

AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURE: THE INTERSECTION OF  
INTERLANGUAGE, RESIDUAL MODERNISM, AND NOMADIC HYBRIDITY IN  
BEI DAO AND EZRA POUND'S MODERNIST POETICS

BY

JAMES INNIS MCDUGALL

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2003

Copyright 2003

by

James Innis McDougall

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to 甘柳露 whose love and support helped me to unlock these words.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES.....	4
3 MODERNIST INTERLANGUAGE... ..	12
4 RESIDUAL MODERNISM.....	16
5 OBSERVING PERFORMANCE.....	23
6 NOMADIC HYBRIDITY.....	31
7 CONCLUSION.....	37
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	38
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....	45

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURE: THE INTERSECTION OF  
INTERLANGUAGE, RESIDUAL MODERNISM, AND NOMADIC HYBRIDITY IN  
BEI DAO AND EZRA POUND'S MODERNIST POETICS

By

James McDougall

May 2003

Chair: Marsha Bryant

Major Department: English

The main thrust of this thesis is answering the question: when poets attempt to use voices and styles outside of their immediate cultural location, what sense can we make out of the cultural artifact that they produce? To answer this question the imagist poetry of Ezra Pound as well as the misty poetry of Bei Dao are both investigated, concentrating on the cross-cultural aspects of their poetry. The paper takes three different approaches to analyze the way that cross-cultural material is used in poetry: interlanguage, residual modernism, and nomadic hybridity. As such linguistic, literary, and cultural studies are employed to show how poetry challenges the boundaries of a national aesthetic and participates in redefining what those boundaries might mean.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Bei Dao and Ezra Pound make good subjects for re-evaluating theories of cross-cultural appropriation—a topic fraught with political implications—because both have written poetry questioning concepts of “foreign” and “national” to the extent that their poetry serves an indexical function, marking aesthetic changes in literary modernism. Their lives, too, as ex-patriots and exiles, have established each poet as representative figures of twentieth century hybridity and displacement. One of Ezra Pound’s noteworthy projects, even before he published the 1915 collection of Chinese poems, *Cathay*, was rethinking English language poetry as it refracted through cultural indices, from medieval Italian poetry to Chinese. He later established theories of poetics and language based on Chinese ideographic writing. Out of a radically different context Bei Dao, resisting the proscriptive ideological constraints of the Gang of Four at the end of Chairman Mao’s regime, wrote poetry using techniques and aesthetic principles associated with English language high modernist poetry. The implication of Bei Dao as writing like a “westerner” has come about through criticism from Chinese government officials, as well as a his effort to write and publish in an idiom other than the didactic slogan-saturated revolutionary romanticism and social realism. Moreover, Bei Dao is writing out of a tradition—residual forms of literary modernism had been an important part of Chinese avant-garde poetry movements throughout the twentieth century.

This thesis will show how the two poets are writing in response to their historical context through a dynamic complex, involving interlanguage, residual modernism, and

nomadic hybridity. Just as these intersecting ideas form a crossroads of diverging political and critical theories, the poetry of Bei Dao and Ezra Pound can also be represented by the figure of the crossroads. The crossroads is a place for congregation, commerce, and changes of direction, thus, serves as a starting point for our discussion on Ezra Pound and Bei Dao's poetry.

The critical pathways that intersect here are informed by linguistics and postcolonial theory. The term "interlanguage" is an important concept in language acquisition studies, which assumes that the learner's language is a linguistic theory of the language that the learner is trying to speak. That is to say that the utterances of a language learner are not wild and random, but a way of knowing. Linguists, such as Chomsky and Selinker, also claim the language learner's interlanguage output has two components, performance and competence. In this paper we will look at possible literary applications, concentrating on the aspects of interlanguage performance. The term residual modernity, as used by the scholar Xiaobing Tang to describe the modernist techniques employed by Chinese fiction writers in the 1980s, resonates with the work of postcolonial theorists like Chakrabarty and Duara who have been working with problems of historiography. They look at ways to bifurcate a Euro-centric historiography that is popularly conceived of as a natural development. At the same time they try to avoid reconstructing a narrative of history with an equally totalizing discourse. To attack this problem is to attack some of the popular, and somewhat invisible ways that history appears to be a natural evolution, or an all-embracing process (the Hegelian model, for instance). Finally, the term nomadic hybridity refers specifically to the concept established by the theorists Deleuze and Guattari. For instance, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they try to establish a theoretical

framework for the role of the nomad in the nation state through a historiography of the nomad. Here the term will apply to the literal movement of the poets and the figurative movements within their poetry in relation to mass social movements. The figure of nomadic hybridity is a longstanding tradition imbricated in both Chinese and Anglo-American culture, which will be seen in Qu Yuan—an exiled poet statesman who writes in a hybrid style poetry and in a symbolic gesture sacrifices himself.

## CHAPTER 2 ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Pound's university training was philology. He left his studies for Edwardian London in 1908, disgusted with the academy. The academic discipline of studying and comparing languages, however, is implicated in his fearless translations of cross-cultural forms from the Troubadour poets to the early Saxons. Working with T.E. Hulme and other poets in London's avant-garde literary salons, Pound inculcated the foundational principles of the Imagist school soon after arriving in England. It was Hulme, a student of Bergson and heavily influenced by continental modernists, who in a 1910 lecture on modern art said that "the mystery of things is no longer perceived as action but as impression," he also said that art "no longer deals with heroic action, it has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with momentary phases in the poet's mind"(qtd. in Pratt, 21). The group experimented with *vers libre* and short forms, like the haiku.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the writing of Kafka, using the metaphor of music to posit that a minor literature resembles a minor chord: "as though music set out on a journey and garnered all resurgences, phantoms of the Orient, imaginary lands, traditions from all over" (Delueze and Guitari 95). From this criticism we not only see how the "Orient" is a continuation of several problems Looking at Pound's contribution to the March 1913 edition of *Poetry Magazine*, we see him establishing these kinds of qualities in his poetry, the titles include: "Tenzone," "The Garret," "Dance Figure," "Pax Saturni,"

“A Pact,” and “In a Station of the Metro.” One of the best examples of this can be found in “In a Station of the Metro,” a poem that has been dissected and labeled to the extent that it serves metonymically as the imagist school: “The apparition of these faces in the crowd/Petals on a wet black bough.” Dropping the copula from the metaphor, instead of syntax, parataxis creates the discursive continuum. The platform of the metro station provides the bricolage where the people of the city, rich and poor, foreigners and nationals, comers and goers are momentarily united underground by modern transportation. The metro serves as a place of journey (divergence) as well as community (convergence) in a juxtaposed collage. The composition of daily experience living in the cosmopolitan city (any city at the time big enough to support a subway system) is one of constant parataxis.

Taking into account the *theme/rheme* argument, which states that word order determines the “point of departure”(Celce-Murcia and Larson-Freeman 22) of a clause, “[t]he apparition” suggests that “these faces” are less important than the sudden appearance of the supernatural. The haunting is caused on one hand by the immanent beauty of the faces suddenly precipitated from the crowd. On the other hand the people are haunted by the organizing principles of the cosmopolitan city that forces people underground, like souls in a Greek hell. William Pratt points out that Pound re-uses the “Metro” formulation in his Cantos to describe both heaven and hell (26).

The poem is also haunted by “phantoms of the Orient.” Not only does the form borrow from the Japanese haiku, the content uses a motif of classical Chinese ink brush painting: “Petals on a wet black bough.” Eisenstein in his “The Cinematographic Principle and The Ideogram,” discussing the Japanese approach to painting a cherry

branch, points out that the artist will “frame the shot”(41). Eisenstein writing in 1930 seems to refer specifically to this poem as a prototypical montage. First, the image that Pound provides does not allow the reader to view the entire shrubbery. He cuts it, leaving only the bough and petals. Next, Pound’s editing also includes a cut from the crowd in the familiar “station” to the ink brush painting. The ink brush painting is the framing device that situates the faces and the crowd within the image. This construction juxtaposes exterior and interior, nature and modernity, familiar and foreign.

