

Linking Ancient and Contemporary

Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Literature

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Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong*, Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* and 20th Century *Avant-garde*

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Abstract Ezra Pound's edition of Ernest Fenollosa's manuscripts for *The Chinese Written Characters as a Medium for Poetry* was a landmark in modernist European poetry and the imagist movement at the beginning of the 20th century. Pound's work has stood for Fenollosa's vision since then and has been the subject of controversy among Sinologists for its emphasis on the graphic elements of Chinese written characters. A recent edition of the complete Fenollosa manuscripts by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein has made it possible to see the differences between Fenollosa's interests and Pound's interpretations and to restore Fenollosa's original intentions. Even though Sinologists have questioned the Fenollosa-Pound emphasis on the graphic elements of the Chinese writing as a component part of Chinese poetry, Ch. 39 of the classical Chinese text *Wenxin diaolong* by Liu Xie (ca. 466-520) refers specifically to this phenomenon as a mode in the composition of Chinese poetry. Case studies of work by John Cage and Jackson Mac Low show that Fenollosa's impact on 20th century avant garde literature went far beyond the works of Ezra Pound.

Keywords Ernest Fenollosa. Chinese Written Character. Liu Xie. *Wenxin diaolong*. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*.

Having a professional interest in Chinese literature, I know I expose myself to trouble simply for having mentioned [Ernest] Fenollosa's name. As we learn very early in our training, Fenollosa was an enthusiast: in his wonderment at the Chinese language, he vastly overestimated the number of primary pictograms in the writing system and saw images and parables where a more sober palaeographer would have seen combinations of phonetic clues. The profession has never forgotten his error.
(Saussy 2001, p. 38)

By chance, part of my own literary training came directly from followers of Ezra Pound and his interpretation of Ernest Fenollosa, including Charles Olson and Louis Zukfsky, but also, and separately, through Zen Buddhism directly from John Cage and Allen Ginsberg. Pound's edition of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* and the versions of Fenollosa's *Noh* that he did with W.B. Yeats were touchstones for modernists searching for a form for the cosmos; Cage's postmodernist

chance operations revealed in its lack of fixed form. I never imagined they might share a common source. Jonathan Stalling has expressed the shock of surprise when he chanced upon one:

In the late summer of 2004, I was leafing through the Fenollosa papers held in the Ezra Pound archive at Yale University's Beinecke Library when I happened upon a startling find: its second half. [...] no one had ever mentioned the important fact that the essay published by Pound represents only one half of Fenollosa's lectures on Chinese as a medium for poetry. [...] Yet this second lecture [...] reveals that Fenollosa possessed a far more richly textured knowledge of classical Chinese (cosmological) poetics [...] Not only did Fenollosa apparently know a great deal about Chinese prosody and poetic theory, but by following the synthesizing impulse that lies at the core of his New Buddhist agenda, he hoped to import key concepts of Chinese cosmology into both Western poetry and society more generally. (Stalling 2010, pp. 59-60)

I had experienced a similar shock of surprise the first time I read Liu Xie's 劉勰 (ca. 466-520) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) and discovered an entire ch. dedicated to the graphic role of the written Chinese character in the composition of literature that anticipated Fenollosa's essay by almost fifteen centuries.¹ First, Fenollosa (via Pound):

人見馬

Man sees horse

Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. [...] First stands the man on his two legs (*ren* 人). Second, his eye moves through space: a bold figure represented by running legs under an eye (*jian* 見), a modified picture of an eye, a modified picture of running legs but unforgettable once you have seen it. Third stands the horse on his four legs (*ma* 馬). [...] Legs belong to all three characters: they are alive. (Fenollosa 2008, p. 80)

Now, Liu Xie:

是以綴字屬篇，必須揀擇：一避詭異，二省聯邊，三權重出，四調單復。[...] 聯邊者，半字同文者也。狀貌山川，古今咸用，施于常文，則齟齬為瑕，如不獲

1 For studies of *Wenxin diaolong* see Liu 1975, Owen 1992, Cai 2001; for translations see Shih 1959, Owen 1992, Relinque 1995, Wong et al. 1999; for the Chinese text see Liu Xie 2014.

