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ZHAOMING QIAN

EZRA POUND AND HIS FIRST CHINESE CONTACT FOR AND AGAINST CONFUCIANISM

On 22 September 1915 Ezra Pound wrote to his father Homer Pound from London, where he had moved in 1908. He expressed his dissatisfaction with a nineteenth-century French translation of the Confucian Four Books—*Da xue* (The Great Learning), *Zhong yong* (The Doctrine of the Mean), *Lun yu* (The Analects), and *Mengzi* (The Works of Mencius): “I wonder if there is a decent translation of Confucius. I’ve Pauthier’s french version. NOT the odes, but the ‘Four Books.’”¹ It was Allen Upward, the author of *The Sayings of K’ung the Master* (1904), who introduced Pound to Guillaume Pauthier’s *Les quatre livres de philosophie morale et politique de la Chine*. There is sufficient scattered reference to Pauthier’s Confucius in Pound’s writings of 1913–1918. The earliest is in a letter he wrote to his future wife Dorothy Shakespear on 2 October 1913: “I’m stocked up with K’ung fu Tsze [Confucius], and Men Tsze [Mencius], etc.” (Pound and Shakespear 264).

In the past decade there has been an increasing interest in Pound’s relation to Confucianism. The tendency has been to emphasize Pound’s Confucian dealings in 1934–1945 and 1946–1958, the middle and the late phases of his Confucianism. This emphasis, while necessary, has resulted in an overlooked spot. Pound’s Confucian engagement in the mid-to-late 1910s has been conceived as isolated, apolitical, and therefore insignificant. Contrary to common belief, I shall argue, Pound’s initial Confucian exploration was motivated by his interaction with anti-Confucian sentiments in China and in the West and this interaction had profound consequences for his future writings on Confucianism.

II

During his late London period (1914–1920) Pound was surprisingly abreast with the political turmoil in China—the collapse of the Qing (Manchu) imperial house in 1911, the founding of the Republic of China in 1912, and the surge of an anti-Confucian campaign in major Chinese cities thereafter. He owed much of this knowledge to F. T. Song (1883–1940), an official of the newly formed Republic of China. Pound met Song in January 1914 and corresponded with him from 1914 through 1919. It was Homer Pound who first encountered Song in Philadelphia and then directed him to Ezra Pound in London. Song was so impressed with the father and son's shared passion for Chinese culture that he offered to find jobs in China for both of them.

In 1999, during her visit to China, Pound's daughter Mary de Rachewiltz spoke of the 1914 China plan: "In 1914 there was a plan for the Pound family to be reunited in China. Homer had been offered some kind of job by a missionary friend, but nothing came of it" (de Rachewiltz 282). The man who invited de Rachewiltz's grandfather and father to visit China was none other than F. T. Song.

Born in Fujian, southeast China, Song was among the first groups of Chinese who went to America to study Western science, technology, laws, and political institutions as a way of saving their country (fig. 1). Returning home to China with BS and MS degrees from Ohio Wesleyan University (1905, 1906) and an additional BS degree from the University of Chicago (1907), Song taught chemistry and mineralogy at Beijing University, the intellectual center of modern China's progressive movements. After the Sun Yat-sen Revolution that overthrew China's last imperial dynasty in 1911, Song joined the government of the Republic of China. In late December 1913, as Inspector General of Mints under the Chinese Ministry of Finance, he visited the Philadelphia branch of the U.S. Mint, where he met Homer Pound and offered to find him a position in China. Having heard this Ezra Pound wrote his father on 4 January 1914, stating: "China is interesting, VERY. Make sure which Chinese government is giving you the job and then blaze away" (Beinecke).

Ezra Pound's enthusiasm for China is no surprise. That winter he had gotten wise to Confucianism from Pauthier's *Les quatre livres*



Far-san T. Sung (Sung Fa-hsiang)
朱發祥字致長

Fig. 1. F. T. Song (1883–1940), *Who's Who in China*
(Shanghai: *China Weekly Review*, 1931).

and he had been exposed to Chinese poetry through Herbert A. Giles's *A History of Chinese Literature*. Moreover, he had been given the late Ernest Fenollosa's notes on Chinese poetry and Japanese Noh drama in order to edit two anthologies—*Cathay* (1915) and *Noh or Accomplishment* (1917). The former was to earn him recognition as “the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time” (Eliot xvi).

