THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY

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Introduction

Precursors

"Of Modern Man I sing," wrote Walt Whitman, declaring his modernity by implicit contrast with Virgil's "Of arms and the man I sing" ("One's-Self I Sing"). But just when poetry in English became "modern" is not easy to determine. The word *modern* comes from the Latin word *modo,* meaning "just now," and so *modern poetry* in a general sense is new or innovative poetry, perhaps beginning with Whitman and continuing to today. As a period term, however, *modern* can be used more narrowly, for poetry centered in the first half of the twentieth century, bounded by the Victorian era on one end and the contemporary period (also called *post–World War II* or *postmodern*) on the other. In this sense, the late nineteenth-century poets Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Gerard Manley Hopkins fall outside the period's boundaries. Yet these three figures stand like giants at the threshold, precursors who heralded key developments in the early twentieth-century poetry that is generally called "modern." Their groundbreaking poetry, disdained by or largely unknown to their contemporaries, found both readers and disciples in the twentieth century.

Considered scandalous in his time, Whitman's verse first gained acceptance in Europe. In his preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Whitman dares to imagine a poetry that, released from inhibiting conventions, responds energetically to the teeming worlds of nature, humanity, and the self. He vows in "Song of Myself" to strip naked, to open himself to the air he loves, "mad for it to be in contact with me." In rhapsodically cadenced lines, he celebrates "The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hillsides, / The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun." In his sweeping embrace, he includes even bodily realities and profane feelings—"guile, anger, lust, hot wishes" ("Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"). Whitman's poetry expresses a new way of looking at the world, discovering charged relationships among the most disparate things and people, and uncovering the world's variousness within himself as poet and as human archetype. This largeness of conception broke the bonds of conventional prosody. He became the first major poet to write in free verse, a crucial innovation that Ezra Pound and the Imagists were to institutionalize more than fifty years later as a prime tenet of modernism. Pound called Whitman "a pig-headed father"; other poets more graciously numbered themselves among Whitman's progeny, including W. B. Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsberg, June Jordan, and Derek Walcott.

Emily Dickinson's poems, only a small handful of which were published before she died, echo through the work of twentieth-century poets, whether working primarily in "closed" or "open," regular or irregular forms, including Williams, H. D., Crane, Lorine Niedecker, Elizabeth Bishop, Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, and Susan Howe. Indeed, Dickinson both embraced and burst formal boundaries: she wrote compact poems in hymnlike quatrains that alternate four- and three-beat lines, yet she slanted and skewed rhyme and structure, time and space. The extreme compression of her poetry, its riddle- or parablelike indirection, and its abruptly shifting scale seem to anticipate "modern" developments. In contrast to Whitman's macrocosm, manifested in long lines, her world is one of minute examinations of her surroundings, recounted like secrets that seem to have been preserved almost accidentally. In short lines that compress multiple meanings and trouble the normal movements of syntax, she inspects domestic and natural objects with diamondlike concentration—a buzzing fly, a worm bit in half, "a certain Slant of light, / Winter Afternoons." Even so, she too draws all things into a jagged cohesion, for to her, "the brain is wider than the sky" and can encompass and absorb sky, sea, and all. "My Business is Circumference," she wrote in a letter. In her poetry, she affirms, as Yeats and William Blake both asserted, that infinity may be represented by things infinitely small.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English precursor of the modern movement, was a devout student of Whitman, and remarked in a letter of October 18, 1882, "I may as well say . . . that I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own than any other man's living. As he is a very great scoundrel this is not a very pleasant confession." Hopkins doubtless thought Whitman a scoundrel because of the American's unchristian religion, general bravado, and erotically charged verse; whereas Whitman found the multitudinous world's coherence in his own sensibility, Hopkins found it in God and termed this integrative energy *instress*. But their poetic kinship is unmistakable. Like Whitman, Hopkins felt the need to transform the apparatus of poetry in the process of reimagining the world. He did not desert rhyme or meter, but he pulled, twisted, and stretched them until they sounded like nothing seen before in English verse. His most important prosodic invention was what he called *sprung rhythm*, in which stressed syllables are attached to widely varying numbers of unstressed syllables—a technique that enabled him to approximate more nearly the unpredictable ebb and flow of experience. His poetry combines extremities of feeling—agony and rapture, distress and joy—in lines so densely packed with sounds, meanings, and ambiguities that they resist easy absorption, as when he describes how branches mark the night in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves": "Only the beakleaved boughs dragonish damask the tool-smooth bleak light; black, / Ever so black on it." Hopkins's poetry was largely unread until his friend Robert Bridges—having waited for the right moment—published a collection in 1918, when audiences shattered by World War I were readier than the Victorians for its strangeness and daring. His descendents include British and Irish poets such as Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden, and Seamus Heaney, and Americans such as Robert Lowell, Amy Clampitt, and Charles Wright.

