

Global America Revisited: Ezra Pound, Yone Noguchi, and Modernist *Japonisme*

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The term *Japonisme* was coined in 1872 by Philippe Burty, a French author and collector, who put a name to what was then an emerging field: the growing awareness, and passage into Europe of woodblock prints, manuscript books, sculpture, ceramics, poems, and other cultural artifacts from Japan. Unlike earlier, more gradual and diffused eighteenth-century movements such as *Orientalisme* or *Chinoiserie*--both of which took place, significantly, within the political and socioeconomic contexts of European imperialism--the earliest phase of this intercultural dialogue, *Japonaiserie*, began more or less with the initiation of free trade and diplomatic ties.¹ For over two hundred years, from 1639 to this celebrated "fall of the bamboo curtain" when the Treaty of Kanagawa was signed on March 31, 1854, Japanese elites had adopted a strict policy known as *Sakoku*, effectively isolating themselves from the great maritime nations of Europe--not just Britain and France, but Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands. Fourteen years later, at the dawn of the Meiji Restoration on October 23, 1868, a new era was proclaimed to have begun at the emperor's summer palace in Kyoto: Article 5 of the Imperial Oath stated that "Knowledge shall be sought for throughout the world, so that the foundations of the empire may be strengthened."² Japan's 1905 victory in the war against Russia was widely regarded as the first time a modern Asian power could enter the world stage on an "equal footing" with the Occident.³

Gabriel Weisberg has observed that the cultural crossings that gave rise to *Japonisme* were, in key respects, comparable to Europe's Renaissance, when the discovery of classical antiquities inspired imitation, and even veneration.⁴ Early signs of this trend were in London, where the Japanese Antiquities of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles were already on exhibit by 1825 and, three decades later, there was another exhibition of Japanese art held by the Society of Painters in Water Colours at 6 Pall Mall East. In the early 1860s, Japanese *ukiyo-e*, or woodblock prints, were first circulated in France and considered models of technique by Impressionist painters.⁵

Boston also became a center for knowledge about Japan, thanks in large part to the efforts of Ernest Fenollosa, a philosopher, leading critic of Japanese art, and ordained Buddhist priest born in Salem, Massachusetts, his father having emigrated from Spain to the New World in the 1830s. Fenollosa probably felt like

something of an outsider to the close-knit society of Harvard College and the Divinity School during the 1870s, even going so far as to describe himself, in the *Harvard Class Book* for 1874, as a descendent of Xiotencatl, chief of the Tlascalans in Mexico at the time of Cortes' invasion. Perhaps it was this sense of being an exotic "Other" which attracted Fenollosa first to Emerson, an ardent reader of religious and literary works from Asia, and then to Japan, where he traveled in 1878 to take a position teaching philosophy and political economy to a rising generation of political and intellectual leaders at the Imperial University at Tokyo.⁶

Fenollosa was one among a distinguished coterie of Bostonians (including Percival Lowell, Isabella Stewart Gardner, and Henry Adams) who studied and collected Japanese art.⁷ This widening engagement with Japanese culture in cosmopolitan centers across New England, on the mid-Atlantic seaboard, and abroad, gradually colored the diverse styles of modern and modernist poets throughout the United States--and, Amy Lowell's efforts notwithstanding, the poet most often credited for nurturing this development is Ezra Pound.

In recent years, important studies by Wai-chee Dimock, Shoji Goto, Yoshinobu Hakutani, Paul Giles, Brent Edwards, Werner Sollors, John Carlos Rowe and others have emphasized the necessity of global and comparative perspectives in American Studies--and my presence here today is part of that broader, salutary trend.⁸ In taking on the global, however, Americanists would do well to remember work that has already been done, in modernist studies and elsewhere, to deepen our understanding of how literary emergence and modernism on the frontiers of European empires in the New World actually came about. Ezra Pound is a wonderful example of the necessity of globality, a task embraced by modern and expatriate modernist American writers who came of age amidst World War in the aftermath of Civil War. We know, moreover, that a lot of good work has already been done on the influence of Japanese and Chinese art on the emergence of *imagisme* and the structural development of *The Cantos*: as Dimock and, over fifty years before her, Earl Miner have shown, Pound's love of Asian literature and art helped him to overcome deeply felt national prejudices and to make his poetry new.⁹ In what follows I hope to build on this body of scholarship by revisiting the contexts and influences surrounding Pound's *imagiste* and Vorticist phases, emphasizing the background of French symbolist translations, impressionist *Japonisme*, and especially the writings of Yone Noguchi, whose presence in this historical panorama has been relatively neglected.

