EXPERIMENTS WITH CHINA IN AMERICAN MODERNITY

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Experiments with China in American Modernity explores formulations of China within America's early and interwar modernist period. I propose the concept of "transpacific experimentalism" to identify an emergent, sustained aesthetic engagement with China, grounded in empiricist, scientistic, or otherwise humanist claims, which can be understood through John Dewey's theory of creative imagination. This dissertation resonates with the continuing expansion of new modernist studies, offering new methodological approaches and archival challenges to a field which has been historically constricted to a narrow high modernist canon. By tracing a constellation of texts situated on the disciplinary interstices of modernist studies, Chinese area studies, and Asian American studies, I do not intend to further horizontally expand the category of American modernism, but to reveal the extent to which it has always already been historically, culturally, and aesthetically transpacific–a term which, following Hua Hsu, "describes a physical space" connecting the United States to Asia, "as well as a horizon of possibility." From the transpacific birth and circuits of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine and Ezra Pound's living Chinese character, to Witter Bynner's collaboration with Jiang Kanghu and the recovery of Sino-US poets and scholars of American modernism, this dissertation

argues for a new mode of reading which unearths the horizontal aesthetic relations which emerged across American and Chinese modernity.

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Thank you to my chair, Paul Peppis, for his unflagging faith and diligent stewardship of this dissertation. Thank you to my committee members Michael Allan, Tze-Yin Teo, and Tara Fickle for their encouragement, enthusiasm, and grace, and without which this text would be greatly impoverished. Thank you to the Department of Comparative Literature and the Center for Asian and Pacific Studies for providing financial support during my years as a graduate student at the University of Oregon, and the support of the Department of Comparative Literature as a home for this work to grow and thrive.

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Finally, thank you to everyone who has provided their kindness, support, and inspiration during the various stages of my scholarly development, including (but by no means limited to) Ken Calhoon, Leah Middlebrook, Steven Brown, Ilya Kaminsky, Marilyn Chin, Joseph Thomas, Joanna Brooks, Ronald Wallace, Charo D'Etcheverry, and Mrs. Tanner, my high school American English and AP English teacher.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Judy Lester (1952-2020),

my brother, Jim Lester (1983-2016),

my father, Richard Lester (b. 1951),

and my son, Ishaan Lester Singh (b. 2019).

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1. INTRODUCTION

i. The Chinese Laboratory

> there is a stright tradition. Kung, Mencius, Dante, Agassiz.
> And that shd/be stressed sometime.
> – Letter from Ezra Pound to Achilles Fang, Feb 4 1953.[1]

In *ABC of Reading*, Ezra Pound relates an apocryphal anecdote concerning the nineteenth-century Swiss-American biologist Louis Agassiz. In Pound's rendition, a post-graduate student comes to Agassiz to learn from him. Agassiz offers the student a "small fish" and tells him to describe it. The student responds by laconically identifying it: "That's only a sunfish." Agassiz then asks for a description of it, whereupon the student "returned with the description of the Icthus Heliodiplokus, or whatever term is used to conceal the common sunfish from vulgar knowledge….as found in textbooks on the subject." Agassiz asks the student again to describe it, whereupon he writes a short essay. Unsatisfied, Agassiz asks the student, one more time, "to look at the fish." The anecdote concludes with an elusive moral: "At the end of three weeks the fish was in an advanced state for decomposition, but the student knew something about it."[2]

Across the aesthetic primers *How to Read* and *ABC of Reading*—the latter largely serving as a revision of the former—Pound argues for an intervention into Anglo-American literary studies by way of an explicitly comparative approach. He assays, "'Comparative literature'

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[1] Zhaoming Qian, ed., *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129.

[2] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (1934; repr., New York, NY: New Directions, 2006), 17–18.

sometimes figures in university curricula, but very few people know what they mean by the term, or approach it with a considered conscious method."[3] Pound advocates for applying scientistically rigorous "laboratory conditions" to aesthetic judgment and comparative literary study, observing, "We live in an age of science and abundance," and therefore "the proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists."[4]

Whereas other "allegedly scientific methods" would seek to "approach literature as if it were something *not literature,* or with scientists' attempts to subdivide the elements," Pound understood his scientific method as being in opposition to "the method of abstraction"[5]; rather, his is a method of empirical close reading, "careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one 'slide' or specimen with another."[6] In this way, Pound's scientific method provides a through-line which connects earlier aesthetic pronouncements, particularly those directed towards or springing from his engagement with East Asian art: for example, his foundational statements on imagism, where he famously advocates for "direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective," and to "go in fear of abstractions"[7]; or his praise of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's acute perception of "the dominant line in objects," epitomized by Gaudier-Brzeska's ability

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[3] Ezra Pound, *How to Read* (London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1931), 8.

[4] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 17.

[5] Pound, *How to Read,* 13, emphasis his; Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 20.

[6] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 17.

[7] Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect and 'A Few Don'ts.'" in *Pavannes and Divagations* (New York: Knopf, 1918), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69409/a-retrospect-and-a-few-donts.

to "understand the primitive Chinese ideographs (not the later more sophisticated forms)" after only "a few days studying the subject at the museum"; or the pair's consequent, mutual disgust towards "the lexicographers who 'hadn't sense enough to see that *that* [Chinese character] was a horse,' or a cow or a tree or whatever it might be."[8] Castigating those who may have consumed "textbooks on the subject," but seemingly hadn't stopped to "look" at the composition of the characters themselves, Pound (via Gaudier-Brzeska) fumes, "what the … else could it be! The … fools!"[9]

"The museum" referenced by Pound above is the British Museum. Indeed, the close, empirical study which Pound advocates for in *ABC of Reading* draws ready comparison to his own formative years in London—what he calls, in *The Cantos,* his "British Museum Era."[10] From 1909-1913, Pound read and wrote in the British Museum's open-access Reading Room, supplemented with frequent visits by him and companions to the much more exclusive Print Room.[11] This wing of the museum was curated by Laurence Binyon, first as Assistant to the museum's Prints and Drawings archive, and later as head of the new Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings—positions which "gave him responsibility

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[8] Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 46, emphasis mine.

[9] Ibid., ellipses in original.

[10] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 526.

[11] Though Pound was never assigned a research position at the museum, he treated his time at the British Museum as if it were a "day job" with scheduled work hours. Signing off a brief letter to his father in 1909, he remarks, "I am already late for my days job at the mausoleum," replacing "museum" with "mausoleum" with his typical penchant for puns and catachresis. Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929*, ed. David Moody, Joanna Moody, and Mary de Rachewiltz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208. Similar remarks can be found scattered across his letters from this period. See, for example, Pound, ibid, 185-187, passim. See also 166, where he claims "Binyon gets paid for doing pretty much what I do in the museum."

for the Department's Asian collections in their entirety."[12] In the Print Room, Pound did not spend his time attending to the study of decomposing fish, but instead found inspiration for his experiments in modernist poetry and translation among Binyon's newest acquisitions of Chinese scroll paintings and Japanese *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 woodblock prints.[13]

Pound states in *How to Read* that he has "been accused of wishing to provide a 'portable substitute for the British Museum,'" with the rejoinder that it's something "I would do, like a shot, were it possible."[14] Yet in *ABC of Reading* his description of the "laboratory conditions" necessary for a scientifically-informed artistic praxis *does* offer just such a substitute. Decades after his British Museum Era, Pound provides his readership a model through which they may access their own portable British Museum Print Room-cum biology laboratory of the mind. Moreover, within this "laboratory," Pound describes the scientific method, in its most concrete aspects, as an "ideogrammic" method, attesting that Ernest Fenollosa's *Essay on the Chinese Written Character* is "the first definite assertion of the applicability of scientific method to literary criticism."[15] In Pound's laboratory—which can, in the final analysis, be described as his *Chinese* laboratory—the Chinese character is rendered not only as the proper ur-subject for close, empirical reading, but is *itself* conceived as a model of biological composition and organicist, vitalist intensity.

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[12] Rupert Richard Arrowsmith, *Modernism and the Museum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 104.

[13] See Arrowsmith, *Modernism and the Museum*, 103-127. Arrowsmith's research into Pound's activities at the British Museum builds on the work of Zhaoming Qian. See by Zhaoming Qian, "Pound and Chinese Art in the 'British Museum Era'," in *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 1–21.

[14] Pound, *How to Read*, 8.

[15] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 18.

It is with this model in mind that Pound writes, retrospectively, of "a stright tradition. Kung, Mencius, Dante, Agassiz": Confucius (*Kongzi* 孔子), Mencius (*Mengzi* 孟子), Dante Alighieri, Louis Agassiz.[16]

ii. Transpacific Experimentalism

Pound's Chinese laboratory may appear to be a *sui generis* confluence of ideas and areas of study particular to his own idiosyncratic proclivities; however, this dissertation, *Experiments with China in American Modernity*, argues it is demonstrative of the extent to which American modernity emerges out of an engagement with ideas, people, and things historically, culturally, and aesthetically transpacific–a term which, following Hua Hsu, "describes a physical space" connecting the United States to Asia, "as well as a horizon of possibility."[17] I propose the concept of "transpacific experimentalism" to identify formulations of China in early and interwar American modernist poetry which demonstrate sustained engagements grounded in rationalist, empiricist, or otherwise humanist claims and which can be productively read as examples of creative imagination.[18]

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[16] Qian, *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends*, 129. For Pound, "Kung" (and to a lesser extent Mencius) stands in for several interrelated aspects of Chinese cultural history: Chinese characters themselves; the philosophy of Confucianism, with which Pound aligned himself beginning in the 1920s; and the *Shijing* 诗经, variously rendered as the *Classic of Poetry*, *Book of Songs*, or *Book of Odes*. One of the Five Classics (*Wujing* 五经), this is the oldest extant collection of Chinese poetry, with Confucius traditionally accredited as its anthologist. For an example of this slippage, see his anthology *Confucius to Cummings*, where "Confucius" refers to his Confucian *Book of Odes*. Ezra Pound, ed., *Confucius to Cummings* (New York: New Direction, 1964).

[17] Hua Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 12, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674969285.

[18] In *Scratches on Our Minds*, Harold Isaacs describes sustained engagement with China in this period as "secondary involvement." It respectively follows that the "primary involvement" of the Euro-American

My usage of the term "experimentalism" follows the American philosopher John Dewey–a figure who loomed large in interwar China due to his two-year lecture series within the country from 1919 to 1921.[19] Dewey's consequential status within China's New Culture movement is more or less taken as a given. Shu-Mei Shih, for example, identifies "John Dewey's philosophical experimentalism as popularized by Hu Shi" as a significant influence on Chinese modernists such as Lu Xun 鲁迅.[20] Yet Dewey's status as an American philosopher of the modernist era is generally ignored or shrugged off by Anglo-American modernist scholarship, with the most significant work within this avenue of research remaining George Hutchinson's account of interracial literary relations in the Harlem Renaissance.[21] In "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," Dewey advocates a philosophy which is compatible with modern lived experience and technological advances, noting "the extent to which the characteristic traits of the science of to-day are connected with the development of social subjects—anthropology, history, politics, economics, language and literature, social and abnormal psychology, and so on."[22] Crucially, this line of thought doesn't lead Dewey to the expected conclusion that the humanities need become "rationalized" by the sciences, but in fact the opposite: he prognosticates that "the

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figures of this dissertation is the project of American modernity and Anglo-American modernist poetry itself. See Harold R Isaacs, *Scratches on our Minds: American Views of China and India* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 17.

[19] See Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and to Learn*, SUNY series in Chinese philosophy and culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), *http://site.ebrary.com/id/10575830*.

[20] Shumei Shi, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*, Berkeley Series in Interdisciplinary Studies of China 1 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 85.

[21] George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1995).

[22] John Dewey, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," in *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements*, ed. William Pepperell Montague and George Adams (New York: Russell & Russell, 1930), 26, https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1930.html.

next synthetic movement in philosophy will emerge when the significance of the social sciences and arts has become an object of reflective attention in the same way that mathematical and physical sciences have been made the objects of thought in the past."[23] Accordingly, he argues in *Experience and Nature* that science should properly serve as the "handmaiden" of art, rather than let art be subordinated to the sciences.[24]

The writings of Dewey's prized pupil and Chinese interpreter, Hu Shi 胡适's help elucidate the relationship which Dewey draws between art and science. Hu Shi published the essay "On Experimentalism (*Tantan shiyanzhuyi* 谈谈实验主义)" May 2nd, 1919 on the occasion of Dewey's first lecture in China–which itself occurred on the eve of student protests in Beijing on May 4th, 1919, inaugurating China's May Fourth Movement (*Wusi yundong* 五四运动).[25] In it, Hu Shi declares, "the experimental attitude is the attitude of a scientist carrying out experiments in a laboratory 实验的态度，就是科学家在实验室里试验的态度 *Shiyan de taidu, jiushi kexuejia zai shiyanshi li shiyan de taidu*," and "I dare say that experimentalism is the outcome of the developments of nineteenth century scientists. 我敢说实验主义是十九世纪科学发达的结 *Wo gan shuo shiyanzhuyi shi shijiushiji kexue fada de shu*." In contrast with other disciplines, Hu Shi identifies science as a conception of the world operating through dynamic, rather than static relations; likewise, science abjures appeals to tradition, readily "replacing the old with the new 以新代旧 *yi xin dai jiu*" when

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[23] Ibid.

[24] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 358.

[25] Shi Hu, "Tantan Shiyanzhuyi (On Experimentalism)," *Xin Jiaoyu* (*New Education*) 1, no. 3 (May 1919), https://m.aisixiang.com/data/86772.html. All following translations from this text are mine.

newer models and ideals appear which prove to be more accurate or applicable than older ones. Derived from these principles, Hu Shi argues that science reveals how "Life is activity, dynamic change, encounters with the outside world, and adaptation to one's environment 生活是活动的，是变化的，是对付外界的，是适应环境 *Shenghuo shi donghua de, shi bianhua de, shi duifu waijie de, shi shiying huanjing*."

Given Dewey's well-known professional and philosophical interest in education, Hu Shi argues these attributes of science and life elucidate the proper aims of education:

> What is the relationship that actually exists between the application of a "practical method" and education? The answer to this question is that education is concerned with cultivating talented students who seek truth from facts. It can't be reduced to an endless study of books, but instead is the study of actual things. It can't be reduced to rote memorization, which fetters one's ideas, but instead appraises these ideas for whether they reflect actual outcomes. It can't be reduced to beliefs spoken by our forebears, but instead inquires into these tenets of faith for whether they are in accord with actual affairs.
>
> 实际主义方法的应用，和教育究竟有什么关系呢？这个问题的答案就是，教育事业当养成实事求是的人才，勿可专读死书，却去教实在的事物；勿可专背书中意思所束缚，却当估量这种意思是否有实际的效果；勿可专信仰前人的说话，却当去推求这些信条是否合于事情
>
> *Shijizhuyi fangfa de ting young, he jiaoyu jiujing you shenme guanxi ne? Zhege wenti de da'an jiushi, jiaoyu shiye dang yangcheng shi shi qiu shi de rencai, wuke zhuan du si shu, que qu jiao shizai de shiwu; wuke zhuan beishu zhong yisi suo shufu, que dang guliang zhezhong yisi shifou you shiji de xiaoguo; wuke zhuan xinyang qianren de shuohua, que dang qu tuiqiu zhexie xintiao shifou yu shiqing.*[26]

Put another way, in a quotation often attributed to Dewey, "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." Accordingly, experimentalism, liberal humanist education, the scientific method, and "cultivation of creative ability 养成创造的能力 *Yangcheng*

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[26] Ibid.

chuangzao de nengli" are all revealed to be embedded within and derive from the processes of life.[27]

The sciences are understood as a discipline concerned with arriving at a better descriptive understanding of what can be understood as "true"—or as Dewey puts it, that which has "warranted assertability." Crucially, however, I do not argue that transpacific experimentalism is necessarily grounded in claims borne out as accurate or true in relation to China. Pound's understanding of the Chinese ideogram has been famously—one may also add *continuously*—debunked in scholarship, at least as early as George Kennedy's "Fenollosa, Pound and the Chinese Character" in 1958.[28] Nor is transpacific experimentalism as discussed here necessarily grounded upon direct, lived experience of Chinese culture and people, as opposed to encounters which are mediated through a transpacific circulation of art, literature, and culture. Again, Pound had no meaningful examples of direct experience with Chinese culture—though this cannot be as easily said of him regarding his correspondence with contemporaneous Chinese scholars[29] Instead, I locate experimentalism in figures and texts which in their historical context exhibit dynamic change, transformation, and adaptation of one's thinking and relationship to the larger world through transpacific encounters with China.

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[27] Ibid.

[28] George Kennedy, "Fenollosa, Pound and the Chinese Character," *Yale Literary Magazine* 126, no. 5 (1958): 24–36, *http://www.pinyin.info/readings/texts/ezra_pound_chinese.html*. Informal statements by figures such as Arthur Waley or Witter Bynner would place the first critiques of Pound's understanding of the Chinese character several decades earlier.

[29] For significant, if not extensive, examples of Pound's correspondence with Chinese scholars, see Qian, *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends*.

Given Hu Shi's linkage of the sciences, "cultivation of creative ability," and education, it is significant that Dewey reconfigures "science" so as to be equivalent to theory, and "art" to practice. Moreover, to bifurcate experience into science *or* art is for him merely a provisional distinction between means and ends. To approach science and art as dualisms or antinomies is thus not reflective of nature and man's experience within nature as such, but instead a problem constructed through language. Dewey declares:

> When this perception dawns, it will be a commonplace that art—the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession—is the complete culmination of nature, and that 'science' is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue. Thus would disappear the separations that trouble present thinking: division of everything into nature *and* experience, of experience into practice *and* theory, art *and* science.[30]

Following Dewey's claim that "the complete culmination of nature" is encompassed within the aesthetic, and Hu Shi's correlation of experimentalism with "cultivation of creative ability," I identify experimentalist aspects of the figures and texts of this dissertation in light of what Dewey calls "creative imagination."

According to Thomas Alexander, Dewey's conception of imagination is a difficult subject to approach, for imagination appears everywhere in Dewey's thought–most notably *Art as Experience*, his book on aesthetic theory–yet is rarely systematically elucidated. Moreover, it is a concept unique to Dewey, without direct antecedent in the writings of William James. Nonetheless, an account can be made of certain characteristics of Dewey's approach to imagination. For one, imagination is inherent to all intelligent action, and is an extension of activity itself: it provides a point or end in view, towards which we can redirect our actions and go forward in our affairs. In this sense it can be understood to have a "dramatic" character, as it plays out dialectically (as well as dialogically, within one's

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[30] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 358.

inner monologue or "soliloquy") between "what is and what ought to be."[31] Put another way, and with a different emphasis by Alexander, "meaning becomes consciously embodied when action undergoes reconstruction through the art of imagination."[32] The organizational faculties of the mind are often understood as aspects of intelligence, but for Dewey they are also fundamentally aesthetic, for "no experience of whatever sort is a unity unless it has esthetic quality."[33] In this way, to treat art as something superficial or superfluous, as if it were "the beauty parlor of civilization," is to overlook how works of art heighten and make advertent to their audience the unifying quality of a situation or experience, and thereby make that experience apprehensible.[34]

The significance of this becomes apparent in our aesthetic encounter with works of art from another time or culture, for "Works of art are means by which we enter, through imagination and the emotions they evoke, into other forms of relationship and participation than our own."[35] On this point, Dewey agrees with the British modernist T.E. Hulme. Quoting Hulme's *Speculations*, Dewey states, "art cannot be understood by itself, but must be taken as one element in a general process of adjustment between man and the

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[31] Thomas M. Alexander, *The Human Eros: Eco-Ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, American Philosophy Series (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 170.

[32] Ibid., 172.

[33] Quoted in Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 40.

[34] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 344.

[35] Ibid., 333.

outside world."[36] Following Bergson, Dewey explains that we "install ourselves in modes of apprehending nature that at first are strange to us. To some degree we become artists ourselves as we undertake this integration, and, by bringing it to pass, our own experience is reoriented."[37]

This description of apprehension, integration, and reorientation in the aesthetic encounter elucidates a categorical distinction in Dewey between imagination and fantasy. According to Dewey, "At the best, the fanciful is confined to literature wherein the imaginative too easily becomes the imaginary." Instead of providing a psychoanalytic or sociocultural gloss for the "imaginary," Dewey denotes it as the aesthetic condition of fantasy or "fancy," whereby "a person deliberately gives familiar experience a strange guise by clothing it in unusual garb." Rather than a profound reorientation of perception of our own experiences through the integration of experiences which are not our own, fantasy is synonymous with a flight of fancy, where "mind and material"–art, artist, and audience–"do not squarely meet and interpenetrate." In contrast, works of art which demonstrate creative imagination make sensible "new fields of experience and disclose new aspects and qualities in familiar scenes and objects," as well as embodying possibilities "that are not elsewhere actualized."[38] This transformation and reorientation of experience through imaginative thinking and works of creative imagination can be identified with what Rob Wilson calls "conversion," in all of the possible resonances carried within the

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[36] Ibid., 332.

[37] Ibid., 334.

[38] Ibid., 149.

term.[39] In this dissertation I argue that its principal Euro-American subjects, Monroe, Bynner, and Pound, all exhibit this sense of conversion in their encounters with China, Chinese language, or Chinese art and culture, not only converting these aspects into their own formulations of Chinese art and culture, but in turn being converted by them as well.

Recalling Dewey's equivalences of science to theory and art to practice, a differentiation of imagination from fantasy can be perceived in how he understands creativity as coinciding with and operating as the praxis of reason: a word which for him "as a noun signifies the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions, such as sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit."[40] In other words, while fantasy is an escape from or disregard to experiential relations, Deweyan imagination is not pure or disinterested but instead caught up in what Jim Garrison describes as our "animal relations with the world."[41] It is not my claim that the primary figures or texts of this dissertation should be fundamentally understood as "Deweyan" or were themselves necessarily in dialogue with his philosophy; rather, as creativity and reason coincide for Dewey as an "attitude" or "multitude of dispositions" towards the world, "not a ready-made antecedent which can be invoked at will and set into movement," so too does this project attempt to understand the terrain of experimentalism in American modernity as one which forgoes "ready-made" readings of transpacific entanglements between America

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[39] Rob Wilson, *Be Always Converting, Be Always Converted: An American Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[40] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 196.

[41] Jim Garrison, "2012 Dewey Lecture: Making Meaning Together Beyond Theory and Practice," *Education and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2013): 11.

and China.[42] Instead, it seeks to uncover how these entanglements take a multitude of forms and dispositions, which include sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, and pursuit.

An important point of consideration when historicizing early and interwar American modernism is a pervasive, rhetorical separation of poetics and politics which highly contrasts with contemporary sensibilities. For an example of the latter, contemporary poet CA Conrad argues in conversation with Dale Smith for the importance of localized, intentional "families" of poets, rather than artistic communities. Conrad likewise cites Kaia Sand, a Portland-based contemporary poet, who "chooses 'avant-garde' over experimental," as "'avant-garde' implies the social side of the work," and thereby carries the potentiality of an "inclusive frame" of "collective action."[43] In sympathy with this approach, Richard Jean So's *Transpacific Community* explores how engagements with China by writers and artists such as Agnes Smedley, Lin Yutang, Pearl Buck, and Paul Robeson can be understood broadly as expressions of leftist solidarity and desire for collective social action.[44] Such coalitions are forged through shared social goals and a desire for mutual aid. Yet in Dewey's analysis of Matthew Arnold's dictum, "poetry is criticism of life," he argues art is not that which seeks to instrumentally impose upon or manifest in the reader the moral judgment of the author. Instead, Dewey argues that art is

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[42] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 196.

[43] CA Conrad and Dale Smith, "Dale Smith & CAConrad Discuss Dorn, AIDS, and Community That Holds Us Together & Holds Us to It," *PhillySound: New Poetry*, October 31, 2009, *http://phillysound.blogspot.com/2009_10_01_archive.html*. Mirroring Conrad's collectivist approach, Smith relates, "The other day I told my freshman writing class that there are no such things as writers. There are only communities of writers."

[44] Richard Jean So, *Transpacific Community: America, China and the Rise and Fall of a Cultural Network* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

operational as criticism "not directly, but by disclosure, through imaginative vision addressed to imaginative experience (not to set judgment) of possibilities that contrast with actual conditions."[45] Towards this point, Dewey concludes *Art As Experience* by quoting Shelley, insisting that "A man to be greatly good"—and likewise societies, and likewise art—"must imagine intensely and comprehensively."[46]

The early and interwar modernist aesthetic collaborations explored in this dissertation are forged on the basis of a common aesthetic ground which often overlooks or is ostensibly disengaged from the involved parties' sometimes very disparate ends. From Dewey, Monroe, and Bynner's small 'D' democratic pluralism to Pound's self-aggrandizing fascism, the political sensibilities of the figures in this dissertation tend to be quite identifiable. Yet over and over one finds that these figures themselves resist an understanding of aesthetic judgment which relegates art to a series of ethical claims or symptomatic reflections of the political. An attempt to fully square their politics and affiliative and aesthetic inclinations can then only be understood, in the descriptive sense, as problematic. In the 1920s Pound, having already grown hostile to American electoralism and beginning to look to Europe for more authoritarian alternatives, nonetheless enthusiastically lauded and subscribed to the leftist magazine *The New Masses*.[47] By way of explanation, he writes to his father, "Can not regard Communism as cure for national

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[45] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 346.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents*, 615.

imbecility, but the New Masses looks to me about only murkn publication worth the 25 cents per issue."[48]

Harriet Monroe likewise shies away from anything which would coalesce identity politics into an identity poetics. On the occasion of a publication of *Poetry* featuring only female poets, she observes, "Quite a number of issues, during our past history, have been masculine, but this is the first one to speak entirely with feminine." Nonetheless, she assures her readership, "The fact that this is a woman's number of POETRY does not result from the editor's deliberate intention."[49] *Poetry*'s John Reed Prize, endowed by the journalist's family after his death in Russia in 1920, was also, surprisingly, stipulated merely to go to a young poet of merit and promise. Indeed, John Reed's own publications in the magazine bore a similar apolitical bent–all the more striking for a man who inspired communist party clubs named after him in the 1930s, which took up the motto, "Art is a weapon in the class struggle." In 1925 the second annual John Reed Prize went to Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen–with the social significance of a major poetry award reaching across the color line going entirely unmentioned by *Poetry*.[50] Within contemporary modernist studies, to say nothing of the humanities at large, to insist on an absolute autonomy of the aesthetic from the sociopolitical is rightfully untenable–even

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[48] Ibid., 599.

[49] Harriet Monroe, ed., *Poetry* 20, no. 5 (August 1922): 291.

[50] "Announcement of Awards," *Poetry* 27, no. 2 (November 1925): 105. The same year, Cullen was the winner of the Witter Bynner Undergraduate Poetry Prize. Coverage of this win, as well as his runner-up placement in previous years, consistently references Cullen as a "Negro." See "Negro Wins Prize in Poetry Contest; N.Y.U. Student Takes Second Honors Among Undergraduates of 63 Colleges," *New York Times*, December 2, 1923, https://www.nytimes.com/1923/12/02/archives/negro-wins-prize-in-poetry-contest-nyu-student-takes-second-honors.html; see also "Countee Cullen 1g, Wins Bynner's Poetry Award," *Harvard Crimson*, November 24, 1925, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1925/11/24/countee-cullen-1g-wins-bynners-poetry/.

more so when the texts and relationships at issue plainly arise from the reality of unequal social, economic and political relations between the United States and China. Yet I follow the ethos of these figures in resisting a reduction of these texts to a series of vertical symptomatic readings which renders their aesthetic qualities subordinate to the political. Instead, I seek to locate these texts within a larger transpacific network of horizontal relationality which cuts across or reconfigures these vertical relations of power.

The stakes of this dissertation and its approach of transpacific experimentalism can be contrasted with two recent monographs. As already discussed, in *Transpacific Community* So traces journalists, writers, and artists in China and America, weighing their shared commitments to a broadly conceived socialist or progressive left. Transpacific experimentalism as it is employed in this dissertation need not identify *only* figures or aspects of texts which resist subordination of the aesthetic to the political; indeed, I would make the claim the primary texts of So's monograph–from Paul Robeson to Lin Yutang and Pearl Buck–are each fully assimilable and comprehensible within my construction of a transpacific experimentalism within American modernity. At the same time, transpacific experimentalism as a method of analysis instantiates an archive of figures and texts which are otherwise foreclosed within So's rubric of politically activated leftist art.[51]

In contrast with So's narrowed focus of leftist coalitionality, R. John Williams' *Buddha in the Machine* identifies the emergence, beginning in the nineteenth century, of a construction of "asia-as-techné," where western artistic sensibilities reflect an appropriation of East Asia which attempts to suture the aporetic chasm at the heart of modernity between spirituality ("Buddha") and technology ("the Machine"). Whereas So

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[51] So, *Transpacific Community*.

largely addresses figures and texts engaged with China between the 1930s and 1950s, covering the late interwar period, World War II, and the 1950s Cold War, Williams expansively reads American and British engagements with China and Japan from the past to the present. He follows texts such as Yunte Huang's *Transpacific Imaginations* or Josephine Park's *Apparitions of Asia*, building upon their formidable literary scholarship by reading transmedially across subject matter as diverse as the British Arts and Crafts Movement, the "racial logic of Jack London's Asia," the Buddhism of Ernest Fenollosa, Lin Yutang's Chinese typewriter, "techné-pop culture," and post-1950s "techné-Zen" and neoliberal global capitalism. Given its capaciousness and flexibility, Williams' conceptual apparatus threatens to capture *all* western engagements with Asia writ large within a grand theory of "asia-as-techné."[52] Transpacific experimentalism argues for the existence of formulations of China which are aesthetically and socioculturally particularized to the context of American modernity, and which moreover aesthetically distinguishes between engagements which evince experiential creativity from those of escapist fantasy; in contrast, Williams' apparatus provides no grounds, aesthetic or otherwise, by which one can properly determine what *is* and *is not* "asia-as-techné" within a transpacific context–to say nothing of other theoretical frameworks such as Park's orientalist "apparitions," Huang's prismatic "imaginations," or that which is conceived as concomitant within a broader transpacific "imaginary."[53] At the same time, transpacific experimentalism provides an

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[52] R. John Williams, *The Buddha in the Machine: Art, Technology, and the Meeting of East and West* (Yale University Press, 2014).

[53] Josephine Nock-Hee Park, *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008). For an excellent example of an application of a "social imaginary" as derived from cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall and Charles Taylor to the transpacific context, see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the middlebrow imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009).

aesthetic framework which extends and enriches the analysis and conclusions of these texts. For example, Williams meticulously traces how Pound's editorialship of Fenollosa's life and papers, including *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (née *The Chinese Written Language as a Medium for Poetry*), served to erase Fenollosa's spiritual connections to Buddhism. Williams argues that Pound saw these aspects of Fenollosa's life as embarrassments which needed to be excised from his personal history and manuscripts, lest he be accused of not meeting the criteria of cogent, rigorous scholarship.[54] Consequently, while Williams approaches Fenollosa and Pound in a fashion which interleaves or blurs distinctions between religion and science, fantasy and imagination, I contend that his own scholarship attests to how a rubric of transpacific experimentalism is most descriptively accurate in regards to Pound's conception of a living Chinese character.

Finally, transpacific experimentalism enables the archival recovery of texts which have been marginalized within the prevailing disciplinary concerns of modernist studies, East Asian studies, or Asian American studies. Despite recent work on Asian American poetry by scholars such as Steven Yao[55], early Chinese American literature remains characterized as largely writing in Cantonese, an articulation of working-class struggle and resistance, or both. Socially and geographically mobile interwar Chinese poets and scholars such as Moon Kwan and Jiang Kanghu participated in Anglo-American modernism and published in venues like *Poetry* magazine in a period where literary modernism coincided with the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924—yet such figures have lain outside

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[54] See "Machine/Art: Ernest Fenollosa, Ezra Pound, and the Chinese Written Character" in Williams, *The Buddha in the Machine: Art, Technology, and the Meeting of East and West*, 86–128.

[55] Steven G. Yao, *Foreign Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity*, Global Asias (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

prevailing disciplinary concerns of both American modernist studies and Asian American studies.[56] To my knowledge, Moon Kwan's collection *The Jade Pagoda* is the first collection of English poetry published in the United States by a poet of Chinese descent, while Jiang Kanghu and Witter Bynner's *The Jade Mountain* was the first complete English translation of a collection of Chinese poetry; moreover, it is the first literary collaboration between an American poet and Chinese scholar. Finally, despite her role as founding editor of the modernist poetry magazine of record, Monroe herself remains profoundly understudied. No critical monograph on Monroe currently exists, and her essays and other writings remain uncollected. This is a surprising state of affairs given the archival turn of modernist studies in recent decades, as well as conscious efforts to expand beyond the traditional limitations of the modernist canon–to say nothing of the prominent usage of her name in the Poetry Foundation's endowed initiatives, such as the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute and the Poetry Foundation's blog, titled *Harriet*.[57] Accordingly, this dissertation joins recent scholarship in seeking a critical reassessment of Monroe appropriate to her centrality within American modernist poetry.

iii. Chapter Summaries

Chapter one, "The Chinese Circuits of Harriet Monroe and *Poetry* Magazine," makes an intervention into the understudied literary history of Harriet Monroe's engagements with China. I argue for an experimentalist reading of Monroe's formulations of China in

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[56] For an extensive discussion of the significance of Johnson-Reed in shaping contemporary American immigration and international policy, see Mae M Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, 2014.

[57] "About Harriet Books," Poetry Foundation, 2023, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/about.

light of her transpacific dissemination of Chinese civilizational power, her family ties and firsthand experiences in China, the "birth of an idea" of *Poetry* magazine, and its related aesthetic policy of the "Open Door", and finally the publication of Sino-US poets and scholars within Poetry. I open this discussion with a photograph of Monroe wearing a Chinese *tangzhuang*, a persistent photograph in the material archive that has remained underexplained, which I relate to her affinity for China and her understanding of the centrality of poetry within Chinese civilization. I argue this line of argumentation is borne out in her article "The Training of Chinese Children," published in *The Century Magazine* six months before the first number of *Poetry*. In it, she employs the topos of childhood to explore the socio-economic development of Chinese modernity. She portrays Chinese people and cultural difference within a larger project of liberal humanism, pushing against notions that Chinese culture is incommensurable to western understanding or is located in a petrified past outside of the telos of western historical progress. Though Monroe's portrayal of Chinese people as morally upright and physically and intellectually industrious draws parallels to model minority discourse, I argue that Monroe proves to be a particularly early example of such an account, which would trouble conventional periodization; moreover, her account is not directed towards Chinese nationals within the United States but instead the education of Chinese children within China itself, raising the question of whether the formation of racial and identity categories within the United States is the most salient aspect of Monroe's essay, or whether racial formation in the United States should instead be encompassed by the larger phenomenon of transpacific entanglements between the United States and China. What I propose is that Monroe's understanding of Chinese culture and the primacy of its literary achievement is not a construction of the West, but instead a result of the transpacific circulation of China's own hegemonic discourse of Chinese civilizational power. For Monroe to take up the notion of

Chinese civilization and propagate it as a model for the West then is not only to convert and appropriate it but also in turn to be converted by it, to perceive in the inter-imperial exchange of America with China ways in which philosophical and aesthetic conditions could be otherwise.

Monroe's sustained interest in China was precipitated by her travels and familial ties within the country. Through extensive research in the archival record of Monroe and her extended family, I reconstitute a narrative of Monroe's 1910 trip to Beijing, as well as the activities in China of her sister, Lucy Calhoun, and her brother-in-law and American ambassador to China, William Calhoun. In contrast with Monroe's recollections in her unfinished autobiography, Lucy and William Calhoun's papers are unpublished and heretofore unexplored in literary scholarship. I relate how William Calhoun's perspective on Chinese culture and its relations with the United States belies an essentialized, chauvinistic understanding of difference between the United States and China from the standpoint of an assumed western superiority. In contrast, Lucy Calhoun moved back to China after William's death in 1916 and continued to live in the country for the next two decades. Unlike William's understanding of essentialized racial difference in the name of political realism, I argue that Lucy's experiences of China are mediated, like Monroe, through aesthetics. Both Monroe and Lucy Calhoun understand cosmopolitan life and art collecting running hand in hand, with Lucy's patrician connoisseurship of traditional Chinese fine art and Monroe's cultivation of *Poetry* as a venue for modernist poetry mirroring one another.

Monroe's "birth of an idea" for *Poetry* magazine plays out against the geopolitical relationship of the United States and China in the first half of the twentieth century. Emblematic of this relationship are the American government initiatives of the Open Door

policy and the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship program. A paternalistic belief in Western socioeconomic dominance and cultural superiority enabled American policies of an open door for economic trade with China abroad and exclusion of Chinese laboring classes domestically. At the same time, the contradictory roles the West held for the Chinese intellectual and cosmopolitan elite as imperial oppressor, economic partner, and cultural model were embodied in the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship program, which enshrined the broader legal right of Chinese students to study overseas in the United States. By the 1910s significant numbers of Chinese students studied in the American humanities, yet the presence of Sino-US poets and scholars in American modernism were both marginalized in their own time and omitted from later accounts within Asian American studies and modernist studies. I argue that *Poetry* served as a significant venue for these figures within American modernism, with the magazine's aesthetic policy of the "Open Door" enabling the conditional inclusion of the significant transnational and intermedial figures Moon Kwan and Sun Yu. Their literary pursuits are consequential in and of themselves, with Moon Kwan publishing the earliest book of American poetry written in English by a poet of Chinese descent. Yet they are made all the more striking in light of their later careers in the Cantonese and Shanghai film industries: Kwan co-founded the first Cantonese studio which followed the Hollywood production model, while Sun directed popular left-wing films starring the most prominent Chinese actresses of his day. Together, they are identified as vernacular Chinese modernists who sustained a secondary involvement with American modernism, to the extent that it served as a "bridge-land" between Chinese and American poetry and culture.

The first chapter concludes with a discussion of Monroe's 1934 return to China, which culminated in *Poetry*'s 1935 "Chinese Number," and how she foresees a future

where East-West relations are radically reoriented from Kipling's England and Western Europe, and towards the "headlong Future" of a new geopolitical alliance of China and America. Yet Monroe's own aesthetic preferences often tended towards the poetry of the early modernist years. In the interchapter, "The Oriental Manner," I examine an emergent modernist engagement with China before the "vogue" of Chinese poetry and translation in the interwar period. Unlike the transpacific experimentalism of Monroe, Witter Bynner, and Ezra Pound, early modernist poetry by Allen Upward, Vachel Lindsay, and Eunice Tietjens engaged with a China that was in turn hypothetical, fantastic, and irreconcilable to American modernity. In Upward's series *Scented Leaves-From a Chinese Jar*, his "leaves" offer a suspension of logic and a decadent derangement of the senses. Rather than the transformative possibility space of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Upward offers a *transportive*, oneiric flight of fancy. I argue that Upward's poems, which he identifies as "paraphrases" from Herbert Giles' *History of Chinese Literature*, operate in a similar logic as Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," which likewise obscures the geographical referent and historical facticity of Kublai Khan's summer palace north of Beijing in the service of Coleridge's free play of imagination. In contrast with Dewey's generative understanding of creative imagination, the fantasy of Coleridge and Upward alchemizes intensified experiences of beauty within an otherwise disenchanted world. Lindsay's "The Chinese Nightingale" likewise evinces a lyrical energy which Tietjens compares to magic, evoking an imaginary Chinese culture and past through which a diasporic, Chinese American subject may experience a momentary reprieve from a life of cramped, urban tenement walls and the drudgery of menial physical labor. Like the Hollywood musical, Lindsay's engagement with China exists on a continuum of entertainment and utopia: on one end, broad genre tropes and racial caricatures; on the other, the evocation of a prelapsarian world through which our own world can be fantasized as otherwise. Yet Tietjens' *Profiles from China* is

neither entertainment nor utopia, but instead the encounters of a chauvinist Western speaker with an incomplete Chinese modernity, where both premodern wisdom and Dickensian industrialization vie with one another for dominance. Adopting Edgar Lee Masters' form of free verse dramatic monologue, Tietjens' poetic reportage reveals a traveler who does not seek to understand Chinese culture or people, but instead concludes that the East and West are intransitive and irreconcilable. Though the speaker in Tietjens' *Profiles from China* evaluates themself as "insufferably superior and Anglo-Saxon," I interpret the appearance of the Chinese character for "northern barbarian" on the book's cover as a critique of both American and Chinese modernity alike in light of the splendor of Chinese society represented in Tang-dynasty poetry.

In the second chapter, "Boxing Matches and / Chinese Poems," I turn to the modernist debates surrounding the translation of Tang poetry in the interwar period. Rather than a phenomenon particular to our contemporary age, I argue that contention over modernism's translational engagements with China is centripetal to the broader developments of Anglo-American modernist poetry itself. Moreover, though *Cathay* is often treated as sui generis within modernist study, and often the sole point of influence for literary Chinese translation in subsequent generations, this chapter seeks to recover Bynner and Jiang's collaborative translation of *The Jade Mountain* as a critical text of transpacific American modernism which stands apart from Pound, Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough, and Arthur Waley's Chinese translations. I begin by observing that Tietjens herself made a similar argument in 1922, evaluating Bynner and Jiang's poems as "the most satisfying of the free-verse translations" to date. In contrast, Lowell found herself buffeted on all sides by both claims of Chinese poetry's inherent untranslatability and the insufficient quality of her verse. Lowell publicly fired back against Tietjens in the pages of *Poetry*, while in private

correspondence she fretted over Bynner and Jiang's translation project and and sought to undercut their credibility. All the while, Bynner feigned amusement or disinterest towards Lowell in his public-facing statements, even as his private correspondence with Tietjens revealed his own personal enmity towards Lowell.