免，可至三接，三接之外，其字林乎！單復者，字形肥瘠者也。瘠字累句，則纖疏而行劣；肥字積文，則黯黹而篇暗。善酌字者，參伍單復，磊落如珠矣。凡此四條，雖文不必有，而體例不無。若值而莫悟，則非精解。（文心雕龍，練字第三十九，Ch. 39）

In grouping words and composing a piece, a writer must be versed in the choice of words: first of all, he must avoid what is odd and strange; second, he must avoid characters with the same radical; third, he must weigh carefully his repetitions; and fourth, he must be balanced in the use of the simple and complex forms [...] By characters of the same radical is meant several characters in succession with one radical, that is, one half of each of their forms, in common. In the description of mountains and rivers, such a device has been used in all ages. But when applied to ordinary writing, the practice is a definite defect, because it offends our sensibilities. If it cannot be helped, it may be permissible for the number to grow to three in succession. Once it is allowed to go beyond three, is it not virtually a glossary? (Shih 1959, pp. 211-212)

Admittedly, Liu Xie is criticising an excessive dependence on what Haroldo de Campos called *paragraphia*, but Liu does refer to an existing literary tradition, and his own literary style often employs just such chirographic punning that plays the graphic components of the written character off against the semantic content of the word it represents, on the visual, not the phonetic plane (Golden 1996, 1997).

心既托聲于言，言亦寄形于字，諷誦則續在宮商，臨文則能歸字形矣。（文心雕龍，練字第三十九，Ch. 39）

The sound of the mind (*xin* 心) is expressed in speech (*yan* 言), and speech resides in characters (*zi* 字): when reciting, we find beauty in *kung* and *shang*, that is, «the consonance of the speech»; and when we compose, our ability is made manifest by the forms (*xing* 形) of the characters (*zi* 字) which we choose. (Shih 1959, p. 211)

Compare this to Pound's transcription of Fenollosa's notes to the lectures of Kainen Mori on Chinese poetry (Qian 2002, p. 302):

written word gives the thought
 the sung word gives it body (spatial existence)
 the tones define the body give the form of spatial
 the measure gives form to the tones. existence
 the measure harmony to the tones.

Were this a reference to Liu Xie's work, it would link them.

Fenollosa's emphasis on the nature of verbs as action is also well-known:

The earlier forms of these characters were pictorial [...] the great number of these ideographic roots carry in them a verbal idea of action. [...] A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points, or rather the meeting points of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots. (Fenollosa 2008, p. 81)

What Fenollosa said is not that different from one of Liu Xie's opening statements:

易曰：「鼓天下之動者存乎辭」。辭之所以能鼓天下者，乃道之文也。(文心雕龍，原道第一，Ch. 1)

«Language (*ci* 辭)» says the Book of Changes, in connection with the language of the hexagrams, «has in it the power of motivating actions (*dong* 動) in the world (*Tianxia* 天下)». Language (*ci* 辭) can activate the world when and if it is the harmonious language (*wen* 文), the poetry, of the Way (*dao* 道). (Wong et al. 1999, p. 3)

In Fenollosa's poetics, Ezra Pound focussed on the juxtaposition of concrete images as a mechanism for generating visual metaphors, what Stallung has described in 天台 Tendai Buddhist terms as «the ideogram's aggregative nature» (Stalling 2009a, p. 26). Haroldo de Campos discovered there the semiotic possibilities for generating concrete poetry:

The «ideographic method of composition» described by Fenollosa and which he places on a par with «metaphor»: the use of «material images» to suggest «immaterial relations,» or, as Eisenstein puts it, the passage from «thought through images» to «conceptual thought». [...] (However, whereas in metaphor properly speaking, as Jakobson explains it, there is an equation at the level of meanings between a «primary» and another «secondary» meaning, in the ideogramic complex the visual or grapheme notation corroborates the metaphorical equation at the level of the *signans* as a kind of paraphasia, which can be assimilated to Jakobson's paronomasia). (De Campos 2007, p. 296)

Classical poetry offers many examples of «several characters in succession with one radical».² While passing through fragrant weeds that encumber

2 When I first taught Fenollosa's essay to university students in China in 1981, they were surprised by his analytical approach to the decomposition of written characters, so unlike

the way to the dwelling of a hermit he intends to visit, the poet 劉長卿 Liu Zhangqing (726-788) sees how the gate he is approaching comes more clearly into view, emptied of encumbrances, until it is as clear and empty as the mind of the hermit within.