According to Zhaoming Quian, British poets such as T. E. Hulme and F. S. Flint were first alerted to the possibilities of Japanese versification after reading translations of tanka and haiku poetry rendered by French Symbolists. Pound's study of Japanese literature probably began when he joined Hulme's "School of the Images" (an offshoot of the stodgier Poet's Club) at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in London in 1909.¹⁰ Edwin Arnold, Rudyard Kipling, and Alfred

Noyes had previously tried to translate and incorporate Japanese motifs, but Pound could also have heard about “hokku” from members of Hulme’s group, especially Flint, who had translated Japanese haiku poetry into English using French translations from *Au fil de l’eau*, an anthology privately published in 1905 by Paul-Louis Couchoud. Kodama speculates that Pound could also have learned about Japanese poetic forms directly, through his own reading of Couchoud’s translations, and this seems likely when we consider that one of these translations was of a poem to which Pound would, some years later, refer.¹¹

We also know that in France, around the time of the First World War, there was growing interest in Japanese poetry. Another important anthology and study of Japanese literature in French translation was published by Michel Revon in Paris in 1910; and, six years later, Julien Vocance published *Cent Visions de Guerre*, a collection of haiku-inspired war poems, in *La Grande Revue*.¹² Revon was the first to call “hokku” (or starting poems) “haikai,” which became the term most commonly employed in French and Spanish circles during the first half of the twentieth century.¹³

Even as a young child, Pound could have taken an interest in Japan, given that during the time when he was growing up in Philadelphia, a hometown lawyer published the novel *Madame Butterfly*, first staged in New York as a popular play by David Belasco in 1900, and later the libretto of an even more successful opera by Puccini in 1904. Still, Pound’s experiences in London and its environs played an essential role in his move towards *imagisme*. The American painter, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, from Lowell, Massachusetts, who had been strongly influenced by Japanese art--incorporating the compositional conventions of Japanese woodcut prints and attempting, in the words of one art historian, to “rival the freedom of the potter’s brush”--did much to bring knowledge of French impressionist *Japonisme* across the Channel from Paris to London during the 1860s and 1870s.¹⁴ In the second, 1910 London edition of *Japanese Poetry*, which included a new essay on “Basho and the Japanese Poetical Epigram,” Basil Hall Chamberlain used “hokku,” the term favored by Pound himself, and which gained currency in Britain and the United States around that time.

Most important for our present purposes, it was in London that Pound also would have first heard about Yone Noguchi. Americanist critic Yoshinobu Hakutani has written that Noguchi “first corresponded with Pound and then met Pound, along with Yeats, when he gave a series of lectures on Japanese poetry in England in early 1914.” Pound may have read Noguchi’s article, “What Is a Hokku Poem,” which was published in London in a January 1913 issue of *Rhythm*; or attended Noguchi’s January 28, 1914 lecture at Magdalen College, Oxford, on “The Japanese Hokku Poetry” delivered at the invitation of college president T. H. Warren and poet laureate Robert Bridges, a lecture published in London by John Murray in March that same year as part of Noguchi’s *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry*; or attended any one of the lectures forming the basis for other chapters in Noguchi’s book at the Japan Society, the Royal Asiatic Society, or the

Quest society, where Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Hulme had also lectured in 1914.¹⁵

Noguchi, who was born in a town near Nagoya, went on a pilgrimage that began with his sailing to San Francisco in 1893, where he worked as a kitchen boy in the home of a Jewish family and then for a local Japanese newspaper, before spending time at the Oakland hermitage of Joaquin Miller (also known as Cincinnatus Heine), a former Pony Express rider and horse thief whose family had moved West from Oregon to California during the Gold Rush.¹⁶ By that time, Noguchi was already a devoted reader of works by Poe, Longfellow, Irving, and Bret Harte, and Miller, a poet himself, continued Noguchi's education by introducing him to Thoreau and Whitman and encouraging his ambitions as a writer. In January 1905, Noguchi wrote an article about Miller for *National Magazine*, "With the Poet of Light and Joy." There, he vividly recalled their first meeting:

Welcome,--Welcome! Joaquin Miller (one of the California, nay, American "wonders") stretched out his hand from the bed when he saw me bowing at the entrance of his hut. It is his habit to pass, or invite his own soul, the whole forenoon in bed, wearing a skull cap which adds to him such a romantic touch of some older age.¹⁷

By 1914, Noguchi already published four collections of poetry in English--*Seen and Unseen: or Monologues of a Homeless Snail* (1897), *The Voice of the Valley* (1898), *From the Eastern Sea* (1903), and *The Pilgrimage* (2 vols., 1908, 1909, 1912)--garnering praise from Willa Cather, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and others.¹⁸ Pound would have been aware of Noguchi's *The Pilgrimage*, which was reviewed in *The Fortnightly Review* for September 1910, and in any event we know that Noguchi sent both volumes of *The Pilgrimage* to Pound in 1911 with this short but intriguing note: "As I am not yet acquainted with your work, I wish you [would] send your books or books which you like to have me read. This little note may sound quite businesslike, but I can promise you that I can do better in my next letter to you.... I am anxious to read not only your poetical work but also your criticism."¹⁹

Pound, in turn, acknowledged receipt of the books in a letter postmarked September 2, 1911:

...I had, of course, known of you, but I am much occupied with my mediaeval studies & had neglected to read your books altho' they lie with my own in Mathews shop & I am very familiar with the appearance of their covers.

I am reading those you sent me but I do not yet know what to say of them except that they have delighted me. Besides it is very hard to write to you until I know more about you, you are older than I am--I gather from the dates of your poems--you have been to New York. You are giving us the

spirit of Japan, is it not?...Of your country I know almost nothing--surely if the east & the west are ever to understand each other that understanding must come slowly & come first through the arts.²⁰

It seems fair to assume, based on this correspondence, that Pound actually read the *hokku* in Noguchi's "Hokku" from *The Pilgrimage*, which was quoted in the *Fortnightly* review and one of the very first to be composed in English:

Where the flowers sleep,
Thank God! I shall sleep, to-night.
Oh, come, butterfly.²¹

Noguchi's Oxford lecture occurred less than a year after Pound's *imagiste* manifesto, "A Few Don'ts," was featured in the March 1913 issue of *Poetry*; just eight months after Pound's best-known haiku-inspired lyric, "In a Station of the Metro," first appeared in the April 1913 issue of *Poetry*; and only a month before Pound's anthology, *Des Imagistes*, was published as the second issue of the New York journal *Glebe*.²² In this lecture, Noguchi tried to describe the effect of *hokku* poetry, tiny poems he describes as "pure" because their music is like the single note of a bird. Such poems, he warns, may at first appear to be "the vagrant utterances of a primitive man who, uneducated, sings of whatever his fancy or whim finds fair and striking"; still, we should think twice before dismissing them as such. Anticipating Eliot's claims about poetry and the primitive in "The Use of Poetry" and elsewhere, Noguchi asks, "what poet is not primitive in heart when he is true?"²³

It is fairly certain that Pound heard or read the text of Noguchi's Oxford lecture. And if he did, he would have been struck by Noguchi's claim that a haiku by Basho recalls the pathos of Walt Whitman's last years:

I read somewhere of Whitman's denying the so-called "literature" (accidentally laughing, scorning, jeering at his contemporaries). "I feel about literature what Grant did about war. He hated war. I hate literature...." Basho always spoke from the same reason that there was no other poetry except the poetry of the heart; he never thought literature or so-called literature to be connected with his own poetry, because it was a single noted adoration or exclamation offhand at the almost dangerous moment when his love of Nature suddenly turned to hatred from the too great excess of his love Although Basho never expressed his hatred of city life in such a bold emphasis of words as Whitman, as his were the days when politeness of language was inculcated...he regarded a city life as fatal to his poetry; he was, with Whitman, a good exemplar to teach us how to escape the burden of life; and again the *Hokku* poems, if intelligently translated into English (indeed that is an almost impossible literary feat to accomplish), will give the most interesting example to encourage the modern literary ideal of the West which seeks its salvation in escape from the so-called literary.²⁴

