

Modernism and Confucianism: Otherness as a Stimulus to Modernity in Chinese and English Literatures*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a particular cultural phenomenon that occurred in the first two decades of 20th century and involved using other's culture as a stimulus to the regeneration of one's cultural tradition. It argues that in that particular period of history involving a great socio-political change, the conception of Confucianism signified differently and performed different effects in the construction of modernism as a literary movement owing to different interpretations of it, either as an adversity in the context of modern Chinese literature or as an ideal in the context of modern English literature. The combination of the two events in terms of modernism is based on such grounds as follows: 1) there is the proximity of occurrence of modern literature: Imagism in 1912 and the Chinese "Literary Revolution" in 1917; 2) both literary movements started with formal reform by acting against its immediate predecessor: Imagists rejected the late Victorian style, and Chinese moderns the *Tongcheng* style; 3) the essential drive for literary innovation was a historicist view as is seen in Hu Shi's evolutionary historicism and Ezra Pound's syncretic historicism; 4) the literary reforms were taken as a means for social reform in both English and Chinese cases. To clarify these points, the paper focuses on major Chinese pioneers' remarks regarding the Literary Revolution and on Ezra Pound as a typical case through examining his attempt to use traditional Chinese culture as a stimulus for a "renaissance" in his own time and his establishing of Confucian ethics as one of the major thematic cords of *The Cantos*. The examination also proceeds to clarify the paradoxical relationship of

Confucianism with the literary modernisms and to display a contrast in using otherness for the initiation of modernity in Chinese and English literatures.

KEY WORDS

Modernism, Confucianism, renaissance, historicism, Darwinism, The Literary Revolution, Imagism, *The Four Books*



A cultural trend may move in two ways: carrying its predecessor further or reacting against it. I will take the latter as my viewpoint in examining “modernism” in English and Chinese literatures. Here the word “modernism” is used principally to refer to the intellectual tendency that dominated “high modernism” (1912–1922) in Anglo-American literature and also dominated early modern Chinese literature (1917–1928). In view of its cultural significance, I prefer to follow Furbank’s view of “modernism as a parallel to the Renaissance” (3), partly because such notions as enlightenment, inspiration, invention and revival fundamentally characterize the two literary movements, and partly because the concept of “renaissance” is dominant in both English and Chinese leaders’ promotions of modern literature. For instance, Ezra Pound used the phrase “make it new” as the banner for modernist literature, while Hu Shi said that the journal *Xin chao* (*New Tide*), founded in 1918, might be called “The Renaissance in English” (149). Moreover, later in 1961, recalling the “vernacular” (*baihua*) movement “that has generated modern Chinese literature,” Hu Shi explained that “this movement [is] generally called the Literary Revolution, but I prefer to call it ‘the Renaissance in China’” (259).

Similarly, Peter Childs observes that “Modernist art is, in most critical usage, is reckoned to be the art of what Harold Rosenberg calls ‘the tradition of the new’” (1). This view can also apply to my discussion of “modernism” here in that both Anglo-American and Chinese moderns created a “tradition of the new” in their respective literary histories, and they both did this by taking the other’s culture as a stimulus and driving force in reacting against their immediate traditions (i.e., the late Victorian convention in the English case and the

wenyan tradition in the Chinese case). Furthermore, with regard to the literary contexts in the first two decades of the 20th century, traditional Chinese culture served as one non-Western innovating forces for English literary modernism, while modern Western thought worked as the dominant force in marking modernity (or the start of modernism) in Chinese literature. These historical facts thus provide the ground upon which I can collate the two events in terms of (Western) modernism and (traditional Chinese) Confucianism; the latter in fact influences in two different ways due to the different interpretations of it of the Chinese and English modern pioneers. So this paradoxical relationship of Confucianism with modernism will be focused on in the following examination.

1

An examination of literary events in China at the turn of the 20th century shows the obvious role of other cultures in the renovation and development of Chinese literature. Between 1897 and 1909, Yan Fu translated and published a series of Western works. Among them were *Evolution and Ethics* (T.J. Huxley; *Tian yan lun*, 1897), *Study of Sociology* (H. Spencer; *Qunxue si yan*, 1897), *Inquirey into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* (Adam Smith; *Yuan fu*, 1902), *On Liberty* (J. S. Mill; *Qun ji quan jie lun*, 1903), *History of Politics* (E. Jenks; *Shehui tongquan*, 1904), *A System of Logic* (J. S. Mill; *Mu Le mingxue*, 1905), and *L'Esprit des lois* (Montesquieu; *Fa yi*, 1904-09). As this list shows, Yan Fu chose to introduce into China's society new ideas of Western sociology, economics, politics, law, ethics and philosophy; and through his introductions, which contained his own interpretations, he substantially enriched the intellectual resources of modern China and actually made Western thought, especially social Darwinism (evolutionary theory), liberalism and pragmatism (Ouyang: 109), part of Chinese intellectual discourse in the early 20th century. Liang Qichao considered that "among the Chinese studying in the West, Yan Fu was the first to relate Western theories to Chinese intellectual circles" (98). Hu Shi also said, "since *Tian yan lun* was published in

1898, Chinese scholars gradually got to know that the West also has sophisticated philosophies which we could adopt apart from their guns and warships” (93).