In mid-January 1914 Song traveled from New York to London and made the same offer to Ezra Pound. “We may yet be a united family,” Ezra cheerfully told his father on 19 January 1914 (Beinecke). De Rachewiltz obviously had this letter in mind when speaking about “a plan for the Pound family to be reunited in China.”

There is no way of knowing whether Homer Pound was interested in getting a job in China, but it is certain that Ezra Pound was. He

apparently asked Song to send him a few books about China. On 8 February 1914 Song wrote Pound from Beijing, affirming that he would put in the mail an "English book dealing with Chinese affairs" (Beinecke). In that letter Song also reported what initial efforts he had made on behalf of Pound:

I have already sent two inquiries for a position for you in China and have seen a few men and [will] see if I can make them give you a good position. They ask me to get your academic records, etc. So if you will be kind enough to send [them] to me, it will be a great advantage. I think I can get a fairly good position for you. We will see what can be done.

Ezra Pound probably did send Song a résumé. Unfortunately his side of the correspondence is all lost. With an MA in Romance languages and literatures and as a thriving poet and critic, Pound would have made an excellent professor of English or lecturer in Romance literatures in any Chinese university. However, there is no proof that Song explored such possibilities. At any rate, in his next letter (dated 1 April 1914) Song sounded less optimistic about finding a suitable job in China for Pound:

Now in regard to your coming out to Peking, I have been trying very hard to get a suitable position for you but so far I have not been able. I have found a position about \$200.00=£20 per month as a translator. If you feel like it, please let me know. It might be all right for you for the beginning, but I am rather afraid that you do not like it. I am looking for a good position for you.

(Beinecke)

How did Pound react to the prospect of having to go to China as a translator? The best we can do is to infer from a letter Song wrote to him on 3 July 1914:

Accept my congratulations for your happy union and newly married life. I wish you great success.

I am sorry that you have changed your plan that you are coming to Peking to join me. I hope sometime in the near future you can come to pay me a visit. (Beinecke)

Between April and June Pound apparently informed Song about his marriage to Dorothy Shakespear (on 20 April 1914) and used it as an excuse to call off the China plan. Clearly, he was not interested in becoming a translator dealing with government or business documents.

Strangely, nowhere in his 1914 correspondence did Song mention Pound's engagement with Fenollosa's Chinese poetry notes—his retranslation of Li Bo and other Chinese poets that led to the 1915 *Cathay*. Had Song declared to Pound his half-knowledge of Chinese literature? He probably had. In his letter of 1 April 1914, Song tried to put Pound in touch with his brother-in-law, W. C. Chen, formerly the editor-in-chief of *Beijing Daily*. Dr. W. C. Chen, Song wrote, was lecturing at the University of London. His address was 42 Hillfield Road, West Hampstead. "I hope you will call on him, mentioning my name," he continued. "I am sure he will be very much interested in you and your work" (Beinecke).

By "your work," I think Song meant both Pound's adaptations from Giles's *A History of Chinese Literature*—"After Ch'u Yuan," "Liu Ch'e," and "Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord"²—and his Fenollosa undertaking—the Chinese poems of *Cathay*. Song had apparently seen drafts of Pound's Chinese adaptations for the imagist volume *Des Imagistes* (February 1914). And he might also have heard Pound brag about how he had, by a stroke of luck, gotten the late Professor Fenollosa's notes on Chinese poetry. About four decades later, in 1952, Pound would disclose to his new Chinese friend Angela Jung (Palandri) how a visitor from China had had a hard time translating his "Seafarer" into Chinese: "Years ago one compatriot of Miss J. got through 6 or 8 lines, but apparently with crushing endeavour. He worked at my little table in London for an hour and half, but NEVER returned."³ Was Pound speaking of Dr. W. C. Chen? No one can tell.

III

Pound's encounter with Song also coincided with his initial attraction to Confucianism. Song as Pound's first Chinese contact turned out to be a caustic critic of Confucius and Mencius. Interacting with

him proves to have informed Pound of the anti-Confucian polemics in early Republican China.⁴ Interestingly, Song's attack on Confucianism appears in an article published in the London *Egoist*, rather than in his correspondence with Pound. There is reference to this article in his letters to Pound, nevertheless. In a letter of 14 April 1914, Song asked Pound if his paper was issued: "If so, please send it to my sister, Miss Mildred Y. Sung [Song], 50 Nevins Street, the Harriet Judson, Brooklyn, N.Y., U.S.A." In his letter of 3 July 1914, he thanked Pound for having his "China's Poverty" published in the London fortnightly.