Imagist poets and Anglo-American poets in general were able to make a tradition out of literary modernism, that is to say they were heavily influenced by the French symbolists, yet they manage to clear out a space for critical difference. This can be seen not only in Hulme, but also in Pound’s study of Gauttier ([Hombberger 13](#)). Baudelaire, twenty years prior, in addition to writing about the “orient” and “exotic,” often writes about the city through the eyes of the *flanneur*, strolling about the avenues of Paris. “Metro” certainly has this quality. The poem seems like a casual observation that a city walker might make, using an artist’s eye to appreciate the experience of being in the metro. The poem also has a sense of Mallarmé’s vigorous phrasing. In addition the haiku form has a *vers libre* quality, which at the time was foreign to English poetry. In fact, it was a concept so revolutionary to English poetry that throughout much of the twentieth century the easily translatable term remained French, *non*? This combination of the city walker seeing the vision of the oriental print in a crowd of people, during an unprivileged moment in the metro intensifies the haunting. Deleuze describes this situation as it exists in a minor literature as: “be[ing] a foreigner, but in one’s own tongue, not only when speaking a language other than one’s own. . . is when style becomes a language” (98).

Style becomes language in poetry, because it is part of the poet's "enunciation" or "performance." As such, the "Metro" poem has haunted poetic language since 1913.

The poem "In a Station of the Metro," in terms of literary history, performs as the station where Ezra Pound arrived as an imagist. It also serves as a point of departure that would take him across the across the classical Chinese literary landscape as we see in the re-worked translations that he included as representative pieces of imagism in the 1914 *Des Imagistes* anthology.

Moving across time and space to 1970s Mainland China, Bei Dao wrote one of his most famous poems, "The Answer" ("回 答" *Huidá*). It was an enigmatic answer to the poetry and politics during the oppressive regime of the Gang of Four:

<p>卑鄙是卑鄙者的通行证， 高尚是高尚者的墓志铭。 看吧，在那镀金的天空中， 飘满了死者弯曲的倒影。</p>	<p>Debasement is the password of the base, Nobility the epitaph of the noble. See how the gilded sky is covered With the drifting twisted shadows of the dead (<i>August Sleepwalker</i> 35, lines 1-4)</p>
---	---

The first four lines consist of a parallel construction of two definitions followed by two lines containing a single image. The poem is written in quatrains with an abab end-rhyme structure ("证" *zhèng* and "中" *zhōng* are off-rhymes, while "铭" *míng* and "影" *yǐng* are feminine rhymes). On the surface of the poem, the ideas are syntactically disconnected; the structure of the verse allows for parataxis as the ideas to comment on each other. The tone is decidedly eulogistic as even the sky, "镀金" *dùjīn* (gilded) artificially golden" does not house the "rising sun" (a common revolutionary motif used to represent Chairman Mao), but rather "drifting twisted shadows of the dead." The translation reads "倒影" *dǎoyǐng* as "shadows," but can also be translated as "reflection in water" or "inverted image." This play on surfaces transforms clouds into an image of an image of

the dead. In this simulacrum “nobility” is only a simulation of an ontological “noble”-ness, and, thus, its “epitaph.” All that is left is the “gilded sky” and “debasement.” When compared to the state-proscribed<sup>1</sup> literature, the content in the poem is radical, unfamiliar, and not a little obscure.

“The Answer” began circulating during the first Tiananmen incident of 1976 (the April Fifth Movement). People gathered at the square during the Qingming festival bringing eulogies and funeral wreaths to mourn the death of the extremely popular premier, Zhou Enlai. The gathering was also an implicit critique of “the gang of four” and the ailing Chairman Mao’s leadership of the Cultural Revolution. In this context, the allusion to “nobility” and “debasement” corresponds to revolutionary idealism, and the realities of the Cultural Revolution. With the April Fifth movement as the *milieu*, the performative value of the poem can be found in its cutting irony, and critique of degenerating culture. The poem as a performance in an event that served as both protest and eulogy explains some of the reason for ambiguity; a direct affront to authority yielded severe consequences. At the same time, the poem radiates the high modernist “imperious gesture of the charismatic Master” (Jameson 2). The syntactic disconnects in Bei Dao’s early verse represent the available linguistic space that existed outside of the Party’s political speak. Bei Dao and the avant-garde poets searched out a linguistic response to the crisis of expression, and the disconnected syntax is evidence of the linguistic repression of the time. As such Bei Dao finds a literary modernism within the

---

<sup>1</sup> In his famous Yan’an address, Chairman Mao declared all literature must be a aid the proletariat revolution, calcifying an official state proscription that all literary styles must either conform to the conventions of social realism or revolutionary romanticism. Chairman Mao said literature must “operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind” (Mao 567).

cultural context of the Cultural Revolution not as an imitation or appropriation of Western Modernism, but a use of language in response to the historical moment. Jacques Derrida suggests that Ezra Pound and Mallarmé are prototypical grammatologists who established a “graphic poetics” in order to break the “entrenched Western traditions” (92). Likewise, Bei Dao, searches out language beyond an entrenched system, and in the process significantly alters the poetic landscape.

In the first verse of the answer, the “debasement”/“nobility” opposition, in terms of class and class consciousness, deviates from the ideologically “pure” revolutionary romanticism poetry, and is a topic that Bei Dao treats with ambivalence. Like Gu Cheng, Mang Ke, and other poets that emerged from the Cultural Revolution in the Beijing literary scene, Bei Dao found the project of building a new aesthetics more important if not completely separate from politics. For example, Mang Ke said, “Poems, after all, are not popular cookbooks” (Pan 199). Rey Chow sums up the attitude of these Chinese artists as follows:

Contrary to orthodox Socialist beliefs, the protest made in contemporary Chinese popular culture is that such collectivization of human lives is what produces the deepest alienation ever, because it turns human labor into the useful job that we are performing for that ‘other’ known as the collective, the country, the people, and so forth. (Chow 469)

This ambivalence attains a fuller expression in the poem “Declaration” that was published two years after “The Answer,” where Bei Dao claims, “In an age without heroes/I just want to be a man” (*August Sleepwalker*, lines 5-6). We are faced with the tension between the loss of the “heroic” and everyday mind of the individual, resonating with Hulme’s pronouncement on modern art. The avant-garde movement in which Bei Dao took part was an elite group reshaping a national aesthetic, while at the same time

having a certain degree of “radical chic,” putting the poets in a position similar to the imagists as “profoundly contradictory: at once revolutionary and reactionary” (Hombberger 6). “The Answer” projects some of this complexity onto the sky, which starts out a Tartarus of shades and then changes to a starlit expanse of the “watchful eyes of future generations” (line 28).

The movement Ezra Pound makes in remodeling modernity (the metro) into vegetation (petals and bough) exudes an aesthetic that is foreign yet familiar. Bei Dao also provides a similar uncanny foreign in the everyday by constructing a defiant subjectivity in a literary climate where the “I” had almost completely disappeared. In 1983, during the anti-“Spiritual Pollution” Campaign debates over the legitimacy of a Chinese modernism, the poet Xu Jinya expressed his support for the new aesthetic possibilities that literary modernism offered. He claims that the new poetry is, “the exact opposite of all poetry since 1949: it has clear syllable images; the entire mood is obscure, the internal rhythm violent” (qtd. in Larson 52). Xu also notes that the beginning of the new style of poetry began in 1976 during the Tiananmen incident at the height of China’s repression of foreign influences (Larson 53). It seems that Xu has Bei Dao’s “The Answer” in mind. The parataxis, obscurity, and the focus on the image relate to the very roots of Anglo-American London avant-garde in the early 1910s even though the poem does something completely different than the poem “In a Station of the Metro.” For example, as “The Answer” continues, a subjective “I” emerges with a prophetic voice having “to proclaim before the judgment/the voice that has been judged” (lines 15-16). The poet proclaims: “I don’t believe the sky is blue/I don’t believe in thunder’s echoes/I don’t believe that dreams are false/I don’t believe that death has no revenge” (lines 17-

20). These statements move from rationalistic toward intuitive thinking, and tend toward a complexity that stylistically echoes the poem's resistance to simplistic ideologically "pure" slogans, and state-proscribed forms. These statements in their naked declarative mood are something we rarely see in Anglo-American high modernism without highly ironic or hopelessly unreliable personae.