Modern and Modernist

Thomas Hardy is a pivotal figure between the Victorian and modern periods. Although his novels appeared in the nineteenth century, he published all

but the first of his poetry collections, *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898), in the twentieth. Like Hopkins, Hardy confronts and even affronts the reader with new shapes, rhythms, and sounds. His verse is based on tormented syntax and inelegant vocabulary, as if they, rather than eloquence, might best reflect the uncouth universe. He praised "dissonances" and "irregularities" in verse, and while his poems are in rhymed and metered stanzas, their unconsoling endings, jarring juxtapositions, and skeptical questionings also distort and dislocate Victorian conventions. His unvarnished presentation of his pained and tumultuous feelings—in his elegies for his first wife and elsewhere—likewise accord with the fiercely truth-telling mood of poets he most influenced, such as D. H. Lawrence, Siegfried Sassoon, W. H. Auden, Philip Larkin, James Wright, and Pound, whose only literary souvenir when leaving London in 1920 was a letter of Hardy's.

Hardy marked the end of the Victorian period and the dawn of the new age in "The Darkling Thrush," a poem originally titled "By the Century's Deathbed" and postdated December 31, 1900, the last day of the nineteenth century. The poem mourns the demise of a century of conviction and optimism, and it intimates the beginnings of a new era in its skeptical irresolution, its bleak sense of the modern world as "hard and dry"—favorite adjectives of later writers such as Pound and T. E. Hulme:

> The land's sharp features seemed to be
> The Century's corpse outleant,
> His crypt the cloudy canopy,
> The wind his death-lament.
> The ancient pulse of germ and birth
> Was shrunken hard and dry,
> And every spirit upon earth
> Seemed fervourless as I.

Along with Hardy's first volume, A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), Edwin Arlington Robinson's *The Children of the Night* (1897), and Yeats's *The Wind among the Reeds* (1899) appeared in the waning years of the nineteenth century. These books continue Romantic and Victorian traditions—a language of personal feeling, regular meters and rhymes, the imputation of human feelings to nature by the pathetic fallacy. But the poetry of Housman, Robinson, and Hardy diverges by its intensified doubt and pessimism, and that of the early Yeats by its thorough internalization of the outer world and by its apocalyptic anticipations.

Because this century-bridging poetry remains grounded in nineteenth-century literary conventions, it is *modern* without being *modernist*. By analogy with political *-ist* words such as *anarchist* and *monarchist*, the word *modernist* can be glossed literally as "advocate of newness." Through its fragmentation, ellipses, and jagged edges, modernist poetry disrupts formal coherence, traditionally enforced by regular meter and rhyme, tonal and figural continuity. It aggressively asserts modernity in form and subject matter, and it forces a sharper break with Romantic and Victorian tradition. Instead of lamenting the death of the nineteenth century, Pound repudiated the late Victorian period as "blurry, messy," and "sentimentalistic." The 1914 manifesto of the avant-garde journal *Blast* thunders, "BLAST / years 1837 to 1900." Like other avant-garde manifestos, this one damns the middle class for perpetuating Victorian taste and conventional mores.

While modern poetry in English can be dated to the turn of the twentieth

century, modernist poetry began in the 1910s with the publication of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Preludes," H. D.'s and Pound's Imagist poems, Gertrude Stein's and Mina Loy's early experimental work. Manifestos by Hulme, Pound, Loy, and others accompanied these first modernist poems, proclaiming and explaining the new aesthetic. A further distinction arises with the emergence of what is often called *high modernism:* the densely allusive, learned, polyglot poetry, exemplified in the 1920s by Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and his Cantos, a group of which were published as a book in 1925.

These distinctions, if clear at the extremes, blur in the middle ground held by Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, and others who share qualities with modernism and high modernism, but can also be seen, in Yeats's words, as "the last Romantics": they innovate formally and thematically while extending nineteenth-century traditions. Still more formally conservative poets—such as the World War I poet Wilfred Owen, the Harlem Renaissance poet Claude McKay, and the New York traditionalist Edna St. Vincent Millay—brought inherited forms into fresh dialogue with "modern" subjects, such as mass warfare, racial lynching, and sexual liberation. Moreover, even Pound and Eliot did not break completely with nineteenth-century poetry: they were indebted to Whitman, Robert Browning, and the French Symbolists, among others, and in the late 1910s, they too composed formally regular poems—in quatrains. But since Pound and Eliot sought to distinguish themselves from the Romantics and Victorians, their modernist emphasis on rupture and on formal invention colors the overall picture of what is new and distinctive in modern poetry as a whole. As a result, some critics use *modernism* broadly for all early twentieth-century literature, claiming the term's prestige for the nonmodernist moderns as well.

