

An electronic reprint from

Symbiosis

a Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations

Ian F. A. Bell

The Poundian Fourth Dimension

<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>

FOR GUIDANCE ON USE OF THIS EBOOK PLEASE SCROLL TO PAGE 2

PUBLICATION DATA

© Symbiosis 2007, 2009 all rights reserved

The Author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this Work
in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

First published in SYMBIOSIS 11.2 (October 2007)

2nd electronic edition published in 2009 by Humanities-Ebooks LLP

<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>

Tirril Hall, Tirril, Penrith CA10 2JE

Essays published in Symbiosis are subsequently digitized
for the benefit of the author (80%) and the Journal (20%)

READING OPTIONS

To use the toolbar this Ebook should be read in default view.

To navigate use the hyperlinked 'Bookmarks' or thumbnails at the left of the screen.

To search, click on the binocular symbol in the toolbar.

Use <CTRL+L> to enlarge the page to full screen.

Use <Esc> to return to the full menu

LICENCE AND PERMISSIONS

This ebook is licensed for reading on a particular computer.

It is permissible to print a copy of the book for your own use
or to save it to another device of your own, but it would be illegal to
make a copy for another reader, or to permit anyone to do so.

ISSN: 1362-7902

A cumulative index of Symbiosis essays and reviews is online at

<http://www.symbiosisonline.org.uk>

IAN F. A. BELL

The Poundian Fourth Dimension

Towards the end of *The Fifth Decad of Cantos* (1937), resting between the historical turbulence of Cantos 48 and 50, celebrating the tranquillity of ancient Chinese order and applauding the pleasure and relaxation of pre-industrial labour, Pound's Canto 49 concludes on a note of particular quietude in its penultimate line: 'The fourth; the dimension of stillness.'¹ A few years later, in a letter of June 1942 to Luigi Berti, we find a gloss on this quietude which remains one of only two open acknowledgements by Pound of the Fourth Dimension:

Stillness—the word is more concrete than IMMOTO [the motionless], for it also suggests silence. What is still is motionless and soundless. But the concept of motionlessness is more important in this line. In Dante, above the primum mobile there is the motionless, the sphere which does not turn. I conceive of a dimension of stillness which compenetrates the Euclidean dimensions.²

But such quietude and stillness are not achieved without a struggle—Canto 49 finishes 'And the power over wild beasts.' The syntax of this final couplet, compounded by the familiar disturbance of Pound's fragmentary exposition, renders uneasily any connection between its two halves. It is helpful only up to a point to refer back to Canto 47 which ends with the same line and which, in its evocation of the Eleusinian Mysteries, enables us to read this 'power' as that of Dionysus and his 'gift of healing.' We need, in a sense, a simpler reading which sets the two halves of the couplet against each other—stillness is achieved against a world of 'wild beasts,' is maintained against a world that, from various perspectives, is threatening. And this struggle in itself, as I shall suggest later, is a central aspect of fourth dimensional thought: the oppositional nature of such thought characterises not only its own procedures (where