I argue that Eliot Weinberger's *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* continues in the bellicose spirit of these translation wars, where he accuses Bynner of translating as if he were in a "haze of opium." By making this claim, however, Weinberger overlooks Jiang's contributions to these translations, demonstrating the pervasive invisibility of Sino-US translators and poets among successive generations of modernist scholars. I contend that Weinberger's failure to consider Jiang as an equal partner in *The Jade Mountain* not only occludes the collection's status as the first book-length collaboration between an American modernist poet and Chinese scholar, but moreover belies Bynner's engagement with the transpacific as a network of horizontal relationalities. Accordingly, I trace the origins of *The Jade Mountain* to their respective appointments at the University of California, during which time Jiang fell into Bynner's eclectic coterie of orbit of undergraduate students and California bohemian artists. I argue that Bynner's involvement with China cohered the two opposed personas of Bynner's literary work: the kimono-clad, bohemian provocateur, and the sedulous, stalwart pillar of the Poetry Society of America. Bynner's engagement with China was first and foremost aesthetic, operating through an appreciation travel, nature, and Chinese poetry. Moreover, during his time in China, he frequently eschewed typical western comforts, opting instead for the vernacular, holistic experience of the "feral Sinologist." From Bynner's time spent with Chinese students and scholars, he began to understand Chinese culture as "the beauty of direct expression and the simplicity of the human spirit," and found these qualities epitomized in classical Tang poetry. Appropriately,

he sought to render his translations with Jiang in idiomatic English free verse. Bynner and Jiang thus favored a middle way between Pound's ideogrammatic method and Lowell and Ayscough's florid, attenuated verse. Indeed, it is through translation of classical Chinese poetry that Bynner lets go of residual, conservative prosodic habits and becomes modern. The collection proved to be an immediate success and continues to endure within Chinese area studies, even as its status remains elided from a prevailing "Pound-to-Rexroth" model of American engagement and translation of China.

In a discussion of Bynner's interpretive choices, as well as his personal affinity regarding the poetry of Wang Wei, I argue *The Jade Mountain* formulates Chinese culture and poetics as a celebration of the imminence of lived experience, approaching translation as a ground of open, prismatic multiplicity. In this way, *The Jade Mountain*'s approach to China mirrors the polycultural construction of regulated Chinese prosody itself, which according to recent scholarship was a result of inter-imperial sociocultural exchange across premodern Asia. As with Tang poetry's emergence through the processes of translation, so too must American modernist poetry be recognized as developing in relation to translations of Chinese poetry.

While Bynner approaches the Chinese text as "something to animate" within American modernism, "not to appropriate," Pound conceives of Chinese poetry, Chinese culture, and Chinese language as the living, organic material of Anglo-American modernism itself. Chapter three, "Ezra Pound's Living Chinese Character," traces the ways in which Pound's modernist approach to poetry is imbricated by both his organicist-vitalist aesthetics and his transformation of Chinese characters into living, intuitively realized modernist images. Through my historical analysis of the co-development of Pound's theory of the Chinese character — the putative "ideogram" — and his aesthetic,

organicist-vitalist theory of Vorticism, I establish a relationship between the "Rays ideogram" of *Cathay* and *The Cantos* and Pound's understanding of the Vortex in "Vorticism" as "a radiant node or cluster." I contend that any account of Pound's Vorticist project not only can, but must read the discourses of organicism-vitalism, Vorticism, and "ideographic" poetics in Pound's work both in tandem and against one another.

The development of Pound's aesthetic theory begins with T.E. Hulme and his salon in in London, where imagism emerged within the group's engagement with French Symbolism and Japanese haiku. Pound took early inspiration from Hulme, as well as his exposure to East Asian paintings curated by Laurence Binyon at the British Museum. However, Pound's doctrinal disputes concerning Hulme's vitalist philosophy led to him writing Hulme out of the imagist record–a situation which repeats itself when he disavows Lowell and what he saw as her usurpation of imagism, rebranding his own poetry as vorticism. Though these events attest to Pound's desire to assert precise definitional and authorial control, they also demarcate clear shifts in Pound's thought. Against competing scholarship which either omits any reference to Chinese poetry in its account of vorticism or equates imagism with Pound's interest in the Chinese character, I argue for a progression of an understanding of Pound's aesthetic theory of the image which progresses from Japanese-based poetics in imagism to Chinese-based poetics in vorticism. In my reading of "In a Station of the Metro" in "Vorticism," Pound assimilates his "direct treatment of the thing" in imagist poetry to a vorticist aesthetic theory of expression as dynamic, intensive energy.

Pound's inherits much of his vitalist rhetoric from Walter Pater, and his empiricist literary approach from the "laboratory conditions" of nineteenth-century biologist Louis Agassiz. However, unlike his explicit acknowledgment of his literary antecedents, through

which he develops a distinctly Poundian lineage of poetry and literature, he is by turn circumspect, ambivalent, or even hostile towards contemporary aesthetic theorists. In light of this, I argue Pound's dichotomy of intensive and extensive art in "Vorticism" comes directly from Hulme's vitalist philosophy, despite his early antipathy towards Hulme's enthusiasm for Bergson. Likewise, though Pound rejected American intellectual culture wholesale in favor of European cosmopolitanism, the aesthetic theory of Dewey, Bergson, Hulme, and Pound all share remarkable overlaps, revealing the relative interpermeability of organicism, vitalism, and even mechanism in the modernist era when transposed from the life sciences to the aesthetic sphere. These contemporaneous philosophies provided Pound with a robust theoretical framework through which he conceptualized his engagements with China and his understanding of the Chinese character as nonrepresentational image. In Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry,* a work whose final shape was as reflective of Pound's heavy editorial hand as his later collaboration with Eliot on *The Waste Land*, the Chinese character is conceived as the site of immanent, dynamic creativity. Following Fenollosa's belief in the luminosity of the Chinese character, with its ability to bring to light what lays hidden in other languages, Pound adopts the "ideogram" as the pre-eminent model of language for modern times and develops his own model of "ideogrammic" reading. I argue it is this final elaboration of Pound's scientistic conception of the Image as Chinese ideogram which remains with him throughout his career. Reading the discourses of vitalism and ideogrammic poetics in Pound's work with and against one another opens up fresh readings and lines of inquiry into the pre-eminence of the Chinese character for Pound and their hypothetical meanings as vorticist Images, as seen in the modernist motto to "make it new"; Pound discovers this phrase in Legge's Confucian translations, reconfiguring the en-face source text into a form both purely visual and nonrepresentational. While the afterlife of this ideogrammic phrase attests to the ways in

which Pound's legacy has shaped American modernist studies, the "Rays ideogram" illuminates aspects of Pound's work which have otherwise lain unaddressed. Through Pound's glosses of this character in connection to the intensive, vitalist radiance of the "Vortex," the "Rays ideogram" emerges as an Image for not only the Vortex; but also in the final analysis as a vorticist, nonrepresentational image of Pound himself.

iv. Note on Chinese Romanization

In this dissertation I follow contemporary scholars such as Madeline Hsu in romanizing Mandarin names, places and people from mainland China using *Hanyu pinyin*–the standardized romanization system of the People's Republic of China since 1958, and the United States government and press corps since 1979. For example, I render the name of Witter Bynner's co-translator as Jiang Kanghu 江亢虎 rather than Kiang Kang-hu–the latter following a now-archaic Chinese Postal Romanization (*Youzhengshi pinyin* 邮政式拼音) based upon Herbert Giles' Nanking Syllabary.[58] In the case of pen-names or abbreviations such as H.T. Tsiang (Jiang Xizeng 蒋希曾) or Moon Kwan (Guan Wenqing / Gwan Manching 关文清) I have preserved the romanization which the author used themselves. (In this regard I am more conservative in my approach than Hsu, who for example renders the name of the architect I.M. Pei as Yuming Bei; see Madeline Y Hsu.[59]) I

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[58] See Lane Harris, "A 'Lasting Boon to All': A Note on the Postal Romanization of Place Names, 1896–1949,'" *Twentieth-Century China* 34, no. 1 (November 2008): 96–109.

[59] *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

also follow this approach concerning names in Cantonese, which generally speaking has no single romanization scheme prohibitively favored above all others.

2. CHAPTER ONE: THE CHINESE CIRCUITS OF HARRIET MONROE AND POETRY MAGAZINE

In the August 1920 issue of *Vanity Fair* there is a photo spread of contemporary figures of arts and letters which the magazine seeks to nominate to a hypothetical "Hall of Fame." Among these figures is the poet and editor Harriet Monroe, who appears in the feature adorned in a Chinese *tangzhuang* 唐装. The magazine lists the following reasons for her "nomination":

> Because she is editor of "Poetry, a Magazine of Verse", the first of its kind in America; because she herself is an interesting poet…and finally because, as critic, editor, and anthologist, she is, perhaps, more than anyone else, responsible for the revival of interest in contemporary American poetry.[60]

What is left unspoken by the editors is the connection between Monroe's literary accomplishments and her impetus to appear in Chinese clothing. What is the significance of this intertwining of Monroe, contemporary American poetry, and Chinese culture or style? Should this photograph's composition be taken simply as a passing bohemian whim of a poet and literary editor? Alternatively, was China, and East Asia as a whole, so predominant, so self-evident in the cultural and literary discourse of the day that for the staff and middlebrow readership of *Vanity Fair* it simply did not bear mentioning? (As if to confirm this last suspicion, a profile of a performance choreographed by Michio Ito, the Japanese dancer and early artistic collaborator with W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, appears on

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[60] "Vanity Fair," August 1920, 66.

the very next page of the magazine[61]; a few pages earlier, a series of "Limehouse Sketches" from Thomas Burke, whose collection *Limehouse Nights* [1916] served as the source material for D.W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* [1919]).[62]

The *Vanity Fair* photograph reappears in a 2021 feature on the website of the Poetry Foundation concerning the "History of Poetry Magazine." Our present moment having a much different relationship to costuming oneself in the dress of another culture, the photograph is now accompanied by a brief explanatory caption: "Harriet Monroe dressed in clothing she had purchased on a recent trip to China, c. 1910." As with *Vanity Fair* a century earlier, any possible connections between Monroe, *Poetry*, and China are entirely absent from the *Poetry Foundation*'s official narrative save for this one persistent photograph.[63]

A similar situation is borne out regarding Monroe's "birth of an idea" to publish a little magazine solely dedicated to poetry. In the "Guide to the Harriet Monroe Papers," housed in the University of Chicago Library, this phrase appears in reference to a collection of Monroe's letters: "1910, [More] travel letters, written on Monroe's trip around the world, from Moscow, Siberia, etc. Upon return from this tour her 'birth of an idea'-to found a poetry magazine-occurred." Both the first monograph account of Monroe's life and more recent, oft-cited research on the magazine's founding omit the trip altogether.[64]

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[61] Ibid., 67–68.

[62] Ibid., 61.

[63] "History of Poetry Magazine." *Poetry Foundation*, 2021, *https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/history.*

[64] Daniel Cahill, *Harriet Monroe* (New York, NY: Twayne, 1973); John Timberman Newcomb, "Poetry's Opening Door: Harriet Monroe and American Modernism," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 15, no. 1 (2005): 6–22, doi:10.1353/amp.2005.0011.

Another, *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance,* fleshes out this account while sticking to a similar set of story beats, with *Poetry* providing Monroe with "something new for her to do" after her return "from a trip to the Orient."[65]

A different origin story was once suggested by Monroe herself, though to my knowledge it has never been discussed in scholarship. In a 1916 interview with the *New York Tribune*, she confessed, "The idea of bringing out the magazine came to her in China":

> "I had been visiting in China, returning to the United States early in 1911," she said. "Poetry there was an art highly recognized, while in the United States it was certainly languishing. I brought back with me a determination to do something for the cause of poetry in America.
>
> "It seemed to me there were plenty of good poets, but they weren't known…The people of the country needed to be made aware of their existence, of the songs they were singing unheard. In short, I returned from China with Walt Whitman's immortal phrase about great audiences on my lips."[66]

This is a very different telling of Monroe's "birth of an idea" for *Poetry* than one which erases China from the narrative altogether, or renders it as one of many miscellaneous, incidental, or unnamed stops–"Moscow, Siberia, etc."–along Monroe's path towards becoming a foci of Anglo-American modernist poetry. If an archive is a horizontal collection of available information, a narrative is necessary to organize a hierarchy of relevance within that information and cohere it into meaning. What that narrative cannot cohere and relate is passed over in silence. In this chapter I speak back to the silences of Monroe's archive by re-mapping the transpacific birth and development of *Poetry* magazine. Despite her role as founding editor of the modernist poetry magazine of record, Monroe herself remains profoundly understudied. No critical monograph on Monroe currently

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[65] Ellen McWilliams, *Harriet Monroe and the Poetry Renaissance: the First Ten Years of Poetry: 1912-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 13.

[66] "Boomer of Poets Wants Them Subsidized," *New York Tribune*, April 2, 1916, Sunday edition, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 22, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

exists, and her essays and other writings remain uncollected. This is a surprising state of affairs given the archival turn of modernist studies in recent decades, as well as conscious efforts to expand beyond the traditional limitations of the modernist canon–to say nothing of the prominent usage of her name in the Poetry Foundation's endowed initiatives, such as the Harriet Monroe Poetry Institute and the Poetry Foundation's blog, titled *Harriet*.[67] Accordingly, this dissertation joins recent scholarship in seeking a critical reassessment of Monroe appropriate to her centrality within American modernist poetry.[68] This chapter seeks to establish an understanding of Monroe's experimentalism in light of her transpacific dissemination of Chinese civilizational power; her family ties and firsthand experiences in China; the "birth of an idea" of *Poetry* magazine, and its related aesthetic policy of the "Open Door"; and finally the publication of Sino-US poets and scholars within *Poetry*.

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[67] "About Harriet Books," *Poetry Foundation*, 2023, *https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/about*.

[68] For an example of recent scholarship which stands apart from the standard omissions of China in Monroe's biography, see Liesl Olson, *Chicago Renaissance: Literature and Art in the Midwest Metropolis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017). The monograph's author, Liesl Olson, is a director at the Newberry Library in Chicago where the Monroe family papers are held, and her research gains much insight from the author's access to this and other major collections of the Chicago area. Olson reads Monroe's trip as a perspectival recalibration which emboldened her to embark on her new literary venture, rather than a direct antecedent which fundamentally shaped the direction of the magazine itself (ibid., 50). For Olson, Monroe's ties to China are one more piece in the puzzle of the literary and cultural history of the Chicago Renaissance and its wider national and international connections. Her historical research on Monroe is indispensable, even as her interpretive claims are limited by the considerable scope of her project and her own academic background. Let one instance stand in for many: she identifies Eva Watson-Schütze, of Chicago's Renaissance Society, as the photographer of Monroe's portrait in *Vanity Fair*, while also misidentifying Monroe's garment in the photograph itself as a Japanese *kimono* (Olson 2017, 8). Additionally, her research does not consider the *New York Herald* clipping which I cite from the University of Chicago Special Research Collection.

i. The Education of Chinese Children

In March 1912, six months before the first number of *Poetry,* Monroe published an article in *The Century Magazine* titled "The Training of Chinese Children."[69] Originally titled "The Education of Chinese Children" in manuscript,[70] the essay's print title echoes W.E.B. Du Bois' "Of the Training of Black Men," published a decade earlier in *The Atlantic*.[71] Though Monroe's article is indeed about Chinese education, it is not confined to that topic alone; instead it employs the topos of childhood to assay a wide range account of Chinese culture–particularly northern Chinese culture–through a mixture of anecdote, reportage, and ethnographic narrative fiction.

The article begins with a racialized defamiliarization of her subject: "When the little new-born Chinese child first furls up his Oriental eyelids under the unwrinkling flesh, his little black eyes, through their narrow slits, look up into smiling faces."[72] Monroe's attention to phenotypical difference is indicative of how, here and elsewhere in the article, her prose lapses into that of the typical literary writer playing at the role of amateur ethnographer. In the next paragraph she makes a passing reference to that nadir of Chinese

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[69] Harriet Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," *Century Magazine*, March 1912.

[70] Harriet Monroe, "The Education of Chinese Children," n.d., Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 22, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[71] W.E.B. Dubois, "Of the Training of Black Men," *The Atlantic*, September 1902, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1902/09/of-the-training-of-black-men/531192/.

[72] Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," 642.

cultural critique, male chauvinism, with the mother sighing with "divine relief–for this child of her hopes might have been a girl." The text then makes an unexpected swerve, providing her reader with a description of this household which is both empathetic and inviting: "It is winter in Peking; a thin dry snow-dust is trying to veil the persistent sunshine out of doors, and through the paper panes of the windows cold air sifts into the tiny bedroom. But a fire is glowing softly under the bed, and the heavy stone slab keeps mother and baby warm."[73].

As Lorenzo Thomas puts it, "Cultural inventories are usually excited manifestos or jeremiads. What is interesting and instructive is to compare such pronouncements from various decades. In that way, we can chart the movement of the glacier."[74] Indeed, what at first glance in Monroe seems to be a predictable, monolithic account of Chinese difference soon reveals considerable complexities. Details ranging from her descriptions of the "one-story roofs" of Chinese courtyard *siheyuan* 四合院 houses, the "wall-within-wall" and "narrow" lanes of *hutong* 胡同 residential blocks,[75] and the aforementioned fire "glowing softly under the bed" in each household are not indicative of a general account of the country but instead a particular familiarity with Beijing and northern China. Monroe is also at great pains to make distinctions across class lines: while the lower classes may still cling to superstition and follow old traditions, it is quite a different story for the western-educated cosmopolitan set:

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Lorenzo Thomas, "W.S. Braithwaite Vs. Harriet Monroe: The Heavyweight Poetry Championship, 1917," in *Reading Race in American Poetry*, ed. Aldon Lynn Nielsen (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 84.

[75] Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," 646.

> We are presupposing that the baby's parents are of the middle class. If they are very poor, there are fewer gifts and less general rejoicing, but essentially the story is the same. If, however, they are of the upper class, all the old symbolism, while perhaps observed in part, is weakened. For among princes and mandarins, whether Manchu or Chinese, foreign ideas have been gradually drifting in during the last half-century. It may be that the little heir of a new age is born of an educated mother, who has perhaps studied in a Virginia boarding-school or even graduated from Bryn Mawr, while his father may have gone through Cornell and traveled around the world. Even if his parents have not joined the westward procession, they have seen something of foreign life, have traveled on railroads, and felt the strong current of new ideas. Under such influences the old religious observances have become negligible superstitions or poetic symbols.[76]

Other signs of Chinese socio-economic modernity abound for Monroe. She reports that the young hostess of a family "offers her Occidental guest tea or champagne, or both"[77]; moreover, "foot-binding has already ceased to be the fashion," and in any event "In northern China many women have natural feet, as the Manchu conquerors have never followed the custom."[78] Meanwhile, deeper Chinese values remain unchanged by the changing times, particularly "the Chinese love of children" and the child's reciprocal "code of reverence" for their parents.[79]

Monroe's article appears at a moment of crisis in the Chinese education system, viewed internally as obsolete and ill-equipped to position China as a power on the world stage or repel further colonization by Europe, America, and Japan. In 1905, the civil service examination system was abolished, which had been the primary method of entrance into

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[76] Ibid., 644. As it happens, Hu Shi, purported by one scholar to be the "the Greatest Cornellian," was at the time of this publication enrolled at Cornell; see Aaron Coven, "The Case of Hu Shih as the 'Greatest Cornellian'," *Cornell Chronicle*, November 25, 2014, https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2014/11/case-hu-shih-greatest-cornellian.

[77] Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," 646.

[78] Ibid., 651.

[79] Ibid., 646.

government–albeit with occasional disruption–since the sixth century, and nominally the entire purpose of systematized education itself.[80] In response, scholars of the burgeoning New Culture movement would seek to reform Chinese society by adopting western scientific, socioeconomic, and aesthetic models. Although Monroe publishes her essay less than a year after the 1911 Xinhai Revolution 辛亥革命, inaugurating China's Republican period, she reckons that it is these educational reforms which in fact are "more revolutionary than the overthrow of a dynasty."[81]

Yet the more things change, the more they stay the same. She estimates, "Probably Chinese mothers, like those of other nations, vary as disciplinarians. As a Chinese teacher in Peking expressed it, 'Different families much different: good families children trained, children obey; foolish families'–with a gesture of disgust-'*mei yo, mei yo*."[82] Her approach to locating Chinese cultural difference within a larger liberal humanism mirrors the kind of project prescribed by Lin Yutang in *My Country and My People* (1935):

> That seems to me to be the only way of looking at China, and of looking at any foreign nation, by searching, not for the exotic but for the common human values,

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[80] For an account of the transition of China's "age-old" civil examination system into a modern system for a new, internationally-educated professional class–and its associated growing pains–see Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2001), 61-67. In a telling moment, Ye relates, "Students of engineering, law, and medicine, for instance, were placed in the 'fourth class' [of the 1905 examination administered by China's Board of Education] and were thereby unable to receive the *jinshi* [进士] degree [the highest examination degree]. A chief examiner justified this discrimination by explaining that since time immemorial the degree of *jinshi* had been conferred only upon literary men" (ibid., 63–64).

[81] Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," 648.

[82] Ibid. Another interlingual appearance of this idiom (*meiyou, meiyou* 没有，没有) comes at the conclusion of Peter Wang's film *A Great Wall* (1986): Leo Fang (played by Wang) has a college-age son named Paul who has just returned from a trip to Beijing with his family. Talking to his white girlfriend Linda, Paul says, "People in America think I'm too Chinese, and people in China think I'm too American. What do you have to say about that?" Linda responds, "*mayo, may-yo*." Paul corrects her, saying, "No, no, *mei-you, mei-you,*" enunciating the phrase with an *erhua* 儿化 Beijing dialect.

> by penetrating beneath the superficial quaintness of manners and looking for real courtesy, by seeing beneath the strange women's costumes and looking for real womanhood and motherhood, by observing the boys' naughtiness and studying the girls' day-dreams.[83]

Both Lin and Monroe's anonymous Chinese teacher recall the Confucian teachings of the *Three Character Classic* (Sanzijing), which Monroe excerpts in both Herbert Giles' transliteration and translation, and which begins:

> Men in the beginning are fundamentally good.
> Their nature is close to one another, even as their habits are far apart.
> If they are not instructed, their nature will deteriorate,
> So instruction must be done with care and concentration.
>
> (*æn zhi chu, xing ben shan / xing xiang jin, xi xiang yuan / gou bu jiao, xing nai qian / jiao zhi dao, gui yi zhuan* 人之初，性本善。 / 性相近，习相远。 / 苟不教，性乃迁。/ 教之道，贵以专; translation mine.)

She describes it as a "medieval homily of the thirteenth century [which] was for six hundred years 'the foundation-stone of a Chinese education,'" and in her reckoning "still the basis of a Chinese education." At the same time, she cautions, it "is not the only thing offered to students. By imperial decree, modern sciences, mathematics, military drill, calisthenics, English or some other secondary language began to sweep away much of the ancient lumber of classical learning."[84] In short, Monroe perceives a progressive tide of western education in a dynamic, modern China, bolstered by and compatible with China's own traditional cultural values. Explaining how this could be so, Monroe proclaims, "the ideals of the race have always been for scholarship rather for war, for mental rather for physical accomplishment, and the hero-tales told to children show ambitious youth arriving at prodigious learning, and consequently high office in the state, after many years

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[83] Yutang Lin, *My Country and My People* (New York, NY: The John Day Company, 1935), 15.

[84] Monroe, "The Training of Chinese Children," 650.

of incredible labor and self-denial."[85] Certainly, each of Monroe's generalizations are quite doubtful. To give one obvious example, her appeal to Chinese cultural ideals loses sight of the actual "naughtiness" and "day-dreams" of early twentieth-century children in China, who like today were likely much more interested in fantasy, adventure, and war of the kind depicted in the vernacular novels *Journey to the West* (Xiyouji 西游记), *Outlaws of the Marsh* (Shuihuzhuan 水浒传), or *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo Yuanyi 三国演义), rather than hagiographic parables of Confucian officials[86]; moreover, language like "the ideals of the race" discloses the faulty shorthand of her time which conflates culture, nation and race together–compare it to Pound's maxim in *ABC of Reading* (1934) that "Artists are the antennae of the race," for example.[87]

How should Monroe's claims be interpreted? Given her appraisal of Chinese people valuing upright morality, intellectual achievement, and hard work, it is tempting to read her essay as an appeal to China as a nation of model minorities. The historical formation of Asian model minority discourse in the United States is generally ascribed to American geopolitics after World War II, shaped by the material conditions of immigration quotas and the ideological battles of the Cold War.[88] As such, Monroe is better read alongside

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[85] Ibid.

[86] For a contemporaneous personal account see "Achang yu Shanhaijing 阿长与山海经" ("A'chang and the Classic of Mountains and Seas"), Lu Xun, "阿长与《山海经》," *Baidu Baike*, 1926, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%98%BF%E9%95%BF%E4%B8%8E%E3%80%8A%E5%B1%B1%E6%B5%B7%E7%BB%8F%E3%80%8B/255512.

[87] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (1934; repr., New York, NY: New Directions, 2006), 81.

[88] For a representative account, see Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), https://archivesquebec.libraryreserve.com/ContentDetails.htm?id=1443171; for a discussion of how liberal American goodwill and charity towards East Asia after World War II is reconstructed around a free, democratic Asia and

recent scholarship which evaluates the ways in which Chinese and American academics and writers antecedent to the formation of model minority discourse sought to positively shape public perception and policy concerning China's people and culture.[89] A primary example is what David Leiwei Li contemptuously identifies as a discursive turn towards "[affirming] Chinese humanity by resorting to an unpracticed ancestral high culture."[90] Though the broad strokes of Li's account are accurate, it is also limited to the United States, misconstruing its transpacific origins. Monroe also troubles Li's periodization, appearing two decades before his own examples of *My Country and My People* and Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* (1933).[91] Additionally, as is the case with the *The Good Earth*, reading Asian American identity into texts geographically conceived in or thematically concerned with China raises the question of whether the formation of the racial and identity category of Asian American is best understood as separate, intersectional, or subsidiary to the larger phenomenon of transpacific entanglements between the United States and China.[92]

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an equally opposed "lost" China and its associated communist-bloc, see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2009).

[89] See Madeline Y Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); For an account of H.T. Tsiang's appeals to such figures during the legal battles over his immigration status, see Hua Hsu, *A Floating Chinaman: Fantasy and Failure Across the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674969285.

[90] David Leiwei Li, "The Production of Chinese American Tradition: Displacing American Orientalist Discourse," in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 322.

[91] This is particularly relevant in the case of Buck, a white renounced missionary who from 1892 to 1934 had spent all but four years of her life in China – and three of those at a woman's college in Virginia, where she would later recall how her white classmates considered her "Chinese" and addressed her with racist slurs; for examples of recent work attentive to these problematics in Lin and Buck, see Richard Jean So, *Transpacific Community: America, China and the Rise and Fall of a Cultural Network* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). See also Hilary Spurling, *Buck in China* (London: Profile Books, 2011).

[92] The ramifications of this question extends beyond Asian American literature and reaches to the project of English studies as a whole. On one side, Rey Chow provocatively notes, "Asian American studies is grouped

Monroe's subject in "The Training of Chinese Children" is nominally Chinese education, and it is incontrovertible that literature played a central role in it through its codification in the imperial examination system until its abolishment in the early 1900s. In this way, literary mastery directly translated into sociopolitical capital and prestige. Before the modern construction of "literature," or *wenxue* 文学 following western models, Chinese literary, scholastic, and philosophical modes of writing were to a degree inextricable from one another; certainly they were all forms which were valid as objects of aesthetic appreciation.[93] Moreover, in contrast with the conventional belief that western literature emerges from an epic or narrative tradition, it could be argued that "Chinese literary tradition as a whole is a lyrical tradition," as famously articulated by Chen Shixiang (Chen Shih-hsiang 陈世骧).[94] It was against this cultural backdrop in which Monroe

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together with ethnic studies rather than with English studies, even though English studies should, properly speaking, long have been renamed Western European studies or British American studies—indeed, made a subspecialty of ethnic studies." Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 126; on the other, Chris Patterson argues for reading practices which categorize Asian American literature "as neither Asian nor American, but as transpacific Anglophone, a category that stresses encounter and exchange." Christopher Patterson, *Transitive Cultures: Anglophone Literature of the Transpacific* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 25.

[93] Michael Hockx and Kirk Denton, *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 56-57; see also 52-59 *passim* According to Michael Hockx, *wenxue* originated as "a translation of the Western concept of 'literature' as it was originally understood in the nineteenth century; for Chinese writers and critics trying to distinguish their activities from those of others in terms of genre, it was a useful concept," for it served as "a novel combination of genres possessing (scholarly) respectability and relevance"; Rather than facilitating a horizontal expansion of what could be identified as the literary, Hockx argues that the primary use-value of the concept of "literature" for modern Chinese literary societies was its *exclusionary* quality, so that entire genres, styles, and communities could be dismissed as non-literary.

[94] Shixiang Chen, "On Chinese Lyrical Tradition: Opening Address to Panel on Comparative Literature, AAS Meeting, 1971," *Tamkang Review* 2.2/3.1 (1971–1972): 20; See also Dewei Wang, *The Lyrical in Epic Time: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and Artists Through the 1949 Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 12. David Wang-Der Wei neatly summarizes the discussion and debate which surrounds Chen's claim: "Chen indicates that his appraisal of Chinese literature presupposes his reflection on the Western canon, and that he proposes the 'lyrical tradition' as a way to respond to the (Western) assumption that *all* literature originates with the epic and drama. Behind his postulation of the quintessential Chinese lyrical tradition, therefore, is a self-conscious effort to rectify the Occidental format of temporality: to the predominant Western literary tradition, there exists in China a distinct counterpart. Chen's emphasis on the lyrical as the 'orthodoxy' of Chinese (and even Far Eastern) literature nevertheless smacks of essentialism on its own terms. He verges on being excessively inclusive when enlisting the multiple forms of Chinese literary expressions in a monolithic

declared, "I returned from China with Walt Whitman's immortal phrase about great audiences on my lips."[95]

To fully explore how China's literary past could weigh so heavily on Monroe's cultivation of an audience for modern American poetry, we must in the final analysis read China's role as a cultural model not in light of America but instead in light of China. Monroe's position resembles nothing less than a return to that taken by eighteenth century intellectuals such as Voltaire and Leibniz, whose fascination with Chinese material and intellectual culture preceded the European colonialism and American exclusion laws of the nineteenth century.[96] Before the long nineteenth century of national humiliation (*guochi* 国耻), civil unrest, and the Opium Wars and unequal treaties, China enjoyed sustained hegemonic cultural dominance in East, South, and Central Asia. According to Michael Schuman, China's "glittering attraction" has always lain in what he calls China's "civilizational" power.[97] In a podcast interview, he elaborates on how civilizational power operates as "the foundation of Chinese power through its entire history": "China was not

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'lyrical tradition.' Furthermore, by streamlining other East Asian literary traditions into one 'Chinese lyrical tradition,' he displays a symptom of Sinocentrism similar to the Eurocentrism he sets out to critique. Chen never had an opportunity to elaborate on his essay, however: he passed away a few months after his AAS presentation."

[95] "Boomer of Poets Wants Them Subsidized."

[96] Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); for a discussion of America's "patrician Orientalism" before widespread Chinese immigration, see John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2001); for a horizontal reconceptualization of literary modernity as a global, simultaneous phenomenon predicated upon circuits of silver trade between the New World, Europe, and East Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, see Ning Ma, *The Age of Silver: the Rise of the Novel East and West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Of particular note is Ning Ma's exploration of how Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* is instigated by his interest in a second-rate Chinese novel that becomes popularized in 18th century Europe as a byproduct of these trade routes.

[97] Michael Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2021), 596–97.

always politically unified. It was very often not a very strong military power…But what was the source of Chinese power? Well, it was still basically the foundation for civilization in East Asia. And that didn't change…until the dominance of the west, starting in the late nineteenth century."[98]

Surprisingly, nearly a century earlier Dewey comes to similar conclusions as Schuman, using almost identical language. In a 1922 essay, the same year in which he published "Racial Prejudice and Friction," he writes these concluding remarks:

> In putting down, largely in western terms, these suggestions about the philosophy of the Chinese, one is painfully conscious of their inadequacy. But even so, they show why the Chinese maintain such confidence in the outcome of events, in spite of so much that is discouraging. China has survived many such periods. But after a while the *civil power*, that is, the moral and intellectual, has reasserted itself, and the stable industry of the people has again become dominant. Even now, in spite of conditions that would throw any western state into chaos, there is steady progress among the people.[99]

Although the rhetorical contours of China's *civilizational power* indeed emerge in the twentieth century "largely in western terms," it is wrong to understand it as a construal of the west. Instead, it is a discourse rooted in China's *own* imperial project, where the Chinese word for "China," *Zhongguo* 中国, became metonymically transformed from its original reference to a collection of states centrally located around the plains of the Yellow River into the "middle country," positioned at the center axis of its own known world. Similarly, *Huaxia* 华夏, originally referring to China's legendary Xia dynasty, denotes transhistorical,

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[98] Kaiser Kuo, "'Superpower Interrupted': A Conversation with Veteran China Journalist Michael Schuman about his Chinese History of the World," *Sinica Podcast*, June 11, 2020, https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sinica-podcast/id1121407665.

[99] John Dewey, Anne S Sharpe, and Carl Cohen, "As the Chinese Think," in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 13 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 225, emphasis mine.

hegemonic and centripetally assimilative aspects of Chinese civilization.[100] In a similar way, the Han (202 BCE-220 CE) and Tang (618-907 CE) dynasties serve as various appellations for Chinese people and culture, variously employed in terms which refer to non-ethnic minority Chinese people (*Han minzu* 汉民族; *Tangren* 唐人), Chinese written characters (*hanzi* 汉字, more often known in English by the Japanese *onyomi* 音読み loanword "*kanji*" 漢字), reconstructed pre-Qing clothing (*hanfu* 汉服), Qing-dynasty clothing, or *tangzhuang* adopted from Manchu (*Manzu* 满洲) fashion, and overseas "Chinatown" communities (*Tangren jie* 唐人街). These floating signifiers attest to a hegemonic discourse of the dynamic continuity of Chinese cultural heritage, practices, and beliefs, undergirded by pre-modern concepts such as the imperial mandate of heaven (*tianming* 天命), by which a dynasty legitimates its rule (or, once lost, is subsequently supplanted), and *tianxia* 天下, "all under heaven," which served as a "Chinese conceptual naming of temporal and spatial boundaries" before the modern importation of the western concept of a "world" (*shijie* 世界).[101] As the first lines of the fourteenth-century *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguoyanyi 三国演义) instruct, "The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide.

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[100] Those who read the phrase "civilizational power" and hear in it overtones of the "civilizing" project of colonialism are not off the mark. See for example Eric Schluessel, *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

[101] Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity 1900-1937* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995), 342. According to Lydia Liu, *shijie* arrived in China as a "return" loanword from the Japanese, *sekai*, following the *onyomi* 音読み, or Japanese "sound reading" of the characters as derived from historical Chinese.

Thus it has ever been" (*Huashuo, tianxia dashi, fen jiu bi he, he jiu bi fen* 话说天下大势，分久必合，合久必分).[102]

Schuman's reading of China as a transhistorical superpower has at times been criticized as a "repetition of China's own propaganda."[103] Such criticism overlooks that, in a general sense, this is *precisely* his project: to recover in the literary and historical record the ways in which China understood and argued for its own exceptionalism. As with Lin and Buck, this critique is also suggestive of a certain unease with the author's lack of dispassion and critical distance from his subject. Whether ensconced in language like "ideals of the race" or *huaxia*, the transpacific circulation of Chinese civilizational power is an imperial discourse of assimilation and cultural continuity, one which troubles and extends fixed understandings of race and nation. To take up the notion of Chinese civilization and propagate it as a model for the west then is not only to convert and appropriate it but also in turn to be converted *by* it, to perceive in the inter-imperial exchange of America with China ways in which philosophical and aesthetic conditions could be otherwise.

In retrospect, Monroe's enthusiasm for China wasn't out of the ordinary among her milieu of poets and public intellectuals; indeed, in a word it could be described as nothing less than quintessentially modern. Her essay did, however, predate nearly all other involvement with China among Euro American modernist poets, including Ezra Pound, the

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[102] Guanzhong Luo, *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*, trans. Moss Roberts (2004; repr., Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020). See also Schuman, *Superpower Interrupted*, 39. For recent scholarly work which historicizes this understanding of hegemonic Han culture, see for example Ban Wang, ed., *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

[103] Philip Bowring, "Review of Superpower Interrupted: The Chinese History of the World," *Asia Sentinel*, July 19, 2020, *https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/book-review-superpower-interrupted*.

sine qua non of transpacific American modernism.[104] Pound would opine in his later years that he never made it to China.[105] Monroe, significantly, did. In fact, pace Eric Hayot,[106] it was through a curious twist of fate that their relationship to one another was also tied up in "a certain relationship to China" well before the publication of *Cathay* (1915): Pound's collection *Personae* (1909) had been personally recommended to Monroe in London by his publisher Elkin Matthews, and it was this book that she read on the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1910 as she made her way to Beijing.[107]

ii. The Chinese Education of Harriet Monroe

Virginia Woolf famously remarked, "On or about *December 1910* human nature changed." As it happens, this was very much the case for Monroe. In the late fall of 1910 Monroe arrived in Beijing on the Trans-Siberian Express. There she stayed three months with her sister Lucy and her brother-in-law William Calhoun: a lawyer, one term representative in the Illinois legislature, childhood friend of former President William McKinley, and recently appointed American ambassador—or, according to his official title,

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[104] See, for example, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 311. As will be discussed at length in chapter three, Pound's pivot towards China began in the fall of 1913.

[105] Zhaoming Qian, ed., *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

[106] Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel* (2004; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 8.

[107] Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life; Seventy Years in a Changing World* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 223, https://www.worldcat.org/title/A-poet's-life-seventy-years-in-a-changing-world/oclc/756464.

Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China. In Monroe's autobiography, *A Poet's Life*, unfinished at the time of her death in 1938, she relates it the following way: "1910–came my journey around the world. My sister's husband, William J. Calhoun, had been appointed by President Taft Minister to China, and the temptation to visit them at the United States Legation in old Peking was too formidable to be resisted."[108] Appointed in 1909, "The new minister and his wife" arrived in the late spring of 1910 and had "little time to get adjusted" to Beijing before her arrival that fall (having spent the intervening time at the nearby summer resorts at Beidaihe 北戴河, or "Pei-ta Ho," which were favored by the international community); together they "slipped easily into the cosmopolitan legation life" of state dinners and dancing.[109]

In *A Poet's Life*, Monroe quotes extensively from her impressions of life at that time in Beijing:

> This is the most romantic capital I ever saw. All this eager, active, very concentrated and intimate legation life, with its theatrical semblance for amplitude and grandeur, against the hoary background of a life, a race, an architecture older than the whole Graeco-Roman system we were born into. I doubt if anywhere else in the world is the contrast quite so rich or the moment quite so dramatic. For things are changing even here…When girls' schools are being founded, and Manchu ladies are accompanying their husbands to foreign dinners, and it is becoming unfashionable for Chinese women of the upper classes to have bound feet–even railroads and coal mines are less revolutionary than such new ideas as these.[110]

As we have already seen in regards to education, Monroe argues that a revolution of ideas in China outpaces technological progress or political upheaval. All the same, like Pound in the Oriental Print Room of the British Museum, it was the traditional arts of

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[108] Ibid., 222.

[109] Ibid., 231.

[110] Ibid., 233.

China–particularly its architecture and visual arts–which first impressed itself upon her. She took "a sudden very deep plunge into Chinese art," shepherded in her education by one "Charles L. Freer, the Detroit collector whose beautiful museum in Washington, bequeathed to the nation at his death in 1919, perpetuates his fame," and who was "hot on the trail" for Chinese paintings and sculptures during her time in the country.[111] She also had occasion to visit local art connoisseurs, like "another great collector, the ex-Viceroy Tuan Fang" (Duanfang 端方), an educational reformist who instituted kindergartens and China's first public library (the Nanjing Library, née Jiangnan Library). Among the items in his collection displayed to Monroe were bronzes from Zhou dynasty temples–which, by the 1930s, she noted were "now in the Metropolitan Museum of New York"[112]. Praising qualities which Witter Bynner would later give to Chinese poetry, Monroe describes "the delicate precision of beauty" and "subtle harmonies in old Chinese art" as an inspiration "against which much Occidental art becomes blatant and melodramatic."[113] And she voices especial appreciation for Tiantan 天坛, a religious complex in the heart of Beijing and "the very flower of Chinese architecture and one of the masterpieces of the world," where "in the ultimate center of things, the temple of the universal God where no picture or sculptured image desecrates its sublimity, one wins from art a sense of unlimited breadth and spaciousness under the lofty sky of heaven."[114]

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[111] Ibid., 234.