Pound himself had already exhibited a similar, but far more ambivalent stance towards Whitman in a now well-known 1909 essay, written after he was dismissed from Wabash College and, having toured Gibraltar and Venice, moved for the year to London: "Entirely free from the renaissance humanist ideal of the complete man or from the Greek idealism, he is content to be what he is, and he is his time and his people."²⁵

The influence of Whitman on Noguchi has already been examined by Hakutani, who demonstrates their shared abhorrence of materialism and love of nature: like Whitman, who in *Song of Myself* "reincarnates himself into a sensitive quahog on the beach, Noguchi in 'Seas of Loneliness' identifies himself with a lone quail."²⁶ The pervasive recollection of Whitman's frontier poetics in Noguchi's early poetry makes sense when we consider the close relationship between Miller and Noguchi, and the fact that, according to Arthur Ransome, his reviewer in *The Fortnightly Review*, Noguchi's second collection of poems *The Voice of the Valley* was written in response to his stay in Yosemite National Park, a region that was first settled by whites during the Gold Rush and where Amerindians had lived for at least 8,000 years.²⁷

But what remains to be shown is that Noguchi's expressed interest in Whitman, which emphasizes Whitman's critique of the "so-called literary," correlates closely with Pound's own attitude towards Whitman, and that Whitman could have thus figured so centrally in Pound's discovery of *imagisme*.²⁸ One story of how Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" came about, also from 1914, was in the same September 1st *Fortnightly Review* article where Pound tried to differentiate *imagisme* from modes of symbolism that were now, as he put it, "debased." In "Vorticism," an essay now familiar to us all, Pound remembered the pains he had taken to condense what would arguably be his most memorable contribution, not just to the emergence of *Japonisme* but to the flowering of modernism on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁹ Whether or not the image of a butterfly returning to its branch, which appears in Pound's rendering of the haiku poet Arakida Moritake, was intended partly as an allusion to Noguchi's "Hokku" we can only guess:

One is tired of ornamentations, they are all a trick, and any sharp person can learn them.

The Japanese have had the sense of exploration. They have understood the beauty of [the small child's] sort of knowing. A Chinaman said long ago that if a man can't say what he has to say in twelve lines he had better keep quiet. The Japanese have evolved the still shorter form of the hokku:

"The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:

A butterfly."

That is the substance of a very well-known *hokku*....³⁰

We should note that Couchoud, in one of two articles on "Les épigrammes lyriques du Japon" published in 1906, singled out the same poem by Moritake as being most typical of the genre: "Un bref étonnement!" as he put it, "Les trois

versiculets semblent faits pour traduire une apparence inattendue, une surprise d'oeil." Couchoud translated Moritake's *hokku* as

Un pétale tombé
Remonte à sa branche:
Ah! c'est un papillon!³¹

Four years later, Revon would offer this slightly different rendering--

Une fleur tombée à sa branche
Comme je la vois revenir:
C'est un papillon!

and in a footnote he remarks that "Un proverbe japonais dit que 'la fleur tombée ne revient pas à sa branche'; le poète a eu, un instant, l'illusion contraire."³² Pound's "Petals on a wet, black bough" and "The fallen blossom" thus work effectively to reconcile two French translations of a poem by Moritake that is, according to Couchoud, already the "translation of an unexpected appearance."

The historical connections among Whitman, Noguchi, French translations of Japanese poetry and Pound's *imagisme* are more compelling when we consider that the *Poetry* version of Pound's metro poem was placed directly below (or "super-positioned" by) his "truce" with Whitman in "A Pact," and that Noguchi included an English translation of the same Moritake poem in his lecture at Oxford, shortly after his remarks on Whitman. It is significant that Noguchi complains about the inaccuracy and low quality of the English translation as one that "clings to exactitude" and ends up being no more than a pretty vignette couched in epigram:

When the English poet must cling to such an exactitude, let me dare say, as if a tired swimmer with a life-belt, I have only to wonder at the general difference between East and West in the matter of poetry. Take another example to show in what direction the English poetical mind pleases to turn:

"I thought I saw the fallen leaves
Returning to their branches:
Alas, butterflies were they."