The influence of Yan Fu’s translations of Western works was universal among Chinese intellectuals at the time, as can be seen in the works of China’s modernizing pioneers. Liang Qichao, for example, considered that traditional Chinese ethics offers only “private virtues” (*si de*), and therefore Western “public virtues” (*gong de*) should be adopted and cultivated by the Chinese people so that the tribal people (*bu min*) might become “national people” (*guo min*) or “new people” (*xin min*): this was to him fundamental to a “new system” and a “new country” (Yu 31). Here we see Liang adopting Darwinism (from tribe to nation) and Western ethics in his plan of reforming the Chinese nation as a whole. It was for this political purpose of educating the people that Liang launched his “three-realm revolution” (*san jie geming*; revolution in poetry, prose and fiction), and laid a special and typically Confucian emphasis on the instrumental function of literature—“literature is to carry *Dao*” (*wen yi zai dao*)—while attempting to change the content of this literature from conventional Confucianism to Western democracy (Yu 37).

Darwinian and, as he says, “Utilitarian” ideas are also seen in Hu Shi’s view of literature and language, as shown in his important article “*Wenxue gailiang chu yi*” (Preliminary views of literary reform), which was published in the journal *Xin qingnian* (*New Youth*) in January 1917, and was seminal to the movement of “Literary Revolution” in its quest for formal reform of the Chinese literature at the time. Here, from a Darwinian viewpoint (“each era has its own literature”, Hu Shi considered that “true literature” depends on its social value and on its “tool” or language (Hu 18). He divides literary works into two kinds, “dead” and “living”; the former refers to works written in classical literary Chinese (*wenyan*) and the latter to those written in vernacular Chinese (*baihua*). He then uses Renaissance literature to justify this division, saying that like Latin, classical literary Chinese is dead, while works written in vernacular Chinese are living like Dante’s work and Luther’s German translation of the *Bible*. He

thus asserts that “viewed from the current perspective of historical evolution, vernacular literature will become the orthodoxy of Chinese literature, and [vernacular Chinese] the necessary powerful instrument for the advent of [Chinese] literature” (Hu 24–25). He also held such a view of “historical evolution” in his reviewing of literary history, and asserted that the history of Chinese literature is such a history that new literary instruments (language) replace old ones, and the living (*baihua* works) replaces the dead (*wenyan* works). He even took European literatures to support his view: “literary revolutions in European countries were but the revolutions of literary instrument, and so were several revolutions in the history of Chinese literature” (192–93). This pragmatist view of historical evolution is also the dominant principle in his writing *Baihua wenxue shi* (A history of vernacular literature) in 1921. It is obvious that Darwinism and instrumentalism dominate Hu Shi’s remarks regarding literary reforms.

The notion of “evolution” is also essential to Chen Duxiu’s launching of the literary revolution. In the article “Wenxue geming lun” (On literary revolution) Chen published in February 1917 to give a fervent response to Hu Shi’s article, Chen interprets the word “revolution” (*geming*) in terms of Darwinism and renaissance: “How comes today’s solemn and brilliant Europe? [. . .] Since the Renaissance, revolutions took place in politics, religion and ethics, and in literature and arts. None of the realms did not incur revolutions, and none of them has not advanced (*jinhua*) due to the revolutions” (Chen 26). With this hypothetical logic, he raises his “three major principles” to the effect that writers should replace “decorative, flattering aristocratic literature” with “plain national literature”, “stereotypical classical literature” with “authentic realistic literature”, and “obscure landscape literature” with “popular social literature”. Thereby, he intended to orient literary writing towards a socio-political direction. What he was most concerned with, as he said, was “the issue of Confucianism,” which was being raised up in the society at the time (26). Having traced some “revolutions” (or stylistic changes) in the history of Chinese literature, he comes to focus on Han Yu (768–824), criticizing him for two things: 1) his writing still followed classicism; 2)

he was misled by the Confucian fallacy that “literature is to carry *Dao*” (27). Chen thus asserts that from Han Yu to Zeng Guofan (1811–72), all *Dao*-carrying writings are but copies of extremely shallow and general phrases from Confucius and Mencius, working to “establish doctrines on behalf of sages.” Therefore, he asserts further that the Confucian fallacy is the “monster” that has frustrated brilliant literary works like the Yuan and Ming plays, and the Qing novels, and has made modern Chinese literature decaying, and falling far behind European and American literatures (27).

It is clear that Chen’s three principles are politically expedient because his expelling of the aristocratic, the classical and the landscape from modern Chinese literature results from his view that “these three types of literature are all interrelated to our national personality, which is flattering, exaggerative, hypocritical and impractical” (28). And “today if we want to renovate our politics,” so he affirms, “we must renovate *the* literature that applies this political means in occupying our spiritual realm” (28). Here we see Chen elevating literature up to political importance and also a contradiction in his thinking. He seemed to be fiercely attacking the Confucian *Dao*-carrying convention, yet he essentially followed it, using literature to serve for politics, a policy Liang Qichao had initiated. Chen’s view was close to Hu’s but different in focus. Where Hu focused on literary instrument, Chen emphasized the instrumental function of literature. Although in these two cases, the terms Hu and Chen have used are general and abstract, the concepts of Darwinism and Renaissance are obviously used as their major critiques in promoting the Literary Revolution. Nevertheless, neither of them proposed significant details with regard to its content. Hence Zhou Zuoren came to reify the “new” Chinese literature, though still in terms of “evolution” and “renaissance.”

