? For his trial, Julian Cornell, his lawyer, presented the manuscripts of *The Pisan Cantos*, specifically "Canto 74," to claim that his verse was a manifestation of madness. Even though numerous poets and public figures questioned the controversial decision to use the poet's verse to declare him insane and unfit for trial, the court felt it was sufficient evidence to drop the charges and send Pound to St. Elizabeths Hospital.

Among Pound's biographies that narrate his life focusing on the relationships he had developed while at the hospital, Swift's recent work *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics and Madness of Ezra Pound* (2017) is the first study that provides a detailed analysis of Pound's medical documents and attempts to ascertain whether he was treated for any medical condition. This study also refers to Overholser's and Cornell's accounts at the time. However, none of these works directly examine the reasons behind Cornell's decision to use "Canto 74" as proof of Pound's insanity and how Pound agreed with this plea to use his poetry as proof since *The Pisan Cantos* was later awarded the Bollingen prize. The main question, then, becomes not whether Pound was insane but what in the poem convinced the jury and the doctors that he was insane. How does the text imitate the rantings of a madman in a way that it is perceived by the reader as

an account of a madman's point of view? Researching the alleged madness of Pound by using narratology and approaches to madness by Foucault and Feldman would illuminate why "Canto 74" could evoke the impression of a madman's rantings. This canto was presented as evidence of his madness by Pound's lawyer. However, by utilizing Foucault's approach to the language of madness as well as the narratives of madness in fiction, one may argue that the poetic style of Pound may be mistaken for a manifestation of madness.

## Aim and Methodology

In *Language, Madness and Desire* (2015), Foucault claims that language and madness are linked to one another because both play with "signs that play with us" (Foucault, 2015, p. 38). This common point, where literature and madness intersect, could arguably be the reason why the language of the madman is similar to literature. Both rely on the creative mind. The audience, who is of sound mind, cannot comprehend the fictional, unreal tales spun by the madman and tries to determine whether what he/she hears is true or made up. This paper adopts Foucault's approach to the language of madness to argue that the ambiguity in the madman's language, which fluctuates between fact and fiction and speaking the truth or concealing it with made-up stories, can be identified as a stylistic element in Pound's "Canto 74." Pound's style is to employ contrasting, paradoxical phrases; fragmented images; allusions to literary works; and quotes from history and personal memories. These aspects form a collage that builds the vortexes in *The Cantos*. These vortexes construct multilayered meanings in the poem, which, to the untrained eye, could appear as illogical, fragmented ramblings of a madman.

It is highly unlikely that Pound had the intention of deliberately appearing insane when he was composing *The Pisan Cantos*. However, agreeing to his lawyer's proposition, as revealed in many of his biographies, indicates that he would consent to having his sanity questioned to avoid being charged with treason. In light of this, one may ask, why and how would one be regarded as insane, and what kind of utterance would register as the manifestation of a madman? This was arguably the ploy Pound's lawyer was aiming for. How would one perceive someone as mad, and would words be sufficient to determine whether a person was insane are questions that require contemplation. In Pound's case, could the way in which Pound was captured and declared insane and the years he spent in St. Elizabeths be regarded as a fictional narrative like the asylum

novel, which helped his case of being perceived as a madman, is another question to be raised. To seek an answer to this question, this article offers a brief overview of Pound's case and medical accounts by his biographers. In addition, using various theoretical discussions of the manifestations of madness, "Canto 74" is analyzed to determine whether Pound's poem may be mistaken for a madman's perspective and how the canto may be used as proof of insanity.

## **Ezra Pound's Arrest and Diagnoses**

Daniel Swift remarks that when Pound was arrested, his initial psychiatric evaluation in Genoa presented no sign of "psychosis, neurosis or psychopathy"; however, he would be diagnosed with many other mental conditions over the years. He was said to have "delusions of persecution and grandeur" by Dr. Edgar Griffin in 1945. After seeing his medical files, Dr. Romolo Rossi diagnosed him as "manic depressive" in the 1960s and allegedly treated him, although the records have not been saved. During Pound's trial, four doctors, along with Overholser, came up with several possible terms, including "bipolar or manic depressive, [ . . . ] psychotic, paranoid, schizophrenic." Their diagnosis led to the decision that Pound was "of unsound mind," saving him from the death penalty (Swift, 2017, p. 171).