芳草閉閑門

fangcao bi xianmen

The top element 艹 of the first two characters 芳草 of this verse is a semantic indicator that means «plant/grass,» and together they mean «fragrant plants» or «fragrant weeds» or «fragrant grass». The last three characters 閉閑門 all contain the semantic indicator 門 that means «door» or «gate,» a double-leaf door hung on its hinges. The third character 閉 means «to close» or «to shut,» the final two 閑門 form a composite meaning «enclosure gate». Thus the overt meaning is that fragrant weeds block the path to the gate of the hermit's home – few visitors have trodden the path to his door – while the graphic imagery illustrates a covert meaning: the closer one gets to the hermit, the less there is to impede enlightenment. The obstacles that encumber the way disappear, leaving an empty gate through which to pass. Achieving 空 *kong* «emptiness» is a step toward enlightenment. There is a stock phrase for entering monkhood: 遁入空門 *dunru kongmen* meaning «to pass through the gate of (or into) nothingness». The final character 門 is a drawing of an empty gate. The semantic content of the words is contradicted by the graphemic or semiotic acrostic of their written form, but both meanings are apposite (see also Cheng 1982 and De Campos 2007).

What if Ernest Fenollosa knew the *Wenxin diaolong*? And what if his followers had known the complete version of *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*?³ Although ostensibly an orthodox Confucian text, the *Wenxin diaolong* is in fact saturated with Daoism, Buddhism and correlative thinking. It begins and ends with references to the *Yijing* 易經.

人文之元，肇自太極，幽贊神明，「易」象惟先。(文心雕龍，原道第一，Ch. 1)

The origins (*yuan* 元) of human culture (*renwen* 人文) begin with the *Taiji* 太極; the deep explanation of this cosmological brightness (*shenming* 神明) is first presented in the images (*xiang* 象) of the *Zhouyi* 周易.

the way they had actually learned to read, but immediately came up with Fenollosan examples from classical Chinese poetry.

3 These papers have now been transcribed, edited and published by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling and Lucas Klein (see Fenollosa 2008, Saussy 2008 for a thorough discussion of the figure of Fenollosa). Thanks to Haun Saussy for the gift of the book and to Jonathan Stalling and Qian Zhaoming for fruitful correspondence on the subject.

位理定名，彰乎大衍之數，其為文用，四十九篇而已。(序志第五十, Ch. 50)

In sum the principles (*li* 理) and names (*ming* 名) are given a fixed place and permanence in components that are numbered with the magical number of the cosmos (*shu* 數), though the Ch.s of substance amount to only forty-nine. (Wong et al. 1999, p. 188)

The magical number of the cosmos is fifty, the same as the number of yarrow stalks used to consult the *Yijing*, one of which one is set aside, leaving forty-nine. «It is of considerable interest to note that the organization of Liu's book [...] is intended to mirror the procedures of shamanistic divination and the workings of the cosmic system» (Wong et al. 1999, p. 188).

Written characters pattern the world:

故能瞻言而見貌，即字而知時也。(文心雕龍，物色第四十六, Ch. 46)

The hope is to be able to see the face (*mao* 貌) in the words (*yan* 言), to trace the season (*shi* 時) through the written characters (*zi* 字). (Wong et al. 1999, p. 170)

Liu Xie exploits polysemy to link the patterns *wen* 文 of the cosmos with the patterns of language/writing/culture (*wen*), and thereby, the patterning (*wen*) 文 of literature (*wen*) with the ordering of the cosmos. To explain Fenollosa's understanding of *wen*, Stalling cites Stephen Owen on Liu Xie:

«*Wen* 文, aesthetic pattern, is the outward manifestation of some latent order»; and «In the human, *wen*'s outwardness does not appear on the physical body; *wen* is here manifest through the essential human characteristic mind (*xin* 心). The outward manifest form of the activities of «mind» is «writing,» *wen* – or in its essential form, «literature *wen*» Owen concludes: «Literature thus stands as the entelechy, the fully realized form, of a universal process of manifestation»

It is Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* [...] that forms the foundation of this view. [...] Liu Xie ends this passage with a discussion of *wen* in relation to human language: 新生而言立，吉立而文明，自然之道也 From [Zong-qi] Cai we get: «When language was formed, the pattern became manifest. This is the Dao, the natural course of things» [...] one can see Liu Xie's attempt to link *wen* as cosmological to *wen* as human language, and, in particular, as literature/poetry *wen*. (Stalling 2010, p. 65)

For Liu Xie, and for Fenollosa, since each made use of the *Yijing*, patterning *wen* was intrinsic to correlative cosmology. «Ariga took [Fenollosa] to Michiaki Nemoto, Japan's leading authority on the *I Ching*, the Chinese

Book of Changes [...] Here was vivid support for Fenollosa's [...] recognition of organic flux as well; for change was interpreted by the *I Ching* as the universal principle which generates Being and the world of *Yin* and *Yang*» (Chisolm 1962, pp. 218-219).