What real poetry is in the above, I wonder, except a pretty, certainly not high ordered, fancy of a vignettist; it might pass as a fitting specimen if we understand *Hokku* poems, as some Western students delight to understand *Hokku* poems, by the word "epigram."... Arthur Ransome says somewhere in his paper called "Kinetic and Potential Speech": "It is like a butterfly that has visited flowers and scatters their scent in its flight. The scent and fluttering of its bloom-laden wings are more important than the direction or speed of its flying." Such language applies to the *Hokku* poems at their best.³³

Elsewhere, in *Through the Torii*, published in Boston first in 1914 and again in 1922, Noguchi complains about another rendering in English of Moritake. This

time, however, he uses his example to illustrate how boring English similes could be if they were used too explicitly:

I dare say (is it my Oriental pride?) that the Western minds are not yet wide open to accept our Japanese imagination and thoughts as they are.... Last night, before I went to bed, I opened the pages of English translation of our *hokkus*, wherein the following piece was declared to be the most delicate:--

Thought I, the fallen flowers
Are returning to their branch
But lo! they are butterflies.

Of this translation he concludes, "if it means anything, it is the writer's ingenuity perhaps in finding a simile; but I wonder where is its poetical charm when it is expressed thus definitely. Definiteness is one of the English traits, I believe.... To call the Japanese language ungrammatical, the Japanese mind vague, does no justice to them; their beauty is in soaring out of the state of definiteness."³⁴

Here I should mention one more context for the emergence of Pound's *imagisme*, namely, French impressionism. We have already seen that Pound was working with French Symbolist translations, and Noguchi's dissatisfaction with English renderings of haiku may have had an effect on his emerging poetics of imagism. That Pound enhanced his knowledge of Japanese poetry, and even his appreciation of kinship with Whitman as a result of Noguchi's influence is all the more likely when we consider that an earlier version of Pound's narrative about the metro had already been circulated in *T.P.'s Weekly* for June 6, 1913, begging the question of why he decided to revise it again for publication:

For well over a year I have been trying to make a poem of a very beautiful thing that befell me in the Paris Underground. I got out of a train at, I think, La Concorde and in the jostle I saw a beautiful face, and then another beautiful face. All that day I tried to find words for what this made me feel. That night as I went home along the rue Raynouard I was still trying. I could get nothing but spots of colour. I remember thinking that if I had been a painter I might have started a wholly new school of painting. I tried to write the poem afterwards in Italy, but found it useless. Then only the other night, wondering how I should tell the adventure, it struck me that in Japan, where a work of art is not estimated by its acreage and where sixteen syllables are counted enough for a poem if you arrange and punctuate them properly, one might make a very little poem which would be translated about as follows--

"The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough."³⁵

This first version of Pound's narrative, in "How I Began," also includes a version of the poem that comes close to the final one published in *Lustra*:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.³⁶

But the replacement of the colon by a semi-colon marks an important departure. A colon connects two grammatically independent but logically dependent clauses, where the second explains the first, implying a metaphorical relationship of equivalence where petals stand figuratively for the faces in the Paris underground. A semi-colon, by contrast, fits more accurately with Pound's poetic principles, because it connects two dependent clauses containing elements of a catalogue or list, implying that the clauses are closely related while leaving their logical relationship ambiguous. The absence of a verb also foregrounds the literal reality of faces and petals as objects, not figures or symbols, locating each within a particular culture and historical moment--cultures and eras which the semi-colon encourages us to juxtapose and compare while at the same time maintaining their uniqueness.

The passage from June 1913 also touches on the analogy with a "new school in painting," a topic Pound would develop more explicitly in connection with imagism at least twice, first in the 1914 *Fortnightly Review* essay on "Vorticism," and then again a year later in "As for Imagisme," published in *New Age*. Michael Levinson, in *A Genealogy of Modernism*, has shown that Ford Madox Ford's Impressionism was formative in shaping Pound's poetics, even though Pound was ambivalent--or, as Levinson puts it, there was a "confusion" or "curious dissociation in Pound's critical judgment" on this point.³⁷ We see this same ambiguity in "Vorticism," where Pound says that "Imagisme is not Impressionism, though one borrows, or could borrow, much from the impressionist method of presentation."³⁸ In his "one image poem," Pound continues, he was "trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective." Again, in "As for Imagisme," Pound avers that the image "may be impressionism, it may even be very good prose. By 'direct treatment,' one means simply that having got the Image one refrains from hanging it with festoons."³⁹