Even though the decision to institutionalize Pound for 12 years seems to be unanimous, evidence shows that many insisted that the poet displayed no signs of mental incapability. For instance, Dr. Marion King, the head of the prison medical service in Washington, agreed with the initial evaluation in Genoa that Pound did not exhibit indications of psychotic behavior. However, his evaluation was not included in the files presented to the court. Moreover, Dr. Addison Duval declared that he had only agreed to the insanity diagnosis because of Overholser, the head of the psychiatrist group (Swift, 2017, pp. 9–10). Furthermore, the Rorschach test conducted by Dr. Kendig reports that although Pound seems to have confined himself to a fantasy world rather than reality, his "pedantic" answers indicated no evidence of psychosis. Swift, the recent biographer of the poet, focused specifically on Pound's years at St. Elizabeths, and remarks that after reading his doctors' reports, it is hard to believe that Pound was genuinely insane (Swift, 2017, p. 160). Swift observes that considering the conspiracy theories about Pound's insanity and admission to St. Elizabeths over the years, the two scenarios agree that Pound is most likely sane:

The conspiracy theories told about Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeths run in two directions. In one, he is a traitor shielded by the hospital from the punishment which was his due; in the other, he is a fearless truth-teller punished for threatening to reveal all he knew. In one, Pound is the hero, wronged and justified. In the other, he is a trickster, mocking and weak. The two versions, however, agree upon their diagnosis: for in both, Pound is sane. (Swift, 2017, p. 172)

When his arrest, admission to St. Elizabeths, and the time he spent at the hospital are analyzed, one point that all biographers mention is the agreement between Pound and his lawyer on the plea of insanity. Pound's lawyer revealed, in his letters collected in *The Trial of Ezra Pound*, the true nature of Pound's supposed "insanity." In his letter to James Laughlin, Cornell admits to having conferred with Pound about pleading insane to have treason charges dropped. To this, Pound replied that the same thought had occurred to him as well (Swift, 2017, p. 9; Rushing, 1987, p. 121; Moody, 2015, p. 167).

I discussed with him the possibility of pleading insanity as a defense and he has no objection. In fact he told me that the idea had already occurred to him. In view of what we now know of his recent medical history, I think there is a good chance that such a defense might succeed. As you probably know, the trial of such an issue is almost always a farce, since learned medicos who testify for each side squarely contradict each other and completely befuddle the jury. It then largely becomes a question of the sympathy of the jury, assuming, of course, that there is no question of outright faking. (Cornell, 1966, p. 14)

It may be deduced from the above words that Cornell was formulating a defense that depended on convincing the jury as well as the doctors of Pound's forged insanity. In a letter to Dr. Wendell Muncie, Cornell provides a summary of Pound's achievements and writes that he "was stricken with violent terror and hysteria, and also affected with amnesia" due to his imprisonment in a gorilla cage near Pisa. Here, Pound spent weeks exposed to the harsh Mediterranean sun (Cornell, 1966, p. 32). Additionally, Cornell describes the state in which he found Pound upon his arrival:

When I asked him whether he wanted to stand mute or would prefer to enter a plea, he was unable to answer me. His mouth opened once or

twice as if to speak, but no words came out. He looked up at the ceiling and his face began to twitch. Finally he said he felt ill and asked if he could not go back to the infirmary. (Cornell, 1966, p. 32)

In addition to referring to Pound's arrival, Cornell attached excerpts from *The Pisan Cantos* to his letter, namely "Canto 74," to imply that the war and his imprisonment in Pisa had a lasting impact on the poet. He argued that the lines written by the poet revealed that he was unfit for trial (Swift, 2017, p. 71). At the time, the contents of "Canto 74" may have led the doctors to believe that Pound was indeed of unsound mind. However, Foucault's argument in *Madness and Civilization* that the language of madness can be forged and Felman's view in *Writing and Madness* that the language of madness bears contrasting, paradoxical statements provide insight into why the canto may have been perceived as a "narrative delirium" or a manifestation of madness. While writing *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound certainly did not seem to have the agenda of "forging" madness. It was only after Cornell's advice on pleading insane that Pound may have composed the poem to give the impression of the utterances of a madman, especially to those who were unfamiliar with his style. If this speculation is true, then one may claim that Pound was indeed not a madman but, as Mark Feldman describes in his article on Pound's legal case, "crazy like a fox," underscoring his scheming skills. In the third volume of his comprehensive biography on Pound, David Moody reveals that Cornell "unashamedly" falsified his accounts of Pound being unfit for trial (Moody, 2015, p. 184). Whether Pound helped Cornell build his case by providing him with *The Pisan Cantos* or not is a question that needs to be explored.