Zhou defined the new Chinese literature as a “human” literature from the standpoint of an evolutionary view of humans, who, as he says, “have evolved from animals” (23). With this definition, he emphasized the duality of humanity, its natural and cultural beings, which are to him “animal” and “sacred” natures in mankind, and ultimately “entities of soul and flesh” (23). He also articulated this definition as the “truth

of humans” discovered as a result from European Renaissance and religious reform (21). He thus urged Chinese writers to “rediscover” humans in the non-human wilderness of a four-thousand-year Chinese culture. Zhou’s discovery of humanity somehow modified the political course of Literary Revolution, and oriented it toward Humanism with an emphasis on individuality, or in his words, “the individual selfhood in the secular world.” While going to such an extreme as to regard his own culture as “non-human,” Zhou intended to guide writers toward rationalism and self-wakening. His 1918 seminal article “*Ren de wenxue*” (Human literature) is largely his own interpretation of the Western concept of Humanism, which signals modernity in China’s culture because it characterizes “the intellectual culture of Renaissance Europe [. . .], responds optimistically to human achievement in arts and sciences, and celebrates the human potential to ever increase rational knowledge of the world and human nature” (Morris 166). Zhou later developed his “human literature” toward a realist literature with the doctrine of “plebeian literature” (*pingmin wenxue*), with which he redefines and details Chen Duxiu’s ambiguous term “national literature,” and so led writers to write about “ordinary men and women, and their sorrow, joy, success and failure” (Zhou 25).

Note that in their application of Western theories in their writings, we see a dualist paradigm in the thinking of turn-of-the-century Chinese intellectuals: new versus old, living versus dead, human versus inhuman, modern versus tradition, and (therefore) the West (*Xiyang*) versus China. This dualist thinking thus formed the basis on which a counter-traditional discourse was constructed. Such a binary paradigm is obvious in Hu Shi’s conclusion to the theories regarding China’s Literary Revolution:

In brief, our central theories are only two: one is that we want to establish a kind of “living literature,” the other is that we want to establish a kind of “human literature.” The former is the theory for the revolution of literary instrument, and the latter is for the revolution of literary content. (237)

However, at the deeper level the important point here is his “view of literature as historical evolution (*lishi jinhua*)” which, as he said, came from “the influence of evolutionary theory since Darwin” (239). This view in fact underpinned his renowned epigraph, “each era has its own literature,” and made him believe that “contemporary China should make its contemporary literature.” The view of historical evolution in fact underpins all the strategies they used in the form of counter-traditional discourse in establishing a new literature. To establish the “living literature,” they used vernacularism (*baihua*) to subvert the classical literary language (*wenyan*). However, Chinese literati considered the *wenyan* “the most beautiful of the universe, ancient and present, and so nothing can replace it” (Wang Shudan in Hu 231). Such views continued till the Late Qing as seen in Zeng Guofan’s commentary on the Tongcheng School, the most powerful and dominant style of writing at the time: “in listing the most beautiful under the heaven, none may replace Yao Nai’s writing of the Tongcheng School” (Hu 217). Therefore, works written in the *wenyan* were considered most beautiful, and so the orthodoxy of Chinese literature. So for the modern pioneers, to establish vernacular literature or “living literature” is first of all to subvert the *wenyan*, the foundation of the orthodox literature. This is the causality underlying Hu’s and Chen’s launch of the Literary Revolution, which intended to overthrow the authority of Chinese literature through sabotaging the *wenyan* discourse, represented by the Tongcheng School at the time.

How to establish this “human literature” then? Hu Shi still relied on the evolutionary theory which, while little known to domestic scholars at the time, was “not only necessary but the most effective weapon” (241). To illustrate historical evolution (or, as he said, “old and new views”), he took Confucius as an example. From the point of the “old” (conventional) view, Confucius was “the great saint ‘whose virtues equal Heaven and Earth, and whose Dao champions the past and the present’” (*de mou tian di, dao guan gu jin*; 241). From the point of “new” (modern) view, Confucius was only one of many philosophers, like Laozi and Mozi, whom people did not worship (241). Note that here Hu Shi was entirely clear about the duality of Confucius as both