When in London Song handed over to Pound not one but two articles in English. At Song's request Pound arranged to have both published in Dora Marsden's *Egoist* devoted to early Modernist works—those by himself and by James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot. Indeed, Song's "The Causes and Remedy of the Poverty of China" appeared side by side with Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" in three spring 1914 issues of *The Egoist* (16 March 1914, 1 April 1914, and 15 May 1914). As to Song's other article, a comparison of Chinese and Western customs and lifestyles entitled "China," it was printed in three fall 1914 issues of the fortnightly (15 September 1914, 1 October 1914, and 16 November 1914).

The cutting edge of Song's attack on Confucianism is his attribution of China's destitution to 2,500 years of Confucian institutions. Song begins "The Poverty of China" by admiring Western economists' adherence to the principle of consumption and production. "When hungry there is a desire for food and when cold, a desire for clothing," he elaborates. "Having obtained the above there is a fresh desire for luxury, etc. without any end. The desire for existence will therefore create many appetites and demands" (Part 1, 106). What Confucius and Mencius advocate, Song then points out, has been exactly the opposite. "The most important teaching of the sages is that a man should minimize and suppress his desires and appetites." One of their most quoted tenets is "To nourish a heart nothing is better than to restrict one's desire" (106). Accordingly, a perfect person should not "lose his joyful mind when he takes the poorest food." He "will not live in a magnificent palace, nor sit at a sumptuous table, nor keep a numerous retinue with thousands of state carriages when

he has the power to do so." Confucius's favorite disciple Zeng Xi, according to Song, "was so poorly dressed that when he moved his coat was torn and his elbow was seen, and when he put on his shoe it was broken." The Chinese have been taught to be "satisfied in poverty and not have a spirit for struggle," Song concludes, "hence the present poverty" (106).

There can be little doubt that Pound did not agree with Song. His disapproval of Song's position is evident in his introductory note to "The Poverty of China" (signed F. T. S.):

The following MSS. was left with me by a Chinese official. I might have treated it in various ways. He suggested that I should rewrite it. I might excerpt the passages whereof I disapprove but I prefer to let it alone. At a time when China has replaced Greece in the intellectual life of so many occidentals, it is interesting to see in what way the occidental ideas are percolating into the orient. We have here the notes of a practical and technical Chinaman. There are also some corrections, I do not know by whom, but I leave them as they are. (*Poetry and Prose* 1, 229)

By stating that "I might excerpt the passages whereof I disapprove," Pound articulated his skepticism about Song's analysis of the causes of China's poverty. And by referring to China as a nation that had in the new century "replaced Greece in the intellectual life of so many occidentals," he squarely challenged Song's negative assessment of China's place in the modern world.

Going over "The Poverty of China" Pound is unlikely to have missed a fraudulent substitution in Song's premise. Confucius's admonition for minimizing and suppressing appetites is for future government administrators. This has been changed to one for the general public. Nor would Pound have failed to catch Song's contradiction between a remark about China's good and bad emperors and his charge against Confucian teachings. "Occasionally there were a few good emperors, who tried hard to exercise economy in state expenditure," Song admits, "but on the other hand there were many bad ones who squandered the funds of the state" (Part 1, 106). Were the bad emperors more Confucian than the good ones? Did China's economy suffer more from good emperors? Pound did not instantaneously take issue with Song. But seven months later, in

December 1914, he published an article on Confucius in *The Egoist*, and four years later, in March 1918, he brought out another pro-Confucian article in the *Little Review*. Both articles may be considered critiques of Song's "The Poverty of China."

