Ezra Pound and the Invention of China

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Ever since the publication of *Cathay* in 1915—a collection of Chinese poems rendered into English from the word-for-word cribs left by Ernest Fenollosa – the image of China has occupied a place of some prominence in Pound's writings. The urgency of Pound's interest in China led him to declare to his publisher-friend John Quinn in 1917, "China's fundamental . . . [It] is solid. One can't go back of the 'Exile's Letter' or the 'Song of the Bowmen' or the 'North Gate'."[1] Perhaps there was more enthusiasm than deliberation in such a remark, but it shows the excitement of a sense of new direction or a new consolidation. Pound's contemporaries felt likewise, apparently. They spoke of the *Cathay* poems as adding "a new breath" to the literary atmosphere and as "like a door in a wall, opening upon a landscape made real by the intensity of human emotions." The volume was recognized as "the most significant work Pound has done," introducing new shapes and fresh fields into his own work.[2] These new shapes came about, in the words of novelist May Sinclair, as a result of Pound's "discovery of the literature of China," a discovery that "has made for the more perfect realization of Pound's ideal, the finding of his self."[3] May Sinclair's view was later to be echoed by Eliot when he referred to Pound as "the inventor of Chinese poetry" who succeeded in creating "new translucencies."[4] More recently, Hugh Kenner, in discussing Pound's use of language in his poetry, maintained that Pound invented "a new kind of English poem" through his "invention of China."[5] But what is the nature of the "China" that Pound has invented that marks an important stage in the development of his poetry and that is said to have introduced a fresh new note to modern English poetry? It is surprising that despite the proliferation of critical comments on Pound and his work, this question has not been answered in any detail, except in terms of Pound's technical and stylistic development. I believe

that the *Cathay* poems, besides being a stage in the technical development of Pound's poetry, also constitute an important chapter in the development of Pound's poetic sensibility.

Pound's subsequent studies of Chinese culture led him to produce translations of the *Great Learning* (大學, published as *Ta Hio* in 1928), the *Chung Yung* (中庸, which was published together with a retranslation of the *Ta Hio* as *Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot and the Great Digest* in 1947), the *Analects* (論語, 1951), the *Shi Ching* (詩經, published as *The Classic Anthology defined by Confucius* in 1954) and fragments from Mencius, the Five Classics and miscellaneous poems which were incorporated into the *Cantos*. But it is the *Cathay* poems that constitute a turning point in Pound's development, a new integration not only of style as so succintly argued in Yip Wai-lim's (葉維廉) *Ezra Pound's Cathay*,[6] but also of sensibility and experience.

From the beginning, Pound's poetry sought to relate two seemingly disparate worlds – one, a world of irritating contemporary realities confronted by a vibrant vitality (the artist's) anxious to do battle; the other, a world of aesthetic and mystic visions that seemed to transcend time and its wars altogether. In the early years of the century, Pound thought that the Provençal troubadours had unified similar worlds in a way he could imitate. In two essays entitled "Troubadours – their Sorts and Conditions," and "Psychology and the Troubadours," he argued that their age was like his, full of boredoms and pressures, and insisted that their "involved forms" and most esoteric flights into mystic visions had their origin in "the living conditions of Provence" and in passionate physical attractions.[7]

In his translations or adaptations of Provencal poetry, it is doubtful if Pound was successful in his aims. "Cino"[8] is a typical example in this sense. Cino, as the poem relates, is a troubadour, wandering in exile from his native city, reflecting cynically about the high-born ladies who used to enjoy his verses and praises but did not take him seriously as a lover. He will forget these worthless creatures and sing of the sun and clouds, but the thoughts keep creeping back. Finally, he concludes that the ladies are only material for his songs, an experience leading to some higher sensations.

Poems like "Cino," "Pierre Vidal Old" and "Marvoil" dramatize an important concern for Pound. In their broken way, they state a sort of romantic mysticism, a flight into the sacred with an acceptance and affirmation of man's place in the natural cycle of birth and death as a base. But

the sense one seems to get from these poems is that the earthly objects (such as Cino's ladies) are seen only as material for the higher moments of experience and are better forgotten otherwise.

