

# Chinese Elements and Cross-cultural Dialogue in American Poetry in the 1920s and 1930s

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**Abstract:** This paper makes a detailed study of the elements of China in American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s and the cross-cultural communication embodied in them. It is found that the introduction of Chinese culture has a profound influence on American poetry, which not only enriches the image and connotation of poetry, but also promotes the diversification of styles and themes of American poetry. The specific case analysis reveals the ingenious application of Chinese elements in American poetry, such as quoting Chinese classical poems and integrating Chinese philosophical thoughts. At the same time, this study also discusses the forms of cross-cultural dialogue in American poetry and its promotion to American poetry creation. The results show that Chinese element and cross-cultural dialogue not only enhance the artistic value of American poetry, but also promote the mutual understanding and integration of Chinese and Western cultures. This study provides a historical reference for cultural exchange under the background of globalization, and enlightens contemporary literary creation to pay attention to the importance of cross-cultural exchange.

## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States was at the peak of industrial revolution and modernization, and the social and economic structure changed dramatically, so did people's ideas [1]. In the field of literature, there were many literary trends in this period, such as modernism and imagism, which tried to break the tradition and express the complex emotions and social reality of modern people with new artistic forms [2-3].

American poetry has been influenced by European literature, especially English literature since the colonial period [4]. By the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, American poetry began to seek self-breakthrough, and gradually formed its own unique style and theme [5]. The emergence of imagism, objectivism and other schools marks the beginning of maturity and independence of American poetry [6].

In the 1920s and 1930s, with the increasing cultural exchanges between the East and the West, Chinese culture and its elements began to penetrate into the Western culture, and American poetry was also influenced by this cross-cultural exchange [7]. The purpose of this study is to explore how to integrate Chinese culture into American poetry in this period, and to analyze the cross-cultural dialogue behind this cultural integration. This is not only of great significance for understanding the literary phenomenon at that time, but also provides a historical reference for cultural exchanges under the background of globalization today.

## 2. The characteristics of American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s

American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s showed the characteristics of diversity and experimentation, which reflected the complex changes of society, culture and politics [8]. The main features of American poetry in this period are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Main features of American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s

Serial number	Characteristic	Characteristic description
1	The rise of the modernist movement	Poets pursue new expressions and language experiments, and abandon traditional poetic forms and themes.
2	Innovation of poetic form	Try free verse, abandon the traditional rhythm and rhyme, and pay attention to the expression of content and the musicality of language.
3	The influence of imagism	Imagism emphasizes "vivid image" and "direct expression", which has influenced many poets including Pound.
4	Social and political criticism	Under the background of the Great Depression and social unrest, poets use poems to express their criticism of social injustice and politics.
5	Local colors and national characteristics	Poets pay attention to describing the scenery and culture of the United States, showing strong local and national characteristics.
6	The rise of female poets	Female poets began to emerge, and their works explored the identity, experience and role of women.
7	Reflection of immigration experience	The works of immigrant poets reflect their feelings about the new world and their connection with their countries of origin.
8	Religious and philosophical themes	Some poets' works involve religious and philosophical issues and explore the essence of life, universe and existence.

American poetry in this period is diverse, which not only challenges and abandons traditional poetry forms, but also explores new expression techniques and themes. Poetry is not only an artistic expression, but also a profound reflection of the complex social reality at that time [9]. Poets boldly try new poetic forms and expression skills, and strive to innovate in language and image. At the same time, they also began to draw inspiration from eastern culture, and incorporated Chinese elements into their poetry creation, forming a unique cross-cultural aesthetics. This cross-cultural communication not only enriches the connotation of American poetry, but also promotes the mutual understanding and integration of eastern and western cultures.

### 3. The embodiment of Chinese elements in American poetry

#### 3.1. The introduction of Chinese culture and its influence on American literature

The introduction of Chinese culture has injected new vitality into American literature. Since ancient times, Chinese culture, with its profound and long history, has had a far-reaching impact on all parts of the world [10]. In the 1920s and 1930s, with the gradual introduction of Chinese culture, American poets began to have a strong interest in it, which was not only reflected in the reference of Chinese classical poetry, philosophy and art, but also in the deep understanding and application of Chinese culture. American poets have enriched the image and connotation of poetry by incorporating Chinese elements, which has improved the expressiveness and depth of American poetry.

#### 3.2. Analysis of specific application cases of Chinese elements in American poetry

In the works of many American poets, we can find the ingenious use of Chinese elements. For example, Ezra Pound and other poets quoted a large number of classical poems of China in their works, such as Li Bai's and Du Fu's poems, etc., and brought a new artistic style to American poetry by drawing on the images and expression techniques of Chinese classical poems. In addition, some poets integrate Chinese philosophical thoughts, such as Taoism and Confucianism, into their poems, which makes them more profound and philosophical in expressing their themes. As shown in Table 2, specific application cases are presented.

Table 2 Examples of China in American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s

Poet's name	Poetry title	Description of Chinese element application
Ezra Pound	Cathay	Quoting classical Chinese poetry
William Carlos Williams	Spring and All	Drawing inspiration from the artistic conception of Chinese ink painting
T.S. Eliot	Wasteland	Integrating into Taoist thought of inaction
Hart Crane	The Bridge	Traditional Chinese architectural elements
Kenneth Rexroth	In Autumn	The sad autumn feelings in classical Chinese poetry

The table lists five examples of Chinese elements skillfully used by American poets in their works, including the reference to Chinese classical poems, the reference of Chinese ink painting artistic conception, the integration of Taoist thoughts, and the embodiment of Chinese traditional architectural elements and classical poetry feelings. These examples show the profound influence of Chinese culture on modern American poetry.