It is true that Pound's first article on Confucius, "The Words of Ming Mao 'Least among the Disciples of Kung-Fu-Tse'" (*Egoist*, 15 December 1914), is a rejoinder to William Loftus Hare's "Chinese Egoism" (*Egoist*, 1 December 1914). However, a scrutiny will reveal that Pound's criticism is pointed both at Hare the British orientalist and at Song the Chinese modernist. In "Chinese Egoism" Hare contrasts Confucius unfavorably with his third-century BCE opponent, the hedonist philosopher Yang Zhu (Yang Chu).⁵ For Yang Zhu, Hare notes, a person's joy is in the world's rich materials. Confucius, with an everlasting reputation, never had a day's gaiety, whereas Jie, the terminal ruler of the ancient Xia dynasty, and Zhou, the terminal ruler of the ancient Shang dynasty, "had the joy of gratifying their desires," which "no infamy can take away" (Hare 441).

Song is astute enough not to associate his anti-Confucianism with Yang Zhu. Nevertheless, like Yang Zhu he aims his assault at the sage's indifference to materialistic gratifications. Pound's rebuttal duly focuses on the detractors' incomprehension of another kind of human desires, which he would later call "intellectual interests" (74/459):

Yang-Chu says that Kung-fu-tse had never a day's joy in all his life, yet we read that the Master Kung was once rapt into three days' revery, or as the Taoists say, ecstasy by the mere sound of certain beautiful music. To say that a man so capable of aesthetic pleasure has never a day's joy, is manifest folly.

As for Yang and his relation to Egoism, it was Kung who gave true instruction, seeing that he taught that a man's joy should rest in the dignity of his own mind and not in the shilly-shally of circumstance. Thus he died serene though it were among fish-ermen.

As for Ch'ieh [Jie] and Chow [Zhou], their pleasures depended on their having been born to imperial position, their luxury was bestowed upon them, how shall hereditary emperors who are born with such opportunity for revels be set up as examples for men of common fortune, who, even if they had the capacity for debauch, would, if they desired to exercise it, spend

all their lives in a vain desire for trappings and for numerous women in brocade, and for pavilions and caparisoned horses!

The counsels of Yang-Chu are in no sense Egoism, since they teach a man to depend on all things save himself. This dependence on self is the core of Confucian philosophy. (*Poetry and Prose* 1, 320)

For Pound as for Confucius, "intellectual interests" are vital to the fulfillment of a person's life. For them denial of human thirst for knowledge and for aesthetic enjoyment is denial of humanity itself. Overtly a critique of Hare's tribute to Yang Zhu's self-indulgent egoism, Pound's first essay on Confucius also serves as a repudiation of Song's overemphasis on materialistic appetites at the cost of Confucian teachings. Pound's denunciation of Jie and Zhou, moreover, clarifies Song's confusion as to whether China's economy suffered from good emperors and from Confucian ethics. Jie and Zhou were teachers by negative examples. It was from their downfalls that Confucius drew the lesson to future rulers and government officials to minimize and suppress their materialistic appetites.

Effective as it is in reprimanding the detractors' slight of "a man's joy . . . in the dignity of his own mind," Pound's December 1914 article leaves some of Song's fundamental questions unanswered. Is Confucianism an obstacle to modern China's advance? Will abandonment of Confucian education be a solution to China's poverty? These are the issues that Pound deals with indirectly but unambiguously in "Imaginary Letter VII" (*Little Review*, March 1918). Rather than standing in the way of China's prosperity, he argues, Confucian teachings offer remedies for its various problems, what Song describes as "the corruption of the internal administration, the weakness of our army, the deplorable condition of our finance, and the misery of our people" (Part 1, 106).

Unlike Song who compares China negatively with the West, Pound in "Imaginary Letter VII" contrasts Chinese thinking (Confucianism) favorably with the Occident's (Christianity). Christianity in the Occident, according to Pound, has been reduced to one principle, "Thou shalt attend to thy neighbour's business in preference to thine own," thus hampering individuality and freedom of speech (*Pavannes and Divagations* 71). In contrast to Christian conformists,

Pauthier's Confucius appears as a respecer of individual opinions. In a retranslation of *Le Lun-Yu* 11.25, Pound shows us how the Master encourages his disciples of diverse temperaments to speak their mind. When asked what each would do if "recognized," the first disciple remarks that he would toughen his kingdom's defense and make his people courageous, the second declares that he would let his people "have enough," the third replies that he would put order into the observance of sacrificial rites, and the last states that his opinion is quite different from his companions'. Only after Confucius says, "Who forbids you to express it?" does he announce that he would rather go enjoying nature with friends, "sing a little," and then go home. Confucius admits his leaning toward that opinion. When alone the last pupil wants to know what Confucius thinks of the others' speeches. Confucius's answer is: "Each one has expressed his own temperament. That is the end of the matter" (72-73).⁶