### CHAPTER 3 MODERNIST INTERLANGUAGE

The reason for this juxtaposition of two very different poets from two different places and times is that their names have already been spliced together in interweaving narratives of modernism, translation, and appropriation. Both have become notable figures through poetry, gathering talent, editing, and compiling poetry for publication. They prove that the greater talent of modern poetry is not producing words on the page as much as producing poetry in the sense of the film producer producing a film. One of the few critical texts to put Bei Dao and Ezra Pound on the same page is Chen Xiaomei in her book *Occidentalism*. She problematizes Said's seminal text *Orientalism* by showing how after the Liberation of 1949 official, artistic, and academic discourses reconstructed the West to reinforce as well as oppose an entrenched linguistic regime. She devotes a whole chapter on the "misunderstanding of Western modernism," where she plays on the "creative misunderstanding" criticism of Pound's "ideographic" poetics (73). Using Chen Xiaomei's point that these discourses of misunderstanding are mutual, we engage the question of interlanguage.

When poets attempt to use voices and styles that exist outside of their immediate cultural location, what sense can we make out of the cultural artifact that they produce? One way to approach the question is to view poetry as an event that occurs in language. Thus, it follows that the poet's understanding of a culture, to the point that it becomes a

theory, forms what language acquisition studies call an interlanguage.<sup>1</sup> The interlanguage is the language learner's language distinct from the native language and the target language. It is not an inherently biological ability to process and produce a poetic grammar, but a site of mediation between the poet's imperfect understanding of a second culture, and the possibilities that exist in creating art. Whether the source of inspiration comes from ancient Greece or China, the poet's understanding of that literary heritage determines its application to literary production. "Interlanguage" is the term that Selinker applies to language learning that refers directly to Chomsky's "theory of language learning. . . an internal representation of a system of rules that determine how sentences are to be formed, used, and understood" (Chomsky 25). Along with this idea, Chomsky offers two terms, "performance" and "competence": two separate ways of evaluating language acquisition (25). By applying the concept of interlanguage to the appropriation of cultural artifacts, ranging from Ancient Greek architecture to early Tang Chinese lyrical poems, we can see that the understanding of the building or the verse when graded on a level of competence may seem lacking, and dependant on the artist's understanding of the history, culture, and the form itself. Because the artist's audience does not include the ancients, the mastery of reproducing a traditional form as understood in the conditions in which it was originally produced remains secondary to the purpose for which such a project is undertaken. Instead the performance or the use of this cross-cultural model in producing an aesthetic or political effect is the critical factor. Just as learning a second language creates insights into the paradigms and structures of the first language, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Selinker introduced this term in his 1972 article "Interlanguage" to describe the learner's language that is different from both the native language and the target language. The term conceptually follows Chomsky's theory of language acquisition, see *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*.

learning of a cross-cultural aesthetics reveals cultural possibilities and limitations. These possibilities and limitations in English language literary production are foregrounded in the experiments of literary modernism; to quote Eliot's "Prufrock," "It is impossible to say just what I mean/ but as if some magic lantern tossed the nerves in images upon a screen."

Transcribing a poetics across cultural boundaries shows how a poet identifies the extent to which culture is always hybrid and in flux, and uses this fact as a way of rethinking cultural paradigms and conventions. This performance functions similar to de Certeau's argument for a non-linguistic "enunciation," which involves the "*realization of the linguistic system that actualizes some of its potential,*" as well as the "*appropriation of language by the speaker who uses it,*" and the "organization of a temporality. . . and the existence of a 'now' which is the presence to the world"(33). As such, the conditions for performance require residual materials from which to draw. They lie embedded in the syntax of material culture beneath the ken of cultural consciousness from centuries of familiarity that the regular ebbs and floods of commerce, war, hospitality, and empire continually bring home (such as the habit of drinking of tea, or in the circulation of silver through different economies). In literary modernism the foreign surfaces in unexpected ways, such as T.S. Eliot's Buddhism, and Ezra Pound's Confucianism. Both are informed by their respective interlanguage, which mediates a performance of their respective artistic and political statement. Buddhism and Confucianism become a polemical positioning of values that are foreign to both the domestic audience as well as the traditions from which they are derived. Using the high modernist voice and wasteland images Bei Dao is able to perform a poetic speech act, that at once criticizes the

saccharine revolutionary romanticism, as well as speak in a new and innovative way. But Bei Dao's modernism is something different from the elite Anglo-American literary modernism of the early twentieth century.

When Ezra Pound says that there is a "new Greece" in China (Qian 18), he speaks neither of geography, nor an algebraic genealogy that modern Americans or Europeans could trace back to a cultural and intellectual "home." Instead the statement acknowledges that the identification of Classical Greek texts as the spring that feeds the stream of European and American culture not only privileges those texts, but also is both arbitrary and limiting. The polemics of situating modern European and American cultural heritage in China involves an argument against a historiography of progress, which is an ideology that understood "Western Culture" as resulting from a natural evolution of dominant cultures from imperial Greece and Rome, to imperial England and America. Pound suggests that the identification of England or America with a Classical Greek past is an artifice that leads down a blind alley, or at least, as seen during the first two decades of the twentieth century, several blind trenches. Pound's "new Greece" is a rethinking of cultural hybridity, not as bastardization or cultural hijacking, but as an aesthetic opportunity. It also marks a change from colonial discourses where "Chinese" is coded as inscrutable. Instead Pound's "Chinese" is something vital and necessary. Finally, it provincializes Europe, lightening the weight and temporality of a Euro-centric universe, and allowing for new possibilities and aesthetic experiences. The discovery of the Chinese print in the metro is akin to Homberger's idea that: "It was the discovery of modernity within Edwardian culture itself which seems such a remarkable phenomenon" (14).

## CHAPTER 4 RESIDUAL MODERNISM

Theorizing the experimentation that Chinese fiction writers were making with form in the early eighties, Xiaobing Tang applies the term “residual modernism.” This term describes writers who deal with the issues of modernity, like tradition, economy, and national identity through identifiable discourses of literary modernism:

Residual Modernism in China, furthermore, appears to be not merely a transplantation of modernist techniques, but also a repetition of a modernist ethos and even themes, only in a much more intensified and self-conscious form. (“Residual Modernism” 10)

This concept asserts that the “repetition” is something other than mechanical reproduction of modernist texts, and stresses performance over competency (if not drudgery) of copying, say, *The Cantos*. Residual modernism is found within Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro” and in the imagist movement in general. The movement found a greater linguistic intensity and a heightened “self-consciousness” through ideas already existing. In this regard, modernism itself is a play on the pastiche, problematizing the aesthetics that have gone into defining post-modernism. Additionally, identifying the location from which the works are being transplanted becomes a messy business to explain. This problem exists in literary modernists like Amy Lowell, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound where the aesthetics are heavily determined by the transplanting of foreign cultural artifacts. It is also found in Matisse and Picasso’s painting and sculpture, as well as Eisenstein’s theories of film. Is this simply a continuing of Orientalist discourses, or does

can it represent something different? One explanation comes from Peter Wollen who shows how the cross-cultural materials figured by the French surrealists:

For Breton, the fact that reactionaries consistently warned against the danger of Oriental influence, as they warned against any threat to the stability of their own Western culture, simply meant that those who themselves wished to destabilize the dominant culture could and should make use of the myth of the Orient as they might an other potentially subversive force. This concept of the Orient was the rallying cry for those who wanted to create an alternative aesthetic, which stood apart from the binary opposition of Western modernism and social change versus Western academicism and the *ancien regime*. (26)

That is to say that by adopting a phrase, pattern, image, or narrative strategy the writer chooses a way of clearing out a discursive space. It marks the poet's becoming rather than a deterministic ontological historiography. As in the case of language acquisition studies, interlanguage either goes toward language via performance or it atrophies.

Literary history is very much at fault for reinforcing the binaries involved in a cross-cultural aesthetics by framing literary innovations with a model that naturalizes a history of development. The historiography of development suggests there is natural evolution of writing; thus, literary modernism comes after the Victorian period and before postmodernism. From the fallen towers of postmodernism we find our current "state" of evolution, whatever you might wish to call it—post-postmodernism is it? More accurately, residual modernism, as a performance of becoming helps to disrupt the concept of literary modernism as a homogenous, hermeneutic literary era. Residual modernism re-conceptualizes their work as a condition *of* and a response *to* modernity. This also explains why there are so many conflicting narratives of modernity, making the term slippery.

