History as Poetry: The Chinese Past in Ezra Pound's *Rock-Drill Cantos*

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"An epic is a poem containing history."[1] This definition of the epic is probably one of Pound's most famous mottos. Obviously the definition was intended by Pound to encompass *The Cantos.* Indeed the long poem which had evolved for more than forty years began with a Homeric sea journey, but the expectation for a linear narrative structure was abrogated almost immediately after the first canto. Besides the elimination of the continuity of action, there was neither continuity of characters nor progression of time sequence. Many years after the beginning of *The Cantos,* the readers were informed in an essay that the poem would try to reenact the tripartite structure of Dante's *Commedia.*[2] However, they were also reminded that "one can't follow [exactly] the Dantesquan cosmos in an age of experiment."[3] Having repudiated in both theory and practice the traditional structural models of the long poem, Pound substituted the ideogrammic method as the central organizing principle. Due to its non-linearity and concrete juxtaposition, this method turns out to be complementary in form to Pound's view of "historical contemporaneity."

History, according to Bernard Lewis, is of three types.[4] There is, first of all, remembered history, which includes not only writings written to record facts and events of the past, but also the commemorations (feasts, fasts, and celebrations), the surviving laws and customs, and the cultural traditions. All these constitute a very large part of a society's collective memory. Then there is recovered or critical history. Unlike remembered

history, critical history often begins with a dissatisfaction with the inaccuracies, gaps, or deficiencies of the collective memory. Such history starts of course with what is remembered and transmitted. But through scholarly research the gaps are to be filled and the errors corrected. Trying to be unbiased, this kind of history must not set out to prove a pre-determined thesis, for its chief goal is to attain maximal accuracy. Very often events and ideas in the past may be rejected by the collective memory for various reasons. Whatever is restored through the critical historiography can be seen as recovered history. To some historians only the second type of historical writing can be truly considered as history; the rest can be classified as legend, tradition, chronicles, or simply past. Finally there is invented history, which creates, embellishes, corrects, or removes any part of the past that the present society may find distasteful and replaces it with something more acceptable for current purposes.

The Poundian sources for the Chinese history that goes into *The Cantos* can all be classified as remembered history. None of these sources – the Confucian classics, a Chinese chronicle in Manchurian and rendered into French by a Jesuit, a compilation of vulgarized Confucian tenets circulated as the *Sacred Edict* and meant to be the ideological buttress of the status quo – can truly lay claims to objectivity and accuracy. Yet in re-transmitting these materials, Pound never seems to be bothered by the authenticity, objectivity, and correctness of his sources. He is neither critical nor investigative about his materials. He simply accepts the validity of the printed words without much questioning and further research. Often when a certain source is used for the argumentation of a thesis, that particular work would remain the sole arbiter without any corroboration from other sources. This unscrupulous use of remembered history, however, is actually complemented by Pound's ideogrammic method. The method eschews linear development and simply juxtaposes concrete data without explanation. Whatever questions the readers may have about the juxtaposed data are left very much to their own investigation and contemplation.

In *Section: Rock-Drill De Los Cantares LXXXV–XCV* (1955), *Shu ching* (書經, *Book of History*), one of the Confucian classics, is quite extensively used. While *Shu ching* is purported to contain more than seventeen centuries of China's early documents, there are many gaps in the coverage and each of the five parts of the *Shu* has to be read differently. According to James Legge, in Part 1 of the *Shu,* which deals with Yao's reign, "legend

and narrative are confusedly mixed together." In Part 2, which deals with Shun's reign, "it may be impossible to separate what is old from what is more recent – to distinguish what the compilers added of their own." Part 3 which deals with the Hsia dynasty may simply be "the compilations of a later time." While Part 4, which deals with the Shang dynasty, may be more accurate and authentic, Part 5 contains the documents of Chou which "were contemporaneous with the events they described and became public property not long after their composition."[5] The authenticity of the documents in *Shu ching* has long been the subject of controversy. In Bernhard Karlgren's 1950 translation of the *Shu,* some twenty documents were not considered as genuine and omitted from the translation. Apart from the genuineness of certain documents, there is the problem of the text, which, with its archaic language and lapidary style, is often very obscure and open to divergent interpretations. While Karlgren's translation can be seen as a history of the second type, Pound's unscrupulous re-transmittance of the *Shu ching* belongs to the first.

Pound, however, is also capable of communicating historical "knowledge" of the third kind. Throughout *The Cantos,* Taoists and Buddhists are often mentioned and described in a derogatory manner, as in the Chinese History Cantos:

> Hochang, eunuchs, taoists and ballets
> night-clubs, gimcracks, debauchery
> Down, down! . . .
> Sung is down
> Hochang, eunuchs, and taozers
> empresses' relatives, came then a founder
> saying nothing superfluous
> cleared out the taozers and grafters, gave grain
> opened the mountains
> Came taozers, hochang and debauchery
> (56:302)

Hochang and taozers refer to Buddhist monks and Taoist priests. The Taoists in this context are those who practice the religious Taoism of alchemy, immortality elixir, and other superstitions. The Chinese dynasty of Sung collapsed under the continuous invasions of the Mongolians in the thirteenth century; to put the blame of the downfall on religious Taoism and Buddhism

is a case of embellishment or selective emphasis.[6] This piece of revisionist history, however, can be explained by de Maila's identity as a Jesuit priest and Pound's self-proclaimed role of an ardent Confucianist.

Fortunately the invention of history appears to be rare in *The Cantos.* Analogies to historical characters and past events, however, are very pervasive. The ideogrammic juxtaposition is based upon Pound's concept of historical contemporaneity, which he first discussed in 1910: "It is dawn at Jerusalem while midnight hovers above the pillars of Hercules. All ages are contemporaneous. It is B.C., let us say, in Morocco. The Middle Ages are in Russia. . . . This is especially true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent, and where many dead men are our own grandchildren's contemporaries."[7] The Middle Ages in Russia is perhaps a reference to the death of Tolstoy in 1910. The way Pound presents his idea of contemporaneity allows it to be read as a metaphorical expression. In his epic, it is no longer a manner of speaking, but an idea into action, the conceptual basis of his ideogrammic practice. *The Cantos* has always contained historical analogies, but with the beginning of *Rock-Drill,* they have become very obscure and puzzling. It is as if in his urgent need to "hammer through" the message – which, according to the poet, is the meaning of the title *Rock-Drill* – he becomes so self-centered that he merely utters quickly and deliriously without pausing to explain. As a result, the reader is now entirely on his own to seek out the significance of the historical facts and to make the juxtaposition meaningful.