In poems that are more overtly social in subject matter, Pound was also unable to find a unity after the fashion he thought he saw in the troubadours. He found as late as 1913 that when he spoke of physical passion, he was accused of (or praised for) mere animality:

> And now you hear what is said to us:
> We are compared to that sort of person
> Who wanders about announcing his sex
> As if he had just discovered it.
>
> "The Condolence," *P*, 91

It is understandable that Pound did not have much luck with an audience who felt squeamish at reading a reference to "Mother's buttocks" in one of Edward Thomas's poems (when the term actually refers to a tree). But Pound was also to blame in part. As "Cino" shows, Pound has not found a way to offer a transcending vision of life that is mired in the petty realities of life. When he touches on contemporary events and issues, he is pithy and to the point, but the tone is usually strident or defiant or cynical or expresses a frustration that he shrugs off with a humorous patronizing gesture:

> As a bathtub lined with white porcelain,
> When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
> So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
> O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.
>
> "The Bath Tub," *P*, 109

In the finer lyric pieces, such as "The Spring," "Ione, Dead the Long Year," "Gentildonna," "Dance Figure" or "Provincia Deserta," Pound expresses a genuine sense of loss, of being exiled from beauty, a sense of a solitary on a voyage seeking to recover the impulse of creative vitality, the beauty of life. In these poems, a human figure, a girl or a woman, has departed from the scene, yet still, in a sense, inhabits it, as a lingering presence – a trace, a memory or an aroma. But to experience the presence

or the loss seems invariably to take the poet *out* of quotidian life. Pound implies as much in a note attached to the poem "La Fraise" in *A Lume Spento:*

> Also has Mr Yeats in his "Celtic Twilight" treated of such, and I because in such a mood, feeling myself divided between myself corporal and a self aetherial, "a dweller by streams and in woodland," eternal because simple in elements . . . Being freed of the weight of a soul "capable of salvation or damnation" . . . leaving me thus *simplex naturae,* even so at peace and trans-sentient as a wood pool I made it.[9]

With the Pound of these poems, discovering whatever reality there is in oneself requires breaking through the trivial surface personality that is structured to deal with transcience and trivia. The various "forms" of life are viewed as negative coverings from which the self has to be liberated to be receptive to the exertion of poetic energy:

> For I was a gaunt, grave councillor
> Being in all things wise, and very old,
> But I have put aside this folly and the cold
> That old age weareth for a cloak.
>
> I was quite strong – at least they said so –
> The young men at the sword-play;
> But I have put aside this folly, being gay
> In another fashion that more suiteth me.
>
> I have curled 'mid the boles of the ash wood,
> I have hidden my face where the oak
> Spread his leaves over me, and the yoke
> Of the old ways of men have I cast aside.
>
> By the still pool of Mar-nan-otha
> Have I found me a bride
> That was a dog-wood tree some syne.
> She hath called me from mine old ways
> She hath hushed my rancour of council,
> Bidding me praise
>
> Naught but the wind that flutters in the leaves.

She hath drawn me from mine old ways,
Till men say that I am mad;
But I have seen the sorrow of men, and am glad,
For I know that the wailing and bitterness are a folly.[10]

Thus, the poet escapes from his normal self and the world to which that self is naturally attached in order to win moments of insight into a special realm, a realm of "other levels of experience" that Pound has described as "mythic moments," moments of "delightful psychic experience."[11] For all his art, this concentration on the visionary at the expense of the everyday has an effect on Pound's poetry which is best described by Charles Olson, Pound's friend and admirer, and recorded by Catherine Seelye in her book, *Charles Olson & Ezra Pound: An Encounter at St. Elizabeths:*

> His power is a funny thing. There is no question he's got the jump – his wit, the speed of his language, the grab of it, the intimidation of his skilfully-wrought career. But . . . he does not seem – and this is a crazy thing to say in the face of his beautiful verse, to appear ungrateful for it – but I say it, he does not seem to have inhabited his own experience. . . . The impression persists, that the only life he had lived is, in fact, the literary, . . . for the verbal brilliance, delightful as it is, leaves the roots dry. One has a strong feeling, coming away from him, of a lack of the amorous, down there somewhere. . . .

A few lines later, Olson defines "amorous" as meaning a lack of "fire" as against possessing only "light":

> Maybe fire is the opposite principle to light, and comes to the use of those who do not go the way of light. Fire has to consume to give off its light. But light gets its knowledge – and has its intelligence and its being – by going over things without the necessity of eating the substance of things in the process of purchasing its truth.[12]

In the period between 1913 and 1915, when Pound was engaged in the task of translating the *Cathay* poems, the "light" seemed to have struck "fire." The fact that the subject is "given" may have something to do with it. And yet, out of the many possibilities left by Fenollosa, Pound chose less than twenty to translate. So the truth perhaps lies somewhere in

between, that in the raw material provided by Fenollosa, Pound saw the possibility, or the possibility presented itself for him, to create or recreate a poetry that can integrate the high and the low, the ordinary and the transcendent.

