



This is a repository copy of *Response to responses*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/123996/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Kindellan, M.R. orcid.org/0000-0001-8751-1433 and Kotin, J. (2017) Response to responses. *Modernist Cultures*, 12 (3). pp. 388-390. ISSN 2041-1022

<https://doi.org/10.3366/mod.2017.0183>

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Edinburgh University Press in *Modernist Cultures*. The Version of Record is available online at:
<http://www.eupublishing.com/10.3366/mod.2017.0183>

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Michael Kindellan & Joshua Kotin

We are grateful for the challenging responses from Charles Altieri, Alan Golding, Marjorie Perloff, and Steven Yao and Michael Coyle. We first presented our essay at the Ezra Pound International Conference (EPIC) in 2015. Golding responded and Perloff chaired the panel. A lively discussion ensued, kicked-off by Altieri's comments about poetry's general resistance to pedagogy. Yao and Coyle were also present, and their book, *Ezra Pound and Education* (2012), served as an important impetus for our research. This forum is thus a continuation of an ongoing discussion. We are also grateful to the editors of *Modernist Cultures* for hosting the forum, and for their editorial guidance.

The most prevalent criticism of our essay is that we define pedagogy too narrowly. ("How many poets," Altieri asks, "would pass Kindellan and Kotin's tests for adequate pedagogy?") But when we wrote our essay, we worried that our definition was too broad. The *Cantos*, we argued, "is not compatible with any conceivable model of education—from what Paulo Freire calls the 'banking concept of education' to his emancipatory alternative, 'the problem-posing concept of education.'" Freire, here, is not meant to represent mutually exclusive models of education (as Yao and Coyle suggest), but an almost impossibly wide range of models. We do not believe that Freire alone defines the field.

For Pound, defining terms was, in theory if not in practice, essential. Remaining faithful to the poem then might require us to make our definitions

explicit. In that spirit we might follow Ford's injunction in "Canto 98" to "get a dictionary / and learn the meaning of words"¹ and defer to the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines pedagogy as "the art, occupation, or practice of teaching." If pressed further, we might argue that for a poem (or any text) to count as pedagogical, it must share at least three characteristics: it must adopt or invent a method of instruction; it must concern itself with the actions of its readers; and it must be able to succeed or fail on its own terms. The Cantos, we suggest, abstains from all three characteristics. Yao and Coyle raise the example of *Paradise Lost*—a poem that exhibits all three characteristics. Indeed, Milton's epic is a pedagogical poem and a poem about pedagogy—about how best to "justify the ways of God to men."²

Nevertheless, we agree with Golding that the poem can be construed as pedagogical—albeit (and for us importantly) against Pound's will. "The Cantos," Golding writes, "is pedagogical, not in the ways that Pound hoped or intended but rather in ways or for reasons that he would have emphatically resisted." Our question: is teaching against one's will or by accident still teaching? (Can Trump teach us about the dangers of Trumpism? Can a flower teach us about beauty?) Instead of expanding the meaning of pedagogical (in ways Pound would have hated), we might ask about the stakes of insisting on the term.

We also agree with Perloff: "What the poem does teach us [...] is how a poem can be constructed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, how semantic and emotional resonance is created by the repetition and variation of a key set of

¹ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (New York: New Directions, 1975), 689.

² John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1957), 212.

recurring motifs.” But this account of the poem’s pedagogy also violates Pound’s intentions. He did not write *The Cantos* as a model for how to write poetry or to motivate readers to speculate about the resonance among recurring motifs. To read the poem exclusively as an aesthetic artifact is to risk underestimating its ethical and political ambitions.

Altieri’s account of “new eyes” provides an incredibly attractive model for understanding the poem’s pedagogy. But it is also, we think, problematically abstract. Pound may have wanted us to have a “sense of discovery” while reading *The Cantos*, but he also wanted us (and expected us) to discover exactly what he discovered. (Yet the poem provides no way for us to do so, which is one reason we describe it as magical.) For Pound, “new eyes” is less an alternative pedagogy than an alternative to pedagogy.

Writing this response, we are struck by the fact that Pound scholars still have deep disagreements about the basic features of *The Cantos*. Even the responses testify to this fact. We do not know what this fact says about Pound studies and literary studies, more generally. One thing we do know: Pound believed that the poem’s value had nothing to do with scholarly consensus—or even opinion, scholarly and otherwise. We might (grudgingly!) admit there is a lesson in that.