Stalling demonstrates how Fenollosa understood *wen* in terms of correlative cosmology. In the final draft of the CWC, Fenollosa writes:

The whole delicate substance of speech is built upon substrata of metaphor. Abstract terms, pressed by etymology, reveal their ancient roots still embedded in direct action. [...] Similar lines of resistance, half curbing outward-pressing vitalities, govern the branching of rivers, and the branching of nations. Thus a nerve, a wire, a roadway and a clearing house are only varying channels which communication forces for itself. This is more than analogy; it is identity of structure [...].

Pound excised the next, and most important, line of Fenollosa's argument: «Laws of structure are the same in the spiritual and the material world. Human character grows with the same stresses and knots as mountain pine». In Fenollosa's «universal theory of literature,» *wen* is shown to be a part of correlative nature and should therefore try to harmonize with it by adopting (if not manifesting/channeling) its correlative structure. (Stalling 2010, p. 67)

The missing second half of Fenollosa's draft essay on poetics is saturated with Zen Buddhism and correlative cosmology in the context of a detailed discussion of the prosody of classical Chinese poetry. «As Pound and subsequent Pound/Fenollosa scholars have generally neglected to point out, Fenollosa never argues that characters are pictures of things, but instead says they are snapshots of natural processes or interpenetrating bundles, a distinction with very important philosophical implications» (Stalling 2009a, p. 26). Fenollosa wrote:

If we take an instantaneous photograph of the sea in motion, we may fix the momentary form of a wave, and call it a thing; yet it was only an incessant vibration of water. So other things [...] apparently more stable, are only large vibrations of living substance; and when we trace them to their origin and decay, they are seen to be only parts of something else. And these essential processes of nature are not simple; there are waves upon waves, process below processes, systems within systems; - and apparently so on forever. (Stalling 2009a, p. 33)

For Stalling, Fenollosa's poetics are profoundly influenced by his training in Zen Buddhism in Japan:

The central argument is not the perfect isomorphism of signifier and signified, which is one of the most important elements of Pound's reading of the essay, but that Western languages and logic have mistaken accuracy for truth, taxonomy for knowledge, and abstraction for reality. [...] For Fenollosa one must turn to the openness of a language infused by interrelation and conditionality rather than one closed by substance and identities. (Stalling 2010, p. 31)

Fenollosa would have been familiar with the metaphor of Indra's Net that his student and colleague Okakura Kakuzo explained in *Ideals of the East*: «For art, like the diamond net of Indra, reflects the whole chain in every link» (Okakura 1904, p. 9) «This vast web of interpenetration [...] *yintuo luowang* 因陀羅網 is envisaged as a vast web or net of interconnections where a jewel lies at every point of convergence and reflects every other jewel in the net» (Stalling 2010, pp. 15-16). There is evidence enough of Fenollosa's familiarity with the 華嚴 Kegon and 真言 Shingon schools of Zen Buddhism and his own training in the Tendai school. What is not evident is his familiarity with the work of Liu Xie.

While it is unclear whether Fenollosa's Tendai or poetry teachers introduced him to Kukai's 空海 *Bunkyū hifuron* 文鏡秘府論, which includes the most extensive (and cosmologically oriented) collection of texts on Chinese classical prosody in existence, the fact that Fenollosa uses this term 文章 (Ja: *bunsho*, Ch: *wenzhang*), not simply as the word for «literature» but as a metacritical term «synthetic harmony,» as the central term of his «universal theory of literature» makes me believe that he may have been familiar with Kukai's description of the *yin/yang* cosmological roots of Chinese poetic form[...] Even if Fenollosa did not have access to Kukai's collection on prosody, his notes include diagrams of Chinese rules for tonal prosody coded in *Yijing* symbols for *yin* and *yang*. (Stalling 2010, p. 73)

