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ZHAOMING QIAN

AN AFTERWORD CONCERNING POUND'S 1935 REVISIT TO THE FENOLLOSA PAPERS FOR AN EDITION OF "MORI'S LECTURES" ON THE HISTORY OF CHINESE POETRY

In 1901, after working through "Rihaku" (Li Bo) with Professor Kainan Mori for a year and a half, Ernest Fenollosa requested the latter to give him a private course of lectures on Chinese literary history so that he could put into perspective everything he had learned about Chinese poetry. The request was granted. Mori gave the first of his lectures on the history of Chinese Poetry on Thursday, 28 May 1901, and they were continued week after week for almost four months till 19 September 1901, a matter of days before Fenollosa left Japan for America. Mori's lectures prove to have been a source of inspiration for Fenollosa's 1901-04 notes and drafts for his controversial essay, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry."

Pound evidently read Mori's lectures as recorded in the three notebooks labelled "Chinese Poetry: Prof. Mori's Lectures," in November 1914 while working through Fenollosa's Chinese poetry notebooks for the first time. He numbered in blue the forty Chinese poems quoted in these lectures 38-77 just as he numbered in blue the Chinese poems recorded in Fenollosa's five other notebooks 1-37 and 78-150 that same winter. As has been noted, no. 52, "blue blue river bank grass," in Vol. II of the three notebooks was chosen by Pound to make "The Beautiful Toilet" for his 1915 *Cathay*.

Pound also glossed in red pencil the names of a number of Chinese figures in Fenollosa's notes for Mori's lectures (T'ao Ch'ien for "Toem-mei," Li Po for "Rihaku," Han Yu for "Kantaishi," and so on) in late 1914 or 1915. Aside from these and no. 52, which he had reworked, Pound apparently didn't go into the detail of Fenollosa's barely legible notes of Mori's lectures. Nor did he return to the three notebooks in 1916-18 while editing Fenollosa's "big essay on verbs." Certainly he didn't realize

at that time that Mori's lectures might serve as a key to his understanding of "The Chinese Written Character."

However, Pound did later pay his respect to this section of the Fenollosa papers. In 1935, while planning to bring out a separate edition of "The Chinese Written Character" (*The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, 1936) as the first volume of his "Ideogramic Series," he revisited the three notebooks that recorded Mori's lectures. At once, he recognized their extraordinary value and set to drafting a foreword to an edition of Mori's lectures on the history of Chinese Poetry. In the foreward, he explains,

As chronicle, for a public profoundly ignorant both of chinese AND of poetic values, I don[']t know that Mori's lectures wd. have tempted me to retype them. As a fund or fountain of wisdom applicable to the criticism of ANY poetry, that is to say world p[o]etry or poetry of any nation, they have a value that no one but an ass can deny. They contain considerably more wisdom than I noticed when I first read through them 20 or 30 years ago, and even at that time I had certain qualifications which are possibly not the common property of every philologist.

At any rate I am glad I did not attempt to edit them at that time for a good deal of their acumen wd. have escaped me.

Pound did not finish "recasting" (his apt word) Fenollosa's notes for Mori's lectures in 1935, however. Nor did Pound edit and correct the part he did complete (nineteen pages) or submit any part of it for publication. His warning about Fenollosa's haste of transcription applied here to his own hasty transcribing and commenting:

When men are as intelligent as Mori and Fenollosa it wd. be falsification rather than editing to suppose that they relapse into brute idiocy in every case where the haste of transcription has failed to make every expression fool proof [sic] and more than legally binding.

In November 1958, in his tower room at Brunnenburg, he returned to Fenollosa's turn-of-the-century notes for the last time. It seems that after thirteen years of exile in Washington his mind was again fixed on his failed attempt to bring to light Mori's lectures: "I now tackle Fenollosa's penciled record of Mori's lectures on the History of Chinese Poetry, with the intention of transmitting them as *his* view of the subject . . ." The typescript reached thirty-seven sheets, and then it stopped.

For nearly seventy years and over forty years respectively, Pound's two failed attempts have survived among the Fenollosa papers. They are now in the Yale Collection of American Literature in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. By special permission, Pound's typescript of his 1935 transcription of Fenollosa's notes for Mori's lectures on the history of Chinese Poetry, with Pound's introduction and commentary, is printed here for the first time. The 1958 typescript I am preparing for a book I am editing, *Ezra Pound's China: Essays, Letters, and Conversations*.

Incomplete and fragmentary though they are, both typescripts illuminate not only the impulse responsible for Pound's sustained interest in Chinese poetry, but the urge underlying his 1935 attempt to reproduce Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (London: Stanley Nott, 1936) with corrections, a "Foreword" and the following "Terminal Note":

Whatever a few of us learned from Fenollosa twenty years ago, the whole Occident is still in crass ignorance of the Chinese art of verbal sonority. I now doubt if it was inferior to the Greek. Our poets being slovenly, ignorant of music, and earless, it is useless to blame professors for squalor. (37)

SONG FOR SILKWORMS

Every province and kingdom under heaven, no city has
avoided shield and sword. Why can't the weapons be
cast into ploughshares, and every inch of abandoned
field tilled by oxen? Don't condemn heroes to weep
like heavy rains, leave man to grain, women to silk. . . .

Tu Fu (abridged). Trans. David Hinton.

JAMES LAUGHLIN,
A Commonplace Book of Pentastichs, 64