This situation can be illustrated by the opening of *Rock-Drill,* which one critic believes to be quite "unreadable" without consulting simultaneously the original source, the *Book of Histroy.*[8] The *Rock-Drill* begins like this:

LING[2] 靈

Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility.
All there by the time of Y Yin 伊
All roots by the time of Y Yin. 尹
Galileo index'd 1616,
Wellington's peace after Vaterloo

止 chih[3]
a gnomon

(85:543)

"Ling" or 靈 is an ideogram formed by three parts. The upper part of the ideogram is 雨 or *yu,* rain falling from the heaven; the middle consists of three mouths. The lower part, 巫 or *wu,* according to *Mathew's Chinese-English Dictionary* (No. 7164), refers to "Magical arts. Dancing and posturing in order to induce the descent of the spirits." The entire ideogram (No. 4071) means "the spirit of a being, which acts upon others." In the context of *Shu ching, ling* has the connotations of virtue and intelligence. Pound's approximation of "sensibility" seems to be deliberately all-encompassing. While it may refer to the emperor's virtue, it can also denote, as Hugh Kenner has aptly observed, the poet's work, "reaching into the realm of the natural." ("Under the cloud/the three voices" – 104:740).[9] An ideogrammic reading of the whole word, as favored by Pound, may see it as the rains from heaven being induced to descend on earth by the ritual songs and dances. In the next canto "sensibility" is also explained as "the feel of the people" (86: 560). In short, the mandate of heaven can only correspond with the good will of the people on earth.

The speaker of this "great sensibility," however, is not specified here. Neither are we told whose "dynasty came in because of [it]." Only by comparing the poetry with the source do we know that the unidentified voice belongs to the Duke of Chou (周公), who assisted King Wu of Chou (周武王) in overthrowing the ruthless last emperor of the Shang dynasty (circa B.C. 1766-1154). The Shang dynasty came into existence by toppling the Hsia. Speaking to the former officials of Shang, the Duke of Chou cited this historical precedent to vindicate the uprising:

> I have heard the saying – "God leads men to security"; but the sovereign of Hea [Hsia] would not move to such security, whereupon God sent down corrections indicating His mind to him. Kee [Chieh], however, would not be warned by God.... Hereupon [Heaven] charged your founder, T'ang the Successful, to set Hea aside, and by means of able men to rule the empire.... And thus it was that while Heaven exerted a great establishing influence preserving and regulating the house of Yin [the tribe that founded the Shang dynasty], its sovereigns on their part were humbly careful not to lose the favour of God, and strove to manifest a good-doing corresponding to that of Heaven. But in these times, their successor showed himself greatly ignorant of the ways of Heaven....
> Greatly abandoned to dissolute idleness, he paid no regard to the bright principles of Heaven, nor the awfulness of the people. On this account

God no longer protected him, but sent down the great ruins which we have witnessed.[10]

The Y Yin (伊尹, I Yin or Legge's E Yin) in Pound's passage was the chief minister of "T'ang the Successful" (成湯). He was regarded as one of the most distinguished among the sage councellors.[11] Actually the principles outlined in the Duke's speech were totally in accord with the instructions given by Y Yin as recorded in Books 4, 5, and 6 of "The Books of Shang" (商書). The Duke of Chou was then telling the Shang officials and people that the Chou dynasty came into being correctly and righteously, fulfilling the will of Heaven and realizing Y Yin's doctrines.

Many centuries after Y Yin and the Shang dynasty, China finally came into contact with the West through the Jesuits. Matthaeus Ricci, an Italian priest who went to Peking in 1601, was most instrumental in the introduction of Western sciences and culture. His numerous works published in China include a 1614 volume on astronomy and mathematics. The Chinese officials accepted the Jesuits mainly because of their scientific training.[12] Pound is right to observe that despite the church's case against Galileo, "it was Galileo's mathematics that gained [the Jesuits] their favour" (*SP*, 65). Galileo has been considered by Pound in favorable terms in his *Guide to Kulchur;* and he is juxtaposed with Mencius in Canto 89: "Galileo from Mang 孟 tzu/caliginern vespertinam" (599). But the historical basis or analogy that allows Galileo to be juxtaposed between Y Yin and Wellington is unclear and ambiguous. Is 1616 merely a mistake for 1614? And mistakes are not uncommon in Pound's scholarship. Are we supposed to see Galileo's scientific discoveries which alter the world views of the West to be another kind of analogy to Y Yin's doctrines which mold the Chinese political outlook? Or is Galileo actually a contrast, meant to suggest the changes or disruptions of the traditional Chinese system and order? We know that Pound was once delighted to point out that "an Emperor finally ousted [the Jesuits] with an answer full of sobriety" (*SP*, 65).

While the meaning of the Galileo reference remains in doubt, the allusion to Wellington can probably be explained as historical contrast. Nonetheless, a reader less familiar with Pound's earlier works might simply speculate that the peace brought by Wellington's victory to Europe is seen as an analogue to the restoration of order after Chou's defeat of Shang. That this is probably not the correct analogy can be demonstrated by Pound's

opinion about Wellington and Napoleon. Although Pound sees Napoleon as the incarnation of "provincialism the enemy," for "only a backwoods hell like Corsica could have produced him" (*SP*, 201), he is, at least for once, grouped with Adams and Jefferson (*SP*,158). Like Mussolini, Napoleon is also supposed to be crushed by the usurers:

> "and the economic war has begun"
> Napoleon wath a goodth man, it took, uth
> 20 yearth to crwuth him
> it will not take uth 20 years to crwuth Mussolini"
> as was remarked in via Balbo by the Imperial
> Chemicals
> its brother
>
> (78:477)

While Pound's view of Napoleon appears to be a mixture of admiration and disagreement, his opinion of Wellington in an earlier canto is totally negative. Wellington is cursed by Pound as "a jew's pimp/and lacked mind to know what he effected" (50:248). As for the Chinese ideogram "chih," it has been used in other cantos to signify the resistance to evil forces and the restoration of order. Its strategic juxtaposition after the Battle of Waterloo is perhaps an attempt to remind us of the principles of Y Yin and the Duke of Chou as the right solution. On the other hand, *chih* is etymologically related to the ideogram *shih* 𠂤 or time, which consists of two pictographs: the sun ⊙ and the highly stylized 𠂇, indicating a foot touching the ground. This pictograph also represents the meanings of both "stop," which is *chih* 止, and "go," 之 *chih* in the first tone. So the abstract concept of time is suggested by the "stop" and "go" of the sun. Pound's "gnomon" under the ideogram *chih* then adds an entirely new, though etymologically ancient, aspect to this word. The decision to do an etymological reading is probably not accidental and it may be related in some obscure way with the allusion to Galileo.

When Y Yin appears again in the same canto, he is found to be in analogy with Richard of St. Victor:

> Dante, out of St Victor (Richardus)
> Erigena with greek tags in his verses.
> Y Yin sent the young king into seclusion
> by T'ang Tomb to think things over,

that they make total war on CONTEMPLATIO.
(85:546)

A twelfth century theologian, Richard of St. Victor had been studied and translated by Pound (*SP*, 71). He was interested in Richard's system of cogitation, meditation, and contemplation. In *Guide to Kulchur,* these three modes of thought are explained as follows:

> In the first the mind flits aimlessly about the object, in the second it circles about it in a methodical manner, in the third it is unified with the object.
>
> That is something a man can check up on. It is a knowledge to be verified by experience. I mean ours with St Victors.[13]

According to Richard, "in contemplation, man achieves a state of complete understanding in which all perception is focused in one, perfect intuition. But Pound does not forget that the origins of contemplation are in love, first manifested in *bona voluntas* [benevolence or good will], and in the desire of the intelligence for truth. Thus implicit in contemplation are love, truth, virtue, and justice, all essential to the realization of a 'paradiso terrestre.' "[14]