The *Bunkyū hifuron* draws upon the *Wenxin diaolong*, especially for its discussion of prosody, the subject of the second half of Fenollosa's essay on poetics. Richard W. Bodman has translated part of the *Bunkyū hifuron*. Although Liu Xie's discussion of the graphic aspects of Chinese writing does not appear, there is a tantalizing reference to it in Bodman's footnotes, when he explains the phrase «Hyperbole such as 'Rushing torrents, deluginous deluges, plummeting cataracts, surging billows and abundant inundations' has had its time» 奔激潢潦, 汨蕩泥波, 波瀾浸盛, 有年載矣 by citing the same text of Liu Xie that first caught my attention with regard to Fenollosa:

奔激潢潦，汨蕩泥波，波瀾浸盛，有年載矣。

This line does not make sense as a sentence and does not appear to be a quotation; it would seem best to regard it as a list of extravagant phrases which should be avoided.

The *Wenxin diaolong* in its section thirty-nine [...] gives the following advice: «By characters of the same radical is meant several characters in succession with one radical, that is, one half of each of their forms, in common. In the description of mountains and rivers, such a device has been used in all ages». (Vincent Shih, p. 299; Bodman 1978, pp. 471-473)

The title of *Wenxin diaolong* refers to *diaolong* the «carving of dragons», a stock phrase for embellishment, even hyperrealism, of dragons so well limned that they take flight upon completion. Laurence Binyon, who quotes Fenollosa extensively, explained this in his own book on East Asian art, *The Flight of the Dragon*: «we hear of horses so charged with life that they galloped out of the picture, of dragons leaving the wall on which they were painted and soaring through the ceiling» (Binyon 1911, p. 20). It was he who introduced Ezra Pound to East Asian art and Pound published a review of this book. Fenollosa's wife, Mary McNeil Fenollosa, published a novel entitled *The Dragon Painter* (Fenollosa 1906). Binyon mediated Mary Fenollosa's gift of her husband's manuscripts to Pound. In a letter to Ezra Pound in 1952, Achilles Fang remarks in an offhand way that suggests that Pound would be familiar with the reference, «If Guggenheim is willing to be useful, I shall try to translate Wen-hsin tiao-lung next year» (Qian 2008, p. 121). Fang had reviewed Shih's translation of *Wenxin diaolong* in the *Times Literary Supplement*. So there is evidence for Pound's familiarity with *Wenxin diaolong*, if not Fenollosa's, and Pound's proselytizing of Fenollosa was then still in full swing, as in his influence on Charles Olson, and through Olson on the American poetic avant-garde («men worth anyone's study: [...] Ernest Fenollosa!» (Olson 1997, p. 188).

Restricting his influence on the 20th century avant-garde to the publications that Pound edited gives an incomplete picture of Fenollosa's legacy. He also exerted a major influence on the visual arts through his own collection of East Asian art and the exhibitions he curated, through articles and books and public lectures on the subject, through collaboration with Arthur Wesley Dow in revolutionizing the teaching of arts and crafts, and through the role of his Japanese colleagues in disseminating Zen. Fenollosa also collaborated with Friedrich Hirth in creating the East Asian Studies programme at Columbia University, where Dow subsequently taught for many years (Chisolm 1963, p. 198). This is where D.T. Suzuki would teach Zen to writers and artists like John Cage, Allen Ginsberg and Jackson Mac Low.

In the course of Dow's thirty years of teaching he converted a generation of art teachers to Fenollosan principles [...] Fenollosa's writings provided texts and references throughout the seventeen years that Dow taught at Columbia. [...] Dow and his missionaries deserve recognition for initiating a shift in American taste [...] for all phases of modern design from Bauhaus furniture to «Mondrianesque» graphics and calligraphic paintings. (Chisolm 1963, pp. 179, 193, 238)

Fenollosa's ideas about structure and composition in art and about harmonics and overtones in music, consequent upon his study of Chinese and Japanese art, of the prosody of Chinese poetry, and of learning to sing texts from Noh theatre, prepared him to see artistic expression as an embodiment of *yuanqi* 緣起, the interconnectedness of all things, their interrelations.