"Make It New"

It may be useful at the outset to summarize some of the distinctive features of modern poetry. The preoccupation with newness is put succinctly in Pound's slogan "make it new" and in an assertion of William Carlos Williams: "Nothing is good save the new." Formal coherence, metrical rules, and generic laws must be broken or, at least, twisted and distorted to fit the unsettled times: "To break the pentameter, that was the first heave," Pound writes. The lyric convention of the "gem-like" poem must be shattered in favor of poetry, as Lawrence graphically puts it in his "Poetry of the Present" (1919), of the "insurgent naked throb of the instant moment."

The search for new ways to represent experience was not exclusive, of course, to poetry. By the early twentieth century, powerful vocabularies were emerging in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and the visual arts that described human identity in radically new ways. Sigmund Freud's seminal *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900, and soon psychoanalysis was changing how people saw and described rationality, the self, and personal development. By 1913, when Pound defines the image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," he refers to the psychoanalytic meaning of "complex" ("A Retrospect"); at the same time, in his prose and poetry, Lawrence is adapting the Oedipus complex to interpret and present his relationships with his parents, though rejecting Freud's negative definition of the unconscious. In a 1924 essay about Freud's influence on literature, the southern poet and critic John Crowe Ransom noted that,

after Freud, the self is conceived as "multiple rather than simple," many "bound up loosely in one," "a pack of demons." By the time of his death, in 1939, Freud had become, as Auden wrote in an elegy for him, "a whole climate of opinion // under whom we conduct our different lives." Also in the early twentieth century, Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915) and other works of anthropology were altering basic conceptions of culture, religion, and myth. Eliot observed that Frazer's work "influenced our generation profoundly," and the critic Lionel Trilling suggested that "perhaps no book has had so decisive an effect upon modern literature as Frazer's." In poetry, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, H. D., Stevens, and Lawrence layered myths of fertility gods as paradigms of the death and potential rebirth of civilization, and as models for what Yeats called the ritual of verse. For both anthropologists and modern poets, Western religion now became one of numerous interrelated mythologies—the "dying god," Jesus Christ, but one "three-days' personage" (in Stevens's phrase) among many. Reinforcing this radical rethinking were the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth-century German philosopher who declared the death of God, repudiated Christianity, and offered instead a harshly tragic conception of life: people look "deeply into the true nature of things" and realize "that no action of theirs can work any change," but they nevertheless laugh and stoically affirm their fate. Stevens responds with Nietzschean gaiety to seeing the "gods dispelled in mid-air and dissolve like clouds"; Yeats, who remarks in a 1902 letter that his eyes are exhausted from reading "that strong enchanter," greets death and destruction in a Nietzschean spirit of exultation; and Robinson Jeffers, who read Nietzsche at fifteen, likewise conceives of heroic responses to loss and tragedy that, like those of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* or overman, exceed the human.

The modern poet's concern with the new also reflects the rapid transformation of everyday life in the early twentieth century. Electricity was spreading, cinema and radio were proliferating, new pharmaceuticals were being developed, and cheap steel was readily available for the building of skyscrapers. As labor was increasingly managed and rationalized, as more and more people crowded into cities, as communications and transportation globalized space and accelerated time, poetry could not stand still. (As if nothing had changed, some popular poets, such as Americans in the "Genteel Tradition," as the philosopher-poet George Santayana called it in a 1911 lecture, continued to write about conventional themes in an archaic diction and highly rhetorical style, but their work has, as a result, been largely forgotten.) This was a period of scientific revolution, as exemplified in German physics by Max Planck's quantum theory (1900) and Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905). Eliot reflects the increasing dominance of science when he argues that the poet surrenders to tradition and thus extinguishes rather than expresses personality: "It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science," he claims, adding that "the mind of the poet is the shred of platinum" that catalyzes change but itself remains "inert, neutral, and unchanged" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent"). Gertrude Stein, who considered a possible career in science, conducted her experiments in poetic form after working for ten years in laboratories; her investigations included neurophysiological research under the supervision of the psychologist William James.

