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Ezra Pound: Merits and Defects in Approaching Eastern Poetry

Zijun Zhou[1,a,*]

[1]*Clifton College, College Road, Bristol, England*
a. lmaya83880@student.napavalley.edu
**corresponding author*

Abstract: Many literati consensually consider Ezra Pound a very significant figure in bringing Eastern poetry into the English world. His Cathay and In A Station of the Metro manifest his engagement in Chinese and Japanese poetry respectively. Rarely have scholars systematically discussed and evaluated the interconnection between the three languages' poetry displayed in Pound's work. Therefore, this article aims to provide a comparative and comprehensive analysis of Pound's works, Chinese ancient poems and haikus. It begins with an overview of poetry and then moves to introducing how English and Eastern poetry differ. In the discussion, Chinese and Japanese poetry have been explored respectively and jointly. This article, from the perspective of one with mastery or intermediacy in all three languages, aims to provide some more accurate and aesthetic translations of Chinese poems by poets including Wang Wei, and haikus by haijins such as Bashō. These translations (unless specified, original) better serve to compare and contrast Pound's poems and their Eastern counterparts. A series of close, dialectic analyses demonstrate that Pound both possessed merits and defects in approaching Eastern Poetry. This study provides a more thorough account of this significant literary crossover, from which it is hoped that future studies discover how Pound developed and/or popularised certain styles in this process.

Keywords: Ezra Pound, haiku, Chinese poetry, translation

1. Introduction

1.1. The History of English and Eastern Poetry

The timeless form of art where cultures and emotions intertwine, poetry has flourished worldwide for centuries. In the East, Chinese poetry can be traced back to *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*) compiled from the 11th to 7th century BCE; *Manyo-Shu* (*Collection of Ten Thousand* Leaves; some scholars believe *Kojiki* is the first anthology) marked the beginning of Japanese poetry, following the borrowing of *kanji* from Middle Chinese by 7th century [1, 2]. Coincident or inevitable, the first English poem, *Cædmon's Hymn*, was written in the same era [3]. Thereupon, all three groups of poetry underwent an evolution and, at a certain point in time, a watershed. Before the Renaissance, English poems were mainly epical and mythological. Afterwards, poems became more emotional, vernacular, and secular, and hence the Renaissance marked a watershed in English poetry.

Renaissance literature peaked with William Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Many scholars believe that his significance to Renaissance poetry is what Tang Xianzu was to the poetry of China's

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Ming Dynasty [4]. A comparison of the works by these two epitomes of their times can provide some insights into the development of Chinese and English poetry entering the latter half of the past millennium. Despite the cultural exchanges between the West and the East had already been established for more than a millennium, the two poets' works still demonstrated an essential difference between Eastern and English poetry. In summary, early modern English poems are emotionally more abundant and, in most cases, loyal to grammar, whilst early Chinese poems are emotionally implicit and grammatically irregular. This is a result of the flexibility of Chinese grammar and the fact that, the dominating form of early Chinese poetry, *jinti-poem* (late ancient Chinese poems or regulated verse) possesses less character space, which also explains the significance of concise imagery in Chinese poetry [5]. Inheriting ancient Chinese poetry, Japanese *haiku* has manifested these characteristics more evidently since poets had to express the stream of their minds within only 17 syllables. Historically, Chinese literature deeply influenced Japanese literature and thus they are very similar in some ways, which well-grounded the article's viewpoint from which Japanese and Chinese poetry are categorised as "Eastern poetry" and compared with English poetry of the West [6].

1.2. Ezra Pound

The disparity persisted for another 4 centuries, until the early 20th century when globalisation began to sprout. As one of the literati at the forefront, Ezra Pound faced the intersection and the acceleration of global literary communications, in which his great interest made him a prompter thereof. As early as the 1910s, he was captivated by Japanese *haiku* and ancient Chinese poems, from which he concluded some essences of Eastern poetry and then systemised imagism (originally as *imagisme*) — a literary movement that prompted the precision and economy of language through the adoption of concise images [7, 8]. Afterwards, he translated *nohs* (a form of traditional Japanese play) and several Chinese poems. These poems constitute his anthology *Cathay* which enjoyed a high reputation in the West. Beyond translation, he furthermore composed his own English *haikus*. *In a Station of the Metro* is an English *haiku* and one of Pound's most eminent works. Afterwards, he incorporated elements, especially imagery, from *haikus* ancient Chinese poetry into his later works in English and Italian. Pound kept practising and promulgating his imagist theories, which impacted James Joyce, T.S. Elliot, Elizabeth Bishop and almost all English modern poets. It is fair to say that he laid the bedrock of modernism in English poetry [9, 10].