saint and philosopher. Why did he set Confucius the ultimate adversary of their literary revolution? As he had made his historicist study of Chinese literature of all the dynasties through his *Baihua wenxue shi*, he believed that “[the development of] vernacular literature was ‘a natural tendency’ in the history of Chinese literature.” But he pointed out that “it is not enough to rely on the ‘natural tendency’ for us to subvert the authority of the dead literature; we must have a conscious and purposeful policy if we want to achieve the effect of Literary Revolution” (241). The remarks reveal a pragmatist and extremist tendency among the modern pioneers of the time, and their strong intention as well, that is, in order to break the hegemony of the orthodox literature, they also needed to subvert the *Dao* it carried, that means to replace *ru dao* (Confucianism) with *ren dao* (Humanism) in addition to their reform of its instrument, language. It was for this political purpose that Confucianism became the target of attacks. When Hu Shi playfully mentioned Wu Yu as “an old hero attacking Confucian shop single-handedly in Sichuan” in his preface to *Collected Works of Wu Yu*, his words were rumoured as “knock down Confucian shop” (dadao Kongjiadian; Zhang 1) Thus, Confucius became the scapegoat for the cultural hegemony of the imperial and clannish China, and Hu’s words became an empty political slogan, for none of the modern pioneers ever seriously criticized Confucian philosophy or ethics in their writings regarding the Literary Revolution. Nevertheless, Hu’s commentary and its transformed slogan reflected the radical and extremist attitude toward traditional Chinese culture among the intellectuals at the time. They were too narrow-minded, too prejudiced, looking at their own culture by placing it against an imaginary, idealized and “brilliant” Western culture and by eclipsing a traditional, agricultural China with the industrializing West and Japan.

The slogan which arose at the time signifies that Confucianism is the adversary of the literary revolution, thus we need to disenchant Confucianism, that is, deprive it of its sacred halo as well as the repressive powers the ruling classes of all the dynasties had imposed on it. This paradoxical cultural phenomenon - to promote a modern culture by attacking its own roots as its major adversary – is clearly reflected in

Hu Shi's remarks, and can be largely gathered from Weber's term "disenchantment" which is considered essential to the concept of modernity: "with the onset of modernity, [. . .] the *Zweckrational* (purposive rationality and instrumental action) was coming to replace the *Wertrational* (value-rational action)" (Smith 14–15). In view of this point, what Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu said with regard to the Literary Revolution was in fact working as a kind of "purposive and instrumental action" to deconstruct the "value-rationality" of Confucianism. In other words, for the political purpose of breaking through the hegemony of conventional Chinese culture, the Chinese modern pioneers created an anti-traditional discourse and thus turned Confucianism into a cultural icon that epitomized all the ethical and institutional powers, which were repressing individual selfhood, ideological freedom, humanism, democracy and modernization.

2

When we turn to look at modernism in Anglo-American literature, we see that the concepts of the "new" and of "Renaissance" are also correlated with its development, and that its primary stimuli came also from other cultures, that of China being one. As Childs observes, in the 1970s the Euro-American definition of modernism was challenged. Of various arguments, one was that "Modernism marked the regeneration of a tired Western artistic tradition by other cultures: African, African-American, Asian, Chinese and, more generally, diasporic" (13). "A tired Western artistic tradition" has to do with the imperialist rivals, political chaos and intellectual nihilism before, during and after First World War, as can be seen in works like *The Cantos* and *The Waste Land*. Although neither Ezra Pound nor T. S. Eliot called themselves "modernists," for literary criticism modernism in English literature is generally considered to start with Imagism in verse (1912 to 1917), in which Pound played "a leading part" and was also "the mid-wife" who temporarily brought English and American writers together (Furbank 3; Ayers 2–3). As the issue concerned is complex, here I would like to limit my examination to Ezra Pound only, taking

him as a case to illustrate how “otherness” works as a stimulus to the “regeneration” of late Victorian literary tradition.

A comparison of relevant histories suggests that we may examine English and Chinese “moderns” side by side. Apart from the proximity of occurrence (modern Chinese literature started in 1917, and Imagism in 1912), there are at least three affinities essential to the genesis of modernity in both Chinese and English literatures. First, in both cases modernism began with formal reform by acting against its immediate predecessor: where the Chinese moderns rejected the *wenyan* and the *Tongcheng* style, Imagists repudiated the verbose style of the late Victorian literature (Ayers 2). Second, the essential drive for literary innovation is a historicist view as is seen in Hu Shi and Pound. Hu held a “view of historical evolution,” which underpinned nearly all his theories, as he believed that the successor excels the predecessor. Pound however held a view of syncretic historicism, which emphasized historicity in presentness, or recurrence and reiteration of history in one’s contemporary concerns, for he believed that “certain forces, elements or qualities, which were potent in the medieval literature [. . .] are still potent in our own” (SR 7). Pound was thus inclined to transcend his own time in search of elements for his current concerns. He even considered “all the intervening movements as revivals of the Renaissance [. . .] or as the various forms for ‘classicism’” (GB 114). Third, like the Chinese pioneers, Pound’s concerns with literary reform had a socio-political significance. He saw the convention of Victorian “verbalism” as harmful not only to literature but also to a nation’s thinking. Because of verbalism, he warned, “the whole machinery of social and individual thought and order goes to pot” (LE 21). To Pound, such maladies as rhetoric and verbiage in literature were symptomatic of intellectual and cultural crisis. Therefore, he initially promoted “*le mot juste*” and the “Image” both as cures for the maladies of the previous (e.g. romantic and traditional realist) literature and as primary constituents of modern poetry.