[112] Ibid., 235.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., 236.

Leaving Beijing in November 1910, as "the season's first snowflakes" began to fall, she stopped off in Shanghai, "that misplaced European capital," and made social visits to figures such as "Consul General Wilder," father of playwright Thornton Wilder.[115] By December she was heading back to the United States via Japan, "an anticlimax after China": though she found "the Japanese temples more trimly kept and in better repair," and described the Kamakura Buddha (*Kamakura Daibutsu* 鎌倉大仏) as "the noblest conception of deified humanity which I have ever seen," she "missed the colored roofs of the Peking temples and palaces, and the simpler lines of Northern Chinese architecture."[116] Writing about her "readjustment" to American life in the *Chicago Tribune*, Monroe remarks that Chinese aesthetic sensibilities "bid us pause with arresting power. Something in their quiet authority allures us; already the art of the West turns to listen and observe; and her followers must note and obey the change in her mood as she goes on her way."[117]

In contrast with Monroe's recollections in her autobiography, Lucy and William Calhoun's papers and first-hand accounts of their time in China are unpublished and heretofore unexplored in literary scholarship. Though the Calhouns shared more or less the same experiences in China during William's appointment, they had vastly different understandings of the country. According to Mark Twain, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." Dewey likewise had faith in the individual–which is to say the privileged, educated cosmopolitan–and their ability to overcome learned habits of

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[115] Ibid., 237.

[116] Ibid., 237–38.

[117] Ibid., 238–39.

thinking and sociopolitical prejudices that remained dominant within the masses at large.[118] In contrast, Sullivan argues in regards to race relations, "it is intimacy and familiarity, not foreignness, that tends to produce anger and hostility toward others."[119] In other words, familiarity breeds contempt. Outwardly, Monroe describes Calhoun as "playing ably his new diplomatic role, and endearing himself to all Peking by his companionability, his sincerity, his faith in people, his humor and love of life."[120] However, in his private letters a different figure presents itself: writing in December 1911, one year after Monroe's visit and in the midst of the Xinhai Revolution (*Xinhai geming* 辛亥革命) which inaugurated China's Republican era (*Guomin shiqi* 民國時期), Calhoun writes her a lengthy letter describing the social and political upheaval:

> The fear among the foreigners was that the natives–the rival races [Manchu and Han Chinese]–might begin fighting each other… The stage seemed to be set, with scenery in place, the actors in the wings waiting for their cue, the orchestra tuning up and the curtain ready to rise up on a horrible, grewsome [sic] tragedy. For many days and nights every ear was strained to hear the first sound of the bloody tocsin. Pleasant anticipations, weren't they? Charming city, this Peking! Very nice and interesting people, these Chinese! But nothing happened.

Calhoun follows these sardonic remarks with an account of Yuan Shikai 袁世凱, from which he then expands into a broad description of the Chinese national character generally–one quite at odds with Monroe's own account:

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[118] John Dewey, Anne S Sharpe, and Carl Cohen, "Racial Prejudice and Friction," in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 13 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 242–54.

[119] Shannon Sullivan, "From the Foreign to the Familiar: Confronting Dewey Confronting &Quot;Racial Prejudice"" *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2004): 198, doi:10.1353/jsp.2004.0026.

[120] Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, 233.

> He is not especially intellectual in appearance and he doesn't look much like a statesman. For that matter, none of the Chinese do; they are not statesmen, any of them, in the sense in which we understand the term. The standard for character, for efficiency, is very low. They have little or no breadth of view, no perception, no inspiration, no imagination. How can they have? For centuries past they have been trained to look backward, into the dim shadows of the past, where lie the graves of their ancestors. They never look forward. The future has no promise, no hope, no aspiration for them. They never dream dreams or see visions with the 'faculty divine' for the glory of their country.[121]

Calhoun associates a historical Confucian emphasis on ancestor worship in Chinese culture with a general tendency of backwardness, yielding a people with "little or no breadth of view, no perception, no inspiration, no imagination." His use of the term "imagination" here operates very much in the same sense as Dewey's. In this way, it affirms Cornel West's claim that, contrary to its intellectual history in the United States, there is nothing *inherently* progressive, in and of itself, about pragmatist politics.[122] On the one hand, figures such as Calhoun undercut Dewey's misplaced faith in an internationally-minded cosmopolitan class. On the other, Calhoun's statements reveal habituated racial prejudices which in a Deweyan sense are not demonstrative of "thinking" at all. Calhoun's dim outlook is a continuation of earlier, turn of the century missionary-cum-culture critics such as Arthur Smith, whose writing on Chinese national character accentuated an essentialized difference between the United States and China from the standpoint of an assumed western superiority.[123] Rather than Monroe's advocacy of Chinese civilizational power, the

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[121] William Calhoun to Harriet Monroe, December 29, 1911, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 1 Folder 3, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[122] Mendieta, Eduardo. "Empire, Pragmatism, and War: A Conversation with Cornel West," April 6, 2004. *https://www.csub.edu/~rmault/west.htm* Indeed, Dewey's own stance regarding Sino-US relations abetted, if not condoned the continuation of racial prejudice of white majorities against Asian populations where more drastic interventionist actions by the government were necessary. See Dewey, Sharpe, and Cohen, "Racial Prejudice and Friction".

[123] Lydia Liu, "Translating National Character: Lu Xun and Arthur Smith," in *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity 1900-1937* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1995).

adversarial positions of Smith and Calhoun are better understood by what Lydia Liu describes as a "clash of empires."[124]

Soon after the events of the revolution Calhoun resigned from his position, which was suddenly more precarious and far less desirable. He and Lucy moved back to Chicago, where he became a consultant, trading his previous position in for lucrative consulting contracts for businesses attempting to make in-roads in the Chinese economy. Yet Monroe's sister Lucy was considerably more sanguine about China than her husband. Writing a letter to her brother, Lucy assures him, "Do not worry about us. We are quite safe and sheltered here and would not have missed the excitemeny [sic], as long as it had to be, for anything. Poor old China, I am afraid she will have to suffer in the cause of liberty.[125] Undeterred by the winds of change in Asia, she moved back to China after William's death in 1916, where she continued to live for the next two decades. In her unpublished manuscripts, she recounts her fond memories of the country: meeting the Empress Dowager Cixi, traveling with Florence Ayscough up the Changjiang 长江 River (conventionally rendered in English as Yang-tze River, based upon the lower *Yangzijiang* 扬子江 section) from Shanghai 上海 to Chongqing 重庆, and developing a connoisseurship of Chinese "tapestries" and other fine arts. As with Monroe, Lucy's narrative reveals class biases and unacknowledged privileges endemic to the city's cosmopolitan milieu of Europeans and Euro-Americans. She describes how "the foreigner

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[124] Lydia Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[125] "Personal Letter to William Monroe from Lucy Calhoun," March 4, 1912, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 1, Folder 3, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Perhaps to differentiate the two, she refers to her brother William as "Billy," and her husband by his nickname "Cal.".

lives his colorful life undaunted by strange ways and an alien language," ensconced in "the luxury of unhurried comfort and loyal service," while those seeking a "richly cosmopolitan" experience of China "had a pleasant mixture of Chinese life and a quota of Chinese friends." In contrast, she observes that Chinese laboring class "live their lives uncomplainingly, accepting the world as it is, the good with the bad, the chastisement of the gods along with their rewards." At her worse, she slides into patronizing, romantic stereotypes of the menial Chinese laborer content with their lot in life, "happier than the white-collar clerk at his desk [who is] dreaming of things he cannot attain."[126]

No matter the aspect of China under discussion, tranquility and happiness, belied by the news abroad of constant war and political turmoil, remains the prevailing themes of Lucy Calhoun's writing. Describing Beijing, her home for over twenty years, she calls it "one of the great cities of the world, asking no quarter, standing in quiet dignity for what it is, seeking neither blame nor praise." Likewise, she personifies the Forbidden City (*Gugong* 故宫) of the Republican years as "A very human museum, intimate and friendly, which has grown out of the lives and needs of the rulers of a friendly people." In contrast with William's preoccupation with cultural stereotypes and essentialized racial difference in the name of political realism, Lucy's Chinese experiences are dominantly conceived through aesthetic terms. Nowhere is this more apparent than in her descriptions of expatriate connoisseurship and the wheeling and dealing of Chinese art collectors, who in their gallantry and high regard for Americans exemplified her belief in "sympathy between the races." She writes:

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[126] Lucy Calhoun, "'Untitled [on Peking]' and 'My Greatest Adventure Was China'" n.d., Lucy Monroe Calhoun Papers, Box 7, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

> The dealers make you welcome and give you tea. They are as interested as you as your reactions, and if you show taste and discrimination, they will lead you on through flowery courtyards to other rooms and finer treasures. Their courtesy summons your own, and you find yourself uttering greetings and farewells unknown to the shops of other lands. The oftener you return and the longer you consider an object, the better they like you, and nothing in their manner coerces you to buy against your will.[127]

As with Monroe, Lucy's cosmopolitan life and artistic connoisseurship ran hand in hand. She observed that the latter often served a central role in the pursuits and social life of the European and Euro-American expatriates, calling to mind the "patrician orientalism" which John Kuo Wei Tchen identifies in colonial America. As already seen in Monroe, Lucy, and William Calhoun's heterogenous relationships to China, Tchen portrays the generation of America's founding fathers as holding conflicted, yet often surprisingly idealized understandings of Chinese culture. Bolstered by the esteem for China in this period, "Chinese things and ideas" were collected as a "primarily social," rather than intellectual pursuit, with collections of rare Chinese objects and consumer goods serving as markers of social status and taste.[128] Likewise, Lucy reflects, "we were all collectors, some of one thing, some of another, and there was a friendly rivalry between us." As is often the case for collectors, it was the very desire to collect itself from which she derived her greatest pleasure. She writes, "The joy is in the pursuit, for the longer perfection eludes you, the more certain you are that it will be found in the end." Moreover, this state of affairs also extended to her upper-class Chinese friends, though she relates they were never to be found "in the fairs and shops where we went," but were instead "attracted by foreign

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[127] Ibid.

[128] John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xx-xxi.

shops which left us indifferent."[129] Just as the activities of Lucy and her cohort in China were reciprocal to her Chinese friends, so to did Lucy's connoisseurship of traditional Chinese fine art mirror Monroe's pursuit of a venue for poetry which reflected this new age of technological modernity and transnational exchange. Lucy naturally aided her sister in her literary endeavor, appearing on *Poetry*'s masthead as a financial contributor throughout Monroe's tenure as managing editor, under the name Mrs. William Calhoun.[130]

In the final analysis, Lucy Calhoun's position on China was firmly one of sympathy and advocacy, seeking to render the nation and its people in explicitly human terms, in order to "leave one sensitive to the majesty of high endeavor in these millions of lives, working, hoping, suffering, building a nation." Given the seemingly endless bounty of artistic and aesthetic experiences to be found in the efflorescence of China's interwar period for the cosmopolitan upper-class, it is perhaps less of a surprise in retrospect that, as it was for so many Americans of the period, her "greatest adventure was China." She

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[129] Ibid.

[130] For a discussion of modernist collections, see Anne Pfeifer, *To the Collector Belongs the Spoils: Modernism and the Art of Appropriation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023). In her discussion of the collections and collecting tendencies of Henry James, Walter Benjamin, and African art scholar Carl Einstein, Anne Pfeifer identifies a dialectal structure of appropriation, both of destruction–particularly so in regards to the rapacious tendencies and seized national property of instructions such as the British museum–as well as generative, creative, or even revolutionary properties. See also Christopher Reed, *Bachelor Japanists: Japanese Aesthetics and Western Masculinities* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016). Reed identifies the intersection of appropriation and queer performativity within communities of queer and homosocial male "bachelor Japanists" in American modernism. Though it lays beyond the scope of this dissertation, the many gay, lesbian, or "spinster" figures of transpacific Anglo-American modernism, among which include Witter Bynner, Harold Acton, Amy Lowell, and Monroe and Lucy Calhoun, are rife for research along similar lines.

concludes on a sentiment which echoes the Chinese tradition of *shanshui* 山水 landscape painting: "China is so big and so old that one never comes to the end of it."[131]

iii. The Open Door Policy

What were the geopolitical circumstances which immediately precipitated William Calhoun's appointment in China, and Harriet Monroe and Lucy Calhoun's interest in Chinese literary and visual art as a reflection of its civilizational power? America's relationship towards China in the first half of the twentieth century can be understood through two government initiatives: the Open Door policy and the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program. After the anti-colonial Boxer Uprising (*Yihetuan yundong* 义和团运动) of 1899-1901 was repelled by the Eight Nation Alliance (*Ba guo lianjun* 八国联军) of European powers, the United States, Russia, and Japan, China's status as a semi-colonized (*banzhimindi* 半殖民地) nation appeared unavoidable, and its long-term prospects for sovereignty and self-governance were in considerable doubt. In order that the United States may maintain access within, and indeed further expand into China's domestic market as part of its "need and ability to expand ever westward," as well as shore up economic and military defenses against Japan in its victory, a policy of the Open Door was eagerly

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[131] For comparison, see "*Xishanwujin* 溪山无尽," "Mountains and Streams without End," a common title within Chinese landscape painting. See also Gary Snyder's book-length poem of roughly the same name: *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (New York: Counterpoint, 1996).

pursued by American statesmen.[132] In Jerry Israel's *Progressivism and the Open Door*, an authoritative history of America's Open Door policy, he writes: "In one of the rare truly give-and-take situations between the intellectual and political realms, the H Street world of Brooks and Henry Adams, John Hay, W.W. Rockhill, and Alfred Thayer Mahan produced an Open Door policy, a minister, a Secretary of State, and a president to support it, and fertile minds to give it structure and definition."[133] In interwar American accounts, the Open Door was characterized as a "square deal."[134] The 1937 newsreel "War in China," intending to catch the average American up to their nation's recent past in the Pacific, tells it this way: "In return for the special privileges which gave foreign traders access to China's markets of 400 million prospective customers, the United States and other world powers pledged themselves to respect China's territorial integrity, until her scattered millions, pursuing their ancient ways, could become a unified country."[135]

Yet the blatant hypocrisy of American policies of an open door for economic trade with China abroad and exclusion of Chinese laboring classes domestically was readily apparent to all parties involved. Indeed, it was the prevailing instigating factor in the

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[132] Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door: America and China, 1905-1921* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 5.

[133] Ibid., 5–6.

[134] Ibid., 5.

[135] "War in China." *March of Time*. New York: HBO, 1937. Alexander Street/ProQuest. *https://video-alexanderstreet-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/channel/march-of-time-y6*. The newsreel tells the story of China "slowly" coalescing into a technologically and socially modern state, contingent upon the country's unification under Chiang Kai-Shek's Republican government in 1927—until the disruption of China's "most dreaded enemy, Japan." The phrase "400 million prospective customers" invokes Carl Crow's well-known *400 Million Customers*, an account of his time in China as an newspaper editor and businessman published in 1937. Numerous editions of Crow's book were subsequently released, including an Armed Services Edition during World War II. See Carl Crow, *400 Million Customers* (1937; repr., Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2012).

Chinese Boycott of 1905, a year-long boycott of American goods both within mainland China and across the wider Sinosphere. Despite this, according to one scholar, the perceived economic benefits of the Open Door policy for both nations were such that this disparity was largely left unchallenged:

> Business interests and missionaries rightly pointed out the incongruity of having an open door for trade in China and a closed door for immigrants in the United States, but the confrontation between the two policies in 1900-1906 was more theoretical than real. Both the Peking and Washington governments knew full well that the open door for trade was much in China's interest no matter how badly Chinese might be treated in the United States.[136]

America's political and economic relationship to China from 1905 to the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937 was predicated on a paternalistic belief in America's socioeconomic dominance and western cultural superiority. Yet it was the soft power of the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program which best reflects Harold Isaac's description of this period as America's "Age of Benevolence" towards China.[137] Weili Ye observes that the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program embodies the "paradoxical roles" which the West held for the Chinese intellectual class as "both the oppression of imperialism and the lure of modernity."[138] Already financially strained from internal civil unrest, China owed financial indemnities to the United States government as part of the 1901 Boxer Protocols, the latest in a long line of unequal treaties between China and foreign powers during its long century of "national humiliation (*guo chi* 国耻)." By converting these indemnities into a scholarship fund for talented Chinese students to study abroad and acquire a modern

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[136] Esthus, Raymond A, "Review of Chinese Exclusion Versus the Open Door Policy, 1900–1906: Clashes Over China Policy in the Roosevelt Era, by Delber L. McKee," *Journal of American History* 64, no. 4 (March 1978): 1144–45, https://doi.org/10.2307/1890810.

[137] Harold R Isaacs, *Scratches on our Minds: American Views of China and India* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 71.

[138] Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name,* 11.

western education, the United States transformed its status on the world stage from that of rapacious belligerent to a pillar of enlightened liberalism; moreover, according to Ye,

> The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program was the most important scheme for educating Chinese students in America and arguably the most consequential and successful in the entire foreign-study movement of twentieth-century China. It enjoyed a good reputation because of its competitive selection procedure and high academic standard, especially after the founding of a specially designed preparatory school in Beijing, Qinghua (Tsing-hua) College. From the approximately thirteen hundred individuals sent by the program from 1909 to 1929, there emerged some of modern China's best scholars and educators, as well as prominent leaders in other walks of life.[139]

The Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program enshrined the broader legal right of Chinese students to study abroad in the United States, whether it be through the auspices of government programs, missionary funding, or private family wealth and resources: "As upper-class Chinese, they were exempted, like merchants and diplomats, from the exclusion acts and were granted legal protection by the American government." Moreover, Ye assesses that "as an intellectual elite seeking western learning, they were in general kindly received by educated Americans"—even as they found themselves thrust into the "peculiar and precarious racial situation" of prevailing anti-Chinese sentiment within the broader public.[140] Ye highlights how American race relations imposed a race and class-consciousness among Chinese scholars who would otherwise "have little to do with their lower-class compatriots except to act like masters commanding the latter's service. In the United States, the 'masters' found out that, like it or not, they were bound to the 'servants' by common racial and national identity."[141] Moreover, though Chinese scholars

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[139] Ibid., 10.

[140] Ibid., 82–83.

[141] Ibid., 83.

were allowed entry into the United States, their status did not inure them from the appalling conditions of in-transit detainment by American immigration officers, or subsequent scrutiny of state officials during their years of study.[142] He elaborates:

> Issues of race, class, and modernity were all implicated in the students' ambivalent relationship with the Chinese laborers in the United States. Some students blamed the lower-class Chinese and their traditional way of life for the poor image of China held by the American public, and strove themselves to project a new and westernized image. Being the Other to the laborers in terms of class and modernity, the students nonetheless found themselves inseparable from the lower-class immigrants around the issue of race. And race mattered in America.[143]

Though early waves of Chinese students in the United States sought technical or professional education in areas such as the sciences, engineering, or law, by the late 1910s significant numbers of Chinese students began to be involved in the humanities, either during their time abroad or upon their subsequent return to China. Given this, an important question should now be raised: to what extant did Monroe's relationship to China inform her later domestic literary activities in the United States? According to Monroe herself in one interview, her "birth of an idea" for *Poetry* was inspired by her awareness of poetry's enduring high esteem and cultural capital in China. But did this transformational experience lead to the inclusion and participation of Sino-US poets and scholars in Poetry itself, or were they excluded in favor of Euro-Americans writing in an "oriental manner"—a mode which prevailed in American modernist poetry during *Poetry*'s first decades? For that matter, were there in fact Chinese poets and scholars writing in English at all in this period?

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[142] Ibid., 88-89. Indeed, Ye argues that the 1905 boycott served "in part as a protest against the mistreatment of the upper-class Chinese in America." (ibid., 89)

[143] Ibid., 83.

One anthology of Asian American poetry provides us with insights into the complexities of these questions: Juliana Chang's *Quiet Fire: A Historical Anthology of Asian American Poetry 1892-1970*, published under the aegis of the Asian American Writers' Workshop with a grant from the Witter Bynner Foundation for Poetry. Of the twenty-seven poets represented in the anthology, Chang identifies the following poets from the early and interwar modernist periods within a broadly conceived Asian American rubric: Sadakichi Hartmann, Yone Noguchi (born Noguchi Yonejiro 野口 米次郎), Jun Fujita, Wen I-to (hereafter Wen Yiduo 闻一多), Masao Handa (Handa Masao 半田正夫), H.T. Tsiang (Jiang Xizeng 蒋希曾), Bunichi Kagawa, and Moon Kwan (Guan Wenqing [Mandarin] / Gwaan Manching [Cantonese] 关文清).[144]

The inclusion of Wen, and his poem "The Laundry Song," is particularly revealing.[145] No explanatory or paratextual information appears alongside the poem, and the reader could be forgiven if they were to assume that it was written in English. In fact, the poem is Kai-Yu Hsu's 1963 translation of Wen's "*Xiyi ge* 洗衣歌."[146] The source of the translation, Hsu's *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry*, appears in *Quiet Fire's* back matter under "Copyrights and Acknowledgments"–though here the citation neither lists Hsu as editor

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[144] *Quiet Fire: A Historical Anthology of Asian American Poetry 1892-1970* (New York City: The Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1996). Chang's collection stands apart from nearly all other anthologies of Asian American literature to date in its broad inclusion of English poetry predating the Asian American movement, as well as its capacious employment of the term "Asian American" in regards to transnational figures such as Noguchi, Wen, and Kwan.

[145] Ibid., 26–27.

[146] Kai-Yu Hsu, ed., *Twentieth Century Chinese Poetry* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1963), 51. Hsu received his B.A. in foreign languages and literature at Tsinghua University (Qinghua Daxue 清华大学) in China, his M.A. in journalism at the University of Oregon, and his Ph.D in modern Chinese literature and thought at Stanford University.

nor translator. (Interestingly, Hsu *is* cited by name in the "Bibliography" section, but in this case for his 1972 publication *Asian-American Authors*.)

In the early 1920s, Wen studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he crossed paths with Monroe and Amy Lowell.[147] Moreover, he cultivated a life-long interest in 19th century Romanticism–Hsu argues that "The Laundry Song" imitates Thomas Hood's 1843 poem, "The Song of the Shirt."[148] "The Laundry Song" first appears in 1925, roughly the same time as Wen's return to China in 1925, where he participated in the Crescent Moon literary society (*Xinyue She* 新月社) alongside other western-educated figures like Hu Shi and Xu Zhimo 徐志摩.[149]

Wen's original prefatory note to the poem, omitted in *Quiet Fire*, makes it plain that the poem is written for a mainland Chinese audience, with its subject matter instigated by his overseas experiences:

> Washing is the most common occupation of overseas Chinese. So it is that international students are often asked, "Is your father a laundryman?" Many must suffer this indignity. However, washing as an occupation indeed contains a meaning which is a little mysterious–or at least I thought so–and so I wrote "The Laundry Song."
>
> 洗衣是美国华侨最普通的职业。因此留学生常常被人问道："你的爸爸是洗衣裳的吗？"许多人忍受不了这侮辱，然而洗衣的职业确乎含着一点神秘的意义，至少我曾经这样的想过，作洗衣歌; translation mine[150]

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[147] Ibid., 44.

[148] Ibid.

[149] For a discussion of China's modernist literary societies and journals, see Michael Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003).

[150] Yiduo Wen, *Wen Yiduo Shi Wenji* *闻一多诗文集* (Beijing, China: Wanjuan chuban gongsi 万卷出版公司, 2014), 83, https://baike.baidu.com/item/*洗衣歌*/2890831.

A poem published in China, for a Chinese-speaking audience, which follows the form of a nineteenth-century English poem and seeks to give voice to marginalized Chinese American laborers, "The Laundry Song" is emblematic of the transnational exchange of early East Asian and Asian American poetry. It also attests to the porousness of the concept of Asian American itself before its later establishment as a *de jure* identity category. Chang is remarkably inclusive in *Quiet Fire* regarding this latter point: Hartmann, Noguchi, and Kwan all appear in her anthology alongside Wen, troubling easy distinctions between the transnational and the diasporic subject, or that of Asian American and East Asian.[151]

The inclusion of Wen's Chinese verse passed off in English-language clothing bears a metonymic relationship to the tendency to conceptualize early Chinese American literature as literature in languages other than English. Anonymous Sinophone writings such as the Cantonese *Gold Mountain Songs* (Gumsan gozaap 金山歌集) and *tibishi* 题壁诗 poetry on the walls of the Angel Island barracks attest to the status of poetry as an enduring cultural force among Chinese American communities, largely characterized as uneducated.[152] *Quite Fire* includes representative examples from both. As with "The Laundry Song," these poems give voice to a Chinese underclass which did not so much fall on the deaf ears of English-speakers as pass by them, both imperceptible and in plain sight.

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[151] In contrast, Weili Ye observes a persistent misconception among overseas Chinese students that American Chinese were mostly laundry workers, attesting to "a tendency among some students to emphasize their class status so as to differentiate themselves from the resident Chinese," along with a repetition of American cultural stereotypes as credible received wisdom; see Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name*, 94-104, passim.

[152] Marlon K. Hom, *Songs of Gold Mountain: Cantonese Rhymes from San Francisco Chinatown* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1987); Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2014). Yunte Huang reads the citational nature of many of these poems, which allude to other the canon of classical Chinese poetry, as indicative of the high level of education and aesthetic refinement of those interned; see Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 101-115.

Steven Yao argues that "the enduring influence of an activist ethos" within Asian American studies situates the study of poetry in a "curiously bifurcated space": on the one hand, it is connected to elitism; on the other, it denotes a populist realism of ordinary language, lived experience, and protest.[153] Texts within Asian American studies like *Quiet Fire* have often historically invoked a condition of quietness, silence, or voicelessness, often in recognition of the systemic conditions of Chinese exclusion, Japanese internment, and marginalization of Asians within the broader American social polity and cultural sphere. Scholars have observed how this silencing operates in dialectic relation to the historical prevalence of Euro-American appropriation and construction of broadly "Asiatic" motifs, or have read Asian American literature as a counter-discourse which resists and speaks back to this silence.[154]

Timothy Yu's *100 Chinese Silences* exemplifies this latter point.[155] Yu's sardonic poems have been read as a wholesale polemic against modernist and contemporary poetry's engagement with Asia from an explicitly Asian Americanist perspective: figures such as Pound and Snyder come under particular attack, while Weinberger finds himself hoisted by his own petard. As John Yau blurbs, "Not only does Yu make Ezra Pound and Gary Snyder stand on their pointy heads in ways that are illuminating and funny, but he also skewers Jeb Bush, Billy Collins, Mary Oliver, Marianne Moore, and Eliot Weinberger right through

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[153] Steven G. Yao, *Foreign Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity*, Global Asias (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

[154] See, for example, King-Kok Cheung, *Articulate Silences: Hisaye Yamamoto, Maxine Hong Kingston, Joy Kogawa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); see also Elda Tsou, *Unquiet Tropes: Form, Race, and Asian American Literature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015).

[155] Timothy Yu, *100 Chinese Silences* (Los Angeles: Les Figues Press, 2016).

their bright yellow Chinese hearts."[156] In the light of such perspectives, Lucas Klein observes an "anxiety" surrounding East Asian translation which has emerged in our present moment.[157]

And yet–couldn't it also be said that there is something in the nature of Yu's critique which is by its very nature *quintessentially modernist*? Notably, *100 Chinese Silences* is published by Les Figues Press, an explicitly avant-garde small press which, according to its founders, "resists basic market-driven standards of quality, morality and political identity found in the tried and untrue sectors of mainstream publishing and the current après-garde."[158] As will be discussed in chapter two, interwar modernism was rife with skirmishes over Chinese translation–a condition later echoed in Weinberger's *19 Ways of Looking At Wang Wei*.[159] In this way, the critique of modernism's engagement with China, and East Asia generally, is revealed to not be a recent phenomenon of our contemporary age but as inherent to and as old as that engagement itself–even as the respective terms of that engagement and critique have changed over the intervening century.

In *Apparitions of Asia*, Josephine Park conceives of Anglo-American modernist poetry writ large as an Orientalist project, resulting in a vexed heritage that Asian American poets

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[156] "100 Chinese Silences," *Small Press Distribution*, 2023, https://www.spdbooks.org/Products/9781934254615/100-chinese-silences.aspx.

[157] Lucas Klein, "Silences, Whispers, and the Figure of China," *Genre* 51, no. 3 (December 1, 2018): 267–93, doi:*10.1215/00166928-7190519*.

[158] *American Book Review* 31, no. 4 (May/June 2010): 9.

[159] Wei Wang, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei: How a Chinese Poem Is Translated*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (Mount Kisco, N.Y: Moyer Bell, 1987).

must invariably confront, if not overcome.[160] Like Yu, Park reads modernist and Asian American poetry as deeply imbricated, with the latter (Asian American poetry) emerging from out of the former (Anglo-American modernism) in the second half of the twentieth century. However, such a bifurcated chronology leads the reader to believe that poets of East Asian heritage simply were not present or participatory in the early and interwar modernist periods. A similar chronology is indicated in Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature*, and the monographs' subtitle, *From Necessity to Extravagance*. It posits that Asian American poetry developed from the "necessity" of enunciating a politically activated subject position, while *belles-lettres* experimentation and "extravagance" characteristic of American modernism only emerged later in Asian American literature, towards the end of the twentieth-century.[161]

Reductively, there are two conclusions one can arrive at: either Asian American poets did not historically intersect with American modernism–or, if they did, what they wrote cannot properly be called Asian American poetry. These conclusions are then extrapolated, *totum pro parte,* into assumptions that the structural racism enshrined in the American legal system was also uniformly reflected by explicitly racist attitudes towards Asians held among American modernists, without proper attention to the complexities of the "peculiar and precarious racial situation" of the early and interwar period. This error is epitomized by R. John Williams' claim that "[American modernists] were closing their eyes to the literal incarceration and forced exclusion of Chinese bodies," turning to "the

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[160] Josephine Nock-Hee Park, *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[161] Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); despite his interrogation of conventionally received narratives surrounding Asian American poetry, Yao likewise describes racial protest as "The first to emerge in the history of Asian American poetic production." Yao, *Foreign Accents*, 12.

linguistic and cultural 'other' of China, without regard for the contemporary 'other' immediately present."[162] Not only were Sino-US poets and scholars coeval with American modernism, but they were present in its development and published in American modernist magazines, with *Poetry* during Monroe's editorialship serving as perhaps *the* most significant example.[163]

On the website for the Poetry Foundation, the Chicago non-profit which operates *Poetry*, there appears an introductory article titled, "A History of the Magazine." It begins, "Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Monroe's Open Door policy, set forth in volume 1 of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of *Poetry*'s mission: to print the best contemporary poetry, of any style, genre, or approach."[164] Despite the Poetry Foundation itself identifying the prevailing editorial policy for the magazine under Monroe as an "Open Door policy," this has never been brought into conversation with the contemporaneous Open Door policy of the United States in China. In the November 1912 number, Monroe concludes the reviews and editorials section with a statement on "The Open Door."[165] In it, she addresses the reactionary "fears" expressed to her that *Poetry*'s

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[162] R. John Williams, "Decolonizing Cathay: Teaching the Scandals of Translation Through Angel Island Poetry," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2006–Winter 2007): 24. Williams errs in hastily generalizing attitudes held by Ezra Pound–the complexities of which will explored at length in chapter three–into larger epistemic claims concerning American modernists.

[163] I employ the term "Sino-US" to broadly identify poets and scholars of Chinese heritage who wrote in English in the United States before the establishment of "Asian American" as a legal category. In doing so, I follow Nan Da, who uses this term in regards to interactions between Chinese and American writers, scholars, and officials in the nineteenth century. See Nan Da, *Intransitive Encounter: Sino-U.S. Literatures and the Limits of Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[164] "A History of the Magazine," *Poetry Foundation*, 2023, *https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/history*.

[165] Harriet Monroe, "The Open Door," *Poetry* 1, no. 2 (1912): 62–64.

interest in publishing modernist verse (what she would later name, in a 1921 anthology, *The New Poetry*[166]) would render *Poetry* a marginal venue within the publishing world, "a house of refuge for minor poets."[167]

Her response focuses on two points. First, she observes, "The world which laughs at the experimenter in verse, walks negligently through our streets, and goes seriously, even reverently, to the annual exhibitions in our cities, examining hundreds of pictures and statues without expecting even the prize-winners to be masterpieces."[168] A reoccurring theme for Monroe in the first decade of the magazine, her comparison seeks to place modernist verse on equal cultural and economic footing as the fine art "bought at high prices by public museums," regardless of their questionable status as timeless masterpieces.[169] In this way, her riposte is a continuation of *Poetry*'s maxim, "To have great poets, there must be great audiences," given that a primary marker of a healthy and robust audience for an art form is a widespread appreciation for it in all of its varieties, and at all levels of professional quality. Towards her second point, she reaffirms the magazine's commitment to an explicitly pluralist aesthetic policy:

> The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine–may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his ample genius! To this end the editors hope to keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school.

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[166] Harriet Monroe, ed., *The New Poetry* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), https://www.bartleby.com/265/index1.html.

[167] Monroe, "The Open Door," 62.

[168] Ibid., 63.

[169] Ibid.

> They desire to print the best English verse which is being written today, regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art it is written.[170]

To be sure, Monroe's editorialship of *Poetry* in its first decade showed considerable preferential treatment to friends and family, to an extent perhaps unremarkable in her own day, but downright blatant and objectionable to our modern day sensibilities.[171] Moreover, Monroe articulates *Poetry*'s Open Door policy in explicitly aesthetic terms–the "desire to print the best English verse which is being written today"–rather than corollaries in our present day such as color-blind casting, which explicitly link democratic inclusivity to broader structural reform and sociocultural equity. Nonetheless, the magazine's ostensible aesthetic and political nonpartisanship and Monroe's unacknowledged liberal progressivism often worked in tandem. The magazine's John Reed Prize, for example, was endowed by the family of the well-known leftist journalist (and former *Poetry* contributor) after his death in 1920–yet the prize was stipulated merely to go to a young poet of merit and promise. Indeed, John Reed's own publications in *Poetry* bore a surprising apolitical bent–all the more striking for a man who inspired communist party clubs in the 1930s to name themselves after him and take up the motto, "Art is a weapon in the class struggle." Consequently, when the second annual John Reed Prize went to Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen, the social significance of a major poetry award reaching across the color line went unmentioned by *Poetry* editorial.

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[170] Ibid., 64.

[171] To name one example, the 1917 Helen Haire Levinson Prize award was given to "Grotesques" by Cloyd Head, future husband of associate editor Eunice Tietjens (Harriet Monroe, ed., *Poetry* 29, no. 2 (November 1926): 106). In contrast, controversies around poetry contests with entrance in the mid-2000s led to sweeping institutional rule changes concerning submission eligibility. See, for example, Kevin Lardner, "The Contestor: Series Editor Retires Amid Controversy," *Poets & Writers,* November/December 2005, https://www.pw.org/content/contester_series_editor_retires_amid_controversy.

Indeed, while America's Open Door policy enabled free market trade abroad and Asian exclusion domestically, *Poetry*'s Open Door policy was far more heterogenous and bi-directional. Of the poets anthologized in *Quiet Fire* before World War II, Noguchi, Fujita, Kagawa, and Kwan all published in *Poetry*; Hartmann, meanwhile, appeared in the magazine's essays and announcements. Moreover, poets and scholars of the interwar era *not* included in *Quiet Fire*, such as Sun Yu 孙瑜, Jiang Kanghu 江抗虎, Chen Shixiang 陈世骧, and Kwei Chen (characters unknown) also published in *Poetry*, as did the Filipino poet and novelist Carlos Bulosan. Additionally, Cai Tinggan 蔡廷干's translations were reviewed by Tietjens. The magazine also took note of the death of Wen Yiduo's Crescent Moon compatriot Xu Zhimo 徐志摩.[172] Translations of Xu's poems later appeared in the magazine's 1935 "Chinese Number," and in the same number were discussed alongside Hu Shi in Harold Acton's essay on contemporary Chinese poetry. In short, the extent of my research reveals H.T. Tsiang as the *only* significant Sino-US poet of this period who does not appear in one form or another in *Poetry*. Rather than exclusion, *Poetry*'s relationship to Sino-US figures of the interwar era was marked by what Ellen Wu and Madeline Hsu call "conditional inclusion," whereby "Select categories of Asians gained authorized entry into the United States and mainstream acceptability by virtue of demonstrating high levels of education, economic attainment, and cultural compatibility."[173] Ellen Wu and Madeline Hsu use this term in relation to the emergence of liberal (rather than progressive) racial reform in the United States against the backdrop of Cold War geopolitics after World War II; however, by "placing a global lens on U.S. immigration and ethnic history" which

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[172] *Poetry* 40, no. 3 (1932): 176.

[173] Madeline Hsu and Ellen Wu, "'Smoke and Mirrors': Conditional Inclusion, Model Minorities, and the Pre-1965 Dismantling of Asian Exclusion," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 45.

"troubles the standard historiographical time line," the framework also aptly describes Chinese writers and scholars within American modernism.

Sun Yu and Moon Kwan serve as apt examples in this regard. In 1925, as an undergraduate at University of Wisconsin, Sun completed a thesis on Asian influences in American modernist poetry–a surprisingly early example for this kind of research to be undertaken at the collegiate level. The following year, his translations of the Tang poet Li Bai 李白 appeared in *Poetry* .[174] Kwan had also placed translations of Li Bai and Wang Wei 王维 in *Poetry* a few years earlier, appearing in the same number as Japanese *tanka* 短歌 poems by the Chicago-based Japanese photographer and poet Jun Fujita.[175] Before that, he published a portfolio of Wang Wei translations in *The Liberator* in collaboration with Max Eastman.[176] Though modernists in both China and the United States sought to free themselves of stagnation in their respective national verse cultures, classical Chinese verse itself functioned for these poets as a way to "pass" within the Euro-American identity poetics of American modernism.

Yet these publications, critical to locating Sun and Kwan in the historical record of American modernist poetry, only begin to scratch the surface. In northern California, Kwan ensconced himself in the west-coast bohemian scenes of the 1910s and 1920s, a self-styled Chinese literati of antiquity running in the same crowds as modernist American painters,

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[174] *Poetry* 28, no. 5 (1926): 256–57.

[175] *Poetry* 18, no. 3 (1921): 130, 128-129. Fujita is credited by some with bringing the form into American modernist poetry, with the shorter *haiku* form respectively attributed to either Noguchi or Hartmann

[176] Wei Wang, "Poems of Wang Wei," trans. Max Eastman and Moon Kwan, *The Liberator* 3, no. 11 (November 1920).

poets, and silent film actors.[177] For example, in 1918 Moon Kwan sat for a series of portraits by Margrethe Mather, a modernist photographer romantically associated with Edward Weston. In one photograph, where Mather experiments with compositional framing, he appears in the bottom right of the image wearing *tangzhuang* clothing and a *guapimao* 瓜皮帽 hat; meanwhile, in the upper left a scroll depicting Li Bai looms over him. The figurative association which the photograph establishes between the Tang poet and Moon Kwan is unmistakable–made all the more so by Mather herself referring to her subject as a poet.[178] This aspect of Moon Kwan's artistic persona is made manifest in his 1920 collection *A Pagoda of Jewels*–the earliest identified book of American poetry written in English by a poet of Chinese descent.[179] In his poem "To Witter Bynner," commemorating Bynner's presence at Berkeley and his establishment of the Halcyon poetry society in which Kwan participated alongside Genevieve Taggard, Stella Benson, and Chinese scholar and poet Jiang Kanghu, Kwan writes:

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[177] Literary bohemianism took note of the presence of Asian immigration and culture in the United States quite early. Bret Harte, a primary purveyor of bohemianism in the American west in the nineteenth, was also the writer of the notorious poem "Plain Talk from Truthful James," better known by the name "The Heathen Chinee." Yet in the interwar period Kwan found himself on equal footing among the bohemian set in a way unforeseen by earlier generations, attesting to the ways in which the circulation of Chinese civilizational power disrupted the Eurocentrism of dominant American culture within interwar artistic communities. For a discussion of Harte's pivotal role in extending American bohemianism from a relatively self-contained group of New York City journalists and transplanting it in Northern California, see Joanna Levin, *Bohemia in America, 1858-1920* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 70-125.

[178] Beth Gates Warren, *Artful Lives: Edward Weston, Margrethe Mather, and the Bohemians of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Getty, 2011), 145-146. I thank Jing Yu for confirming my suspicions that this figure is Li Bai, and identifying the *jiuding* 酒精 traditional drinking vessel within the scroll's compositional space (alcohol and the "banished immortal" Daoist poet being inimically linked). Another, more conventional portrait of Kwan taken by Mather is housed at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. (Margrethe Mather, *Moon Kwan*, 1918, National Portrait Gallery, *https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2011.21*)

[179] *A Jade Pagoda* is listed among the "Books Received" in the backmatter of *Poetry*'s September 1920 number ("Books Received," *Poetry* 16, no. 6 (1920), 350).