1.3. Main Contents

Although his mistranslation of Chinese works and his political stand have been persistently criticised, Ezra Pound is still considered a great poet who played a very important role in the amalgamation of Eastern elements into English poetry. This article aims to explore his merits and defects in approaching Eastern poetry through (1) a brief introduction to the differences between English and Eastern poetry with analyses of poems including William Shakespeare's sonnet, Tang Xianzu's *jinti*-poem, Masaoka Shiki and Ōshima Ryōta's *haikus*, and Li Yu's Song-*ci*; (2) a review on how *haikus* inspired Ezra Pound, especially in terms of his imagism, and left traces in his works, with a close analysis of his *In a Station of the Metro* and other works by himself and some *haijins* (*haiku*-poets); (3) discussion on the defects and merits of his translations of Chinese poems in *Cathay* and from which what characteristics Pound had derived and impacted his works; (4) a conclusion on how Pound's imagism affected and thereby easternised Western poetry with compare between poems before and after the popularisation thereof.

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2. A Comparative Analysis of Pound and Other Poets' Poems

2.1. The Main Differences Between Early Eastern and English Poetry

Understanding the main differences between early Eastern and English poetry is a prerequisite to analysing how Pound approached the former from the latter's perspective. As aforementioned, the Renaissance marked the watershed of English poetry, after which Shakespeare wrote hundreds of sonnets. A similar watershed in Chinese poetry was marked by the transition from *guti*-poems (early ancient Chinese poems) to *jinti*-poems in the Tang Dynasty. The successor inspired Japanese poets and thereby they developed a new type of poetry named *haiku*. It is important to notice that, at that time, Eastern poetry did not differ from English poetry formally. To illustrate, *jinti*-poems, *haikus* and sonnets all follow strict rhyme and/or syllabic rules, and thus in this manner, all three forms can be considered as regulated verse. What really evinces the differences are the themes, emotions, and devices, which thus shall be the focus of this part.

2.1.1. Explicitness vs Implicitness and Love vs Friendship

The most depicted and praised emotion and theme in English poetry has always been love, not only adhered to by sonnets but also by many other forms of poetry, from epics (e.g. Orpheus and Eurydice) to lyrics (e.g. Percy Bysshe Shelly's *Love's Philosophy*). Amongst those poems about love in English, *Sonnet 18* by Shakespeare is the most representative [11]:

Sonnet 18, by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Overall, the tone of *Sonnet 18* is emotionally vivid and the theme of love is conveyed very explicitly in the poem. The sonnet begins with a question that exhibits the narrator's appreciation and adoration of whom he loved. Adjectives including "lovely," "eternal," and "fair" attribute allurable qualities to the sonnet's subject, and the anaphoras of "Nor" and "So" further stress the intensity of emotion. Thereby, a very universal model of English poems can be conjectured: the praise of love in an intense style.

By contrast, in terms of emotions, Eastern poetry represented by *jinti*-poem and *haiku* is mainly about friendship [12, 13]. Two poems below, a *jinti*-poem and *haiku* respectively, illustrate this theme:

Song-Ke-Gui-Yuezhou (*Farewell, My Visitant Back to Yuezhou*) by Tang Xianzu [14]

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Maples fade, cicadas chirp,	*Feng-yin / haochan-ji,*
Forest spreads, in rest placid.	*Lin-kai / fangdan-qing.*
Willow leaves, entwine sound sleep,	*Liuyan / mianji-wen,*
River moon, drunk yet limpid.	*Jiangyue / zuiyu-qing.*
Nightfall far, isle in *Xiaoxiang*,	*Yese / yao-xiangzhu,*
Fall dark, chills his where-to-go.	*Qiu-yin / leng-yuecheng.*
Still resound, with *Dongting* lake,	*Huan-lian / Dongting-shui,*
Fishers' flutes, and singing row.	*Yudi / he-gesheng.*

Aki-Futatsu (*Two Autumns*) by Masaoka Shiki [15]

For me going	*Yuku-ware-ni*
For thee staying	*Todomaru-nare-ni*
Two autumns	*Aki-futatsu*

This divergence in processing emotions is caused by cultural discrepancy. Chinese society had long been in a state of extreme conservatism, and thus love-related discussions were far less accepted than that of friendship. Moreover, since Bo Ya and Zhong Ziqi's story took place, a culture in seek of an intimate has deeply rooted in Chinese society, which also affected the cultivated poets, including Tang Xianzu [15]. Such culture deeply impacted Japanese values as well, especially during the Tang Dynasty in which Sino-Japanese communications climaxed. Many other poems, for example, *The Song of Wei City* (*Weicheng-Qu*), a translation of Wangwei's poem in *Cathay* that shall be discussed below, also bear the depth of friendship as a theme.