Pound's remarks about impressionism should also be considered in light of *Japonisme*, given the thoroughly documented influence of Japanese woodblock prints on French impressionist painters, as well as on Americans such as Whistler and Mary Cassatt. From a literary vantage point, we should think as well that the background of impressionism could also have given Pound, however obliquely, a consoling recollection of his American antecedents Stephen Crane and Henry James, in addition to Ford. James himself was more than aware of the Japanese influences on Impressionist art, as his comparison of a Cape Cod scene to "a pendant, pictured Japanese screen or banner; a delightful little triumph of 'impressionism'" would suggest.⁴⁰ There is also this passage, which opens James's essay, "London," that Pound may well have read, where James recalls his wonder upon first entering London by train in terms that anticipate Pound's rendering of

his metro emotion:

There is a certain evening that I count as virtually a first impression, --the end of a wet, black Sunday, twenty years ago, about the first of March. There had been an earlier version, but it had turned to grey, like faded ink, and the occasion I speak of was a fresh beginning....The sense of approach was almost intolerably strong at Liverpool, where, as I remember, the perception of the English character of everything was as acute as a surprise, though it could only be a surprise without a shock. There was a kind of wonder indeed that England should be as English as, for my entertainment, she took the trouble to be; but the wonder would have been greater, and all the pleasure absent, if the sensation had not been violent.⁴¹

Finally, and not surprisingly, given all the evidence we have seen regarding the formative role Noguchi played during this phase of Pound's maturation as a poet, we should remember that in "What is a Hokku Poem," an article published six months before Pound's essay in *TP's Weekly*, and reprinted in *Through the Torii*, Noguchi called attention to the "impression" made by a poem he implicitly compares to one of Hiroshige's woodcuts, a poem that recalls his trip first from Tokyo to Atami, to see the first plum trees flowering in springtime, and then his return to his home in Tokyo where the first blossoms began to break:

You may call me mad or fantastic if you will, when I tell you that I journeyed one hundred miles for just an early sight of the flowers; that early sight makes my ephemeral life worth living.... When the plum trees in the well-known "Plum Forest" there...began to smile up to the skies and sunlight (and to me), I carried my world-wearied soul every day out under their shade, and talked with them in the silence that was beyond the world and humanity. I was called, when I was almost forgetting human speech, back to Tokyo again to pay life's toll, where I was at once besieged by the same winter cold....; I was again obliged to shut myself within the room with a little brazier on whose ashes I could write and rewrite the pages from the Songs of Innocence, and to look happy traveling before Fuji Mountain's presence in Hiroshige's pictures. But it happened one morning when I was washing my face in my garden...that the very first note of a nightingale made me raise my face at once to the plum tree where two or three blossoms had just begun to break; "At last, Spring even to Tokyo," I exclaimed. I made a habit from then on to sit on the balcony facing the garden when the sunlight fell there with all heart and soul and to count the blossoms every day; I recall here to my mind the following seventeen-syllable hokku poem:

"One blossom of the plum--
Yes, as much as that one blossom, every day,
Have we of Spring's warmth."

It might be from the conditions of my impaired health of late that such a little poem as the above makes a strong impression on my mind; indeed, I

never felt before this year, the kindness of the sunlight and the joy of spring.⁴²

Pound's interest in Japanese literature and art would intensify shortly after this coming-of-age as an *imagiste*--when, by his own account, he first met Mary Fenollosa, widow of the distinguished American Orientalist, at the London home of the Hindu nationalist poetess, politician, and lecturer Sarojini Naidu, some time in the fall or early winter of 1913.⁴³ *Cathay*, first published in 1915 and reprinted in *Lustra* the following year, illustrates the early results of Pound's encounter with East Asian cultures through Fenollosa's notes. Although Pound calls his works "translations" on the title page, he also explicitly acknowledges that the Chinese originals by Li Po were "for the most part" mediated through the interpretative lens of Fenollosa's notes and Japanese translations (hence, "Rihaku") and, furthermore, through the "decipherings" of Mori Kainan and Nagao Ariga.⁴⁴