The early twentieth century also brought countless advances in technology: the first wireless communication across the Atlantic occurred in 1901,

the Wright brothers flew the first airplane in 1903, and Henry Ford introduced the first mass-produced car, the Model T or "Tin Lizzie," in 1913. Not that modern poets univocally embraced such changes. Although poets in the second modern generation were more sanguine—Hart Crane exalted the Brooklyn Bridge and Stephen Spender the express train—most poets of the first generation were paradoxically repulsed by aspects of modernization. Mass-produced appliances and goods, such as the "gramophone" and canned "tins," are objects of revulsion in *The Waste Land,* and cinema ("kinema"), the pianola, and popular journalism come under satiric attack in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. Scientific materialism and positivism, according to which empirical explanations could be found for everything, were weakening the influence of organized religion, and many poets looked to poetry as an alternative. His "simple-minded" Protestantism spoiled by science, Yeats says in his autobiography he "made a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition." H. D. assumes an almost priestly role in her verse, though she attempts to free religious icons such as the Virgin Mary of patriarchal accretions. Whether or not they welcomed the demise of tradition, habit, and certitude in favor of the new, modern poets articulated the effects of modernity's relentless change, loss, and destabilization. "Things fall apart," as Yeats wrote, "the centre cannot hold." Eliot describes in *Four Quartets* his quest for the "still point of the turning world." "Make it new" thus arises in part out of an often ambivalent consciousness of the relentless mutations brought by modernization.

"Make it new" is also, ironically, a reaction to an uneasy sense of being "not new," of coming late in the long record of human achievement, and thus bearing the enormous weight of the cultural past. The explosion of knowledge was extending human consciousness, as Eliot said of Frazer's work, into "the backward and abysm of time" (echoing Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). At the same time that modern life was shedding old traditions and customs, the great expanse of cultural and literary history was becoming more accessible—"simultaneous" is Eliot's word—than ever before. To "make it new" is thus necessarily in part to recycle, refurbish, and recontextualize the old. Indeed, Pound said he borrowed his slogan from the bathtub of an ancient Chinese emperor. Modern poetry, like the two-faced Roman god Janus, looks toward the newness of the "just now" and toward the "backward and abysm of time." It registers the impact of change on the imagination, while answering to the traditions of poetry as an ancient art form. Poems of the greatest allusiveness and synchronicity—high modernist works from *The Waste Land* and *The Cantos* to H. D.'s *Tribute to the Angels,* Louis Zukofsky's "Poem Beginning 'The,' " and Melvin Tolson's *Harlem Gallery*—are steeped in literary tradition, but they reassemble and amalgamate past myths and vocabularies, figures and forms, in ways that are decidedly antitraditional.

The social changes at the turn of the century were reflected not only in what and how the new poetry was written but also in who was writing it. Between the two world wars, African Americans of the Harlem Renaissance and Jews of the modernist and Objectivist movements racially and ethnically diversified poetry in English. As we shall see, these writers brought into poetry partly unwritten areas of experience, fresh vocabularies, and emergent social identities, and thus they also made it new. More women were leading poets in the modernist revolution than in the comparably transformative literary revolutions of the Romantic movement and the Renaissance; their

ranks included Stein, H. D., Loy, Marianne Moore, Amy Lowell, Edith Sitwell, and Laura Riding. Many other women poets consolidated and revised lyric traditions, often from a strongly gendered perspective—in 1920s and 1930s New York, for example, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, Dorothy Parker, and Louise Bogan. Modern male poets continued as the majority, however, and sometimes Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and other men, in their representations of their masculinity and of women, betrayed a heightened anxiety over changing sex roles. The partial gender shift in the traditionally male domain of poetry was enabled by the increasing access of women to higher education, the loosening of Victorian gender codes, and the entry of more women into the workplace—accelerated by the labor shortages of World War I. After long struggles, the women's movement won suffrage for American women in 1920 and for British women over thirty in 1918, over twenty-one in 1928. Modern women poets in turn helped prepare the way for the still greater number of ambitious women poets after World War II.