The two Eastern poems both portray parting — what in particular friendship in Chinese and Japanese poems is about. Interestingly, both poems depict this theme yet not in an explicit manner. In Tang Xianzu's work, the only clues that indicate the ongoing farewell are "*liuyan*" (willow leaves, intertwine) and "*Yuecheng"* (*Yue* City, translated as his where-to-go). The former is a common image applied by poets to convey parting, as "*liu"* is a homonym for "to stay," which is translated as "leaves" to retain the pun. None of the remaining elements of the poem directly recount the farewell but set off it by creating a lightly sorrowful atmosphere. In Shiki's *haiku*, the parting is also very implicit, with the contrast between "going and staying" and "Two autumns". Eastern philosophies' attempt in veiling emotions, like placing a piece of silk cloth above them, is the reason why poets hardly explicitly described their emotions, as in the two provided cases, which sharply contrasts with the explicitness of English poetry as shown in Shakespeare's work.

2.1.2. Nature in Eastern Poetry

In *Aki-Futatsu*, Shiki hid the grief of farewell in a seemingly calm depiction of a natural phenomenon — the coming of autumn, which also shows the inevitability of the farewell. The employment of nature can be found in many of its fellow *haikus*, as well as in ancient Chinese poems that preceded them. To be precise, Chinese poets and Japanese poets did not only explore the theme of nature; they emphasised it. In Chinese poetry, the emphasis on nature is a result of the unity of nature and humanity deeply rooted in philosophy; and in Japanese poetry, the natural elements, like in *Two Autumns*, are the observations of insignificant yet beautiful natural phenomena [16]. Very direct evidence thereof is the rule that each *haiku* should contain a *kigo*, a word related to a season, showing nature as the focus of Japanese poetry [17]. "Two autumns" is very apparently a *kigo*. Moreover, *Song-Ke-Gui-Yuezhou* also includes many natural elements such as "maples" and "river moon".

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2.1.3. Grammatical Differences

Although poems are meant to be approached from a literary viewpoint and thus grammar shall not be the focus, the effect of grammar on rhythm and poetic devices can never be neglected. The difference in the former causes that in the latter. In order to more clearly compare the grammatical differences between Eastern and English poetry in the following text, Tang Xianzu's *Farewell, My Vistant Back to Yuezhou* is translated in accordance with the grammar of the original text, and a translation that is closer to the original grammatical structure adopted by Masaoka Shiki is chosen. The two Eastern poems clearly differ acutely from the sonnet in terms of grammar — the former is grammatically incomplete and the latter follows grammatical rules as usual. Taking the second sentence of *Song-Ke-Gui-Yuezhou* as an example, if it follows usual grammatical rules, it should be written as: "Willow leaves, entwine [whilst] sound sleep[ing], / River moon, [is] drunk yet limpid."; *Two Autumns* is very similar: "For me [who is] leaving, / For thee [who is] staying, / [There are] Two autumns." Generally, Eastern poetry, especially Chinese poetry, tends to omit conjunctions. In turn, if the last line of *Sonnet 18* is written by a Chinese poet, it may be reorganised into "long… this… gives life… thee". This grammatical difference is another pivotal reason, besides cultural differences, that accounts for the discrepancy between Eastern and English poetry, and the aforementioned grammatical characteristics are sufficiently necessary for the conciseness and imagery-guided nature of Eastern poetry.

2.1.4. The Use of Flowers

Many Eastern poems were bestowed their beauty by the transience of time. This is, in particular, usually achieved by depicting imagery such as a flower, as flowers are often associated with "falling" in Chinese (*luohua*) and Japanese (*rakka*) culture [18]. Two examples are Li Yu's *The Joy of Reunion* a Song-*ci* and Ōshima Ryōta's *Sakura I'd See*:

The Joy of Reunion by Li Yu, translated by Song Fan [19]

Here come the spring red blossoms fading vast,	*Linhua-xiele-chun-hong,*
Too soon, too fast,	*Tai-congcong,*
And yet cold rains by day	*Wunai-zhao-lai,*
Fence not hard winds by night to blast.	*Hanyu-wan-lai-feng.*
Tears in powder	*Yanzhi-lei,*
Crying louder	*Xiangliu-zui,*
When back to past,	*Jishi-chong.*
Like water east to run,	*Zi-shi-rensheng,*
Our life's a pain to ever last.	*Changhen-shui-chang-dong.*

Yo-no-naka-wa (*Sakura I'd See*) by Ōshima Ryōta [20]

In the world may be	*Yo-no-naka-wa*
After three days off the eyes	*Mikka-minu-ma-ni*
Sakura I'd see	*Sakura-kana*

In *The Joy of Reunion*, the blossom is "fading… too soon, too fast," and serves as imagery that evokes "tears" and "pain". Likewise, *Sakura I'd See* covertly implied a message: the world, like sakura, wafts and changes within as short as three days. The use of "not to see" (which is translated as "off the eyes") makes the imagery more organic and enables the reader to associate it with the twinkling of an eye. To sum up, oriental poetry often pities yet also cherishes the passing of time and

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expresses in a certain way such emotions as nostalgia. Contrariwise, English poetry is much less sentimental in this manner. English poets usually use flowers to bestow optimistic emotions, for example, Robert Burns wrote "O my Luve is like a red, red rose / That's newly sprung in June," glowing with enthusiasm, appreciation, and a sense of *vita nova* [21]. An even more notable difference is that flowers in English poems are often simply applied as a metaphorical means, whereas in Eastern poems they are scenery truly existing as imagery. A conclusion is hence that significant differences between Eastern and English poetry exist in terms of all the following elements: emotions, themes, grammar and devices.