But can the "contemplatio" forced by Y Yin upon the young king be a genuine parallel with Richard's mystical concept? Returning to the Chinese source, one learns that after the death of T'ang the Successful, the throne was succeeded by his grandson T'ai Chia (太甲). Unfortunately the young sovereign did not serve the "bright requirements of Heaven." Despite Y Yin's continuous remonstrance, T'ai Chia persisted in his deviation. The prime minister finally took the most drastic measure of removing T'ai Chia from the throne and kept him in solitary confinement near his grandfather's grave. The idea was to compel the young king to meditate on his own errors. For three years Y Yin ruled the country while simultaneously giving lessons to T'ai Chia. When T'ai Chia was truly repentent, Y Yin returned him to the throne and again resumed his former duty of counselling.[15] The ground for analogy here is clearly the act of contemplation. But while the Chinese incident reveals the concept that political order can derive from personal rectification, Richard's belief is a mystical one, trying to achieve a state of

ecstasy for the soul to appear in the presence of God. The fundamental difference between these two kinds of "contemplatio" is much greater than the facile resemblance.

In human communication analogy is not only common but useful. It can be employed to suggest hypotheses. It may also contribute to a fuller understanding of certain principles and phenomena by resorting to the known or the more simple. When analogy is applied in historical writing, it can, through the familiarity of past experience, provide ways of proceeding, a security in feeling, and even meaning in life. In this sense, the historian Bruce Mazlish contends, historical analogy functions both as myth and model. The merits of historical analogy certainly are not to be deprecated. However, unscrupulous use of historical analogy based on superficial correspondence may not only be misleading, but obstructive to genuine analytical insight. Mazlish argues that a historical analogy which is meant to be scientific knowledge must transcend the self-contained comparison of two resembling simple elements, for it is impossible to truly understand the structural or functional position of one single element without a comprehensive study of the system, both dynamic and static, within which that element rests. For instance, in comparing the railroad system of the nineteenth century and the space program of our time, Mazlish sees the latter not merely as an isolated scientific innovation, but as a "complex *social invention.*" By that he means "an invention that is technological (e.g., missiles, launching pads), economic (e.g., involving large-scale employment of manpower, widespread use of materials), political (e.g., involving new forms of legislation, and new dispositions of political forces), sociological (e.g., affecting kinship groups, communities, classes), intellectual (e.g., changing man's views of space and time), and so forth."[16] Clearly the historical analogies in the *Rock-Drill* can hardly measure up to the working model suggested by Mazlish. In some other cantos, such as those on Malatesta or on John Adams, background details are far more abundantly supplied. Although these details may be highly selective, they at least manage to impart to the reader a sense of the larger context and a base for judgement. The Chinese historical personages in the *Rock-Drill* are simply there, inserted without much introduction. It is as if the author is asking the reader to embrace them in good faith, and to accept the author's evaluation and selection with blind trust.

Several years after Pound's first observation on historical contemporaneity, Oswald Spengler, a student of Leo Frobenius, had also tried to

construct a system of cultural morphology with a qualitatively similar idea. According to Spengler, all the different cultures are totally autonomous organisms which go through various phases of growth from the spring of life to the winter of decay. Attempting to compare the cultures in a more accurate way, Spengler sets up the distinction between homology and analogy. Homology is concerned basically with structural equivalence, such as the structure of a map corresponding to that of the country represented. Analogy, on the other hand, deals only with functional equivalence, such as the biological resemblance between the fish gills and human lung.[17] Spengler believes that this method, when applied to history, is far more systematic and perceptive. Merely to mention certain historical similarity on the surface, such as that between Alexander and Caesar, is impressionistic and unscientific. Examining Alexander and Caesar from the broader perspective of cultural development, the two cannot be structurally homologous, for one falls into the autumn of the culture while the other helps to consolidate its winter. The homologous form for Alexander can be found in Napoleon, for both appear in the same transitional period of a declining culture. Caesar, on the other hand, is only analogous with Napoleon. Hence, when historical facts or figures are considered as "contemporaneous" or homologous, they are, at least in the Spenglerian system, posited in the corresponding structural positions in their respective cultures.

Pound's "historical contemporaneity" does not make such a distinction, and there is no attempt to construct even a self-contained system. Disregarding the difference in social and cultural background, he would isolate an endeared trait or idea, and with that juxtapose any number of historical characters supposed to share it. For Pound the origin, context, and motivation of a certain statement or incident are not important. He does not treat a historical statement as a living thought, but as a dead one, a finished product, cut loose from its roots. It is with this kind of *modus operandi* that many of the analogues are created. The two *Rock-Drill* passages which we have tried to explicate can testify to this.

Despite Pound's own lack of systemization or even clarification of his comparative principles, he is very critical of Spengler. In an essay on "How to Read" (1927), Pound states the need for the discipline of " 'comparative literature' . . . with a considered conscious method." He loudly wonders why "English novelists were not compared with the French," and without hesitation denounces the only kind of comparative scholarship practiced at

that time: "Sources were discussed; forty versions of a Chaucerian anecdote were 'compared', but not on points of respective literary merit." One would think, then, that he should have favorable words for the "lively and correlated system" devised by Spengler, but instead he offers this severe criticism: "Authors like Spengler, who attempts a synthesis, often do so before they have attained sufficient knowledge of detail: that they stuff expandable and compressible objects into rubber-bag categories, and that they limit their reference and interest by supposing that the pedagogic follies which they have themselves encountered, constitute an error universally distributed, and encountered by every one else."[18] Ironically the same criticism can be applied to the Pound of the *Rock-Drill.* In this case, knowledge of the details is simply insufficient for the reader's credibility; and the categories Pound used to "stuff" the ideas and personages remain subjective and obscure. As for the second part of the criticism, it can be construed as a defense of his own ideogrammic method. Indeed the "pedagogic follies" or "clumsiness of method" are now avoided,[19] for the Poundian method offers no (or, in Pound's view, unnecessary) elaboration, corroboration, critique, or explanation of sources and materials. One would suspect that perhaps in his prose works, more justice can be done. But even there Confucius is compared with Mussolini solely because the Duce had said something about the people's need of poetry. Then there is the book *Jefferson and/or Mussolini.* Despite the ample space there, the analogy, aided by sporadic quotations, is not logically developed; and the ideogrammic presentation once again forces the readers to work out the argument by themselves.

In both the *Rock-Drill* and the Chinese History Cantos, Pound's focus is continuously on the emperors and occasionally, the famous prime ministers. Throughout the *Rock-Drill,* instead of relying upon the chosen details to demonstrate the concept, as in the Chinese History Cantos, Pound becomes more didactic. He reiterates the idea that "it may depend on one man" (86:563). Rather than selecting concrete achievements of the kings and ministers, Pound's choices from the *Shu ching* are more inclined toward discursive statements. Perhaps he believes that there are sufficient concrete examples in the early cantos, and the goal now is more "hammering through" of the basic ideas. The most fundamental idea of all is certainly this from the *Shu*: "The prosperity and unsettledness of a state may arise from one man. The glory and tranquility of a state also may perhaps arise from the excel-

lence of one man."[20] The exemplary virtue of the ruler, however, must be cultivated and passed on in order to ensure the survival of the dynasty. This responsibility is not the sovereign's alone, but very much that of the ministers'.

