

THE MYSTICAL ELEMENT
IN
"SECTION: ROCK-DRILL 85-95 DE LOS CANTARES"
OF
THE CANTOS OF EZRA POUND

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The mystical element in "SECTION: ROCK-DRILL 85-95 DE LOS CANTARES" of The Cantos of Ezra Pound is one of the fundamental concepts of this section and exemplifies most of the main themes leading to a coherent explanation of the root attitudes in The Cantos. Pound restates the traditional, fundamental teachings which are basic to mysticism and makes them new. He incorporates these core beliefs in his particular idea of forma.

Ezra Pound recognized that mystic states are natural to man. He dissociates a benevolent mystic state from a fanatic mystic state. These states become apparent in Pound's choice of historical characters and their different levels of awareness. These historical characters are used with other concrete images to carry the thread of mysticism throughout the "Rock-Drill" section.

Pound's structure of the whole scheme for The Cantos as well as his specific intention for "Rock-Drill" implies a mystical quality. Pound pointed out the similarity of the structure of The Cantos to that of a Bach Fugue. The structure of a Bach Fugue is such that one melody cannot be severed from the whole without destroying the effect on the consciousness and in the poem the quasicontrapuntal themes cannot be severed from the whole without losing the intuitive

awareness on the part of the reader. The result of the unity of a Bach Fugue or of the unity of The Cantos is its effect on the consciousness. "Rock-Drill" seems to be a condensation of these quasicontrapuntal themes, a stretto, in which the themes quicken and catch up with one another.

The words as well as the verse in the "Rock-Drill" section have a mystical quality to them, mystical in the sense of "magical" or "beyond what is apparent." Pound's use of ideograms and foreign words and his typographic disposition all reveal multiple and complex meanings. The images and rhythms seem to reflect the beginnings of a higher consciousness and are found to be the source of the mystical element in the "Rock-Drill" section.

Pound's method of using foreign words and ideograms, images and rhythms as well as his use of cryptic expressions in order to maintain the quasicontrapuntal structure of the Cantos to express certain metaphysical experiences is exemplified in the surface exegesis of Canto 85. This exegesis reveals Pound's interest in a level of consciousness rather than an interest in abstract ideas. Pound is concerned with the "seed," the beginning of things, a state of mind in which ideas are germinated.

This state of mind in which ideas are germinated becomes clearer by tracing the concrete images into their depth. The concrete images draw forth other sensory impressions which are germane to the fundamental concept of

mysticism. These images incorporate the multiple themes used throughout The Cantos such as Odysseus' journey to hell, metamorphoses, Usura, coinage, alchemical transmutation, the philosophy of Confucius, neo-Platonism and the exact nature of perception. Pound's idea of forma (as the invisible attraction of the magnet, an energy which draws things into order) encompasses the further development of the images which are used in pursuing the concrete images first seen in Canto 85.