Throughout Fenollosa's analysis one can detect both the spatially oriented Kegon 華嚴 definition of emptiness (all things are empty of autonomous completeness because all things are interrelated), and the more temporal-oriented Madhyamika definition of emptiness («one cause passing into another» or *pratītya-samutpāda* or dependent arising). (Stalling 2009a, p. 32)

In the first published version of his theory of poetics in *The Lotos* in 1896, Fenollosa wrote:

Synthetic thinking demands a pregnant language; rich, juicy, significant, full words, charged with intense meaning at the center, like a nucleus, and then radiating out toward infinity, like a great nebula. This is poetry, the making a word stand for as much thought and feeling as possible, and that through the mutual modifications of the successive words. [...] Refined harmony lies in the delicate balance of overtones. (Chisolm 1963, pp. 216-217, 225)

Haroldo de Campos recognised the implications of this approach: «Fenollosa was capable of recognizing in Chinese written poetry – on the graphemic level therefore – the 'harmonics' dancing before the eyes and 'colouring' all of the semantic planes, like a 'dominant chord'» (De Campos 2000, p. 42; translation of the Author).

Poetry, theatre, music and painting all provided Fenollosa with metaphors for his theory of poetics:

Here I lay a spot of red paint down on my canvas. Next I choose a green which I dot near it. The red is immediately changed, and so is the green. In contrast to the green the red has taken fire, and the green now glows

inwardly like an emerald. The reaction is mutual. [...] So I might go on creating, that is, finding added colors, each one of which would modify all the previous reactions in the way of making them all finer. [...] If, however, the magic has been accomplished [...] and ten colors, say (a modest allowance), have been mutually juxtaposed so that their multiple cross relations have only clarified and irradiated each other, then no one is cause and no one effect, for all is cause and all effect. (Chisolm 1963, pp. 202-203)

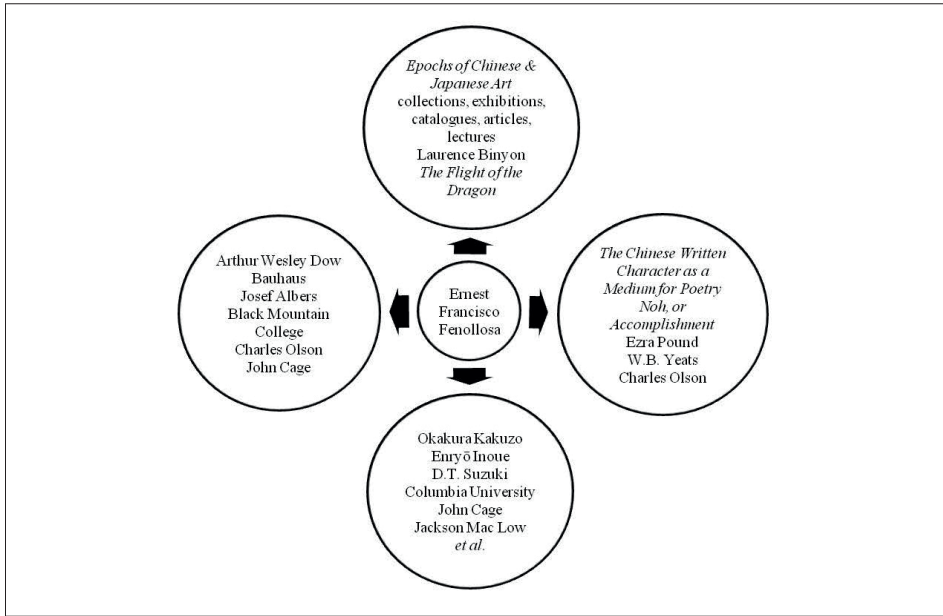
Fenollosa's influence on 20th century avant-garde writing and art is like his definition of poetry, «charged with intense meaning at the center, like a nucleus, and then radiating out toward infinity, like a great nebula». His disciples from Japan, Enryō Inoue and Okakura Kakuzo, introduced Zen Buddhism to America and Okakura's *The Book of Tea* and *Ideals of the East* were early English language guides to Zen, a subject Fenollosa commented on extensively in his own *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*.