I, a wanderer; thou a weaver of the petal-speech,
In the bridge-land of the East and West have met.
Though flowers may bloom and fall,
The Spring breeze shall not forget.[180]

Kwan's traditional diction and rhyming quatrain form here draws parallels to modernist women poets such as Sara Teasdale, whose contributions to modernism did not lay in free verse innovation, but instead in the expansion of English verse to include new voices and subjectivities–across gender lines for the modernist women poets, and racial lines for Kwan and the Sino-US poets, respectively. The poem also bears a striking resemblance to Bynner's own verse.[181] And yet "To Witter Bynner"–a panegyric to a close acquaintance of Monroe and Tietjens, and himself a frequent contributor to *Poetry*–never appeared in the magazine. Nor did any example of Kwan's original verse. As such, Kwan's poetry, which could otherwise be read metonymically in light of *Poetry*'s Open Door policy–a "bridge-land of the East and West" where poets from both poles can meet and have profitable commerce–was excluded from the magazine proper. In this way, the pervasive interest in East Asia among Euro-American modernist poets, and Monroe in particular, indeed laid the groundwork for *Poetry* to open its doors to Sino-US poets; yet their conditional inclusion rarely extended to publication of original work. Instead, their inclusion was generally restricted to translations–and of those, by and large, the classical Tang dynasty poets such as Li Bai who so enamored the interwar modernists. (Indeed, later

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[180] See Juliana Chang, *Quiet Fire: A Historical Anthology of Asian American Poetry 1892-1970* (New York: The Asian American Writers' Workshop, 1996), 44. Dorothy Wang cites "To Witter Bynner," first appearing in the festschrift *W.B. In California* in 1918, as the earliest Chinese American poem in English; however, an original poem by Jiang also appears in the collection, suggesting the title should be shared between them (Dorothy Wang, "Asian American Poetry and the Politics of Form," in *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature*, ed. Rajini Srikanth and Min Hyoung Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 437–53; Witter Bynner, *W.B. In California: A Tribute* (Berkeley, CA: Privately printed, 1919)).

[181] For example, compare to "A Caravan from China," the final poem in Bynner's 1925 collection *Caravan*, which evokes an imagined trip back to the west via the historical silk road: "I went away a western man / But I am coming back in a caravan, // Coming with wisdom in my hands / Slowly, slowly over the sands." (Witter Bynner, *Caravan* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1925), 77)

translations of modernist Chinese poets by Acton and Chen in the 1935 "Chinese Number" compound this state of affairs, even as they refute assumptions that Anglo-American modernist poets were completely ignorant of a continental Chinese modernism. In this way, despite Monroe's own stated aspirations, the magazine's "open door" indeed remained "half-shut," serving as a temporal gatekeeper for those like Kwan who would seek to contribute their own English verse to American modernism.

This is not the end of the story, however. In an unpublished 1919 letter written to Monroe from Los Angeles, Kwan relates some brief biographical details along with his other artistic endeavors:

> I was born about twenty three years ago in a little village beyond Canton in South China and came to America as a student when I was sixteen. I have lived in Los Angeles now for three years where I have made my living in various ways including the "movies." I began to write for the Los Angeles Sunday Times eight months ago, and they have published ten articles, among them one on Chinese Poetry. I am now working on translations.
>
> I send a plum-blossom (first, last, and very beautiful) wish to you and "Poetry."[182]

In the same period that Kwan was sending translations to *Poetry* and being photographed as a "poet" by Mather, he was nearly simultaneously working as a technical assistant in Los Angeles to D.W. Griffith on the set of the 1919 film *Broken Blossoms*. During this time he stayed at the Garnier building, the current site of the Los Angeles Chinese American Museum and "the oldest and most important single structure linking the [contemporary] Chinese community to Los Angeles' original Chinatown."[183] Though the majority of

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[182] Moon Kwan, to Harriet Monroe, May 2, 1919, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 43 Folder 24, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Kwan's translations were published two years later in *Poetry*'s June 1921 number. His contributor notes in the number are very brief–in keeping with the standard practice of the magazine at the time–and omits any reference to his work in "the movies," burying the authoritative link for American scholars between Moon Kwan the poet and Moon Kwan the filmmaker in the archival record.

[183] "The Building," *Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles*, 2023, *http://camla.org/the-building/*.

Chinese students in the United States came from northern and eastern China, Kwan was born in Guangdong and spoke Cantonese, enabling him to communicate to the film's Chinese extras. Whereas Kwan positioned himself in relation to signifiers of classical Chinese tradition in his endeavors within poetry and fine art, he went to great lengths in Griffith's production to advocate for the *modernity* of the Chinese people. He persuaded Griffith against the Chinese protagonist of the film wearing a queue, arguing it would be woefully anachronistic for a narrative taking place in the current day.[184]

This experience, in all of its dimensions, would prove formative for Kwan. After obtaining his degree in English at Berkeley he spent the next fifteen years shuttling between the United States and China, helping to lay the infrastructure for China's nascent film industry while also contributing to the odd Hollywood production and screening Chinese films in the United States. During his time stateside he crossed paths with pioneer Asian Americans in Hollywood such as Anna May Wong and cinematographer James Wong Howe, and formed an enduring friendship with prolific journalist and Hollywood screenwriter Ben Hecht.[185] Though he never acquired US citizenship, even after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 made naturalization possible for Asian Americans,

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[184] Qian Zhang, "From Hollywood to Shanghai: American Silent Films in China" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2009), 176–77.

[185] For scholarship of Hollywood's Asian American community in the interwar period–which overlaps with the silent film era, early sound film, and Hollywood's "golden age"–see Arthur Dong, *Hollywood Chinese* (Angel City Press, 2019). See also, for example, Katie Gee Salisbury, "Young Hollywood Was Asian," *Medium*, May 3, 2022, *https://katiegeesalisbury.medium.com/young-hollywood-was-asian-aa5e8da6e5c8*. For Hecht's reminiscences on Kwan, see Florice Whyte Kovan, *Rediscovering Ben Hecht: Selling the Celluloid Serpent* (Washington, DC: Snickersnee Press, 1999). The intersections of Asian American actors and filmmakers within American modernism generally is an area which demands further critical attention. For example, Anna May Wong was close friends with Carl Van Vechten, the writer and photographer who played a pivotal yet vexatious role in exposing the Harlem Renaissance to the broader Euro-American public. For an extensive discussion of Anna May Wong and Carl Van Vechten's friendship, see Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend* (Hong Kong, HONG KONG: Hong Kong University Press, 2012). For profiles of Anna May Wong among continental modernists such as Walter Benjamin, see Shirley Lim, *Performing the Modern* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2019).

his continued transpacific movement between Hong Kong and the United States very much fits the social dynamics of what Aihwa Ong describes as "flexible citizenship."[186] Despite this, according to Kwan himself, he "decided to return to China after his humiliating experience at a party in Hollywood in the early 1920s."[187] Unable to break past the "bamboo" ceiling of the interwar American literary sphere, and with only intermittent opportunities prospects within Hollywood's oppressive social climate, his attentions turned toward film making in Cantonese.[188] In the 1930s he co-founded Grandview Film Studio (*Daguan pianchang* 大观片场) with Joseph Sunn (Joseph Sunn Jue / Chiu Shu-San [Cantonese] 赵树燊) as the first Cantonese studio which followed the Hollywood production model. Together they pioneered early Cantonese sound and color film for the Hong Kong and overseas American Chinese markets, and released over fifty films over the next two decades–nearly all lost today.[189] Notable examples from these films include the 1935 commercial hit *Lifeline* (Shengmingxian [Mandarin] / Sangmingsin [Cantonese] 生命线) and the 1941 *Golden Gate Girls* (Jinmen nü [M] / Gam mun neoi [C] 金门女)–the latter written, edited, and co-directed by Moon Kwan alongside pioneering female director

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[186] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

[187] Quoted in Zhang, "From Hollywood to Shanghai: American Silent Films in China," 257.

[188] Along with what has been previously discussed, Kwan published an account of Chinese prosody in the *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, based upon traditional Chinese understandings. Published roughly at the same time as Ezra Pound's edition of Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, it attracted little to no notice within the American modernist community.

[189] See Kar Law and Frank Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-Cultural View* (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

Esther Eng (Ng Gamhaa [C] 五锦霞), with Moon Kwan appearing for good measure in a cameo role (along with a three-month old Bruce Lee in his first cinematic appearance).[190]

We return now to our other Sino-US figure, Sun Yu. If he is given short shrift in our discussion here, it is so only because he is a figure within Chinese film history significantly *more* researched and widely known than Kwan. After obtaining a degree in English at University of Wisconsin and doing graduate work in film at Columbia in the 1920s, Sun became a director at Lianhua Films (Lianhua Yingye 联华影业), a significant production studio of popular left-wing cinema in 1930s Shanghai. Applying American directing techniques to the social problems and national ideals of Chinese modernity, Sun directed films such as *Toys* (*Xiao wanyi* 小玩意) in 1933, a melodrama starring Li Lili 黎莉莉 and Ruan Lingyu 阮玲玉–two of the biggest, if not *the* biggest screen actresses of the time–and *The Big Road* (*Dalu* 大路) in 1934, a social realist film which romanticizes China's laboring class.[191] In contrast with Kwan's countless lost Cantonese films–reflective of the lack of preservation of early Sinophone film history generally–much of Sun's filmography, directed towards a Mandarin audience, remains extant today. According to one scholar, Sun's social realism radically departs, technically and aesthetically, from the static blocking and camera shots of earlier Chinese film. In so doing, "'the poet of the silver screen' rejected western and Japanese imperialism while appropriating western democratic ideals,

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[190] See *Golden Gate Girls* (Women Make Movies, 2014). Law argues that Eng's work on the film is omitted in later accounts, and that Kwan took "the entire credit" for the film in his memoirs (Law and Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema*, 98).

[191] Toward this point, Stanley Kwan's 1991 film *Center Stage* remains the only biopic of a Chinese actress from this period. The Chinese name for the film is, simply, *Ruan Lingyu* 阮玲玉.

romantic momentum, a fascination with science and social progress, and representational techniques."[192]

If by now we have moved well afield of our original discussion of *Poetry* and Harriet Monroe, it is only so because of the ways in which the conditional inclusion of *Poetry*'s Open Door policy also opens doors for scholars to the rich intermedial and transnational connections which lay at the heart of American and Chinese modernity—yet are rarely discussed or perceived as such due to the ways in which these historical and material linkages operate within the disciplinary gaps of Anglo-American modernist studies, Asian American studies, East Asian studies, and American and Chinese film studies. Indeed, one cannot even neatly periodize the artistic production of Kwan and Sun into, for example, their early literary work in English poetry and their more artistically mature work in Chinese film. Both sustained their interests in English poetry and translation throughout their professional lives. In 1932, a decade after his translations in *Poetry*, Kwan published *A Chinese Mirror: Poems and Plays*, a revision and expansion of *Pagoda of Jewels*.[193] This second collection would see reprintings as late as 1971—this last time in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, for his part, Sun published *Li Po: A New Translation* in 1982, well into retirement. Belying the collection's subtitle, it includes his translations of Li Bai which first appeared in *Poetry* over a half century earlier.[194] As such, in the final analysis we can identify Kwan, Sun, and interwar Sino-US poets and scholars generally as a reversal of Harold Isaacs' category of secondary involvement: rather than a primary interest in Anglo-American modernism and

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[192] Corrado Neri, "Sun Yu and the Early Americanization of Chinese Cinema," in *Media, Popular Culture, and the American Century*, ed. Kingsely Bolton and Jan Olsson (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2010), 244.

[193] Moon Kwan, *A Chinese Mirror: Poems and Plays* (Los Angeles: Phoenix Press, 1932).

[194] Yu Sun, *Li Po: A New Translation* (Kowloon, HK: The Commercial Press, 1982).

a sustained, secondary interest in China, in the end the primary commitment of these figures was to the project of Chinese modernity itself; meanwhile, they sustained a secondary involvement in American modernism to the extent that it could function, in the words of Kwan, as a "bridge-land of east and west."

iv. Conclusion: "Westward to Cathay / the Headlong Future Sails"

In the winter of 1934 Harriet Monroe returned to China, visiting Lucy and gathering material for what would become *Poetry*'s 1935 "Chinese Number."[195] Her essay "In Peking" describes Beijing as a "rustily gorgeous, modern city"–a description which could just as easily apply to Chicago. She reflects:

> For me it was the same grand old town which I had descended upon from Siberia and Manchuria [in 1910]…the oriental glamour which I had almost lost the scent of through these POETRY years. It was just before the founding of POETRY that I first breathed that glamorous air, and it was strange to be carried back by the first whiff of it. "Has Peking changed?" they asked me often, expecting a lament; but I found little to regret and much to praise.[196]

As in "The Training of Chinese Children," Monroe contrasts the "oriental glamour" of Beijing's Qianlong-era architecture with the developments of cultural and technological modernity: "the automobiles which went surging and honking through a maze of vehicles and pedestrians" and the "pretty Chinese girls in slim brocades" dancing with men at

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[195] Though *Poetry* often ran issues with particular themes–including yearly Awards Numbers, multiple Christmas Numbers, a War Number during World War I, or a 1936 "Social Poets Number"–the "Chinese Number" was one of a scant few devoted to poetry of a national culture or language.

[196] Harriet Monroe, "In Peking," *Poetry* 46, no. 1 (1935): 30–31.

galas.[197] Likewise, she observes how "in the universities student poets were using the vernacular instead of the classic Mandarin, and large English classes were keenly eager to know what is going on in the western literary world."[198] Examples of the latter are highlighted in the number's inclusion of modernist verse by Xu Zhimo, He Qifang 何其芳 (Ho Chi-fang), and Lin Geng 林庚 (Lin Keng), translated by Harold Acton–to my knowledge, the first time contemporaneous Chinese poetry was published in a general-audience American literary magazine.[199]

On this second trip, Monroe's thoughts turned toward the longer history of China's engagement with the west. In her travel diary, she considers how Marco Polo traveled from Western Europe to Beijing when it was previously Khanbaliq, the seat of the Mongolian khanate under Kublai Khan.[200] Polo's *The Description of the World* remained the primary point

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[197] Monroe, "In Peking", 31, 32. Monroe remarks upon "the narrow hutung [sic] leading to a Chien-Lung home with its flowering courts and beautiful lofty rooms."(Monroe, ibid, 31.) The Qianlong 乾隆 emperor wielded power over China from 1711 until his death in 1799. A comparison could easily be made to the reign of Queen Victoria in England In the nineteenth century, as far as how they lend their names to respective ages in their nation's history which, in hindsight, connote a final high water mark of imperial splendor or "glamour."

[198] Ibid., 32.

[199] See Harriet Monroe, *Poetry* 46, no. 1 (1935), 14-19. Acton was a British aesthete who ran in the same Elton College circle as Evelyn Waugh before his decampment to China. His translations with Chen Shixiang in *Modern Chinese Poetry* (1936) mark the second significant example of collaborative translation with a Chinese scholar in Anglo-American modernism. The first, Witter Bynner and Jiang Kanghu's *The Jade Mountain* (1922), a complete translation of the anthology *Tangshi San bai shou* 唐诗三百首, will be central to the discussion of interwar translation in chapter two. Chen himself is perhaps most remembered in American poetry for Gary Snyder's memorialization of him, nearly half a century later, in the title poem of *Axe Handles* (1983). Recalling his time at Berkeley in the 1950s, where Chen was appointed a professor of Chinese and comparative literature, Snyder writes, "It's in Lu Ji's Wên Fu, fourth century / A.D."Essay on Literature"-—in the / Preface: "In making the handle / Of an axe / By cutting wood with an axe / The model is indeed near at hand." / My teacher Shih-hsiang Chen / Translated that and taught it years ago" (Gary Snyder, *Axe Handles* (Albany, CA: North Point Press, 1983), *https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57150/axe-handles*).

[200] Harriet Monroe, "China Diary, 1934-1935, 3 Vols." n.d., Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 4, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

of information concerning China and the greater Asian world for centuries afterwards.[201] Before arriving in China, Monroe composed a brief poem in common meter on this theme in her diary. Responding to Rudyard Kipling's endlessly quoted and misquoted "The Ballad of East and West," and its refrain "For East is East and West is West," she concludes, "Now it is westward to Cathay / The headlong Future sails."[202] Though she refers to China by its poetically archaic name–popularized in modernist poetry by Pound's collection of the same name[203]–she foresees a future where East-West relations are radically reoriented: rather than operating by way of Kipling's England, or Western Europe, the trade winds of the "headlong Future" would be a geopolitical alliance of China and America–wherefrom one travels west, not east, to East Asia, and east to Western Europe.[204]

Monroe sustained an interest in China from her first visit in 1910 until the end of her tenure at *Poetry* in 1936, when she unexpectedly died at the age of seventy-six while in Peru. For others, however, the modernist fascination with East Asia was treated as a momentary flash in the pan. In the December 1928 number of *Poetry*, a reviewer expresses their growing fatigue. They bemoan, "We have had, in the last few years, so many translations of Chinese and Japanese poems-not always especially interesting in English-that

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[201] See Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, trans. Sharon Kinoshita (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2016).

[202] Monroe, "China Diary, 1934-1935, 3 Vols."

[203] Ezra Pound, *Cathay: A Critical Edition, Edited by Timothy Billings* (Fordham University Press, 2019).

[204] Deleuze and Guattari later make the same point in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "America reversed the directions: it put its Orient in the West, as if it were precisely in America that the earth came full circle; its West is the edge of the East" (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 19).

perhaps the novelty is off the oriental manner."[205] Clearly Monroe did not agree. At a 1934 poetry reading at Peking Normal University in 1934, she recited poems by Carl Sandburg, Wallace Stevens, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. She also read Lindsay's "The Chinese Nightingale," a personal favorite of hers, and Eunice Tietjens' "The Most-Sacred Mountain," on the theme of Mount Taishan 泰山. Her selection of poets attests to how, even in her late tenure at the magazine, she continued to favor the poetry written at the nascence of *Poetry* magazine and American modernism. The next chapter will explore the out-sized role which China and things Chinese held for these early American modernist poets. Rather than the fluorescence of translations of Chinese poems in the interwar period which would fatigue the *Poetry* reviewer, or the interwar conditional inclusion of Sino-US poets, the early modernist period was marked by Lindsay, Tietjens, and other poets fantasizing a hypothetical China in an "oriental manner."[206]

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[205] *Poetry* 33, no. 3 (1928), 160. The reviewer, Margery Mansfield, was a business manager for *Poetry*.

[206] For a similar phrasing as Mansfield, see also Bynner. In his response to John Fletcher Gould's account of imagism, he contends that imagism was a "Japanese rather than Chinese manner." (Witter Bynner, "Patterns of Eastern Culture," in *Prose Pieces*, ed. James Kraft, The Works of Witter Bynner (1945; repr., New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1979), 238)

3. INTERCHAPTER: "THE ORIENTAL MANNER"

In December 1916 a notice appears in *Poetry* remarking upon a winter lecture series facilitated by the magazine and representative of its "new movement":

> In the first lecture, on November 19th, Miss Harriet Monroe presented the historical background of the new movement, besides reading from her own poems. In the second, on November 26th, Vachel Lindsay personally explained and illustrated his *Poem Games*. Padraic Colum, the Irish poet, will speak on December 3rd, and Witter Bynner on December 10th. Among the other speakers will be Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, Arthur Davison Ficke, Eunice Tietjens, Mary Aldis, Florence Kiper Frank, and later in the season Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, the English poet.[207]

The speakers of the series were selected for their ability to speak to the state of the field of modernist poetry–and more specifically, the state of *Poetry*, of which all of the speakers were contributors. The announcement also indicates the speakers were chosen for their "personalities," "which it is to be hoped will stimulate interest in the art," and that each will, "in addition to reading from his or her own poems, speak of his method of work and his theories of the art."[208] And yet another, surprising undercurrent runs through these assembled speakers in regards to China. Three had immediate familial ties to the country. Lucy Calhoun's time in China was discussed in the previous chapter, while Lindsay and Tietjens had missionary siblings stationed in China. (Tietjens' sister Louise Hammond, stationed in the eastern city Wuxi 无锡, was a two-time contributor to *Poetry* herself.) By 1916, Lowell had successfully out-maneuvered Pound to become the arbiter of imagism in the eyes of the general American public, and afterwards began a project of Chinese poetry

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[207] "Announcement," *Poetry* 9, no. 3 (1916): 162. Though the lecture series is titled *Twelve Talks by Poets on Poetry*, only eleven are enumerated in the announcement.

[208] Ibid.

translations with her childhood friend and sinologist Florence Ayscough, culminating in *The Fir-Flowered Tablets* (1921). Ficke had published a book of ekphrastic poems responding to Japanese *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 woodblock prints and would soon accompany Bynner on his first trip to China and Japan.[209] For Bynner, these travels would have a profound effect on the subsequent direction of his work, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Tietjens herself had returned from a trip to China earlier that year, which inspired her collection *Profiles from China* (1917). Rounding out the participants in the lecture series, Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* (1916) has been argued to display intermittent flashes of East Asian poetics characteristic of imagism.[210] Finally, while Aldis did not publish work related to East Asia herself, she did review Lowell's imagist anthology *Some Imagist Poets* (1916) for *The Little Review*,[211] as for Colum, he established himself in part by way of his staunch opposition to imagism.[212]

As the saying goes, once is chance, twice is coincidence, and three times makes a trend. So what should be made of fully eight of the eleven announced speakers in this

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[209] Concerning Japan's place in American modernism and in the travels of American poets, David Ewick makes an interesting claim: "British poets continued to travel to and to work in Japan in the twenties, thirties, and even into the forties, but Bynner and Ficke were the last American poets of note to visit the country from 1917 until after the Second World War." David Ewick, "Witter Bynner and Japan," *Emerging from Absence: An Archive of Japan in English-Language Verse*, 2003, http://themargins.net/bib/B/BE/00beintro.html.

[210] According to Ewick, "the point more correctly is that Sandburg after 1913 incorporated into his work the principles of imagism, and the influence is more Pound than Japan. Insofar as one can find a likeness to Japanese poetics in Sandburg's verse it is in the *Chicago Poems*, a few of which are brief, unrhymed, and culminate in a sharp visual image"; David Ewick, "Carl Sandburg (1878-1967). Chicago Poems. New York: Holt, 1916," *Emerging from Absence: An Archive of Japan in English-Language Verse*, 2003, http://themargins.net/bib/C/ca/ca06.html.

[211] Mary Aldis, "Review of Some Imagist Poets," *The Little Review* 3, no. 4 (1916): 26–31.

[212] John Gould Fletcher, "The Orient and Contemporary Poetry," in *The Asian Legacy and American Life*, ed. Arthur Christy (New York: John Day Company, 1945), 145–74.

lecture series–of the Americans, eight of nine–all having personal and professional entanglements with Asia? Well before "the vogue of Chinese poetry" in the interwar 1920s,[213] what appears in the work of numerous contributors to *Poetry* is a persistent, multivarious engagement with Asia, and China in particular. Yet scholarship insufficiently distinguishes these engagements of Lindsay, Tietjens, and others from that of the central figures of this dissertation. Rather than the experimental approach of Monroe, Bynner, or Pound, the aesthetics of early modernist poets are best understood--to borrow the phrasing of one of *Poetry*'s contributors--as poetry in an "oriental manner."[214]

i. The Emperor Han Heard A Certain Word

Allen Upward's "The Word" appears in *Poetry*'s September 1913 number as part of a sequence of brief vignettes titled *Scented Leaves–From a Chinese Jar*. In its entirety, it reads:

> The first time the emperor Han heard a certain Word he said, "It is strange." The second time he said, "It is divine." The third time he said, "Let the speaker be put to death."[215]

Strange, divine, and finally intolerable, the prose poem's relationship to language stands in direct contrast with the sentiment of Emily Dickinson's "[A word is dead]": "A word is dead / When it is said, Some say. // I say it just / Begins to live / That day."[216] Rather

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[213] Hsin-Hai Chang, "The Vogue of Chinese Poetry," *Edinburgh Review*, no. 236 (1922): 99–114.

[214] Margery Mansfield, "Review of Nine Dragons by Bertha Ten Eyck James," *Poetry* 33, no. 3 (1928): 161.

[215] Allen Upward, "The Word," *Poetry* 2, no. 6 (1913): 199.

[216] Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas Johnson (New York, NY: Little, Brown And Company, 1961), 534–35.

than a speaker giving life to "a word" through its enunciation and repetition, in Upward it is the repetition of "a certain Word" which provokes the emperor to sentence its speaker to death. Is the reader intended to take this as proscription against "certain" words which must necessarily be censored by the head of the state–or rather an entreaty, under pain of death, for variety and novelty of rhetorical expression? The latter reading interprets the poem as a fantastic staging of modernism's central tenet, to "make it new." Yet within the diegesis of the prose poem itself, this exhortation becomes untenable: if "a certain Word" for the "emperor Han" were to refer to *any* given word, a terrible recursion would soon take effect which would lead to the destruction of all speakers and language in total.

The title of Upward's series, *Scented Leaves–From a Chinese Jar*, recalls that *other* pillar of nineteenth century American poetics, Walt Whitman, and his monumental *Leaves of Grass*. In both texts, "leaves" serves as a deictic reference towards the pages and poems of the respective collections. However, Whitman's "leaves of grass" indicate his subject as radically commonplace and grounded--even as his expansive, prophetic verse reveals the rhizomatic multiplicity of American experience. In contrast, the "leaves" in Upward are racially particularized and "scented," indicating a suspension of logic and a decadent derangement of the senses. Rather than the transformative possibility space of Whitman's radically inclusive subjectivity, Upward offers a transportive, oneiric flight of fancy. The tea "leaves" of his poems arrive as if from another space and time: a preserved "Chinese" past displaced to an Anglo-American present. Upward's ahistorical China continues in the steps of Hegel, and his infamous declaration that China's sociohistorical development exists somewhere outside of the zeitgeist of history.

Monroe was herself relatively indifferent to the historical provenance of Upward's "The Word." Rather, it was Pound, who served as liaison between Monroe and Upward in

his capacity as the magazine's "international correspondent," that expressed serious misgivings concerning the collection.[217] Responding to Pound's concerns, Upward explains to Monroe that his poems "are only recollections of Chinese culture literature in the sense that the flowers are recollections of the rains." In particular, his understanding of Chinese culture is "derived from the classic 'Book of Odes' in Legge's translation, and from Prof. Giles's History of Chinese literature." Upward was introduced to these texts by the amateur sinologist Launcelot Cranmer-Byng, who ran the "Wisdom of the East" series at John Murray in London, and who published texts throughout the 1910s such as Lawrence Binyon's *Flight of the Dragon* (1911) and Byng's own Chinese translations.[218] In turn, Upward introduced Giles' *History of Chinese Literature* to Pound, a text which had considerable consequence for Pound's engagement with Chinese culture, poetry, and language.[219]

Upward allows that "of course Kublai and the Ming emperors are historical personages," yet their appearance in his collection are not intended to imply historical accuracy; as he puts it, referencing his description of the Ming Tombs elsewhere in *Scented Leaves*, "whether willows grow round them I do not know." Instead, what he seeks to convey is "the spirit" of Chinese poetry, "without much caring for the accuracy of the local

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[217] According to Huang, Upward's poems "immediately caught Pound's attention because they were reminiscent of his own experience with those Chinese paintings in the British Museum." Yet Huang leaves it unclear how or when Pound first encountered the poems. In fact, it was Pound's enthusiasm for them that prompted Upward's submission to *Poetry* (Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2002), 67). See also "Personal Letter to Harriet Monroe from Allen Upward," January 10, 1914, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 26, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[218] "Personal Letter to Harriet Monroe from Allen Upward," February 24, 1913, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 26, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. As Upward further relates to Monroe, "Some years ago a friend and I started a small series 'Wisdom of the East'…One booklet contains versifications of the Odes from Legge's prose rendering."

[219] Huang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 67.

color." As a kind of intellectual exercise, Upward muses to Monroe, "It would be interesting if you were to send the 'Leaves' to Pekin, when they appear, or find out how they strike a Chinese scholar. I have never been to China, and very much wish I could go."[220] Monroe's response to Upward on the matter is placid and direct:

> I thought you did not wish us to explain fully the fact that those Chinese things were chiefly yours. 'Paraphrase' seems to me a rather loose word, which the knowing would stretch to cover the case. Of course, I should be delighted to make an explanation.[221]

In the end, in the back matter of the October 1913 number, concluding Upward's biography, the following note appears: "The *Scented Leaves* are not direct translations, but paraphrases from the Chinese."[222] Regarding how much of "The Word" corresponds to Giles and established Chinese history, and how much of it is "paraphrase," it happens there was indeed an "emperor Han" – Han Gaozu 漢高祖, or "High Founder of the Han," more often referred to by his given name Liu Bang 劉邦. However, Giles quickly passes over this figure in *History of Chinese Literature* and never references him by name. Instead, the beginning of his chapters which are notionally concerned with the "Han Dynasty" instead discuss at length Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, the despotic "first emperor" of a united China whose reign is appropriately identified as the Qin dynasty. According to tradition, Qin

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[220] "Personal Letter to Harriet Monroe from Allen Upward."

[221] "Personal Letter to Allen Upward from Harriet Monroe," October 6, 1913, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 26, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[222] "Notes," *Poetry* 2, no. 6 (1913): 228.

Shihuang burned the Confucian classics and buried the Confucian scholars alive in his attempt to eliminate all recorded history which preceded him.[223]

Insofar as *Scented Leaves* operates akin to an extended daydream or reverie precipitated by an ambiguity in Legge and Giles's sinological work, Upward's invocation of references to the Ming tombs and Kublai Khan invites comparison to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and the poem's subtitle, "A vision in a dream. A fragment." Nominally set in the reign of another emperor of China, approximately 1400 years after the Qin dynasty, the poem famously begins, "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / a stately pleasure-dome decree."[224] The "Xanadu" of Coleridge's poem is the summer capital Shangdu (上都) of the Mongolian Yuan *khanate*, which was founded by Kublai (in Mandarin, Hubilie 忽必烈) and located roughly 200 miles north of the country's capital of Khanbaliq or Dadu (大都)–now called Beijing. Like James Hilton's description of a "Shangri-La" ensconced in the *Lost Horizon* (1933) of the Tibetan Himalayas, the opulence and instability of Coleridge's vision–brimming with incongruous details such as an "Abyssinian maid" who sings of "Mount Agora" on her dulcimer–obscures its actual geographical referent and historical facticity. What Coleridge describes as Kubla's "pleasure-dome" is roughly concordant with Marco Polo's description, later paraphrased in Samuel Purchas' *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625),

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[223] Herbert Giles, trans., *A History of Chinese Literature* (1901; repr., New York: D. Appleton and Company, 2013), 78–79, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43711/43711-h/43711-h.htm.This telling is preserved in the Chinese *chengyu* 成语, or fixed phrase, *fenshu kengru* 焚书坑儒–"burning books and burying Confucianists." Given that this information comes down from the *Book of Han* (汉书 *Hanshu*), the subsequent dynasty which usurped him, there is pervasive skepticism in contemporary scholarship about the accuracy and extent of these claims.

[224] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan," in *Christabel; Kubla Khan; The Pains of Sleep* (1816; repr., John Murray: London, 2020), https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Christabel;_Kubla_Khan;_The_Pains_of_Sleep_(1816)/Kubla_Khan.

of Shangdu as a walled city of permanent settlements and mobile yurt tents.[225] All the rest, including the sacred river "Alph," which "ran / Through caverns measureless to man / Down to a sunless sea," are Coleridge's invention alone.

Coleridge's account of the poem's genesis should also be considered. The preface to the poem describes how he fell asleep in a chair while reading *Purchas's Pilgrimes*, having ingested "an anodyne" of the opium tincture laudanum for a "slight indisposition." Consequently, "On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved."[226] "Kubla Khan" is thus not offered to the reader as a dream-like reverie as such, but as the mediation of Coleridge's transcription of his "distinct recollection" of a dream; moreover, not just any dream, but an opium dream of China: a country itself somatically associated with opium as a result of the historical and material conditions of British colonialism.[227]

The result is a poem which emerges out of a confluence of China's historical entanglements with the west: first as the eastern terminus of inter-imperial trade along the Silk Road, and afterwards as semi-colonial subject. Yet "Kubla Khan" has been historically read first and foremost as suggestive of the free play of the human imagination, particularly

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[225] Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, trans. Sharon Kinoshita (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2016), 66.

[226] Coleridge, "Kubla Khan."

[227] For a discussion of deterministic readings of Chinese characteristics in light of this historical relationship, see for example Eric Hayot, "Bertrand Russell's Chinese Eyes," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 18, no. 1 (2006): 120–54, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41490956.

in light of Coleridge's own philosophy of imagination.[228] According to Coleridge, primary imagination corresponds to immediate sense perception–the infinite, "eternal act of creation" registered within man's "finite mind." Secondary imagination results when the mind re-organizes these impressions according to "laws of association," as with fantasy, or "fancy"; or when it undergoes an "esemplastic" process which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate." It is this latter imagination, which attempts to arrive at an ideal, transcendent unity of experience–and thereby reconnects the finite human mind to the divine infinite–which Coleridge calls poetic imagination.[229] However, if we go by his own telling, what "Kubla Khan" emphatically is *not* is a poem which demarcates a profound transformation of Coleridge's perceptual understanding of his own life and artistic work, but rather a moment of inspiration which befell him as if by magic, and consequently one to which he could never return. As the preface concludes, "the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him…but the to-morrow is yet to come."[230]

ii. The Successor of Merlin

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[228] See, for example, James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 46.

[229] Ibid., 120–21.

[230] Coleridge, "Kubla Khan."

In "The Lyric in Poetry," published in the June 1923 number of *Poetry* Magazine, Eunice Tietjens considers the work of the "lyrical" mode in terms of energy. She quotes approvingly from a novelist acquaintance, who states that the function of art is to "step up life, as an engineer steps up energy." However, instead of pursuing the possible connections between modernist art and scientific innovation, as was often the case with Monroe and Pound, she instead pivots this notion of intensified experience towards a consideration of the transcendental:

> In the world of today the lyric poet is the successor of Merlin. He alone can weave spells about common things and turn them by a sure alchemy into the pure gold of inescapable beauty. He alone can step up life. Today the outward phenomena of magic have been stripped away. It was enough for Aladdin's djinn to wave his hand and create a palace overnight. Nowadays any wealthy man can wave a million and create the same effect. But we know it is not magic. What was magical in the djinn was the escape from reality, the freeing of the heart of Aladdin from the bounds of self. And this is the power of the lyric poet-a power which time cannot touch.[231]

If modernity for Tietjens is fundamentally a condition of disenchantment, where "the outward phenomena of magic" has been "stripped" from lived experience, then the purchase of the modernist lyric is an ability to "step up life" by means of an aesthetic escape from reality. In this way, the modernist poet proves themselves "the successor of Merlin" in their ability to alchemize experiences of "inescapable beauty" within a modern world otherwise disenchanted of his magic.

A poem suffused with such a transportive magic for both Monroe and Tietjens is Vachel Lindsay's "The Chinese Nightingale." Lindsay was born in Springfield Illinois, just south of the twin towns of Canton and Pekin–both apocryphally named according to the belief that United States and China were geographically antipodal from one another.[232] A

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[231] Eunice Tietjens, "The Lyric in Poetry," *Poetry* 22, no. 3 (1923): 153.

[232] "Pekin, Illinois," *Wikipedia*, n.d., *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pekin,_Illinois#Origins_of_Pekin*.

note which accompanies the publication of "The Chinese Nightingale" in *Poetry* explains, "Mr. Lindsay wrote The Chinese Nightingale in Springfield and New York, between May and October, 1914, while his father and mother were in China visiting their son-in-law and daughter, who are medical missionaries at Lu-Chow-Fu." It continues:

> The poet, who has never seen China himself, says of the poem: "The intention of the piece is to combine such elements of Chinese decoration and whim as are to be found by the superficial observer in the curio-store, the chop-suey restaurant, the laundry, the Chinese theatre. To these are to be added such general ideas of China as may be acquired in any brief resume of their religion, their customs and temperament."[233]

As Olson puts it, Lindsay sought "To locate the nascent origins of creative expression in African or Chinese or Native American" culture.[234] "The Congo," his most anthologized poem, locates a percussive, driving intensity in its primitivist depiction of male black bodies engaged in a "hoodoo" ritual[235]; on the other side of the coin, "The Chinese Nightingale" effects a more subtle, elegant narrative derived from the "decoration and whim" of Chinese culture's "superficial" aspects. As with Upward, Lindsay locates Chinese culture in a thoroughly imaginary past; however, Lindsay seeks to bring this past to bear on a diasporic Chinese American present. Deep in the night, while "San Francisco sleeps as the dead," the laundryman Chang, "with a countenance of stone, / ironed and ironed

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[233] "Notes," *Poetry* 5, no. 5 (1915): 247–49, 247. Luzhou 泸州 was a key port city in early 20th century China along the Yangtze river (Changjiang 长江, literally "long river") in Southwest Sichuan province.

[234] Liesl Olson, *Chicago Renaissance: Literature and Art in the Midwest Metropolis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 289.

[235] For a contemporary evaluation of "The Congo," see "Noncanonical Congo: A Discussion of Vachel Lindsay's 'The Congo.'" *Poetry Foundation*, November 30, 2009, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/75438/noncanonical-congo-a-discussion-of-vachel-lindsays-the-congo.

alone."[236] Soon, however, the "joss" incense sticks which he has lit become animate, and regale him with a song set in a China so ancient that even "Confucius was not yet born,"[237] a lost utopia where, "When all the world was drinking blood… / We drank our tea in China, beneath the sacred spice-trees,"[238] and "Spring came on forever."[239]

In Florence Kiper Frank's "The Movies," anthologized in Monroe's *The New Poetry*, the medium of film is ambivalently described as a "cheap release / From worry and from pain."[240] In his correspondence with Monroe, Upward likewise remarks, "It is time we had some literature not competing with the Picture Palace."[241] Yet in Lindsay it is nonetheless the elegiac song of a lost love and remembrance of a mythic, lost Chinese civilization which provides Chang with a momentary "release" from his life of cramped, urban tenement walls and the drudgery of menial physical labor. The oneiric reverie of "The Chinese Nightingale" was certainly no less diverting than anything to be found at "the movies" for the readers of *Poetry*. From today's viewpoint, the poem's narration in song by a talking incense stick resembles nothing so much as the Hollywood musical, which Richard Dyer describes as existing on a continuum of "Entertainment and Utopia," with genre tropes and racial caricatures on one end, and on the other an evocation of a

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[236] Vachel Lindsay, "The Chinese Nightingale," *Poetry* 5, no. 5 (1915): 199, 200.

[237] Ibid., 202.

[238] Ibid., 199.

[239] Ibid., 201.

[240] Florence Kiper Frank, "The Movies," in *The New Poetry* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), 163–64.

[241] "Personal Letter to Harriet Monroe from Allen Upward," June 2, 1913, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 26, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

prelapsarian world through which we can fantasize ways in which our own world could be otherwise.[242]

iii. Profiles from China

Tietjens' *Profiles from China* proved to be neither entertainment nor utopia.[243] With the exception of "Echoes," a section in the middle of the book of eight short poems remarkably similar to Upward's *Scented Leaves*, her poems are stamped throughout with reportage datelines: Wuxi [Wusih], Nanjing [Nanking], Suzhou [Soochow], Beijing [Peking], Hankou [Hankow], Shanghai. Combined with her section titles, "From the Interior" and "China of the Tourists," these paratextual elements attest to the collection's facticity, derived from her travels in China while visiting her sister Louise Hammond, a missionary residing in Wuxi in Jiangsu province. As Louis Untermeyer blurbs in an advertisement for the book, the poems constitute "the emotional gleanings of a winter spent in a Chinese city in the interior."[244]

The speaker of Tietjens' poems frequently serves as an intermediary for the American reader, a tour guide providing access to a contemporary China quite different from Lindsay's "elements of Chinese decoration and whim as are to be found by the

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[242] Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," in *Only Entertainment* (Routledge, 2002), 19–35. In particular, the technical finesse, anthropomorphism, and doubtful evocation of exotic, distant lands in "The Nightingale" calls to mind the animated musical, the template of which was established by Disney in the 1930s and 1940s.

[243] Eunice Tietjens, *Profiles from China* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1917).

[244] "Advertisement for Profiles from China," n.d. Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 4 Folder 48. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

superficial observer." The form of Tietjens' approach, and its self-imposed limitations, can be seen in "The Story Teller," a poem which appears early in *Profiles from China*, and was published alongside "The Most-Sacred Mountain," "Our Chinese Acquaintance," and other poems from the collection in the December 1916 number of *Poetry*.[245] It begins with a scene reminiscent of "The Chinese Nightingale," a storyteller sitting "in a corner of the market-place," spinning a tale: perhaps of "a fox-maiden" bewitching a scholar, "an unfilial son tortured" by devils, or "a decadent queen" conniving with her eunuchs. However, unlike Lindsay, the poem does not transport us as readers into another time and place, but instead denies us access to the story teller's tale altogether. However "Artful are the gestures of his mouth, elaborate and full of guile," the poem's speaker does not know Chinese. The speaker, the story teller, and the reader alike remain "alien" and alienated from one another.[246]

If we follow Benjamin's "The Storyteller," the transition between the oral storyteller and the written narrative is a shift in aesthetic mediation which coincides with the epistemological break of modernity, whereby "wisdom" which the storyteller brings from afar becomes converted into the "information" of the written text.[247] Tietjens' "The Story Teller" likewise presents a speaker of the modern western world encountering an incomplete Chinese modernity, where both premodern wisdom and Dickensian industrialization vie with one another for dominance. Moreover, this ontological gap is racialized and rendered impassible by Tietjens. The result is best understand, borrowing

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[245] *Poetry* 9, no. 3 (1916).