Pound speaks of the ministers' duty through the unidentified voice of the Duke of Chou:

> We flop if we cannot maintain the awareness XVI.4
> Diuturna cogites 10
> respect the awareness and
> train the fit men.
>
>  mîng ngò tsiun  XVI.20
>
> chün[4] 1727.Mat.
>
> Cdn't see it (ming) could
>  extend to the people's subsidia,
> that it was in some fine way tied up with the people
> (85:557-58)

The "XVI.4" refers to the original source in *Shu ching;* and "1727.Mat." tells the reader where to check in *Mathew's Chinese-English Dictionary* the meaning of the word *chün.* Picking up the lead, the reader who cares to go through the source will know that this is a statement from the Duke of Chou to his brother the Duke of Shao (召公), demanding him not to retire. Citing the examples of former ministers, beginning with Y Yin, Chou tells his brother that it is their obligation as ministers to cultivate the young sovereign's virtue and to "train the right men" so that the Chou dynasty can continue to enjoy the "favor of Heaven." Since "the establishment of our dynasty rests with us two," Chou tells his brother, they should bear in mind "the distant future" ("Diturna cogites"). One should not merely cultivate one's own virtue, but should "bring to light [other] men of eminence ['mîng ngò tsiun / chün']." Shao's problem, in Pound's opinion, is that he fails to perceive how his own destiny ("ming") is now entwined with that of the people. The relationship between the ruler and the counsellors is idealistically a complementary one, and its proper functioning directly effects the people's welfare. As for the "awareness" which is to be respected by all, it is obviously a connotative reading of *ling,* the sensibility linking

heaven and earth.

While the ministers can help the sovereign to preserve the awareness, the sovereign, in turn, must exercise wisdom and judgement in the appointments of his counsellors:

> Get men, it [ling] will grow
> Milites instar ursorum, xxiii, 5, men strong as bears
> Not in two minds
>
>  jóung touan
>
> Edictorum
>
>  t'i iao
> (86:561)

The ideogram *tuan* is a reference to "THE FOUR TUAN[1] or foundations" (85:545), which are *jen* (仁, benevolence), *i* (義, righteousness), *li* (禮, propriety), and *chih* (智, wisdom). Apparently the word is meant to call our attention to these qualities. Besides being "brave as bears" ("Milites instar ursorum") and "of no double heart" ("Not in two minds"), the ministers, as the source ("xxiii, 5") indicates, should also be very articulate: "In measures of government to be consistent and constant, and in proclamations ["Edictorum"] a combination of completeness and brevity ["t'i / iao"] are valuable."[21] All these brilliant qualities, however, are not stated all at the same time in the original. Pound has to excerpt from two different passages and strategically insert the ideogram "tuan" to suggest the four Confucian principles, which are of later formulations.

Following the scheme described by Pound, prosperity and order can be easily achieved through the ascendency of virtuous kings and ministers. This, however, is precisely the weakness of the whole system, for so much now depends upon the one, or the few, in power. Theoretically, there is a check and balance of power among the ruling elites. The virtuous ministers can remove the unrighteous sovereign, as in the case of Y Yin's confinement of the young king; or the righteous lords can rise up against the ruthless king, as in the case of Chou. Mencius, for one, clearly endorses the removal of

unrighteous rulers and does not consider it as illegitimate usurpation. However, the Legalist philosophers, notably Han Fei (韓非), believe that the relationship between the monarch and the ministers is not relative but absolute. In other words, ministers are inherently subordinates who must never challenge the absolute and supreme power of the emperor. Ever since the Han dynasty, which had the whole country under its control, the Confucianists managed to remain in power only by consciously and unconsciously borrowing and practicing the Legalist philosophy. Although the thesis that the Chinese absolute monarchy was in spirit supported by Confucianism was once popular, the historian Yü Ying-shih (余英時) has brilliantly argued that it was far from the truth. Yü, echoing the Neo-Confucianist Chu Hsi (朱熹), contends that the basic philosophy underlying the system is diluted Legalism, or at best, a mixture of the two philosophies.[22]

After the consolidation of imperial power in the Han dynasty, the well-being of the Chinese people was indeed at the mercy of one man. Despite his untiring study, Pound never perceives the weakness of the system. Neither does he have much admiration for the democratic system which allows the many to take the place of the few in the governing scheme. His own elitism prompts him to an idiosyncratic and self-serving reading of the Confucian philosophy, which, like the sun shining on the silk (顯, *hsien*), has merely augmented the light blurring his vision. Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, he is oddly reconciled with the idea that the fate of the many should rest in the hands of a few. Viewing recent history from this perspective, he actually manages to credit the delay of the Second World War to the personal efforts of Edward VIII ("the three years peace we owe Windsor / '36-'39" – 95:645), and to blame the downfall of Mussolini on the corruption of his ministers. Pound's adulation of the elitist individuals simply asserts them as the deterministic force behind historical changes and progress. Such an idealist assumption appears to be a crude reduction of the "heroism" theory prevalent in the nineteenth century.

Opposing this view of "individual determinism" is the theory of social determinism. Its basic arguments have been summarized by Sidney Hook as such:

> 1. No individual makes history *de novo*. He is limited by his times and culture.... 2. There is a difference between what men, even great men, imagine what they are doing and the objective meaning or signifi-

> cance of what they do.... 3. The world-shattering deed or thought which testifies to the presence of greatness is possible only when the culture is prepared or ripe for it.... 4. The great man is therefore an "expression," "a representative," "a symbol," "an instrument" of historical and social forces on whose currents he rides to renown and victory.[23]

To indulge in the controversy over the key to "the riddle of history" is not our intention here. Hook's summary of an opposing view, besides being a critique, is quoted to demonstrate the reductive nature of the Poundian assertion, which often ends in absurdity. But when a learned man like Pound decides to embrace one single theory as the explanation to all historical process, it cannot be easily dismissed as mere oversight or zealousness. It must be considered as a deliberate act with significant ideological implications. In her study of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt observes that the rewriting and even forgeries of the past are necessary for totalitarian movements, because they require sanction and inspiration for action. The totalitarian elites often tolerate the revisions of history not only for political reasons, but because they are convinced that "traditional historiography was a forgery in any case."[24] Pound is far from branding all traditional historiography as forgeries, but in tailoring his sources to support his political and economic ideas, he exhibits a typical trait of the demagogic mentality.

Despite his emphasis on "individual determinism," Pound is equally obsessed with the economic explanation of history. Repeatedly he warns his reader: "History that omits economics is mere bunk."[25] And he sees the health of the arts as directly linked with the economic base. It is also well-known that he reduces the immense complexity of the infrastructure to the single factor of usury, which he defines broadly as "a charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production" (*SP*, 355). On the surface, Pound's assumption bears some resemblance to the Marxist theory, which also sees economics, with the interplay of class interests, as the key to historical process. However, Pound is extremely critical of Marx and Marxism. Several cantos before his journey into Chinese history, he denounces Marxist theory as a failure:

> . . . Mr Marx, Karl, did not
> foresee this conclusion, you have seen a good deal of
> the evidence, not knowing it evidence, is monumentum
> look about you, look, if you can, at St Peter's
> Look at the Manchester slums, look at Brazilian coffee

or Chilean nitrates. This case is the first case
Si requieres monumentum?
This case is not the last case or the whole case, we ask a
REVISION, we ask for enlightenment in a case
moving concurrent, but this case is the first case:
Bank creates it ex nihil. Creates it to meet a need,
Hic est hyper-usura. Mr. Jefferson met it:
No man hath natural right to exercise profession
of lender. . . .

