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The Vortex and World War II: Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot's Poetic Treatment of Wartime

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THE VORTEX OF WORLD WAR II:
EZRA POUND AND T.S ELIOT'S
POETIC TREATMENT OF
WARTIME

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ABSTRACT

       This thesis is an examination of the poetry written by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot during World War II. The works that I focus on are Pound's <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> and Eliot's <u>Four Quartets</u>. I will go about this examination by applying the vortex, as a literary term and critical tool, to these two works of poetry. The structure of the vortex is a swirling outer turbine held together by a calm center. The vortex was coined as a literary term during the British avant-garde movement, Vorticism. Ezra Pound was a prominent participant in this movement that occurred in the early twentieth century. After Vorticism ended, Pound continued to write about the vortex as a literary term. Eliot, though never a Vorticist, was familiar with the concept of the vortex and directly uses the term in <u>Four Quartets</u>. The application of the vortex will show how Pound and Eliot organized their social, political, and artistic situations at the time of World War II.

DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

World War II was a time of chaos and confusion resulting in a social climate of

fear and uncertainty and a political climate dictated by the conflicting ideologies of world

powers. As poets living in prominent countries of the European theater of World War II,

Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot were deeply immersed in the circumstances of the war. T.S.

Eliot served as a fire-warden during the German air raids on London, and Ezra Pound

broadcast his political views from a radio station in Italy called Radio Rome (Kaplan 43).

The fascist propaganda that Pound advocated on his radio program eventually led to his

arrest and brief imprisonment for treason (Sieburth x). The poetry that they wrote during

this time period, Four Quartets by Eliot and The Pisan Cantos by Pound, represents their

experiences with the War and how they defined themselves in a time of such extreme

conflict. Their poetry also portrays the disorientation and moral confusion present in a

time of war. In order for the reader to organize the chaos of this poetry into a

manageable structure, it is useful to examine a British avant-garde movement of the early

twentieth century. By extracting the vortex, used as a literary term, from the Vorticist

movement, readers can use it as a critical tool to organize the occasionally overwhelming

complexities of Four Quartets and The Pisan Cantos.

The literal definition of the vortex is a chaotic swirling of air or water held

together by a calm center. Pound and his Vorticist contemporaries defined the vortex as

the swirling chaos of the present organized around the calm position of clarity that the

artist occupied. Though not all of the components of Vorticism will be relevant to the

discussion of <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> and <u>Four Quartets</u>, it is important to have an understanding of the essential aspects of the movement that created the vortex as a literary term. Through an examination of Vorticism's origins and specific articles from the Vorticist publication, <u>Blast</u>, the essential components of the vortex that allow for its continuing usefulness as a critical tool can be separated from the less accessible components that limited the sustainability of Vorticism as a movement.

One crucial difference between Pound and his fellow Vorticists was his consideration of the past and future. While many of the other Vorticists ignored them completely, Pound found parts of the past relevant and inseparable from the present. These relevant parts of the past interact with the present to create a future. Eliot, who was never considered a Vorticist and never considered himself to be allied with the Vorticists, placed a similar importance on the past in his earlier critical work. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), which later appeared in <u>The Sacred Wood</u> (1920), Eliot expresses his belief that great art contains both novelty and a sense of history. In his opinion, in order to create sustainable art, the artist needs to be able to marry the past and the present. The necessity of discussing the causes and consequences of World War II makes it important to use a vortex that does not ignore the past and the future when discussing <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> and <u>Four Quartets</u>.

The vortex is useful to these poems because of the confusion of the present in times of war. As the largest war in history, this is especially true for World War II. The proximity of violence and destruction as well as the differing of doctrines of the global

powers struggling for dominance have to be taken into consideration. These confusions were prominent parts of both Pound and Eliot's respective situations.

Pound composed The Pisan Cantos while imprisoned after World War II at the Disciplinary Training Center near Pisa, Italy. During the war, and even after the U.S.'s entrance into the war, Pound believed he was performing his duty by expressing his opinions over Radio Rome, despite the fact that his ideas were considered treasonous by the U.S. government. He thought that through his knowledge of Eastern culture, he could provide valuable input that would aid in the resolution of the war (Sieburth x). Because of his belief in the righteousness of his actions, the harsh nature of his imprisonment created significant confusions for Pound. The Pisan Cantos were the vessel that Pound used to work through these confusions. His imprisonment removed him from his artistic position at the center of the vortex. In order to master the chaos once again, Pound had to redefine it.

Pound accessed the theories of his late friend Henri Gaudier-Brzeska to gain clarity on the vortex and the variations of its use. Gaudier-Brzeska was a sculptor, as well as a member of the Vorticist movement and a contributor to the Vorticist publication Blast. He used different vortices to define the driving forces behind different cultures throughout history. One of the vortices he used to accomplish this is the vortex of destruction. This is an important vortex for the analysis of both Pound and Eliot's later definitions of the present. The vortex of destruction organizes Pound's consideration of the technologies that enabled more efficient and widespread warfare, such as the invention of the atom bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima to ultimately end World War

II. His consideration of this technology delves into the consequences for future generations of the existence of this powerful weapon.

Eliot's composition of <u>Four Quartets</u> spans a much larger period of World War II than Pound's composition of <u>The Pisan Cantos</u>. Starting in the years leading up to the war, "Burnt Norton," the first of the four poem series, was published in 1936. The last poem, "Little Gidding," was completed in 1942. During this time, Eliot saw the global circumstances leading up to the war, the beginning of the war, and experienced first-hand the violence and destruction during the German bombings of London. This is the experience that most poignantly evoked Gaudier-Brzeska's vortex of destruction for Eliot and made him question the extent of humanity's capacity for self-destruction.

Despite the prominence of violence and destruction during World War II, themes of hope and ideas that humanity can overcome the atrocities of war are interwoven into both <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> and <u>Four Quartets</u>. The vortex provides an instrument for the reader to discern the core beliefs that allow Pound and Eliot's art to continue as well as to organize the chaos of war represented in their poetry around these beliefs. Pound organizes the chaos around the clarity of art and Eliot organizes the chaos around artistic and spiritual faith. The vortex as a chaotic yet energized structure is a critical tool that can be used to find the core meaning in art that fully depicts the turmoil of its historical context.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TITLE OF CHAPTER TWO WILL GO ON THIS LINE

The vortex, as a literary term that will aid in the examination of <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> and <u>Four Quartets</u> in the following chapters, initially came out of the Vorticist movement of the British avant-garde. Vorticism was aggressive and confrontational from its origin to its end. Existing as a British artistic movement, Vorticism mirrored the social and political climates of its nation of origin. The unrest of this time resulted from a shaky economic situation, discontent with labor laws, an aggressive and often violent women's movement, and the tumultuous relationship between Great Britain and Ireland. The volatility of this situation threatened civil war in the years leading up to World War I (Edwards 14). This social upheaval was reflected in the atmosphere of the artistic world in the early twentieth century. Artists were aggressively dividing themselves by ideologies and artistic form.

Wyndham Lewis and the others who would be identified as Vorticists clashed most harshly with the Bloomsbury Group. The Bloomsbury Group, which included such notable authors as Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and Roger Fry, was a group of English authors who maintained friendships throughout their lives (Rosenbaum ix). Several of the authors met while enrolled at Cambridge University and continued their connection beyond their collegiate years. The artists who made up the Bloomsbury Group had an appreciation for the nineteenth century and were inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris (Edwards 15). The Vorticists came from a different social class than the Bloomsbury Group, helping fuel the differing artistic and social outlooks of

the two groups. The socially comfortable, middle-class standings of the Bloomsbury Group contrasted with those of the Vorticists, who were largely composed of immigrants and those from lower classes (Edwards 15). While the Bloomsbury Group tended to be more liberal and uphold pacifist beliefs, the Vorticists were staunch supporters of the military. The new English artists replaced the traditional idyllic countryside of previous artistic generations with the energy and versatility of the urban café. These avant-garde artists gathered at the cafés to assemble "a crowd of dirtyish, bearded, slouch-hatted individuals" (Wees 38). Many Bloomsburyites practiced conscientious objection that led to their arrest. To the contrary, the Vorticists advocated war, several members of the movement even volunteered for service. They found value in both the awareness of life brought on by the proximity of death as well as war's ability to thin out, or purge, society. The argument between Wyndham Lewis and Bloomsburyite Roger Fry, which resulted in the departure of Lewis and several of his contemporaries from the Omega Workshop (a company created to let artists incorporate their ideas into design), marked the culmination of the rift between these two groups (Edwards 15).

　　　　With their rejection of both past artistic movements and movements that concentrated on the past, the artists that would come to be known as the Vorticists needed a current example of how to create a movement. They found this example in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the Italian Futurists. Marinetti laid out the parameters of his movement In "The Futurist Manifesto" of 1909. He dictated that: "Courage, audacity, and revolt will be the essential elements of our poetry" (21). He wanted to create poetry that shocked the reader and rebelled against tradition. This "[p]oetry must be conceived

as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man" (21). The Futurists aggressively wanted to wrestle the world into submission. Ultimately, Futurism wanted to create art that invigorated the artist. This need to feel alive led to Futurisms obsession with speed. The Futurists felt that automobiles, locomotives, and airplanes exemplified the speed of the modern age.

Futurism also advocated war as a manner of reinforcing the experience of life. "We will glorify war -- the world's only hygiene -- militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for" (Marinetti 23). The prospect of death puts life into perspective; it reminds the populace of what it means to be alive. It also acts as a cleansing agent. It eradicates outdated regimes and ideas. This idealization of war became a prominent belief of the Vorticists as well.

The world community was growing through advances in communications technologies. Marinetti believed considerations of the past were obsolete due to the commonly accessible ability to consider different parts of the contemporary world society (Wees 89). Modern society was inundated with the present. Considerations of the past did nothing more than waste time that could be spent exploring the glory of the present. Studying the art of the past did nothing to remind people that they were alive. Marinetti declared: "Museums: cemeteries! … Public dormitories where you sleep for ever side by side with beings you hate or do not know" (22). Museums contained dead art that was no longer relevant to the present -- art forced into context with art of opposing movements and eras. Marinetti did not exclude Futurism from becoming an irrelevant part of the past. He postulated that: "[w]hen we are forty, other younger and stronger men will

probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts -- we want it to happen!"
(23). Futurism demanded the regular turnover of artistic movements in order to maintain
a society of artists that could accurately depict the present. Futurism's self-proclaimed
brevity of existence became more definitive of Vorticism than Futurism. The Futurist
movement would be reborn in the Russian Futurist movement, but Vorticism never
firmly reestablished itself after <u>Blast</u>.