[246] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 18–19.

[247] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 83–109.

from Nan Da, as an "intransitive encounter," with no equivalences, conversion, exchanges, or even appropriation possible.[248] Over and over, across different milieus and locations, Tietjens' consistent theme presents itself in *Profiles from China*, of "the Orient–struggling and suffering, spawning and dying–but what it is I shall never know."[249] At best, as articulated in "New China: The Iron Works," the industrial and technological advancements of the west which have been "embedded in the east" only amount to "to-tomorrow set in yesterday," "a graft but not a growth."[250] In the face of this dim outlook, Tietjens' speaker in "Reflections in a Ricksha" is chagrined to report, "I grow insufferably superior and Anglo-Saxon. / One is what one is."[251]

If one is what one is, then what exactly is *Profiles from China*? The predominant mode of the collection–a combination of free verse and somewhat depersonalized dramatic monologue–bares an unmistakable resemblance to Edgar Lee Masters' contemporaneous and wildly acclaimed *Spoon River Anthology*. In a rare instance of *Poetry* reprinting material originally appearing elsewhere, a selection from Masters' cycle of poems ran in the magazine in 1914.[252] By 1915, still before the book's official print publication, *Poetry*'s editors declared Masters' poems to be "the literary sensation of the year," and that it "may

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[248] Nan Da, *Intransitive Encounter: Sino-U.S. Literatures and the Limits of Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[249] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 46.

[250] Ibid., 41.

[251] Ibid., 62.

[252] "Our Contemporaries," *Poetry* 5, no. 1 (1914): 42–45. Alice Coburn Henderson later argues that Pound and Tietjens' should be credited with their early discovery of Masters while he was still a relatively unknown quantity; see Alice Corbin Henderson, "Review of Spoon River Anthology by Edgar Lee Masters," *Poetry* 6, no. 3 (1915): 145–49.

prove a masterpiece in the wise judgment of posterity."[253] Whereas *Spoon River Anthology* is an intimate portrayal of "the vibration of the soul" of a small midwestern town, Tietjens' collection takes the resolute point of view of an outsider.[254] Nonetheless, the advertisement for *Profiles from China* ran with an approving blurb from Masters himself, alongside similar comments from Lindsay, Sandburg, Lowell and Louis Untermeyer.[255] Masters, Lindsay, and Sandburg were all based in and around the Chicagoland area, and Tietjens' poetry reflects the impact of regional modernism upon early modernist free verse generally. Even in China--or *especially* in China--Tietjens grows not only more Anglo-Saxon in sentiment, but Midwestern in literary style.[256] Untermeyer's quotations within this advertisement also bare further reflection. He begins, "These are times when the Orient becomes increasingly important. Our eyes are turned to the East with a growing understanding or, at least, a desire to understand." As for Tietjens' turn to the east, he claims, "there is no pseudo-orientalism in this book. It is the record, both humorous and tragic, of a profound spiritual experience, and it is by a genuine poet."[257] Untermeyer attests to an emergent cultural interest in China in interwar America; yet his generalized claims are surprisingly

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[253] "Notes," *Poetry* 5, no. 5 (1915): 247.

[254] Edgar Lee Masters, "What Is Poetry," *Poetry* 6, no. 6 (1915): 306–8, 308. The collection proved *too* intimate for some: It is attested that a self-enforced ban by local booksellers and librarians made *Spoon River Anthology* unavailable in Lewistown, Illinois for decades after its publication. See Laura Wolff Scanlan, "How the Once-Banned Spoon River Anthology Made a Comeback in Lewistown," *Humanities* 36, no. 6 (2015), https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2015/novemberdecember/statement/how-the-once-banned-spoon-river-anthology-made-comeback-i.

[255] "Advertisement for Profiles from China."

[256] For a discussion of how *Poetry* magazine and early modernist poetry attest to the regionalism of early American modernism, see Liesl Olson, *Chicago Renaissance*.

[257] Ibid.

tenuous when applied to Tietjens. Given our analysis of "The Story Teller" above, *does* she "desire to understand"? If not, what else is her purpose?

The cover of *Profiles from China*'s first edition, as depicted in the advertisement, offers a clue concerning the book's thesis. Along with the book's name, calligraphed in a stereotypical "wonton" font style, the dust jacket is adorned with the single Chinese character *di* 狄. The *Di* were one of the four "barbarian" tribes who, alongside the *Yi* 夷, *Man* 蛮, and *Rong* 戎, proverbially bordered China's north, east, south and west in antiquity. The way in which these tribes were understood within the Chinese sociocultural sphere is conveyed in James Legge's translation of the Confucian *Analects* (*Lunyu* 论语): "The Master said, 'The rude tribes of the east and north have their princes, and are not like the States of our great land which are without them.' 子曰、夷狄之有君、不如诸夏之亡也 *Zi yue, yidi zhi you jun, buru zhu xia zhi wang ye.*"[258] These tribes were consistently employed, often interchangeably, so as to provide rhetorical contrast, signify otherness, or assert a chauvinist Han or *Huaxia* 华夏 superiority. This is seen in *Mengzi* 孟子, commonly known by Legge's appellation of "Mencius." He observes, "I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land to change barbarians, but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians. 吾闻用夏变夷者，未闻变于夷者也 *Wu wen yong xia bian yi zhe, wei wen bian yu yi zhe ye.*"[259]

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[258] James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: Confucian Analects*, 2009, https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=4094.

[259] James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics: Vol. 2 The Works of Mencius*, 2019, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Chinese_Classics/Volume_2/The_Works_of_Mencius/chapter05.

Together with Pound's *Cathay*, which preceded it, and Lowell and Florence Ayscough's *Fir-Flower Tablets* and Bynner and Jiang Kanghu's *The Jade Mountain*, which both came afterwards, *Profiles from China* constitutes a modernist tetralogy of publications which employ Chinese characters as cover illustrations. The characters on *Fir-Flower Tablets* and *The Jade Mountain*—*songhua jian* 松花笺 and *yu shantou* 玉山头, respectively—are literal equivalences to their English titles and are indicative of their engagements with China as translation projects. In contrast, the single characters on the covers of *Profiles from China* and *Cathay*," *di* and *yao* 耀 provide commentary or perspectival approaches towards the contents of these books. The importance of the character *yao* within Pound's aesthetic theory will be explored at length in chapter three. As for Tietjens, the question is raised: who are the *Di*, or "northern barbarians" of *Profiles from China*? On the surface, the answer is obvious: the Chinese people themselves. Over and over, her speaker is sensorially assaulted by "filth" and "stench," "leprous hands" clutching at her skirt as she passes, and of the "unbelievable" odors of latrines in spring.[260] In the entirety of the city of Wuxi, it is only in the Western settlements, "the great church of the mission within the wall" and "the courtyard of the great factory beyond the wall," that she can "breathe." Lest the reader overlook the telling comparison, she elaborates, "The mission and the factory are the West. What they are I know."[261] Indeed, when she does happen upon something which delights her, such as the "tawny charm" of a camel in Beijing her conclusion is that this animal is

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[260] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 42-44.

[261] Ibid., 45.

not Chinese at all, but something else which has arrived from and will return to parts unknown. She remarks, "Here in the city you are alien, even as I am alien."[262]

Dewey observes that, perhaps contrary to expectations, "Sometimes the natives of a country resent [the delighted] visitor even more than they do that of the grumbler and fault finder. They feel that they are not treated as reality but merely as something to look at and enjoy."[263] Certainly Tietjens identifies a ready number of "native" friends to corroborate her antipathies. In contrast with Monroe, who was enchanted by the tiled roofs of Beijing and its *hutong* 胡同 residential neighborhoods, Tietjens' speaker in one poem meets her "Chinese acquaintance" "in the runway called a street, between the warrens known as houses." Adorned in continental dress and ideas, her intellectual acquaintance who has recently returned from overseas is also rendered "alien here," and expresses a "troubled uncertainty" towards China which mirrors her own: "China is very dirty……Our priests are rascals, and the people……I do not know."[264] The unresolved tension within her poems is thus not derived from a modernist defamiliarization or other stylistic techniques, but a perpetual social and cultural estrangement from the everyday conditions in which she finds herself. At the corner of a street in Wuxi, a "venerable Chinaman with a face such as Confucius must have worn" relieves himself in broad daylight, "suspended in mid-air over the broken pottery rim."[265] The moment which

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[262] Ibid., 63.

[263] John Dewey, Anne S Sharpe, and Carl Cohen, "Some Factors in Mutual National Understanding," in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 13 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 263.

[264] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 35, ellipses in original.

[265] Ibid., 44.

Tietjens captures is cheap and exploitative, pushing her description of squalor to its inevitable conclusion and rendering her "venerable Chinaman" as bestial and inhuman. Dewey notes, "Those who are not sensitive to new impressions and who have little esthetic taste go about criticizing what they see because it is unlike that which they are acquainted with and of which they have grown fond."[266] But is it "God's own country" back in Chicago which Tietjens has grown fond, or somewhere else entirely? As she passes the man self-consciously, she observes, enigmatically, that "He gazes at me contemplatively…with eyes in which the philosophy of the ages has its dwelling."[267]

Dewey diagnoses the two extremes of travelers: persons who "are always discontented when they are abroad," and those "in perpetual raptures over what is seen, and travel is a continual delight."[268] Tietjens represents a third category: those who first "travel in imagination," and afterwards find actual lived experience wanting.[269] In neither the urban squalor of modern China nor a disenchanted American midwest can she commune with "the philosophy of the ages." To do so, she must turn to the romantic sublime of Taishan 泰山, "The Most-Sacred Mountain." Here she is able to escape the blight of China's present, if only temporarily, and arrive at a place in which, "when Confucius came, half a thousand years before the Nazarene, he stepped with me, thus into

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[266] Dewey, Sharpe, and Cohen, "Some Factors in Mutual National Understanding," 262.

[267] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 44.

[268] Dewey, Sharpe, and Cohen, "Some Factors in Mutual National Understanding," 262–63.

[269] Ibid., 263. Dewey is at times notoriously inconsistent with his own terminology, particularly in his writing for a general public. Here his usage of "imagination" is akin to idle ideation and fantasy, in direct contrast with a transformative imagination which he aligns with creativity.

timelessness."[270] Having moved beyond chrononormative time, she is enmeshed in the infinite simultaneity of the natural world, where "the rhythm ceases,"[271] and "Li Po [Li Bai 李白], who was very drunk, wrote an impassioned poem to the moon."[272] Like Coleridge leaving Xanadu, she carries her glimpses of what lays beyond back to the material world:

> And time will close around me, and my soul stir to the rhythm of the daily round.
> Yet, having known, life will not press so close, and always I shall feel time ravel thin about me;
> For once I stood
> In the white windy presence of eternity.[273]

Likewise, at Tiantan 天坛, "The Altar of Heaven" admired by Monroe established in the Ming dynasty and ensconced in the center of Beijing, she is confronted with a natural divinity unattainable within western religious doctrine or a house of worship: "Heaven is very near. / For this is worship native as the air, wide as the wind, and poignant as the rain. / Pure aspiration, the eternal dream."[274] In the final analysis, Tietjens' antipathy towards China's present reveals her dissatisfaction with both American and Chinese modernity, which by any measure can only be understood by her as "barbaric" in comparison to China's imagined, arcadian past. Concluding *Profiles from China,* she considers Shanghai's extraterritorial "mixed court" system, presided over by a sharply intelligent but corrupt

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[270] Tietjens, *Profiles from China*, 38.

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid., 540.

[273] Ibid., 39.

[274] Ibid., 69.

Chinese judge and an honest but dim and disinterested western judge. The final line of the collection is an unresolved question hovering in the air: "The judges put their heads together. They are civilization and they are very grave. / What, I wonder, is civilization?"[275]

The first chapter of this dissertation identified Monroe's transformation of poetry's role in American modernism in light of her transpacific circulation of Chinese civilizational power. Unlike Tietjens, who avows here that "civilization" is nowhere to be found, whether one look to the East or West, Monroe perceived the progress of American and Chinese modernity as inextricable from one another. Yet Monroe herself made no aesthetic statements or editorial judgments regarding the how and why of a poem's engagement with China, "so long as they give us something of the rare flavor, the special exquisite perfume" of that country and its "royal line of Chinese poets," whose "delicate and beautiful art" were only just beginning to be discovered by American poets.[276] China emerged as a central preoccupation for both the canonical figures of high modernism and her own coterie of regional, early modernist poets. As Wallace Stevens pronounced, reflecting on a box of jasmine tea shipped to him from Beijing by Lucy Calhoun, "for a poet to have even a second-hand contact with China is a great matter."[277] Reprinting these words as a blind item in the "News Notes" of a 1923 number of Poetry, Monroe observes,

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[275] Ibid., 77.

[276] Harriet Monroe, "Introduction," in *The New Poetry* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), *https://www.bartleby.com/265/1000.html*.

[277] Holly Stevens, ed., *Letters of Wallace Stevens* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 253.

"The Orient allures the poets more and more."[278] In this sense, Monroe's early focus on China proved to be the absolute cutting edge of the cultural avant-garde. From the very beginning, she asserted, "This oriental influence is to be welcomed because it flows from deep original streams of poetic art. We should not be afraid to learn from it."[279]

This section of the dissertation has sought to not only "learn from" early modernist poetry written in the oriental manner, but also evaluate it in light of the transpacific experimentalism of Dewey, Monroe, Bynner, and Pound. That most of the texts discussed in this section have been dismissed or forgotten by contemporary scholars is indicative of the way they can be assessed as *failures* of imagination in the Deweyan sense. Yet such evaluations also tend to broadly typify modernist engagements with China as a whole as aesthetically minor, culturally appropriative, and perhaps best consigned to the dustbin of history. Anne Witchard, the editor of the recent collection *British Modernism and Chinoiserie*, acknowledges that time has not been kind to this area of study: what once was redolent to Stevens of "the good smells out of China"[280] now arrives to us mildewed and orientalist. Seeking to raise such work out of obscurity, Witchard identifies Upward's poems and Pound's *Cathay* as cut from the same cloth.[281] Scholars such as Huang likewise note the usage of Giles' *History of Chinese Literature* in both Upward and Pound. Building on the scholarship of Robert Kern, he describes the pair as being engaged in "intertextual

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[278] "News Notes," *Poetry* 21, no. 5 (1923): 287–89.

[279] Monroe, "Introduction."

[280] Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, 253.

[281] Anne Witchard, ed., "Introduction: 'The Lucid Atmosphere of Fine Cathay,'" *British Modernism and Chinoiserie* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 3–4.

reorientalizations."[282] On this point, what constitutes a contemporary critical intervention for Witchard and others is tantamount to a return to Monroe's earlier aesthetic judgment, which likewise did not separate the wheat from the chaff. In her 1917 anthology on the "new poetry"—the majority of which was previously published in *Poetry*—Pound's "The River-Merchant's Wife" and "Exile's Letter" appear alongside Tietjens's "The Most-sacred Mountain," Lindsay's "The Chinese Nightingale," and sixteen poems from Upward's *Scented Leaves*, concluding with "The Word."[283] Likewise, Pound anthologized several of Upward's poems from *Scented Leaves* in the first imagist anthology, *Des Imagistes*, beginning with "The Bitter Purple Willows"—which, the poem relates, inaccurately, are found "growing round the tombs of the exalted Mings." "The Word" and its homicidal emperor are omitted from the selection.[284]

Monroe observes that for the early modernist poets, "The task is difficult, because our poets, ignorant of Chinese, have to get at these masters through the literal translations of scholars."[285] However, as the Great War came to a close, a new battlefront emerged, with many would-be literary translators weighing in on how best to translate Chinese poetry. The next chapter will explore how Monroe and Tietjens put their own fingers on this scale, with *Poetry* becoming a staging ground for the Chinese translation battles of interwar modernism.

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[282] Huang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 68. Also 67-69 passim.

[283] Harriet Monroe, ed., *The New Poetry* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1917), https://www.bartleby.com/265/index1.html.

[284] Ezra Pound, ed., *Des Imagistes* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1914), 51–53.

[285] Monroe, "Introduction."

4. CHAPTER TWO: BOXING MATCHES AND / CHINESE POEMS

In 1953, *Poetry* editor Karl Shapiro replied to a letter of inquiry from one Mr. Adnan Caknakcioglu, concerning whether the magazine would be interested in his translations of classical Turkish poetry. Though Shapiro expresses interest in the translator's project, he also tempers his expectations, advising that "POETRY does print a certain amount of translated verse, but only rarely."[286] What is surprising about this statement is how it wildly contrasts with the editorial direction of the magazine in the interwar years. The first chapter of this dissertation previously discussed the publication of Sino-US poets in *Poetry*, and how their conditional inclusion tended towards translations of classical Chinese poetry. In the fall of 1922, Eunice Tietjens published a two-part series attesting to the magazine's interest in China, titled "On Translating Chinese Poetry." Remarkably, Pound's *Cathay* is largely left out of Tietjens' brief, yet surprisingly comprehensive history of English literary translations of Chinese poetry. Instead, she focuses her attention on subsequent work by Arthur Waley, Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough, and Witter Bynner and Jiang Kanghu 江亢虎 (1922)–all of which, like *Cathay*, contain sections which first appeared in *Poetry*.[287] Of the three, she estimates the collaborative translations of Bynner and Jiang as singularly

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[286] "Letter from Karl Shapiro to Adnan Caknakcioglu," 1953, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 73, Folder 9, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[287] Ezra Pound, *Cathay*, ed. Ernest Fenollosa, Mary de Rachewiltz, and Zhaoming Qian (1915; repr., New York: New Directions, 2015); Arthur Waley, *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (London: Constable and Company, 1918); Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough, *Fir-Flower Tablets* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/lowell/tablets/tablets.html.

"valid and universal in uttering beauty."[288] By the end of the year Lowell was openly feuding with Bynner and Tietjens in the pages of *Poetry*; the following year, in *Spring And All* (1923), William Carlos Williams would observe, "men knock blindly together / splitting their heads open / That is why boxing matches and / Chinese poems are the same."[289] This chapter will map the translation debates and battles of interwar American modernism. Instead of being a phenomenon particular to our contemporary age, the contention over modernism's translational engagements with China is revealed here to be centripetal to the development of Anglo-American modernist poetry itself. Though *Cathay* is often treated as *sui generis* within modernism, and the sole point of influence for literary Chinese translation in subsequent generations, this chapter recovers Bynner and Jiang's collaboration on *The Jade Mountain* as a critical text of transpacific American modernism.

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[288] Eunice Tietjens, "On Translating Chinese Poetry: I," *Poetry* 20, no. 5 (August 1922): 331.

[289] William Carlos Williams, *Spring and All* (1923; repr., New York, NY: New Directions, 2013), 44. As it happens, Williams was no disinterested party: thirty-five years after *Spring and All* he briefly attempted his own Chinese translations with the support of David Rafael Hsin-fu Wand; see Jonathan Cohen, "Empty Hills—Deep Woods—Green Moss: William Carlos Williams's Chinese Experiment," *Words Without Borders*, April 26, 2018, https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2018-04/william-carlos-williamss-chinese-experiment-jonathan-cohen/. Zhaoming Qian argues that sections of *Spring and All* itself, beyond the epigrammatic observation previously cited, bear the trace of Williams' extensive engagement with Chinese poetry; see Zhaoming Qian, *East-West Exchange and Late Modernism: Williams, Moore, Pound* (University of Virginia Press, 2017), doi:10.2307/j.ctt1wvwdnr. Williams' own personal library included the Cantonese primer *Chinese Made Easy* (1904, with an introduction by Herbert Giles), Herbert Giles's *A History of Chinese Literature* (1916 [1901]), Waley's *170 Chinese Poems* (1919) and *More Translations from the Chinese* (1919), Pound's *Cathay* (1915) and *Instigations* (1920), Bynner and Jiang's *The Jade Mountain* (1929), H.T. Tsiang's self-published novels *China Red* (1931) and *The Hanging on Union Square* (1935), and Lin Yutang's *The Gay Genius* (1947); see "Descriptive List of Works from the Library of William Carlos Williams at Fairleigh Dickinson University," *William Carlos Williams Review* 10, no. 2 (1984): 30–53.

i. Tempest in a China Teacup

If we are led to believe, as T.S. Eliot has it, that Pound was the "inventor of Chinese poetry for our time" with the publication of *Cathay* in 1915, then it appears a reviewer of Lowell and Ayscough's *Fir-Flower Tablets* in *Chinese Students' Monthly* did not get the message. Beginning with the supposition that translation from the Chinese language "has always remained an insuperable difficulty," the reviewer nonetheless observes, "it certainly looks that Chinese poetry is beginning to be appreciated by the cultivated English-reading public." Regarding Lowell's recent contribution to this "ready market" in which "Mr. Waley has achieved quite a success," the reviewer allows, "Miss Lowell's poetic gifts are unquestioned, and her power of transfusing foreign material into something original and pleasing to her accustomed audience must be equally great"; however, they find themselves "dissatisfied" by the "queerness of the final result":

> One would think that the Chinese poet lived in a small egocentric world. Even Max Stirner probably would not have uttered so many I's in three lines, or the distinguished Roosevelt either, at that. Now I do not consider this as a true representation of Chinese poetry; I do not know that this is English poetry. And then we do not see that Chinese poetry has any resemblance to free verse, except possibly, if we stretch our imagination a little, a portion of what we call "ancient" poetry. But Miss Lowell's translation is in free verse throughout, as if she wishes to prove that there were verse libréists in a foreign country considerably more than ten centuries ago! This is no place to criticise the honourable movement in American poetry. It is, at any rate a patriotic movement: it is 100 percent Americanism…But what Miss Lowell has given us is Americanism even with a vengeance: she discovers that the Chinese poets had long ago imbibed the spirit![290]

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[290] "Review of Fir-Flower Tablets," *Chinese Students' Monthly* 17, no. 4 (1922): 351-352. The "ancient verse" (*gutishi* 古体诗) referred to here is likely Han fu 汉赋, a panegyric form with resemblances to blank verse or

In a sense, the reviewer anticipates the dictum popularized after World War II, often credited to Robert Frost, that "poetry is what is lost in translation," and draws its line of thought out to the logical conclusion. They conclude, "we are perfectly willing to grant that parts of the translation are full of beauty; beauty, alas, of free verse, not of Chinese poetry. The work is still of the pioneer sort, and the lack of any satisfactory guidance accounts, I think, for what seem to a Chinese reader inexcusable crudities."[291]

A reviewer of Lowell's letters in 1946 describes *Chinese Students' Monthly*, then defunct, as "obscure."[292] Nonetheless, it held a singular role in the late 1910s and 1920s as a magazine by and for its namesake audience of American-educated Chinese scholars. It was anything but obscure to China-interested scholars and writers of the interwar period: Dewey published opinion pieces in it and Bertrand Russell quoted from it in *The Problem of China*.[293] It also holds considerable significance for modernist Chinese literature: instigated by a friendly literary feud with Hu Shi in 1917, Sophia Chen Hengzhe (Shafei Chen Hengzhe 莎菲 • 陈衡哲) published "One Day" ("*Yi tian* 一天") in *Chinese Students' Monthly*, scooping Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman" ("*Kuangren riji* 狂人日记") in the pages of *New Youth* (La Jeneusse / *Xin qingnian* 新青年) by a full year as the first short story written in

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prose poetry In English. In counterpoint, *lü shi* 律诗, or regulated poetry written after the seventh century, is often called "modern style" poetry (*jintishi* 近体诗).

[291] Ibid., 352.

[292] Stewart Mitchell, "Review of Florence Ayscough & Amy Lowell: Correspondence of a Friendship by Harley Farnsworth MacNair," *The New England Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1946): 398–403.

[293] Bertrand Russell, *The Problem With China* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13940/13940-h/13940-h.htm.

vernacular Chinese.[294] Certainly the magazine was anything but inconsequential to Lowell. In a letter to Ayscough, she writes, "I am considerably wrought up over these things and am awfully mad with the Chinese Students' reviewer. It gave me a violent headache and a sleepless night."[295] In her letter to the editor responding to the review—a practice she later repeats in *Poetry*—she writes, "I wonder whether you think such writing is liable to promote a pleasant feeling between our two countries."[296] It is curious in retrospect how Lowell internalizes the review as an attack on her personally, given it is predicated upon the inherent untranslatability of Chinese poetry into American free verse. On the other hand, how could she not? Without elaboration, the reviewer charges Lowell with not only lacking the euphony of the Chinese original, but moreover of "inexcusable crudities." For the moment, we will leave the reviewer's static and essentialist understanding of Chinese poetry unremarked upon; however, it would be amiss to not acknowledge their words echo Shen Yue 沈约, the proverbial inventor of tonal prosody in 5th century China, who writes, "Concerning whether or not a work has euphony, there is in addition the difference between refinement and crudity (*yun yu buyun, fu you jing cu* 韵与不韵，复有精粗)."[297]

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[294] Ming Di, "Re-Reading Hu Shi," January 22, 2016, https://www.poetryinternational.com/nl/poets-poems/article/104-27632_Re-reading-Hu-Shi.

[295] Stewart Mitchell, "Review of Florence Ayscough & Amy Lowell," 188.

[296] Qtd in Witter Bynner, "Tempest in a China Teapot," in *Prose Pieces*, ed. James Kraft, *The Works of Witter Bynner* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), 245.

[297] Qtd in Meow Hui Goh, "Knowing Sound: Poetry and 'Refinement' in Early Medieval China," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 31, no. December (2009): 63.

Tietjens, for her part, approached the Americanism of free verse poetry and the place of Chinese poetry within it from another angle. In her two-part series in *Poetry*, she wonders if modernist translation has been in some ways *too successful*: in its suggestion that American modernism and classical Chinese poetics share an aesthetic correspondence, she worries the modernist reader may have a false confidence in our understanding of an aesthetic form and cultural context "so great as to be far beyond anything the West has ever produced."[298] However, in the final analysis, her interests do not lay in the aporetic condition of translation and other such theoretical problems which continue to preoccupy scholars, but rather in a judgment of literary translation on the grounds of aesthetics itself, which she understands as an experiential condition of "magic." Bucking the consensus of the time, she eschews British linguist and autodidact Arthur Waley's seemingly authoritative command of the Chinese translation market, arguing his "word sense," "at once so simple and so scholarly," nonetheless "falls short of the ultimate subtlety of magic."[299] On the other hand, Tietjens declares, "I for one cannot quite trust Miss Lowell. She has given us so many racial interpretations–Japanese, Chinese, Indian and others–which were all essentially herself, that when I find that [*The Fir-flower Tablets*] too reads like her own poems I doubt their essentially Chinese quality. She has surely too vivid a personality to make a good translator."[300] Rounding out the competition, she observes that Pound does not identify his "airy snatches"[301] of Chinese poetry in *Cathay* as proper

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[298] Tietjens, "On Translating Chinese Poetry: I," 269.

[299] Eunice Tietjens, "On Translating Chinese Poetry: II," *Poetry* 20, no. 6 (September 1922): 330.

[300] Ibid., 330–31.

[301] Ibid., 330.

"translations," and so chooses to accept this claim at face value.[302] Having eliminated all other contenders, Tietjens throws her hat in with Witter Bynner and his forthcoming collaborative translations with the Chinese scholar and political figure Jiang Kanghu. She pronounces, "Mr. Bynner's book is not yet out, but from the examples I have seen it promises to be the most satisfying of the free-verse translations in the matter of magic."[303]

Waley and Bynner had a mutual appreciation for one another's work, while Pound by this time had already divested from *Poetry* due to Monroe's ambivalence towards *The Cantos*. The case of Tietjens, Bynner, and Lowell, however, was a different matter. Lowell's subsequent response to Tietjens ran in its entirely across seven pages in *Poetry*. In it, she claims Tietjens' account "allows propaganda to outrun discretion." Among other things, she accuses Tietjens of tearing her down so as to indirectly advocate for her sister, Louise Hammond's Chinese translations which ran concurrently in *Poetry* as Tietjens' editorial.[304] Years later, on the occasion of the publication of Lowell's collected correspondences with Ayscough, Bynner wrote a retrospective account of this and other clashes with Lowell, calling them a "Tempest in a China Teacup."[305] Existing somewhere between a review and an open letter, he explains, "Since many pages of the book discuss me, I feel it is only fair

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[302] Ibid., 331.

[303] Ibid., 330–31.

[304] Amy Lowell, "Miss Lowell on Translating Chinese," *Poetry* 21, no. 3 (December 1922): 170.

[305] Bynner's refining of the phrase "tempest in a teacup" is redundant. The phrase originated in the British aristocracy's overly hasty dismissal of the nascent American revolution, epitomized then and still remembered today by the Boston Tea Party, and was immortalized in Carl Gutenberg's political cartoon "Tea-Tax-Tempest" (1778). Given that England controlled the taxation of tea carried to the American colonies from China, and that American clipper ships soon began running to China once the Revolutionary War was won, it is safe to say that in the original phrasing China is already operative in the waters upon which any such tempest rages. For a discussion of colonial America's exchanges with China, see Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990).

to quote a few of the passages for better or worse." Bynner assumes an amused, somewhat disinterested position in the face of her acrimony–as when she writes, "It makes me so angry to have him come out here and gallop through a T'ang anthology of three hundred poems. He simply can't do such a thing."[306] He contrasts Lowell's "anxiety" to get *Fir-Flowered Tablets* published before *The Jade Mountain* with his and Jiang's gradualist approach:

> Time and again in their letters both ladies seemed to think that I was in haste. I venture in the light of 1946 to note that eight years after 1921, years of incessant work, Dr. [Jiang] and I published *The Jade Mountain* and that twenty four years after 1921 with the generous help of Arthur Waley and others it was issued again, the sixth edition revised and improved. The ladies really need not have hurried.[307]

Bynner takes note of how her pettiness towards him extends to his Chinese acquaintances, as when she writes, "He throws round a lot of big names of people he met in China, such as Dr. Hu [Shi]…Princess Der Ling [Lizzie Yu Deling 裕德龄]…Dr. [Gu Hongming 辜鸿铭]…According to Witter, all these people have greatly praised his work, which I can well believe, for they know nothing of the English language."[308] Likewise, she is distrustful of Jiang's west-coast affiliations, given that he was recently appointed "in Berkeley, California, and not in one of the older universities."[309] Bynner concludes, without elaboration, by taking note of an incident involving Lowell and an unnamed "Chinese professor":

> she wrote to Mrs. Ayscough about a dismal attempt to enjoy an evening with a Chinese professor whom she had bidden to her house. "I gave him a brief outline in my letter of the kind of thing I wanted him to answer without mentioning any

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[306] Qtd. in Bynner, "Prose Pieces," 244.

[307] Qtd. in ibid., 245.

[308] Qtd. in ibid., ellipses in original.

[309] Qtd. in Bynner, "Prose Pieces."

> specific things. It seems to have given the gentleman's feet chills…I do not find it easy to understand these Chinamen; nor do they find it easy to understand me."[310]

Such an exchange, at the heart of much twentieth-century translation from East Asian languages and which was derided by Bynner in his own time, is described by Huang (in a different context) as a "classic scene of anthropological fieldwork: an ethnographer asks questions prepared from preconceived notions and waits for the narrative informant to fill in the blanks."[311]

Despite Bynner's stated disinterest in Lowell's tempestuousness towards him, his own private correspondence with Tietjens reveals otherwise. In 1922, before the fall publication of "Of Translating Chinese Poetry," Tietjens and Bynner organized a literary event themed around Chinese classical poetry, held at a Chinese restaurant in Chicago. Continuing the ironic inversion of Eurocentric sensibilities gestured to in *Profiles from China*'s 狄 *dí*—northern tribe or "barbarian," she wishes to find a restaurant "as little westernized as possible in this barbaric city." Though she admits, "it seems a little cheap to dramatize the poetry via the food route," she hopes the effect of it "will get over twice as well," and that in any case "It ought to be a distinct change for these corn-fed authors."[312] At the event, Bynner read and discussed his Chinese translations alongside Cai Tinggan 蔡廷干,

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[310] Qtd. in ibid., 245–56, ellipses in original.

[311] Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Imaginations: History, Literature, Counterpoetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 154. For an earlier discussion of Lowell by Huang, see Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature.* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2002), 93-112.

[312] Eunice Tietjens to Witter Bynner, January 4, 1922, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 1, Folder 10, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Eunice Tietjens, "On Translating Chinese Poetry: II," *Poetry* 20, no. 6 (September 1922): 330. As discussed in the previous section, Tietjens' respect for classical Chinese poetry and culture is quite jarring when compared to her antipathy towards modern Chinese life. Indeed, the aporia of China as both a theoretical idea and a historical contingency of America itself is one which pervades the interwar period. In a certain sense, it runs straight to the heart of the theoretical construle of the transpacific itself.

an admiral and career statesman educated in the United States in the 1870s who had returned for a summit in Washington. Later, he had a brief career in retirement from public service as professor of literature at Beijing and Tsinghua University, and Tietjens would review his book of translations in *Poetry*.[313] Although Cai Tinggan was by all accounts well received, Tietjens wrote fawningly to Bynner, "you were the bright star of the evening."[314]

As it happens, Amy Lowell was invoked in the planning stages of this event as a possible speaker. In a masterful stroke of equivocation, Bynner writes to Tietjens:

> I hope you did not misunderstand me to mean that I would rather not have Amy Lowell. The point is that I disagree with her considerably in approaching Chinese poetry, and yet as a man have to be more considerate of my opponent than she does as a lady. This misgiving, however, may be wholly a false one. We should probably have an extremely interesting and enjoyable time of it.[315]

Given his later publication of "Tempest in a China Teacup," such talk of gentlemanly consideration ended up quite empty. Well before that, his tossed-off insult, circulated

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[313] Cai Tinggan was one of thirty Chinese boys who studied in the United States through Yung Wing 容闳's Chinese Educational Mission, which was ultimately aborted in 1881; see Thomas La Fargue, *China's First Hundred* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1942). Cai's *Chinese Poems in English Rhyme* (1933), which Tietjens estimated to be the first book put out by a Chinese translator working alone, was a "surprisingly good job." She writes that the translations, "while few of them are magical, are exact and scholarly and quite capable of passing on to us pleasure in the original." Eunice Tietjens, "Review of Chinese Poems in English Rhyme," *Poetry* 42, no. 3 (June 1933): 174–75.

[314] Eunice Tietjens to Witter Bynner, February 15, 1922, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 1, Folder 10, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[315] Witter Bynner to Eunice Tietjens, January 7, 1922, Harriet Monroe Papers, Box 4 Folder 186, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

widely by Pound, that Lowell was an overweight "hippopoetess" was certainly as petty as anything Lowell ever directed towards him or Jiang.[316]

ii. The Jade Mountain

William Butler Yeats observed, "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry." But what of the quarrels with others *about* poetry? Though this period saw the emergence of many would-be translators banging their heads against Chinese poems, attempting to crack them open and reveal the prosodic secrets within, it also marks the emergence of the modernist quarrels over how best to do so. Indeed, this juxtapositional pairing of *Poetry* and Lowell–here Tietjens, but more commonly Pound–continues to be reflected in contemporary scholarship.[317] In short, it is not too much of an exaggeration to remark that *Poetry* is for reading, but Chinese poetry is for fighting. Eliot Weinberger kept the pugilistic spirit of the interwar modernists alive in *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*.[318] A classic of translation studies, Weinberger's slim volume pits different translations of Wang Wei's "Lu Zhai 鹿寨" against one another in a no-holds-barred battle royale. Evaluating Bynner's effort, titled, "Deer-Park Hermitage,"

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[316] Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, *Amy Lowell, American Modern* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 171.

[317] See, for example, Huang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 93; see also Steven G. Yao, *Foreign Accents: Chinese American Verse from Exclusion to Postethnicity*, Global Asias (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[318] Wang Wei, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei: How a Chinese Poem Is Translated*, ed. Eliot Weinberger (Mount Kisco, N.Y: Moyer Bell, 1987). The title of the collection is a direct reference to Wallace Stevens' "13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Qian discusses "13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" as part of a larger "modernist response to Chinese art" in the work of see Pound, Marianne Moore, and Stevens (*The Modernist Response to Chinese Art* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

Weinberger accuses him of being "a primary purveyor of Chinoiserie translation in the 1920's" and likens the poem to "a haze of opium" and the redolence of "the mystical, inscrutable Fu Manchu East." His critique is topped off with a brilliantly backhanded compliment: at least Bynner is "not as extreme an exoticist as his imagist counterparts, Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough."[319] Of course, Bynner did not execute the translation unilaterally. Unmentioned in Weinberger's opprobrium is any mention of Jiang Kanghu, whose work on this poem as part of *The Jade Mountain* marks the first book-length collaboration between an American modernist poet and Chinese scholar. Jiang's name appears paratextually alongside Bynner in the poem's attribution, but nowhere else in Weinberger's commentary. The oversight is representative of how Jiang is repeatedly omitted from discussion of *The Jade Mountain*. It is also convenient: much more troublesome for Weinberger to equate the ellipses at the end of a line of poetry to "a haze of opium" if he were to also acknowledge a Chinese author's contributions to that line.

Let us return to T.S. Eliot's claim that Pound invented China for "our time" with the publication of *Cathay*. Approaching it from a cultural position, Eric Hayot observes, "*Cathay* does not provide an indisputable date for when 'our time' began," but "it does indicate when its fate came to be understood in terms of a certain relationship to China and to things Chinese."[320] As we have seen in the first chapter, this "certain relationship" in fact precedes *Cathay* in the case of Monroe and her "birth of an idea" for *Poetry* magazine; yet Pound's short collection of translations of Tang-dynasty poems marks a critical turning point, where China becomes operative in American poetry not only in its "oriental

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[319] Ibid., 10–11.

[320] Eric Hayot, *Chinese Dreams: Pound, Brecht, Tel Quel* (2004; repr., Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 8.

manner" but also its preoccupation with Chinese translation. Reflecting on the lasting impact of this "certain relationship," Steven Yao writes, "Pound's Cathay stands as the formative event not only for such roughly contemporaneous feats of collaborative translation, specifically of Chinese poetry, as *Fir Flower Tablets* (1921) by Amy Lowell and Florence Ayscough and *The Jade Mountain* (1929) by Witter Bynner and [Jiang Kanghu], but also more generally for the current approach to the rendering of other languages into English."[321] If we follow Yao, Pound's inauguration of modernist translation of Chinese poetry is interchangeable with the advent of modernist and contemporary English literary translation itself. Yet he also reminds us that this "certain relationship" emerged through the collective efforts of figures such as Lowell, Ayscough, Bynner, and Jiang, rather than Pound in isolation.

Tietjens and Lowell attest to how Jiang was acknowledged in his own time as a co-contributor to *The Jade Mountain*. Yet as we have seen with Weinberger, he and other Sino-US figures remain largely omitted from subsequent modernist scholarship, Yao's citation of Jiang above being one of a scanty few exceptions which prove the rule. Following Lawrence Venuti's observation of the translator's invisibility in American letters, this omission from the record of American modernism is perhaps best described as a condition of "Sino-US invisibility" in American modernism: invisible Sino-US scholars, invisible Sino-US translators, invisible Sino-US poetics.[322] As such, it is worth relating the circumstances which lead to Bynner and Jiang's collaboration. Bynner met Jiang during his 1918-1919 teaching appointment at University of California. Bynner had recently returned

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[321] Yao, *Foreign Accents*, 32.

[322] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2008).

from his travels in Japan and China, and he fashioned his apartment hotel room near the Berkeley campus after a Japanese teahouse. However, rather than the refined Japanese Tea Garden of Golden Gate Park, which was commissioned for the 1894 World's Fair, Bynner's facsimile ran somewhat closer to the demimonde historically associated with Tokyo's Yoshiwara pleasure district. Reports began to swirl of riotous parties where undergraduates were supplied with alcohol. (In comparison, Pound's hagiographic dismissal from his position at Wabash College roughly a decade earlier, for allowing a "homeless" woman to stay the night in his quarters, comes off as rather tame.) Bynner's pedagogical approach proved equally unconventional: anticipating the Iowa Writer's Workshop model which flourished after World War II, he gathered the students in his poetry class each week on the campus lawn, circulated their poems anonymously, and had the class conduct cold reading critiques of each other's work.[323] When the English department did not renew his contract, the "Halcyon Society" poetry club which he had established at Berkeley awarded him the festschrift *WB in California*.[324] Among the nineteen "charter and honorary members" of the club who contributed to the publication were, in descending order of academic seniority, Jiang Kanghu, Stella Benson, Genevieve Taggard, Hildegarde Flanner, Moon Kwan, and Idella Purnell. All of them went on to publish in *Poetry*, many through the auspices of

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[323] Witter Bynner, "On Teaching the Young Laurel to Shoot," in *The Works of Witter Bynner: Prose Pieces*, ed. James Kraft (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979), 366–72; see also Witter Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, ed. James Kraft (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 66–69.