(46:234)

"Hyper-usura" is the bank creating money and profit out of nothing. Pound argues that there was not much resistance to usury ever since the Church softened its position. "Protestantism," Pound thinks, "may have sprung from nothing but pro-usury politics. And the amazing history of the nineteenth century is summed up in: 'Marx found nothing to criticise in money' " (*SP*, 273). Pound then praised Gesell for studying history with the money question in mind, which allows him to avoid the "nineteenth-century blindness (specifically Marx's)" (*SP*, 274). But surely Pound who takes the pains to study *Das Capital* (*SP*, 307) must know that this is far from the truth. Indeed Marx does not deal with the appearance of money *per se* in the developed capitalist economy, but this is because he insists on treating simple commodity production so as to derive from it the inevitable emergence of money as the general equivalent, as "pure exchange value opposed to all other commodities."[26] One of the crucial differences between Pound's concept and Marx's system is this: the former is only a partial adjustment while the latter is meant to be a total solution. Pound once said that Major Douglas is one who "can resist strictly economic lies, but somewhere comes the moment of inattention" (*SP*, 268). However, Pound's criticism of Marx's ignorance is more than inattention, for economic theory is closely entwined with political allegiance.

Pound also criticizes Marx for forgetting or failing to clarify "the limits of his economics. That is to say, Marxian economics deals with goods for sale, goods in the shop. The minute I cook my own dinner or nail boards together into a chair, I escape from the whole cycle of Marxian economics" (*SP*, 239). But when industrial capitalism has become a mammoth system, with capital as the centralizing force of labor and raw materials, no one is truly capable of returning to the now mythical harmony of agricultural economy, which serves as a contrast in *The Cantos*:

Sun up: work
sundown; to rest
dig well and drink of the water
dig field; eat of the grain
Imperial power is? and to us what is it?
(49:245)

Pound's statement and this passage adapted from a pre-Han song betray a sense of nostalgia; but such yearnings can provide a motivation for commitment and change.

Compared with Marx, Pound's idea of a change in the economic system is not a radical one. He wants to abolish usury, which, in modern times, is practiced mostly by bankers. But this does not mean that he wants to destroy the entire capitalist system. Following Douglas, he believes that the function of the state to lend has been usurped by the banks (*SP,* 211). When this function, along with others, is returned to the state, it can then regulate the "surplus values" by distributing purchase power to the masses through various means (*SP,* 264 and 276-82). And when "the potential production (and possible production) of anything is sufficient to meet everyone's needs, it is the business of the government to see that both production *and* distribution are achieved" (*SP,* 264). This is obviously not unbridled laissez-faire. It is a call for central planning and government control of economy. But both Pound and Douglas are not against a "reasonable" profit and "limited" ownership (*SP,* 298). Pound even accuses Marx for not being able to distinguish property from capital: "property [is] a possession; capital a claim on other men's work, often savagely enforceable" (*SP,* 444). Brief and simplistic as this exposition is, it should be sufficient for us to see that what Pound hopes for is some form of state capitalism. This system is supposed to achieve more economic justice through national welfare programs and outright distribution of buying power (*SP,* 294). Despite Pound's rather untidy presentation, his economic solution, which is a mixture of Douglas' social credit and Gesell's stamp scrip, cannot be dismissed as a crackpot notion. This can be illustrated by the serious confrontation of Gesell's theory by John Maynard Keynes in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936). Keynes observes that "the purpose of [Gesell's *The Natural Economic Order*] may be described as the establishment of an anti-Marxist Socialism, a reaction against *laissez-faire.*" To Pound, however, anti-Marxist attitude is both economic and political. In an early essay on the

American "National Culture," he issues an warning about the "red peril": "I do not see a regeneration of American culture while Marx and Lenin are reprinted at 10 cents and 25 cents in editions of 100,000 and Adams' and Jefferson's thought is kept out of the plain man's reach, and out of my reach considering that for three years I have in vain tried to buy John Adams' letters" (*SP*, 162). Such hostility is to persist throughout his life.

Pound's aversion to Marxism can be partly traced to his elitism. In spite of Mussolini's rise to power through the mass movement, Pound always sees the historical change as something brought about from the top through executive orders. Theoretically the economic interpretation of history is contradictory to the concept of patriarchal rule by the virtuous few. But the conflict does not bother Pound. He resolves the dilemma in one stroke by introducing the idea of "directio voluntatis." "No economic system," he argues, "is worth a hoot without 'good will.' " An economic system can only function when "people are prepared to act on their understanding" (*SP*, 238). In this way he reaffirms the individual as the deterministic force of historical process. From his many activities in the thirties we clearly see this idea in action. In his 1933 interview with Mussolini, he tried to advise him on economic matters. After that, he began his personal campaign by writing to people in the position to act. He wrote to Franklin D. Roosevelt, attempting to remind him of "the nature of money." He also wrote to one of his economic aides, telling him not to be "ignorant of Douglas, and ras moneta (stamp scrip)." He wrote incessantly and his letters showered on premiers, ministers, senators, congressmen, bankers, and editors.[27]

His vigorous campaign, however, did not bring about any change. Moving toward the end of the thirties, the economic crisis lingered on, and there was no sign of relief in sight. Only in the "Corporate State of Italy" (*SP*, 445) could he see a just system enforced by will (*SP*, 312). To him, the present was indeed the inferno. More and more he looked into the past, especially the Chinese past, for order and the source of order. Apparently his views had not changed much, otherwise he would not try to "hammer through" the message of *Shu ching* and subsequently, *The Sacred Edict*. His idea of the historical process in the modern times is clearly not an optimistic one. It keenly displays the "sense of an ending" and is permeated with what Frank Kermode describes as the "eschatological anxiety."[28] Such a vision of history sees the present forever moving toward the final chaos and total destruction of all values. Kermode is correct in placing

Pound among the group of modern writers who harbor a "crisis psychology" and fear the violent ending. "Crisis," Kermode points out, "is a way of thinking about one's moment, and not inherent in the moment itself."[29] Pound's crisis mentality, in other words, reveals more about his own mode of thinking than the reality of the historical moment.