The Futurists concentrated on the speed of modern society. They were fascinated
with how to depict motion. In <u>Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash</u>, painter Giacomo Balla
depicted a dog in motion by drawing it with many blurred feet and tails (Wees 90-91).
They also tried to exemplify the speed of the age in poetry. The poems used a driving,
mechanical rhythm and truncated words and sentences to express expediency. With the
lack of punctuation and the abundance of onomatopoeia, this type of poetry often came
across as nonsensical. To resolve this issue, the Futurists combined words with images to
make a poetic-visual fusion (Wees 89). Futurist works attempted to be a "conflation of
music and noise, drama and theatrical gesture, narrative and exposition" (Perloff 92).
Eliminating segregation between artistic mediums created an artistic motion and speed
through its disorienting effect. The most influential artistic fusion created by the
Futurists, and an essential component of Pound's <u>The Pisan Cantos</u>, more than thirty
years later, was the typographic revolution that they created as a visual poetry. "Italian
Futurism's real achievement in this general area of enhanced 'expressiveness' lay in the
development of typography's potential in new directions" (White 12). These typographic
developments would become an important part of the Vorticist publication <u>Blast</u>.

Wyndham Lewis was intrigued by the Futurists at first, as well as inspired by Marinetti's aggressive promotion of both himself and his movement. Lewis was even commissioned to create a couple of Futurist works along with C. R. W. Nevinson, the only English artist to be considered a Futurist (Munton 177). Ezra Pound was also influenced by Marinetti's charismatic leadership style. While Pound was an influential member of the Vorticist movement, he also was the driving force behind the poetic Imagist movement. Pound's penchant for promoting revolutionary movements is what would ultimately lead to his arrest and the composition of The Pisan Cantos at the end of World War II.

Lewis broke with the ideals of Marinetti and Futurism before Vorticism fully took form, but he took some of the movement's foundations and built the British avant-garde around them. Both the Futurist and Vorticist schools of thought concentrated solely on the modern and defined art and society by the machine, but while Futurism reveled in the interactions with technology, Vorticism observed the present from an emotionally uninvolved third-party perspective (Munton 177). Futurism saw itself as taking part in the machine age, acting as the artistic equivalent of the revolutionizing technology. Vorticism was more interested in capturing and abstracting the machine age and its effects on society. Lewis's divergence from Marinetti was inevitable despite some common ideals. On his visit to London in the spring of 1914, Marinetti said that London was "not yet completely futurist" and that it needed "more electric light, more noise, and the traffic must be much quicker" (Wees 103). The antagonistic charisma and independence of both men ensured that their paths would eventually diverge. Marinetti's

desire to take credit for ultimately instigating all new forms of English art did not agree with the Vorticists. During the beginning of Vorticism, the movement ran parallel to Futurism, but due to Marinetti's boisterous nature, Lewis and his contemporaries attacked Futurism for its lack of specificity in later years. Futurism's obsession with the machine and speed caused it to lose sight of the individual components that made up contemporary society.

Vorticism was named after the vortex, a term Pound was the first to employ as a paradigm for artistic creation. Literally, the vortex is a turbine of chaotic swirling energy held together by a calm center, similar to the structure of a tornado. Vorticism's guidelines, or lack of guidelines, were established in <u>Blast</u>, edited by Lewis and signed by the eleven primary members of the movement. In the two manifestos at the beginning of <u>Blast</u>, Lewis set the position of the Vorticists through the negotiation of dualities. "Lewis upsets expectations by both Blasting and Blessing the same cultural entities" (Munton 178). Lewis begins his manifesto by blasting England, citing the country's obsession with Victorianism and its dismissal climate as flaws (Lewis 11). Later in the manifesto, he blesses England for its ships and its seafarers, praising the country's vibrant trade industry (22). In this manner, Vorticism does not completely accept or completely reject ideas, but rather finds the most fruitful exploration of meaning to be the consideration of extremes. Eliot will later use the negotiation of extremes to define time in <u>Four Quartets</u>.

<u>Blast</u> defied expectations in many ways. Starting with the magazine's cover, the formatting of the type size and font was revolutionary. The simplicity of the bold, diagonal letters of the title across the solid pink cover is striking. The text of <u>Blast</u>,

particularly in the manifestos, continues to defy expectations, reading vertically at times as well as horizontally at others and changing size and capitalization frequently. In this manner, the text can be examined in form as well as content, expanding on the Futurist idea of marrying word and image.

Vorticism, adhering to the consideration of dualities, dismisses the Victorianism of the preceding generation and rejects the broad scope of Futurism. Instead it concentrates on the intricacies of the present. The movement's "content is the real world of work and the streets, of dress, dance, and the body in motion, of the new city and its architecture, of industry ports, and real and imaginary machines" (Munton 177). The Vorticist movement was largely concentrated in the visual arts. The artists who powered this movement created images of machinery replacing or distorting the body in order to represent the dominant theme at this time. Representing the body as affected by the machine age allowed the Vorticists to "get deeply enough immersed in material life to experience the shaping power amongst its vibrations" (Munton 179). These artists concentrated on how the circumstances of life defined contemporary society and culture. This will be an important concept in chapters two and three when looking at how Pound and Eliot define their circumstances during World War II through their complete immersion in their respective situations. Vorticist paintings and sculptures attempted to capture the instant expression of these vibrations, creating a freeze frame of a potential energy that is almost uncontainable.

Lewis defines the vortex in the part of his "Vortices and Notes" entitled "Our Vortex." Here Lewis addresses how the vortex resolves the problems of the past and the

future. "Our vortex is not afraid of the Past: it has forgotten it completely. Our vortex regards the Future as as sentimental as the Past" (Lewis 147). The vortex eliminates any distortion of the past by completely removing it from the mind. It examines the present as it happens without any consideration of how previous events shaped it. By ignoring the past the vortex eradicates sentimentality related to memory and associations of fondness or regret. The future must also be disregarded due to its sentimentality. Speculations of events to come are inextricable from feelings of hope and fear. To remove emotion from art, speculation must also be removed.

Lewis claimed that the "vortex does not deal in reactive Action only, nor identify the Present with numbing displays of vitality" (Lewis 147). When the present is considered as a result of the past it becomes merely a "reactive Action," devaluing and obscuring the intricacies of the current situation. Disregarding "numbing displays of vitality" is a direct attack on Futurism. Futurism lacks the insight of Vorticism, according to Lewis and his companions, due to its concentration on the speed and mechanization of society. Taking such a broad view while ignoring the components that create this speed prevents artists from creating adequate representations through the disorienting scope of their examination. The vortex does not make this mistake; it is more comprehensive through its consideration of individual aspects of the present. Rather than being caught up in speed of the mechanical age, "the Vorticists sought the very centre of the hurricane, the quiet eye of the storm, from which point they could concentrate on the chaos raging around them, and control it" (Edwards 17). The control gained from this detached point of view is what allowed the Vorticists to create the art

that they felt needed to exist. Lewis relates the past and the future to life. An individual's experience is largely defined by their fixation on the past and speculation about the future. This is the chaos that most people are caught up in and what prevents them from achieving the eye of the hurricane. By eliminating the past and the future, the vortex allows the Vorticist to create artistic representations of the present.

The uncompromising nature of Lewis's vortex makes the Vorticist an aggressively dominant individual. "The Vorticist is not a Slave of Commotion, but its Master" (Lewis 148). The Vorticist masters commotion by placing him or herself at the center of the vortex where the stillness of the eye allows for an understanding of the chaos. This, in turn, enables the artist to represent the chaos through abstraction that truly represents the present. The Vorticist does not accomplish this through passivity, but rather aggressively takes action and lets "Life know its place in a Vorticist Universe!" (Lewis 148). This only occurs in a Vorticist Universe though. The artist has to ascribe to Vorticist thought for life to know its place. This control that the artist gains asserts the superiority of Vorticism and the vortex in comparison to a movement such as Futurism that tries to fight the chaos.

In his essay on the vortex in <u>Blast</u>, Ezra Pound defines the vortex as "the point of maximum energy" (Lewis 153). For the Vorticists this point is the present, or immediate experience. As energy radiates away from the present it loses purpose and meaning. Pound refers to movements that concentrate on the consequences of the present to depict the future as "CORPSES OF VORTICES" (Lewis 154). Contributing to Lewis's agenda of bashing the Futurists, Pound claims that "Marinetti is a Corpse" due to his adherence

to what the Vorticists considered a flawed movement. Art that concentrates in areas of

speculation loses the drive that comes from the energy at the center of the vortex, and that

art loses value by attempting to interpret the dead dispersal of the vortex. As will be

discussed in Chapter 2, Pound had to battle against the fear and confusion of his

imprisonment during his composition of The Pisan Cantos in order for his art to remain

energized.

Pound, like Lewis, also defines the vortex as a type of control. By using the

vortex, the artist is "DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, . . .

CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting" (Lewis 153). Part of the

control allowed by the vortex is a product of its efficiency. The vortex is the most

appropriate medium of art: "[i]t is the picture that means a hundred poems, the music that

means a hundred pictures, the most highly energized statement, the statement that has not

yet SPENT itself its expression, but which is the most capable of expressing" (Lewis

153). The vortex provides the appropriate medium to create the most succinct expression

with the greatest energy.

While Pound allied himself with the Vorticists, his views were not entirely

congruent with them, which is why his definition of the vortex will be more relevant to

his, as well as Eliot's, World War II poetry. Pound "struggles to be modern, speaks of

'primary form' in the arts" (Munton 179). Pound sees the past as an intricate part of the

present. He defines the turbine as "[a]ll the energized past, all the past that is living and

worthy to live" (Lewis 153). Unlike his fellow Vorticists, Pound could not exclude the

past from the present. He saw the present as containing certain, prevalent, energized

parts of the past. Also unlike his fellow Vorticists, Pound did not refuse to consider the

future. Though he did not speculate, as did the Futurists he condemned, he did examine

the aspects of the present that would affect, or "energize" the future. The relevant parts

of the past are "pregnant in the vortex, NOW" (Lewis 153). Even though Pound's main

concentration was on the present, his vortex saw the future as the product or offspring of

the past. How the past is interacting in the vortex with the present is what will create the

future. He viewed living devoid of the past and future as hedonism, a trivial occupation

that took the form of an un-energized "spool or cone" (Lewis 153). Though this is an

attack on Futurism, these claims contradict Lewis's vortex as well. Rather than viewing

the past and present as sentimental and anti-artistic, the consideration of the past and

present was a utility and a responsibility for Pound and a tool that would eventually help

him regain control of the vortex while he was imprisoned at Pisa.