## **Textual History of *The Pisan Cantos* and Pound's Madness**

For most of his literary career, Pound was working on composing the great epic of his time, which contained fragments of the best examples of human civilization. Pound's *The Cantos* is known for its long, intricate, and fragmented lines that are packed with heaps of images and texts from the past and the present, ranging in their subjects from history and myth to personal anecdotes. Time within *The Cantos* fluctuates from the Classical period to the twentieth century, and locations vary from the Far East Chinese dynasties to the house where Pound was born. The narratives of *The Cantos*, like the temporal and spatial fluctuations, are diverse; they range from fictional characters like Odysseus to contemporary political figures like Mussolini to Pound's accounts of the figures he had met in Europe and elsewhere. Because Pound's *The Cantos* contains such

accounts derived from his memory, at times, the line between fiction and reality is blurred, and history and myth transgress their boundaries, making it impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction. While one might be inclined to perceive these lines as authentic accounts of his life, given that they are recounted by various personae in the poem, it is equally plausible to read them as intentional constructions of fiction rather than accepting the confessional tone of the poem at its face value. Moody states that Pound could only be in his right mind when composing such an intricate and central part of *The Cantos*:

There is an abundant yet controlled flow of material, made up of immediate and recollected and visionary experience. The language is consistently charged and layered with intricate meaning, and shaped into an ever-varying verse that is at once measured and free—the sort of verse in which every line-break is a discrimination. The entire sequence reads as free flowing natural speech, only heightened, concentrated, intensely energized; each line is separately formed, and yet fitted into an ongoing rhythm; and each canto finds its own definite form. The poet was evidently altogether in his right mind through those summer months; and still, only long practice in which acquired skills had become habitual, instinctive, could have enabled him to compose so well at such a rate, and in that place. (Moody, 2015, p. 135)

Viewed from this perspective, *The Pisan Cantos* may be erroneously understood as a poem written by a madman to an unfamiliar eye. In other words, Cornell could easily pass Pound's genius as a manifestation of his insanity.

Ronald Bush and David Ten Eyck observe that Pound suffered a mental breakdown during his arrest in Pisa, a period coinciding with the commencement of the composition of the Pisan sequence of *The Cantos* (Bush and Eyck, 2013, p. 122). *The Pisan Cantos* was first published in fragments in little magazines. The textual history of *The Pisan Cantos* reveals that although Pound started writing the poem while being held at the DTC near Pisa, hence the name *The Pisan Cantos*, he revised the manuscripts before they were published (Bush and Eyck, 2013, pp. 125–126). While there is no evidence of an intentional manipulation to plead insanity through his verse, the textual history shows that Pound was working on these cantos while his future was still uncertain, and he may have had the opportunity to tilt the scales to his advantage.

## Language and the Construction of Insanity

Lars Bernaerts, Luc Herman, and Bart Vervaeck assert that an examination of the narratives of madness in fiction provides insight into the psychology of the literary characters and the writers' creative process and, therefore, "involves the wider domains of language and behavior" (Bernaerts et al., 2009, pp. 284–285). As they contend, mad narrators often signal an unreliable narration; however, mad narrators also encourage the reader to ask these questions: "Is the storyworld a mental projection? Is the main character [or narrator] truly mad?" (Bernaerts et al., 2009, p. 286). These were the very questions that critics raised during and after Pound's institutionalization, which further urges one to ask: If the madness of a poet can be proven through his poetry, could it also prove his sanity? What is more, what can it say about the distinction between fiction and reality? Can the written text prove that madness or sanity is constructed artificially, or effaced to disguise it? Since Cornell used "Canto 74" as proof of Pound's madness, suggesting that these were the true words of the poet rather than fictional constructs, can certain passages from "Canto 74" likewise prove that these are intentionally constructed manifestations of madness or examples of the narrative delirium forged by the poet? Shoshana Felman's definition of madness, rooted in a comparative discussion between Derrida's and Foucault's approaches to the language of madness, speaking and silence in relation to madness, seems to provide an answer to the present debate about madness and its position between reality and fiction:

Madness can only occur within a world in conflict, within a conflict of thoughts. The question of madness is nothing less than the question of thought itself: the question of madness, in other words, is that which turns the essence of thought, precisely, *into a question*. (Felman, 2003, p. 36)

According to Felman, what is missing from the definitions of madness and the discussions about its position in literature is the boundary between reality and fiction or the end of thought and the beginning of madness (2003, p. 47). In light of her argument, the ambiguity of where reason ends and madness manifests itself in the utterances of characters demonstrates the fluid nature of the representations of madness. Therefore, the presence of conflicting thoughts may be one way of identifying madness, which may easily be constructed in fiction.



In "Fight Club and the Embedding of Delirium in Narrative," Lars Bernaerts discusses narrative delirium as a form of the manifestation of madness through a reading of Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club* (1996). According to Bernaerts, narrative delirium constructs a "delusional world" in which the narrator draws the reader in "by representing the delirium of the experiencing self without comment" (Bernaerts, 2009, p. 374). This type of narration, he argues, controls the dynamic of the text, creating "tensions and instabilities" that fluctuate between "mental representations of events and characters" (Bernaerts, 2009, p. 374). The narrative delirium

takes shape when the narrator partly or fully relates the story from the perspective of a deranged character, regardless of whether the narrator himself is that character. The narrator displays the characters and events the way they are perceived and/or experienced by the mad subject. (Bernaerts, 2009, p. 374)

One of the defining features of "narrative delirium" is the creation of an alternative world as an interpretation and cognizance of reality by the mad subject, which is a form of the manifestation of madness. As such, the mad subject is convinced that his delirium sheds light on the "real, actual world" in which he has "deciphered" a secret code that proves "conspiracies and a national threat" (Bernaerts, 2009, pp. 377–379). Moreover, delirium is not only an interpretation of reality but also an alteration of reality as it becomes part of his understanding of the world around him. The delirium narrative helps the mad subject "to cope with the outside world and with himself," which typically includes psychotic themes and motifs like "persecution," "escape," "conspiracy," "threat," and "divine intervention" (Bernaerts, 2009, p. 383). As Bernaerts underscores, delirium may at times offer political asylum to characters, enabling them to symbolically escape from political oppression through institutionalization (Bernaerts, 2009, p. 384).

Accordingly, *The Pisan Cantos* registers as a delirium narrative. As *The Cantos* is made up of a palimpsest of texts, temporalities, and places, it may be regarded as a "delusional world" constructed by the poet. As Moody observes, the disassociated fragments especially present in the Pisan sequence are in fact "too dense, the ever-changing relations too fluid and complex, for deliberate analysis to do them any sort of justice. They need to be performed, and performed again and again, for their music to come clear" (Moody, 2015, p. 137).

Another reason Pound's poem might be viewed as a delirium narrative is the use of a wide range of topics, such as Confucius, the founding of the Bank of England, Italian politics, economic problems, his relationships with other people, including his wife Dorothy Shakespear and his mistress Olga Rudge (Swift, 2017, p. 33). Although these subjects may seem unrelated and take on the guise of the ramblings of a madman, they frequently appear throughout *The Cantos* and are juxtaposed to achieve layers of meanings, which was part of Pound's poetics.

One can argue that Pound's emphasis on the use of the vortex to compose great poetry imitates the delirium narrative. The language of the madman is interpreted as insane due to the lack of illogical, coherent statements and the use of dissociated images and fragmented utterances. Even though the use of the vortex and collaged fragments are not exclusive to *The Pisan Cantos*, the stylistic experimentation in these cantos is pushed to its limits. The magnified contrasts and the fragmented pieces of literature and history, as well as the poet's memory, are arranged in such a fashion that they imitate the "secret code" in which the madman speaks. The language in "Canto 74" remains caught between imitations of the utterances of the madman or the revelation of poetic genius.

