

Editor's Introduction

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Ezra Pound's rallying call to 'Make It New' became a powerful modernist motto, invoking a sense of renewal in the avant-garde project in casting off the dead weight of stale custom and forging a new aesthetic. Pound famously adapted this phrase – 薪日日薪 (*xin ri ri xin*) – from the ancient Shang Dynasty Emperor Ch'eng T'ang (1766–1753 BCE), who, legend has it, inscribed it on the side of his bathtub. It is a gesture emblematic of Pound's career, crossing history and linguistic borders to create new art informed by the best that had gone before, and it quickly became a heuristic device by which to understand Pound's artistic legacy and his role in cultural history.

From the beginning, Pound scholars have explored his formidable range of sources and the uses to which he put them in his production of poems, essays, music, journalism and critical commentary on the work of other artists and writers. This work is grounded in a vast archive of published and unpublished material, principally housed in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, with other important holdings at the Lilly Library at Indiana, the Harry Ransom Center at Austin and elsewhere. In recent years, Pound studies has experienced a foundational shift in several respects: the enormity of the archive has revealed major manuscripts and a cache of biographical information previously overlooked, radically altering our understanding of Pound's life and work; changes in copyright law and the passage of time have fundamentally altered the status of published work and archive material; and associated changes in cognate fields, such as the new philology in medieval studies, frontier theory in geography, the 'transnational turn' in literary studies and advances in knowledge of Chinese and Japanese poetry and drama, offer a range of new techniques to apply to Pound's work as well as to his sources. The critical landscape has shifted in fundamental ways too: significant advances in gender and sexuality studies demand the reappraisal of Pound's poetry, and the impact of theories of literature and textuality,

including digital textuality, on methods of reading Pound's poetry requires mapping in current and future potential configurations. These factors 'Make It New' for Pound studies, providing a clearer view of Pound's own texts and working methods, and allowing far superior evaluation of his sources than was previously possible. Major initiatives in editing Pound's texts, and in several cases digitizing them, open up a range of possibilities in critically evaluating his role in twentieth-century literature and beyond: his work is being translated into an ever-widening array of languages, and his influence on contemporary Chinese poetry is a subject of enormous consequence, but one only now establishing itself in critical discourse.

The New Ezra Pound Studies addresses these developments within and beyond Pound studies in three parts: essays addressing Pound's texts (those upon which he relied for source material, those he produced in manuscript and print, and the texts and other media with which he interacted and for which his poetry serves as stimulus); essays dealing with the radical re-conception of Pound's cultural and political activities throughout his career, and his continuing impact, a reassessment made possible by recent controversial scholarship as well as new directions in literary and cultural theory; and essays providing an overview of Pound's poetry and translations in relation to scholarship in East Asian studies, particularly China and Japan. Each of these zones of scholarly inquiry has changed radically in the past fifteen years, demanding a refocused account of the state of scholarship and the significant potential for future work in cognate areas. This volume is not aimed at giving the last word in any of these spheres, but rather to open up potential for further research in the themes covered in the essays, as well as stimulus to advance research in areas not yet covered or still to be given adequate scholarly treatment.

The Pound canon has from the start offered an enormously rich and varied range of published materials, recordings and manuscript drafts. Pound's career famously included poetic composition, literary and cultural essays, music and art reviewing, radio and print propaganda, operatic and chamber music composition, economic journalism, work as impresario and publisher to major literary figures, and unstinting correspondence with writers, artists, publishers and political figures, as well as numerous projects in translation and critical editing of poets and writers from a variety of epochs and languages. The first generations of Pound scholarship sought to clarify and explicate his artistic and professional activities during the last decades of his life and the years following his death. The territorial range of Pound scholarship was slowly established, but with recent advances in a variety of fields, much of this terrain can now

be understood at new depths. In addition, scholarship in related fields has advanced the state of knowledge of the textual traditions upon which Pound draws in his poetry and prose: new papyrus manuscripts of key poems in Sappho's corpus and the Huygens Institute's digital collation of glosses on *Martianus Capella's Marriage of Philology and Mercury* – the so-called oldest commentary tradition – to name just two examples. Pound studies will clearly benefit from these and other major textual advances, as will literary studies more generally.