In his consideration of the past, Pound was more allied with Eliot than his fellow

Vorticists. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot expresses his belief in

the evolution of poetry. For poetry to be great, it has to contain the tradition of poetic

history as well as add to it. Similar to Pound's idea of the past being "pregnant in the

vortex, NOW," Eliot believed that relevant art was created through the fusion of

innovation with the tradition of previous artistic generations. Innovation with no sense of

history results in novelty, and a sense of history with no innovation results merely in

repetition. While "novelty is better than repetition," neither should be the goal of the

artist (Eliot, The Sacred Wood 49). The goal, according to Eliot, is that poetry contains

"not only the pastness of the past, but its presence" (49). Eliot and Pound both believed

that how the past is interacting with the present is an essential component of art, and this belief would play an important role in their composition of poetry during World War II.

According to Pound, the role of the Vorticist artist is not to create a representation of something else, but a work that exists on its own in its primary form. When the meaning of a work of art has been defused too many times, it begins to exist in "a state of flaccidity, of elaboration, of secondary applications" (Lewis 154). As the only solely literary figure among the Vorticists, Pound established "[t]he primary pigment of poetry [as] the IMAGE" (Lewis 154). The image of a poem cannot be a representation of something else, but has to stand by itself as the image of that poem. The image of a poem is the reader's instinctual interpretation of the poem. Throughout The Pisan Cantos, Pound aids the image the reader generates through his use of Chinese characters and typographic choices.

Pound greatly admired Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and would later draw heavily from his essay on the vortex that appeared in Blast. Gaudier-Brzeska wrote that "[t]he driving power was life in the absolute -- the plastic expression of the fruitful sphere" (Lewis 155). Gaudier-Brzeska's vortex examines a much vaster span of history than his contemporaries. "The sphere is thrown through space, it is the soul and object of the vortex" (Lewis 155). As a sculptor, Gaudier-Brzeska examined the structures of the dominant cultures throughout history to define his vortex. The defining structure of each culture shows what their driving force of life was. Religion inspires vertical structures reaching towards something higher, self-obsession inspires recreations of the self, and preoccupation with reproduction produces love charms. Some of these structures lacked

the true meaning of the vortex. For the Greek who recreated his own image, "HIS SCULPTURE WAS DERIVATIVE his feeling for form secondary. The absence of direct energy lasted for a thousand years" (Lewis 156). The Greeks lacked Pound's primary pigment, the originality that gave art its value. Their structures were nothing more than a representation of something else, depriving them of their energy. In relation to his contemporary sculptors, Gaudier-Brzeska claimed "We have been influenced by what we liked most, each according to his own individuality" to "express our abstract thoughts of conscious superiority" (Lewis 158). While the preceding cultures created their vortices around the driving force of their lives, Gaudier-Brzeska and his contemporaries had the knowledge of all of these structures and cultures, and the perspective of the driving force of life as it moved through all cultures. With this outlook, "[w]ill and consciousness are [their] VORTEX" (Lewis 158). Gaudier-Brzeska's vortex exists on a higher plane of thought than the simplistic motivations of his predecessors and, like Pound and Eliot, includes the perspective of the relevant past.

Pound and Gaudier-Brzeska were both motivated almost completely by their artistic sensibilities. Eliot's conversion to Anglicanism during the time in between World War I and II provided him with a driving force beyond art. Eliot chronicles his conversion in the poem "Ash Wednesday," published in 1930. "Ash Wednesday" is a six-part poem that relates the spiritual journey of the speaker from being lost, unable to turn to either a higher power or worldly experience, to being conscious of both but choosing the higher power. Part I of the poem claims "that time is only time/ And place is always and only place/ And what is actual is actual for only one time/ And only for one

place" (Eliot, The Complete Poems 60). The speaker is unable to discover any deeper truth than what is immediately perceivable. The superficial nature of existence is a source of despair for him. Eliot constructs his faith over the course of the six-part poem. By part V, Eliot no longer advocates the singular and fleeting nature of time and place. "The right time and the right place are not here/ No place of grace for those who avoid the face/ No time to rejoice for those who walk among the noise and deny the voice" (65). The speaker chooses the spiritual over the secular and warns the reader against choosing worldly experience over a focus on God. This becomes an important theme in Four Quartets: how to use faith to balance worldly action and spiritual concentration. Where the Vorticist masters the chaos through artistic creation, Eliot mastered the chaos by allowing faith to provide the calm center of the vortex and organize the commotion of worldly experience around it.

Vorticism ended during World War I. Such a time-specific movement rooted in the present and fueled by the youthful vigor of its members could not be sustained. The continuation of Vorticism would border on hypocrisy considering its refusal to consider the future. As a movement that advocated war, it could not hold up against the reality of World War I, especially considering the direct experience many of the Vorticists had with the global conflict. "The extreme means of expression of the modern movement were not applicable to the horrors of war" (Edwards 22). In an article entitled "Vortex" that appeared in Blast no. 2, Gaudier-Brzeska recounts an experience in which he found an enemy rifle and discovered he did not like its form. He says: "I broke the butt off and with my knife I carved in it a design, through which I tried to express a gentler order of

feeling, which I preferred" (Edwards 22). Despite Vorticism's exultation of strength and aggression, the brutality of the war proved too excessive for even the Vorticists' artistic sensibilities.

Understanding that the past and future cannot be entirely dismissed while still concentrating on the present allowed Pound to keep his concept of the vortex relevant longer than the lifespan of the Vorticist movement. The sustained relevance of Pound's vortex is due to its versatility. After the end of Vorticism, Pound evolved his vortex into not only a method for composing art, but a critical tool, as well. The vortex was not a singular idea or philosophy, but a tool for organizing concepts, language, and art. He viewed the critical approach of trying to analyze a work in its entirety as a practice that would trivialize the value of a work by allowing its complexities to be lost in the search for an overarching meaning. The vortex allows for the concentration on and analysis of specific aspects of a work.

The density of The Pisan Cantos and Four Quartets is representative of the extreme chaos of World War II. As a critical tool, the vortex can break down these works, extracting the maximum meaning by working through parts of each work instead of attempting to take a single, comprehensive perspective. It provides a method to organize the chaos represented in the works to discover how Pound and Eliot defined the driving force of life in a time of global violence.

CHAPTER THREE

EZRA POUND'S REAQUISITION OF

THE CENTER OF THE VORTEX

Ezra Pound was taken prisoner on the third of May 1945 by Italian partisans at his home near Rapallo, Italy. The partisans eventually allowed him to surrender to American authorities (Sieburth ix). Pound was charged with treason for his broadcasts on Radio Rome in which he advocated fascism and expressed anti-American sentiments. These charges of treason eventually led to his imprisonment in the Disciplinary Training Center near Pisa (xii). After two and a half weeks in a six-square-foot cage exposed to the elements, Pound was moved to a tent in the medical facility (xiii). This is where Ezra Pound composed The Pisan Cantos.

Through The Pisan Cantos Pound explored his situation, his political, social and artistic philosophy, and memory. Pound recognized that his philosophies were controversial, but he viewed it as his duty to express his opinions for the betterment of both the United States and Europe. He could not understand why it was treasonous to express his political opinion when one of the fundamental values of America is freedom of speech. Condemnation of him by his country of birth, when he believed he was acting in its best interest, added greatly to the adversity of his situation. In order to save his life's work, he had to reevaluate his philosophies as well as the philosophies of his captors. Pound had conceptualized the vortex during an earlier period of artistic clarity in his life while surrounded by like-minded peers. The Pisan Cantos can be analyzed by using this structure that represented truth to Pound. Applying the vortex to the poetry he

composed during his time of imprisonment can establish Pound's position at the beginning of his incarceration in relation to where Pound believed it should have been, according to his definition of an artist: at the center of the vortex. Once a starting point is established, the process by which Pound returned to the center of the vortex can be explored.

Pound's conceptualization of the vortex draws heavily on Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's writings on it. Through quoting Gaudier-Brzeska in A Guide to Kulchur (1938), Pound asserts that "[T]he driving power was life in the absolute-- the plastic expression the fruitful sphere" which when "thrown through space, … is the soul and object of the vortex" (63). In its simplest form, the vortex is how life sustains and defines itself through time. Life, while often taken for granted, becomes a prominent consideration during times of war. Gaudier-Brzeska and Pound were both profoundly affected by war; World War I resulted in Gaudier-Brzeska's death and World War II resulted in Pound's imprisonment. Gaudier-Brzeska's consideration of the vortex while immersed in the war is essential to applying the vortex to The Pisan Cantos because of the relevance of his wartime experience to Pound's experience. Gaudier-Brzeska catalogued the vortex through time, relating it to different eras. He expanded the vortex beyond a term only used to define the art of a movement into a tool to define different cultures throughout history. One of the vortices he uses to describe a particular culture is the vortex of war, which he describes with respect to different cultures that were driven by this vortex: "[t]he men of Elam, of Assur, of Bebel and Kheta, the men of Armenia and those of Canaan [who] had to slay each other cruelly for the possession of fertile

valleys" (Pound, <u>Guide to Kulchur</u> 65). Life depended on the ability to cultivate land for these different cultures, so the earth became the sphere at the center of the vortex, surrounded by violence and conflict. World Wars I and II were recurrences of the vortex of war, only the motivations dictating war were no longer agriculturally based. While land was being fought over, it was only for the purpose of possession and power, no longer for its life-sustaining capabilities.

Even though Gaudier-Brzeska died in combat, his favorable outlook on war in general remained constant during his experiences as a soldier. As quoted by Pound in <u>Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir</u>, Gaudier-Brzeska wrote from the trenches: "With all the destruction that works around us nothing is changed even superficially. LIFE IS THE SAME STRENGTH, the moving agent that permits the small individual to assert himself" (27). War provides the common man with the ability of overcome his own inconsequentiality by taking part in a struggle larger than his own existence. Gaudier-Brzeska echoed the ideals of many of his fellow Vorticists in his assertion that war served as a social purging. War "TAKES AWAY FROM THE MASSES NUMBERS UPON NUMBERS OF UNIMPORTANT UNITS, WHOSE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES BECOME NOXIOUS" (27). War was beneficial for both the individual and society. It briefly provided the common individual with the clarity of purpose that the Vorticists generally reserved for their own artistic vision. Belief in country provided soldiers with the stabilizing center necessary to cope with the chaotic conditions of war and organize their current situation into a manageable vortex.