It is noteworthy that from the very beginning Pound used “otherness” (borrowed qualities) to construct modernism in English literature. Firstly, *le mot juste* is a French phrase that points to the

conception of prosaic accuracy Pound adopted through Madox Ford from Flaubert and Stendhal, and used it as a key Imagist principle that poetry “should be at least be as well written as prose” (GB 115). He actually used this principle as a strategy to fight against the practice of verbose Victorian convention prevailing among poets at the time. Secondly, although the Image is the core of Imagism, it can be traced to the influence of ancient Greek poetry. In 1912 Pound coined the term “Imagiste” to distinguish an “objective” and “direct” style shown in the poems of H. D. and Richard Aldington. Yet the two poets were originally interested in Greek classics, wrote poems by imitating the fragments of Sappho’s poems, and resulted in a quality of “neo-clàssicism,” which is considered to be “a key element in English modernism” (Ayers 2). So when Pound promoted Imagism, he actually advocated a kind of classical aesthetics in verse. This is the essential difference between Anglo-American moderns and Chinese moderns.

Here and elsewhere, we see that Pound used the old and the other in making the new. This predilection came from his discipline in Romance languages and literatures (French, Italian, Spanish, German, etc.) at the University of Pennsylvania and Hamilton College between 1901 and 1905. The texts he studied are of “world (or European) masterpieces” or “Classics.” Yet he studied them in a comparative way and in with a Goethean sense of World Literature. Through his comparative study of the masterpieces, he found certain “classical” (anterior) qualities durable, surviving temporary and regional limitations; and he also found excellent writings always detailed, keeping a “precise” relation to observed things as typical in Dante. His discoveries constituted the basis for his syncretic historicism and his cosmopolitan perspective, two factors that account for his use of the old and/or the other in poetic innovation. Moreover, his studies led him to crystallize his perceptions into two terms, “precision” and “luminous detail,” which formed the central ideas of his first academic book *The Spirit of Romance* (1910), and also the basis on which he developed his poetics as a whole.¹ In this sense, either “Imagiste” or *le mot juste* was only a poetic way of advocating his concept of precision. To Pound, the precise relation of the signifier and the signified is essential not only to

poetry but also to society. That was why Pound fiercely criticized the philistine society of commercializing America in the early 20th century, particularly its institutions of education and literature, which he considered being dominated by rationalism, “general terms” and “abstraction,” all of which were to him as pernicious as “tuberculosis to the health of the national mind” (LE 59–60). He thus strove to seek remedies for this “mental defection,” looking into European traditions and then looking beyond them towards the East.

It is interesting to note that the modern avant-gardes discussed above all turned to the other’s (i.e. to one another’s) culture for their own renaissance. When Western thought impacted modern China and the Chinese intellectuals regarded Western culture as a modern renaissance, there appeared in London, the cultural centre of the West at the time, an Oriental vogue occasioned by the Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese Painting hosted by the British Museum between 1910 and 1912, the year Pound started the Imagist club in London. The Museum art expert, Laurence Binyon, delivered lectures and articles on Chinese art and aesthetics, which in turn spurred Pound’s interest in Chinese culture (Qian 100-01). Besides, in the late 1913, Pound met Mary Fenollosa and obtained from her the late Fenollosa’s manuscripts. Fenollosa’s transliterations of Chinese poems and his aesthetical reading of Chinese script truly opened his eyes to classical Chinese literature and ideograms, and made him start his lifelong study of Chinese culture. In an article published in 1914 Pound claims Qu Yuan, Liu Che and Li Bo being “the great *vers libre* writers,” and their works being “a treasury to which the next century may look for as great a stimulus as the renaissance had from the Greeks” (LE 218). Owing to this view, late in 1914 Pound selected 18 classical Chinese poems from Fenollosa’s notebooks, re-creatively translated them from his modernist point of views, and published them in 1915 in an anthology entitled *Cathay* for which Eliot called him “the inventor of the Chinese for our time” (LE 14)². This year also saw Pound working on drafts for his “endless” *Cantos*, and showing an admiration for Confucius. He first read of him in Pauthier’s French translation of the *Four Books (Si shu)* Allen Upward had recommended alongside the Giles 1901 *History*

of *Chinese Literature* (Carpenter 218). In comparing Confucian ethics with Christian one, Pound was most impressed by Confucius' teaching: "beginning with oneself" (Carpenter 420). This perception, however, coincided with Zhang Taiyan's conclusion of Chinese philosophies: "Confucianism, Daoism, Ming-ism Fa-ism (ru, dao, ming, fa) keep changing endless; in seeking their root, it lies in only one phrase, 'relying on oneself, not on others'" (Zhang 194). Pound's primary impression of Confucianism was enduring. In drafting the 1917 *Three Cantos*, he fell into a self-contradictory dilemma, struggling to decide whether to start with Browningsque monologue or Homeric narrative or his own imagist/vorticist poetic. In a discarded draft, he parallels Confucius with Dante as his models: "the soul starts with itself, builds out perfection, / Confucius, Dante" (Froula 74). He then repeats it in the *Three Cantos*: "Confucius later taught the world good manners,/ started with himself, built out perfection" (119). The *Three Cantos* proved a failure because Pound drastically revised them in 1923, and deleted most of them along with the Browningsque monologue. The true start was Canto 4 (finalized in 1919) where Pound is seen returned to his own Vorticist poetics, developing it through the "ideogrammic method," a device close to Chinese poetics, as seen in present Cantos 2 and 4, alongside Homeric narrative that starts *The Cantos*.³ So in a sense Confucius helped Pound decide to "start with himself." His appreciation of Confucianism is far beyond this. As Pound kept reading Pauthier's translation of *The Four Books (Si shu)*⁴ and a Latin translation of *The Book of Songs (Shi jing)*, he came to devote Canto 13 especially to Kung (Kongzi, 551–479 B.C.) in mid-1923, taking Confucianism as the "backbone moral" of *The Cantos* (Carpenter 420). So this canto marks the genesis of one of the three major thematic cords ("Kung, Dante and Greeks")—Confucianism (more precisely, Neo-Confucianism as defined by Zhu Xi, 1230–1300), which Pearlman considers "the philosophical underpinning of *The Cantos* as a whole" (51). Additionally, this canto also shows Pound's aesthetic concerns, and so is worthy of a closer look.