2.2. *Haikus* and Ezra Pound

2.2.1. The Background of and Further Information about *Haiku*

The dominating and most renowned form of Japanese poetry, *haiku* provides a window in which one can glimpse the literary core of Japanese poems. His time at the British Museum provided Ezra Pound a chance to be exposed to the newly introduced Japanese arts, in which he became interested thereafter [22]. Pound's exchange of thoughts with Japanese-Italian poet Harukichi Shimoi further prompted the blossom of his sakura, as he started to delve into *haikus* [23]. Subsequently, a long-term interaction was established between Ezra Pound and Japanese poetry, enabling him not to only enjoy *haiku* as a short-lived pleasure but also to absorb it into the core of his later writings. In terms of *haiku*, Pound's efforts are mostly appreciable and less defective. This section analyses several devices and the gist of *haiku* and compares Ezra Pound's own works with Japanese *haikus* to obtain a conclusion on how *haiku* influenced Pound.

2.2.2. *Kireji*

In brief, *haiku* is a form of Japanese poetry derived from *jinti*-poems, consisting of 3 lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables respectively, which traditionally must include a *kigo* and a *kireji*, a "cutting word" that cuts the line or the poem so that it becomes grammatically incomplete. In *Sakura I'd See*, the *kireji* is "*kana"* (an exclamation and also literally meaning "perhaps," which is translated as "I'd see"), a word that has multiple definitions — it stresses, questions and exclaims. The *kireji* of this poem questions the main statement concerning the relationship between the world and sakura; emphasises the sense of uncertainty bestowed through the implication of *rakka* and the use of "three days"; and brings the poem to a sudden pause. This pause enables readers to contemplate but it never entirely terminates a stream of mind, which "allows the two halves [of the *kireji*] to reverberate" [24]. By way of explanation, readers may reread the poem as "…I'd see / In the world may be / After three days off eyes / Sakura," providing two explanations of this *haiku*: that the world both includes and is sakura. This Japanese technique of *kireji* can be, to some extent, compared with enjambments in English poetry; yet the former, since it appears in various forms, bears emotions that are profounder than the latter does.

Obviously, Ezra Pound was deeply affected by this unique technique of *haiku*, which can be found in many of his poems, although *kirejis* appear in English usually in a different form: punctuation marks, because in English exclamations are usually prepository. Pound's *April* is a good example of how a *kireji* serves the aforementioned functions:

April by Ezra Pound [25]

Three spirits came to me
And drew me apart
To where the olive boughs

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Lay stripped upon the ground:
Pale carnage beneath bright mist.

A colon splits lines 4 and 5, refreshing readers' minds and marking a transition in the poem — the tone shifts from divinity and solemnity to miserableness. It also deepens the shocking effect created by the word "carnage," and even, like what *kana* does in *Sakura I'd See*, enables multiple interpretations. Readers can both interpret line 4 as a part of the objective clause led by the word "where," and may also consider line 4 as an explanation of line 5: "[what] Lay (lays) stripped upon the ground / [is] Pale carnage beneath bright mist." Therefore, using the colon allows lines 4 and 5 to echo mutually, in particular, that "stripped" and "Pale" seem to form a pair of strangely beautiful synonyms. Nevertheless, the *kireji* alone does not result in multiple interpretations. Another characteristic of *haiku* that is also important is the absence of punctuation marks. This seems to contradict the application of punctuation marks as *kirejis* in English, but in fact, it does not. Colons, unlike periods and commas, bridge thoughts more than splitting them. Peradventure that the essence of *kireji* is to *cut* but not *cut off*. By way of illustration, given a period after *kana* in *Sakura I'd See*,"readers will not reread the poem and thus cannot read it from a different perspective.

Pound's later-written triplet, *Papyrus*, is like this: "Spring….. / Too long….. / Gongula". This seems to be a bold experimental work inspired by *kireji*. The rumination-evoking device is widely applied by Pound in other works and widely spread as a part of imagism.