A characteristic of those who see themselves enmeshed in a time of crisis is the association of apocalypse with war. For Yeats, another poet with eschatological anxiety, "the danger is that there will be no war. . . . Love war because of its horror, that belief may be changed, civilization renewed."[30] Though less vocal than Pound, Yeats was also an ardent supporter of Mussolini and Italian fascism, and had been involved marginally with an Irish fascist group.[31] Like Pound, Yeats believed that "thought is nothing without action." The idea that through the apocalypse a new civilization may arise like a phoenix is, oddly enough, an assumption never taken seriously by Pound. Unlike Yeats, he never welcomes the "Savage God," least of all to pray for it (Yeats: "Send war in our time, O Lord"). He hates the so-called "usurers" precisely because they continuously demand and cause the outbreaks of war to serve their exploitative purpose. But to Yeats, war is a means for the realization of his apocalyptic vision of history. The Yeatsian apocalypse, as well as the Christian one, presupposes a drastic change to something new and positive. After the *Pisan Cantos,* Pound no longer cherishes an active hope for a postive change. His "individual determinism" of the historical process does not allow him to envision a change and a new beginning. The death of Mussolini signifies the demise of the "enlightened elite" who can "make it new." For a while Pound thought that "the poet Mao possessed *ling,* but before long Mao's men were harassing Confucians"; and sharing Senator Joseph McCarthy's view, he believed that "in the State Department. . . the winning side had persuasive American spokesmen."[33] All is lost and one can only lament: "*le personnel manque* we have not men for the times" (62:344).

Without the instrumentality of the virtuous leader, change is not possible. The only thing left to be done is to keep the fire burning through the study of history, so that the message will not be entirely lost:

To know the histories
書 to know good from evil
And know whom to trust. 經 (89:590)

The Chinese ideograms stand for *Shu ching;* but the idea must not be taken literally, for Poundian history includes far more than the Chinese history. History now becomes his only comfort in this moment of an ending. Parallels and analogies are employed to reveal the eternal truth and permanent values. In so doing, there seems to be a residual hope that they might be picked up and put back into action some day. His idea of revolution is not unlike that of the "eternal return," a mythic process of cyclical rejuvenation but not fundamental change. Indeed, throughout the *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones* he can still occasionally evoke the motto "Make it New," indicating that his spirit may not be completely crushed:

"per l'ignoto"
and the soul's job? (Ocellus)
"Renew"
as on the T'ang tub:
Renew
jih 日
hsin
renew 新
Plus the luminous eye
見 chien[4]
(93:629)

The name of Ocellus means "little eyes," and elsewhere he is credited with this dictum: "but our job to build light" (98:684). Here the Ocellus' light of the divine and the intellect is linked with T'ang's *ling* through the ideogram *chien.* The Fenollosa reading sees it as an eye carried by running legs. So the vision of the "luminous eye" must be carried into the realm of action before change can occur.

The message is certainly not new; it is prevalent in Pound's writings of the thirties. In an essay written in 1933, he stated explicitly that "the poem is not a dualism of past against present." Eventually the poem would "establish an hierarchy of values, not simply: past is good, present is bad, which I certainly do not believe and never have believed."[34] It is true that in his prose of the same period he frequentiy attacked the dualistic mode of thinking which lacks a "sense of gradations."[35] When the first thirty cantos were published in 1930, the dichotomy of the golden past versus the

infernal present might not be obvious. But when the poem evolved for four more decades, the opposition between past and present has become most explicit. The "hierarchy of values" is tipped heavily toward the past, effacing all the gradations. The entire poem, as it stands now, does not even produce a balanced dualistic pattern, not to mention "a scale of values" or "grades of evil."[36] Pound's original scheme has apparently collapsed. Only in the *Pisan Cantos* are we given a glimpse of a more balanced juxtaposition of the past and present. G. S. Fraser once described Pound's "deepest mood" as that "of the Jeffersonian American radical," full of "simplicity and hopefulness."[37] This could only be true of the pre-Pisan Pound. Then, though the present was hellish, the future did not seem entirely irredeemable. In the sections following the *Pisan Cantos,* the gulf between the two poles becomes even wider. The sense of an ending lingers on, but the present is almost completely annulled by the total immersion into and glorification of the past. History finally becomes his only reality.

Histroy, according to Leopold von Ranke, should always be written as how it really was. But this is often easier said than done. "The temptation," Bernard Lewis thinks, "is often overwhelmingly strong to tell it, not as it really was, but as we would wish it to have been."[38] In classical Chinese historiography, the most prominent example of writing history as it should have been is the *Ch'un ch'iu*(春秋 , *The Spring and Autumn Annals.*) After years of unsuccessful pursuit to put his ideas into action, Confucius, in his old age, returned to his native state and devoted himself to teaching and writing. *Ch'un ch'iu* was one of the products of this period, when anarchy and chaos seemed to be the norm of the day, and hope for change was relegated to the future. The work itself offers only the bare chronology, without any explanation of circumstances. A subjective critique, however, can be detected through the choice of words in describing the historical events. This is done at the expense of recording objectively and accurately. The most obvious revision is the refusal on the historian's part to acknowledge the more superior titles usurped by the feudal princes; instead they are known throughout the work by the titles originally conferred by the King of the Chou dynasty. The more subtle revisions are done through the manipulation of the connotations and suggestive meanings of the words. For instance, a prime minister who failed to protect his sovereign or deliberately allowed him to be killed would be held as the chief culprit, though he did not take part in the crime. The transitive verb *shih* (弒),

suggesting the murder of a superior, would then be used. Cases of outright distortion also exist. When the powerless King of Chou was threatened by a duke into attending a certain conference, the *Ch'un ch'iu* would only record the incident as a royal hunting trip. Compiling a historical chronology in this style, Confucius intended to convey his judgement on the past. Such a revisionist history also served the purpose of opposing and reminding the usurpers and rebels that their actions would not pass unjudged by the society. At the same time, Confucius' vision of the proper or ideal order was subtly suggested.

As I have mentioned earlier, Pound is also capable of distortion and selective inclusion of historical facts. But while distortion is quite inexcusable, selective inclusion or emphasis is a more thorny issue. It is possible, as Carl L. Becker points out, for different historians to come up with various numbers of affirmations about a certain event. These affirmations can all be true, all denoting the same event, but containing different degrees of factual information of the total event. It is, however, impossible for the historian to make affirmations encompassing all of the facts – "all of the acts, thoughts, emotions of all the persons who contributed to the actual event in its entirety." Hence there has to be choices, and certain affirmations will be made and related in a certain way; in the process certain other affirmations and other ways of relating them will be dropped. The choice of one historian will then be different from another, while both can claim to be presenting a "true" affirmation. The motivation behind the choice of one affirmation from all the others, according to Becker, is often the purpose the historian has in his mind. It is this purpose which determines the precise meaning to be derived from the event. "The event itself, the facts, do not say anything, do not impose any meaning. It is the historian who speaks, who imposes a meaning."[39]

In blaming the Taoists and the Buddhists for the downfall of Sung, or in maintaining that Dante's God is not exactly the same as the one worshipped in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Pound is practicing selective inclusion or emphasis. The same is true of Confucius when he chose to represent the feudal lords by their original titles. Still, such affirmations contain a certain amount of truth or accuracy, and cannot be completely disclaimed. However, to record a surrender to threat as a hunting trip is to indulge falsehood and palliation. In Pound's case, confusion and distortions arise when analogies and parallels are made without any regard to the

context, as in the case of Y Yin or Mussolini. Both Confucius and Pound are apparently more interested in how history should have been than it really was. Some modern scholars of Confucius are critical of this. Charging Kung for the lack of reverence of truth in history, James Legge sternly reproaches the concealment and misrepresentation of facts.[40] Hu Shih (胡適) also notes that the propositions in *Ch'un ch'iu* often turn out to be "judgements."[41] But if the purpose of the work, as the traditional "Kung Yang Commentary" (公羊傳) says, is "to reform the corrupt age and restore it to rightness," it then should not be read for its historical truth, but for the vision – the political, ethical, and moral ideals – articulated through the manipulation of language and facts. The same principle must also be applied to Pound. The Poundian revision of history, though reprehensible in the eyes of the Western historians, is in essence true to the Confucian tradition. Ironically, what turns both Pound and Confucius to the rewriting of history is precisely the historical forces of their own time. Had their respective visions been successfully realized, they would not have had to engage in such revisionist enterprises. In the end, Pound's revision of Chinese and Western history, though he fervently believed it to be final and truthful, is no more than a myth, not very different from Yeats' visionary schemes. The only function of this mythic history now seems no more than a reminder of the creator's dilemma and frustration, a clinical signature of his age. The sense of commitment, however, remains as probably the most admirable quality of the history cantos.