3

The character of Confucius is mainly portrayed through his conversation with his disciples. The adoption of the dialogue form of its original, *The Analects (Lun yu)*, suggests that Pound appreciated the affinity between ancient Confucians and the ancient Greek disciples of Socrates and Plato, for both preferred *dialogue* as the best form for passing down their masters' philosophies. In Canto 13 Confucius is introduced both as a wise master who is concerned with state government and as a gentleman who embodies ethics in *The Four Books*. This canto, by means of a colloquial synthesis, foreshadows the tenets of Confucian ethics and philosophy that pervade later cantos. A collage of fragments, this canto is composed of excerpts from three of the *Four Books: The Analects, The Great Learning (Da xue)* and *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong yong)*, all of which Pound was to translate later. The first section is its bulk (lines 1–30), based on *Analects XI 25*, where Confucius questions four of his disciples as to what they would wish to do if given the chance. In replying to the master, Zi Lu (Tseu-lou) prefers to take up a military command, Ran You (Khieu) wants to take a civil office, and Gongxi Hua (Tchi) wishes to preside over the rituals at an ancestral temple. The fourth disciple, Zeng Xi (Tien or Dian), says nothing ambitious. But in the original he is the one particularly praised by Confucius, who “sighed and said, ‘I would agree with Dian’” (Zhu 81). Dian seems to stand opposed to his fellows. However, it is in Dian that one sees a deep moral in Confucius, his desire for a natural and perfect being, and also the stylistic feature of *The Analects*, a simple and vivid colloquialism. In contrast to the eloquent dialectic in the other three books, *The Analects* merely presents the remarks and actions of Confucius and his disciples with little commentary. This classic always invites the reader to interpret the fragmentary passages instead of offering the author's opinions. This stylistic feature must have interested Pound.

The Dian passage typifies this style. While the other disciples state their ambitions clearly, Dian, playing his lute all the while (in both

the original and Canto 13), seems to skirt the master's question by saying that he wants to bathe in the Yi River and to enjoy the breeze at Wuyu (the local platform for the rain-making rite) in company with a group of young men and children. Dian sounds modest and his wish is not so much directly announced as it is suggested by his behaviour. This feature made Pound lay special stress on Dian's playing the lute and on the music: "[. . .] with his hand on the strings of his lute/ The low sounds continuing/ after his hand left the strings, / And the sound went up like smoke, under the leaves, /And he looked after the sound [. . .]" (13/58). However, "music" (*yue*) is an important means of self-improvement for Confucians, and functions as one of the primary concepts of Confucian ethics since Confucius says that "one should start the cultivation of virtues with *shi* (poetry or the *Book of Songs*), establish oneself with *li* (ritual or the *Book of Rites*), and accomplish one's personality through *yue* (music or the *Book of Music*) (Zhu 65). Moreover, to wash oneself in a river suggests another virtue, *xin* (new), which for Confucians means constant self-renovation. Dian's willingness to keep company with adolescents may imply his concern with education. With regard to this passage, Zhu Xi comments that what Zeng Dian practices probably shows, "where human desires end, heavenly law prevails" (81). Dian may thereby embody *dao* and the virtue of *yue*, and may represent the type of person who enjoys his own environment and cares about self-perfection and education. Here Pound lists for his readers four types of people: three are to work in public service, and one may enjoy a natural life of self-perfection; these are two different kinds of Confucian "pragmatism."

In contrast to these types of men who "do something useful" for a state or community, Yuan Rang (Yuan Jang), is stigmatized as typical of persons who have contributed little to society in their lifetime, as described in *The Analects* (Zhu 91). Pound has accepted this Confucian image of Yuan Rang, who is said to have sung at his mother's death, as did Zhuangzi over his wife's death, regarding death as another form of existence (*ibid.*), and then presents Yuan Rang as a Cynic or Daoist character opposed to Confucian pragmatists. He thus comments that "Yuan Jang sat by the roadside pretending to/ be receiving wisdom"

(13/59), relating him to Zhuangzi, whose philosophy he has not really understood so well, as seen in the 1916 *Lustra* poem, "Ancient Wisdom, Rather Comic." Besides, the pragmatic nature of Confucianism is strengthened by Pound's emphasizing Confucius' concern with the secular world rather than sacred world: "[Kong] said nothing of the 'life after death'" (59/13), showing his appreciation of Confucianism as a secular philosophy in contrast to the divinity in Western philosophies, a key point which he stresses again in the preface to his 1950 translation of *The Analects*: "Voltaire admired that Confucius 'was the first man who did not receive a divine inspiration'" (*Con.* 191).