Difficulty and Imagination

Make it difficult is another imperative of much modern poetry. In his essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), T. S. Eliot famously said that "it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning." Eliot's analogy between the complexity of modern poetry and that of modern civilization suggests that simple poetry feebly evades modernity, retreating into the consolations, nostalgias, and pieties of the past. Because of the rapid pace of social and technological change, because of the mass dislocation of populations by war, empire, and economic migration, because of the urban juxtaposition of vast cultural differences, modernity disrupts the old order, up-ends ethical and social codes, casts into doubt previously stable assumptions about self, community, the world, and the divine. Difficulty takes on many different guises in modern poetry. Reflecting the erosion both of the classically liberal confidence in progress and advancement and of traditional values and belief systems, modern poetry—skeptical of all-explanatory narratives and theories—avoids the discursive commentary of Victorian poems such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Modern poetry more often shows instead of telling, presents instead of expounding. Its approach is typically oblique, throwing the reader into the middle of an experience instead of working up to it gradually. Because modern poems present ideas, experiences, and sensory perceptions directly, unfiltered by explanations, their immediacy and directness paradoxically contribute to their difficulty. Eliding the comforts of discursive connections and transitions, they force readers to leap across gaps of many different kinds—tonally, from bitter satire to melancholy in Yeats's "September 1913"; figuratively, from an urban crowd to flower petals in Pound's "In a Station of the Metro"; metrically, from cadenced, unrhymed verse to couplets in Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"; generically, from the blues to iambic pentameter couplets in Langston Hughes's "The Weary Blues"; typographically, from prose poetry to lineated verse in Stein's "Idem the Same. A Valentine to Sherwood Anderson"; spatially, from a mountain-

top glacier deep into the sea in Marianne Moore's "An Octopus"; temporally, from World War II–era London to ancient Egypt in H. D.'s *The Walls Do Not Fall*; and linguistically, from African American vernacular to Standard English in Sterling Brown's "Strong Men." Poets such as Yeats and Robert Graves, mistrusting conventional religions, assemble private mythologies, leaving readers to puzzle them out in the poems. Even seemingly straightforward poems, such as those of Robert Frost or Langston Hughes, often employ evasive irony and subtle indirection.

Modern poets also place a premium on the imagination, an emphasis that leads back, perhaps surprisingly, to the Romantic movement. The Romantics presented poetry not as the celebration of the ideals of society, but as the expression of the individual imagination, its power to invest the external world with a new light—or even to transform it altogether, to invent what Auden called "alternative worlds." Many modern poets fundamentally questioned the reality of the objective world. Their verse exhibits what Paul Valéry called a "drama of mental images," a drama made out of the different and conflicting gradations of reality or irreality that mental images seem to possess. Not that modern poets need confine themselves to a single stance. Sometimes, they may veer toward a Platonic world of essences, beside which material things offer only ghostly semblances; at other times, they may recognize the stubborn powers that lurk in material realities, resistant to reshaping by the imaginative will. Modern poets search for adequate fictions, fictions verging on facts, what is imagined reshaping what is seen, and their imaginative quest may be said to culminate in Stevens's pursuit of a "supreme fiction." This pursuit has been concomitant, also, with doubts about the feasibility of such an enterprise—another favorite subject of modern verse. In Stevens's poetry, life and art struggle to bring one another under control, and the issue is never settled. Yeats's poetry asks to what extent art conquers nature, is conquered by nature, and is itself nature, and the degree to which nature is itself art. The lake isle of Innisfree is a real island, but in Yeats's famous poem, it is also an image of that island perfected by the imagination. Byzantium is a real, historical city, but for Yeats it is also an image of art and eternity, conjured out of nothing by the passions of a living poet. The London of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and H. D.'s *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the New York of Crane's *The Bridge*, the Harlem of Hughes's *Montage of a Dream Deferred* and Tolson's *Harlem Gallery* are replete with verifiable concrete details, but each is also an "Unreal City," the special property of the poet who aided in its creation. In Eliot's poetry, the imagination conjures broken images of a fragmented world, but strives to reconstruct the symbols needed for survival, symbols that for him are not only imaginative but spiritual, implying the interdependence of art and religion. In an age characterized by fragmentation, Eliot searches for a symbolic landscape of wholeness and radiance. In the next generation, Auden abjures any relation of poetry and religion, insisting that the one praises the physical universe and the other the metaphysical universe, but his work nevertheless refurbishes drab or anguishing data by spiritual nourishment and aesthetic delight.