When Pound first began to present his version of history, he meant it to serve a far more immediate, didactic, and practical need. Two of the main purposes of remembering the past, as most historians tell us, are (1) "to explain and perhaps to justify the present"; and (2) "to predict and even to control the future."[42] These two purposes can also be found in Poundian history. Undoubtedly he has every reason to discover the causes of the modern chaos. His economic and political views, which are in conflict with those embraced by the liberal-bourgeois governments, demand his own presentation of the salient facts. Such a presentation justifies his allegiance and beliefs. When he was writing the Chinese History Cantos in the thirties, the long narrative of the Chinese past, which is detailed and sequential, was supposed to prove this thesis: "For 2,500 years, whenever there has

been order in China or in any part of China, you can look for a Confucian at the root of it."[43] Besides justifying his theory, the Chinese past was very much in tune with the momentary success of Il Duce. The future was then seemingly controllable. When the future eventually turned out to be another hideous present, the *Rock-Drill,* though continuing the theme of "one man," followed the ideogrammic mode of the *Pisan Cantos.* Defeated and confined, there was no longer the need for him to proselytize clearly and explain detailedly. The "hammering through" of the past was for the selected few and the distant future; the disparate juxtaposition of the ideogrammic method helped to suggest the notion of cyclical return. It was quite clear that the immediate future was entirely out of control. But in citing the Duke of Chou's attempt to legitimize the new dynasty, Pound was also subtly legitimizing his own authority. Like the Duke, who attached the new regime to the initial righteousness of the previous dynasty, Pound's concepts could claim validity from the Chinese past. In so doing, he appeared to argue that the failure of an idea in practice at one particular juncture did not necessarily mean that it was theoretically incorrect. This was in the early fifties. More than a decade later, he did not seem so sure, but neither would he unreservedly admit his error. In a confessional mood he wrote:

> Many errors,
> a little rightness,
> to excuse his hell
> and my paradiso.
> And as to why they go wrong,
> thinking of rightness
> And as to who will copy this palimpsest?
> . . . . . .
> To confess wrong without losing rightness:
> Charity I have had sometimes,
> I cannot make it flow thru.
> (116:797)

The narratives of both the Chinese History and the Adams Cantos are continuous and linear. In both sequences Pound is more interested in the continuity, rather than the ruptures, of order. Instead of comparisons with Western figures, the Chinese emperors or ministers are shown to be similar to each other. By parading their achievements or failures one after

another, the analogy is implicitly made in a temporal way within the history of one country, without any disruption of the narrative line. The Chinese and American histories are then two diachronic continuities paralleling each other. Both have their own unity, contours, and contexts. But the ideogrammic analogies of the *Rock-Drill* allow neither context nor narrative continuity. All of a sudden, the diachronic mode of the earlier history cantos is replaced by the synchronic. Temporality of one particular historical process no longer interests Pound. The ideogrammic mode, which is only occasional and restrained in the pre-Pisan works, finally becomes dominant. Chinese and Occidental histories are mashed into a synchronic whole, pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to be related to each other. The meaning of history is now to be found not in the diachronic process, but in the relations between the constant elements. The job waiting to be done is to make the right connections from that synchronic totality.

The historical figures in this synchronic past often function as emblems. By this I mean that these personages, and sometimes mots and mottos, are representations of certain didactic meanings. They may be historically real, but in the poetry, their historicity tends to be shadowed by the meanings assigned to them. Besides lending them a certain credence, their historicity is merely the clue to that meaning beyond. In the late Pound, as Hugh Kenner points out, "the visible is a signature of the invisible," the natural world is related with that of the divine.[44] One can simply cite the opening ideogram *ling* to support this view. What eludes Kenner, however, is the fact that before *Rock-Drill* never has history functioned so distinctly and systematically as emblem. But to anyone familiar with the early Pound, the argument that he intends to deduce a noumenal meaning from historical phenomenon may seem dubious and contradictory.

The contradiction arises from Pound's early anti-Symbolist stance. In the Vorticist manifesto, he states that "Imagisme is not symbolism. The symbolists dealt in 'association,' that is, in a sort of allusion, almost of allegory. . . . One can be grossly 'symbolic,' for example, by using the term 'cross' to mean 'trial.' The symbolist's symbols have a fixed value, like numbers in arithmatic."[45] To the early Pound, the meaning of the phenomenon itself is sufficient, for an image is not an ornament, it is "itself the speech."[46] The poet's duty is simply to render the image as it has been perceived. Ironically he also issues this warning: "The author must use his *image* because he sees it or feels it, *not* because he thinks he can use it to

back up some creed or some system of ethics or economics."[47] Apparently the late Pound has totally abandoned his early beliefs. In the admonition of what he considers as the degeneration of the French symbolist technique, Pound provides another definition to symbolism. This can perhaps be seen as a prognostication of his subsequent development:

> I said in the preface to my *Guido Cavalcanti* that I believed in an absolute rhythm. I believe that every emotion and every phase of emotion has some toneless phrase, some rhythm-phrase to express it.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> To hold a like belief in a sort of permenent metaphor is, as I understand it, "symbolism" in its profounder sense. It is not necessarily a belief in a permanent world, but it is a belief in that direction.[48]

In *The Cantos,* the belief in some kind of a "permanent world" is only implicit at the beginning. It is substantially revealed in the Pisan sequence, and the appearance of *Rock-Drill* reaffirms it. By manipulating history in the emblematic mode, he is able to erect a metaphor of everlasting values. By alluding to some "fixed meanings" represented by historical counters, Pound must be considered at least as a limited symbolist. His only difference may be that his meaning seldom veers into the metaphysical and his focus is constantly on the concreteness of the materials.