Another aspect of Confucianism Pound appreciated is its socio-political value. He adapts a passage from the book *Zhongyong* to the effect that "When the prince has gathered about him/ All the savants and artists, his riches will be fully employed" (13/59). The poet Pound expressly wishes that a good monarch would be a generous sponsor of arts. This expectation leads him to address the gist of Confucianism proclaimed in *Da xue* as follows: "If a man have not order within him/ He can not spread order about him;/ His family will not act with due order;/ And if the prince have not order within him/ He can not put order in his dominions" (13/59). These lines are based on a passage in *Da xue*: "The ancestors who wished to manifest bright virtue to the world first ordered well their own states. Those who wished to order well their states first regulated their families. Those who wished to regulate the families first cultivated their personalities. Those who wished to cultivate their personalities first rectified their minds" (Zhu 3). Here we come to see the source for Pound's saying that Confucius "started with himself, built out perfection." This phrase is in fact Pound's interpretation of the tenet of Confucianism: perfection of family and state starts with individual morality. Pound thus took it as a constant norm of moral power and used it time and again in his later cantos. He thus stresses Confucian ethics: "And Kung gave the words 'order' and 'brotherly deference'" (59/13). The former is identified with *zhi*, which signifies the primary Confucian concept of governing family being the precondition for state government; and the latter with

ti, which, with filial piety (*xiao*), forms two Confucian virtues being at the root of humanity.

In addition to Confucian ethics, Pound also perceived the concept of *zhongyong* as an epistemological means, paraphrasing it like this: "And he said/ "Anyone can run to excesses,/ It is easy to shoot past the mark,/ It is hard to stand firm in the middle" (13/59). Pound is very astute in perceiving this passage's dialectical sense, employing the *Lun yu* remarks to explain what is said in the book *Zhongyong*. "That which is *zhong*," says Zhu Xi, "means being not inclined to any side, nor leaning against anything; the term refers to avoidance of excess and deficiency; while *yong* means even and constant" (Zhu 12). Yet Pound goes beyond this, reading intuitively the ideogram *zhong* (中), "to stand firm in the middle," which recurs as the verbal symbol of "unwobbling pivot" with a variety of implications in his later cantos.

Pound then came to introduce the concept of *ren* (*jen*)—the core of Confucianism, which Legge translated as "perfect virtue," and Waley as "goodness." Pound was however unsatisfied with such translations, knowing this notion was essential to his *Cantos*. Perhaps lacking an equivalent in English, he gave up discursive attempts at this term and turned instead to his "ideogrammic" method, a way by which particulars may lead to abstraction. He selected relevant anecdotes from *The Analects* to illustrate this. Here he tactically uses the question raised about a conflict between human conscience and civil law: "If a man commits murder/ Should his father protect him, and hide him?" However, "Kung said: / He should hide him" (13/59). This answer is based on *ren* (or "humaneness" as Pound later used; Con: 59), which is illustrated by the anecdotes Pound chose to use here: Confucius married his daughter to Gongye Chang (Kong-Tch'ang), a prisoner; and his niece to Nan Rong (Nan-Young), a man without office. Here Confucius did not base his judgment on judicial laws but on his moral justice as he said that "although Gongye Chang was imprisoned, he had not been guilty of any crime" and that "if the state were properly governed, Nan Rong would have been appointed" (Zhu 49).

To emphasize the moral power of *ren* in his modern epic, Pound uses another allusion: "Wang ruled with moderation, / In his day the

state was well kept". This comes from Confucius' answer to Duke Ai who has asked about government in the book *Zhong yong*. Here the "Wang" refers to King Wen or King Wu of the Zhou dynasty (11th BC), revered as two sage rulers; and Confucius cites them as models for his belief in virtuous rulers choosing proper ministers to assist their government (Zhu 20). Confucius also explains the concept of *ren* both as the base of state management and as the root of man: "Humaneness means man (仁者, 人也); its highest principle is in loving kinsfolk. Righteousness means appropriateness; its highest principle is in esteeming virtuous people" (Zhu 20). Thus internal humanity within human is stressed as well as love of kinsfolk. Looking back on the eras of King Wen and King Wu, Confucius thought that his own time no longer offered deeds worthy of official historians' recording, and dreaded that such a time had ever even "passed." Pound in his turn takes this view of his own "modern" time ("But that time seems to be passing" 13/60), presenting Confucius' words in the way of "translation," which is in effect one of his *personae*.