## **The Manifestations of Madness: Silence and Language of the Madman in "Canto 74"**

"Canto 74," which is the first of the *decad* of *The Cantos* entitled *The Pisan Cantos*, was composed during Pound's imprisonment near Pisa. Like in the rest of *The Cantos*, "Canto 74" presents numerous personae whose narratives blend into one another, obscuring the identity of the speaker. However, unlike the rest of *The Cantos*, "Canto 74" is unique in its use of complex characters, such as Odysseus, who oscillate between insanity and intelligence. Pound uses *The Odyssey* throughout *The Cantos*. However, in "Canto 74" specifically, the image of characters speaking and keeping silent is reiterated, as if the personae are reliving their decisions in life whether to speak up or remain silent. Such an example is Odysseus; in "Canto 74," he is presented in the moment when he reveals his true name to Polyphemus and where his cursed journey begins. Like in the previous cantos, Pound fuses the image of Odysseus, who reveals his true identity, with Wanjina and Ouan Jin who are also punished for speaking their minds. The personae in this section are compounded through the image of speaking and silent characters, which may be viewed as a metaphor for Pound's position since he believed that it was "speaking up" that led him into trouble.

"I am noman [Odysseus], my name is noman"  
 but Wanjina is, shall we say, Ouan Jin  
 or the man with an education  
 and whose mouth was removed by his father  
     because he made too many things  
 whereby cluttered the bushman's baggage  
 vide the expedition of Frobenius's pupils about 1938  
     to Auss'ralia  
 Ouan Jin spoke and thereby created the named  
     thereby making clutter  
 (Pound, 1996, pp. 446–7)

The first line quoted is the sentence uttered by Odysseus, which is followed by the appearance of the Australian folkloric figure Wanjina and the reference to the life of Frobenius (Terrell, 1984, p. 365). A reader who is unfamiliar with Pound's technique might find these lines like the fragmented, unrelated ramblings of a madman. These utterances are presented in the form of run-on sentences, shifting between perspectives and subjects. These fragmented blocks called vortexes may be regarded as groupings of various themes and images, historical texts, and pieces of memory, converged to constitute a unified idea through a kaleidoscope of perspectives. In these lines, characters that represent silence serve as a means to establish the notion of persecution, one of the themes of delirium narratives. Odysseus declaring himself as no man, a nobody, to protect himself—an act of foresightedness in the poem—is interpreted as an act of silence by Pound. Alternatively, revealing Odysseus' true identity by declaring his name out loud after escaping the cave of Polyphemus is likened to the speech that resulted in Pound's imprisonment, the infamous radio broadcasts. Similarly, the image of Odysseus is parallel to Wanjina, who created the world by pronouncing the names of things. His father punishes him by closing his mouth. Ouan Jin is a man of letters, and Frobenius' life is cut short and his work is carried out by his students. In other words, the silencing of these characters by a "divine intervention" suggests that Pound saw the treason charges against him as an act of silencing truth, which in turn renders the fear of persecution. He declares in another line: "Tempus tacendi, tempus loquendi" (a time to speak, a time for silence) (Pound, 1996, p. 449).

According to Foucault, silence as well as speech may convince the audience of madness. That is, one is convinced of the insanity of the madman even before he speaks because the madman's delirium is rooted in his silence:

We willingly believe that the madman is mad even before he begins to speak and that it's from the depths of this madness, of this originally silent madness, that he allows the obscure words of his delirium to rise up, belatedly in some sense, and circle around him like a swarm of blind flies. (Foucault, 2015, p. 25)

That is, madness reveals itself by what the madman utters or conceals, and the moment before he speaks, this potential is manifest in the eyes of the viewers who believe that the person across them is mad (Foucault, 2015, p. 25). "Tempus tacendi, tempus loquendi" (a time to speak, a time for silence), the lines in "Canto 74," may be interpreted in this manner to support the argument that this statement is telling of Pound's condition at the time. Speech and silence may be used and replaced with one another to hide or manifest madness. While speech can be used against the poet, as in the case of his radio broadcasts, to prove his guilt and insanity, silence may also be used against him to prove his innocence and insanity. In other words, silence, as well as speech, can be interpreted as madness depending on how the reader understands and analyzes them. While speaking may be linked with Pound's radio broadcasts on Radio Rome for which Pound was declared an enemy of the state and charged with treason, silence may render him an outcast in the same way that the madman becomes an outcast of the society. This is because when the poet is deprived of words, he ceases to be a poet and, like the madman, is denied of his existence.