2.2.3. *In a Station of the Metro*

April is definitely not Pound's best poem. *In A Station of the Metro* is one of the Pound's most famous masterpieces, in which he seems to have better grasped the essence of *haiku*:

In A Station of the Metro by Ezra Pound [25]

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

Apparently, this poem is not grammatically complete. It is not even considered a sentence but rather a phrase due to the absence of a predicate. *Two Autumns* and the following *haiku* lack of a predicate as well:

Sabishisa-ya (*Fading Firefly* by Tachibaku Hokushi [26]

Alone as loneliness:	*Sabishisa-ya*
In footlong wavering and	*Isshaku-kiete*
Fading firefly	*Yuku-hotaru*

This is a very common phenomenon in *haiku*, which perchance is rooted in the momentary nature thereof. The momentariness is also found here in Ezra Pound's poem. "Apparition" implies how short "these faces" stay in the poet's sight, and the use of "Petals" to construct the imagery perfectly demonstrates how flowers are used to represent transience in Eastern poetry. These devices, all characteristics of Eastern Asian poetry introduced in 2.1, suggest that by the time Pound wrote this English *haiku*, he had already had a deep knowledge of *haikus* and even of Chinese poems.

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2.2.4. On Essence of *Haiku*

A simple separation of lines allows a more direct comparison between this English *haiku* and its Japanese counterparts since this poem consists of only two lines:

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

The basis of this method of division is that three lines of a *haiku* usually consist of two that describe two "core images" and one that completes or connects these images. Notice that this line is also part of the poem's imagery as a whole, and the distinguishment of it from the remaining two is simply to better illustrate a common structure of *haikus* and Pound's treatment thereof, exemplified by *Sakura I'd See* ("world" and "sakura") and *A Crow Upon A Withered Branch* by Matsuo Bashō, with which Ezra Pound himself compared *In A Station of the Metro*:

> *Kara-eda-ni* (*A Crow Upon A Withere Branch*) by Matsuo Bashō [27]
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | On a withered branch a | *Kare-eda-ni* |
> | A crow has settled — | *Karasu-no-tomari-keri* |
> | Autumn nightfall | *Aki-no-kure* |

(The poem contains 8 syllables in its second line. This phenomenon is called "*ji-amari*," literally "extra character". Extra syllables are tolerated in certain cases. Conversely, "*ji-atari*" describes a line that has fewer syllables than usual. Some argue that the adoption of *ji-amari* and *ji-atari* can create special emotional effects, but others question)

In the edited version of Pound's poem, lines 1 and 3 convey two core images, "faces" and "Petals" respectively, so is Bashō's poem with the core images "crow" and "nightfall" in lines 2 and 3. All four core images concern about living bodies and nature, which is one of the essences of *haiku*, and together they compose what the word "imagery" conveys — a scene or experience obtained through smaller core images and correlating them in various, delicate ways. Diving deeper into these correlations reveals both the similarities and differences between both sets of core images. One similarity is that the second image is the echo of the first in the poet's mind [7]. The apparitional faces and the fallen petals are both fleeting and numerous; autumn nightfall and branch crow are both quiet and peaceful. However, at the same time, both sets of images contrast in their magnitude In many aspects, so far the completeness and superbness of Pound's *haiku* are already very close to one written by a Japanese *haijin* (*haiku* poet), especially corroborated by the extent of delicacy to which he could link the two core images in such profound ways.

Nonetheless, *In a Station of the Metro* is still criticised. Some scholars believe that if a *haijin* wants to make the compare and contrast, they "must set the image of a small… phenomenon… against… one which is vastly larger or more enduring or more significant" [28]. Their explanation is that, if the significant image is followed by a dainty one, the *haiku* would become less profound [7]. This is not a prerequisite to or the essence of *haiku* since Japan itself has embraced *wabi-sabi*, a philosophy that accepts the transience and fragmentation of things, and *haiku* originally intended to be meticulous observations of nature. If this criticism of Pound's *haiku* is well-established, then *Sakura I'd See* shall be also invalidated, because it includes a transition from the significant to the transient, from the world to the flowers of sakura. Therefore, the criticism is untenable and Ezra Pound's *haiku* is still essentially consistent with its Japanese origin.

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2.2.5. Seeing *Haiku's* Influence on Pound Through Statistical Data

One interesting statistic provides some insights into *haikus*' profound impact on Ezra Pound: in his first anthology *Personæ of Ezra Pound*, the average length of a poem is 27.3 lines. This number steadily decreases as Pound further interacts with *haiku*, with *Ripostes'* 16.4 lines and *Lustra's* 12.3 lines. (These anthologies are selected in chronological order to reveal the possible impact of Eastern poetry on his writing styles [25]. The statistic's basic unit is lines, as the number of words shall be excessive. Translations of *haikus*, Chinese poems, ancient epics and also his English *haikus* are eliminated because *haiku's* impact on Pound's usual English works is the focus of the statistic) Although no direct cause-and-effect relationship can be proved from this set of data, it is reasonable to conclude that, in the process of studying, translating and writing *haikus*, Pound was inspired by *haiku's* 3-lines character and thus he reduced the length of his poem in conformity with his emphasis of concision as one of the three core principles of imagism, a literary movement that changed the entire English literary world [29].