Kainan, considered by Fenollosa to be "probably the greatest living authority on Chinese poetry," was a professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo with whom Fenollosa studied for many years; and Nagao Ariga, one of Fenollosa's students at the time, was author of *La guerre sino-japonaise au point de vue du droit international* (1896), *La guerre russo-japonaise au point de vue continental* (1908) and other works on Japanese legal history, jurisprudence, and world politics. Two others who are known to have contributed to Fenollosa's knowledge of Japan were Kakuzo Okakura, author of *The Ideals of the East* (1903), *The Awakening of Japan* (1904) and *The Book of Tea* (1906), a principal founder of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, and starting in 1910 Director of the Asian arts division at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; and Umewaka Minoru who, according to Mrs. Fenollosa, was a former court actor to the Shogun.⁴⁵

Hugh Kenner was the first to point out that Pound's word "decipherings" implicitly questions the accuracy of the translations in *Cathay*; and, more recently, Barry Ahearn has gone so far as to argue that Pound "not only suggests that his role in the process of translation has been minimal, but calls into question the qualifications of two of his fellow translators." Whatever the case, "decipherings" recalls the series of prior cultural exchanges and possible distortions involved in Pound's adaptation of Fenollosa's translations of texts in Japanese that were themselves translations by Japanese scholars from Chinese sources. As George Kearns observes, "In dealing with all texts, Pound likes to leave traces of cultural transmission."⁴⁶

Returning to the oft-told tale of Pound's *imagisme*, with these various contexts in mind, I would like to raise a few claims that have not been sufficiently emphasized in scholarship. First, that the techniques resulting from Pound's encounter with Japanese poetry may have helped him, in poetically confronting his metro emotion, to avoid the desperate grandiosity, explanations, and moralizing which Pound found so off-putting in Whitman. "I wrote," Pound tells us in the *Fortnightly Review*, "a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call a work 'of second intensity.'"⁴⁷ The question whether there is also the

cherished memory of Noguchi's butterfly *hokku* in Pound's poem, or whether Pound alluded to translations of Moritake by Couchoud and Revon as a tacit acknowledgement of Noguchi's debt to Moritake, or whether Noguchi's stated admiration for Whitman helped Pound consciously to engage in poetic commerce, not just with Whitman but with Noguchi and Moritake, must remain open. Raising such questions, nonetheless we arrive at a renewed appreciation for Pound's North American milieu, as well as his adventurous, always surprising, and restorative crossing of global cultures.

Second, T. S. Eliot praised Pound's *Cathay* in 1928, saying that it contributed to Pound's "steady effort towards the synthetic construction of a style of speech," and this certainly holds true with regard to Pound's *Japonisme*.⁴⁸ Critics have, understandably, been distraught at Pound's racism, which may well have hampered any good faith effort at transculturation. But Pound's preoccupation with "style" also suggests that he was not a thoroughgoing Orientalist, at least not in Edward Said's sense of the word. In *Orientalism*, Said argues that Edward Fitzgerald is not an Orientalist because he was, like Pound, primarily concerned with "a stylistic matter." Elsewhere, he contends that an Orientalist is someone claiming to have expert knowledge, but when we go through Pound's letters, we find that Pound is constantly referring to his "appalling ignorance" about Japanese language, religion, and literature.⁴⁹ Since this is the case, it is difficult to show that Pound intended to produce accurate, learned translations, or that he was trying to write what Yunte Huang calls "ethnography," revising and displacing cultural meanings so that they end up fulfilling Pound's own racist preconceptions.⁵⁰

Third, Kenner was surely right to underscore Pound's principle that "an image... is real because we know it directly," a "Luminous Detail" out of history --and thus that the fact of war would have helped Pound, as Kenner put it, to "rethink English verse." "*Cathay*, April 1915," he writes, "is largely a war book,... selected from the diverse wealth in the notebooks by a sensibility responsive to torn Belgium and disrupted London.... Much as the title alone connects 'In a Station of the Metro' with its occasion, so the date on the title page connects *Cathay* with the privations of the Expeditionary forces across the channel."⁵¹