In relation to art he claimed: "MY VIEWS ON SCULPTURE remain absolutely THE SAME" (Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska 27). This is shown in the language Gaudier-Brzeska used to describe the war. In Blast, Gaudier-Brzeska claimed: "Sculptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation" (Lewis 155). Gaudier-Brzeska's description of the war, from his article on the vortex written from the trenches, is dependant on how human masses related to each other: "HUMAN MASSES teem and move, are destroyed and crop up again" (Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska 27). Gaudier-Brzeska did not find the images war provided him to be artistically pleasing, but he came to this conclusion by processing them according to his unyielding view on sculpture. In this article quoted by Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska discusses the shape of an enemy rifle that he finds. He decided the shape displeased him. Gaudier-Brzeska describes how he remedied that displeasure: "I broke the butt off and with my knife I carved in it a design, through which I tried to express a gentler order of feeling, which I preferred" (28). He does not find the same artistic value as the social value he finds in war, but this does not change his sculptural process. In his first article on the vortex in Blast, Gaudier-Brzeska claims "[w]ill and consciousness are our VORTEX" (Lewis 158). In his second article on the vortex written during World War I, Gaudier-Brzeska maintains that "IT IS THE VORTEX OF WILL, OF DECISION, THAT BEGINS" (Pound, Gaudier-Brzeska 28). The center of Gaudier-Brzeska's vortex continued to be his will until he died in the war. The solidarity of his center allowed him to retain a stability of artistic viewpoint even when faced with the violence and chaos of World War I. Gaudier-Brzeska's philosophical opinions on the vortex were influential to Pound, but the stability of his system of beliefs was influential

as well. It served as a paradigm of solidarity prominent in Pound's continued support of fascism throughout <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> even though his support of fascism was the cause of his imprisonment.

While Gaudier-Brzeska was celebrated by France for his bravery in the war and for giving his life to France, and the United States imprisoned Pound for promoting treasonous ideas. Despite being impacted in different ways, both artists were deeply impacted by the war, and both artists were able to hold on to their core artistic beliefs when faced with the harsh reality of war. Pound maintained his political beliefs while imprisoned in Pisa, lamenting the death of Mussolini and "The enormous tragedy of the dream" that died with him in the opening lines of <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> (3). Both artists were able to adhere to their ideals when faced with the adversity of war. The Vorticists' goal was to "get deeply enough immersed in material life to experience the shaping power amongst its vibrations" (Munton 179). Neither of these two men could have gotten more deeply immersed in material life than they did through the actions that led to Gaudier-Brzeska's death and Pound's imprisonment. The fundamental core of Vorticism lived beyond the expiration of the movement through Gaudier-Brzeska and Pound's unflinching immersion into whatever situation they were experiencing.

While Pound was in captivity, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The atom, the smallest constituent of matter recognized at the time, is essentially the building block of all physical existence that provides the core to organize the structure around, making it inextricably relevant to the center of the vortex. The center of the vortex is the permanent and essential part of the vortex. The destruction of the center

results in the destruction of the vortex. To date, the splitting of the atom is the most

complete and wide-spread form of destruction experienced by humanity. The sphere of

Gaudier-Brzeska's cultural vortex, as he describes in <u>Blast</u>, is the driving force of life;

therefore the destructive efficiency of the newly acquired ability to split the atom

becomes the antithesis of Gaudier-Brzeska's sphere. The sustainability of this sphere is

no longer a certainty. In light of this, Pound questions: "can they again put one together/

as the two halves of a seal, or a tally stick?" (Pound, <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> 45). The Chinese

seals that Pound is referring to are split down the middle at the onset of a conflict

between empires, and then rejoined when the conflict is resolved as a sign of trust

between warring peoples. Even though the sides of the seal are rejoined, the split down

the center serves as a reminder that trust can be broken again. In theory, those in

possession of nuclear weapons will refrain from their use due to the idea of mutual

destruction, but the knowledge of how to split the atom cannot be unlearned. Gaudier-

Brzeska's vortex of life is no longer a certainty. The existence of such a technology

serves as the split in the seal where the sides have been rejoined, a constant reminder that

the trust can be broken again. Pound heard about Japan signing the armistice "in the s.h.

a suitable place/ to hear that the war was over" (Pound, <u>The Pisan Cantos</u> 45). The shit

house was a suitable place to find out about the end of the war not only because of the

mass destruction used to end the war, but also because it meant the victory of the

economic, social and political systems he was imprisoned for opposing. This provided

quite a blow to Pound's belief system. All of his political ideals had been overcome

during the War and he had been personally condemned and imprisoned for expressing

beliefs that he held with complete conviction. Pound's position at the calm center of the vortex had been attacked. Pound did not seem to be able to master the commotion of his current situation, as is the role of the Vorticist, and for a time, the commotion overcame him.

During the upheaval of Pound's position at the center of the vortex, the only certainties became Gaudier-Brzeska's vortices of war and destruction. War became a purpose that stood alone, independent of causes and consequences. "The chess board too lucid/ the squares are too even…theatre of war… /'theatre' is good. There are those who did not want/ it to come to an end" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 55). War can become so consuming that it becomes a game and a form of entertainment. A world that knows nothing but the strategies and actions of war can lose its ability to find meaning outside of war, motivating it to sustain the conflict as long as possible. In this vortex of seemingly perpetual war, individuals get caught up in the turbine and lose sight of the value of life. Complete immersion in the violence can lead to the idea "that excess population/ demanded slaughter at intervals" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 35). Similar to Gaudier-Brzeska's "great remedy," the enactors of war invert the original sphere of life in the absolute and replace it with what they see as the cleansing power of violence. The sphere, or center, of the vortex during war is "[d]eath, insanity/ suicide degeneration" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos, 35). The axis that holds the vortex together during times of war is the power to limit life, not the power to sustain it.

There is some limit to humanity's ability to destroy. Pound writes: "the clouds over the Pisan meadows/ are indubitably as fine as any to be seen/ from the peninsula/

[the barbarians] have not destroyed them/ as they have Sigismundo's Temple" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 37). The barbarians, or the Allies, destroyed classic architecture of Italy and other opposing countries, but they did not have the ability to ruin certain aspects of nature. There is tragedy in the destruction of these archaic structures, but there is also solace in the continuation of nature's beauty. Pound's experience of natural beauty serves as the starting point for his reacquisition of the center of the vortex. Pound had to find the aspects of his present in which he could find meaning and which were not controlled by his captors. Pound possesses no more control over nature than his captors, but recognizing the limit of their power helps him begin to master the commotion once again.

The Pisan Cantos express a belief in a ruler governing by right, which is not obtained by war. At the end of Canto 76, Pound offers a warning to those who establish their right to rule in this fashion: "woe to them that conquer with armies/ and whose only right is their power" (41). The ruling class should have the ability to lead, not solely the ability to dominate. The victory of the Allies, in Pound's opinion, was a product of power derived from superior destructive ability, not the ability to govern. According to Pound, in a violent conflict, at least one contender is fighting under misguided motivations. In the circumstance where one side of the contest is fighting for a just cause, this does not justify the war, only the cause. He maintains that "there/ are/ no/ righteous/ wars" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 61). Pound emphasizes his belief in this statement by placing each word on a separate line, centered on the page. This five-word statement constitutes the last five lines of Canto 78, using an exaggerated form to draw

attention to the simplicity and clarity of the statement. Similarly, and in the heyday of

Vorticism, Lewis used unconventional typographical techniques in <u>Blast</u> to defy readers'

expectations. Pound is using this same method to draw readers' attention. The

unexpectedness of this formatting is intended to shock the reader into concentrating on

this part of this poem. Pound works through his belief system by using broad concepts to

help him approach clarity. After having been removed from the eye of the vortex, he was

forced to reorganize his doctrine. By setting aside the simplistic concepts of which he

was certain, Pound acquires the freedom to explore more complex aspects of his doctrine.

Pound believed that language took the form of a vortex. In Canto 74 Pound

discusses "the man with an education/ and whose mouth was removed by his father/

because he made too many *things*" (4-5). The educated man creates ideas, which are

made up of words. Pound emphasizes the power and concreteness of words and ideas

through his phrasing. The educated man does not express opinions, he "makes *things*."

The newness of the ideas that the educated man creates inspires fear in others, which is

why his father removed his mouth. Pound is the educated man in this scenario. The U.S.

government attempted to "remove his mouth" because of the ideas he created on Radio

Rome.   These ideas were made up of words, which Pound believed are like "great

hollow cones of steel… charged with a force like electricity, or, rather, radiating forces

from their apexes" (Materer 140). In <u>The Pisan Cantos,</u> the concept of words charged

with energy is prevalent in Pound's recurrent use of Chinese ideograms. Almost every

time a Chinese symbol is used in these Cantos, it is immediately following the English

translation. Primarily, this serves the purpose of drawing the reader's attention to certain

words. With attention brought to a word, the reader can experience the full force that Pound intended to radiate from that particular word. It also provides a visual representation of those words. The examination of how the ideogram operates visually can create a more active experience and facilitate participation with the content rather than surface level analysis.

One of the most commonly used ideograms in The Pisan Cantos is the symbol for "chung." This symbol is a rectangular shape with a line or spike drawn through the center. This translates as "middle." Pound also translated it as "pivot," "mean," or "axis." This ideogram exemplifies the vortex. In its translation are all the components of the structure. The "axis" holds the vortex together, and "pivot" implies the swirling motion of the turbine around the axis. The shape even resembles a vortex, with the enclosed shape moving around the vertical spike. The shape that the Vorticists chose to include in Blast to represent the vortex bore a similar construction; it consisted of a vertically oriented cone with a line moving through its center to represent its axis. Shortly after the use of the ideogram "chung" in Canto 76, Pound employs the ideogram "ch'eng," which means "sincerity." Pound looked at this ideogram as "[t]he precise definition of the word, pictorially the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot verbally" (The Pisan Cantos 132). This ideogram in conjunction with the ideogram representing "axis" is definitive of Pound's belief in words charged with energy. The ideogram's fusion of imagery and language, particularly in an ideogram of unparalleled clarity such as this one, provides the axis from which to radiate meaning.

The ideogram is not the only manner in which Pound uses this attention-drawing repetition. Talking about the ruling class, Pound states "having got 'em (advantages, privilege)/ there is nothing, italics *nothing*, they will not do/ to retain 'em" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos, 52). "Nothing" is repeated as well as "italics," in word and form. By using the word "italics" as well as the style, Pound draws attention not only to word use and placement, but also to the calligraphic nature of the word's composition. In this manner The Pisan Cantos create an aesthetic in form as well as in content.

The spoken aspects of language are also addressed in The Pisan Cantos. At the beginning of Canto 81 he quotes in Spanish: "Hay aqui mucho catolicismo-(sounded catoli*th*ismo)/ y muy poco reliHion" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 95). Pound concentrates on the pronunciation in this quote, making sure to point out that the "c" in "catolicismo" is pronounced with a "th," as well as capitalizing the "h" in "reliHion" to ensure that the reader does not pronounce the word with a "g" as it is spelled. Pound saw words as vortices, with each word providing a center from which it can radiate meaning. Pound ensures that the reader has the most precise conceptualization of the word by providing the pronunciation of word as well as its written form so that each word can radiate the maximum meaning. Specification of dialect and pronunciation can provide the core of each word's vortex with stability and poignancy.