One narrative of literary modernism follows a postcolonial reading where the invisible circuits of colonial administration are foregrounded. Said's *Orientalism* depicts

ways in which cultural interaction between Asia and “The West” has been mediated by networks of imperial administration, coercion, and domination, that have been supplemented with a massive academic and missionary project. This accounts for much of the European and American presence in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. The year 1900 marked the end of the Boxer Rebellion, among other things. According to a journalistic accounts the 19,000 soldiers in the allied forces that Europe and America sent to crush the rebellion were relentless in exacting revenge: “Every town, every village, every peasant’s hut in the path of the troops was first looted and then burned” (qtd. in [Tuchman 33](#)). After the six armies smashed the anti-foreigner Boxers, they imposed indemnities on the Qing administration for “crimes ‘against civilization’ and crimes against the nation” ([Tuchman 33](#)).

This outrageous miscarriage of power and domination was continual as it was a continuation of Orientalist discourses that involved “civilizing” and “teaching lessons” to “uncivilized” countries. Here, too, is the historiography of progress cementing an ideology. The events of the Boxer rebellion also facilitated an increased flow of Chinese cultural items to England, like the scrolls that were collected in the British Museum. There, in the British Museum, Ezra Pound would frequent, often dining at a nearby café with Binyon, the British Museum curator who promoted exhibitions and lectures on Chinese and Japanese art ([Qian 13](#)). The culture of China moving into the center of London would have a profound effect on Anglo-American poetry.

The translations, reworking of translations, and imitations of Chinese poetry from the time of Pound onward often appeared in an anti-colonial context in Anglo-American poetry. Poetry as “performance” can be seen in the strains of this anti-imperial sentiment

found in Ezra Pound's *Cathay*. For example, "The Bowmen of Shu" depicts forlorn soldiers in a far imperial outpost stricken by hunger and homesickness. Later in the poetry of the San Francisco renaissance of the 1950s and 60s, this positioning of Chinese poetry as having an anti-war connotation appeared again, particularly in the work of Allen Ginsburg and Gary Snyder. Through these poems China works as a way of clearing out a space outside of conventional poetics, if not politics, as seen in Fenollosa's notebooks: "The duty that faces us is not to batter down their forts or exploit their markets...[w]e need their best ideals to supplement our own"(4). This notion parallels statements made by Bei Dao and other Chinese writers of the late 1970s and early 1980s about the possibilities of an applied "Western Modernism." Pound's persona, Mauberly, lamented a breakdown in culture and looked beyond England to find it. Pound did not have to travel to China; the cultural artifacts were residing in the British Museum. In fact, David Porter, in his *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe*, shows how Chinese cultural artifacts have been a part of British commodity and intellectual culture for over four centuries.

In the very same century that saw massive social rifts and unprecedented economic and technological changes in Europe and America, China experienced a series of unparalleled upheavals. Throughout the twentieth century, Chinese literature was marked by avant-garde literary movements that translated, studied, and incorporated stylistic innovations from foreign literature. These movements used the appropriations as a means of clearing out a space to express a unique condition of modernity. From the May Fourth Movement in 1919 continuing to the late 1970s and early 1980s democracy

movements, avant-garde literary circles employed modernism as a critique to oppose dominant discourses, and as established aesthetic opportunities.

The narrative of “learning from the West to defeat the West,” beginning with the Opium War, was later to be repeated by the invasion of the Six Armies in the Boxer Rebellion and again during the Japanese invasion. For example, Li Hongsheng in a 1979 *Guandong Ribao* article summarizes a conference of historians who were outlining “China’s Learning from the West”; in the article Li states that the historians identify the end of the Opium War through to the 1870s as the time when pioneers first “perceived China’s backwardness,” thus, beginning the “modern” age of China (3). The perception of “backwardness” and “humiliation” versus “modern” becomes part of the poet’s “interlanguage,” and mediates the performance of using literary modernism as an aesthetic. The attitude toward “Westernization” as a way of strengthening China, coupled by the presence of European, Russian, American, and Japanese imperial administrative networks and infrastructure (schools, missionaries, printing presses), had, in addition to a large translation project, created a linguistic hybridity that would alter not only the literary aesthetic but also the Chinese language itself. Early twentieth century Chinese iconoclastic avant-garde literary movements, which formed a hybrid style of content and form, appeared roughly contemporaneous with the high modernists. By the time Bei Dao emerged as one of the key figures in the *menglong* group, techniques and ethos of literary modernism had already been used as a tactic in Chinese literature and literary movements for over sixty years. As a performance, the *menglong* poets’ use of literary modernist techniques was a statement (artistic and political), which can be seen as a response to the Gang of Four’s mono-logic demands for an ideologically pure language.

The term *menglong* can mean either “obscure” or “misty,” and there is a tradition of *menglong* as “misty” poetry dating back to the ninth century Tang dynasty poet, Li Shangyin. The *menglong* poetry of the late 1970s early 1980s, however, according to Michelle Yeh, receives its name from a negative review by a critic Zhang Ming who wrote an article called “The Infuriating *Menglong*,” criticizing their work as “obscure” (“[Light a Lamp](#)” 385). Tang Zhengxu, a scholar from Mainland China, points out that the target of this attack was not the major *menglong* poets of the time (Bei Dao, Shu Ting, or Gu Cheng), but rather Yuan Kejia and the *Jiuye* (Nine Leaf) group that formed in the 1940s. This group was heavily influenced by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and even wrote articles on poetics of the image ([Tang 523](#)). Tang suggests that the Yuan Kejia and the *Jiuye* group deeply influenced the sensibilities of the *menglong* poets ([523](#)). Members of this group met in *Xinan Lianda* (Southwest Associated University) in Kunming during the Japanese invasion, where several famous modernist poets, like Feng Zhi and Bian Zhilin, held teaching posts, and the American modernist poet and critic William Empson lectured from 1938-1939 ([Yip, \*Lyrics From Shelters\* 49](#)). Later Yuan Kejia became the compiler of the first anthology of Western modernism that was published in China during the early 1980s ([Tang 523](#)). Before the Cultural Revolution in the early 1960s, the *Jiuye* group translated books that “systematically introduced Western modernist literature” ([Bei Dao, “Translation Style” 63](#)). These books were only available to Party cadres; yet during “the chaos of the Cultural Revolution,” they began to spread out to the “educated” youth, and, according to Bei Dao, provided a necessary basis for the birth of underground literature ([63](#)). As far as influence is concerned, there had been an internalization and codification of Western modernism (which included everything from Kafka to Lorca to

Camus) within elite poetry circles in China after the Cultural Revolution. Though critics like William Tay marvel at the imagist quality of Gu Cheng's poems (Tay 139)—Gu Cheng had never read any of the imagists. The fact that the ideas of imagism had been circulating amid Chinese intellectuals and literary elites for sixty years should change the inquiry from “how are the characteristics of the two different poetic movements so similar?” to “what were the different poetic movements doing with the similar styles of literature?” And even more fundamentally, since the ideas of imagism were sustained through classical Japanese and Chinese poetic structures and subject matter, what are the implications of this cross-cultural commerce in aesthetics? Through this question we can appreciate how some of the avant-garde Chinese poets of the late 1970s situated their literary modernism, moreover we can gain a fresh way of looking at the avant-garde Anglo-American modernists.

## CHAPTER 5 OBSERVING PERFORMANCE

The point of these brief historical narratives is to show the extent to which Chinese culture had been entering Europe and America during the waning stretch of their colonial forays into China, and the extent to which literary modernism was residual in China. Hopefully this demonstration shows that Bei Dao and Ezra Pound's "enunciation" uses an available language because it was already there.