Pound's presentation of the disciples' statements is reminiscent of Song's description of early Republican China's dilemmas. We cannot afford to overlook this pertinence, for it helps to explain why it is that Pound has chosen for his "Imaginary Letter VII" this section over all other sections of Pauthier's *Le Lun-Yu*. This conversation is meant not only as a critique of Christian conformism, but also as answers to Song's concern about China's ills. Among the disciples is the "poorly dressed" Zeng Xi ridiculed by Song. His and his fellow adherents' speeches can be viewed as possible solutions to the specific problems listed in "The Poverty of China." Pound's Confucius, modest, receptive, and popular, is intended as an ideal model for all world leaders, including those of early Republican China.

Like his fellow American expatriate Henry James, Pound hated despotism and believed in the importance of "recognition of differences, of the right of differences to exist" (*Literary Essays* 298). In Pauthier's Confucius he appears to have found an ancient philosopher, a cultural hero, who shared their Modernist values. While affirming social responsibility the Chinese sage also stressed the relevance of individual dignity. To Pound such a philosopher could serve as an antidote against evils in the world, East or West. Without any knowledge of the degree to which Confucianism had been corrupted, Pound unavoidably wondered how China could remedy its

problems by abandoning its Confucian heritage. To Pound nothing seemed wrong with true Confucian teachings. Mr. Song and his fellow Chinese modernists just had to distinguish Confucianism from the political system of old China.

IV

Compared with his Confucian dealings during and after World War II, Pound's initial Confucian exploration appears narrower in scope and less creative in application. It is appropriate to characterize this phase of Pound's Confucianism as "imitative" and the later two phases respectively as "creative" and "comprehensive" (Lan 3). This does not suggest, however, that Pound's early Confucian preoccupation requires little serious discussion. On the contrary, Pound's Confucian engagement in the mid-to-late 1910s compels our attention. It compels our attention partly because it occurred at a critical moment in Pound's career (and in the evolution of China's changing attitudes toward its Confucian heritage) and partly because its circumstances gave birth to convictions later to become firmly embedded in Pound's Confucianism.

Pound's earliest writings on Confucius should be examined not only in the context of his old resentment at Christian conformism but also in the context of his growing awareness of the anti-Confucian polemics of early Republican China. From 1914 to 1919 when Pound moved toward High Modernism and Chinese culture, an anti-Confucian campaign was gathering strength in China, which reached its peak during the May Fourth era (roughly from 1916 to 1921). Although Pound probably never read Liang Qichao's influential *Theory of a New Citizenry* (1902 and 1903) or Hu Shi's "Ibsenism" (1918), he scrutinized an assault on the Confucian heritage from Liang and Hu's social-Darwinist and pragmatic standpoints.⁷ Interacting with Song informed Pound of the Confucian ideas against which Chinese reformers and liberals aimed their criticisms and led him inevitably back to an inquiry into Pauthier's Confucius. It was under such circumstances that Pound wrote his first two articles on Confucius.

Not surprisingly, Pound relied exclusively on materials from one part of Pauthier's *Les quatre livres*—the third Confucian book *Lun*

yu—to build his defense of Confucius. Confucius's enchantment with Shun's music alluded to in "The Words of Ming Mao" is from *Lun yu* 7.13, and the sage's conversation with four of his disciples presented in "Imaginary Letter VII" is from *Lun yu* 11.25. For a fairly long time, Pound would resist rendering into English or Italian the complete text of *Lun yu*.⁸ His English translation of the first Confucian book *Da xue* (*Ta Hio*) was published in 1928. His Italian versions of the first two Confucian books *Da xue* and *Zhong yong* (*Studio integrale* and *L'Asse che non vacilla*) appeared respectively in 1942 and 1945. 1947 saw the publication of his new English translation of *Da xue* (*The Great Digest*) and first English translation of *Zhong yong* (*The Unwobbling Pivot*). Also in 1947 *New Iconograph* published his English version of a portion of the fourth Confucian book *The Works of Mencius* (*Poetry and Prose* 8, 349-51). It was not until 1950 that he finally issued an English translation of *Lun yu* (*The Analects*).