In Canto 83, Pound describes W.B. Yeats's process for composing poetry, specifically, his poem "The Peacock." When Pound and Yeats lived together at Stone Cottage, Yeats would repeat the lines of his poetry over and over again trying to find the perfect inflection to give the words: "made a great Peeeeacock/ in the proide ov his oiye/

had made a great peeeeeeecock in the… / made a great peacock/ in the proide of his oyyee" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 112). The function of a poem when spoken is equally as important as how it functions in written form. Pound's examination of the language of his poetry relates back to the "primary pigment" of art, as he discussed in Blast, that he claims is indispensable to the Vorticist (Lewis 153). The primary pigment is the most efficient medium to convey a particular message. As the primary pigment of The Pisan Cantos, language's many intricacies must be explored. The language of a poem exists in phases; how it is composed, how it is read, and how it is spoken. By examining the language in all of these phases, the reader better understands how the word can achieve its maximum efficiency and energy.

All of these aspects of language on which Pound places importance contribute to the energy that the language radiates. Pound refers to Henri-Martin Barzun in Canto 77 (50). Barzun had the idea of recording several voices at the same time reading the same poem. This is similar to the concept of the multiple aspects of language that Pound employs to convey meaning in his poetry. The auditory and visual aspects of the language used in The Pisan Cantos contribute as significantly to the poetry as the literal meaning, inundating the reader with as many stimuli as possible. In this manner, Pound is "presenting one facet and then another until at some point one gets off the dead and desensitized surface of the reader's mind, onto a part that will register" (Pound, Guide to Kulchur 51). Pound is trying to reach a larger audience by presenting this multitude of facets. No reader is going to register every facet, and many readers are going register different facets. The multitude of facets allows the reader to choose which facet registers

most efficiently and then use that facet as the center that the chaos of the rest of the poem can be organized around.

Without this center, instability of perspective can make it difficult for the reader to organize The Pisan Cantos. This instability of perspective can be examined through the metaphor of the "periplum." In Canto 59, Pound defines the term "periplum" "not as land looks from a map/ but as sea bord by men sailing." It stems from the Latin word *periplus*, which is a type of circumnavigation that uses the view of land from the sea for direction. "Periplum" implies a constantly shifting perspective, as the ship moves with the wind, tide, and condition of the sea. The periplum defines the limitations and variation of instant perception. It is a source of human fallacy. The periplum is the perspective that results from being overcome by the commotion, rather than mastering it. It is a failure to achieve the center of the vortex.

Failure to achieve the center of the vortex can result in a dangerous lack of clarity. Mob mentality is a direct result of immediate perception, a dangerous periplum view resulting from each individual defining his or her objective from the unstable position of the negotiation of everyone else's opinion. Pound describes the hanging of "Ben and la Clara *a Milano*/ by the heels at Milano/ That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 3). After being captured and immediately executed, Mussolini and his mistress were hung by their heels and symbolically executed again. Regardless of the opinion held on Mussolini's actions and politics, the actions taken on his body and the body of his mistress were gruesome and inhumane acts enacted to satisfy the bloodlust of a mob that continually grew by feeding off the communal need for vengeance. Pound

advises the reader to "[f]ear god and the stupidity of the populace" (Pound, <u>The Pisan</u>

<u>Cantos</u> 3). The lack of capitalization when referring to god implies an ambiguous non-

Christian deity. This ambiguity makes the fear of god an apprehension of uncertainty.

Fear of "the stupidity of the populace," in contrast, is a very specific fear, particularly in

the context of the previously related execution of Mussolini. The perspective of an

individual caught up in a mob mentality is defined by chaos, when the goal of the

individual should be to define and organize the chaos.

By opening this series of cantos with a condemnation of Mussolini's death and a

declaration of the danger of the general population's stupidity, Pound makes it clear that

he has not renounced his fascist beliefs, and he thereby sets the tone for the remaining

cantos. The flaws in the American view of politics and global relations are a recurring

theme throughout <u>The Pisan Cantos</u>. At the beginning of Canto 84, Pound relates an

experience he had in Washington with two senators in 1939. The purpose of the visit was

to discuss economic policy and help the U.S. avoid their upcoming involvement in World

War II, but Pound received, from Idaho senator William Edgar Borah, the response "I

don't know what a man like you/ would find to *do* here" (<u>The Pisan Cantos</u> 15).

Politicians are unable to look at issues in a manner outside of the prescribed channels of

problem solving, which limits their problem-solving abilities. The hubris of American

politicians establishes that only people within the system are equipped to evaluate the

country's situation. This school of thought also implies that those indoctrinated into the

system must look at issues from a particular, American, viewpoint. In reference to

President Franklin Roosevelt's economic plan, Alabama senator John Hollis Bankhead

said "he chop an change all the time/ stubborn az a mule, sah, stubborn az a MULE,/ got th' eastern idea about money" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 15). Pound was deeply immersed in Eastern thought, especially considering that during the composition of The Pisan Cantos, a copy of Confucius's writings was one of the few works of literature he had access to. Senator Bankhead's hypocrisy is evidenced through his refusal to consider foreign economic views, while simultaneously declaring President Roosevelt "stubborn az a MULE." The Senator's credibility is further challenged through Pound's representation of his southern accent, as well as his choice of comparing President Roosevelt to a bastardized farm animal. By exaggerating the Senator's accent, Pound feeds into the common conception of Americans as ignorant slaveholders. This is the persona that Pound chooses to represent American politics, exemplifying the flawed, periplum navigation of those directing the actions of the nation. The democracy of America becomes a way for it to validate its periplum view. Whatever actions it takes are supported by the country's history and individual responsibility is eliminated by the group mentality of congress. This is why Pound found fascism to be the most adequate form of government for the general population. The most qualified individual is able to achieve a singular vision for his country, allowing him to organize and energize the social chaos through the clarity of his principles.

Pound defines America through its extended condoning of slavery at several different points throughout The Pisan Cantos. Pound compares Pisa to purgatory in Canto 77 with "in limbo no victories, there, are no victories--/ that is limbo; between decks of the slaver" (48). Pisa, the carrying compartments in a slave ship, and limbo all

function in essentially the same way. They provide a horrifying stagnation of experience. There are no victories, everything continues without change. Slavery and the detention center at Pisa are both products of U.S. creation, and purgatory provides a reference for comparison. In order to provide an adequate reference to the conditions of these two individual institutions, Pound has to access the supernatural and eternal. The detention center is in many ways a continuation of slavery. The irony of the U.S.'s periplum view is made evident through "all the presidents/ Washington Adams Monroe Polk Tyler/ plus Carrol (of Carrolton) Crawford" present in the detention center (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 14-15). Many of the African American detainees were named after American Presidents and heroes. The Africans who were abducted into the slave trade were taken from their home country against their will and then later given the names of the people who founded the country that enslaved them. Some of the African Americans who inherited this legacy were Pound's fellow prisoners at Pisa. Imprisonment is presented as what America exchanged for slavery, a different institution derived from the same unstable perspective. The alternative to imprisonment is to do the government's bidding as soldiers, a choice not far removed from slavery. The stigma slavery left on America prevents it from progressing. In his article on the vortex in Blast, Pound discusses how the relevant parts of the past need to be energized in the present in order for an efficient vortex to exist. America's attempt to ignore the effect slavery had on its present at the time of World War II prevented it from moving beyond the stigma.

Pound does not exclude himself from falling victim to the periplum. His relation of his conversations with the Idaho and Alabama senators comes from nothing but his

memory of what happened approximately six years before. It is not a precise recreation, but rather his reconstruction of how to best convey the meaning of the transpired events. His portrayal of Senator Bankhead's accent is used to convey what the conversation meant to Pound, not to create an accurate depiction of an individual with whom the majority of readers will be unfamiliar. The actual occurrence of the conversation is insignificant to how the memory of it shapes Pound and adds to the chaos of his current situation that he must organize by rediscovering the center of his vortex.

Much of The Pisan Cantos is Pound's negotiation of his memories of the past; separating what is ultimately inconsequential from what is indispensable in the evaluation of himself and his condition in Pisa. In his essay on the vortex in Blast, Pound claims that the important aspects of the past are "pregnant in the vortex, NOW" (Lewis 153). One use of the composition of The Pisan Cantos, for Pound, is his search for memories that are indispensable to the vortex that represents his experience in the detention center. Pound often refers to the Odyssey in conjunction to the periplum. His study of the past is similar to Odysseus's journey home, often leading him astray in his search for his ultimate goal. "Pound's Odysseus-figures and Pound himself, who dons them as his masks, are far more home-deserters, outward bound on their quest for knowledge" than home voyagers who have lost their path (Baumann 66). Pound's epistemological impulses led him away from the United States and ultimately to the detention center at Pisa. Though he does not believe his imprisonment is just, he has to examine the events of his life that have led to his current situation as well as those that are pivotal in defining him as an artist.

In order to separate significant memory from the inconsequential, Pound has to define what makes memory important. In Canto 76, he compares the memory of James Joyce to the memory of Miss Norton, a lady he met once who had an uncanny ability to recollect inane conversations. "Miss Norton's memory for the conversation/ (or "go on") of idiots/ was such as even the eminent Irish writer/ has, if equaled at moments (?sintheticly)/ certainly never surpassed" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 34). While Miss Norton's memory rivals that of Joyce, it is the quality of the recollection that comes into question. Miss Norton catalogues the irrelevant conversations that hold no consequence to the present or the future, but Joyce's memory results in great works of art that will continue to be relevant far into the future. Relevant art is pregnant with memory, or the past, in order to energize the future, as Pound dictates it should in his article on the vortex in Blast.

In order to ensure that his work contained the energized parts of the past that are relevant to his identity as an artist, Pound reconstructs certain memories that are pivotal to his poetic career. Later on in Canto 76, Pound recollects his inner conflict before publishing his first book of poetry. He remembers trying to decide whether to deliver his manuscript to the printer or to "chuck the lot into the tide-water" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 38). Pound's decision to act at this time in his life is inextricable from his decision to compose at Pisa. Despite the desperate nature of his situation, Pound acts instead of merely sustaining himself. He does not chuck the experience away; he embraces it in order to energize it into poetry.