The purpose of the Zen teacher, according to Fenollosa, was to let the student's mind «build up its own view of the subtle affinities between things; to construct an organic web of new categories». In individual confrontation of nature a Zen artist might glimpse the interrelationships of all life. (Chisolm 1963, p. 217)

D.T. Suzuki (with whom Yeats corresponded) was acquainted with Fenollosa (Saussy 2008, p. 23). He became the major Zen source for a generation of writers and artists through his classes at Columbia University (part of the legacy Fenollosa initiated with Hirth and Dow). Through Dow, Fenollosa's influence reached the Bauhaus Movement, and the Bauhaus took root at Black Mountain College, along with Charles Olson and John Cage:

in 1933 Josef Albers, who also came from a long teaching experience at Bauhaus, began teaching at Black Mountain College [...] an experimental community for art education, whose body of artists-teachers included, at different times, composer John Cage and the poet of Poundian lineage Charles Olson. [...] On the reading list for Olson's class in the 50s was Fenollosa's essay on the ideogram [...] No direct link, naturally. No linearity in the process. But the synchronic eye detects the compass rose of convergences. (De Campos 2000, p. 38; translation of the Author)

Haroldo de Campos' metaphor, *a rosácea das convergências*, derived from the image of a compass or wind rose, places Fenollosa at the hub, the centre that can hold, where everything converges, from which all spokes radiate outward.



Graphic 1. The compass rose of convergences: Fenollosa’s influence on the 20th century avant-garde

And this is another aspect of the interconnectedness and interrelation of all elements that finds echoes in Liu Xie’s explanation of the inter-textuality endemic to classical Chinese literature. After offering examples of five writers who all use the same images or metaphors, Liu writes:

此并廣寓極狀，而五家如一。

諸如此類，莫不相循，參伍因革，通變之數也。是以規略文統，宜宏大體。先博覽以精閱，總綱紀而攝契；然後拓衢路，置關鍵，長轡遠馭，從容按節，憑情以會通，負氣以適變，采如宛虹之奮鬚，光若長離之振翼，乃穎脫之文矣。（文心雕龍，通變第二十九，Ch. 29）

The five writers of note who seem so uniform [...] must have drawn quite freely upon each other. [...] Criss-cross preserving and transforming are the ways of continuity and change and so in seeking to master the tradition and scope of literature it is politic to enlarge on the essential features. You do well to read extensively and in detail to acquire an impression of overall structure and significant forms. Then you can go on your own thoroughfare, set up your turnpikes, and, long reins in hand, you gallop forth as far as you like and at your own speed. You meet the unbroken past on your own terms and live with change according to your own temperament. (Wong et al. 1999, p. 112)

Steven Owen uses the metaphor of a «discourse machine» to describe how Liu Xie's own text emerged out of a set of rules and requirements that were independent of the author: «*Wen-hsin tiao-lung* sets in motion the machine of 5th century rhetoric and analytic technique. Liu Hsieh's genius is the skill with which he operates this expository machine» (Owen 1992, p. 184).

In this essay I would like to consider Liu Xie's arguments not as the «expression» of ideas already fully formed and fixed, but rather as a process of exposition. This process is not unitary: In many cases we can identify two «players» contending for control of the exposition. One of these players we will call «Liu Xie» a human character with beliefs, an education of received ideas, and common sense. The other main player is the rhetoric of parallel exposition, what I call the «discourse machine» which produces utterances by its own rules and requirements. (Owen 2001, p. 175)

John Cage would turn time and again to James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (FW) to set in motion another kind of discourse machine producing utterances by its own rules and requirements. As it would happen, Joyce also knew the work of Fenollosa. In letters to Joyce dating from 1915, Ezra Pound alludes to his work on Fenollosa's theory of Chinese ideograms in a way that suggests Joyce's familiarity with it (Golden 1976, p. 53). Joyce wrote down some of Fenollosa's statements: «A true noun does not exist in nature (Fenollosa): any pronouns? phonetic theory is unsound: be careful!». These three phrases refer to three separate sections of Fenollosa's essay, suggesting that Joyce knew the whole essay (Golden 1976, p. 85). Fenollosa had written, «A true noun, an isolated thing. does not exist in nature. [...] The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them». This appears in FW as «For if we look at it verbally perhaps there is no true noun in active nature where every bally thing - please read this mufto - is becoming in its own eyeballs» (Joyce 1939, p. 523; Golden 1976, pp. 90-91).

Cage chose to operate by chance in his compositions as a result of an interest in Zen and the *Yijing*. («Fenollosa saw art presenting a momentary and sufficient ordering of possibilities»; Chisolm 1963, p. 247).