2.3. Chinese Poems and Ezra Pound

2.3.1. The Hidden Influence of Chinese Poetry

The concision, however, shall not be only credited to *haiku*; Chinese *jinti*-poem is also very concise - sometimes even more concise than *haiku* because the Chinese language is not agglutinative. It is important to notice that, although Chinese poetry also has far-reaching impacts on Ezra Pound, the impact is not as apparent as *haiku*, for two reasons: (1) Such impact is mainly indirect — Pound devoted more to *haiku*, consequently, his *haiku* researches and translations seemed more successful than on Chinese poetry. Therefore, *haiku*, or Japanese poetry, served as a relay media and enabled Pound to access the Eastern philosophies, devices and forms that mostly were originally from China. (2) The two cultures' poems share too many similarities that it is almost impossible to split Chinese and Japanese poems from each other, and many Chinese poetry's characteristics are thus already explained in the previous part. This section aims to provide some complements, mainly by analysing his translation of and approaches to Chinese poems.

2.3.2. *Weicheng-Qu, Cathay*

Ezra Pound's most far-reaching and age-breaking contribution is his compilation of *Cathay*, initially containing 15 translations from Chinese poems. He translated Wang Wei's *Weicheng-Qu* (*The Song of Wei CIty*) as part of the prelude under "Four Poems of Departure," lack of knowledge about Wang Wei and the background of the poem — Pound did not sure of whether the poet is Wang Wei or Li Bai, and even more bizarrely he represented the name of both in Japanese: *Ri-Haku* and *O-Ma-Kitsu*, the former a given name and the latter a style name (*"O"* is a Japanese honorific; *Ma-kitsu* is the transcript of Wang Wei's *zi*, or style name, *Mojie*) [30]. This re-translation is incomprehensible to readers, slightly disrespectful to poets, and ineffective in conveying what the poem's story originally bore, although Pound had his personal reason for doing so [31]. Apart from this ambiguity, the translation of *The Song of Wei City* is relatively quality, partly fulfilling two core elements of a good translation under Chinese philosophe Yan Fu's yardstick: expressiveness and elegance [32]. This is Pound's translation:

Weicheng-Qu (*The Sog of Wei City*) by Wang Wei, translated by Ezra Pound [25, 33]

Light rain is on the light dust. *Weicheng-zhaoyu-yi-qing-chen*
The willows of the inn-yard

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/	*Keshe-qingqing-liuse-xin*
Will be going greener and greener,	
But you, Sir, had better take wine ere your departure,	*Quan-jun-geng-jin-yibei-jiu*
For you will have no friends about you	
/	*Xi-chu-yangguan-wu-guren*
When you come to the gates of Go.	

Expressiveness refers to the degree to which the translated text adapts to the habits of the target language, to which Pound altered the poem's structure and completed grammatical elements. For instance, the poem is originally a *qiyan-jueju*, a kind of *jinti*-poem with 4 lines, 7 syllables each. Pound changed the poem into 6 lines to enable the application of more syllables as a character of the English language so that the translation is more native and coherent. Elegance in this translation is more easily perceived, demonstrated by the adoption of horrific and antiquated words, such as "Sir" and "ere," creating classical-style diction. However, some other phrasings, such as "greener and greener," for they are too plain, seem to counteract the merits brought by the exquisite words. In terms of the rhythmic and musical properties concerned by Pound's 3 principles of imagism, he also attempted to relive the rhymes and rhythms and create a sense of resonance in the original text by repeating words including "rain" and "you" [30].

Nonetheless, defects need to be pointed out. Objectively, they are not confined to Ezra Pound since many of this translation's problems are commonly shared by its fellow works. Hereby, to better serve a comparison, another version of the translation is provided:

Weicheng-Qu (*The Sog of Wei City*) by Wang Wei

Morn of *Weicheng* dews light dust,	*Weicheng-zhaoyu-yi-qing-chen*
Inn-yard willows' new leaves green.	*Keshe-qingqing-liuse-xin*
One more cup of drink, please thee	*Quan-jun-geng-jin-yibei-jiu*
West of *Yangguan* no friend's seen.	*Xi-chu-Yangguan-wu-guren*

The missing of certain meanings and literarily appealing devices in the original text, or the missing of Yan Fu's third core element, faithfulness, is the most prominent defect of this translation. The most ubiquitous failure in the conveyance of poems' delicacy is the loss of rhymes. Although Pound seemed to notice the rhyme scheme and applied repetition of words in the alternative, this approach shall not be considered more than a makeshift solution. In an ideal work, rhymes should be retained in translation. For instance, most Chinese translations of Shakespearean sonnets have their rhymes retained. The author's translation follows Wang Wei's rhyme scheme (ABCB) in order to make it more coherent with the original text aurally. Additionally, when translating Chinese poems, many poets including Ezra Pound aim to supplement the missing logical connections. These connectives, however, are better if tacit, because many Chinese poets refuse the use of logical links to intentionally a sense of construct hazy beauty. Pound used 2 conjunctions in his translation, namely "But" and "For". In the original poem, although a transition in tone is placed between lines 2 and 3, the parts before and behind it do not sharply contrast and thus using "but" is not optimum. The problems discussed here can also be found in the following text.