Therefore, Pound alludes indirectly to another Confucian ethic, *xiushen*, cultivation of perfect personality in oneself. One way is to read the Confucian *Odes* (*Shi*), and another is to expose oneself to "music" (*yue*). However, unless one has a nature like Dian's, one is "unable to play that instrument/ Or to execute the music fit for the Odes" (13/60). The understatement is that Pound diagnoses the ultimate malady of his time (or the post-World-War-I West) as the lack of moral power within because of the disintegration of internal humanity from external human. Thus Canto 13 ends with an allusion to the "apricot" platform where Confucius lectured to his pupils, and with a determination to cultivate human values as Confucius did, and from the reader's perspective, as Pound is attempting with his *Cantos*: "The blossoms of the apricot/ blow from the east to the west,/ And I have tried to keep them from falling" (13/60).

In committing his literary innovations to his desire for social reform, Pound also promoted his discovery that the Chinese cultural legacy was to him as the Greek classics were to the Renaissance, and promoted the Confucian motto "Make It New" (*ri ri xin*)⁵ as a major

principle of modern English literature and as the spirit of modern times. On the other hand, the Chinese pioneers discussed earlier were all inclined to take modern Western thought as an alternative to their own tradition, and Western theories, particularly Darwinism and Humanism, thus exercised a mighty enlightening effect in modern China, just as the Renaissance had done in Europe. The leading figures, Pound and Hu Shi, were in accord in taking the other's culture as a great stimulus to the "regeneration" of their own cultural tradition. However in so doing, Hu Shi and his fellows, owing to their view of historical evolution, actually used otherness (Western thought) as what Weber said in terms of "disenchantment", that is, "purposive rationality and instrumental action" to replace the "value-rational" in Confucianism, while Pound, due to his syncretic historicism and "neo-classicism," paid special attention to the value rationality in his absorption and dissemination of other traditions and thus took Confucianism as an ideal moral strength for his modern society. This difference thus caused a stark contrast in bringing out modernity in Chinese and English literatures. Where Hu Shi used the *baihua* to replace the *wenyan*, Pound used the Image and the "ideogrammic" to combat Victorian verbalism. Where Zhou Zuoren took humanism as an evolutionary result, Pound took it as Confucian *ren dao*. Where the Chinese moderns advocated Western democratic civilization (*qun zhi*), Pound promoted Confucian moral power as a strategy, that is, state government should depend on personal virtue-cultivation and family harmony. The Chinese moderns advocated Western logic, whereas Pound promoted the Confucian *zhongyong* as his epistemological means. Ironically, then, while the Chinese moderns took Confucianism as the chief adversary of their literary revolution, Pound took it as the "backbone" of his modern epic. All this leads one to rethink the "value-rational" of one's own cultural tradition; for perhaps, in this age of globalization and/or glocalization, we must try to avoid taking otherness as a purposive and instrumental action that will in effect (as for the modernizing Chinese) destroy one's own tradition; perhaps we need to seek an ideological base upon which (as a sort of unwobbling pivot) we can balance globalization and localization, if we reads the Chinese classics as thoughtfully as Pound

did.

NOTES

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¹ For more account of Pound's cosmopolitanism and comparative poetics, see Naikan Tao (a) 2001.

² For accounts of Pound's re-creative translation of these poems, see Yip: *Ezra Pound's Cathey*.

³ For details of the influence on Pound of Chinese poetics, see Tao (b) 2001.

⁴ Here *Si shu* refers to *Si shu ji zhu* edited and annotated by Zhu Xi. It was translated into English by James Legge and published as *Confucius* in 1892.

⁵ This phrase derives from his reading of the motto engraved on the bathtub known as "Tang ming" in *Da xue*: "gou ri xin, ri ri xin, you ri xin." Zhu Xi, p. 3.

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現代主義與儒家思想： 中國文學與英語文學中作為一種刺激的他者

摘要

本文檢視發生於二十世紀第一個二十年間，母文化挪用異文化作為自我革新之刺激的一個特殊現象。本文主張，在社會政治產生諸多變動的該時期間，被詮釋為現代中國文學中的災難或英語文學中的理想的儒家概念，在建構現代化的脈落裏意指了不同的意涵，且履行了不同的成效。從現代主義角度觀之，此兩個事件的結合建立在下列的基礎之上：一) 中國「文學革命」(1917) 與美國意象派詩歌 (1912) 這兩個現代文學運動在時間點上的接近二) 此兩個文學運動皆以拒抗先前的典範，作為形式改革而出發：美國意象派詩歌拒抗後維多利亞風格；「文學革命」則是抵制銅城派的文風 三) 這兩個文學革新運動的重要驅力都來自像胡適的文學進化論與龐德融合論之歷史主義觀點 四) 在此中國與英語文學的例子當中，文學上的革新都被當作是達成社會改革的一種手段。為了釐清這些觀點，本文聚焦在中國文學重要先鋒們對中國「文學革命」的立論，他們檢視龐德如何嘗試利用傳統中國文化當作開啟「文藝復興」的一大刺激，且用儒家思想的倫理觀作為他〈詩章〉裏的核心主題連結。這樣的檢視也進一步闡明儒學與現代主義之間的弔詭關係，並且展現了中國文學與英語文學如何用他者開啟現代性的一個相互對照。

關鍵字：現代主義、儒家思想、「文藝復興」、歷史主義、達爾文進化論、中國「文學革命」、美國意象派詩歌、《四書》