Unlike the more organized blocks of ideas that are found in the previous cantos, the ones in *The Pisan Cantos* reveal a defeatist tone due to the lack of a coherent strain of images. Moreover, characters like Odysseus or Mussolini, who were associated with power and leadership, are described through the loss of their identities. For instance, "Canto 74" begins with the death of Mussolini, whom Pound admired as a great visionary leader.

THE enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent  
shoulders  
Manes' Manes was tanned and stuffed,  
Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano*  
by the heels at Milano  
That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock  
DIGONOS, Δίγονος, but the twice crucified  
where in history will you find it? (Pound, 1996, p. 445)

In the poem, Mussolini is “twice crucified” and likened to Dionysus due to his double birth, and Pound calls it an “enormous tragedy” in history. Likewise, Dionysus, who is usually associated with euphoria and madness, is represented here as a diminished god (Pound, 1996, p. 445). Odysseus, another figure from Greek myths, whom Pound regarded as the first example of a “proto-Fascist leader,” is repeatedly called ΟΥΤΙΣ, “No Man,” in Greek (Flack, 2015, p. 105).

a man on whom the sun has gone down 莫 ΟΥΤΙΣ

...

ΟΥΤΙΣ

a man on whom the sun has gone down

nor shall diamond die in the avalanche

be it torn from its setting

first must destroy himself ere others destroy him. (Pound, 1996, p. 450)

Odysseus is known as “the man of many wiles,” which is a commendation of his intelligence and his scheming, sane mind. However, in “Canto 74,” he is repeatedly portrayed in the moment of his loss of identity and revealing of his true name, as his trick against Polyphemus is reminded to the reader. In the famous scene in *The Odyssey*, Odysseus declares that he is “no man” upon being held captive in the cave of Polyphemus, Poseidon’s son. By hiding his true self and symbolically giving up his identity, Odysseus protects himself and plans his escape. These examples may be regarded as representations of loss of identity: Mussolini’s death, the double crucifixion of Dionysus, and Odysseus becoming “no man” strip them of their identities. These may be considered as forms of self-annihilation, suggestive of the poet’s notions of failure or seeming failure as acts of protection and creating time to scheme a plan of escape. By portraying such characters, the poet presents to the reader a set of personae under the threat of destruction, which seems to align with the poet’s personal life.

However, in the poem, with another allusion to Homer’s *The Odyssey*, this “loss of identity” transforms into a temporary disguise. Throughout *The Odyssey*, Odysseus uses many forms of disguise and adapts to survive until the end, and when he finally reveals his true identity, he becomes the ruler of Ithaca after slaying the suitors. The reference that transforms the loss of identity from its negative meaning of failure into a hopeful temporary state of loss is achieved through an allusion to Circe. In *The Odyssey*, in Circe’s house, Odysseus’ men are captured after being poisoned and are transformed into

swine. The transformed men are only physically altered, but their intelligence remains human. This temporary "loss of identity" in the form of a physical disguise referred to in "Canto 74" (Pound, 1996, p. 456) may be likened to Pound's situation in which on the surface he accepts to "appear" mentally unfit while remaining sane and safe from being hanged for treason. The idea of disguising as a madman is not new, as Pound's ideal hero, Odysseus, also tries to fake his madness to avoid going to the Trojan War. If Pound was truly attempting to present himself as a madman through his verse, using the motif of disguise could be a means to convey this concept.

Another section in the poem that could be perceived as a manifestation of madness is seen in Pound's description of usury and economics, which is a frequent subject the poet discusses in *The Cantos*. According to Bernaerts, one of the themes of delirium narratives is the narrator believing he/she is part of a conspiracy and creating an alternative world in which he/she is aware of the secrets that remain undisclosed to other characters. As such, in "Canto 74," as well as other cantos and his essays, Pound believed that private investors and usurers were responsible for the deterioration of the economy, resulting in war.