More blatantly, Pound omitted some words in his translation. He did not tell the time of the rain: morning. He also failed to translate the city in which the parting took place: *Weicheng*, or *Wei* City. Concerning *"Yangguan*" ("Sunny Pass"), although Pound maintained this element in his translation, he translated in a very irresponsible way — he omitted "*Yang*" ("Sunny") and wrote "g*uan*" twice: once in "gates" that is correct in meaning, once in "Go" that sounds similar to "*guan*". Then, why did

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Pound adopt two different approaches in translating these two names of places? Nevertheless, the retainment of "*Yangguan*" is important, which is appreciable because it bears a special cultural background. Generally, in practice, direct translation and transliteration are both applicable, and both can be found in *Cathay*.

2.3.3. *The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter, Cathay*

The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter by Li Bai, translated by Ezra Pound

And you have been gone five months.	*Wuyue / buke-chu*
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.	*Yuan-ming / tianshang-ai*
You dragged your feet when you went out.	*Menqian / chi-xing-ji*
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,	*Yiyi-sheng / lütai*
Too deep to clear them away!	*Tai-shen / buneng-sao*
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.	*Luoye / qiufeng-zao*
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August	*Bayue / hudie-huang*
Over the grass in the West garden;	*Shuang-fei / xiyuan-cao*
They hurt me.	*Gan-ci / shang-qie-xin*
I grow older.	*Zuo-chou / hongyan-lao*
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,	*Zaowan-xia / Sanba*
Please let me know beforehand,	*Yu-jiang / shu-bao-jia*
And I will come out to meet you	*Xiangying / budao-yuan*
As far as Chō-fū-Sa.	*Zhi-zhi / Changfeng-Sha*

The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter (simplified as *A Letter* below) is an example in which Pound applied the latter [25, 34]. In *A* Letter, Ezra Pound transliterated *Changfeng-Sha* into "Chō-fū-Sa," which keeps faithfulness to the original name of the place. However, he again used Japanese as a medium, because "Chō-fū-Sa" is the *romaji* transcript of the corresponding *kanjis* in Japanese. This, again, reveals a special character in Pound's translation of and approach to Chinese poems, that to discuss Pound's merits and defects in approaching Chinese poetry requires an understanding from a Japanese perspective.

For the convenience of an effective close analysis, only one section will be analysed. *A Letter* is a combination of strengths and weaknesses. The latter seems to be more obvious than the former. Apart from the aforementioned defects found in *The Song of Wei City*, imperfections in appraoching several traits of Chinese poetry exist. Two main defects are introduced here. First, the "five months" is a mistranslation. Since "five months" and "May" are spelt the same in Chinese, Pound confused these two definitions of "*Wuyue*" and used the incorrect one. The original poem contains a partly antithetical couplet created by "May" and "August," indicating the passing of time and thus building up the merchant's wife's ache of widowhood. Pound failed to include it and thus lost a chance to establish emotional resonance with the wife. Furthermore, the redundancy of words is sharply contrasted with the original text. Pound used 12 words to translate the 5-characters line "*Zaowan-xia-Sanba"*. These extra words can be attributed to Pound's direct translation: the "If" is unnecessary, and "the narrows of the river Kiang" stands very uncannily for "*Sanba"*. This word actually refers to the bends of the Yangtze River (which Pound rendered as "River of *Kiang*" due to the Chinese name of the river, *Chang*, or Chinese pronunciation of the word "river" itself, *Jiang*) in Sichuan, and thus can be simplified as "river bends". Moreover, "*Zaowan"* shall be translated as "when," not "if," given

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that the original tone is rather enquiring. Whereupon the line can be retranslated as "When descending Yangtze's river bends, / thou…". In fact, Pound compiled *Cathay* several years after interacting with *haiku*, which raises a doubt: Why is the translation of *Cathay* even more distant from the concision of his imagism principles? Why is this translation so uneconomical in wording?