### 3.3. The influence of Chinese elements on the style and theme of American poetry

The integration of Chinese elements has greatly changed the style and theme of American poetry. On the one hand, the addition of Chinese elements makes American poetry more diversified in expression techniques, such as the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphor and antithesis in Chinese classical poetry, which enhances the artistic expression of poetry. On the other hand, on the theme, the introduction of Chinese element makes American poetry begin to explore more the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and the thinking and concept of life. These themes are deeply reflected in Chinese traditional poetry and philosophy.

## 4. The construction and interpretation of cross cultural dialogue

### 4.1. The historical background of Sino-American cultural exchanges

Sino-American cultural exchange has a long historical background. Since the 19th century, with the increase of trade and cultural exchanges between China and the United States, Chinese culture has been gradually introduced into the United States. In the 1920s and 1930s, with the improvement of Sino-US relations and the deepening of cultural exchanges between the two countries, American poets began to understand and accept Chinese culture more deeply, which provided new inspiration and materials for American poetry creation.

### 4.2. American poets' understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture

American poets' understanding and acceptance of Chinese culture is a gradual process. At first, they may only be interested in some superficial elements of Chinese culture, such as traditional arts and festivals in China. However, with the passage of time, they began to study Chinese philosophical thoughts, historical traditions and literary works in depth, thus gaining a deeper understanding of Chinese culture. This understanding and acceptance is not only reflected in their poetry creation, but also in their way of life and thinking.

### 4.3. The forms of cross-cultural dialogue in poetry

Cross-cultural dialogue shows its profound and diverse influence in American poetry. This dialogue is not only reflected in the superficial cultural elements for reference, but also goes deep into philosophical thinking and the exploration of human common values.

On the one hand, American poets often directly quote or skillfully use Chinese classical poems in their creation. For example, they may embed a poem of Du Fu or Li Bai in their poems, or imitate the meter and rhyme of Chinese ancient poems, thus giving their works a unique oriental charm. This practice not only shows the poets' deep interest in Chinese culture, but also significantly improves the expressiveness and depth of their works. At the same time, some American poets will also incorporate Chinese philosophical thoughts into their works, such as

Taoism's inaction and Confucian benevolence, which have added rich philosophical connotations to their poems.

On the other hand, American poets are also good at deepening the theme of their poems by comparing the similarities and differences between Chinese and western cultures. They may present the elements of Chinese and western cultures in the same poem, and emphasize the differences and similarities between them through sharp contrast. For example, they may compare Chinese collectivism with the western individualism, or compare Chinese idea of conforming to nature with the western conquest of nature. This contrast not only enriches the theme of poetry, but also provides readers with a brand-new perspective to examine and understand Chinese and western cultures.

The embodiment of this cross-cultural dialogue in American poetry is actually a blend of cultures and a collision of ideas. It not only enriches the connotation and expressive force of American poetry, but also makes American poetry more diversified in theme and style. More importantly, it promotes the mutual understanding and integration between Chinese and Western cultures. Through this dialogue, American poets and readers can have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, while Chinese readers can re-examine and understand their own culture through American poetry. This kind of cultural exchange and integration is undoubtedly of great significance to promoting the diversity and inclusive development of world culture.

#### **4.4. The role of cross-cultural dialogue in promoting American poetry creation**

Cross-cultural dialogue has played a positive role in promoting American poetry creation, which is reflected in many aspects and has profoundly influenced the evolution and reform of American poetry. It broadens the creative horizons and ideas of American poets and provides them with more inspiration and sources of materials. At the same time, it also promotes the diversity and inclusive development of American poetry, which improves the expressiveness and depth of American poetry. Most importantly, cross-cultural dialogue promotes the exchange and integration of American poetry with other cultures in the world. In this exchange, American poetry not only absorbs nutrition from other cultures, but also brings new artistic expressions to other cultures. This kind of cultural blending and collision has injected new vitality into the development of American poetry, making it glow more brilliantly under the background of global culture.

### **5. Conclusions**

Chinese element and cross-cultural dialogue are of great value and significance in American poetry. They not only enrich the connotation and expressive force of American poetry, but also promote the mutual understanding and integration of Chinese and western cultures. This cross-cultural exchange not only helps to promote the diversity and inclusive development of American poetry, but also provides useful reference and enlightenment for cultural exchange under the background of globalization.

This paper probes into the integration of Chinese elements in American poetry in the 1920s and 1930s and the cross-cultural dialogue behind this cultural integration. It is of great significance to cross-cultural communication in contemporary literary creation. First of all, it reminds us to pay attention to the importance of cross-cultural communication in literary creation, and actively learn from and absorb the excellent elements and expressions of other cultures. Secondly, it encourages us to keep an open and inclusive mind in literary creation and respect and understand the differences and characteristics of different cultures. Finally, it inspires us to seek innovation and breakthrough in cross-cultural communication and promote the diversity and prosperity of literary creation. Through in-depth analysis of Chinese elements in specific poetry works and the construction and interpretation of cross-cultural dialogue, this study is expected to provide beneficial enlightenment and reference for cultural exchanges and literary creation between China and the United States.

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