Pound maintains "a belief in the universe as a system of energies that is unified at some mysterious point or 'node.' The artist's place is at the still center of this energy vortex, or at this node of organic development" (Materer 138). Despite this, immediate experience and captivity remove him from this center while he is composing. Throughout The Pisan Cantos Pound refers to the periplum while looking at celestial objects. In Canto 74 "the great periplum brings in the stars to our shore" (19). In Canto 77 he places periplum in parentheses in the line following his reference to "the sun that is god's mouth" (68). The Earth, along with the other planets, moves around the Sun in a vortical pattern. This reinvents the periplum as the view of the center of the vortex from a point in its wall. As an artist, Pound's place at the center of the vortex is distorted by his resentment of captivity, exposure to the elements, and stunted source of news. Concerning the politics surrounding the end of the War, Pound and Pisa both are considerably removed from the center of the situation.

Pound uses The Pisan Cantos to reacquire the center of the vortex. He shifts through memory and reorganizes his current situation through the composition of these Cantos, with the ultimate goal of reestablishing himself in the proper place of an artist. For Pound "[t]he ultimate form of the vortex is a pattern of hope" (Materer 62). Hope is expressed from the beginning of The Pisan Cantos. The inversion of Eliot's line from "The Hollow Men" "not with a bang but a whimper" serves as a testament that his spirit has yet to be broken. Mussolini's death and his imprisonment occur "with a bang not with a whimper" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 3). Though their political ideas may have

been overthrown, they left an impression on the world. The idea is now in existence so the cause can be taken up again at a later date.

For Pound, this hope is a product of recognizing what he has succeeded in and accepting what he has regretted. In Canto 76, he writes in Italian what translates into "I have had pity probably not enough," and shortly after follows this with another Italian phrase that translates into "paradise is not artificial, nor is hell" (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 38). Hell is embodied in the detention center and the regrets he has about the past. By accepting these regrets he is able to concentrate on memories of past relationships and experiences, and, by residing and taking comfort in these, he is able to construct an earthly paradise in which his place at the center of the vortex once again becomes secure. This allows Pound in Canto 81 to express faith in his legacy and pride in his actions. He maintains that "[w]hat thou lovest well remains" (98). Pound took care in his writing, even when his desk was a box in captivity, and he took comfort in the relationships he had had. Despite being accused of treason, "[w]hat thou lovest well is thy true heritage" (99). Pound believes his legacy will be his writings, and even if many do not agree with them, "error is all in the not done" (100). Pound continued to energize his past and present into his art even while imprisoned, and his belief in poetry provided the stable axis needed to maintain his vortex.

Though the density and complexity of his art can be overwhelming, the vortex provides a tool to analyze Ezra Pound's poetry and philosophy. World War II created a seemingly insurmountable level of chaos, both globally and for Pound personally. This chaos is fully represented in The Pisan Cantos, and the vortex provides the reader with

the means to organize this chaos. Pound defined the vortex in <u>Blast</u> early in his career

and reiterated his belief in it in <u>Guide to Kulchur</u> later on. Through his recurring support

of the vortex, Pound supplied his readers with a critical tool that can be used to extract

meaning from his art with maximum efficiency. As a critical tool, the vortex functions

through defining the core meaning of the work, the calm, energized center that can

organize the chaos of Pound's poetry. The vortex provides the reader with the ability to

examine individual aspects of poetry and how they function in the structure of the work,

preventing the smaller components of the art from being lost in the attempt to look at the

work as a whole.

CHAPTER FOUR

FAITH AND CHAOS IN T.S. ELIOT'S <u>FOUR QUARTETS</u>

T.S. Eliot's <u>Four Quartets</u> as a whole has a breadth of perspective on World War

II that many poetic examinations of the war lack. W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939"

concentrates on the uncertainty of the beginning of the war. H.D.'s <u>Trilogy</u> draws from

her experience of the German bombings of London. Even Ezra Pound's <u>The Pisan</u>

<u>Cantos</u>, which relies heavily on his memories of the past, is dependant on his perspective

of imprisonment at the end of the war. All of these war poems concentrate on one

specific experience of the war. The composition of <u>Four Quartets</u> started in the years

leading up to the war with the original publication of "Burnt Norton" in 1936, and

continued through the war and the air raids on London until the publication of all four

poems together in 1943.

Four Quartets consists of four poems: "Burnt Norton," "East Coker," "The Dry

Salvages" and "Little Gidding." Each five-part poem is named after a physical location.

The themes of humanity's relationship to time, social dissatisfaction, violence, and

salvation are present in all four poems through the recurring images of the seasons,

destruction, and both physical and purgatorial fire as well as the repetition of beginnings

and endings.

Though Eliot was never in the Vorticists' circle, he was consumed with many of

the same philosophical dilemmas as the movement's members. Surprising, Eliot directly

uses the image of the vortex in "Little Gidding," speaking of "a vortex that shall bring/

The world to that destructive fire" (25). This shows that while he was not a Vorticist, the

idea of the vortex is something he contemplated. One such dilemma that plagued both Eliot and the Vorticists was the most effective way to experience the present and the effect of the past and the future on this experience. Eliot explores all of these dilemmas in Four Quartets, and though he had very different goals than the Vorticists had, he used much of the same methodology that they used to come to a resolution. In Blast, Wyndham Lewis states that "[t]he Vorticist is not a slave to Commotion, but its Master" (148). Eliot used Four Quartets to master the commotion of World War II. The poem conveys a complete sense of the chaos that the war created and the faith necessary for an individual to survive and maintain a place in society through its relation of such an extensive experience with violence and turmoil. Like the turbine of the Vorticists, the outer turbine of the vortex when applied to Eliot is the swirling chaos of his current situation. Unlike Lewis and his comrades, Eliot needed more than a concentration on existing solely in the present to provide the stabilizing, coherent center of the vortex. Instead, Eliot used a core of faith to organize the outer chaos around him.

Part of the outer turbine of Eliot's vortex as represented through Four Quartets is made up of swirling doubt and despair derived from the impossibility of perceiving time in its totality and from the instability of reality. This causes Eliot to question language and poetry's ability to affect reality. Reality itself becomes an object of distrust. In part I of "Burnt Norton" Eliot states that "human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality" (14). Eliot addresses the idea of a complete reality in his doctoral dissertation Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley in which he refutes the idea of an Absolute Experience (Materer 143). Absolute Experience is a complete and objective record of

events. It embodies the past and the present as the complete, communal human experience, devoid of the subjectivity of individual perception. The impossibility of removing human perception and bias from experience motivated Eliot to a preference for "immediate experience, which is a partial but direct perception" (Materer 144). The transitory nature of immediate experience prevents it from being translated into philosophical truths.

Eliot's distrust of absolute experience manifests itself in Four Quartets in the collision of past, present, and future. The fleeting nature of immediate experience creates a need to define the present from a philosophical standpoint, even if the definition cannot be entirely efficient. The present is a negotiation of the past and the future, making "all time eternally present," as expressed in "Burnt Norton" (13). The present is contingent on the past, and the future will result from the course the present takes. Pound describes this experience as the past being "pregnant in the vortex, NOW," which will ultimately give birth to the future (Lewis 153). In this sense, the past and the future, in the forms of causation and potentiality, always exist in the present.

As would seem to contradict the idea of the vortex, throughout Four Quartets Eliot continues to express time in terms of dualities. Like Lewis in Blast, Eliot found meaning in the consideration of extremes. He opens "East Coker" with "In my beginning is my end" and closes the poem with "in my end is my beginning" (23, 32). Between the beginning and the end, between the past and the future, one finds the present. Moving ever closer to the center from both sides, the present becomes increasingly smaller. Eventually, the present, or immediate experience, becomes so minute of a center that it is

impossible to recognize before it passes. Eliot uses the Earth's axis as a metaphor for this

pinpoint center. "At the still point of the turning world" is where dualities meet to create

a defined reality (15). The intangibility of this pinpoint center adds to the chaos of

Eliot's experience, rather than providing the stabilizing core as the present did for the

Vorticists. For the Vorticist, this still point is where the artist can create art in complete

clarity. Eliot, on the other hand, did not find the present alone to be enough of a center to

stabilize the vortex. By defining the present as the negotiation of the past and the future,

Eliot is acknowledging that the present is just one moment among many. Recognizing

the temporary nature of the present makes it difficult to elevate the importance of the

present above that of the past or the future. Immersing oneself in the present is difficult

in situations such as war, "but to accept instability as a permanent rather than a temporary

condition requires even more faith" (McDiarmid 111). For Eliot, recognizing the

possible unimportance of the present in the context of the past and the future fueled the

chaos of the vortex's turbine.

Because of his distrust of the Absolute Experience, "Eliot concludes that 'any

object that is wholly real is independent of time'" (Materer 152). Removing oneself or

the contemplation of an object from time is an impossibility, which Eliot recognizes and

expresses in "Burnt Norton" as existing "Only in a world of speculation" (13). This is

not to say that there are not entities that exist outside of time. In Part V of "Burnt

Norton" Eliot writes that "Love is itself unmoving,/ Only the cause and end of

movement,/ Timeless and unmoving" (20). Love exists outside of time, but has a

profound impact on existence within time. It is human contemplation of Love that cannot

escape the subjectivity of time. While the negotiation of opposites may be the best possible way to approximate a truth, the fact remains that "the seeming dualities of experience cause endless philosophical confusions" (Materer 143). The same problems with perception that create the necessity for this philosophical inquisition prevent Eliot from being able see it with complete lucidity. The confusion of perception leaves Eliot still searching for a stabilizing core that will allow him to master the commotion.

Eliot's consideration of time and its effect on the ability to accurately chronicle the present is particularly problematic in the context of World War II. In "East Coker" he refers to "the years of *l' entre deux guerres*," or the years between the first and second World Wars, as "Twenty years largely wasted" (30). In the aftermath of the Great War, the world was given time to try to understand the causes of the War and how to prevent such a thing from happening again. With this failure brought into relief by World War II, the need to examine how to document a global conflict once again became relevant.

Eliot addresses the question of whether language is even an adequate tool for the enactment of change. In "The Dry Salvages" he claims: "We had the experience but missed the meaning" (39). Society took comfort in the end of the war without taking any measures to prevent war's recurrence. People "hid behind the assurance/ Of recorded history" (39). "Recorded" implies that the events are in the past and will remain that way, but Eliot's consideration of time and its ability to always exist in its entirety refutes this argument and makes the cataloging of history in this manner insufficient.

In order to be preventative, if it even can be preventative, the language needs not only to record events, but also to serve didactic purposes. The recording of events by the

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historian burdened with objectivity is an act of futility. The unattainable goal of objectivity ensures the failure of the historian. Eliot believed that the poet must make the past interactive with the present. The poet's goal is "*Erhebung* without motion, concentration/ Without elimination, both a new world/ And the old made explicit" (Eliot, Four Quartets 16). The Concise Oxford German Dictionary defines "erhebung" as an elevation or an uplifting. Through the simultaneous consideration of the past and the present, the poet can attain a higher understanding. Unfortunately, the poet lacks the tools for such an enlightened diagnosis. The poet is constantly staging "a raid on the inarticulate/ With shabby equipment always deteriorating/ In the general mess of imprecision of feeling" (Eliot, Four Quartets 31). The poet is always trying to find the most efficient form of expression while struggling with the inadequacies of language and the unorganized confusion of emotion. This is the same problem that inspired Lewis and his contemporaries to create the Vorticist movement, the need to create art that was efficient in order to battle the imprecision of their contemporary social climate. Eliot's idea of efficiency in art was poetry that denoted when philosophy was no longer sufficient and when spirituality must take over.