Bei Dao said:

Our poems must absorb the techniques of Western poems, while the mood and emotion must be national. In this case, "national" should not be mechanically understood as referring to traditional Chinese literary forms such as Chinese folk songs, but as trials and tribulations uniquely experienced by the Chinese nation. (Pan and Jie 199)

In this statement, we can see Bei Dao working through the performance aspect of a hybrid poetics. Bei Dao would agree with Xiaobing Tang's "residual modernism" where hybridity is a tactic for poetic "enunciation." This statement also shows the anxiety and ambivalence Bei Dao has toward the nation-state. The nation-state provides a foundation for describing a community who have suffered similar "trials and tribulations," but with the rigid cultural borders of the modern nation-state comes a limit on the artistic possibilities and static "mechanical" reproduction. Hybridity, especially as expressed in the conventions of literary modernism has been a continual tactic in dueling with "an age of mechanical reproduction." Explaining, perhaps, why Pound in "H. S. Mauberly" says,

“the age demanded an image,” and the imagist poets began to look seriously at classical Chinese poetry.

“生活” “Life”

网 Net

(*August Sleepwalker* 35)

Bei Dao published this one character poem as a part of a collection of brief imagistic blank-verse fragments, titled “Notes from the City of the Sun,” pushing the limits of lyric compression. Ezra Pound describes the “‘one image poem’ as a form of super-position, that is to say, one idea on top of another” (*Gaudier* 89). If we follow Pound’s aesthetic theory into “生活 [Life]”, we can make sense of “网[net]” as supporting the idea of “Life”. The possibilities for interpretation are endless. Regardless, of interpretation, the poem, like the other poems from “Notes from the City of the Sun,” can be seen to follow the principles that Pound labors to explain throughout his article on Vorticism in his *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir*. Pound states: “The image is the word beyond formulated language” (88). Through this image of the “net,” Pound would later argue through Feltonossa, the concept of “life” emerges un-tampered by rhetorical forms, because it is presented in a more “natural” language where the Chinese ideogram “represents the thing itself...[i]t retains the creative impulse and process, visible and at work” (*Fenollosa* 25). Another example from the “Notes” is “Freedom” which is comprised of the single image: “Scraps of paper, fluttering” (*August Sleepwalker* 32). The pattern in these poems is consistent. “Notes from the City of the Sun” relies on super-position to take words that have rhetorical distinction, like “Youth,” “Love,” and juxtaposes them with a singular image. This returns us to Hulme’s 1910 observation of modern art that the heroic in is replaced by the subjectivity of poet’s individual mind.

The poem “Life” strips down all representations of life to almost nothing but a single character that is fraught with meaning, leaving most of the page empty. Also, the position of the poem, contiguous to surrounding poems that employ similar devices, creates the effect of a collage. Through this collage the irony cuts through the representations, and the critique becomes more and more apparent. The poems, taken collectively, serve as a pedagogical tool for reading each poem individually. In a poem like “Freedom,” we are presented with an image of “Scraps of paper/ Fluttering” (*August Sleepwalker* 32). Here “freedom” is stripped of its romantic and idealistic connotations. “Motherland” depicts the idea of an organic nation-state situated as a museum piece: “Cast on a shield of bronze/she leans against a blackened museum wall” (32). The poems are driven by an objective correlative, which is semantically disconnected from the title. “Motherland” gives the clue as to the subtext behind these poems. Bei Dao with a biting irony reduces the idealized nation-state to something orientalized, exoticized, and propped up, perhaps in some back corner of the British Museum.

The poems work as a space clearing gesture, sweeping out the formulaic and proscribed answers that were demanded in literature by officials. These imagistic poems were published in 1978 two years after “the Answer.” “Notes from the City of the Sun” functions similar to what Ezra Pound describes in his “A Few Don’ts By An Imagist” as, “the presentation of such [intellectual and emotional response to an image] a “complex” instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation” (200). Quite literally, Bei Dao adheres to Chairman Mao’s proscriptive purpose of poetry, which is to “liberate” the masses; (the title of the poem has a play on Chairman Mao, “the rising sun,” making Beijing, the city where Bei Dao was writing, “the City of the Sun”) the liberation

occurring in the poems found in “Notes from the City of the Sun,” however, takes words like “freedom” or “life” and liberates them from pre-determined, if not over-determined, signification often found in the slogans that saturated the Mao-era cultural *milieu*. Later, throughout the 1980s and especially after his exile in 1989 his poetry would become less and less represented by the prophetic voice of “the Answer” and move on to different aesthetic principles. Bei Dao has said that he did not like the poem “The Answer” very much, and that it did not represent his poetry.<sup>1</sup> This statement reminded me of Pound’s turn against the imagist school, dismissing it as too restrictive a form.

Pound’s contributions to the first anthology of imagist poems, *Des Imagistes*, in 1913, demonstrate his experiments in refiguring Chinese translations with imagist characteristics, as seen in “Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord”:

O fan of white silk,  
 Clear as frost on the grass-blade,  
 You also are laid aside.  
 (Qian 46)

The poem uses juxtaposition differently than Bei Dao’s “Life” or “Freedom” but the main idea remains: the juxtaposition of concise phrasings, produces “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (“A Few Don’ts” 200). If we are to understand the intellect as that which registers the image, and the emotional as a locus of affectations produced by an image, we are left with a lyric that forms a circular bond between the personae who sees the fan, registers its delicate coldness, and experiences an emotional response. The persona, then, experiences the ideal response to reading an imagist poem.

---

<sup>1</sup> This conversation took place during a dinner with Bei Dao, Dr. Carlos Rojas, and the poet Suzanne Zweizig, after his poetry reading at the University of Florida in March of 2002.

The poem's title, "Fan-Piece," suggests that the poem would be printed on a fan, heightening the poem's self-consciousness of its own subject matter; it is situating the "fan," as the subject of the persona's consciousness, on the "fan." This also brings the poetry out of a page in a book, and resituates it as a decorative art. The intention of Pound's decorative art is to breach the surface of ornamentation; Pound states this intention in his article, "Vorticism," where he claims: "The point of Imagisme is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image is itself the speech" (qtd. in Pratt 23). Pound tries to defy the laws of physics with the alchemy of poetry, attempting to transform the signifier into the signified.

The representation of the Chinese subject matter is familiar, recalling at once the trope of tragic beauty, as well as the "Oriental" image of the unappreciated concubine cast aside by her despotic "Imperial Lord." In the poem, as the persona apprehends the fan, which triggers a subjective identification with the object—a fan misplaced, and unappreciated. The "emotional complex" of the piece is sorrow, dejection, and loss of having been objectified and then discarded. Moreover, the words, "laid aside," add another layer, suggesting, perhaps, a post-coital depression and the sexual politics of virginity, beauty, youth, and value. These codes are already familiar to English and American audiences.

Postcolonial theorists, like Appiah,<sup>2</sup> would suggest that this is an appropriation necessary for commercial reasons. The poem adheres to a pattern of *chinoiserie*. With its "Chinese" branding, it clears out a market space for imagist poetry, differentiating it from competing avant-garde poetry movements, like futurist poetry. A more complicated

---

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion see Appiah's article "Is the "Post-" in Postcolonial the "Post-" in Postmodern?"

answer would involve Pound's "interlanguage" of Chinese poetry, which would have been affected by the sheer amount of *chinoiserie* residual in Europe. Undoubtedly, the interlanguage would be negotiating orientalist discourses, especially since the source material for the poem comes from the English academic Sinologist, Giles, who was engaged in producing knowledge of the "Orient." Despite the participation of Orientalist tropes, Pound's poem as a performance also provides a different paradigm for thinking through a theory of aesthetics, and performing an oblique criticism of the "imperial."

