

A Conversation with ChatGPT about Ezra Pound

Diogo R. Ferreira

IST, University of Lisbon, Portugal

It is hard to approach the work of Ezra Pound without being driven into the controversies surrounding his life. When the subject is brought up, there is no easy way out, because there is a fine balance between assessing his literary work without prejudice, and still being thoughtful enough about his mistaken views during WWII, for which, in any case, he paid dearly during his life. As the world is again threatened with global conflict, technology marvels us with some of the most recent advances in artificial intelligence. One of such amazing feats is ChatGPT, a language model that can interact in a seemingly human, conversational way. In this work, we engage with ChatGPT in a conversation about Pound's work and life, including some exploration into the nature of Modernism and the Imagist movement. While testing the knowledge of ChatGPT on these topics, we find that it tends to restate the facts that it has seen elsewhere, mostly in a superficial and non-committal way. Although the lack of depth and decisiveness by ChatGPT is at times unsatisfying, it does provide the opportunity to review some of the basic aspects about the life and work of such a controversial character.