[324] Witter Bynner, *W.B. In California Bynner: A Tribute* (Berkeley, CA: Privately printed, 1919). It is tempting to identify Bynner's sexual orientation as a catalyst for his dismissal from Berkeley, and it would be wise to not entirely rule it out. However, by all accounts Bynner was circumspect concerning his sexual relations, following what his biographer calls "a code of public conformity and private honesty." In a letter to Robert Hunt, his future partner who had recently come out to his parents, Bynner writes, "I fear lest your windy impulses may blow you into regrettable candors, candors which can only cause you eventual discomfort. Hold back, old dear. This is not advice to be cowardly–it's advice toward wise, unharassed happiness. Don't indulge your sudden fevers for sensation. Be square with yourself. Accept the liking of those who like you. Like those you like. And to hell with the rest. Am I right?" (Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 119).

Bynner himself.[325] These dueling aspects of Bynner's life and work went hand and hand, aptly dramatized in two photographs: one, hosted on "the Hidden History of the Berkeley Campus," a website which documents "the history of sexual minorities at Cal," portrays Bynner as a bohemian provocateur adorned in a Japanese *kimono*[326]; the other, the frontispiece of an edited collection of his *Chinese Translations*, depicts him as bespectacled and professorial, seated next to Jiang as the two pore over a text.[327]

Dorothy Wang identifies Moon Kwan's poem "To Witter Bynner" in *W.B. in California* as the earliest example of Chinese American poetry in English.[328] Contestation around what should be properly identified as Asian American literature notwithstanding, it is worthy of note that two poems by Jiang appear in the same valedictory collection: one which he wrote in Chinese and translated into English, and one which he wrote in English and translated into Chinese. Jiang thus shares with Kwan the distinction of earliest American publication in English by a poet of Chinese heritage; moreover, as far as research indicates, Jiang should be credited with the first literary English translation of Chinese poetry by a Chinese poet or scholar. The pair came from different socioeconomic circumstances and family backgrounds: Jiang from a well-established scholar-official family in Jiangxi province near Shanghai, Moon Kwan from humbler roots in Guangzhou. Yet

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[325] *University of California Chronicle* (University of California Press, 1920), 19.

[326] William Benemann, "The Carlton Hotel," *Gay Bears: The Hidden History of the Berkeley Campus*, 2002, https://bancroft.berkeley.edu/collections/gaybears/bynner/links/carlton_hotel.html.

[327] Witter Bynner, *The Chinese Translations*, ed. James Kraft, The Works of Witter Bynner (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1979).

[328] Dorothy Wang, "Asian American Poetry and the Politics of Form," in *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature*, ed. Rajini Srikanth and Min Hyoung Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 438.

their respective orbits came together by way of Bynner and the wider circle of bohemian artists of the California coast. In a letter to Max Eastman, the silent film actress Florence Deshon describes a "Chinese professor from San Francisco" of Jiang's description assembling a tour group to China for that summer. In the same letter, she relates an anecdote this professor told of "a wonderful dowager Empress that became bored, so she pushed her son off the throne, and ascended it herself. She conquered other countries and was a great Empress, no man could apply for a position in the Court unless he qualified as a poet." The editors of Deshon's letters identify the empress as Empress Dowager Cixi (Cixi Taihou 慈禧太后), though the details more accurately describe Tang-dynasty Empress Wu Zetian 武则天. Deshon continues: "Moon-huan [sic] who is very child like in some ways, doesn't like her because she had many love affairs."[329]

If Chinese civilizational power had an especial appeal to modernists due to the perception of poetry's historical prominence in Chinese education and culture, then the claim that one had to be "qualified as a poet" to attain a position at the Tang court of Wu Zetian reinforces what Stephen Owen calls "the myth of the High T'ang as the apogee of poetry and medieval civilization."[330] Weinberger likewise describes English translation of classical Chinese poetry as a "prevailing T'angophilia," observing that any discussion of "Chinese poetry" was more often than not directed toward Tang poetry specifically.[331]

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[329] Cooper Graham and Cristoph Irmscher, *Love and Loss in Hollywood: Florence Deshon, Max Eastman, and Charlie Chaplin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 231.

[330] Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High Tang* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1981), 170.

[331] Eliot Weinberger, "Excerpts from the Introduction to The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry," no. 23 (August 2003), *http://jacketmagazine.com/23/rex-weinb.html*.

Bynner and Jiang likewise decided to collaborate on a translation project which would "be the first complete Chinese verse classic, as far as [Jiang] knows, translated into English": the *Tangshi sanbaishou* 唐诗三百首, or *Three Hundred Poems of the Tang Dynasty*, an anthology compiled in the 18th century by the Qing-dynasty scholar Sun Zhu 孙洙 under the pen name Hengtang Tuishi 蘅塘退士.[332]

Waley's *170 Chinese Poems* had yet to appear, and Bynner reports other translation attempts "had not held what I wanted"; moreover, Bynner and Jiang were motivated by a desire to pair Pound's free verse approach to translation with the rigor of scholarly research. Bynner was inspired by Jiang's ability to recite *Cathay*'s Chinese source poems, improvising English translations on the spot "still finer" than Pound's. He recalls,

> Ezra Pound's small sheaf, *Cathay*, printed in London three years before, contained passages arrestingly fine, as well as prophetic of Waley's direct manner; but [Jiang], wondering why the American poet should call Li Po only by his Japanese name, Rihaku, recited off-hand versions of the same poems Pound had chosen, which I found, even in [Jiang's] halting English, still finer.[333]

In the summer of 1920, Jiang and Bynner traveled to China with plans to gather materials and begin work in earnest. In a letter to Carl Sandburg in anticipation of the trip, Bynner writes, "I relish showing up the merely literary translators, who give us only the language of a limbo between East and West, and are ensnared by what they think picturesque, colorful, novel, instead of trying to bring over the living simplicity and directness of those

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[332] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 69.

[333] Witter Bynner, "Remembering a Gentle Scholar," in *The Selected Witter Bynner*, ed. James Kraft (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 228.

old poets."[334] Through a series of missed connections, Bynner and Jiang spent much of their time separated from one another. When his traveling companion Arthur Davison Ficke decamped to the expatriate community in the nearby villas of Moganshan to escape the sweltering summer heat, Bynner initially demurred and stayed behind in Hangzhou, once described by Marco Polo as "without a doubt the best and the noblest city in the world."[335] He writes:

> I had moved to a native hotel and, consumed with heat and mosquitoes and unable to sleep much on the bed of slung matting, was physically miserable. Fortunately I like the food and, clad in only a long linen Chinese coat, ate it on my own picturesque little balcony–ardently companioned by two Chinese students of twenty who had come to my rescue with a little English on the roof the [Hangzhou] hotel, where I was listening, my first night there, to some singsong girls. The two likable lads were with me after that from dawn to eve, my guides, my bargainers, my friends.[336]

That fall Bynner and Jiang briefly reunited (meeting "by accident on a Shanghai street") before going their separate ways again. During their time apart, Bynner had been working diligently on the literal trots with which Jiang had supplied him, and they finally settled in for a more extended period of "intensive work" together that winter in Beijing. In the spring of 2021 Bynner returned to the United States, and the pair continued their incremental work by mail throughout the 1920s. They finally published *The Jade Mountain*, after many delays, in 1929.[337]

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[334] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 73.

[335] See Marco Polo, *The Description of the World*, 133.

[336] Ibid., 74.

[337] Bynner, "Remembering a Gentle Scholar," 228–29; Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 79.

Kaiser Kuo uses the phrase "feral Sinologist" to describe foreigners who gain knowledge of China through a holistic, boots-on-the-ground approach–particularly in contrast with what he laments as the increasingly narrow specialization of contemporary Chinese area studies.[338] As opposed to other figures such as Agnes Smedley or Jack Belden, whose vocational interests lay in reportage or political advocacy, Bynner's engagement with China was first and foremost aesthetic, manifesting in his appreciation of travel, nature, and Chinese poetry.[339] He describes "Wandering through out-of-the-way places in China, following at [West Lake in Hangzhou] and up through the Yangtze Gorges the very footsteps of the poets in whose work I was engrossed," "overlooking a landscape the like of which I had never seen from any dwelling on earth. There were Sung mountain paintings glimmering from our peak all the way to the Himalayas…And just as that landscape moved and breathed, so do the Chinese poems from line to line. And just as man becomes natural and simple in a presence like that, so did the Chinese poets."[340] Bynner's vernacular experience in China is reflected in his initial self-professed ignorance of standard western transliteration. He recalls,

> I learned that *shan* means mountain and that *shuêi* means water and that *shan-shuêi* means landscape. I learned that "mountain-water" paintings lack sometimes the mountain and sometimes the water, and I learned to translate the word as landscape. I am not even sure how to spell the word for water. I am spelling it as it sounded when I added to it the word for hot, which I herewith avoid spelling, and

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[338] Kaiser Kuo, "The World According To Jeremy Goldkorn," *Sinica Podcast*, August 19, 2019, https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sinica-podcast/id1121407665.

[339] For a discussion of Agnes Smedley's role in advocating for what Richard So calls a proletarian "coolie democracy" in China, see Richard Jean So, "Coolie Democracy: U.S.-China Political and Literary Exchange, 1925-1955" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2010).

[340] "Translating Chinese Poetry," in *The Selected Witter Bynner*, ed. James Kraft (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 196, 190.

> summoned, according to a middle or an upper gesture, a hand-basin or a pot of tea.[341]

Despite learning "to ask in several dialects for a few necessaries," as in the foregoing example, Bynner stresses he "is a very far cry from being able to read"; yet he downplays this shortcoming by playing up the diglossia of literary and vernacular Chinese, estimating, "had I learned Chinese, I should not have fared much better as a translator. I am assured that not even foreigners born in China and knowing the language from childhood are safe guides when it comes to Chinese poetry."[342] Moreover, he reminds that translation is also inherently interpretation, and "The Chinese themselves vary in their interpretations–not in a way that conflicts with basic and essential clarity, but in one that is only natural, considering the absence from the poems of such grammatical details as present, tense and number."[343]

Among the figures whose interpretations he consulted during his time in China were Hu Shi, whom Bynner describes as "an influential young modernist of Peking Government University and author of widely read poems in the so-called 'vulgar tongue,'" and as a "patient listener" to his translations; Princess Der Ling, "former lady-in-waiting to the Empress Dowager" and friend of Lucy Calhoun, who would recite with Bynner "instantaneous translations of the poems, which she knew by heart"; and Nieh Shih-chang, "the young student and friend" with whom he crossed paths on an ocean liner en-route to China, and who subsequently "piloted" him on his trip, "constantly reading the poems

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[341] Ibid., 196.

[342] Ibid., 196. Lowell reads this sentiment as, "of course, an attempt to cut the ground under [Ayscough's] feet"; see "Tempest in a China Teapot," 244-245.

[343] Ibid., 196.

and making helpful suggestions."[344] All of them appear in the acknowledgments for *The Jade Mountain*.[345] However, in the final analysis Bynner invariably deferred to Jiang:

> [Jiang] would make sure that I knew the literal meaning of the successive characters, explain his own preference, give me sometimes my choice of the various interpretations, or even let me make one of my own. It is due him, for better or worse, to say that I generally chose his.[346]

Bynner also crossed paths during his travels in China with John Dewey,[347] though their interactions were mainly limited to parties and other social functions. Decades later, in 1948, Bynner and his partner Robert Hunt would spend Christmas and New Year's as a guest at Dewey's home in Key West.[348] A figure of more direct consequence for Bynner was Gu Hongming 辜鸿铭, an idiosyncratic, biracial, western-educated Confucian anti-reformist who came of age in the late Qing. From Bynner's conversations with Gu in Beijing, during which Gu often recited passages from his essay *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, Bynner developed an understanding of Chinese culture as a "spirit of perpetual youth." According to Gu, this spirit is the "working together in harmony of the heart and

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[344] Bynner, "Translating Chinese Poetry", 196-197; After Bynner's return to the United States he continued to correspond with Nieh throughout the 1920s. Nearly sixty of Nieh's letters to Bynner are housed at Harvard. See "Nieh, Craig Shih-Chang. 58 Letters; 1920-1930 & [n.d.]., 1920-1930," n.d., Witter Bynner Papers, Hollis Archives, Harvard University Library, *https://hollisarchives.lib.Harvard.edu/repositories/archival_objects/513407*.

[345] Hengtang Tuishi, ed., *The Jade Mountain*, trans. Witter Bynner and Jiang Kanghu (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1929), 278.

[346] Bynner, "Translating Chinese Poetry," 197.

[347] Hu Shi served as Dewey's official interpreter and personal confidante on Dewey's lecture tour, and Dewey makes thinly veiled references to Hu Shi in his writing on China. One article, for example, begins with a description of "A Chinese friend, to whom I owe so much that he would be justified in arresting me for intellectual theft." (John Dewey, Anne S Sharpe, and Carl Cohen, "New Culture in China," in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 13 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 108)

[348] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 195–96.

head….this happy union of soul with intellect."[349] Bynner identifies this quality in Chinese poetry as a medium where the beauty of direct expression and the simplicity of the human spirit coincide. This union renders Tang poems as "valid and universal" in their capability of "uttering beauty," as Chinese poets are "able enough and sure enough to make the ultimately exact terms become the beautiful terms."[350] Such cases for Bynner account for "the continuation of poetry as a live factor among [Gu Hongming's] people," as well as enthusiasm for the verse among American modernists.[351] Concluding one of several essays on translation and Chinese poetry, Bynner elaborates on this indelible relationship between the human spirit and poetry's "spirit of beauty":

> Before there can be political equity in the world, there must be human equity, an end of racial ignorance and snobbery on all sides, an end of the superstition that superficial differences of skin and mold mean fundamental differences of mind and spirit. East and West, there is only one human spirit in the world, though knaves and fools would keep it divided. And it is the nearest thing we know to what we confidently call the divine spirit. At its best it is the spirit of beauty, whether in nature, in art or in the conduct of man. And still, through the centuries, the poets are its heralds.[352]

Can one translate in such a way that it leaves the "human spirit" intact? And can such an approach, bordering on nineteenth century idealism, be identified as modernist? In 1922, a portfolio of Bynner and Jiang's translations of the Tang poet Wang Wei 王维

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[349] Hongming Gu, *The Spirit of the Chinese People* (Beijing, China: The Peking Daily News, 1915), 13, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Index:The_Spirit_of_the_Chinese_People.djv.

[350] Witter Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," *Poetry* 19, no. 5 (1922): 277; Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, xvii.

[351] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, xv.

[352] Bynner, "Translating Chinese Poetry," 198.

appeared in *Poetry*. In an accompanying essay, Bynner explains a method of dynamic translation which attempts to leave intact the "beautiful," "universal," and "ultimately exact" qualities of Wang Wei's verse: "Translating the work of Wang Wei and others in the Three Hundred Poems of the T'ang Dynasty, Dr. [Jiang] and I have tried constantly to transfer the Chinese idiom into an equivalent idiom in English, rather than to stress the local novelty and pungency of Chinese phrasing."[353] This orientation towards concrete, immediate language is reiterated in Bynner's introduction to *The Jade Mountain*—as is his accrediting of the translations to a collective effort between Jiang and himself: "There have been frequent instances in this volume where Dr. [Jiang] and I have discussed several possible meanings of a poem and have chosen for translation into the more definite language the meaning we preferred."[354] Though Bynner's approach superficially resembles Pound's imagist clarion call to go in fear of abstraction, it explicitly differs from *Cathay*, which Venuti identifies as an explicit foreignization of the source text which renders the act of translation visible. Throughout the collection, Pound idiosyncratically employs Japanese transliteration of Chinese places and poets, identifying Wang Wei and Li Bai 李白 respectively as "Omikatsu" and "Rihaku"—figures accurately identified by their Chinese names elsewhere in his work. Though this practice earns skepticism from Jiang, Bynner, and Waley alike, it also results in a wholesale creation and indexicality of poetic transmission, grounded in his autodidactic study of the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa. Rather than transcreative foreignization, Bynner and Jiang favor a middle way between

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[353] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 277–78.

[354] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, xviii.

Pound's ideogrammatic method and Lowell and Ayscough's florid, attenuated verse.[355] One example is the persistent appearance of ellipses throughout *The Jade Mountain*—what Weinberger misreads as Bynner blowing a lot of opium smoke. They are a typographical invention of the translators and do not appear in Hengtuishi's anthology. (For that matter, neither do English conventions such as commas, periods, capitalization, or even line breaks.) Rather than denoting an imprecise, "hazy" translation, they do the exact opposite, marking a distinct change in subject, voice, or line of thought in the original poem without additional explanatory verbiage. See, for example, the ellipses which comes at the end of the third line of the Wei Yingwu 韦应物 *jueju* 绝句 quatrain, "An Autumn Night Message":

> As I walk in the cool of the autumn night,
> Thinking of you, singing my poem,
> I hear a mountain pine-cone fall. . . .
> You also seem to be awake.[356]

Ellipses thus serve as cues to the reader, providing visual, semantic transitions between otherwise juxtaposing or paratactic elements—quintessential modernist techniques commonly eschewed in Bynner's own, relatively conservative verse. In one sense, *The Jade Mountain*'s elaborated punctuation suggests Chinese prosody, in a western context, was *too* modern for Bynner—particularly in light of subsequent translators such as Kenneth Rexroth and Gary Snyder, who sought to amplify, rather than soften the contrastive elements found in the original. In another sense, as with Pound, it is *through* Chinese poetry translation that Bynner lets go of his residual prosodic habits and becomes modern. Notably, within

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[355] Setting both Pound and Lowell in his sights, Bynner writes, "It would be as erroneous to overemphasize the component radicals of a Chinese character as to overemphasize the component meanings of such words in English as day break, breakfast, nightfall or landscape." Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 278.

[356] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, 306.

modernist studies Bynner is best remembered as the perpetrator of the "Spectra Poets" hoax, where he and Ficke, under the assumed names Emanuel Morgan and Anne Knish, published modernist free verse pastiche in Alfred Kreymborg's *Others* magazine.[357] Rather than a fleeting amusement or mask of alterity, Bynner's involvement with China and Chinese aesthetics became integral to his work and identity.

Bynner and Jiang's hybrid domestication of Chinese poetry proved an immediate success. Bynner's interest in presenting Tang poetry as "valid and universal in uttering beauty" combines with Jiang's scholarly precision in a text which is both accessible and copiously annotated, rendered in free verse but stressing fluidity (a pairing in this time as likely to be considered at odds with one another than as concordant).[358] Throughout the 1920s, selections from *Jade Mountain* ran in an astonishingly comprehensive array of venues: *The Freeman*, *Asia*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The New York Evening Post*, *The New Republic*, *The Dial*, *The China Review*, *The Double Dealer*, *The Fugitive*, *The Harvard Advocate*, *The Little Review*, *The New Orient*, and *The Smart Set*, among others.[359] In sum, ninety-percent of the poems from the collection, 278 poems in all, first appeared in magazines and journals, and a second printing was ordered for the book even before its initial release. Jiang parleyed its success into a job hire, becoming head of McGill's new department of Chinese Studies, and the first Asian scholar to head a university department in Canada. However, his fortunes turned during World War II due to his collaboration of a different kind: serving as China's Minister of Education

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[357] See Churchill, Suzanne, "The Lying Game: Others and the Great Spectra Hoax of 1917," in *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches*, ed. Suzanne Churchill (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 177–97.

[358] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 277; see also their respective introductions in Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, xiii-xix, xxi-xxxvii, passim.

[359] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, 278.

in Wang Jingwei 汪精卫's wartime puppet government under Japanese occupation. He met his end while imprisoned, first by the Nationalist *Guomindang* 国民党 and afterwards by the Communist *Zhongguo Gongchandang* 中国共产党. Bynner remained in contact with Jiang's family and dutifully forwarded to them in China half of all royalties he received for *The Jade Mountain*, providing them with a critical source of income.[360] As for Bynner, his evangelistic tendencies towards Chinese civilization were married to contemporary civic causes in the run-up to America's entrance into the Pacific theatre in support of China. He served as the New Mexico state chairman for the United China Relief, publicizing fundraising events and raising awareness through exhibitions of paintings he acquired in China and his own lectures on Chinese poetry and culture.[361]

The Jade Mountain remains the only complete English translation of the *Tangshi sanbaishou*. It continues to be valued for its pedagogical worth, despite occasional inaccuracies in light of later scholarship,[362] and a number of poems from it appear in a recent anthology of Tang and Song poetry edited by Michael Fuller.[363] Alongside the later Robert Payne, Bynner and Jiang are the only non-contemporary translators who make the cut among Fuller's selections. Despite this, their translations have hardly been considered "valid and universal" within American modernist scholarship. In contrast with Fuller, Weinberger eschews their translations in his editorialship of *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese*

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[360] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 68–69.

[361] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 168–70.

[362] See Burton Watson's introduction to *The Jade Mountain* in *The Chinese Translations*, 17-18.

[363] Michael Fuller, ed., *An Introduction to Chinese Poetry: From the Canon of Poetry to the Lyrics of the Song Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017).

Poetry, opting instead for translations from the likes of Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder, and David Hinton.[364] Their inclusion, and Bynner and Jiang's absence, can be attributed equally to publishing permissions as much as critical judgment: all of the poems curated by Weinberger were previously published by New Directions; *The Jade Mountain*, meanwhile, was put out by Knopf, Bynner's primary publisher. Yet Bynner's Asian affectations, both on and off the page, position him as a direct forerunner to Rexroth and Snyder, post-World War II poets with ties to the 1950s San Francisco Renaissance and the Beats, and whose translations of "Lu zhai" in *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* are called out for particular praise by Weinberger. A conceptualization of a "Pound-to-Rexroth" model of American modernism's engagement with China which takes Weinberger's anthology as gospel thus not only omits Bynner from the historical record but Jiang as well–along with the participation of Sino-U.S. translators in interwar American modernism as a whole. A recent example of this Pound-to-Rexroth model can be seen in Lucas Klein's *The Organization of Distance*. Klein identifies two distinct trajectories of literary translation in twentieth-century American poetry: the literary model, represented by the Chinese translations of Pound, Rexroth, and Snyder, and the scholarly anthology model, which he locates in Harold Acton and Shixiang Chen's *Modern Chinese Poetry* (1936) and Robert Payne's *Contemporary Chinese Poetry* (1947).[365]

Robert Kern identifies a separate genealogy of modernist poetry, one which approaches translation through "readability," and which includes both Rexroth and Bynner,

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[364] Eliot Weinberger, ed., *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry* (New York: New Directions, 2003).

[365] Lucas Klein, *The Organization of Distance: Poetry, Translation, Chineseness* (New York: Brill, 2018), 1–6, 25–28.

the previous serving under the latter as his protege.[366] Indeed, Rexroth's interest in the Chinese poet Du Fu 杜甫 was instigated by a pilgrimage to see Bynner at his house in Taos, New Mexico in 1924.[367] In contrast to "the bareness and autonomy of Chinese characters" in classical poetry, Kern describes Bynner's translations as "often limpid free verse" achieved by "a luxurious flow of speech that owes more to English lyric traditions than to Chinese poetry," and which constitutes "an alien imposition upon the original structure of the Chinese text."[368] (Jiang's role as collaborator on the translation is never discussed.) The poem which Kern selects to exemplify this "imposition" is "A Night-Mooring near Maple Bridge," a translation of Zhang Ji 张继's "*Fengqiao Yepo* 枫桥夜泊" which appears as the second poem in *The Jade Mountain*:

> While I watch the moon go down, a crow caws through the frost;
> Under the shadow of maple-trees a fisherman moves with his torch;
> And I hear, from beyond Su-chou, from the temple on Cold Mountain,
> Ringing for me, here in my boat, the midnight bell.[369]

Kern takes note of the translation's primary intervention–"the speaker's arresting and almost fastidious location of himself in the scene"–which successfully adapts into first

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[366] Robert Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 244.

[367] Kern assesses that Bynner was an even more formative influence on Rexroth's lifelong interest in East Asian poetry than *Cathay*. In 1924, at the age of eighteen, Rexroth traveled to Santa Fe to meet Bynner. Kern writes, "He introduced Rexroth to 'the major Sinologists in French and English' and he encouraged him to shift his focus from [Li Bai] to [Du Fu], who would become, as Rexroth asserts, the major influence on his own poetry" (Ibid., 243).

[368] Ibid., 244.

[369] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, 4.

person perspective the source poem's floating third person perspective.[370] In the original, the effect is reminiscent of a landscape executed in aerial perspective, which also locates the artist somewhere within it. James Liu identifies such a perspective, often found in Tang poetry, as one which "juxtaposes the cosmic perspective of time with the personal."[371] However, what Kern actually takes issue with as an "alien imposition" is not this change in perspective, but instead the translation's "long and elaborate" use of prepositional phrases and "words such as 'while,' 'under,' 'from,' and 'here,' which are rarely directly represented in Chinese."[372] As with much of Kern concerning Chinese poetry and translation, the statement is generally true–provided we take "Chinese" to mean literary Chinese verse, *totum pro parte*, and not Chinese language–yet is not necessarily accurate in this specific case. As it happens, directional particles appear in three of the source poem's four lines. *Wai* 外, meaning outside or beyond, is quite straightforward in its usage in the third line: "Outside Gusu city, Hanshan Temple" (姑苏城外寒山寺 *Gusucheng wai hanshan shi*). Gusu was a district of Suzhou 苏州 (rendered above as Su-chou), a major city in Jiangsu 江苏 province, and Hanshan literally means "Cold Mountain." Bynner and Jiang's decisions to identify "Gusu" with the more identifiable, contemporary city, and to literally translate Hanshan attest to their preference for limpid readability.[373] The other two

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[370] Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem*, 244.

[371] James J.Y. Liu, "Time, Space, and Self in Chinese Poetry," *CLEAR: Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 1, no. 2 (1979): 148–49.

[372] Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem*, 244.

[373] In contrast, Pound insists upon using opaque Japanese transliteration of Chinese place names in "The River-Merchant's Wife," even when a literal translation would lead evocative, concrete results. For example,

particles, "*dui* 对" and "*dao* 到," are much more implicit and ambiguous in the poem, demanding interpretive choices to be made for their respective lines if the English translation is to retain the content of the source text while also making grammatical sense.[374]

Another key work of criticism which discusses *The Jade Mountain* without attributing Jiang is Ming Xie's *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry*. Xie not only omits Jiang from his critical commentary, but moreover fails to credit him in the monograph's bibliographic citations.[375] Like "orientalism" in Zhaoming Qian's *Orientalism and Modernism*, the "appropriation" of Xie's title belies an even-handed, multivalenced reading of flows of exchange between American and Chinese translators, poets, and commentators.[376] Describing the early decades of Anglo-American modernism as "The Age of Chinese Translation," he lays out his primary argument: "In the process of poetic translation and assimilation it is possible now, retrospectively, to recognize how these Anglo-American writers had construed and appropriated certain aspects of classical Chinese poetry according to their own preconceptions and creative needs."[377] His project is equally

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"Long Wind Sand" (*Changfengsha* 长风沙), described in Fenollosa's notes as "a port on the [Changjiang River]," appears as "Cho-fu-Sa." Pound, *Cathay*, 33-34, 81.

[374] A literal trot of the poem reads: "moon set–crow cry–frost–full sky / river maple–fishing lights (on boats), *dui* particle, sorrow sleep / Gusu city, outside, Hanshan temple / midnight bell–sound, *dao* particle, traveler's boat. 月落乌啼霜满天江枫渔火对愁眠。姑苏城外寒山寺夜半钟声到客船。*yueluo wu ti shuang mantian / jiang feng yuhuo dui chou mian / Gusucheng wai Hanshansi / Yeban zhongsheng dao kechuan.*"

[375] Ming Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism* (1999; repr., New York: Routledge, 2014).

[376] Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

[377] Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism*, 3.

invested in revealing how, "when the results of such translation or adaptation are successful English poems in their own right," these transcreative texts instantiate "an invisible tradition and establish for the Western reader a particular mode of poetic perception and canon of composition" that is understood as equivalent and interchangeable with Chinese poetics.[378] In this regard, Xie superficially resembles Venuti, who argues that English translation's historical displacement of the source text not only conceals the labor and creativity performed by translation, but in doing so also establishes false notions of fidelity to the original text against which subsequent translations are measured.[379] At the same time, Xie's approach of analyzing English translations "against the evidence" of the Chinese source text is one which regards Chinese poetry in English as fundamentally *misinterpretation*, whereby Chinese poems are falsely treated as "isolated fragments that could be floated free of their anchorage in poetic and historical conventions."[380] Though Xie primary focuses on Pound, Lowell, and Waley, Bynner intermittently appears on the periphery of his analysis. At particular issue for Xie is Bynner's claims of "realism" in Tang poetry. Xie observes:

> What is considered "romantic" in Chinese terms may just well be "classical" or "realistic" by Western standards; what is merely "straightforward" in Chinese could well be "suggestive" to a Western reader. Witter Bynner, for example, once accused Ayscough and Lowell of being over-exuberant in their *Fir-Flower Tablets* and believed that the Chinese poets were "realists" whereas Ayscough and Lowell were "romantics" who "never realized that the exactly fitting connection of commonplace words could make poetry."[381]

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[378] Ibid., 3–4.

[379] Lawrence Venuti, *Theses on Translation An Organon for the Current Moment* (New York: Flugschriften, 2019).

[380] Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism*, 216.

[381] Ibid., 211.

Xie's interest in deconstructing Bynner's claims of "realism" follows the general historicizing thrust of Tang scholarship in the United States in the wake of Stephen Owen. Owen discusses how Tang poetry, regarded in its own time as a highly crafted, socially important aesthetic form, came to be associated with self-evident, transparent historical and autobiographical accuracy and "a 'realism' that attended writing from direct experience."[382] In one instance, for example, he reads Li Bai's poetics as "idealized situations, conventional figures in a schematized scene" which is fundamentally incompatible with claims of "realism," regardless of whether the poem also depicts "some aspect of everyday life that most poets ignored."[383] Xie provides an example concordant with Owen's argument:

> Po Chu-i [Bai Juyi 白居易]'s "Lazy Man's Song" as translated by Waley may perhaps fit Bynner's idea of what Chinese poetry is…But here the indolence of the poet, the "man of sensibility," should in fact be considered as a literary convention in the Chinese tradition, disguised as "simple emotion" couched in a commonplace, even vernacular, idiom.[384]

Xie argues that what is clearly an example of ironic "literary convention" in the Chinese tradition is taken at face value by readers like Bynner, when it is more akin in its original context to the trenchant affectations employed by a writer like T.S. Eliot.[385] Yet the comparison does nothing to dispel a distinctly quotidian, enervated milieu evoked by both poets. In their zeal to provide historicizing correctives to commonly held beliefs, both Owen and Xie suggest that *any* mediating effect of a literary convention or style which

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[382] Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, 169–70.

[383] Ibid., 130.

[384] Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism*, 212.

[385] Ibid.

exceeds the author's own direct, lived experience is fundamentally incompatible with claims of "realism"–criteria so severe that it surely disqualifies anything found in Auerbach.[386]

Let's turn to a poem that is more suitable for getting to the heart of both Tang poetics and Bynner's understanding of it. The following translation, "My Retreat At Chung-Nan" ("*Zhongnan bieye* 终南别业," hereafter "My Retreat at Zhongnan") appears in Bynner and Jiang's suite of Wang Wei poems in *Poetry*:

> My heart in middle age found the Way,
> And I came to dwell at the foot of this mountain.
> When the spirit moves, I wander alone
> Where beauty is known only to me.
> I will walk till the water checks my path,
> Then sit and watch the rising clouds,
> And some day meet an old woodcutter,
> And talk and laugh and never return.[387]

End-rhymes within Chinese poetry have existed since the *Shijing* 诗经, or *Book of Songs*, the earliest official anthology; the major subsequent development of "modern style" *jintishi* poetry, which flourished in the Tang, was the introduction of regulated tonal prosody, where each line is composed not only in accordance with organizational concepts such as rhetorical parallelism or intensification, but also the sonic principle of *pingze* 平仄, or "flat" (*ping* 平) and "oblique" (*ze* 仄) tones. The source poem of "My Retreat at Zhongnan" demonstrates all of these characteristics. To display one's sophisticated wit and technical virtuosity in the court of the pre-Tang Southern Dynasties were qualities essential to

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[386] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask, 2003.

[387] Wei Wang, "My Retreat At Chung-Nan," trans. Witter Bynner and Kanghu Jiang, *Poetry* 19, no. 5 (February 1922): 238. The poem's later revision in *The Jade Mountain* remains substantially the same–line 4 is reworked, and there are minor variations in line enjambment and full and partial end-stops; see Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, 195.

maintaining one's social prestige. It was thus essential to master *pingze* tonal prosody. To do so demonstrates that you are one who "knows the music," or in this case "knows the meter" (*zhiyin* 知音, literally "knows sound"), thereby demonstrating how you are "at the forefront of an emerging form of literary skill and knowledge."[388]

Xie is by no means incorrect to say that Bynner reads Tang poetry as something more aesthetically consequential than merely the idle pursuit of the literati or a symptom of Chinese socioeconomic capital. In his introductory essay to *The Jade Mountain,* he submits, "the characteristic method of the best Chinese poetry" is an aesthetics of "substance" over "turns of expression."[389] In "The Persistence of Poetry," a privately published edition of his essay for *The Jade Mountain*, he elaborates,

> Chinese poetry rarely trespasses beyond the bounds of actuality. Whereas western poets will take actualities as points of departure for exaggeration or fantasy or else as shadows of contrast against dreams of unreality, the great Chinese poets accept the world exactly as they find it in all its terms, and with profound simplicity find therein sufficient solace.[390]

Bynner formulates Chinese poetics as part of a larger, prevailing humanist celebration of lived experience within Chinese culture, and Bynner and Jiang's translations bear out this perspective. An editorial note in *Poetry* concerning Bynner and Jiang's translations of Wang Wei observes, "Mr. Bynner's preference for the line of four feet and for the four-line or eight-line poem is his tribute to the close prosodic structure of Chinese poetry. In the translator's opinion the form he has chosen is the closest approach to the original which is

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[388] Goh, "Knowing Sound: Poetry and 'Refinement' in Early Medieval China," 53.

[389] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain,* xvi.

[390] Bynner, "The Persistence of Poetry," 385–86.

possible in English."[391] However, in the final analysis Bynner assigns little weight to formal mechanics as ends in themselves, calling them merely "the superficial tricks by which a Chinese poet" (or English language translator of poetry, for that matter) "makes his words balanced and melodious."[392] In choosing a flexible free verse line of four feet as "the closest approach to the original" in English, he instead demonstrates a preference for what feels "natural and familiar" in English, rather than "exotic or quaint," so as "to accent in these T'ang masterpieces the human and universal qualities by which they have endured."[393] "My Retreat at Zhongnan" is one of many Wang Wei poems set in the Zhongnan mountains, where he had a family estate often visited when not at the capital. Thus Wang Wei was "perhaps the greatest of the capital poets," yet is often remembered best for his poems which construct a life of the "rural idyll."[394] Towards this point, and in direct contrast to Xie's stated assumptions, Bynner cautions the reader not to take "the indolence of the poet" at face value. He observes, "As a matter of fact Wang Wei was a physician, a high government official, a great poet, and also one of China's most illustrious painters. (A scroll attributed to him is on view at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.)"[395]

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[391] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 278.

[392] Bynner, "The Persistence of Poetry," 385.

[393] Hengtang Tuishi, *The Jade Mountain*, xix.

[394] Fuller, *An Introduction to Chinese Poetry*, 193.

[395] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 274.

Bynner's praise of Wang Wei's "realism" thus ultimately becomes predicated upon the poet's rendering of an affective connection to the "heart of life" within the aesthetic space of the poem–rendering "realism" and "lyrical" as interchangeable. He was not the only modernist who registered a personal affinity for Wang Wei. Max Eastman, whose PhD was directed by John Dewey, revised two Wang Wei translations by Moon Kwan, publishing them in *The Liberator*.[396] He mused, "Isn't it strange that I should have felt such an identity with the word's [sic] of Wang Wei, when I knew so little about them, and they seem all of them to be just what I want to feel?"[397] Nor was Bynner the only poet or scholar to attempt a translation of "the heart of life" beating within a literary text, or evaluate a translation as being successful in doing so. Indeed, Wai-lim Yip, Zhaoming Qian, and Guiyou Huang all make various claims tending towards this direction, though not in regards to *The Jade Mountain* but instead *Cathay*.[398] In his "hermeneutical model" of translation, Venuti assays all such discussion as being rooted in a fallacy of the "true," original text. Even when the translator aims for a semantic correspondence to the source text, the aesthetic function and meaning of the text has always already been interpreted. Moreover, one can cite different historical interpretations of reading the source text in the original, which in turn leads to a multiplicity of translations.[399] This interpretive hermeneutic is particularly visible when brought to bear on the textual lineage of Chinese

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[396] Wei Wang, "Poems of Wang Wei," trans. Max Eastman and Moon Kwan, *The Liberator* 3, no. 11 (November 1920).

[397] Graham and Irmscher, *Love and Loss in Hollywood*, 204.

[398] Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound's Cathay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*; Guiyou Huang, *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997).

[399] Venuti, *Theses on Translation An Organon for the Current Moment*.

poetry. As Yunte Huang prudently reminds English readers, the tradition of Chinese poetry has never been understood to be self-evident, exegetically pellucid, or aesthetically "pristine" within Chinese scholarship; instead, literary verse typically comes down to contemporary readers in edited volumes where the poem is visually besieged on all sides of the printed page, surrounded by a dense historical accretion of paratextual glosses and critical commentary.[400] Both Huang and Venuti reject scholarly tendencies of falling back upon essentializing claims of what literature or translation *is* or *must* be, thereby clearing the ground for the open, prismatic multiplicity of what it *can* be. On this final point, their respective scholarship is in the final analysis quite amenable to Bynner, Yip, and Qian alike.

In contrast, competing scholars like Xie approach translation from the first principle of a fundamental *untranslatability*. By reducing the translated Chinese poem to the many ways in which it is not and cannot be the original, Xie himself becomes unwittingly ensnared in an appeal to an "authentic" Chinese text. In this regard they mirror the pronouncement of Amy Lowell's reviewer in *Chinese Students' Monthly* that "a true representation of Chinese poetry" cannot be achieved in American free verse. In the face of this supposed untranslatability of regulated Chinese prosody, however, recent scholarship contests longstanding assumptions that this verse reflects any essential linguistic or sociocultural "Chineseness." Instead, Victor Mair and Tsu-lin Mei attest that tonal regulation in Chinese prosody is an importation from Sanskrit poetry. Through a comparative reading of Chinese and Sanskrit sources, the Mair-Mei hypothesis reveals what is taken to be most quintessentially Chinese is instead a result of inter-imperial sociocultural exchange across premodern Asia; in other words, itself a product of translation. In *The Organization of Distance*, Klein musters this and other translational case studies in an attempt to overturn the

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[400] Huang, *Transpacific Displacement*, 76–77.

essential "Chineseness" which runs through the heart of Chinese poetry.[401] In doing so, he argues Chinese poetry "translated a foreignizing form towards a nativizing aesthetic, and how it contributes to the creation of a dominant ethic of Chineseness through that translation."[402] For Klein, the stakes of this is the realization that notions of "Chineseness" in poetry historically emerged through the transplantation and interplay of the foreign and native. Rather than a condition of untranslatability, we arrive at a conception of literary heritage grounded upon conditions of transnational circulation and cross-cultural appropriation and transformation–translations between English and Chinese being only the most recent example, rather than some kind of exceptional case. Klein concludes, "If Chineseness emerges only through translation, then the transference between languages through which regulated verse became possible must not fade away."[403] Likewise, whither American modernist and contemporary poetics absent recognition of its emergence and development in relation to translations of Chinese poetry.

iii. Conclusion: Something to Animate, not to Appropriate

An aspect of Wang Wei's work neglected by Bynner, Owen, and Xie alike is its strong association with Buddhism. Indeed, the most plausible interpretation of "Deer-Park

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[401] Klein addresses the presence of Buddhist Sanskrit in Tang poetry in the chapter Lucas Klein, "Indic Echoes: Form, Content, and Contested Chineseness in Regulated Verse," in *The Organization of Distance: Poetry, Translation, Chineseness* (New York: Brill, 2018), 113–53. Moreover, in a footnote in the introduction he credits "the seed" of his book to his "prolonged meditation on the implications of Mair and Mei's findings to the question "What is World Poetry?"; kleinOrganizationDistancePoetry2018, 14

[402] Klein, *The Organization of Distance*, 159.

[403] Ibid., 153.

Hermitage" is that it functions as Buddhist allegory, with the light shining through the trees representing a brief moment of insight (*jian xing* 见性) into how ultimate reality and the mundane phenomena of everyday life are mutually interpenetrated with one another. The title of the poem nudges the reader in this direction, as deer are sacred to Buddhism and symbolically linked to the historical Buddha (for, as tradition has it, it was at Deer Park that he gave his first sermon). Though Paul Rouzer cautions elsewhere against overdetermined readings of Buddhist rhetoric in Wang Wei's poetry, he himself supplies a very similar gloss to the word "empty" (*kong* 空) in line 4 of "My Retreat at Zhongnan": "The adverbial use of *kong* ('empty') in this line evades reasonable translation. It suggests that the poet is both conscious of the splendor of the scene but that it is also part of śunyatā, the essentially 'unreal' nature of our reality [within Buddhist metaphysics]."[404]

Given these textual clues, as well as Bynner's personal affinity for Wang Wei, it is startling that he and Jiang claim that Wang Wei was a Daoist–first in their 1922 *Poetry* portfolio, and again, unamended, in *Jade Mountain*. In his discussion of "My Retreat at Zhongnan," Bynner contends:

> One of [Wang Wei's poems] begins with the line, "My heart in middle age found the Way"; the Chinese word for the Way being Tao, the first character of the title of Lao-tzu's book, Tao-Te-Ching, which may be translated in whole as The Way and the Exemplification. Taoism appears, then, to have been the consolation of Wang Wei, although Professor Herbert M. Giles, in his volume Chinese Literature, declares it to have been Buddhism.[405]

The crux of their confusion lays with the word *dao* 道. Though aligned with Daoism in its mainstream English usage, it appears as a keyword within a number of Chinese spiritual

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[404] Wei Wang, *The Poetry and Prose of Wang Wei*, trans. Paul Rouzer (Boston/Berlin: DeGruyter, 2020), 79.