Mary Paterson Cheadle is correct in identifying Confucius's concern for "the individual and its sense of social responsibility" as central to Pound's early Confucianism (9). Indeed, canto 13, the Confucian canto (1924), contains, among other things, a poetic rendition of Confucius's conversation with four of his disciples, illustrating this concern:

And Tseu-lou said, "I would put the defences in order,"
 And Khieu said, "If I were lord of a province
 I would put it in better order than this is."
 And Tchi said, "I would prefer a small mountain temple,
 "With order in the observances,
 with a suitable performance of the ritual,"
 And Tian said . . .
 "The old swimming hole,
 "And the boys flopping off the planks,
 "Or sitting in the underbrush playing mandolins."
 And Kung smiled upon all of them equally.
 And Tsheng-sie desired to know:
 "Which had answered correctly?"
 And Kung said, "They have all answered correctly,
 "That is to say, each in his nature." (13/58)

While Pound's 1918 Confucius, like Pauthier's and the original *Lun yu*'s, makes known his preference for the last disciple's opinion,

this new Confucius does not let out any of his inclinations. Having heard the different responses, he simply "smiled upon all of them equally," saying, "They have all answered correctly." By suppressing his expressed bias and revising his final comment, Cheadle asserts, Pound has invented a Confucius "more generous, even more democratic in his judgment of his disciples than Pauthier's, Legge's, and Pound's later Confucius" (20).

Pound's exploration of more complex Confucian concepts in the later phases has been fully appreciated. With the expansion of his Confucianism, it would be inaccurate to assume, however, Pound shifted away from the Confucian tenets that appealed to him in the early days. Memorable Confucian anecdotes from *Lun yu* kept coming back to him often at unexpected moments. Among the Confucian allusions of the *Pisan Cantos* (cantos 74–84) is one to Confucius's rapture over legendary sage king Shun's music:

Criminals have no intellectual interests?
and for three months did not know the taste of his food
in Chi heard Shun's music
the sharp song with sun under its radiance
(74/459)

Whereas the guide for Pound's 1914 account of the episode is Pauthier's *Les quatre livres*, that for his 1945 rehearsal is James Legge's bilingual *Four Books*.⁹ It is at Pisa perhaps that Pound caught his inaccuracy concerning the duration of Confucius's ecstasy by Shun's music. When translating *Lun yu* into English around 1949 he got one more chance to justify his correction: "In Ch'i he heard the 'Shao' sung, and *for three months* did not know the taste of his meat" (emphasis added) (Confucius 220).

Recurring in Pound's late cantos is also the Confucian character 敬 *jing*¹. 敬 is labeled 火 implying "flourishing" in canto 85/575, "To respect the vegetal powers" in canto 86/602, "reverence" in canto 98/711, and "pray / There is power" in canto 110/801. The large hand-drawn 敬 preceding Pound's *The Analects* (1950, 1951) has this definition: "respect for the kind of intelligence that enables grass seed to grow grass; the cherry-stone to make cherries" (fig. 2). It vividly portrays Confucianism's reverence for nature and for grass roots opinion. As



man standing by his word



*respect for the kind of intelligence that enables grass
seed to grow grass; the cherry-stone to make cherries*

Fig. 2. Ezra Pound, trans., *Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot, The Great Digest, The Analects* (New York: New Directions, 1969), 193.
Courtesy New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Cheadle has demonstrated, nothing is derived from the two dictionaries Pound used—*Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary* or *Morrisson's Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (Cheadle 137). He owes this poetic description of 敬 perhaps most to his reminiscence of Confucian dialogues in *Lun yu*.

Another Confucian character much repeated in the late cantos is 靈 *ling*² annotated “sensibility.” 靈 recurs four times in the first *Rock-Drill* canto (canto 85/563, 571, 572, 575) and one more time in the second *Rock-Drill* canto (canto 86/580) and is culled from Duke of Zhou’s address to the beaten troops of the last Shang ruler Zhou (Chow). Pound’s source is Séraphin Couvreur’s trilingual edition of *Book of History* (書經), whose 今惟我周王丕靈承帝事, rendered “les empereurs de notre maison de Tcheou (Wenn wang et Ou wang), à cause de leur grande bonté, furent chargés d’exécuter l’oeuvre du roi du ciel” (285) yields him

LING²



Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility. (85/563)

He is Confucian enough to track down the roots of Zhou (周) founder’s great 靈 *ling*² back six hundred years to the Shang founder Cheng Tang (Tch’eng T’ang) 成湯, who “overthrew Hia [Xia]” under tyrant Jie (桀 or Hare’s Chieh) (85/575).