Robbing the public for private Individual's gain ~~ΘΕΥΛΕΙΗ~~  
every bank of discount is downright Iniquity  
robbing the public for private Individual's gain  
(Pound, 1996, p. 457)

In the poem, he declares that private individual gain, which he associates with the Jewish community, is like Circe's poison, causing "petty larceny" that destroys the City of Dioce. Pound regarded this city to be the realization of his dream, aiming to establish a world in which writers and artists were supported by the government instead of such private investors. Pound's anti-Semitic views infiltrate into the poem's world, specifically in the City of Dioce. In such a world, the actual world is altered by the narrative created by the persona who believes that he has discovered the secrets to the causes of the Second World War. If paranoid statements, as Bernaerts claims, are one of the characteristics of the delirium narrative, Pound's lines quoted above exhibit an example of such a narrative by presenting a persona who feels paranoid, fears persecution, and knows about the conspiracy theories and the hidden secrets of the government.

Another characteristic of the madman's speech is his tendency to express non-consistent, conflicting ideas. According to Felman, the presence of contrasting statements

may be regarded as proof of madness, which seems relevant to the discussion of such dialectical conflicts in the poem (Felman, 2003, p. 36). While using binary opposites, oxymorons, and paradoxical statements cannot be considered as indications of a madman's speech, forcing these concepts to extreme limits could lead to such an impression. Similarly, Foucault underlines that madness manifests itself in binary oppositions:

Madness, then, is not altogether in the image, which of itself is neither true nor false, neither reasonable nor mad; nor is it, further, in the reasoning which is mere form, revealing nothing but the indubitable figures of logic. And yet madness is in one and in the other: in a special version or figure of their relationship. (Foucault, 2015, p. 94)

In *Revels of Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature* (2002), Allen Thiher explores the narratives of madness from a narratological perspective. According to Thiher, the madman's perspective is a subject that narrative experimentations in modernism have frequently had to deal with (Thiher, 2002, p. 250). In addition, he claims that it is mainly "a response to madness," at times also including "the writer's own insanity" (Thiher, 2002, p. 251). Although he argues that there are various ways in which madness is manifest, one point may be adopted to the argument of Pound's *Pisan Cantos* as a manifestation of a madman:

The fall into time is a destructive modernist possibility for living madness: madness also takes the form of nostalgia for the past as a present. It can take the form of death-oriented anguish about a continuity with the past after all relations to time have been severed. This theme of the past in the present is such a dominant modernist motif that it has led some theorists to consider the mad person's relation to time, in the form of regression, the key to all insanity. (Thiher, 2002, p. 277)

Thiher explicitly describes Pound's madness as "mimicked madness." Thus, one may argue that in light of his words given in the above quotation, Pound's personae in *The Pisan Cantos* may reveal a similar form of madness (Thiher, 2002, p. 250). *The Pisan Cantos*, more than any of the other cantos written at the time, was the most fragmented and contained some of the most extreme dialectical conflicts. As Moramarco observes, in *The Pisan Cantos*, the struggle between "order and chaos" seems to be predominant,

to which "building and demolishing" may be added as one of the prevailing dialectical conflicts (Moramarco, 1977, pp. 313–314). The use of these contrasting dynamics in the poem implies an unrelenting tension between the terms, which, to the unknowing reader, may present an endless inner conflict. As the structure of the poem indicates, the past and the present as well as power and submission are intertwined in *The Cantos*. That is, the theme of "the past in the present" already dominating the lines in *The Cantos* is pushed to the extreme so much so that it imitates the discordant utterings of a madman. This style, viewed together with the earlier autobiographical references in the poem, takes the form of a manifestation of madness, especially a mimicked one that exhibits the intentional subversions and mastery of Pound's style. Similar to the contrasting ideas and discordant utterances in the poem, Dr. Jerome Kavka, Pound's regular doctor at St. Elizabeths, observed in his meetings that Pound would speak in run-on sentences that expressed disconnected ideas brought together in a particular pattern (Swift, 2017, p. 70). Peter Morrall, in *Madness: Ideas about Insanity* (2017), refers to Foucault's case study of Pierre Rivière (1973) to contend that madness can indeed be fabricated. The complex steps of planning, executing the plan, and afterward pleading insanity in the case can be regarded as a process that can be fabricated. In the case of Pound, the poet's lawyer Cornell may have aided him to contrive "madness, badness, and normality" during his evaluation by the doctors (Morrall, 2017, p. 18). Dr. Kavka's familiarity with Pound's style suggests that if the doctors had been more acquainted with his verse, they might have understood—if at all present—that the "insanity" manifest in the poem was a construct.