As in Bei Dao's "Notes," the title of the poem works towards establishing a superpositional relation. The title "A Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord" situates the reader as the "Imperial Lord" who is in the privileged position with the agency to chose this and lay aside that. In doing so Pound is able to complete a parallel circuit where the fan, the poem, and the speaker of the poem charge the reader with a mean lack of sensibilities. The fan, the poetry on the fan, and the poet—they have all been laid aside. "Fan-Piece" is a performative use of language and art to critique the "Imperial Lord," the reader, and the patron of the arts. These themes of lost patronage, lost identity, corruption, and decadence continue throughout literary modernism. We see, for instance in Pound's work emerging after World War I a different approach to form and an unrestrained attack on British culture. This appears in his blast of the imagist literary scene in his poem "H.S. Mauberly," where we find a damning critique of the British imperial authority:

There died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
For a botched civilization.  
( "H. S. Mauberly," Part V, Lines 1-4)

Another poem by Pound that appeared in *Des Imagistes* is “Liu Ch’e.” Like “Fan-Piece,” Pound reworks Gile’s translation. This poem was originally written by the Han dynasty Emperor Liu Che as an elegy for the deceased Li Furen:

“Liu Ch’e”  
 The rustling of silk is discontinued,  
 Dust drifts over the court-yard,  
 There is no sound of foot-fall, and the leaves  
 Scurry into heaps and lie still,  
 And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them:

A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.  
 (Xie 56)

Beginning with the last line, we are reminded of one of Pound’s, “In a Station of the Metro” where the “petals” are clinging to a “wet, black bough.” This image also appears in another reworked Chinese translation that appears in *Des Imagistes*, “Ts’ai Chi’h,” “the orange-coloured rose-leaves/ Their Ochre clings to the stone”(Qian 46). We see this repetition of technique and imagery as a way to “encapsulate some psychological state or experience related to the rest of the poem” (Wilson 141). Furthermore, the “clinging” creates a play of presence and absence that we find underlying both modernism as well as classical Chinese poetry. The “wet leaf,” here, along with the dust, manifests the “emotional complex” formed by the absence of rustling and footsteps. Time, as sensed through sound has lost its presence (“rustling,” “sound of footfall”) and is overtaken by the image of “A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.” This can be seen in the graphic outlay of the poem as a colon followed by a space separates the final line.

The symbol of the wet leaf recapitulates Orientalist discourse by positioning the “Oriental” as feminine. The wet leaf symbolizes the loss of feminine beauty, and fecundity, and by doing so it also foregrounds the opposite—the condition of the

courtyard, where dry dust drifts. Here we have the archetypal wasteland image (“I will show you fear in a handful of dust”). This comment on the infertility and dryness represents a lack that literary modernism tries to fill through cross-cultural material. The trope of the feminine with both beauty and fecundity, also figures prominently in environmental discourses of the twentieth century. The study of Chinese culture and artifacts in English language discourses of environmental criticism might be fruitful. For example, Gary Snyder, one of the leading voices of environmental criticism, too, translated Chinese poetry and was influenced by Ezra Pound. This is another way that the poets’ Chinese interlanguage performs what de Certeau calls “enunciation.”

“Liu Ch’e,” “A Fan-Piece, for her Imperial Lord,” and “Ts’ai Ch’ih” were all represented in *Des Imagistes*—the anthology that included artists that would become key figures in twentieth century English literature, such as James Joyce, HD, D.H. Lawrence, Richard Aldington, and Amy Lowell, among others. If the edition was in some way a definition of the imagist school of poetry, and Ezra Pound was the central figure in the production of this first anthology, then the poems that Pound chose to represent himself with can be viewed as representative for his vision of imagism. The making of the anthology also shows how, by 1913, avant-garde modernism was already residual self-consciously piecing together its own image. Pound’s inclusion of the three Chinese translations shows the extent that imagism was invested in “the Orient.”

## CHAPTER 6 NOMADIC HYBRIDITY

We have seen that both Ezra Pound and Bei Dao bring into circulation the immanence of cultural hybridity. They not only carry foreign poetry into the domestic cultural arena, but they, themselves, also physically crossed cultural borders. This movement applies to the metaphor of the crossroads established at the beginning of the paper, with the third intersection, nomadic hybridity. Ezra Pound first moved to London in 1909. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution Bei Dao ended his studies at one of the few elite middle schools in Beijing. He joined the Red Guards and went to the countryside to receive a proletariat peasant “re-education.” From these movements I want to suggest that their “nomadic” position as an outsider perhaps triggered their sensitivity to the residual culture to which they became identified. I also want to suggest that consciously or unconsciously both poets followed the archetypal “nomadic hybridity” of Qu Yuan. As such, they became relatively self-contradictory in creating an aesthetic that “no longer deals with heroic action and ... deals with momentary phases in the poet’s mind,” they both tried to assume the dauntless responsibility as the saviors of culture.

Qian Zhaoming describes Pound’s early exposure to Chinese poetry through Giles’ translation, showing how Pound was captivated by one of the earliest canonized poets of China, Qu Yuan. More importantly, Pound’s notion of brevity was affected by his

reading of Qu Yuan<sup>1</sup>: “They hold if a man can’t say what he wants to in 12 lines, he’d better leave it unsaid. THE period was 4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.—Chu Yuan, Imagiste”(qtd. in Qian 25). Qian also shows how Pound would have identified Hulme’s imagist principles in Qu Yuan’s poetry, because Pound had read Giles’ statement that Qu Yuan’s poetry was a “choosing and working–up of analogies” (qtd. in Qian 34). Pound, like Qu Yuan, was affected by his “biculturalism”(Qian 30) as “a mediator of refined northern civilization and the barbarians of the South” (Schneider 210). In addition to Qu Yuan, Li Bai (Li Po) the Tang dynasty poet is another famous example of cultural hybridity within the nation-state, as he was born in what is now Kazakhstan, and spent much of his life traveling to different parts of China. Even today Li Bai’s poetry is perhaps the most celebrated in all of China.

Bei Dao and Ezra Pound were familiar with both of these poets, and their lives. With this being said, the poet as a figure is a text that runs underneath the question of cross-cultural appropriations. The poets’ movements, like nomadic existence, and the working across boundaries form a readable rhetoric. This rhetoric is also a deep part of the poets’ interlanguage of the cross-cultural poetics, determining to a certain extent what the poet translates to the surface of the page. So when Bei Dao, who was sent down to the countryside from one of the best middle schools in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution, claims that he is experimenting with a hybrid aesthetic, he is doing something that is intensely national that dates back to China’s earliest canonical poets (Pan 200). It also shows how Ezra Pound could call China the “new Greece,” as Pound splices himself

---

<sup>1</sup> Pound, in “A Few Don’ts By An Imagiste,” said: “It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works”(201).

to a tradition of poets who were revered by the nation, yet, they, themselves, were working through the problem of nomadic hybridity.

Qu Yuan was a poet-official of the Warring States period (403-221 BC) from the state of Chu, who is one of the earliest poets to be recognized in the Chinese classical canon. The story goes that he was in good graces with the emperor of Chu, but jealousy overtook the emperor's court; Qu Yuan was slandered, and then exiled. He again tried to win an audience with the emperor to warn him of impending danger from a rival kingdom, and again he was denied; the kingdom's capital city was sacked; he then threw himself into the Milo River after writing a poem that serves as a suicide note ([Schnaider 19-21](#)). The Han dynasty historian Sima Qian, in his biography of Qu Yuan, explains that the poet: "chose to die rather than seek a place in the world...Like a cicada slipping from his shell, he shook off the filth that surrounded him and soared far beyond its defilement"(qtd. in [Schnaider 21](#)). When we look at the performance aspect of Bei Dao and Ezra Pound's poetry, they can be seen as responses to massive geo-political transformations, of which residual culture is a symptom. Their poems voice a protest against a corrupt regime of power, even if the regime of power is simply popular taste. They also construct tragic and self-sacrificing personae (for example, Bei Dao's "The Answer," and Pound's "H. S. Mauberly") for which poetry is the act of cultural purification as well as an emphatic notice to the public advertising the sacrifice.

In "The Answer" the trope of Qu Yuan crops up after the poet declares he "does not believe":

如果海洋注定要决堤，  
就让所有的苦水注入我心中

If the sea is destined to breach the dikes/  
Let all the brackish water pour into my heart  
([lines 21-22](#))

Taking this passage literally, the persona of the poem threatens death by water.

Figuratively, the conjunction between the prophetic voice and the purification sacrifice combine to save the culture that has endured pollution, suggesting a liturgical if not magical quality of poetry that at once critiques and restores culture.