According to Eliot, the poet is in constant conflict with words. In the time between the two wars, it should have been the role of politicians to lead the world in a direction that might avoid the recurrence of war, but poets took upon themselves the task of creating a diagnostic representation of the war that would maintain its relevance in the future. Instead, they "only learnt to get the better of words/ For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way which/ One is no longer disposed to say it" (Eliot, Four Quartets

30). The poet only discovered outdated messages carried by irrelevant language-based vessels. As Pound states it in Blast: "Elaboration, expression of second intensities, of dispersedness belong to the secondary sort of artist. Dispersed arts HAD a vortex" (Lewis 154). Poetry between the two wars, as defined by Eliot, lacked the energy necessary to create an efficient vortex.

As a result of this failure, on the parts of both the poet and the politician, the time between World War I and World War II was not a time of peace, but a delay of the ultimate conclusion of the conflict. In this sense, Four Quartets "acknowledge[s] the belated arrival, twenty-five years later, of all of Europe to the intellectual and moral ruin of Germany and Central Europe in 1918" (Cooper 122). Once again, the artist was charged with the responsibility of rendering an efficient and diagnostic evaluation of the war and the social climate that resulted from it. The failure to do so after the first war was extremely accessible still due to its proximity, and, as a consequence, success in this endeavor seemed beyond hope.

The need to create language that remained relevant was a source of despair for Eliot. The conflict between the poet and words, as stated in "Burnt Norton," is a product of an unstable language where:

> Words strain
>
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
>
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
>
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place. (19)

Poets are only able to use the words that best convey their emotion and perception, but something is always lost in the translation. The best language-based expression of experience is still a manipulation of a sentiment into something that can be commonly understood. Once it is forced into words, it is then placed against the reader's own experience and the original meaning is further displaced.

The paradox of a poet who doubts the potency of poetry is the marker for where faith must take over. Eliot refers to the poet as the "wounded surgeon" who:

> plies the steel
>
> That questions the distempered part;
>
> Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
>
> The sharp compassion of the healer's art (29)

The condition of the surgeon, or the poet, is almost as dire as the patient. Despite this, the surgeon's sense of duty ensures that he will continue to perform. Eliot refers to the hands of the surgeon as "bleeding hands," explaining that the surgeon's hands are covered in his own blood, not the patient's blood. The hands, as the tools of the surgeon, are wounded, just as words, the tools of the poet, are inadequate. "The sharp compassion of the healer's art" drives the surgeon and the poet to continue to operate with inadequate tools.

This inability to enact change through language seems to imply the impotence of the poet. In Part II of "East Coker," Eliot describes "a vortex that shall bring/ The world to that destructive fire" (25). Here, Eliot is acknowledging the power of the vortex, and highlighting the danger of letting a vortex with an uncontrolled center continue to exist.

With the failure to establish an energized vortex based around art, the sustaining core of the vortex became the product of the destructive force over-taking the world. As we have seen, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska defined cultures throughout history by different vortices. The center of each vortex was the defining aspect of life for the particular culture. The societal mindset of the time was saturated with the war, evoking one of Gaudier-Brzeska's vortices where "cruel nature and temperament supplied them with a stimulant: VORTEX OF DESTRUCTION" (Lewis 157). With a world war occurring every twenty years with increasing severity, the vortex of destruction became the dominant societal structure. In Part IV of "Little Gidding" Eliot alludes to the Herculean myth of the flaming shirt given to the demigod by his wife as an agent of vengeance; "The intolerable shirt of flame/ Which human power cannot remove" (57). This myth "is re-rendered by Eliot as an extraordinary predicate of all suffering" (Mathews 28). War is the cause of this suffering and the inability to translate the experience into the future through efficient poetry ensures that the condition will persist.

Not only does Eliot worry about the continuance of war, he is also concerned with its escalation. In the opening of "The Dry Salvages," he refers to a river as "a strong brown god" (35). He does not capitalize "god" to distinguish that he is referring to the indomitable power of the river, not his own spirituality. Several lines later, Eliot states that:

> the brown god is almost forgotten
> By the dwellers in cities -- ever, however, implacable,
> Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder

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Of what men choose to forget. (35)

War has a similar indomitable power. Humanity forgets about it until it swells again, proving its destructive capability incalculable. Pound's question of "can they again put one together/ as in two halves of a seal" in regard to reining in the technology of atom bomb is echoed by Eliot in a more general sense of the overall violence (Pound, The Pisan Cantos 45). In a conversation with Emilio Cecchi, as recalled by Cecchi, Eliot questioned "whether mankind, now capable of reaching such extremes of frightfulness, has a weaker resistance to new and infernal suggestions; whether the wheel of bloodshed can stop at last or will it follow its murderous course" (Cooper 126). The vortex of destruction is evoked yet again by the circular motion of "the wheel of bloodshed." Such apocalyptic considerations are the natural reaction to witnessing the most destructive and widespread period of violence in human history. While these ideas can easily lead to belief systems based around hopelessness and futility, Eliot did not succumb to pessimism. Despite expressing disbelief that poetry and language can change future events, Eliot continued to write. His role as the "wounded surgeon" forced him into action as a poet (Eliot, Four Quartets 29). Eliot immersed himself in the present, as is necessary for an efficient vortex.

If Eliot could not find a functioning alternative to a vortex of suffering and violence centered around destruction, recording his experience of the war would be futile. Because Eliot had to have the motivation to continue composing, "[r]eason could therefore demarcate the place where faith, if necessary and possible, must be called in" (Materer 146). Faith centers him in the calm, ordered eye of the vortex. In Eliot's terms,

it eliminates the intangibility of "the still point of the turning world" (15). Eliot's

religious conversion and continued adherence to Anglo-Catholic doctrine is an

indispensible part of Four Quartets. From his baptism in 1927, Eliot's religious faith and

affiliation with the Church remained steadfast (Surette 48). This provided him with the

security of a belief system when belief in humanity was in such a volatile and fragile

state. Eliot believed that:

> All manner of thing shall be well
>
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
>
> Into the crowned knot of fire
>
> And the fire and the rose are one. (59)

Faith assured Eliot that, even in death, everything would be well. The war could do its

worst, but his faith in salvation could not be destroyed. Eliot organized the chaos of war

into a manageable vortex by using faith as the stabilizing core of the structure.

Eliot's strength of conviction was lacked by many of his peers during World War

II. Humanism was the popular ideology of the modernist thinker during the time

approaching the war. Humanist belief considers humans and their capacity for rational

thought the highest power. Due to its popularity at this time, "Darwinism spawned

militantly atheistic Humanists" (Surette 47). Eliot saw this as escapism driven "by

superficial notions of evolution,/ Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of

disowning the past" (Eliot, Four Quartets 39). Dismissing the past prevents the turbine,

the chaos organized around the center of the vortex, from being infused with "[a]ll the

energized past" (Lewis 153). Without the infusion of energy, the turbine cannot sustain

its form. Darwinism used in this fashion looks on war as social purging, much as the

Vorticists of the early twentieth century looked upon World War I. Like the Vorticists

after being faced with the violence of war, the Humanists that so rigidly advocated

Darwinism could not sustain their beliefs through the reality of World War II. For a large

percentage of the intellectuals of the time, the war represented "the final defeat of all

humanist illusions about 'Man'" (Cooper 125). Belief in the human race's ability to

govern itself became a difficult concept to support when put into the perspective of

World War II. This resulted in a brand of nihilism defined by an "emptiness at the

human core [that] seems to explain how human beings are capable of descending into the

undreamt of infernos of cruelty and barbarity which characterize European history in

midcentury" (Cooper 126). World War II marked a complete loss of faith in humanity

for many of Eliot's Humanist contemporaries.

Eliot was fully aware of this difficulty. He represents this difficulty through the

previously discussed apocalyptic theme of Four Quartets. He describes this feeling in

"The Dry Salvages" as:

<blockquote>

the failing

Pride or resentment at failing powers,

The unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless,

In a drifting boat with a slow leakage. (38)

</blockquote>

The blow rendered to the Humanist belief forced the Humanists to reevaluate their

dogma. Like the drifting boat with a leak, they were simultaneously directionless and

sinking. Returning to Pound's idea of the periplum, Eliot describes the failure of

Humanism to inspire hope as attempting to navigate the ocean without any discernable landmarks on the shore. The namesake of "The Dry Salvages" "is a small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts" (Eliot Four Quartets 35). As a landmark, "on a halcyon day it is merely a monument"; with the coastline clearly visible in perfect weather there is no need of such precise points to navigate by (40). For the Humanists, the turmoil of wartime completely obscured both the land and the beacon, leaving them lost and directionless. Without direction, there is no way to organize the chaos, into a vortex or otherwise.

Unlike his Humanist contemporaries, Eliot was able to establish hope through his belief in something beyond the human. Eliot's perception and experience was affected by the war, but faith kept the chaos at bay and the beacon remained visible as "a seamark to lay a course by" (40). Without that belief, one is left with "only the growing terror of nothing to think about" (28). While this periplum view of faith is preferable to being completely directionless, it still represents the search for faith rather than the achievement of faith. The search for faith can become counterproductive to the possession of faith. The search for faith questions the reasons for faith, where as faith, by Eliot's definition, is unquestioning. The search for faith is the obscured view of the center of the vortex from the chaotic turbine.

Philosophical thought could only take Eliot to a certain point, and then had to be abandoned so it would not become detrimental to something more profound. In "East Coker," Eliot states that the proper way to approach faith is to:

wait without hope

For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love

For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith

 But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

(28)

This is Eliot's outline of how to move from the periplum view to being firmly established in the center of the vortex. Hope and love both become products of faith in this methodology, radiating from the center of the vortex to energize the turbine with more than just violence. The darkness and the stillness equal Lewis's "centre of the hurricane, the quiet eye of the storm, from which point [he] could concentrate on the chaos raging around [him], and control it" (Edwards 17). The transformation from stillness and darkness to dancing and light is an expression of the control gained from the achievement of faith. From this state of complete calm, one is able to better understand the chaos and in this manner infuse it with order, forming the turbine around the calm of the eye.