Whilst questioned, this translation has enjoyed a notable merit, in that it seems to possess Yan Fu's faithfulness that the aforementioned work lacks. Pound made so many changes when translating Wang Wei'is poem, which makes it unfaithful; contrarily the translation of *Changgan-Xing* is too faithful, or too direct, that to some degree it has lost expressiveness and elegance, however. Peradventure the only possible explanation is that Pound intended to translate this poem written in Middle Chinese, into modern English so that more readers of the West can understand this Chinese classic. Although this piece partly criticises Pound's translation, his effort is admittedly appreciable and important in bringing Chinese poems into the English world.

2.3.4. Confucian Thoughts, *The Canto,* and Pound's Later Works

The impact of Chinese culture and literary essence is not confined hitherto. After the publishment of *Cathay*, Pound translated *Ta Hio* or *The Great Learning of Confucius* [35]. To some extent, the Confucian notions of clarity and restraint impacted Pound's imagism and thus his poems. This is most evident in Pound's epical anthology *The Canto*. The anthology consists of several volumes that briefly recount the history of cultures worldwide in a poetic manner, in which volumes 52 to 56 (LII - LXI), centring Confucianism, narrate Chinese history [36]. Indeed, Confucianism has enjoyed an indelibly high position in Chinese history and has guided the development of Chinese society, but there is another motif in Pound's emphasis thereof. Following Musollini's fascism, Pound found that Confucianism is a good ideology for constructing a strong concentrated government. Whereupon, it can be said that despite his incorrect motives, Pound, in a way, used this opportunity to introduce Eastern philosophies and ancient works of literature to the West, especially influencing Fascist-ruled Germany and Italy, making a great contribution to the cultural exchange between the East and the West.

His later works reflect some traits of Chinese poetry, although such reflection is mostly hidden behind the Japanese relay. Pound wrote, in his *Epitaphs*, "And Li Po also died drunk. / He tried to embrace a moon / In the Yellow River" [25]. First of all merits, this piece is really concise — one that fits his imagism principles, much more concise than his translations in *Cathay*. Looking at its form, one may argue that it is more like a *haiku*; however, the essence of this work is obviously of Chinese poetry, its imagery more significant and tone majestic. Li Bai (Li Po/Rihaku) devoted his whole life to writing poems, under drunkenness and about drinking, which typifies some essence of Chinese poetry. As an admirer of Li Bai, Ezra Pound well-concluded Li Bai's life as a whole, and his style of writing is also impacted by this Chinese poet. Pound compared Li Bai's latter life as one that tried to "embrace a moon / In the… River," which precisely portrays how Li Bai lost his way in his old age. Notice that Pound wrote "a" moon instead of "the" moon, which implies the existence of Li Bai's own moon in his romantic heart. These merits all show that Pound displayed a gradual grasping of the core spirits of Chinese poetry and the mastering of its devices in his career.

3. Conclusion

A debatable figure and an extraordinary poet, Ezra Pound devoted much effort to appraoching Eastern poetry from an English standpoint. All of the aforementioned sentimentality and literariness that were strange to English poets constituted Pound's imagism, which many masters of poetry followed. In the century following the birth of imagism, a general trend was shown towards simplicity and imagery: more and more poets adopt *kireji* as a means of connection, and more and more poems are

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imbued with a hazy aesthetic. Dialectically viewing Pound's work is a prerequisite to obtaining a conclusion, for which this article closely analysed many of his works and compared them to other poets' pieces, revealing several merits and defects in his manner of treating Chinese and Japanese poetry. The trilingual background where the author stands enables understanding and composition in all three aforementioned languages and hence the review of Pound's translations and his alterations of Eastern poetry in English from a relatively rigorous and novel stand.

The article first provided some groundings of world poetry and then comparisons between English and Eastern poetry, which disclosed what existing differences Pound had to overcome in order to treat Eastern poetry more effectively. The discrepancy ranges from grammar to literary devices, and from emotions to themes. Then the focus moved to close analyses of Pound's *In A Station of the Metro* and *April* and Japanese *haikus*, seeking the revelation from the comparison between them, including the discussion of *haiku's* form, *kireji* and essence and rebutting criticism of Pound's poem, which led to a conclusion that Pound well reflected these characters in his own poems. Last, the article analysed several of Pound's translations of Chinese poems in *Cathay* and named some strengths and imperfections in his works, under Yan Fu's standard of translation, and briefly recounted Pound's connection with Confucianism and how Chinese works had affected him. Although his familiarisation with Chinese poetry was much weaker than his Japanese poetic skills, Pound was gradually able to incorporate some elements into his subsequent works.

Thereby, a rough conclusion can be made that Pound displayed both merits and defects in approaching Eastern poetry in his works, and the former is slightly more notable. Nonetheless, no conclusion can be made hereby concerning what specific style Pound exhibited in this process. It is encouraged that future studies can delve deeper into some specific elements and elaborate on how Pound treated them or more particularly explore how Pound's studies of Eastern poetry affected modernism and further the English literary world.

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