Like the early poems, the *Cathay* poems are infused with a sense of loss, of desolation and loneliness, but on a wider scale. Reading these poems, one has the impression of vast distances and the partings and exiles that distances entail; an empire so huge that its defenders and functionaries cannot know its purposes, and perhaps these purposes are absurd anyway; distances also in time and history, so great that human glory cannot hope to outlast them. The social scope covered is equally impressive: war and peace, the high-born and the low-born, the intellectual and the domestic, the soldier and the poet, wife, husband, lover, friend. What sets these poems apart, however, is an achieved sense of harmony, of unity sought and found – the unity that integrates the contemporary reality with the self, the quotidian with the eternal moment. The contemporaries of Pound who welcomed these poems must have felt their relevance to their time. Hugh Kenner implies as much when he describes these poems as Pound's "war poems."[13] But if they are war poems, they are certainly unlike any other war poems, without their note of anger, hate or cataclysm. The essential problem they seem to engage with clear freshness is that of coming to terms with things as they are, both in the outer world and in the inner world.

A quality of Chinese poetry that appeals to Pound strongly is the absence of "moralizing," "comment," and "abstraction,"[14] the absence of what Arthur Waley in his study on Po Chu-i (白居易) describes as "close reasoning." Instead, we find "a power of candid reflection. . .which has not been rivalled in the West."[15] While the qualifying phrase is debatable, it is clear that although the emphasis in the *Cathay* poems is on self-completion and self-direction as in Pound's earlier poems, there are implicit concepts of completion and of full development that are not found in Pound's other poems. Like these other poems, the *Cathay* poems involve the subjective, but they do not convey the sense of being "abandoned" which seems to be the prevailing ethos in modern literature and is so strong an element in Pound's poetry. There is less sense of the "anguish" of being without God. There is resignation, but not despair. Far from feeling that man cannot find anything to depend upon either inside or outside himself, the Chinese attitude to life, as conveyed in these poems, is that inner strength can be

found which triumphs over the bitterest of circumstances. Values may be established in a civilization by which individual suffering and weakness can be relieved, by a sense of their being placed in a larger perspective of human existence – set among the indifference of the natural world, and swallowed as the inevitable price of being alive:

The Dai horse neighs against the bleak wind of Etsu,
The birds of Etsu have no love for En, in the north,
Emotion is born out of habit.
Yesterday we went out of the Wild-Goose gate,
To-day from the Dragon-Pen.
Surprised. Desert turmoil. Sea sun.
Flying snow bewilders the barbarian heaven.
Lice swarm like ants over our accoutrements.
Mind and spirit drive on the feathery banners.
Hard fight gets no reward.
Loyalty is hard to explain.
Who will be sorry for General Rishogu,
the swift moving,
Whose white head is lost for this province?

"South-Folk in Cold Country," *P*, 149

If this is one of Pound's "war poems," its placing of human destructiveness in time and as an aspect of the Universe is very subtle, and contributes by its compassion to the reader's realization of a bond of common humanity.

There is a human-heartedness in such poetry that leads to a transcendence of envy and hate towards a kind of gratitude – gratitude for having existed, for having had the experience of being alive and human:

Light rain is on the light dust
The willows of the inn-yard
Will be going greener and greener,
But you, Sir, had better take wine ere your departure,
For you will have no friends about you
When you come to the gates of Go.

"Four Poems of Departure," *P*, 147

Here there is gratitude for the little that life offers, a recognition at the same time that to be "human-hearted" is to suffer inevitably the painfulness

of real feeling. There is thus a courage, even in the acceptance of the enjoyment of a tender relationship: the undramatized, unidealised feelings of ordinary domestic experience come freshly in a poem like "The River-Merchant's Wife" as the significant stuff of existence:

> While my hair was still cut straight across my fore-head
> I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
> You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
> You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
> And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
> Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
>
> At fourteen I married My Lord you.
> I never laughed, being bashful.
> Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
> Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.
>
> (*P*, 140)

The poetry conveys a sense of gratitude, a creative delight in experience, in the small moments of life.