[405] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 273.

and philosophical traditions, including Confucianism and Buddhism. In the case of Confucianism, this speaks to the historical presence of *dao* in Chinese thought before the codification of specific schools such as Confucianism and Daoism in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. As for Buddhism, which came to China from India in later, successive waves, it demonstrates the historical processes of Sinicization and syncretism–most famously, the intermingling of Chan 禅 Buddhism (widely known in English by its Japanese transliteration Zen) with Daoism. In this way, a wide corpus of South Asian texts and practices foreign to Han Chinese culture transformed into one of China's three great religions. Wang Wei himself was active in the decades immediately following Empress Wu Zetian's patronage of Buddhism at the turn of the 8th century, when it continued to hold immense sociopolitical prestige in the Tang imperial court.[406]

Readers inclined to attribute this misreading of Wang Wei wholly to Bynner risk ignoring his deference to Jiang's interpretations. Nor would this be the only time where Jiang's understanding of Chinese history and culture raises eyebrows, particularly in areas which extend beyond classical Chinese poetics *qua* poetics. The error also emphasizes Bynner's personal preference towards the philosophical outlook of Wang Wei's poetry, describing "the spirit of all his poems" as an attitude of acceptance towards "the natural way of the universe."[407] In contrast with Pound, who in *The Cantos* casts both Buddhism and Daoism as philosophically opposed to his beloved Confucianism, Bynner aligned himself intellectually with Daoism. As with Pound's later translations of Confucian texts

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[406] Rouzer argues that elements in Wang Wei's poetry traditionally attributed to Chan teachings should more accurately be read in relation to a plurality of Buddhist schools and texts that Wang Wei would be familiar with as a lay follower of Huayan 华严 Buddhism–a school which coincided with and later was subsumed by Chan, but in his own time was historically distinct from it; Wang, *The Poetry and Prose of Wang Wei*, xxv-xxvi.

[407] Bynner, "Translating Wang Wei," 273.

which extended beyond the limits of the Fenollosa archive, Bynner also went on to execute a translation of the *Daodejing* 道德经 without the support of Jiang.

Titled *The Way and Its Exemplification*, the book was a commercial success; however, Bynner expressed reservations about its critical reception–particularly by Waley, who had lauded *The Jade Mountain* but was skeptical of this new effort. Bynner was thus deeply grateful when, four years after mailing it to China, the translation received praise from Jiang. Written from his prison cell in Nanjing, this would prove to be their final correspondence. Bynner thanks Jiang for crediting him with a "Fore Nature understanding" of the *Daodejing*. He poignantly writes:

> Thank you for the sweetness of heart you give me…That is what I thought I had; and, in spite of Arthur Waley's strictures against my text, still think I have. To you, dear friend, I owe it, and I never forget the debt. Well I remember meeting you at Berkeley and hearing you point some comment with a quotation from a T'ang poet; and the eleven years together, exchanging texts and making them better each time, till finally the book evolved which Waley himself called 'better' than his own. He was a very generous man at that time; and I am wondering why, since I told in my preface [to *The Way and Its Exemplification*] the fact I lacked your help or that of someone like you, he did not grant me the inner sense of rightness which I feel went into the book. You do it, and I love you for it.[408]

Jiang's wife had mentioned the existence of an autobiography to Bynner in a previous letter, and he made an offer to provide "whatever assistance I may to its proper presentation in English." One never arrived, and Jiang died in prison in 1954.[409]

Jiang's absence from the project was indeed likely to its detriment. The *Daodejing* is famously laden with contradiction, paradox, and archaic wordplay, and Bynner speckles his translation with a euphony that verges on nonsense when his comprehension of the text

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[408] Bynner, *The Works of Witter Bynner: Selected Letters*, 194.

[409] Ibid.

becomes exhausted. In section two, where a literal translation could plausibly read, "Sound and voice mutually harmonize; front and back mutually follow" (*shengyin xiang he, qianhou xiang sui* 音聲相和、前後相隨; translation mine), Bynner writes, "But, since the varying of tones gives music to a voice / And what is is the was of what shall be."[410] Nonetheless, interesting interpretive choices emerge. Bynner renders the *dao* as "existence," while *shengren* 圣人–saint, sage, or wise man–becomes "the sanest man," stripped of all metaphysical connotations. Immediately following the previous two lines, his translation reads:

> The sanest man
> Sets up no deed,
> Lays down no law,
> Takes everything that happens as it comes,
> As something to animate, not to appropriate,
> To earn, not to own,
> To accept naturally without self-importance:
> If you never assume importance
> You never lose it.[411]

Bynner's approach has been likened to "populist hermeneutics," one quite similar to his work on *The Jade Mountain*: "He demystifies and demotes the sage to emphasize his familiar and universal qualities."[412] At the same time, couldn't his description of the "sanest" man also be read as a "sane," demystifying approach to translation–one with which even Weinberger would be likely to approve? One which "lays down no law" but instead "takes everything that happens" in the text "as it comes"; which approaches translation as common and natural, and thus "to accept naturally without self-importance"; as an act

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[410] Bynner, *The Chinese Translations*, 350.

[411] Ibid.

[412] Lucas Carmichael, "The Daode Jing as American Scripture: Text, Tradition, and Translation" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2017).

which should be a credit to the text, rather than renders a "deed" of ownership over it; and which approaches the text as "something to animate, not to appropriate."

To reiterate this chapter's initial point of departure, there was little consensus in interwar modernism concerning English translations of Chinese poetry; nonetheless, among Chinese commentators themselves a familiar canonical figure emerged above all others. In contrast with Bynner's ethos of populist hermeneutics, one critic of the period, Xie Wentong 谢文通, argues that distinctions between translations are fundamentally predicated upon "style." Diverging from the skepticism of Lowell and Ayscough's reviewer in *Chinese Students' Monthly*, Xie contends, "Style is as important in translation as in composition. Messrs. Bynner, Waley and Pound all have it." (Notably, Lowell and Ayscough go unmentioned.) Xie follows by differentiating their respective styles:

> The drawback lies in the possession of a style: a style individual and inflexible, as in the case of Mr. Bynner. Mr. Waley submerges his individuality to re-express the original but compromises with English tradition (especially in the matter of articulation). Mr. Pound is the only one who, uninhibited by tradition, moulds his style on the text.[413]

The claim that Pound "moulds his style on the text" of the Chinese poem instead of imposing his own may be hard to accept at face value–particularly so when Bynner is described in contrast as "individual and inflexible" (evaluations previously made by Tietjens regarding Lowell). Yet this early Chinese critic is not alone on this point. Later scholars like Yip, Qian, and Huang equally argue Pound demonstrates an intuitive poetic sensibility in his translation of Chinese poetry, Chinese culture, and Chinese language into

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[413] Wentong Xie, "English Translations of Chinese Poetry," *Criterion*, no. 17 (1938): 423–24.

Anglo-American modernism.[414] The following chapter will explore how Pound's modernist approach to poetry is imbricated by both his organicist-vitalist aesthetics and "his ingenious etymosinological method" of reading Chinese ideographic characters as living, intuitively realized modernist images.[415]

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[414] Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound's Cathay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969); Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*; Guiyou Huang, *Whitmanism, Imagism, and Modernism in China and America* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997).

[415] Yunte Huang, "Ezra Pound, Made in China," *Paideuma* 42 (2015): 43.

5. CHAPTER THREE: EZRA POUND'S LIVING CHINESE CHARACTER

i. The Chinese Room

In 1980, John Searle proposed the thought experiment of a "Chinese Room." Imagine a person who does not understand Chinese and sits in a hermetically sealed room. The person receives questions written in Chinese from somewhere outside–let's say from us. The person has instructions and a sequential set of systematic operations which tells them how to match Chinese characters with other Chinese characters, and thereby send back an appropriate response. For Marshall Unger, the crucial point is the following:

> Instructions we pass to the man under the door may include Chinese characters, but they only refer to them as visually distinguishable blobs of ink…We are not permitted to give the man English translations of any kind. So far as he is concerned, individual Chinese characters are just graphic objects to be compared or copied as such. He has no idea why they have the shape they do, how they correspond to Chinese or English words or phrases, or why they are in a certain order…We simply feed him orders.[416]

For Searle, restricting our human participant to a series of mechanical inputs and outputs renders them equivalent to a computer processor parsing machine code. Consequently, the "Chinese Room" allows us to interrogate the possibility of artificial intelligence in computers: "if we cannot say that the man in the room behaved intelligently, we have no

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[416] J. Marshall Unger, *Ideogram: Chinese Characters and the Myth of Disembodied Meaning* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 132.

business saying that the computer did either."[417] Unger stumbles a bit on this definitional point, describing the man in the room as "doing many chores that require intelligence (reading documents in English, keeping track of vast amounts of paper, visually comparing on Chinese character with another, deciding whether they are the same or not, copying them as best he can, sharpening pencils)"—all of which, following Dewey, are easily identifiable as rote, habituated action, *not* anything which in and of itself demonstrates a critical intervention into ongoing affairs which we call "thinking." Nonetheless, Unger observes that the conditions of the "Chinese Room" stymie any ability of the participant to positively influence their experience or what they produce in any way: "the overall plan of his behavior is as obtuse, plodding, and absurd as anything Kafka or Sartre ever dreamed up."[418]

Searle's "Chinese Room" stands in direct contrast with *both* the experimentalism of Pound's "Chinese laboratory" and the florid "oriental manner" of early modernist poetry. Instead, Searle follows figures such as the author Franz Kafka and post-structuralist Roland Barthes, who muster China and Chinese characters as a theoretical absolute in order to interrogate broader, universal understandings of human experience and the limits of human knowledge—to talk, in short, about something other than China.[419] Chris Patterson, for example, argues Barthes' employment of China as "virtual other" in *Travels in China* derives from an awareness that *any* act of reading Asia is *a priori* an act of appropriation; therefore, in his studious attempts to *not* read or engage with China, "Barthes confronts an

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[417] Ibid., 133.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Franz Kafka, "The Great Wall of China," trans. Ian Johnston, *Franz Kafka Online*, 2023, https://kafka-online.info/the-great-wall-of-china.html. Franz Kafka Online. 2007-2023.

unknown that 'is neither Japan nor China but his own language, and through it, that of all the West.'"[420] Nonetheless, in order to do so these thinkers invoke Chinese culture and language as "the stereotype of inscrutability par excellence." Unger concludes: "How ironic that, in constructing a powerful argument against a theory of meaning historically inspired by Chinese characters, Searle resorted to our culture's crudest preconceptions about Chinese characters to drive his point home."[421]

ii. Rays Ideogram

All of the voluminous, multifarious research concerning Ezra Pound's engagement with Chinese characters can perhaps be summarized into one single statement: Chinese characters were much more for him than merely "visually distinguishable blobs of ink." Indeed, they may even carry within them the core of his aesthetic philosophy itself. In the 1986 Fall and Winter issue of *Paideuma*, the writer and translator Eliot Weinberger published "A Note on the *Cathay* Ideogram." He remarks:

> The Chinese character that appears on the cover of the first edition of Cathay and on p. 254 of The Cantos as a sort of frontispiece to Cantos LII-LXXI has, I understand, received no comment by Pound scholars. Pound called it the RAYS ideogram, and analyzed it in the Fenollosa notes as "bright + feathers flying."
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> 耀[422]

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[420] Christopher Patterson, *Open World Empire: Race, Erotics, and the Global Rise of Video Games* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 254. For a concise summary of critique and defense of Barthes's employment of Japan and China, see Patterson, *ibid.*, 250-254.

[421] Unger, *Ideogram*, 136.

[422] Eliot Weinberger, "A Note on the Cathay Ideogram," *Paideuma. Mitteilungen Zur Kulturkunde* 15 (1986): 141.

Weinberger observes that this character had remained unremarked upon until his brief explication in the pages of *Paideuma*; indeed, in the years since scholarly work on the character has rarely gone further than his initial observations. Suggestive of its intractable resistance to strategies of interpretation, scholarship tends to replicate Weinberger's intimations that the character "not only means but also includes elements of *brightness*, *splendor*, and *honor*—all of course essential EP words."[423] Mary Paterson Cheadle describes this character as an "exclamation of light," indicative of Pound searching for a word "that would announce the 'enlightened' examples he believed Chinese history provided."[424] Josephine Park employs Cheadle's reading to argue that the character has a "splendor" which "makes overwhelmingly clear the full impossibility of pinning down this image in English."[425] James McDougal likewise reads this character in relation to ideas of illumination and concealment. Elaborating upon Cheadle's position that Pound's philosophy is one of Neoconfucianist enlightenment, McDougal suggests that *Cathay* offers "a poetics of 'Illumination' in both the sense of text as image"—akin to the western medieval illuminated text—"as well as text as radiating direct thought."[426] What none of these accounts do, however, is definitely link these suggestions of light, illumination, or luminousness to a larger aesthetic project. An annotation of this character in a critical edition of *Cathay* best summarizes the ambivalent state of affairs, observing that "almost any

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[423] Ibid., emphasis his.

[424] Mary Paterson Cheadle, *Ezra Pound's Confucian Translations* (University of Michigan Press, 1997), 224.

[425] Josephine Nock-Hee Park, *Apparitions of Asia: Modernist Form and Asian American Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 40.

[426] James McDougal, "Exclusions and Innovations: The Incorporation of Chinese Literature in Modern American Poetry," (University of Florida, 2007), 102.

composite character can be read ideogrammically, if you choose to do so," and that "folk etymology is poesis."[427]

What lays unexplored in these glosses is how this rhetoric of light is central to Pound's discussion of the Vortex of the eponymous vorticist aesthetic movement, which he defines in "Vorticism" as a "radiant node or cluster."[428] It is my contention that this confluence of the Rays ideogram and the central term of Pound's vorticist project is demonstrative of how the discourses of vorticism, the Chinese character, and the influence of T.E. Hulme and other vitalist-organicist philosophies are not unrelated or parallel avenues of inquiry for Pound, but are indeed projects of the closest connections which necessitate the reading of all three in relation to and within each other. Such an approach to Pound can be understood as a critical counterpart to what Hulme describes in *Speculations* as an "intensive manifold," "a complex thing which yet cannot be said to have parts because the parts run into each other, forming a continuous whole, and whose parts cannot even be conceived as existing separately."[429]

Beginning with imagism and arriving at vorticism, this chapter traces the development of Pound's aesthetic theory of the poetic image. Through a historical analysis

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[427] See Ezra Pound, *Cathay: A Critical Edition, Edited by Timothy Billings* (Fordham University Press, 2019), 75. Indeed, panel participants in "Modernism in Literature and the Arts: East and West" at the 2019 ACLA conference supplemented the above readings of the character with their own intuitive etymologies. They observed how this character is phonetically similar to "want" (*yao* 要) and compositionally similar to "leap" (*yue* 躍). The irresistibility of this impulse demonstrates Roman Jakobson's suggestion that "phonemic similarity is sensed as semantic relationship" within the space of poetry, and "the pun, or to use a more erudite, and perhaps more precise term — paronomasia, reigns over poetic art." (Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben Brower (Harvard University Press, 1995), 238)

[428] Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," *Fortnightly Review* 96 (1914): 461–71, *http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/vorticism/*.

[429] T. E. Speculations Hulme, *Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, Edited by Herbert Read* (Brace and Company, Harcourt, 1936), 181.

of the parallel development of Pound's theory of the Chinese character—the putative "ideogram"—and his aesthetic, vitalist-organicist theory of vorticism, I argue that any account of Pound's vorticist project must reckon with his biological understanding of Chinese characters, and that the Chinese character in turn is positioned by Pound as the preeminent nonrepresentational vorticist Image by way of Fenollosa's "ideogrammic method." Reading these discourses in Pound's work in tandem with and against one another allows for new approaches to understanding its inherently transnational nature. As exemplified by the Rays ideogram frontispiece, any account of Pound's work—and indeed, of Anglo-American modernism as a whole—is left incomplete without attention to its transpacific character.

Cheadle advocates an attention to the precise, definitional meaning of Chinese characters for Pound–particularly as they are found in *The Cantos*–and cautions against what she sees as over-attention to the visual, "spectacular" nature of the characters themselves.[430] Nevertheless, the connections between Pound's understanding of these characters and his vorticist project have yet to be sufficiently plumbed. Michael Levenson, R. John Williams, and Zhaoming Qian have all made substantial scholarly contributions to the respective roles that vitalism, vorticism, and Chinese characters play in Pound's work, but none of their accounts can be said to be holistically complete. Levenson provides a definitive account of vorticism's philosophical origins in the work of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century thinkers, but lacks an understanding of the role that Chinese language and poetry plays in the genealogy of modernism.[431] Qian serves as a corrective to Levenson

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[430] Cheadle, *Ezra Pound's Confucian Translations*, 223.

[431] Michael Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

by centralizing the substantial influence of Chinese art and poetics for Pound and other modernist writers, but in turn minimizes any correlations between Pound's work on Chinese characters and poetry and his commitment to vorticism.[432] Most recently, Williams richly traces out Pound's respective affinities for vorticism and Ernest Fenollosa's work on the Chinese character, perceiving a technological imperative which binds the two endeavors together; at the same time, he omits any consideration towards the crucial philosophical undercurrent of vitalism and organicism within these projects.[433] An account is necessary which reflects the primacy of all three of these projects—vitalism, Vorticism, and Chinese characters—in the development of Pound's understanding of the Image.

Pound's initial conception of a modernist poetry which prioritizes the image is indebted to Hulme. In April 1909, Pound joined Hulme's salon, which met every Wednesday on Frith Street at the Cafe Tour d'Eiffel in London. Hulme and other members of the club, such as F.S. Flint, expressed interest in French Symbolist poetry and wrote haiku as a kind of pastime pleasure, rather than as a serious literary pursuit. Flint noted that in all of these activities, Hulme functioned as the "ringleader."[434] Where Hulme and his group gained their knowledge of haiku from, however, is less than clear. Reading "History of Imagism," Flint's account of the group's early imagist activity published in May 1915 in

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[432] Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

[433] R. John Williams, *The Buddha in the Machine: Art, Technology, and the Meeting of East and West* (Yale University Press, 2014).

[434] Jewel Spears Brooker, *Mastery and Escape: T.S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism*. (University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 55.

The Egoist, Earl Miner speculates that the group's exposure to Japanese poetry came from French sources, given Flint's use of the word "haikai" to refer to haiku — an earlier appellation for the form which Miner contends "was used almost exclusively by the French."[435] Along with Flint's references to "a poetry in *vers libre*, akin in spirit to the Japanese," this serves as proof for Miner that French Symbolism and Japanese haiku were indelibly linked in the minds of Hulme's imagist group.[436] He contends, "The group had probably discovered Japanese poetry from the French and in French translations which tended to blur the lines of difference between what was essentially Japanese and what was typical of French taste at the time."[437] Additionally, Qian persuasively argues that Pound took inspiration early on from another source: his exposure to Chinese and Japanese paintings curated by Laurence Binyon at the British Museum.[438]

Despite the group's eventual dissolution as Hulme's interests shifted from poetry and towards philosophy, Hulme's work during this period had an indelible effect upon Pound and his development of imagism. A sample of Hulme's poems, sardonically titled "The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme," appears in the January 25th, 1912 number of *The New Age*, and again in an appendix to Pound's 1912 collection *Ripostes*. His brief, scenic poems of image-based epiphanies stand out in marked contrast to Pound's more rhetorically focused work in this early collection. In "The Painter," for example, Pound

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[435] Earl Miner, *The Japanese Tradition in British and American Literature* (1958: Princeton University Press, n.d.), 101.

[436] Ibid., 104.

[437] Ibid., 101–2.

[438] "Pound and Chinese Art in the 'British Museum Era'," in *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art*, by Zhaoming Qian (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 1–21.

responds to a painting attributed, at the time, to Renaissance painter Jacopo de Sellaio–not by ekphrastically shaping the visual features of the work into descriptive imagery, but rather by conveying the effect the work has upon the speaker, who plainly and directly repeats the sentence, "The eyes of the dead lady speak to me."[439] In marked contrast to this rhetorical move, Hulme's "Autumn" observes in imaginative and sensorial detail "the ruddy moon lean over a hedge / Like a red-faced farmer," and "wistful stars / With white faces like town children."[440] Miner appraises this poem as having the tone and intellectual control of symbolism, and if not the form or content of haiku, "shows an awareness of Japanese poetry which is new to English writers."[441]

The publication of Hulme's poems is often understood as the commencement of imagism proper.[442] To further emphasize this point, the "three rules" of imagism which Pound famously refers to in "A Few Don'ts," published in March 1913 in *Poetry* and preceded by a short preface attributed to Flint titled "Imagisme," are observed to have been "repeatedly enunciated by their old friend Hulme."[443] Despite this, Pound does not see fit to attribute the source of these imagist rules to him. Flint would later attempt to correct the record in "History of Imagism," crediting Pound with launching imagism as a movement in 1912 and Hulme with the theory of imagism and the first imagist poems in 1909.

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[439] Ezra Pound, "Ripostes [1912], Elkin Matthew" 1915 (n.d.): 51.

[440] Ibid., 60.

[441] Ibid., 103.

[442] Brooker, *Mastery and Escape: T.S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism*., 57.

[443] Ibid., 58.

Pound, for his part, went on to write Hulme out of the record of the history of imagism entirely, along with Flint as his proxy. In his republication of "A Few Don'ts" in *Pavannes and Divagations,* his 1918 collection of essays, Pound omits Flint's preface, instead publishing a new preface titled "A Retrospect," which argues that the three "principles" of imagism were "agreed upon" by Richard Aldington, H.D., and himself "in the early spring or summer of 1912."[444]

The divestment by Pound from Amy Lowell further demonstrates Pound's desire to assert precise definition and authorial control over imagism. In fact, Pound's involvement with vorticism, a pointedly androcentric movement, can be seen as the consequence of his disavowal of Lowell and what he saw as her usurpation of imagism. In November 1913, Pound was still championing Lowell and her imagist compatriot John Fletcher in his correspondences, politely addressing Lowell as "Miss Lowell" and calling Harriet Monroe a "bloody fool" in regards to a recent, minor editorial decision concerning one of Lowell's poems.[445] In the summer of 1914 he went as far as offering to attend dinner with Lowell and discuss their current enterprises, including *BLAST*, the short-lived magazine which would become synonymous with the veritable boys club of vorticism.[446] By that August, however, Pound was voicing his first protestations to Lowell's proposal for an annual imagist anthology. Pound states, "I should like the name 'Imagism' to retain some sort of a

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[444] See Ezra Pound, *Pavannes and Divagations* (New York: Knopf, 1918). Daniel Tiffany argues that the original preface, "Imagisme," was in fact ghostwritten by Pound and merely attributed to Flint. If so, this would provide even more reason for Pound to disavow it after his falling out with Flint. Daniel Tiffany, *Radio Corpse: Imagism and the Cryptaesthetic of Ezra Pound* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 45-46.

[445] Ezra Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, ed. D. Paige (Brace and Company, Harcourt, 1950), 64.

[446] Ibid., 77.

meaning."[447] He goes on in a subsequent August letter to write, "I think your annual anthology should be called *Vers Libre* or something of that sort. Obviously it will consist in great part of the work of people who have not taken the trouble to find out what I mean by 'Imagism.' I should, as I have said, like to keep the term associated with a certain clarity and intensity."[448]

From this point on, Pound's relationship to Lowell would rapidly deteriorate; in the end he would only express excorious contempt and ridicule towards her. In September 1914, Pound's essay "Vorticism" appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*. Originally titled "Imagism," this essay provides a developmental account of how vorticism emerges from Pound's earlier understanding of imagism, while also signaling a break with his earlier identification of himself as an imagist.[449] Compounding this, in October he stumbles upon an advertisement in *Poetry* for Amy Lowell's *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds*, which declares Lowell the "foremost member of the 'Imagists.'"[450] In response, Pound sputters to Harriet Monroe, "It is, of course, comic. On the other hand, it is outrageous."[451] To Lowell herself, Pound declares the ad "arrant charlatanism," asserting, "I was quite right in refusing to join you in any scheme for turning Les Imagistes into a critical democracy." He goes on to suggest that Lowell's advertisement was tantamount to libel, concluding with the

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[447] Ibid., 79.

[448] Ibid., 78–79.

[449] Pound, "Vorticism."

[450] Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 84.

[451] Ibid.

proposition, or vague threat, "I think you had better cease referring to yourself as an Imagiste."[452]

One could make a convincing case that Pound's personal investment in vorticism seems to conveniently arrive at the same time he is compelled to chauvinistically distance himself from Lowell; moreover, the pretense of a new philosophical (because masculinist) rigor and discernment which vorticism places upon the image provides Pound with a good cover in doing so. Compounding this, Pound's publication of "Vorticism" signals a distancing of his aesthetic judgment not only from Lowell but also Monroe and other American writers, in favor of a more exclusive coterie of writers and artists based in England. This position, held by Timothy Materer, argues that vorticism is Pound's effort to rebrand his work into "an improved version of Imagism," and thereby distinguish himself above Lowell and her mainstream democratization of imagism.[453] To be sure, this does seem to be partly the case. At the same time, a clear difference between imagism and vorticism emerges in Pound's thought at this moment which in the final analysis extends well beyond the totalizing motives of either sweeping misogyny or crass careerism.

Yoshinobu Hakutani offers the following account of Pound's seminal articulation of the poetic image in "Vorticism":

> As Pound explained in his essay, the image is not a static rational idea … An image, he argued, does not constitute simply a picture of something. As a vortex, the image must be "endowed with energy." … To demonstrate his poetic theory, Pound thought of an image not as a decorative emblem or symbol but as a seed

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[452] Ibid., 84–85.

[453] Timothy Materer, *Make It Sell! Ezra Pound Advertises Modernism*, 1996, http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/amylowell/Imagism.htm.

> capable of germinating and developing into another organism. As an illustration he presented what he called "a *hokku*-like sentence."[454]

The particularities of this conception of Pound's image are noteworthy. There is a palpable vitalist-organicist understanding of the image as being akin to a seed. Like a seed, the image is "endowed with energy," allowing for the potential for it to germinate and flower into something entirely new. As the image is not static but instead conceived as a dynamic vortex, it likewise has a nascent, biological potential to be a meaningful influence upon the history of world literature. This point is critical to Pound's aesthetic understanding of literature as constantly being renewed by a return to those texts of the past which are engendered with an autonomous, evergreen vitality or radiance. This conception of the energized image also provides a criterion by which he can differentiate his poetics from writers such as Lowell.

Alongside this investment in vitalist-organicist metaphors, Hakutani notes the influence of East Asian poetics upon Pound's conception of the vorticist image. Notably, however, Haukutani makes only a passing reference to Pound's own explanation of "In a Station of the Metro" as a "*hokku*-like sentence," with no reference to Pound's work in Chinese. Elsewhere in the article, Hakutani incorrectly observes that Pound only became interested in Chinese poetics in 1918 with his editorial work on Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*.[455] Moreover, he judges that the sources for Pound's scientistic, vitalist ideas which he expresses in "Vorticism" are "hard to determine."[456]

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[454] Yoshinobu Hakutani, "Ezra Pound, Yone Noguchi, and Imagism," *Modern Philology* 90, no. 1 (1992): 47–48.

[455] Ibid., 50.

[456] Ibid., 48.

Given Hakutani's focus on the work of the transnational poet Yone Noguchi, it is understandable how he would emphasize the Japanese influence on Pound over the Chinese. Nonetheless, this bias incorrectly conflates vorticism with imagism, flattening Pound's chronological development from the latter to the former, as well as his divestment from imagism generally in favor of vorticism.

It is interesting to weigh Hakutani's account of Pound's vorticist Image against one more recent by Daniel Tiffany:

> Not long after the first public explanations of Imagism, Pound backed away from the belletristic emblem of the Image as a Chinese ideogram, acknowledging implicitly the ambiguity and "softness" of the original stance (embodied in the "Metro" poem). A more forceful approach was required. Within a year of the Imagist manifesto, he converted Imagism into Vorticism and seized on the more dynamic emblem of the "vortex" as a means of heralding his campaign against the "mushiness" and "putrefaction" of corpse language. Yet the poetry and translations that Pound published during the period of his association with Vorticism (especially the seminal translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry in *Cathay* and *Lustra*) continued to display the resonant and elegiac diction of his early poetry. Alluding to a series of failed interventions, Pound described *Lustra* (1916), his first book of poems after launching the Imagist movement, as "absolutely the last obsequies of the Victorian period" (L 23). It was not, however, to be his last attempt to put the past behind him."[457]

A perceptive and innovative reader of Pound and modernist poetics generally, Tiffany nonetheless makes several contestable claims about Pound's own understanding of his work in *Cathay* and *Lustra* in relation to vorticism. Here, Tiffany's periodization falls on the other extreme of that articulated by Hakutani. Whereas Hakutani omits any reference to Chinese poetry in his account of vorticism, Tiffany suggests that Pound had already been

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[457] Daniel Tiffany, *My Silver Planet: A Secret History of Poetry and Kitsch* (John Hopkins University Press, 2015), 140.

exposed to Fenollosa's work on the Chinese character by the time of writing "In a Station of the Metro," published in *Poetry* in April 1913.[458]

As we have already seen, accounts of imagism differ from one another, even among those who were there at the beginning; this likewise extends to its point of cultural departure. In 1945, John Gould Fletcher contends in *The Asian Legacy and American Life* that imagism should be read in relation to China–what should be a timely and politically expedient argument, given that the United States was at war with Japan and strongly allied with China.[459] Yet in his review of the book, Witter Bynner disagrees with Fletcher's account, arguing he "offers more theory than evidence," and that the imagists were a "Japanese rather than Chinese manner." To look to the latter's influence on early modernist poetry, he suggests that "Mr. Fletcher might more pertinently have considered such poems as Vachel Lindsay's 'The Chinese Nightingale' and 'The Empire of China is Crumbling Down.'"[460]

All that said, we should remember that the point of disambiguation we are concerned with here is not what imagism *was*, necessarily, but rather what it was for Pound. Given this, some clarification of the chronology is now required. It is in October 1913 that Pound refers to the twenty-four poem cycle of his *Lustra* poems as "the last obsequies of the

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[458] Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," *Poetry*. 1 (1913): 7.

[459] John Gould Fletcher, "The Orient and Contemporary Poetry," in *The Asian Legacy and American Life*, ed. Arthur Christy (New York: John Day Company, 1945), 145–74.

[460] Witter Bynner, "Patterns of Eastern Culture," in *Prose Pieces*, ed. James Kraft, *The Works of Witter Bynner* (1945; repr., New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1979), 238.

Victorian period."[461] As such, his work on these poems–though not their publication–entirely predates his exposure to Chinese poetics in the manuscripts of Ernest Fenollosa, which Pound writes about in a letter to William Carlos Williams in December 1913.[462] Where Tiffany seems to be astray is that he conflates Pound's judgment on *Lustra*, as a poetic cycle, with *Lustra* as a final published book–the latter belatedly appearing three years later in 1916, with several additional sections. By that time, however, Pound had already moved on towards new directions.

Pound himself acknowledges how his publication history creates a confusion concerning the periodization of his progression from Japanese-based poetics in imagism to Chinese-based poetics in vorticism. In a 1917 letter to Kate Buss, Pound responds in the negative to her assumption that a poem published in his collection *Lustra* "was in any way influenced by Chinese stuff which I did not see until a year or two later." He elaborates, "The error is natural as *Cathay* appeared before *Lustra*, but the separate poems in *Lustra* had mostly been written before the Chinese translations were begun and had mostly been printed in periodicals either here [England] or in America."[463] As a miscellaneous collection which both precedes and is contemporaneous to *Cathay*, *Lustra* collapses three different periods in Pound's poetic development: his earlier imagist experiments influenced by Japanese poetics, of which "In a Station of the Metro" is the most famous example; a transitional period where Pound became interested in Chinese art and poetry, but still largely conceptualized their thematic content through a formalist lens of Japanese

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[461] Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 23.

[462] Ibid., 27–28.

[463] Ibid., 101.

poetics; and finally, Pound's Chinese translations and other poems following his exposure to Fenollosa's manuscripts, much of which previously appeared in *Cathay* in 1915 or were of a piece to it.

It is instructive to consider how Pound's thinking concerning the Chinese character arises in parallel to the development of vorticism. Like Pound's thoughts concerning the poetic image, Pound's thinking and exposure towards East Asian poetics is marked at this period by a rapid series of paradigmatic shifts. In March 1913, Pound published his seminal statement on imagism, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste," in *Poetry* magazine, quickly followed in the April issue by "In a Station of the Metro." The following November 1913, Pound wrote to Harriet Monroe that his anthology of Imagist poetry, *Des Imagistes*,[464] would be published by *The Glebe*.[465] It was soon published in 1914, with six poems contributed by Pound.[466] Four of the six poems were adapted from Herbert Giles' 1901 *History of Chinese Literature*, without Pound having any access to or way of understanding the original Chinese source poems.[467] Instead, Pound revised Giles' translations through his Imagist understanding of the concision and image-centered poetics of Japanese haiku.[468] The date

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[464] Concerning Pound's peculiar insistence on referring to imagism as Imagisme, and imagists as Imagistes, William Pratt observes that even though imagism is fundamentally an Anglo-American redefinition of poetry, "Pound chose to pay homage to the French school of the *Symbolistes* by giving the name a French spelling and by calling his first anthology in 1914 *Des Imagistes,* his translation into French of what would have been *Some Imagists*" (William Pratt, *Ezra Pound and the Making of Modernism* (AMS Press, 2007), 121).

[465] Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 24–25.

[466] Ezra Pound, "Des Imagistes," *The Glebe.* 1 (1914): 5.

[467] Herbert Giles, trans., *A History of Chinese Literature* (1901; repr., New York: D. Appleton and Company, 2013), *https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43711/43711-h/43711-h.htm*.

[468] Interestingly, despite the influence of Japanese poetics on his early aesthetic development, Pound never took an interest in the Japanese language in and of itself the way he later does Chinese; instead, his

of Pound's correspondence with Monroe makes it clear that these early poems–"After Ch'u Yuan," "Liu Ch'e," "Fan-Piece For Her Imperial Lord," and "Ts'ai Chi'h"–were all written and slated for publication no later than November 1913. During this same period, Pound was also publishing his own original Imagist poems such as "Gentildonna," which appears in the November 1913 issue of *Poetry*, and concludes with the striking image, "Gray olive leaves beneath a rain-cold sky." All of these poems would be later included in *Lustra*.[469]

On November 24, 1913, Mary Fenollosa writes to Pound that she is sending him Ernest Fenollosa's manuscripts concerning his notes and translations on Japanese and Chinese culture and poetics. Pound wastes no time getting to work. In the aforementioned December 1913 letter to William Carlos Williams, Pound informs him of the publication of his imagist anthology, mentioning as an aside, "I am very placid and happy and busy. Dorothy is learning Chinese. I've all old Fenollosa's treasures in mss [manuscripts]."[470] Later in the letter, he cryptically tells Williams, currently in the United States, "You may get something slogging away by yourself that you would miss in The Vortex—and that we miss,"[471] employing the term "Vortex" for the first time in their correspondence. Finally, Pound mentions Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, a sculptor who would become central in vorticism's brief flourishing as a group, as well as a nearly mythic figure for Pound: after

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engagement with Japanese largely operated through the way in which it serves as a conduit for Chinese language and poetry. As a point of fact, the first non-European script which drew his attention was neither Japanese nor Chinese but Bengali, the language of Rabindranath Tagore, of whom Pound was an early supporter. Pound found the phonetics of Bengali writing overly imposing, and with the acquisition of the Fenollosa manuscripts he pivoted to Chinese for good. For Pound's discussion of Bengali and Tagore, see Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929*, ed. David Moody, Joanna Moody, and Mary de Rachewiltz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 285-292.

[469] Ezra Pound, *Lustra* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1916).

[470] Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 27.

[471] Ibid., 28.

Gaudier-Brzeska died in the trenches during World War I in 1915, Pound quickly wrote a memoir about their intellectual friendship and brought it to publication in the following year.[472] Pound's first epistolary remarks concerning Fenollosa's manuscripts, Chinese characters, and vorticism all coincide and attest to their mutual development. The first imagist anthology had yet to be printed, and yet Pound was already off in entirely new poetic directions–a situation made more clear by the publication of "Vorticism" in September 1914.

Although Tiffany gets tangled up in the dates of Pound's 1914 poetic activity, he is on the mark in emphasizing the primacy of the "dynamic emblem of the 'vortex'" within Pound's thinking, as well as how Pound employs his vorticist thinking to differentiate it from the "mushiness" of imagism as employed by others. The development of Pound's thought from imagism to vorticism accordingly can be seen by reading "Vorticism" in tandem with his earlier statements on imagism in "A Few Don'ts." Crucially, Pound contends, "Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity," and "The point of Imagisme is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech."[473] Here, Pound sets his sights squarely on Lowell's imagist poems, which Pound appraised as nothing but ornamental "Amygism" corrupting the proper aims of imagism. The masculinist invocation of imagism's "flaccidity," or loss of potent vitality in contradistinction to vorticism, continues this line of thought. Crucially, Pound links the imagism of "In a Station of the Metro" to the poetics of Japanese haiku. He refers to haiku as a "one-image poem," and observes that his own attempt at such an approach aesthetic

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[472] Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970).

[473] Pound, "Vorticism."

approach resulted in a "hokku-like sentence": "The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals, on a wet, black bough."[474]

Pound's use of "In a Station of the Metro" in "Vorticism" demonstrates how his conception of imagism becomes assimilated into his "own branch of vorticism." This is exemplified in his pronouncement, "In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective." In "Metro," the outward objective phenomena of the masses waiting for their subway car to arrive is collectivized into a plastic, indivisible "apparition" of bodies caught up in the circuit of Paris' mass transportation system–even as these bodies resist collectivity through the sensorial detail of their individual "faces." The image which hinges on Pound's paratactic, diaphoric enjambment suggests the huddled urban commuting masses have not been converted into inhumane, mechanistic cogs of technological modernity; instead, they are as natural, beautiful, and classically poetic as "petals, on a wet, black bough." It is this technique of parataxis which Pound refers to as the "super-position" of the poem, allowing for one idea to be "set on top of another" so as to become a single combinatory image or vortex. In this way, Pound's technique of super-positional diaphoric metaphor, learned from Japanese haiku, elides the clear

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[474] See Pound, ibid. Though Pound's account in "Vorticism" is more canonical, in 1913 he offers a somewhat different narrative of the origins of "In a Station of the Metro." Rather than the condensation of a longer, attenuated poem into a hardened, imagist core, Pound describes the poem as a *translation* into English of a Japanese haiku (more accurately *senryū* 川柳) sensibility. He writes, "It struck me that in Japan, where a work of art is not estimated by its acreage and where sixteen [sic] syllables are counted enough for a poem if you arrange and punctuate them properly, one might make a very little poem which would be translated as follows." Ezra Pound, "How I Began," *T.P.'s Weekly*, June 6, 1913, 707. Thank you to Xiulu Wang, whose presentation on the "Poematic Accident" at the ACLA 2022 conference introduced me to Pound's alternate account.

hierarchical relationship in western letters of subject and metaphor, vehicle and tenor, becoming an "inward and subjective" vorticist image.[475]

On the one hand, Pound's conception of the poem in "Vorticism" as recording a "precise instant" recalls his earlier conception of the imagist poem as a "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time."[476] On the other, Pound's emphasis on precision belies how this instance discloses an intensified temporal structure in which it and all phenomena are constantly unfolding, akin to the dynamic vortex "from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing." Although Pound previously conceives of imagism as "direct treatment of the thing" and as a "complex" which binds intellectual and emotional understanding together in the same event or moment, his understanding of vorticism here takes on a new dimension. He declares, "THE IMAGE IS NOT an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX."[477]

This language of inward directionality and dynamic, intensive energy is the hallmark of Pound's conception of the vorticist image. Pound elaborates on this point with the following helpful taxonomy: "Now you have vorticism, which is, roughly speaking, expressionism, neo-cubism, and Imagism gathered together in one camp and futurism in the other. Futurism is descended from impressionism. It is, in so far as it is an art

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[475] Pound later republishes "In a Station of the Metro" in his 1915 anthology *A Catholic Anthology*, attesting to a continuing belief in the poem as a faithful demonstration of his aesthetic theory of the image. Ezra Pound, ed., *Catholic Anthology 1914-1915* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1915).

[476] Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect and 'A Few Don'ts.'" in *Pavannes and Divagations* (New York: Knopf, 1918), https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69409/a-retrospect-and-a-few-donts.