Since the *Pisan Cantos* a concrete historical fact usaully assumes two meanings: a surface one and another that transcends its particularity. To Pound, any historical phenomenon can be potentially emblematic. The meaning of that phenomenon has only to be released in the poetry and read correctly. The mechanism to release the fact's emblematic significance is the juxtapositon or the way it is placed by the poet and then perceived by the reader. One example of this is Y Yin's confinement of the young king for "contemplatio." By itself it has a surface meaning as an unprecedented historical event. On the other hand, the reader knows from the beginning of the *Rock-Drill* that Y Yin is the embodiment of *ling.* Conjoining Y Yin's action with Richard of St. Victor's dictum, this unique incident is emblematic of not only the divine intellectus, but also of the permanent value of self-reflection or self-discipline. The interpretation of this incident's emblematic meaning is, of course, Poundian, quite oblivious to the real basis of comparison. In the Chinese History Cantos, the time-bound and contextual facts furnish more details to the portraits of the rulers. For

instance, the description of Wang An-shih (王安石), a Sung reformer, roughly takes up a page and a half (55:296-97). In this case, one historical fact among a dozen still has a surface meaning, but the emblematic one is less obvious, because the context and the temporality delimit the fact and retain a certain particularity. This means that for readers keenly in search of Poundian emblematic meanings, the successful decoding of one atemporal, ideogrammic passage sometimes may be more rewarding.

Although one is tempted to systemize Pound's method into a theory of multiple meanings resembling Dante's four-fold scheme, Pound's practice is simply not consistent enough to support such an elaborate construction. One can only point out that while the emblematic meaning may not be easy to determine in the earlier history cantos, in a complex passage of the later works it may be multi-leveled; and one fact may become mutually refractive with other facts. One example is the triple significations of the ideogram *chih* ("desisting usury"; "stillness"; and "a gnomon"). Had Pound been able to maintain some kind of balance between the particular and the general, he might be more successful in revealing the emblematic meanings of permanence from the particularity of historical events. But when Pound focuses too narrowly on the particular at the expense of a larger context, or sometimes fails to accentuate certain particularities, the historical fact or figure merely becomes a free-floating symbol which can only be decoded with difficulty, and often with uncertainty. *The Cantos* is a poetic evolution in search of a median way to articulate diverse and complex thoughts, and nowhere in the poem is the vicissitude of this quest more obvious than in Pound's use of Chinese history.

Notes

1. "Ezra Pound (from an interview with Donald Hall, *Paris Review*, No. 28, 1962)," in *Ezra Pound*, ed. J.P. Sullivan (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p. 278.
2. Ezra Pound, *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 167. Hereafter this title will be abbreviated as *SP*.
3. Ibid., p. 279.
4. Bernard Lewis, *History — Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1975), chapter 2.
5. See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Volume III, The Shoo King* (1865; Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 1960), chapter II of the Prolegomena.
6. The Sung legacy, as John W. Haeger, a Sung specialist, has said, is a "bittersweet"

one. Scholars devoted to the Sung period are especially intrigued by its "uneasy combination of political failure with cultural effervescence." Most scholars trying to explain the Sung weakness have concentrated on the institution of government: "the personality of the emperors, the power of the ministers, the size and organization of the armies, and on the structural problems of society and economy which had implications for the mobilization of resources." The dynasty, however, managed to survive for slightly more than three centuries. Clearly then its final collapse is a matter far more complicated than Pound would have us believe. Although John Haeger's essay, "1126-27: Political Crisis and the Integrity of Culture," does not deal with the collapse of the Southern Sung, it offers us a glimpse of the problems and internalized crises inherited by that government. The article can be found in *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China,* ed. John W. Haeger (Tucson: Arizona Univ. Press, 1975).

7. *The Spirit of Romance* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 8.
8. Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 205.
9. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971), pp. 14-15. For the Chinese ideograms and parts of the original sources, the English reader can consult Thomas Grieve's "Annotations to the Chinese in *Section: Rock-Drill," Paideuma,* 4 (1975). But the reader must be very careful with the ideogrammic explications, as not every component of one ideogram may find its way into the poetry.
10. *Shu ching,* Book XIV, Paragraphs 5-10.
11. See *Mencius,* Book V, Part II, Chapter I.
12. See Maurus Hao Feng (方豪), *Chung-hsi chiao-t'ung shih* (中西交通史, *History of the Interrelation between Chinese and the Western World)* (Taipei: Chung-hua, 1953), IV, 1-13.
13. (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 77.
14. D. James Neault, "Richard of St. Victor and *Rock-Drill," Paideuma,* 3 (1974), 224.
15. See *Shu ching,* Book V, Parts i and ii. Cf. *Mencius,* Book V, Part I, Chapter VI.
16. "Historical Analogy: The Railroad and the Space Program and Their Impact on Society," in *The Railroad and the Space Program: An Exploration in Historical Analogy,* ed. Bruce Mazlish (Camb., Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965), p. 11.
17. In his explanation of the concept, Spengler only uses analogical examples from biological science: "The lungs of terrestrial, and the swim bladders of aquatic animals are homologous, while lungs and gills on the other hand are analogous, that is, similar in point of use." For a very quick glance of his method and argument, see his *The Decline of the West* (1918), tr. Charles F. Atkinson (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928), I, chapter VI.
18. Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays,* ed. T. S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 16.
19. Ibid.
20. *Shu ching,* Book XXX, Paragraph 5.

21. *Shu ching*, Book XXIII, Paragraph 5 and Book XXIV, Paragraph 8.
22. See Yü Ying-shih (余英時), *Li-shih yü ssu-hsiang* (歷史與思想, *History and Thoughts*) (Taipei: Liencheng, 1976).
23. Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), pp. 65-66.
24. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), pp. 30-31. The most notorious invention of history in modern times is perhaps the so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which was subsequently used by the Nazis to serve thier genocidal purpose. See Lewis, pp. 63-64; Arendt, 56-58; and Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: the Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Eyre, 1967).
25. *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 259.
26. See Suzanne De Brunhoff, *Marx on Money*, tr. Maurice Goldbloom (New York: Urizen, 1976).
27. C. David Heymann, *Ezra Pound: The Last Rower* (New York: Viking, 1976), pp. 58-60.
28. Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending; Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 95.
29. Ibid., p. 101.
30. Quoted by Kermode, p. 98.
31. Richard Ellmann, *Yeats — the Man and the Masks* (New York: Dutton, 1948), pp. 244 and 276.
32. Quoted by Ellmann, p. 245.
33. *The Pound Era*, p. 15.
34. Pound, "Mr. Ezra Pound's 'Cantos,' " *New English Weekly*, 3 (May 11, 1933), 96.
35. *Guide to Kulchur*, p. 196.
36. Ibid.
37. G. S. Fraser, *Ezra Pound* (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 68.
38. Lewis, p. 71.
39. Carl L. Becker, "What Are Historical Facts?"in *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*, ed. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Doubleday, 1959), pp. 130-31.
40. Prolegomena to *The Chinese Classics, Volume V, The Ch'un Ts'ew*, pp. 38-51. Despite his brilliance, Legge somehow failed to perceive the purpose of the work. He did not see "the slightest indication of judicial opinion on the part of the writer" or "anything in the language to convey to us the shadow of an idea of the author's feeling." He even felt that the work was too slight and unworthy of Confucius.
41. Hu, *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* (New York: Paragon, 1963), p. 52.
42 Lewis, pp. 55-56.
43. *Jefferson and/or Mussolini* (1935; New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 113.
44. Kenner, *Gnomon* (New York: McDowell, 1958), p. 258.
45. *Gaudier-Brzeska* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 84.
46. Ibid., p. 88.
47. Ibid., p. 86.
48. Ibid., p. 84.