One of the greatest values of the poetry in *Cathay* is that it can express the human need for relationship, and the ways in which the sense of identity is bound up with love. It is true that we do not find in the *Cathay* poems, or in Chinese poetry in general, an idealization of love or woman at all comparable to the reckless passion of Romeo and Juliet, the frustration of Tristan and Isolde or the bitterness of Troilus and Cressida. What we do find, however, is a strong enough recognition that "the goal of the libido is the object" – the maxim of one psycho-analytical writer, W.R.D. Fairbairn.[16] Where fate, circumstance or faithlessness deprive an individual of their loved object, life seems to lose its meaning:

> The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,
> It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,
> And I let down the crystal curtain
> And watch the moon through the clear autumn.
>
> "The Jewel Stairs Grievance," *P*, 142

The absence is absence of the object which confirms the integration of the

subject, not of mere bodily satisfaction.

Years later, looking back on his career, Pound is to lament

> Charity I have had sometimes,
> I cannot make it flow thru.
>
> Canto CXVI

In the *Cathay* poems, this charity does seem to flow through. So much pining and longing is there in these poems, but the relational need is emotionally central. Thus in a poem that expresses a sense of isolation almost absolute, so that "The rain-beaten estrangement of the poet . . . is absorbed into a cosmic estrangement, all nature suffused with dumb longing,"[17] man yet can express his relational need and knows its value –

I

The clouds have gathered, and gathered,
  and the rain falls and falls,
The eight ply of the heavens
  are all folded into one darkness,
And the wide, flat road stretches out.
I stop in my room toward the East, quiet, quiet,
I pat my new cask of wine.
My friends are estranged, or far distant,
I bow my head and stand still.

II

Rain, rain, and the clouds have gathered,
The eight ply of the heavens are darkness,
The flat land is turned into river,
  'Wine, wine, here is wine!'
I drink by my eastern window.
I think of talking and man,
And no boat, no carriage, approaches.

III

The trees in my east-looking garden
  are bursting out with new twigs,
They try to stir new affection,

And men say the sun and moon keep on moving
because they can't find a soft seat.
The birds flutter to rest in my tree,
and I think I have heard them saying,
'It is not that there are no other men
But we like this fellow the best,
But however we long to speak
He can not know of our sorrow.'

"The Unmoving Cloud," *P*, 152-53

If we compare this poem with what is acknowledged to be one of Pound's best poems, "The Return," we can see there is a difference, a difference in the degree of what I would call "emotional morality":

See, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
and half turn back;
These were the 'Wing'd-with-Awe',
Inviolable.

Gods of the winged shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!
These were the swift to harry;
These the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.
Slow on the leash,
pallid the leash-men!

P, 85

"The Return" is a hauntingly beautiful poem, with much of its beauty lying in its musical organization – the subtleties of its elusive, hesitant, continually-

varying movement. Yet despite all this, there does not seem to be much for the experience to fall back on. Both rhythm and imagery trace a nerveless falling-back after a triumphant sallying forth, as the heroes, vigorous of old, survive only as shadows of their former selves. Is the "return" worth it after all?

The deep human-heartedness of the content of the poetry in *Cathay* itself generates its creative excellence. There is in it what Pound calls a gracious simplicity, a naive beauty, and a completeness which at times it seems an impertinence on which to "thrust in remarks."[18] A poise and resigned quietness is captured out of the anguish of quotidian existence, out of time and chance, out of mutable relationship. Pound quotes "The River-Merchant's Wife" as evidence of this completeness:

> While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
> I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
> You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
> You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
> And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
> Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
>
> At fourteen I married My Lord you.
> I never laughed, being bashful.
> Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
> Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.
>
> At fifteen I stopped scowling,
> I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
> Forever and forever and forever.
> Why should I climb the look out?
> At sixteen you departed,
> You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
> And you have been gone five months.
> The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
>
> You dragged your feet when you went out.
> By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
> Too deep to clear them away!
> The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
> The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
> Over the grass in the West garden;
> They hurt me. I grow older.

If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-sa.

P, 140-41

This completeness does not mean that the poem is over as soon as it is read: controlled by all the human facts it gives (and gives with such simplicity and economy) we enter into other lives, and our insight flows into their complex predicament.