From the Pound of the *Rock-Drill* (1955) who stressed “To know the histories 書 / 經 to know good from evil / And know whom to trust” (89/610) and the earlier Pound of the *China cantos* (53–61, 1940) who sketched dynasties thriving with rulers “Caring for needs of the people” (53/266) and falling from “losing the law of Chung Ni / (Confucius)” (56/308), we can trace to the still earlier Pound of “The Words of Ming Mao” (1914) who despised Jie (Ch’ieh) and Zhou (Chow). For four or more decades, it appears, Pound never put out of his head anti-Confucian Song’s confusion as to whether true Confucian teachings helped make good or bad emperors.

V

It is ironic that at a moment when the Chinese modernists were breaking from Confucianism in their search for a modern nation, Pound as their Anglo-American counterpart was moving in a contrary direction, reclaiming the humanist values of the Confucian tradition. For nearly as long as the past century lasted, Confucians in China and in the West neglected to emphasize these virtues. This situation is being changed. In defending Confucianism's universal and permanent merits, surprisingly, the contemporary New Confucians have identified the consciousness of human dignity as a driving force for modernity.¹⁰ According to contemporary New Confucian thinker Tu Wei-ming, the industrial West may have served as a model at the initial stages of East Asia's modernization, but as the process continues, the dynamic force "has been at least commensurate with Confucian ethics, if not thoroughly Confucian in nature." Speaking of German sociologist Max Weber's association of Confucianism with feudalism,¹¹ Tu acknowledges that the 2,500 year old value system "had impeded the development of modern industrial capitalism in traditional East Asia." This hardly suggests, nonetheless, that "the Confucian ethic is incompatible with the spirit of capitalism." On the contrary, he predicts, "the capitalism rooted in Confucian ethics may turn out to be more consequential for the twenty-first century than the classic capitalism fashioned by the inner-worldly asceticism of the Puritan ethic" (*Confucian Traditions* 10). In Tu's critical vocabulary, it should be noted, "capitalism" and "modernity" are interchangeable terms.

Feng Lan is perhaps the first Pound scholar to urge attention to parallels between Ezra Pound and the contemporary New Confucians. The contemporary New Confucian thinkers, Lan asserts, "are committed to the same goal to which Pound also subscribed: to reclaim the humanist values of Confucianism in order to construct a sociopolitical model that can serve both as an answer to the challenges of Western modernity and as an alternative to it" (123). From this we cannot conclude, however, that Pound shared with the contemporary New Confucians an insight into Confucianism's limitations. He does not recognize, as the contemporary New Confucians do, the simple fact that Confucianism cannot be turned into a driving

force for China's modernity before it dissociates from the 2,500 years of feudalism from which it had grown.

From his initial engagement with China, Pound took a stance that was dramatically different from others'. Unlike most of his predecessors and peers, who, as Edward Said has famously noted, explored the Orient "for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over [it]" (3), Pound was looking to China, an "oriental" nation, for remedies and cures for Western ills. This attitude would puzzle—even shock—Song and his contemporaries in their attempt to replace Confucianism with a Western model.

Pound might be ignorant of Chinese reality, but he was confident of the role Confucian China would play in the West. In "The Renaissance," a February 1915 essay, he restates that "this century may find a new Greece in China" (*Literary Essays* 215). In "Laurence Binyon," another 1915 essay, he disassociates from the British Museum orientalist Laurence Binyon, ridiculing his "mind constantly hark[ing] back to some folly of nineteenth century Europe, constantly trying to justify Chinese intelligence by dragging it a little nearer to some Western precedent" (*Poetry and Prose* 3, 99). In "China," a 1918 review article, he criticizes Arthur Waley, the translator of *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (1918), for his "touch of occidental patronage for the poor oriental" (*Poetry and Prose* 3, 126). In "Immediate Need of Confucius," a 1937 essay, Pound further argues that "Western contact with the Far East was made in an era of Western degradation" (*Selected Prose* 76). All in all, Pound's statements about China from the mid-1910s onward identify him as anything but a hegemonic Orientalist.