“The Answer” recollects the artist as an alienated figure who threatens death by water. This creates a complex of narcissism and heroic selflessness found not only in “The Answer,” but also in many modernist texts including “Mauberly” (who also kills himself, perhaps by drowning as seen in the lines: “The chopped seas held him in,” and, “here drifted an hedonist”). Pound says this about Mauberly: “The worst muddle they are making is in failing to see that Mauberly buries E. P. in the first poem” (qtd. in [Wilson 158](#)). Wilson points out, “[i]f the voice that buries E. P. in the first poem is Mauberly, then the narrator of the other poems in the sequence would revert to him too, resulting in the dead Mauberly narrating his own life and reading his own suicide note (158). Here the confusion between poet and persona is magnified, especially in figures like Pound and Bei Dao—Pound would leave England soon after “Mauberly” for Italy due to a host of political, economic, and cultural reasons. Bei Dao would leave China due to his role as an activist in the democracy movement that came to a head in 1989. Thus, the trope of “nomadic hybridity” is written across their very lives.

Schnaider shows how some twentieth century Chinese intellectuals and artists saw their work, which seems to also adequately describe many modernist writers and their ambivalence toward national forms and the reception of their work:

This barbarianlike alienness of Ch’u Yuan’s [Qu Yuan] individuality made him attractive to poet-officials who themselves were driven to extremities. In the twentieth century, it was all the more attractive to the self-proclaimed *deracine*, those intellectuals who saw themselves as ‘superfluous,’ and ‘made useless by the

times’—those “imitation foreign devils” who had traveled in and learned from the barbarian West. (208)

We cannot say for sure whether or not Bei Dao and Ezra Pound felt this way about their work, but critics such as Ai Qing, a poet who had established his fame before 1949, and survived the various waves of criticism and rehabilitation to achieve a weighty status at the end of the Cultural Revolution, criticized Bei Dao by saying: “Poems cannot be evaluated as good or bad unless they are understandable in the first place...The incomprehensibility of some poems results from their mechanical imitation of Western poetry”(qtd. in Pan 199). This criticism was typical of the critical reception that the *menglong* poets received as their poetry was circulated around Beijing between 1978 and 1980. The criticism brings up the question of “mechanical” reproduction in a way that is in dialogue with Bei Dao’s claim that not experimenting with a different aesthetic would lead to “mechanically understanding.” Ai Qing’s criticizes the poem “Life” from “Notes from the City of the Sun” as something “Western” (199). Taking for granted that Bei Dao wrote “imitation[s] of Western poetry,” the criticism brings up the question of the legitimacy of poetic appropriation. To this effect the critic has become what Bruno Latour calls a “policeman,” determining the legitimacy of appropriation and misappropriation; Latour adds, “appropriation is a typically modernist term that means, of course, that there is a rightful owner” (Latour 266), and this question of ownership of metaphor are the challenges that both Bei Dao and Ezra Pound bring about through their poetry. In Bei Dao’s poetry the voices and aesthetics that have been affected by the experimentation of the literary modernism that took place in Europe, America, and China during the first half of the twentieth century, and in Ezra Pound’s poetry has been affected by aesthetics of classical Chinese art.

The comparison of these two poets shows how their poetry is a response to modernity that is already in itself residual. The Ezra Pound's use of classical Chinese poetry, and Bei Dao's use of literary modernism are tactics for enunciation, which have generated new ways of expressing the poet's relation to the nation and national form. Both poets ended up defined by national politics. Bei Dao along with a few other *menglong* poets went into exile after the Tiananmen Square incident; Ezra Pound was admitted into an insane asylum after being acquitted for treason. Later, he died an expatriot in Pisan, Italy. Both poets to an extent have recapitulated the nomadic hybridity of Qu Yuan and as such have challenged the boundaries of a national aesthetic. In the process they have altered the cultural landscape within the boundaries of the nation from which they have departed.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Bringing this discussion full circle, the comparison of these two international literary figures hopefully allows us to do two things at once. First, the comparison helps to locate a nexus of theoretical approaches in dealing with the complicated issue of trans-cultural poetry. Combining interlanguage, residual modernism, and nomadic hybridity that I see intersecting in the poetry of Bei Dao and Ezra Pound represents one approach to understanding this complex. The comparison also helps to rethink the field of literary studies that tends to treat poetry within a monolingual, if not monolithic, literary tradition. That is to say that English or American poetry is not a phenomenon that occurs within the isolated confines of national borders. The comparison of these two poets also opens up a broad horizon for further inquiry. For example, the material production and circulation of the poetry is another important consideration, because both Bei Dao and Ezra Pound were instrumental in consolidating their respective schools of poetry (imagism and *menglong* poetry). This also involves a study of the other poets in these schools, like the *menglong* poet Gu Cheng and the imagist HD. In terms of literary history, looking at the nuances of the “Orientalist” and “Occidentalism” discourses is also very important in understanding our present geopolitical situation where the foreign “other” is continually figured as a threat to a national existence.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso, 1983.
- Appiah, Kwamame Anthony. "Is the 'Post-' in 'Postcolonial' the 'Post-' in 'Postmodern'?" *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Ed. Anne McClintock, Hamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002. 420-444.
- Barbara, JT. "Ezra Pound's Imagist Aesthetics: Lustra to Mauberly." *The Columbia History of American Poetry*. Ed. Jay Parini. New York: Columbia U P, 1993.
- Bei, Dao. *August Sleepwalker*. Trans. Bonnie S. McDougall. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1988.
- . "Translation Style: A Quiet Revolution." *Inside Out: Modernism and Post Modernism in Chinese Literary Culture*. Ed. Wendy Larson. Oxford: The Alden Press, 1993.
- . *Wuye Geshou: Bei Dao Shi Ci*. Taipei: Jiu Ge Chu Ban She, 1994.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Taking Signs for Wonders." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. New York: Routledge, 1995. 29-35.
- Brown, Gale ed. *The Dial: Arts and Letters in the 1920's*. Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1981.
- Celce-Muricea, Marianne, and Diane Larson-Freeman. *The Grammar Book*. New York: Heine and Heine, 1999.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2000.
- Chen, Fong-Ching, and Guantao Jin. *From Youthful Manuscripts to River Elegy: The Chinese Popular Cultural Movement and Political Transformation 1979-1989*. Hong Kong: Chinese U P, 1997.
- Chen, Xiaomei. *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1995.

- Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT U P, 1965.
- Chow, Rey. "Listening Otherwise, Music Miniaturized: A Different Type of Question About Revolution." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Ed. Simon During. New York: Routledge, 2000. 462-476.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1997.
- Dirlik, Arif. *Postmodernism & China*. Durham: Duke U P, 2000.
- . *Revolution and history: the origins of Marxist historiography in China, 1919-1937*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000.
- . *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- Eisenstein, Sergey. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. New York: Harcourt, 1977.
- Fang, Achilles. "Fenollosa and Pound." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 20 (1957): 213-38.
- Fellonosa, Ernest. *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*. Ed. Ezra Pound. New York: City Lights Books, 1936.
- Feng, Liping. "Democracy and Elitism: The May Fourth Ideal of Literature." *Modern China* 22.2 (Apr. 1996): 170-196.
- Flint, F. S. "Imagisme." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. 1.6 (March 1913): 198-200.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism." *Modernism/Modernity* 8.3 (2001): 493-513.
- Goodman, David S.G. *Beijing Street Voices*. Boston: Marion Boyars Publishing Ltd. 1981.

- Gould, Jean. *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975.
- Griffin, Nicholas J. "Britain's Chinese Labor Camps in World War I" *Military Affairs*. 30.3 (Oct 1976): 102-108.
- Grover, Philip ed. *Ezra Pound: The London Years: 1908-1920*. New York: AMS Press 1978.
- Hakutani, Yoshinobu. "Ezra Pound, Yone Noguchi, and Imagism." *Modern Philology* 90 (1992): 46-69.
- Hayot, Eric. "Critical Dreams: Orientalism, Modernism, and the Meaning of Pound's China." *Twentieth Century Literature* 45.4 (Winter 1999): 511-533.
- Homberger, Eric. "Modernists and Edwardians." *Ezra Pound: The London Years 1908-1920*. Ed. Philip Grover. New York: AMS Press, 1978.
- Hulme, Peter. "Columbus and the Cannibals." *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Edited by Ashcroft et al. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism*. Durham: Duke U P, 1991.
- Kenner, Hugh. "Ezra Pound and Chinese." *Agenda* (October-November 1965): 38-41.
- . "The Invention of China." *Spectrum* 9 (Spring 1967): 21-52.
- Kern, Robert. *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1996.
- Larson, Wendy. "Realism, Modernism, and the Anti-'Spiritual Pollution' Campaign in China." *Modern China* 15.1 (January 1989): 37-71.
- Latour, Bruno. "An Interview with Bruno Latour." *Configurations* 1.2 (1993): 247-268.
- Li Honglin. "Exposing and Criticizing the 'Gang of Four' Constitutes a Decisive Battle for a Historical Nature." *History Research (Lishih yenchiu)* 3 (March 1978): 3-15.
- Li Hongsheng. "Guangdong Historians Discuss 'Learning from the West.'" *Guangdong Nanfang Ribao [Southern Guangdong Daily]* 9 Jan 1979: 3.
- Link, Perry. *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 2000.