The *Cathay* poems were written during Pound's brief Vorticist period. The idea of the vortex had been in Pound's mind for some time,[19] but it seems to have been Fenollosa's essay on "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" that brought it into focus in 1913. For Pound, Fenollosa's theory seemed to come as a powerful criticism of the principles of Imagism. The implications in Fenollosa's essay, as Pound saw them, were that Imagism took too static a view of what poetry could perform. It conceived of the world as so many inert "things," to be brought into juxtaposition, whereas the world is made up of "energies," and a poem should be a sort of vortex, concentrating these energies. The *Cathay* poems can be taken as such vortices, concentrating into one the outer world of social reality and the inner world of personal experience. With the new light from China and with the launching of Vorticism in early 1914, there seemed to Pound at this time to be materials for a second Renaissance. But 1914 was the year of an even larger event, the outbreak of the First World War. The war disrupted Vorticism and made a mockery of Pound's imagined Renaissance, and the rest of his career was to be coloured by the disappointment of his hopes of 1914. The two great poems that follow *Cathay* both show a sense of disintegration, a failure of creative nerve. It seems that that intuitive sense of the integrated life that worked so well in the Oriental world of the *Cathay* poems could not be summoned to perform a similar task of integration in the poet's own cultural tradition on the one hand and his own historical world on the other. For the profoundest note in *Homage to Sextus Propertius* – which shows Pound taking a "mask" from his inherited tradition in order to find an "exemplum," a living model to integrate the poet and his society – is the sense of emptiness, of there being nothing whatever left after one has "looked into the matter," a sense that is also

related to the poet's sense of personal failure:

> And behold me, small fortune left in my house.
> Me, who had no general for a grandfather!
> I shall triumph among young ladies of indeterminate character,
> My talent acclaimed in their banquets,
> I shall be honoured with yesterday's wreaths.
> And the god strikes to the marrow.
>
> Like a trained and performing tortoise,
> I would make verse in your fashion, if she should command it,
> With her husband asking a remission of sentence.
> And even this infamy would not attract numerous readers
> Were there an erudite or violent passion,
> For the nobleness of the populace brooks nothing below its own altitude.
> One must have resonance, resonance and sonority. . . like a goose.
>
> *P*, 239

Beneath the surface trifling and frivolity of the verse there is an agonized sense of waste, and much of the agony comes from an inability to "connect."

A similar inability to connect, to integrate the self with the world around it, informs *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* – a poem that expresses with concentration, wit and economy the failure of creativity in our century. In this and other poems by Pound, one tastes the petrification of creative powers, and the futility of trying to exercise the poetic impulse in our time, in phrases like

> Beneath the half-watt rays,
> The eyes turn topaz . . .
>
> 'I was
> And I no more exist:
> Here drifted
> An hedonist.'
>
> Mouths biting empty air,
> The still stone dogs . . .

Reading this poem, one is left with a deep feeling of dissatisfaction. In the end, the marvellous texture of the verse serves only to convey an inability in the writer to believe in creativity, in human capacities to find meaning.

Of course, Pound in *Mauberley* is trying to chronicle a particular episode, the fin-de-siècle malaise, the profound trauma of the 1914-18 war, its vast destruction of youth, and the catastrophic effects upon consciousness:

> disillusions as never told in the old days,
> hysterias, trench confessions,
> laughter out of dead bellies.
>
> There died a myriad,
> And of the best, among them,
> For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
> For a botched civilization.
>
> Charm, smiling at the good mouth,
> Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,
> For two gross of broken statues,
> For a few thousand battered books.
>
> *P*, 200

F. R. Leavis seems to take the poems as the expression of Pound's own life:

> *Mauberley* is in the first place the summing-up of an individual life. It has also a representative value, reflecting as it does the miscellaneousness of modern culture, the absence of direction, of an alphabet of forms or of any one predominant idiom; the uncongeniality of the modern world to the artist; and his dubious status there. . . . One might, at the risk of impertinence, call it quintessential autobiography, taking care, however, to add that it has the impersonality of great poetry: its technical perfection means a complete detachment and control.[20]

Let it be said that it is hard to argue against Leavis' contention that "the whole is great poetry." But having admitted as much, certain uneasy questions keep gnawing at one's consciousness. Isn't it perhaps great poetry

wrung out of the impossibility, not only of saying anything creative, but of finding a creative relationship with experience, finding a creative perception? Are not Pound's "technical perfection," his "complete detachment and control," bound up with a failure to find any way out of the sterility he registers?

At the core of *Mauberley* there seems to be a lack of the "human-heartedness" we referred to earlier. Pound-Mauberley seems to be overcome both by a philistine civilization and a sense of his own coldness, a realization that he confesses with such poignancy in Canto CXVI:

> And I am not a demigod
> I cannot make it cohere.
> If love be not in the house there is nothing.
> The voice of famine unheard.