In 1918–1919, as Pound continued his Chinese pursuits, recreating Confucius in "Imaginary Letter VII," publishing Fenollosa's "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" in the *Little Review* (1919), and inventing Song Yu (Sō-Gyoku's) and Wang Wei in canto 4 (1919),¹² his interest in F. T. Song waned. On 23 January 1919, for some unknown reason, he wrote Song perhaps his last letter, which is acknowledged in the latter's reply of 16 March 1919. In that reply, Song, then political adviser to the Chinese president's office, sent his best regards to Homer Pound, reminiscing "what a nice time I had with him while in [Philadelphia]." Closing that letter, Song once more spoke of his unfulfilled China plan for Pound:

"Do you still think of coming to China? If so, I would like to make arrangements for your coming" (Beinecke).

Despite his lifelong passion for Chinese culture, Pound never traveled to China. In 1968, during an interview with the Italian poet and artist Pier Paolo Pasolini for a documentary, Pound expressed his regret for not having been to China. When asked, "Is this a disappointment for you not to have seen China, which inspired you so much?" he replied, "Yes, I have always wanted to see China. It's awfully late now, but who knows?" (*Poetry and Prose* 10, 317).

Unexpectedly, thirty-one years later, in 1999, it became possible for Pound's daughter Mary de Rachewiltz and granddaughter Patrizia de Rachewiltz to fulfill his unfulfilled dream, or at least Mary de Rachewiltz felt that by going on pilgrimage to Confucius's birthplace Qufu and climbing Taishan, a recurring image of the *Pisan Cantos*, the extended Pound family would be able to accomplish Ezra Pound's dream. In her "Afterword" to *Ezra Pound and China*, de Rachewiltz comments after recounting the 1914 China plan: "Had Pound not re-created China 'in the wilds of the mind' even before writing the *Pisan Cantos*, in 'the tent under Taishan' (74/457), an extended Pound family would not in 1999 have climbed the sacred mountain and visited Confucius's birthplace and burial ground in Qufu" (283).

NOTES

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1. The letter is kept in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University. Further references to letters in the Beinecke Library will be cited parenthetically as Beinecke.

2. See "After Ch'u Yuan," "Liu Ch'e," "Fan-piece, for Her Imperial Lord" in Ezra Pound, *Personae* 110–11. For Giles's versions of the poems, see Herbert A. Giles, *A History of Chinese Literature* 52–53, 100, 101.
3. The letter is in the private collection of Angela Jung Palandri.
4. See Tse-tung Chow, "The Anti-Confucian Movement in Early Republican China."
5. While Yang Zhu's original discourse has not survived, its fragments can be found in the works of Mencius and Zhuangzi. For English translations, see James Legge, trans., *Chinese Classics* 2, 92–99, 282–83; and Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* 99, 267–68.
6. For a discussion of Pound's misreading in his 1918 and 1924 versions of *Lun yu* 11.25, see Feng Lan, *Ezra Pound and Confucianism*, 95–96, 106–09.
7. For a deliberation of Liang Qichao's anti-Confucian *Theory of a New Citizenry*, see Mark Elvin, "The Collapse of Scriptural Confucianism" 64–73. For a discussion of Hu Shi's translation of Ibsenism into an assault on Confucian ethics, see Jerome Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance* 93–98.
8. Pound's Confucius: *Digest of the Analects* (1937) translates into English only an excerpt of *Lun yu*.
9. See Pauthier, trans., "Le Lun-Yu," in *Les quatre livres*, 110–11: "Le Philosophe . . . entendit la musique nommée Tchao (de Chun). Il en éprouva tant d'émotion que, pendant trois lunes, il ne connut pas le goût des aliments." See also James Legge, trans., *Chinese Classics* 1, 199: "When the Master was in Ch'i, he heard the Shào, and for three months did not know the taste of flesh."
10. For works by the contemporary New Confucians, see Mou Zongsan, *The Renewal of Moral Idealism* (1992); Tu Wei-ming, *Modernizing the Confucian Tradition* (1992) and *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons* (1996).
11. See Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*.
12. See Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism*, chapter 8: "Imitating Wang Wei: Toward *The Cantos*," 88–109.

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