In the nature of the use of chance operations is the belief that all answers answer all questions [...] What I do, I do not wish blamed on Zen, though without my engagement with Zen (attendance at lectures by Alan Watts and D.T. Suzuki, reading of the literature) I doubt whether I would have done what I have done. (Cage 2009)

In the late forties I found out by experiment (I went into the anechoic chamber at Harvard University) that silence is not acoustic. It is a

change of mind, a turning around. I devoted my music to it. My work became an exploration of non-intention. To carry it out faithfully I have developed a complicated composing means using *I Ching* chance operations, making my responsibility that of asking questions instead of making choices. (Cage 1990)

In a version of «criss-cross preserving and transforming» that consisted of «writing through» the texts of others by applying chance operations based on mesostics of the author's name («not acrostics: row down the middle, not down the edge»), Cage combined Fenollosa and Joyce:

Syntax: arrangement of the army (Norman Brown). Language free of syntax: demilitarization of language. James Joyce = new words; old syntax. Ancient Chinese? Full words: words free of specific function. Noun is verbs is adjective, adverb. What can be done with the English language? Use it as material. (Cage 1979, p. 11)

Due to N. O. Brown's remark that syntax is the arrangement of the army, and Thoreau's that when he heard a sentence he heard feet marching, I became devoted to nonsyntactical «demilitarized» language. [...] This led me to want to learn something about the ancient Chinese language and to read *Finnegans Wake*. [...] I opened *Finnegans Wake* at random (p. 356). I began looking for a J without an A. And then for the next A without an M. Etcetera. [...] I then started near the end of the book (I couldn't wait) for I knew how seductive the last pages of *Finnegan* are.

my lips went livid for from the Joy
of feAr
like alMost now. how? how you said
how you'd givE me
the keyS of me heart.

Just a whisk brisk sly spry sprink
spank sprint Of a thing
i pitY your oldseIf i was used to,
a Cloud.
in pEace (Cage 1979, p. 133-134)

As chance would have it, when Cage wrote through Pound's *Cantos* his Zen, correlative and Fenollosan perspective highlighted the anti-Daoist, anti-Buddhist stance that had prevented Pound from publishing the significant parts of Fenollosa's work that inspired this study (Cage 1982, p. 112):

statE of bonZes empRess hAnged herself
 sPark lights a milliOn strings calcUlated at sterliNg haD by
 taozErs tho' bonZesses of iRon tAng
 Princes in snOW trUe proviNce of greeD

Fenollosa made a fundamental impact on the 20th century avant-garde. In the generation following Yeats, Pound and Joyce, Charles Olson sought Fenollosan graphemic inspiration in Poundian terms in the images inherent in Mayan writing (Olson 1967, p. 7) and Jackson Mac Low in the images behind the Phoenician alphabet (Mac Low 1986). But Mac Low also attended Suzuki's lectures and turned to chance operations (Stalling 2009b). Haroldo de Campos found the bases for concrete poetry in his reading of Fenollosa (De Campos 2009); Sergei Eisenstein for *montage* (Eisenstein 1929). That impact continues in the 21st century avant-garde. Xu Bing 徐冰 turns Fenollosa on his head with *Tianshu* 天書 (A Book From the Sky, Spears 2012, Xu Bing 2012), whose combination of Chinese calligraphic components produces meaningless words, but returns Fenollosa to currency with *Dishu* 地書 (A Book From the Ground, Xu Bing 2014), which demonstrates the possibility of a universally comprehensible narrative based entirely on graphic symbols. His *Square Word Calligraphy* reverts Fenollosa by composing English words with Chinese calligraphic components (Xu Bing 1994), while Jonathan Stalling's *Yingelishi* 吟歌兩詩 inverts Fenollosa by using the sound of Chinese written characters to produce English language texts that simultaneously conserve Chinese semantic overtones (Stalling 2011a, 2011b). John Cayley's programmatology creates a discourse machine that generates versions of translations from the written characters of Chinese texts (Cayley 2015).

Correlation may not be causation but around the hub of Ernest Fenollosa (and perhaps his predecessor, Liu Xie) many influences converge on 20th and 21st century avant-garde writing and art to correlate a compelling *nebula* (Fenollosa's metaphor) or *rosácea* (de Campos) of *yuanqi* 緣起 or *pratītya-samutpāda*, the interconnectedness of all things, their interrelations, as if Fenollosa had been familiar with Liu Xie, as if his followers had been aware of his unpublished work, though the fullest implications of the East-West fusion he predicated may in the end be more effective in the work of writers and artists like Cage and Mac Low than that of Pound and Olson.

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