Pound-Mauberley "sees" the famine around him to be sure, but he does not "hear" it:

> These fought in any case,
> and some believing,
> pro domo, in any case . . .
>
> Some quick to arm,
> some for adventure,
> some from fear of weakness,
> some from fear of censure,
> some for love of slaughter, in imagination,
> learning later . . .
> some in fear, learning love of slaughter;
>
> *P*, 199

Any uneasy feeling the reader might have that he has confused Mauberley with Pound is dispelled in this section. One can hardly doubt that the deep emotions are Pound's. Yet, although this is a deeply moving poem, the experience is not enriched by any meaning except a kind of "resignation" to the terrible facts of existence which leads to either the passionate anger of the pedagogue who cries,

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization.

or the sterile sense of impotence that informs much of the poem. This sense of impotence informs the poet's feeling that the "sublime" is "out of date," inexpressible in a society which showed its half-savagery by laughing at poets. It informs his obstinacy to pursue his art, observing "the elegance of Circe's hair," generating beauty but seldom able to bring the mind-spun structures into relationship with "whole being," or to relate the obsessions of one's inner world to everyday existence.

Thus, in section III, one may agree with the castigation of modern culture:

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
The pianola 'replaces'
Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations:
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,
Sage Heracleitus says;
But a tawdry cheapness
Shall outlast our days.

P, 198

But there is something missing. There is no admission of those possibilities which can transcend our situation, even our diseased language. There is but a sweeping assumption that the debasement abroad in our time has wholly supplanted all creative symbolism.

The concept of man behind *Mauberley* must be seen against this overwhelming image of existlessness – a feeling about human life that belongs to the paralysis symbolised by the "still stone dogs . . . biting empty air,"

man deprived of the essential dignity he is capable of, of his capacity for self-transcendence. A revisit to the *Cathay* world will show a way in which man's vision can redeem his world, filling it with mystery, meaning and human gratitude for existence. It is this concept of embodied, intentional man, creating as he sees, exerting his freedom by giving meaning to his world that Pound once found in the world of his Chinese poems but now cannot find or believe in:

> I cannot make it cohere.
> If love be not in the house it is nothing.
> The voice of famine unheard.

In these terrifying statements we have a confession of the creative failure in poetry, during the post-*Cathay* period in which Pound wrote, perhaps during the whole period which Pound has influenced. The *Cathay* poems mark a unique stage in Pound's career, a stage in which Pound's sensibility, interacting with the Chinese tradition, discovered a creative theme, a sense of the integrated man.

Notes

1. *Letters,* ed. D.D. Paige (London, 1951), p. 155.
2. See Ford Madox Hueffer, "From China to Peru," *Outlook,* XXXV (June 19, 1915), 800-1; A.R. Orage, *"Cathay," New Age,* 1915, rptd. in his *The Art of Reading* (N.T., 1930), pp. 143-45; Carl Sandburg, "The Work of Ezra Pound," *Poetry,* VII (Feb., 1916), 249-57; Babbette Deutsch, "Ezra Pound, Vorticist," *Reedy's Mirror,* XXVI (Dec. 21, 1917), 860-1; Kate Buss, "Ezra Pound: Some Evidence of his Rare Chinese Quality," *Boston Evening Transcript,* Dec. 6, 1916, Sect. 3, 5.
3. "The Reputation of Ezra Pound," *North American Review,* CCXI (May, 1920), 658-68.
4. "Introduction," *Ezra Pound: Selected Poems* (London, 1928), p. 14.
5. "The Invention of China," pub. in *Spectrum,* IX, i (Spr., 1967) and rptd. in *The Pound* Era (London, 1975), p. 218.
6. (Princeton, 1969).
7. *Literary Essays,* ed. T.S. Eliot (London, 1954), pp. 94-108; *The Spirit of Romance* (London, 1910), pp. 87-100.
8. *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems of Ezra Pound* (London, 1952), p. 20. All

quotations from this collection will be indicated in the body of the text as *P*.

9. (London, 1965), p. 14. First published in 1908.
10. Ibid., p. 18.
11. *Spirit of Romance*, p. 92.
12. Quoted in Donald Davie, "Pound and Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, XXIII, 5 (Apr. 1, 1976), 33.
13. *The Pound Era*, p. 202.
14. See Pound, "Chinese Poetry," *To-day*, III (Apr., 1918), 54-57.
15. Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chu-i.*
16. *An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality* (N. Y., 1954), p. 31.
17. *The Pound Era*, p. 212.
18. Pound, "Chinese Poetry," *To-day*, op. cit.
19. *The Pound Era*, pp. 236-40.
20. *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London, 1932), p. 139.