It is perhaps too much to say that Pound's *imagisme* contributed to the emergence of haiku-inspired war poetry in France marked by the 1916 publication of Vocance's *Cent Visions de Guerre*. Still, it is illuminating to consider that "In a Station of the Metro" may well have been a war poem written during a time of "profound" but far from perpetual peace, not unlike "Range-Finding" by Frost, a prodigal *imagiste* whom Pound praised in 1913 for "painting the thing, the thing as he sees it."⁵² The fact that Noguchi compared hatred of "literature" shared by Whitman and Basho to hatred of war is another suggestive indicator of how and why Pound would have been so drawn to Japanese poetry at this time. Pound's recollection of beautiful faces, the accidental glimpse which in 1911 precipitated his Imagist *hokku*, is a luminous detail that fits well with Gertrude Stein's

trenchant observation almost three decades later that “In Paris around 1900-1914 the men were elegant and had almost more beauty of elegance than the women As the century progressed the war came. The horizon blue and the black uniforms of the aviators continued the tradition of French elegance among the men.”⁵³

Finally, these wartime contexts also enable us to trace a developmental continuity from *imagisme* to Vorticism and *The Cantos*. Pound’s decision to reprint “Three Cantos of a Poem of Some Length,” first published in the June, July, and August 1917 issues of *Poetry*, in the 1917 American edition of *Lustra* demonstrates, as Ronald Bush has argued, that the manifold repetition of “stationary” haiku-inspired images could (like repeated gestures, brush strokes, or musical motifs) be concatenated as an artistic whole, an epic that would approach Whitman’s in scope and depth.⁵⁴

This continuity is even more evident when we remember, as Kenner, J. J. Wilhelm, and Akiko Miyake have noted, that Pound’s parents owned a seventeenth-century Japanese manuscript book of poems written in Japanese and Chinese, with illustrations of *The Eight Scenes of Sho-Sho*, which had been given to Pound’s great-grandfather on his mother’s side by a Chinese merchant.⁵⁵ Pound’s consoling and evocative reference to landscape themes such as “Home-ward Bound Boats off a Distant Coast,” “Night Rain in Hsiao-Hsiang,” “Autumn Moon over Lake Tung-t’ing,” “Evening Bell from a Distant Temple,” “Sunset Glow Over a Fishing Village,” and “Wild Geese on a Sandy Plain” in Canto 49, the so-called “Seven Lakes Canto,” makes sense considering that *The Fifth Decad of Cantos, XLII-LI* was published in Britain and America in 1937, during yet another time of war and social uncertainty:

For the seven lakes, and by no man these verses:
Rain; empty river; a voyage,
Fire from frozen cloud, heavy rain in the twilight
Under the cabin roof was one lantern.
The reeds are heavy; bent;
and the bamboos speak as if weeping.
...
Wild geese swoop to the sand-bar,
Clouds gather about the hole of the window
Broad water; geese lineout with the autumn
Rooks clatter over the fishermen’s lanthorns,
A light moves in the north sky line;
where the young boys prod stones for shrimp.⁵⁶

The presence of such tranquil scenery creates a still, silent place--a hokku-like moment of calm in the whirlpool of history--and confirms Guiyou Huan’s recent account of the poem’s “imagistic” features.⁵⁷ Viewed in these terms, Pound’s first principle of *imagisme*, a poetics of fact that endured the arc of his entire career, should be regarded as having fostered a poetic response to both World Wars, not just the First. Jahan Ramazani has recently suggested that “like Eliot and Yeats,

Pound turns to Asia in a moment of crisis... seizing on Japanese haiku as a literary model that enables his breakthrough,” and that part of what makes Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro” such a key poem in the modernist canon is that it “represents an orientalism that is also antiorientalist, that is cross-cutting and counter discursive.”⁵⁸ From what we have seen, the effects of Pound’s *Japonisme* were far-reaching, and what is more the necessity for breaching these cultural frontiers of the nation-state were also deeply personal, because they helped a lonely watcher on the frontiers of consciousness to speak from the heart.

Notes

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19. Yoshinobu Hakutani, "Introduction," *Selected English Writings of Yone Noguchi*, vol. 2, ed. Y. Hakutani (London: Associated University Presses, 1992), 31; Kodama, *Ezra Pound and Japan*, 4.
20. Yone Noguchi, *Collected English Letters*, ed. Ikuko Atsumi (Tokyo: Yone Noguchi Society, 1975), 106.
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