- Liu, Lydia. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford U P, 1995.
- Lowell, Amy. "Nationalism in Art." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 5.1 (October 1914): 33-38.
- Lowes, John L. "The Poetry of Amy Lowell an Unacknowledged Imagist." *Essays in Appreciation*. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1936.
- Mao Zedong. *Mao Zhuxi Yulu*. Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe. 1967.
- Monroe, Harriet. "Notes." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 2.6 (September 1913): 228-229.
- . "Poems." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 4.1 (April 1914): 60-64.
- . "The Audience II." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 5.1 (October 1914): 31-32.
- . "Notes." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 5.4 (March 1915): 301.
- Pan, Yuan, and Pan Jie. "The Non-Official Magazine Today and the Younger Generation's Ideals for a New Literature." *After Mao Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981*. Ed. Jeffery C. Kinkly. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1985.
- Phillips, William F. "World Literature in Review: Chinese." *World Literature Today* 69.3 (Summer 1995): 645-647.
- Porter, David. *Ideographia: The Chinese Cipher in Early Modern Europe*. Stanford: Stanford U P, 2001.
- Pound, Ezra. "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 1.6 (March 1913): 200-206.
- . "Editor's Comment: The Tradition." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 3.4 (January 1914): 137-141.
- . "Aby Salamamm—A Song of Empire." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 2.1 (April 1914): 176-177.
- . "The Audience I." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 5.1 (October 1914): 29-30.
- . "Exile's Letter." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 5.4 (March 1915): 200-206.
- . *A Memoir of Gaudier-Brzeska*. New York: New Directions, 1970.
- . *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound*. Introduction by Loius L. Martz, Ed. Michael King. New York: New Directions, 1976.

- . *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. New York: New Directions, 1993.
- Pound, Omar, and A. Walton Litz. *Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespear: Their Letters: 1909-1914*. New York: New Directions, 1984.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Pratt, William. "Ezra Pound and the Image." *Ezra Pound: The London Years 1908-1920*. Ed. Philip Grover. New York: AMS Press, 1978.
- Rae, Patricia. *The Practical Muse: Pragmatist Poetics in Hume, Pound, and Stevens*. Lewisburg: Bucknell U P, 1997.
- Qian, Zhaoming. *Orientalism and Modernism: the Legacy of China in Pound and Williams*. Durham: Duke U P, 1995.
- Peng, Shaojian. "The Subject-Object Oneness and the Generative Mechanism of Poetry Images." *Ningbo University Journal* 1(1990): 53-62.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Selinker, L. "Interlanguage." *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*. 10 (1978): 209-231.
- Shi, Zhongquan. "Renew Study, Follow Great Revolutionary Changes." *Beijing Ribao* [Beijing Daily] 4 Jan 1979.
- Tang, Xiaobing. "Residual Modernism: Narratives of the Self in Contemporary Chinese Fiction." *Modern Chinese Literature* 7.1 (1993 Spring): 7-32.
- Tang, Xiaobing. *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford U P, 1996.
- Tang, Xiaobing, and Arif Dirlik, eds. *Politics, Ideology and Literary Discourse in Modern China*. Durham: Duke U P, 1993.
- Tang, Zhengxu, and Chen Houcheng. *20 Shiji Zhongguo Wenxue Yu Xifang Xiandaizhuyi Sichao* [Twentieth Century Chinese Literature and Western Modernism]. Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1992.
- Tay, William. "'Obscure Poetry': A Controversy in Post-Mao China." *After Mao Chinese Literature and Society 1978-1981*. Ed. Jeffery C. Kinkly. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1985.

- Tuchman, Barbara. *Stillwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945*. New York: Macmillan, 1970.
- Upward, Allen. "Scented Leaves—From a Chinese Jar." *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 2.6 (September 1913): 191-199.
- Wang, Jing. *High Culture Fever. Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1996.
- Wang, Jinhou. *Wu Si Xin Wen Xue Yu Wai Guo Wen Xue [May Fifth New Literature and Foreign Literature]*. Chengdu: Sichuan Daxue Chu Ban She, 1995.
- Wang, Lina. "The Publication and Influence of Tang Poetry Abroad." *China Publications* 3-4 (1991); rpt in *New China Digest* (1991): 206-10.
- Wang, Zuoliang. *Degrees of Affinity, Studies in Comparative Literature*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching Press, 1985.
- Wilson, Peter. *A Preface to Ezra Pound*. New York: Longman, 1997.
- Wollen, Peter. *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1993.
- Wu, Guoxia. "Party's Emphasis on Work to Be Shifted to Modernization, Construction." *Guangdong Nanfang Ribao [Southern Guangdong Daily]* 9 Jun 1979: 3.
- Xiao, Yin. "The Leadership Should Liberalize Their Minds a Little Further." *Beijing Ribao [Beijing Daily]* 10 Jan 1979.
- Xie, Ming. *Ezra Pound and the Appropriation of Chinese Poetry: Cathay, Translation, and Imagism*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1999.
- Yan, Yuejun, ed. *Hou Menglong Shi Xuan*. Shenyang Shi: Chun Feng Wen Yi Chu Ban She, 1994.
- . *Menglong Shi Xuan*. Shenyang Shi: Chun Feng Wen Yi Chu Ban She, 1985.
- Yeh, Michelle, ed. *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*. New Haven: Yale U P, 1992.
- . "Light a Lamp in a Rock: Experimental Poetry in Contemporary China." *Modern China* 18.4 (Oct 1992): 379-410.
- . "The 'Cult of Poetry' in Contemporary China." *Journal of Asian Studies* 15.1 (Feb 1996): 51-80.
- Yip, Wai-Lim. *Ezra Pound's Cathay*. Princeton: Princeton U P, 1969.

---. *Lyrics from Shelters: Modern Chinese Poetry 1930-1950*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Zhang Longxi. "Western Theory and Chinese Reality." *Critical Inquiry*. 19 (1992): 105-130.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Innis McDougall was born in Victoria, British Columbia in the year of our Lord 1974. Since that time he has spent many hours learning from Prince Edward Island brook trout, and staring at the corners of many different ceilings, trying to understand principles of the line. Countless highway miles in between have effortlessly reconstituted space around him. Several countries have allowed him to drift around the streets of their cities like a sleeping cloud across brilliant skies. Gan Liulu, Family, friends, strangers, hoary faced Russian writers, Rhinish Medieval mystics, alcoholics and dropouts, soldiers and sailors, modernists that oppose modernity, poets and great doubters, warriors despising war, vegetation springing from deep August heat, the ice pack of a Buffalo gray winter, and all our glorious dead have produced a love that sustains him, and a stability stronger than fate. He has learned essential movements of the cosmos from the color of the sea. Ian, Robert, William, Duncan, Ali and Brian, and his father and mother made him what he is. Gan Liulu made him what he is to become. He studied Europe from the back of an R-5. He studied America from the Great Lakes to the Bronx. He studied English Literature from SUNY Buffalo. He has earned meager sums of money at dairy farms, pizzerias, drive-in movie theatres, scarified clear-cuts in the jack pine/black spruce ocean of northern Ontario, English teaching institutes in Pusan Korea, the basement of a Rochester radio factory, a few months in the libraries (and chemistry labs) of Chapel Hill. He has been to the highest places of his life in China and has come down into the swamps of Florida. There he goes by the grace of God.