[477] Pound, "Vorticism."

movement, a kind of accelerated impressionism. It is a spreading, or surface art, as opposed to vorticism, which is intensive." Pound's position that vorticism is entirely distinct from Futurism — which he refers to elsewhere in the manifesto as "verbal diarrhoea" — seems at first blush needlessly antagonistic, given that the strident, masculinist rhetoric of each camp are very much of the same ilk. Indeed, Pound would take up a new interest in Futurism in the 1930s after pledging his allegiance to Mussolini, putting aside many of his former criticisms. That said, Pound makes here two clear distinctions between these respective movements: Futurism spreads and exteriorizes, while vorticism collapses into the radiant interiority of a Vortex, and Futurism accelerates into the future while vorticism seeks to glean from an evergreen, vibrant past.

Pound's aesthetic positioning of vorticism is later recalled by him in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly," written between 1919 and 1920.[478] As Tiffany notes, the poem "offers a summation of Pound's long struggle with divergent conceptions of the Image."[479] In unmetered, rhyming quatrains, Pound observes that his attempts to return to the vitality of the past, "to resuscitate the dead art / Of poetry" have left him "out of key with his time"; despite this, Pound's projects of imagism and vorticism are revealed to be attempts at a poetics which are both proper for the modern age and "maintain 'the sublime' / in the old sense" of previous ages. However, Pound sardonically notes that what the "age demanded" was not new configurations of an aesthetic sublime, but rather "an image / of its accelerated grimace". Rather than the "Attic grace" or "alabaster" of Pound's unorthodox classicalism, the age seeks the "accelerated grimace" of Futurism, or a "prose cinema" of

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[478] Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly [Part I]," *Poetry Foundation*, 2023, *www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44915/hugh-selwyn-mauberly-part-i*.

[479] Tiffany, *Radio Corpse: Imagism and the Cryptaesthetic of Ezra Pound*, 51.

intimations and impressions without cohesion or aesthetic conviction.[480] This latter critique of what Pound sees as the "flaccid" post-impressionism of cinema is made clear by his swipe at Monet in "Vorticism": "The organization of forms is a much more energetic and creative action than the copying or imitating of light on a haystack."[481]

Given these later reflections, what appears most manifestly important for Pound in "Vorticism" is his statement that "Vorticism is an intensive art. I mean by this, that one is concerned with the relative intensity, or relative significance of different sorts of expression. One desires the most intense, for certain forms of expression are 'more intense' than others. They are more dynamic." One model for Pound's rhetoric of intensive vitalism in "Vorticism" is Walter Pater. Pound turns to Pater as a non-Romantic, expressionist understanding of art's autonomous affect, noting that in *The Renaissance*, "Pater proclaimed that 'All arts approach the conditions of music.'" In fact, much of Pound's vitalist rhetoric is inherited from Pater. Pound's concept of the "hard light" and "clear edges" of imagism, for example, has strong echoes of Pater's comparison of the ecstasy of life to a "hard, gemlike flame." (One may well note the phallocentric language inherent to both Pater's "hard, gemlike flame" and Pound's critique of artistic "flaccidity.") Moreover, Pater immediately precedes this phrase with the following rhetorical question: "How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?" In one sense, Pound's understanding of vorticism is an attempt to formulate an aesthetic answer to Pater's question.

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[480] Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly [Part I]."

[481] Pound, "Vorticism."

As discussed in the introductory chapter, Pound also located his empiricist literary approach in the laboratory conditions of nineteenth-century biologist Louis Agassiz. Moving beyond Pater and Agassiz, however, it becomes challenging to find contemporaneous thinkers whom Pound acknowledges as influences (rather than counterparts) for his decidedly twentieth-century organicist-vitalist aesthetic theory; indeed, such a search may even be a dead-end. What makes this both interesting and unsatisfactory is the way it vividly contrasts with his explicit acknowledgment of his recent *literary* antecedents. The primary example of the latter is the way in which he aligns himself with Fenollosa, establishing an ersatz transmission of lineage. Pound's idiosyncratic approach to the transliteration of Chinese names, though not always read as such in scholarship, is a stark example of this alignment. Before his acquisition of the Fenollosa manuscripts he demonstrates an awareness of Chinese poets such as Li Bai 李白 and Tao Yuanming 陶淵明–having first encountered them in Herbert Giles' *History of Chinese Literature*.[482] Yet his translations from Fenollosa's manuscripts in *Cathay* and *Lustra* opt instead for the obscure appellations "Rihaku" and "To-em-mei," following the Japanese *onyomi* 音読み reading of the Chinese characters.[483] Moreover, he continues to argue for the validity

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[482] According to Huang, it was Upward who introduced Giles to Pound. (Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 67) Pound anthologized Upward's *Scented Leaves* in *Des Imagistes*, and certain elements of Upward's method ("Sayings of K'ung," for example, published in *The Egoist*) are quite similar to aspects of Pound's translational method in *The Cantos*, where he appropriates the historical information found in Giles *History of Chinese Literature* into free verse poetry with not only history in it, but also an explicit economic agenda. Pound writes to Achilles Fang in 1951 that he has "Not read ANY guide or history of Chinese literature since closed Giles history Ch/ Lit/ about 1909. Had Fenollosa's notes and selections and thaZZZall." (Zhaoming Qian, ed., *Ezra Pound's Chinese Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 53)

[483] *Lustra*'s function as an anthology of Pound's poetry throughout the 1910s attests to this contradiction. While he attributes his translations from Fenollosa's manuscript to Japanese transliterated names, earlier poems in the collection reference figures such as "Ch'u Yuan" (*Qu Yuan* 屈原) and "Liu Ch'e" (*Liu Che* 刘彻 / *Han Wudi* 汉武帝, or Emperor Wu of the Western Han) following Wade-Giles romanizations. This tension

of this practice well after successive modernist translations of Chinese poetry, such as *The Jade Mountain*, would seem to render his position untenable. In a letter to Katue Kitasono in 1940, he demonstrates familiarity with pronunciations of the Confucian *Book of Great Learning* (大学) in Japanese–*Dai gaku*–as well as in Mandarin, which Pound renders as *Ta tsü*. Yet neither of these pronunciations reflect the Southern *Yue* dialect family (*Yueyu* 粤语) reflected in Pauthier's title of his French translation, *Ta Hio*–dutifully retranslated by Pound into *Ta Hio: The Great Learning.*[484] All the same, Pound contends, "As sheer sound Dai Gaku is better than Ta Tsü. When it comes to the question of transmitting from the East to the West, a great part of the Chinese sound is no use at all."[485] Likewise, the previous year he writes to his editors, regarding the *Cantos*, "The one thing that is *not* wanted is uniformity in lots of

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is also manifest in his translation "The Unmoving Cloud," which is attributed *both* to "To-em-mei" in the title and "T'ao Yuan Ming" in the concluding biographical matter. (Pound, *Lustra*, 43-44; 93-94).

[484] Ezra Pound, trans., *Ta Hio: The Great Learning* (London: Stanley Nott, 1936). Standardized names for the book include *Daxue* in contemporary *Hanyu pinyin*, *Ta-Süeh* in Wade-Giles, and *Ta Hiue* or *Ta Hio* in French EFEO, the romanization previously employed by the French School of the Far East, or *École française d'Extrême-Orient*.

[485] See Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 347. This statement reveals an under-explored aspect of Pound's transmission of lineage from Fenollosa: not just of reading Chinese characters, but of reading Chinese characters and culture within the context of Japanese nationalism. In the same letter, Pound observes, "Fenollosa wrote, I think justly, that Japan had kept the old sounds for the Odes long after the various invasions from the north had ruined them in China." (ibid., 347) This notion of Japan's living preservation of Chinese language and culture, despite being "ruined" by the wreckage of history in China itself, is rife for critique. The error, however, is in ascribing such thinking to the muddled inauthenticity of American orientalism, when it instead indexically reveals *inter*-Asian Pacific circulation of Chinese civilizational discourse, and how Japan asserted itself as a nation within a cultural lineage inextricable from Sinocentrism. (One should remember, for example, that Japan is the "origin of the sun" [*Nihon* 日本] only from the perspective of China, "the middle country [*Zhongguo* 中国]", looking eastward.) Fenollosa's understanding of the best of Chinese culture being transplanted to Japan is derived from the concept of *kaihentai* 華夷変態, or "the transformation from civilized to barbarian and vice versa." (Wai-ming Ng, *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan: Legends, Classics, and Historical Terms* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), xv). The Japanese Edo-period Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai, for example, referred to himself as a "Japanese barbarian" (*Nihonkoku ijin* 日本国夷人) and "eastern barbarian" (*Tōi no hito* 東夷の人) in relation to the "Central Civilization" (*Chūka* 中華) of China (Ng, *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan*, xv). However, with the Manchu takeover of China in the Qing dynasty–a northern, semi-nomadic ethnic group–other Edo-period scholars began to understand Japan "as the new center of Confucian order in East Asia"–indeed, a new China, or "middle country"–while others were respectively "torn in their view of China between seeing it as a model and as 'the Other.'" (Ng, *Imagining China in Tokugawa Japan*, xv, xvii)

places where a variant is *intended*. This also goes for hyphens in Chinese words. No need to go into all Lin Yutang has been writing on how to help Europeans remember Chinese names."[486]

A transmission of lineage often implies certain exclusive or esoteric qualities, of initiation into secret teachings or practices. Yet Pound's pedagogical predisposition to naming names, of providing a synthetic curriculum for comparative literary study, is strikingly *exoteric* in approach, if still never populist. By offering a distinctly Poundian model of poetry and literature for others to follow–and which *was* followed by successive generations–he reorients his influences so that they become notable for the way in which they are identifiable and activated within his own thinking.[487] The same line of reasoning may then well account for his ambivalence, or even hostility towards contemporary aesthetic theorists.

In the absence of acknowledged theoretical predecessors, it is worth considering who or what becomes illuminated in regards to Pound's *opposition* toward it. Beyond Pound's stylistic debt to Pater in "Vorticism," his emphasis on "intensive art" clearly

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[486] See Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 329, emphasis his. Lin Yutang was a prominent scholar, novelist, and public intellectual. In the interwar 1930s he was well-known on both sides of the Pacific due to his extensive publishing, English fluency, and western education in Germany and the United States. For a discussion of his transcultural work, and his efforts to introduce Chinese language and culture to mainstream American audiences, see Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[487] The direction of my thinking here follows Luis Borges in "Kafka and his Precursors." In this short essay, he offers a reading of Kafka which swerves from identifying aspects of his work within literary predecessors to an argument that these predecessors become illuminated as such through their presence in Kafka. He concludes: "If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have listed resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This last fact is what is most significant. Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist…The word 'precursor is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism, but one must try to purify it from any connotation of polemic or rivalry. The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future." (Jorge Luis Borges, "Kafka and His Precursors," in *Other Inquisitions: 1937-1952*, trans. Ruth Simms (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1965), 108).

signals a continuation of his ambivalent philosophical indebtedness to T.E. Hulme. As noted earlier, one reason for Pound's eventual disavowal of Hulme from the legacy of imagism may well lie in Hulme's turn towards the philosophy of Henri Bergson and Wilhelm Worringer. Hulme met Bergson multiple times in Paris and Italy and was taken by his ideas on intuition and the image, and later met Worringer in Germany.[488] Like Hulme, Worringer "believed that there was an intimate connection in every age between form in art and attitudes in religion and philosophy."[489] Pound took a dim view toward Hulme's enthusiasm for these thinkers, commenting that during the latter days of Hulme's salon "His evenings were diluted with crap like Bergson."[490]

Pound's hostility towards Bergson's brand of vitalism does not necessarily signal his disinterest with vitalism altogether as a strain of philosophical thought. Rather, Pound's appraisal of Bergson stems from a fundamental disagreement concerning their respective underlying aesthetic principles. In "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme explicates the mechanical quality or complexity of the intellect, in opposition to a vital or organic quality which escapes intellectual representation, and so which must be understood through intuition. He elaborates:

> Now this is all worked out in Bergson, the central feature of his whole philosophy. It is all based on the clear conception of these vital complexities which he calls

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[488] Despite Hulme's own position that his aesthetic philosophy was congruent with what Worringer articulates in *Abstraction and Empathy*, it is argued his work actually reveals a synthesis of Worringer and Bergson. One scholar, for example, argues that Hulme's understanding of abstract art as a continuity of representational art runs in opposition to Worringer's understanding of abstraction as an absolute, which consequently separates it from classical associations of emotional empathy; for this reader, the difference lays in the influence of Bergson on his thinking. See Alun Jones, "T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer and the Urge To Abstraction," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 1, no. 1 (1960): 1–6.

[489] Brooker, *Mastery and Escape: T.S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism.*, 62.

[490] Ibid., 60.

> 'intensive' as opposed to the other kind which he calls 'extensive', and the recognition of the fact that the intellect can only deal with the extensive multiplicity. To deal with the intensive you must use intuition. (82-83)

Strikingly, Pound uses this exact same dichotomy between intensive and extensive in respect to art in "Vorticism"; at the same time, Pound reinterprets these concepts from a positivist position, contending that one can indeed arrive at a scientific objectivity of subjective phenomena. Pound's advocacy of scientism as a method of aesthetics is attested to in his definition of the Vortex in the first issue of *Blast*: "The vortex is the point of maximum energy, / It represents, in mechanics, the greatest efficiency. / We use the words 'greatest efficiency' in the precise sense—as used in a text book of MECHANICS."[491] Likewise, Pound begins *ABC of Reading* by observing, "We live in an age of science and abundance," and therefore "the proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists."[492] In this way, Pound seeks to enunciate a vitalism which is concordant with a concern for the "vital complexities" of an "intensive" complex or subjectivity, while at the same time is antithetical to the "flaccidity" of Bergson's notion of intuition, asserting that the mechanical precision of the intellect can be asserted within the subjective expression of the vorticist Image.

Moving from Hulme and Bergson to John Dewey, Pound had no documented interest in him. He was, however, quite dismissive of William James, Dewey's direct philosophical predecessor. In contrast with Henry James, whom Pound lauds as one of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century, if not *the* greatest English novelist,[493] Pound

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[491] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (1934; repr., New York, NY: New Directions, 2006), 153, emphasis his.

[492] Ibid., 17.

[493] A letter which Pound writes to H.L. Mencken in 1917 reflects his esteem for Henry James. Pound writes, "I have enjoyed your Book of Prefaces…but lost my temper over your remarks on H. James." Concerning

avows, in a letter to his mother Isabel Pound, "Wm. James gt. [greatest] asset was being his father's son and Henry's brother, but he probably died ignorant of both these advantages."[494] Pound's specific objections to Williams James are not altogether clear, though his objections likely were not located in any doctrinal reason; rather, he rejected him insofar as James, like Emerson, represented for Pound a certain kind of American parochialism which he constitutionally rebelled against in favor of European cosmopolitanism. A similar reductive suspicion of American intellectual culture would then likely extend to Dewey.[495]

Nonetheless, the terms of engagement for Dewey, Bergson, Hulme, and Pound all share remarkable overlaps, revealing the relative interpermeability of organicism, vitalism, and indeed mechanism when transposed from the life sciences and into the sphere of aesthetics. For example, in the chapter "The Natural History of Form" in *Art as Experience*, Dewey asks the question, "What, then, are those formal conditions of artistic form that are rooted deep in the world itself?" His answer is consistent with a prevailing organicist argumentation that art is derived from an "interaction of environment," whereby the artwork reifies experience itself, or "effects its culmination in experience." He writes,

> Interaction of environment with organism is the source, direct or indirect, of all experience and from the environment come those checks, resistances, furtherances, equilibria, which, when they meet with the energies of the organism in appropriate ways, constitute form. The first characteristic of the environing world that makes

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Mencken's comparison of James to another contemporary writer, Pound admonishes, "you shouldn't treat a great man and a mutton-shank in one page as if there were no gulph between 'em." (Pound, *The Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 182)

[494] Pound, *Ezra Pound to His Parents*, 593.

[495] Ronald Bush suggests that Pound's resistance to Emerson was rooted in a youthful rebellion against his mother, who proudly identified herself as part of New England American stock; see "Pound, Emerson, and Thoreau: The 'Pisan Cantos' and the Politics of American Pastoral," *Paideuma* 34, no. 2/3 (2005): 271-292.

> possible the existence of artistic form is rhythm. There is rhythm in nature before poetry, painting, architecture and music exist. Were it not so, rhythm as an essential property of form would be merely superimposed upon material, not an operation through which material effects its own culmination in experience."[496]

Yet Dewey's assertion that biological "energies of the organism" and "rhythm in nature" precede artistic form also anticipates the naturalist neo-vitalism of Deleuze and Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they propose formal "geologies" of their own which cohere with natural history. In their concept of the "refrain," they reconceptualize human artistic expression as preceded by and an extension of the rhythmic territorializations and deterritorializations which continuously occur within the natural world.[497]

For Dewey, his principle *aesthetic* disagreement with the vitalism of Bergson lays in his evaluation of the latter as advocating for "a world of mere flux" which can only find intervention through human consciousness.[498] In contrast, Dewey contends that even the flow of time, "as organization in change," constitutes "growth, and growth signifies that a varied series of change enters upon intervals of pause and rest; of completions that become the initial points of new processes of development. Like the soil, mind is fertilized while it lies fallow, until a new burst of bloom ensues."[499] Moving beyond this sticking point (which Deleuze and Guattari arguably share, given their radical anti-anthropocentrism), the terms of their respective engagements remain remarkably similar. The following is Dewey, yet could also easily be mistaken at a glance for Bergson or Deleuze and Guattari:

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[496] John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York, NY: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 147.

[497] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[498] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 16.

[499] Ibid., 23.

> All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms. There is ebb and flow, systole and diastolei ordered change. The latter moves within bounds. To overpass the limits that are set is destruction and death, out of which, however, new rhythms are built up. The proportionate interception of changes establishes an order that is spatially, not merely temporally patterned: like the waves of the sea, the ripples of sand where waves have flowed back and forth, the fleecy and the black-bottomed cloud. Contrast of lack and fullness, of struggle and achievement, of adjustment after consummated irregularity, form the drama in which action, feeling, and meaning are one.[500]

The "whirling flux of change" in the rhythms of ocean waves; "ripples of sand"; "the fleecy and the black-bottomed cloud"; "new rhythms" which emerge from "destruction and death." A stylistic separation between these thinkers only appears when one's eyes alight upon the ponderous Deweyism "adjustment after consummated irregularity." Indeed, despite his intermittent protestations, Dewey all but invites such comparison to Bergson, with "vital" and "vitality" appearing, undefined, fifty-nine times in *Art as Experience*.

Dewey goes on to contend that the "outcome" of these rhythmic changes "is balance and counterbalance. These are not static nor mechanical. They express power that is intense because measured through overcoming resistance."[501] The intensity of the art object is derived from its ability to overcome or transform the internal resistances of the spectator or reader. Though he invokes the language of mechanical resistance to describe this process, he distinguishes it from scientific mechanism proper, which would render the world static, deterministic, and unidirectional in its causality. Here too we see a stylistic resonance, this time between Dewey and Pound: though Pound likewise rejects the mechanism which he identifies in Hulme's understanding of intellect, he nonetheless

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[500] Ibid., 16.

[501] Ibid.

argues objective measurements of mechanical "efficiency" can be obtained through comparative literary study. Though this presence of scientific mechanism is more attenuated in Pound than his organicist-vitalism, it is never entirely absent or reconciled either.[502]

Now comes a point concerning Pound's differentiation of vorticism from imagism which demands interpretation. If Pound's essay "Vorticism" organizationally begins as a record of Pound's earlier thoughts on imagism–epitomized by "In a Station of the Metro"–and then continues on to develop his later, organicist-vitalist reconfiguration of imagism into vorticism, then it is significant that this latter half of the essay offers *no* poetic counterpart or example with which to elucidate his understanding of the Vortex as a "radiant node or cluster." In fact, Pound does not reference literary works here at all; instead, he invokes the engagement of his fellow vorticists in the visual arts: the paintings of Edward Wadsworth and Wyndham Lewis and the sculpture of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein.

On the one hand, this decision by Pound signals a shift from the singularly poetic concerns of imagism to the truly *transmedial* concerns of vorticism–a position emphasized in the statement, "What I have said of one vorticist art can be transposed for another vorticist art."[503] On the other hand, it begs the question why Pound does not illustrate his thinking

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[502] See, for example, his later interest in the abstract forms of technical "machine art," as discussed in Williams ("Machine/Art," in *The Buddha in the Machine: Art, Technology, and the Meeting of East and West* (Yale University Press, 2014), 86–128).

[503] Like Pound, Dewey argues for art which emphasizes the primary or dominant qualities specific to that medium. He contends that poetry ought to be "poetic," architecture "architectural," drama "dramatic," sculptures "sculptural," visual art "pictorial," and literature "literary," with each of these words "designating the quality best effected" within that particular medium. Moreover, he regards this approach as the correct interpretation of Walter Pater's saying–often repeated by Pound–that all "arts constantly aspire to the condition of music." Yet Dewey *explicitly* disagrees with imagism's primary emphasis on the pictorial, arguing it should otherwise be the provenance of visual art, and that what is "poetic" about poetry is precisely its lyric

on Vorticism with the example of the Chinese "ideogram." Instead, he cites "Oread" by H.D., recently published in *Blast 1*. Indeed, the question could be raised at this juncture if Chinese language should even be considered a relevant example of Pound's vorticist Image, given its striking absence from his essay.

Such a position becomes thoroughly muddled when we consider the contents of *Blast 1* and *2*, which were published respectively in July 1914 and 1915. In *Blast 1*, China only briefly appears as a topos in a brief series of "Epitaphs" for the poets Fu I and Li Po.[504] In *Blast* 2, however, a significant amount of Pound's contributions and references to him are concerned with China. For instance, in the third section of "Chronicles," Pound peripatetically reviews Lawrence Binyon's *Flight of the Dragon*, published in 1911. Pound lauds Binyon's assessments of East Asian art, pulling quotes from the book and reprinting them as a series of aphoristic statements. Pound especially favors those elements of Binyon which are vitalist in nature, as when he reprints in all caps the pronouncement, "FOR INDEED IT IS NOT ESSENTIAL THAT THE SUBJECT - MATTER SHOULD REPRESENT OR BE LIKE ANYTHING IN NATURE; ONLY IT MUST BE ALIVE WITH A RHYTHMIC VITALITY OF ITS OWN."[505] At the same time, Pound ironically reprimands Binyon for what he sees

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capacity to plumb the interior depths and processes of human subjectivity: "Prose and drama often attain the picturesque, and poetry the genuinely pictorial, that is the communication of the visible scene of things. But in these arts, it is subdued and secondary. The effort to make it primary, as in 'imagism,'' doubtless taught poets something new, but it was such a forcing of the media that it could endure only as an emphasis, not as a dominant value. The obverse truth is the fact that, when paintings go beyond the scene and spectacle to tell a story, they become 'literary.'" (Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 229, 235) Though Dewey is very much engaged with modernist aesthetic theory, his artistic examples often skew older, with particular attention to Romantic poets. This incongruity is less surprising when one considers the considerable span of Dewey's life and career: he was born in 1859, before the American Civil War, and published *Art as Experience* at the venerable age of seventy-five. My reading of *Art as Experience* identifies imagism as Dewey's *only* direct engagement with modernist art and letters proper–a point rarely if ever addressed by scholarship. (His second most contemporary reference being the post-impressionist fin-de-sieclé painter Paul Cézanne.)

[504] Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 1* (1914; repr., Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), 48.

[505] Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 2* (1915; repr., Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981), 86.

as a compulsion to "justify Chinese intelligence by dragging it a little nearer to some Western precedent"—in other words, for applying a Eurocentric critical apparatus to Chinese culture, rather than considering China on its own terms.[506]

A few pages earlier in the magazine, Wyndham Lewis remarks, concerning Pound, that "in his steel net of impeccable technique he has lately caught Li Po. Energy of a discriminating Element."[507] The "energy" described in the second sentence would seem to be Pound–yet the paratactic ambiguity of the sentence also allows for the subject to be Li Po, a judgment of which Pound would approve. Finally, an advertisement for Pound's recently published *Cathay* appears in *Blast*'s backmatter directly below a Vorticist drawing.[508] Though Chinese poetry and art were perhaps not understood by Pound as inherently vorticist at this time, they were also clearly not seen as incompatible with vorticism, given how closely they hovered within *Blast*'s radius.

In February 1915 Pound published "Imagisme and England," where he states that imagist theories of poetry "have sought the force of Chinese ideograms without knowing it."[509] Subsequently, his first Chinese translation from Fenollosa, "Exile's Letter," appeared in *Poetry*'s March 1915 issue. At this moment, Pound's work on his vorticist writings and

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[506] Qian speculates that *The Flight of the Dragon* may be another key influence upon Pound's vorticism. In the final analysis, however, Pound's vorticism and his theory of the ideogram are argued by Qian to be separate, parallel developments. Representative of this position, he observes, "We have reason to believe that Pound's ambivalence toward Binyon around 1915 had more to do with his exchanges with Fenollosa than with his engagement in the Vorticist enterprise" (Zhaoming Qian, *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 144).

507 Wyndham Lewis, *Blast 2, 82.*

508 Ibid., 103.

[509] Ming Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism* (1999; repr., New York: Routledge, 2014), 40.

Chinese translations were both at their height. Even so, Pound only recognizes a correspondence between vorticism and in his interests in China in retrospect. In 1916, he writes in response to an article on vorticism in *Reedy's Mirror*, "As an active and informal association it might be said that Lewis supplied the volcanic force, Brzeska the animal energy, and perhaps that I had contributed a certain Confucian calm and reserve.[510] Nonetheless, Pound's understanding of the Chinese character as nonrepresentational image only came to full fruition with the 1919 publication of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: An Ars Poetica*, a work whose final shape was as reflective of Pound's heavy editorial hand as his later collaboration with Eliot on *The Waste Land*.[511]

In *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media*, Christopher Bush convincingly argues that by the nineteenth century China had become "a topos, called upon to represent something both radically other and uncomfortably familiar, something banished to Europe's archaic, primitive past, and an image of, if not its present, then its possible future."[512] If China served as a way to contextualize and historicize the western world, then the site of this contextualization was that of Chinese characters, where language, culture, and history were understood to have been "closely intertwined from the very start."[513] This western discourse around Chinese writing is one which links the seeming

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[510] Pound, *Pavannes and Divagations*, 245–46.

[511] The extent to which Pound reshapes Fenollosa's essay can be seen in Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition*, ed. Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling, and Lucas Klein (Fordham University Press, 2008). This edition restores the original essay as it appeared in manuscript form before Pound's cuts and line edits.

[512] Christopher Bush, *Ideographic Modernism: China, Writing, Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

[513] Ibid., 6.

rigidity of a Chinese character with "constraints, petrification, and stasis, as well as its natural affinity to tyranny"—designations which are accordingly juxtaposed by the "'normative teleology' of Western characteristics: dynamic, historical, temporal, alphabetic."[514]

There is a fine point of distinction regarding this matter for Fenollosa, who argued for a reversal of the above characteristics attributed to western alphabetic writing and Chinese written characters. Unlike orthodox orientalist understandings of the time, Fenollosa's critique is not directed towards China and Chinese writing, but rather western writing within America's benighted universities, which he charges as having reached a point of "petrification" and "stasis." For Fenollosa, it is precisely within the Chinese written language that possibility for dynamic creativity still lies immanent and capable of being "transplanted" into the soil of Western poetry. An understanding of Fenollosa's notion of the vitality of Chinese writing can be derived from his understanding of the sentence "man sees horse" (人見馬). Fenollosa argues, "The Chinese method proceeds upon natural suggestion. First, there stands the man upon his two legs. Second, his eye moves through space, —a bold figure— represented by moving legs drawn under the modified picture of an eye. Third, at the end of the eye's journey, stands the horse upon his four legs."[515] In consideration of this "thought-picture," Fenollosa notes that the language signs of Chinese writing do not just simply convey an idea, but do so "vividly and concretely," for "legs belong to all these characters: they are alive. The group holds

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[514] Ibid., 9, 18–19.

[515] Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry: A Critical Edition*, ed. Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling, and Lucas Klein (Fordham University Press, 2008), 80.

something of the quality of a continuous moving picture."[516]

Central to Fenollosa's interest in Chinese characters is the notion that they are rooted not in pictures of things but in pictures of actions, and as such are not nouns but are in fact "verbal idea[s] of action," with the radicals of the characters "really short-hand pictures of actions or processes."[517] This idea of Chinese characters and grammar being continuously active serves as Fenollosa's foundational argument that the Chinese language is more primal, "vital," and connected to a nondualistic reality and nature, where "thing and action are not formally separated" but instead "alive and plastic."[518] The import of this statement in terms of an ars poetica is that the English poet can glean inspiration from a language so charged and immanently poetic at its own point of inception. Moreover, in contrast to the English language, whose etymological roots are only apparent to scholars and poets who "piece together our diction, as best they may, out of forgotten fragments, the broken coral that strews our sand," Fenollosa contends that the Chinese character "only becomes the richer and the more consciously luminous from age to age."[519]

Given Fenollosa's thoughts on the luminosity of the Chinese language, with its ability to reveal what lays hidden from view, and its vital, transformative properties, it becomes clear why Pound would consider it the pre-eminent model of language for modern times. And yet, having attained such insight, Pound continues to piecemeal his Chinese character into combinations of intuitively realized ideographs–what Huang calls

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[516] Ibid.

[517] Ibid., 81.

[518] Ibid., 90.

[519] Ibid., 96, 97.

"his ingenious etymosinological method."[520] As with the anecdote of Agassiz and the fish, the Chinese character undergoes a process of decomposition and dissection in Pound's laboratory, and subsequently something has been learned. The exercise is akin to a deconstruction of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No.* 2 (1912) so as to reveal in its prehistory the time-lapse photography of Eadweard Muybridge's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1887). In both cases the final expressionist image is formed not through impression but juxtaposition and superimposition, so that discrete elements or moments in time become integral and whole. In this way, the Chinese character functions in the same way as the vortex of Pound's vorticist project, as when he asserts in *Blast 1*, "All the past that is vital, all the past that is capable of living into the future, is pregnant in the vortex, NOW."[521]

It is this final elaboration of Pound's scientistic conception of the Image as Chinese ideogram which remains with him throughout his career, as seen in his pronouncement in *ABC of Reading* that "The first definite assertion of the applicability of scientific method to literary criticism is found in Ernest Fenollosa's Essay on the Chinese Written Character."[522] Ultimately, Pound's arrival at a conception of the Chinese character as having an essentially vital nature, and of the vorticist Image as a vitalist reworking of imagism, centers upon the influence of Fenollosa's philosophical conception of the Chinese character. Working from this premise, one can read the discourses of vitalism and ideogrammic poetics in Pound's work in tandem with and against one another, opening up fresh readings and lines of

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[520] Yunte Huang, "Ezra Pound, Made in China," *Paideuma* 42 (2015): 43.

[521] Lewis, *Blast 1*, 153.

[522] Pound, *ABC of Reading*, 18.

inquiry into the pre-eminence of the Chinese character for Pound and their hypothetical meanings as vorticist Images.

One area of Pound's work worthy of such a reconsideration is his redoubtable dictum to "make it new." Often employed as a metonymic shorthand for much of modernist poetry as a whole, this phrase first emerges from his creative interpretation of a line from the Confucian book *The Great Learning*. As previously discussed, Pound rendered it as *Ta Hio: The Great Learning*, working from a bilingual edition of James Legge's 1893 translation and Guillaume Pauthier's French translation from the 1850s.[523] He also made use of Robert Morrison's four-volume Chinese-English dictionary to arrive at intuitive ideogrammic translations of its Chinese characters.[524] Armed with these three reference texts, he renders one passage as follows: "In letters of gold on T'ang's bathtub: / AS THE SUN MAKES IT NEW / DAY BY DAY MAKE IT NEW / YET AGAIN MAKE IT NEW."[525]

In Pound's configuration of this line, "it" refers not to poetry but rather to life itself, which one is exhorted to make new just as the sun makes each day brand new. However, given that Pound first utilizes this phrase as the title of his 1934 book of essays *Make It New*, this exhortation slides from the vital renovation of life in general to the practice of modernist poetry in particular, along with the vitalist poetic energies of the past which

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[523] Cheadle observes that Pound's engagement with Chinese writing did not move beyond the Fenollosa notebooks until the 1930s, and that an earlier 1928 translation of *Da xue* "is not based on the Chinese text at all, but is a very close retranslation" of Pauthier's French text (Cheadle, *Ezra Pound's Confucian Translations*, 33–34).

[524] Pound would only go on to use R.H. Matthews' more standard *Chinese-English* dictionary while at St. Elizabeth's after World War II. Discussing the importance of Morrison's dictionary, and the "imagistic power" of its definitions for Pound, Cheadle observes, "In the Confucian translations, Morrison is Pound's true Beatrice" (ibid., 38–39).

[525] Ezra Pound, *Poems and Translations, Edited by Richard Sieburth* (Library of America, 2003), 620.

have retained an inherent dynamism and remain, in Pound's estimation, eternally new.[526] It is precisely this sentiment which he expresses another way in *ABC of Reading* as "Literature is news that STAYS news."[527] As is typical for Pound, he does not attempt to conceal the source of this injunction, instead choosing to print the original Chinese characters on the cover of the first edition of the book, the English title serving in turn as en-face translation. In this way, the characters mark not only Pound's own instrumental aim of providing a pedagogical model for modernization, but also demonstrate how Pound's own aesthetic thinking is "made new" each day in his exposure to Chinese poetics and Fenollosa's invention of the "ideogram."

The characters chosen by Pound as the ideogrammic counterpart to "make it new" are themselves worth discussing. In Legge's original text, the passage appears as 苟日新，日日新，又日新 *ju ri xin, ri ri xin, you ri xin*. Rather than excerpt 日日新 *ri ri xin*, or "each day new," what appears on the cover of *Make It New* is 新日日新 *xinri rixin*. As Park observes of its later appearance in *The Cantos,* "The ideogram for sun is repeated twice ('day by day') and flanked on either end with the repeated character for 'renew,' the ideogram 'hsin,' which Pound reads as its component characters for underbrush and ax."[528] Although the character for *xin* 新 does indeed appear before *ririxin* 日日新 in the source text, it is clearly part of the previous phrase. Moreover, the reproduction of these characters

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[526] For an account of how Pound associates "make it new" at various points with fascism and Neoconfucianism along with this aesthetic imperative, see
Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 62–171, *doi:10.7208/chicago/9780226077901.001.0001*.

[527] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (1934; repr., New York, NY: New Directions, 2006), 29.

[528] Park, *Apparitions of Asia*, 53.

in *Make It New* have a subtle error which reflects this: an extra stroke next to *xin* 新, one which duplicates the punctuation in Legge. This mistake is repeated in its appearance across Pound's other work, including *The Cantos*. Hugh Kenner observes that the comma which appears in these characters serves as a textual artifact of Dorothy Pound mistakenly copying the punctuation marks in Legge's bilingual translation.[529] The question which Kenner doesn't raise, however, is why Pound would choose to deliberately combine these fragments together into a single phrase. Whereas the original text builds rhetorical weight through repetition, Pound's excerpting of the characters creates a new, palindromic structure. Recast in this way, Pound makes new the original Chinese text by converting it into a form both purely visual and nonrepresentational, more concerned with the visual symmetry of the Image than any potential loss of linguistic meaning.

Despite the proliferation of "make it new" across many of Pound's texts, North contends that it was only after Kenner isolated it and brought his critical attention to bear upon it that "make it new" became promulgated within the scholarly community as the general ethos of high modernism.[530] If so, Kenner's selection establishes the canonical phrasing of a sentiment which echoes earlier, similar statements, as when Dewey observes that imagism "doubtless taught poets something new."[531] Regardless, it is clear that Pound's creative reworking of this phrase has taken on its own afterlife. One need only look at the cover of *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry*, edited by Weinberger and published in 2004 (misprint finally corrected), to witness how Pound's ideogrammic

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[529] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 448.

[530] Ibid., 169.

[531] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 235. *Make It New* was published in 1934, the same year as *Art as Experience*.

meaning-making continues to loom over and "make new" American modernist studies and its understanding of Chinese poetry.[532]

If "make it new" serves as an example of how a canonical truism of American modernism may be reexamined in light of its vorticist Image, a return to the ideogram frontispiece of *Cathay* which initiated this chapter can likewise illuminate aspects of Pound's work which have lain unaddressed. Pound discovers this character *yao* 耀 in Fenollosa's manuscript for *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, where it appears in the compound word *yueyao* 月耀, or "moonlight," and in isolation is translated via ideogrammic method as "ray." The poem in which it appears serves as the first example of ideogrammic translation of Chinese poetry in Fenollosa's text.[533] Perhaps it is for this reason that Pound becomes so enamored with it. In any case, the character continues to appear in Pound's books and correspondences. Beyond Fenollosa's text and the cover of *Cathay*, this character is used by Pound as the exemplary model for ideographic translation in a letter to Katue Kitasono. He writes, "You can send translation, but in each case we will want EACH character explained. As in the poem in my edition of Fenollosa's Chinese written character. (Moon Rays etc.)."[534] The character also precedes Cantos LII–LXI, which are often referred to as "The China Cantos," serving as an interstitial break which sets the

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[532] Eliot Weinberger, ed., *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry* (New York: New Directions, 2003).

[533] Complicating Pound's point, this poem is in fact a Japanese *kanshi* 漢詩, literally "Chinese poem": a single quatrain verse written in Chinese by Japanese educated elite. It is not Tang-dynasty verse, but instead was written by the Japanese Heian poet Sugawara no Michizane 菅原 道真.

[534] Ezra Pound, *Ezra Pound and Japan* (Black Swan Books, 1987), 56.

poems off from the previous section. In the en-face table of contents in *The Cantos,* the character is here referred to as "Rays ideogram from Fenollosa collection."[535]

Cheadle minimizes Pound's engagement with Chinese characters before the 1930s, as previously discussed, while Xie contends that Pound does not begin to use Chinese characters in his own creative work until their appearance in "The China Cantos."[536] Such an assertion, however, fails to take into account the character's appearance in his correspondence or its paratextual meaning in *Cathay*. Moreover, it does not account for how Pound's translations, criticism, and poetry are all deeply imbricated with one another. Xie himself attests to this point, elsewhere observing that "there seems to be no fundamental distinction" between translation, adaptation, or original work for Pound.[537]

Beyond Pound's seemingly arbitrary affinity for this character, it is compelling to note that its meaning, "ray," has resonances in both the Chinese original and its English translation with the word "radiant"–as in Pound's definition of the Vortex in "Vorticism" as "a radiant node or cluster." Pound intimates the import of such resonances in his 1938 article "Mang Tsze (The Ethics of Mencius)," where he contends, "There are categories of ideogram not indicated as such in the dictionaries, but divided really by the feel of their forms, the twisted as evil, the stunted, the radiant."[538] If some characters in "the feel of their forms" have the categorical distinction of being "radiant," it then follows the "Rays

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[535] Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1970), 254.

[536] Ming Xie, *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry*, 22.

[537] Ibid., 229.

[538] Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose* (New Directions, 1973), 93.

ideogram" would be the most radiant of them all. Through its serendipitous connection to the intensive, vitalist radiance of the "vortex," we now arrive at the tantalizing, yet also most likely argument that this character serves as a vorticist Image for the Vortex itself.

An equally compelling reading which compounds upon this argument suggests this character has certain pseudonymous qualities for Pound. "Ray" was his childhood nickname, as can be seen in the first illustration in Kenner's *The Pound Era*, where a class photo is captioned "Little 'Ray' Pound."[539] Given this, there is the temptation to read the reference to this character in *The Cantos* possessively: not as the awkwardly pluralized "Rays ideogram," but instead "Ray's ideogram," deictically referring to Pound himself. Moreover, it must be stressed here that this kind of punning or playing with names appears with regularity in Pound's personal correspondences. In the closing to a letter to Katue Kitasono, a Japanese poet with whom he had extensive correspondence, Pound refers to himself with the appellation "Ez' Po' / (debased form of Rihaku)."[540] This Chinese character thus becomes not only emblematic of the vorticist Image of the Vortex, but also a vorticist, nonrepresentational image of Pound. As such, this character should be considered of a piece with other vorticist portraits of Pound, including Gaudier-Brzeska's "Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound" (1914), Alvin Langdon Coburn's "Vortograph of Ezra Pound" (1917), and

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[539] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 9.

[540] Pound, *Ezra Pound and Japan*, 34. Starting in 1940 Pound also affectionately, if problematically referred to Kitasono himself at times as "Kit Kat." (ibid., 104). As observed by North in *The Dialect of Modernism*, Pound and Eliot's regular use of the racialized appellations "Brer Rabbit" and "Old Possum" in their correspondence also reflects this practice (Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1994)).

Pound's own "Ezra Pound / Henri Gaudier-Brzeska" monogram, adorning the cover page of *Gaudier-Brzeska* (1916).[541]

If, as Pound observes, William Carlos Williams may "get something slogging away" by himself that would otherwise be missed by the vorticists, then what becomes clear is this slog through the vitalist-organicist development of vorticism and the Chinese character likewise allows for a reading of the Rays ideogram which has been missed by those working more narrowly on the role of either China or Vorticism for Pound, without proper attention to how these parallel projects are in turn explicated by the other. This reading thus serves as a path in which one can approach the larger interconnected regimes of signification which reign over modernist texts, forming new networks of meaning which radiate from and collapse into the vortex of modernism.

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[541] Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*.

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