Eliot applied the same intensity of belief to his political views as he did to his religious and poetic beliefs. He reacted very strongly to the Munich agreement of 1938 that surrendered Czech land to Germany in exchange for peace (Surette 127). What Britain and France lacked and Germany possessed was a societal belief system that superseded the individual. Though Eliot opposed the Nazi regime, he believed the unity and resolve of its belief system strengthened it. Britain and France, to the contrary,

compromised their virtue for some kind of peace. The peace they achieved was tainted.

This type of compromise contradicts both progress and efficiency. Contrary to the

Vorticist ideal of mastering commotion, this marginalized peace promotes an un-

energized stagnation and contributes to the chaos. The confusion created by moral

compromise is "a dark wood, in a bramble,/ On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure

foothold,/ And menaced by monsters, fancy lights" (Eliot, Four Quartets 26). The

compromise of beliefs leads to uncertainty, causing one to be simultaneously distracted

by the positive aspects of the situation and terrified of the concessions made to achieve

those positive aspects.

Despite expressing dissatisfaction with the conviction of the Allies' belief system,

"Little Gidding" has a prominent theme of coming to terms with the past. In this poem,

the last of Four Quartets, the speaker encounters a ghostly figure that is "[b]oth intimate

and unidentifiable" (53). The figure tells the speaker: "I am not eager to rehearse/ My

thought and theory which you have forgotten./ These things have served their purpose: let

them be" (53). As a prophetic embodiment of the past, the ghostly figure commands the

speaker to let go of things that have already been and are no longer relevant. Echoing

"The Lord's Prayer," the figure tells the speaker to "pray they be forgiven/ By others, as I

pray you to forgive/ Both bad and good" (53). Forgiveness and acceptance supplement

Eliot's definition of faith, preventing one from dwelling on grudges or the past while

waiting without thought. Eliot neither dwells on the past, as Pound often does during The

Pisan Cantos, nor does he forget it completely as Lewis did. In many ways he adheres

more strictly to Pound's concept of using "the past that is vital, the past that is capable of

living into the future" than Pound does (Lewis 153). The ghostly figure of the past in "Little Gidding" says: "So I find words I never thought to speak,/ In streets I never thought I should revisit" (54). When put into the proper context of the present, the past contains new and relevant meaning, impregnating the vortex with its potential consequences.

Eliot describes the regular change of world power in "East Coker," as evidenced throughout history. He makes the analogy that life resets itself "As, in a theatre,/ The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed" (27). The relevant parts of the past show that regimes change, power shifts, and eras come to a close so new eras can begin. In the context of the overwhelming tradition of the past, it is unlikely that this war is the final apocalypse, establishing the strong probability that the world would continue beyond the war. One of the most relevant and prominent aspects of the past is regeneration. In the opening of "East Coker," Eliot writes: "In succession/ Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,/ Are removed, destroyed, restored" (23). Gaudier-Brzeska recognized the same regenerative property of society throughout history. In his article on the vortex in Blast, he described the succession of generations of cultures as a series of vortices. Each culture was defined by a different vortex, based around what each culture placed the most importance on, whether that was religion, agriculture, reproduction, or war. The common characteristic they all shared was that they came to an end and were followed by another, different, culture. Gaudier-Brzeska's final vortex, his vortex, was "[w]ill and consciousness" (Lewis 158). Gaudier-Brzeska was providing the lineage that led to his vortex, but the trend of beginnings and ends hold true for Eliot.

Despite expressing his belief that the war will end, Eliot expounds on the suffering that is necessary for this end to come about. "Little Gidding" was written during the air raids on London, and the fire that engulfed the city becomes a metaphor for the Pentecostal fire needed for salvation. He describes the air raids at the beginning of Part IV:

> The dove descending breaks the air
>
> With flame of incandescent terror
>
> Of which the tongues declare
>
> The one discharge from sin and error.
>
> The only hope, or else despair
>
> Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre-
>
> To be redeemed by fire from fire. (57)

The dove descending in flame is the image of the German dive-bomber, but it is also "a metaphor for the Holy Ghost descending" (Kaplan 43). The two become the same; death by fire from the bombers brings the Pentecostal fire. The German dive-bomber descending from the sky encompassed in flame evokes the image of the vortex, similar to the descent of a tornado when it first makes contact with the ground. As the vortex descends, one has a choice between the vortex of faith and the vortex of destruction. Eliot believed that the individual does not have control over life and death, but the individual does have control over whether death results in salvation or damnation. According to Eliot, this is how one can master the commotion and attain the calm of the center of the vortex.

The dichotomy throughout <u>Four Quartets</u> of beginnings and ends represents time: "to make an end is to make a beginning" (58). The end of the war would be the beginning of new social and political structures. While it was unclear what that beginning would be, it would still mark the end of the war. As is essential to many vortices, time makes up a substantial portion of the vortex created by <u>Four Quartets</u>. Eliot's philosophical considerations resulted largely in a conclusion that humans are ineffectual when pitted against the overwhelming forces of time. The intangibility of the present that results in the flaws of perception creates the fluidly chaotic outer turbine of the vortex, while faith provides the center that allows the structure to continue.

The violence and upheaval of World War II created a vortex that was centered on a core of destruction. Through <u>Four Quartets</u>, Eliot offered an alternative vortex. Through the enactment of faith, the calm center of this vortex can be achieved. From this center, the turbine is energized with the hope of salvation. Following Pound's definition of the vortex in <u>Blast</u>, Eliot uses the relevant past in combination with the present to create the circumstance with the most potential for a desirable future. Through the use of the vortex in application to <u>Four Quartets</u>, the reader is able to gain insight into how Eliot organized and mastered the chaos of World War II through his center of faith.

The application of the vortex to <u>Four Quartets</u> is important because of its ability to show the multifaceted nature of Eliot's last great work. Although it has the potential to be dismissed for its overt religiosity, through the use of the vortex, <u>Four Quartets</u> can be broken down to examine Eliot's commentary on war, society, language, and poetry, as well as religion. Once these aspects are broken down, their interconnections can be

explored and it becomes clear how religion fit into Eliot's identity as a poet. Through the

structure of the vortex, it can be seen how Eliot's center of faith functions poetically to

infuse the chaos of war, society, and the shortcomings of language with order and

meaning.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

The vortex as a critical tool is equipped to analyze the poetry of World War II through its dependence on chaos. Fear, violence, political strife and uncertainty about the future contributed to the chaos of this time. Art is representative of all of the social aspects of the era that produces it; therefore the art of World War II contained all of these tumultuous components. The vortex succeeds as a tool for evaluating Pound's The Pisan Cantos and Eliot's Four Quartets because instead of trying to eliminate the chaos to find clarity, it organizes the chaos into a manageable structure.

Pound and Eliot recognized the importance of the past. The recklessness of ignoring the past, as Wyndham Lewis advocated, impedes progress and ensures that future generations will inherit the problems of the present. This is evidenced through Eliot's claim in "East Coker" that the time in between World War I and World War II was "Twenty years largely wasted" (30). The world failed to resolve the conflicts of World War I, and was condemned to another global conflict twenty years later. Recognizing how World War II is a direct result of World War I provides insight into the central causes of World War II and thusly illuminates how to approach a resolution. Through Four Quartets, Eliot acknowledged that at the end of World War II, society could not afford to be blinded by the resolution; it had to take steps to ensure that a war of this scale would not occur again.

Pound and Eliot both express the danger of letting circumstance occupy the center of the vortex. Letting destruction continue unheeded has possibly apocalyptic

consequences. In "East Coker" Eliot discusses "a vortex that shall bring/ The world to that destructive fire" (25). He was concerned that the extreme violence the world achieved in the war had gained so much momentum that it had become unstoppable. Pound supplemented this idea with his discussion of the destructive technology invented during World War II. Upon learning that scientists discovered how to split the atom, Pound asks in Canto 77 "can they again put one together" (45). Not only did World War II increase humanity's capacity for violence, it also led to the discovery of unprecedented technologies of destruction. Left unchecked, the vortex of destruction is now equipped to efficiently bring about the end of the world.

The vortex of destruction is supplemented by the periplum view of the world leaders dictating how the war was fought. This is the view that led England and France to surrender Czech land to Germany in exchange for a tentative peace, as well as motivated the United States to end the war by carrying out the most destructive act in history, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From a position in the chaos, it is impossible to see the totality of the chaos. Acting according to this perspective results solely in reaction. Wyndham Lewis stated in <u>Blast</u> that a Vorticist "does not deal in reactive Action only, nor identify the Present with numbing displays of vitality" (Lewis 147). Much of World War II was a contest of which side could react with the most force. The U.S. won this contest through the use of the atom bomb. Despite this, one must wonder about the consequences if neither side agrees to surrender.

Before the periplum view can be replaced with the center of the vortex, the center of the vortex must first be defined. Pound used his memories of the past to reaffirm his

belief in his art and return him to the center of the vortex. At the center of the vortex, Pound achieved "ming" (The Pisan Cantos 117). Ming is "the sun and moon, the total light process . . . hence the intelligence" (158). Ming is complete clarity; the state of being that allows him to view the chaos as a whole. Faith is the vessel Eliot used to achieve the center. Four Quartets ends with:

> All manner of thing shall be well
>
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
>
> Into the crowned knot of fire
>
> and the fire and the rose are one. (51)

Regardless of the outcome of the war, Eliot found hope in salvation. His belief assured him that everything would eventually be well, either in life or in death. Eliot established himself in the center of the vortex through faith, and from this position he dulled the overwhelming roar of the chaos to a level he could control.

Pound states in Blast that acting from the center of the vortex is "DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, … CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting" (Lewis 153). Through applying the vortex to these two works of poetry, the reader can discern how Pound and Eliot directed force against their circumstance, rather than just reflecting on it. They energized the turbine of chaos with artistic expressions of hope.

The vortex is applicable beyond the poetry of Pound and Eliot. The image is utilized by many artists, not necessarily in name but in structure. The W.B. Yeats's gyre

of "The Second Coming" is of similar structure and function and is recreated in H.D.'s

Trilogy when she writes of the gyre-like motion of the seabirds.

In contemporary society, technology is effecting how art is experienced as well as created. These advances in mass communication have provided a barrage of art and art forms fully representative of the seemingly endless supply or world news. The Internet provides artists with the means to immediately distribute their art to the masses without concerning themselves with the delays of publishing companies. Technology has also made the means to create multi-modal art easily accessible. The fusion of audio, visual, and textual mediums (something both Marinetti and Pound would greatly appreciate) can create complex and comprehensive works of art. In order to make sense of this overwhelming input, the versatility of the vortex can be used to organize the massive influx of art, as well as discern the energizing core that holds multifaceted works together. The goal of the vortex is to master confusion, which makes it an invaluable tool in a contemporary society comprising countless confusions.

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