In addition to Pound's *The Cantos* being presented as proof of his insanity during his trial, over the years, as if to present further hard evidence of his madness, his life in St. Elizabeths has been portrayed by biographers like that of an asylum novel. Miyatsu, in *Literatures of Madness*, defines the asylum novel as one in which "ostracized characters are thrown into community with other isolated and stigmatized figures, often against their will" (Miyatsu, 2018, p. 52). The biographies and conspiracy theories about Pound's life after his imprisonment in Pisa and the 12 years he spent in St. Elizabeths Hospital depict the poet's life as if it is a page-turner "asylum novel." Viewed from this perspective, Pound's stay at the hospital appears increasingly fantastical and fictional. Convinced by his lawyer to plead innocent by reason of insanity, Pound spent 12 years and 6 months in the mental institution. According to Rushing, Pound "allowed" himself to be declared "insane and incompetent" to avoid charges of treason (Rushing, 1987, p. 111). Many of his friends, including T. S. Eliot, Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, and e. e.



cummings, tried to help him in the process as they were aware of the consequences of being charged with treason (Rushing, 1987, p. 119). In addition, Chace aligns with Torrey's perspective on the topic of Overholser's role in Pound's case. The head of St. Elizabeths knew that Pound was not insane but was in search of "a haven," and standing trial would mean the death penalty for the poet. As a result, Overholser acted as his savior at that moment (Chace, 1987, p. 138; Torrey, 1984, pp. 202–203). What Pound hoped to be just a few months of imprisonment turned into him spending 12 years in St. Elizabeths (Moody, 2015, p. 167).

## Conclusion

Known as one of the most intricate sets of cantos Pound has written, and appreciated by Pound scholars as one of the most elaborate examples that demonstrate Pound's genius, "Canto 74" seems to also share common characteristics with what can be regarded as fictional manifestations of madness. This perceived similarity between the utterances of a madman and Pound's poetic style likely contributed to people's belief that the lines in "Canto 74" were proof of Pound's madness. The truth, however, seems to be the opposite. While the lines in "Canto 74" manifest Pound's stylistic experimentations to the extreme, as evidenced by the intricate layering of images and the presence of vortexes in the poem, the technique he employed could easily be misconstrued as illogical sentences uttered by a madman to the untrained eye. Thus, the pivotal question arises as to what extent Pound allowed his verse in "Canto 74" to be regarded as utterances of a madman, or did he write any lines to intentionally portray himself as insane to help his case? As Rushing remarks, for most people, *The Pisan Cantos* reveals the genius of Pound, demonstrating that such intelligence in poetry requires a sane rather than an incompetent mind (Rushing, 1987, p. 123). Although it seems unlikely that Pound may have composed his verse specifically to depict the characteristics of a madman, if indeed true, this would prove him as a schemer.

The image of the artist "swept along by the radical politics of his day," according to Mark Feldman, does not entirely portray the true story (Feldman, 2012, p. 84). Rather, he observes that the new data released by the FBI reveals that Pound's Radio broadcasts were only part of a greater agenda of his fascist ideology, and even before the war, his position was clear as evidenced by his various editorials in British and Italian fascist publications (Feldman, 2012, pp. 84–86). Even after spending more than a dozen years in St. Elizabeths, when he embarked on his journey back to Italy in 1958, Feldman notes

that Pound gave a fascist salute (Feldman, 2012, p. 88). He further reveals that during Pound's imprisonment in Pisa, the Department of Justice legal team regarded him to be "crazy like a fox," a term used to describe intelligence and scheming abilities that can be mistaken for insanity (quoted in Feldman, 2012, p. 89). In short, Feldman's article argues that besides being institutionalized for his propaganda against the US government, Pound ardently supported Italian Fascism. He was neither insane nor delusional and was saved from trial due to his great achievements as a poet (Feldman, 2012, p. 92). In light of Feldman's words, one may argue that although asserted by various sources that Pound was not in his right state of mind after his arrest in Pisa, it does not prove that his ideology was a result of his delusional state. By the same token, his lines written in Pisa, although to readers who are unfamiliar with Pound's style might appear as nonsensical, are arguably noted to be some of the most intelligently written lines of American poetry. Thus, one may claim that *The Pisan Cantos* does not illustrate a manifestation of madness per se but that of an even greater Odysseus-like dissimulator.

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