Pound's reputation has been inextricably tied to his wartime radio broadcasts in Italy and his subsequent award of the inaugural Bollingen Prize for poetry in 1949. These events provided a focus for extensive discussion of the role of ethics in literature, but in several basic respects this discussion has been impeded by the poor state of the evidence. Recent work in the archives has overturned assumptions of the extent of Pound's wartime activities and his complicity with the Italian Fascist regime during the war. Knowledge of his association with far-right groups and individuals while detained in Washington, DC, following the war has also undergone a profound recalibration. Pound's literary reputation, legacy, and influence thus enjoys a state of considerable volatility, yet his poetic texts have proved to be sustaining resources for poets and writers from a wide range of literary traditions and political circumstances. Determining why this might be the case is one essential part in a timely reconsideration of Pound's role in modernist poetics, as well as in world literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Recent scholarly attention to East-West modernism has opened a field of inquiry barely imaginable even two decades ago. In a generation the relations between East Asian and Transatlantic modernisms have progressed through the stages of exoticism (explanations of sources and influence), orientalism (critiques of artistic domestication of 'exotic' material) and more recently a fuller development of critical expertise on both sides of the East-West dialectic. Modernist literary scholarship is now able to capitalize on this increasingly reflexive and nuanced approach, drawing on expert scholarship in East Asian studies generally, and modernism specifically. Scholars from Asia and the West have made very exciting inroads into some of these questions, and the implications for the understanding of Transatlantic modernism are potentially profound. The critical evaluation of East-West modernism proceeds with a close examination of Western writers and their Eastern influences, including the dialectical relationships they forge with their Eastern counterparts. Pound's firm place at the centre of such a discourse is

increasingly assured, even as knowledge of traditional and modernist cultural production in China and Japan, and their relations with the West, become subjects of more intensive scholarly attention.

Given its legendary status in literary studies, and its bewildering scope and depth, the spectre of Pound's archive looms large in any critical survey of new directions in the field. Subject to the close attention of many scholars over decades, the archive remains an improbably fruitful source for the generation of new research. The production of new volumes of letters, new drafts and version of cantos and, most prominently, David Moody's colossal three-volume biography are all causative and symptomatic of the generative work being done in the archives.¹ Other recent publications reappraise Pound's own texts (such as *Guide to Kulchur*, the Adams Cantos, the late *Cantos*) by investigating the primary materials in the archives, or Pound's archived notes on his primary materials (such as medieval philosophy).² The subjects of Pound's relation with Italian Fascism and American far right political activity have also received revelatory attention in recent years, also in large part due to work in archives and with primary sources.³ Recent essay collections have responded to these critical examinations of primary materials.⁴

If the reader can forgive this namecheck in its inevitable partiality and porosity, it registers the robust state of Pound studies in recent times and looks ahead to where these scholarly highways and backroads may take us in the future. In an era when scholarly work is so often subject to measurement and quantification, the qualities of curiosity, inquiry and critique deserve not merely protection, but also the space and time to unfold and extend the range of understanding of this complex poet. If the present volume stimulates such activity in its readers – and further activity in its writers – then it will have made a valuable intervention in Pound studies within its contemporary formation.

Notes

1. *Ezra Pound to His Parents*, ed. Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody and Joanna Moody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); *Ezra Pound and 'Globe' Magazine: The Complete Correspondence*, ed. Michael Davis and Cameron McWhirter (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); *Canti Postumi*, ed. Massimo Bacigalupo (Milano: Mondadori, 2002) and *Posthumous Cantos*, ed. Massimo Bacigalupo (Manchester: Carcanet, 2015); and A. David Moody,

Editor's Introduction

5

- Ezra Pound: Poet, A Portrait of the Man and His Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 2014 and 2015).
2. Anderson Araujo, *Companion to Ezra Pound's Guide to Kulchur* (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2017); David Ten Eyck, *Ezra Pound's Adams Cantos* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Michael Kindellan, *The Late Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); and Mark Byron, *Ezra Pound's Eriugena* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
 3. Matthew Feldman, *Ezra Pound's Fascist Propaganda, 1935–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013); Alec Marsh, *Ezra Pound and John Kasper: Saving the Republic* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); and Catherine Paul, *Fascist Directive: Ezra Pound and Italian Cultural Nationalism* (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2016).
 4. Josephine Park and Paul Stasi, eds., *Ezra Pound in the Present: Essays on Pound's Contemporaneity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); Roxana Preda, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to Ezra Pound and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); and Ralf Lüfter and Roxana Preda, eds., *A Companion to Ezra Pound's Economics* (Nordhausen: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 2019).