Globalization

Along with the imperatives of newness, difficulty, and imagination comes a fourth—*make it international*. As trade, travel, investment, and communications were becoming globalized, so too was poetry. The movies and radio,

the telephone and telegraph, ocean liners and, after 1919, transatlantic air travel were augmenting and speeding the movement of knowledge, images, news, capital, and people within and across national boundaries. The vast reach of the British Empire and the increasing political and economic might of the United States—in 1919, the prime mover behind the creation of the League of Nations and the greatest creditor nation in the world—also helped knit together previously separate peoples across the globe. Between 1850 and 1914, British and other European empires had carved up most of the "undeveloped" world, and by 1914, Britain's empire was 140 times its own size, covering a quarter of the world's land surface. The empire's centrifugal forces—including economic, political, and religious colonization and ethnographic research—scattered British denizens across the globe; its centripetal forces drew them back, along with material goods, artifacts, and occasionally indigenous peoples (though a much greater influx of non-European immigrants would follow World War II).

No previous period in English-language poetry includes so many migrants and expatriates. Major modern cities were centers of the new internationalism. The population of London, the cosmopolitan capital of the world, had leapt in the nineteenth century from one million to six and a half million by 1900. Now it drew into its "vortex," as Pound called it, writers from Ireland such as Yeats, from Scotland such as Edwin Muir, from America such as Pound, H. D., Eliot, and, more transiently, Frost, Amy Lowell, Claude McKay, and Laura Riding. Other American poets, such as Stein, McKay, Riding, and E. E. Cummings, spent long periods in Europe, where the avant-garde visual arts were exploding. In 1913, the Armory Show brought modern European painting to New York, including works by the Postimpressionists Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin, the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Inspired by the European avant-garde, little magazines in New York published venturesome art and writing—*Others, Rogue, Camera Work, 291, Broom, The Dial*, and, after 1917, *The Little Review*. More heterogeneous than London or Paris, New York was a vibrantly transnational and ethnically diverse metropolis. In and around it lived Williams, Stevens, Moore, Loy, Crane, and most of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance and the Objectivist movement. To its Irish and German populations, New York was rapidly adding Italians, Greeks, Russians, Hungarians, Poles, and, in the wake of continuing pogroms, Jews; in 1907 alone, 1,200,000 immigrants entered through Ellis Island. The Harlem Renaissance owes its energy to the influx of American southerners, but also of West Indians such as McKay. As a result of the migration into and out of the United States, many American poets of this period spoke another language before they learned English: Stein's first languages were German and French, Sandburg's was Swedish, and Louis Zukofsky's was Yiddish. Even the American nativist Williams had an English-born father and a Spanish-speaking mother, from Puerto Rico. In addition to Stein and Zukofsky, other Jews were among the poets born to recent immigrants, such as Laura Riding, Dorothy Parker, Charles Reznikoff, and George Oppen. Poets of Jewish descent in Britain included Loy, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and—as he was surprised to learn at sixteen—Stephen Spender.

Like the great literary burgeoning of the Renaissance, when Continental and classical models infused the English-language writing of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, the modern movement resulted in part from an energetic opening to global literatures. Never before had major English-language

writers immersed themselves so thoroughly in the literary cultures of East and South Asia as did Yeats, Pound, and Eliot. Yeats sought confirmation for his early convictions about the primacy of consciousness in Indian thought, and in 1912, he befriended the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore—the first of his many collaborative relationships with Indian poets and mystics. Although Pound was antipathetic toward South Asian culture, he shared Yeats's interest in Japanese Noh drama and East Asian culture. In 1913, the American sinologist Ernest Fenollosa's widow gave his notebooks to Pound, who creatively rendered from Chinese the free verse poems of *Cathay* (1915), thus beginning a lifelong fascination with the ideogram as a model of juxtaposition and of language that integrates signifier and signified. As a student at Harvard, Eliot immersed himself in the study of Sanskrit and other Eastern languages, Buddhism and other Eastern religions, later incorporated in the global synthesis of *The Waste Land*. Little wonder that high modernist poetry is polyglot—ancient Greek, Latin, French, German, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Yiddish are among the untranslated languages heard in the multilingual din of poems by Pound, Eliot, Moore, H. D., Zukofsky, and Tolson.

Alongside this many-tongued verse, some poets asserted, ever more strongly, the claims of their own indigenous varieties of English. Yeats, and later Austin Clarke and Patrick Kavanagh, hybridized English with elements of Irish English. Hugh MacDiarmid composed in Scots. Rudyard Kipling imported into poetry a vigorous cockney. Frost wrote poems attuned to the speech of New England, and Williams asserted the importance of writing in American English about American subjects. Sandburg used midwestern slang. Hughes and Brown wrote in the African American vernacular, and McKay initially published books of poems written in the Jamaican English of his youth. But these various nativisms in language and poetics cannot be understood outside the context of globalization, within which these poets struggled to carve out a literary space for the local.

Georgian Poetry, Poetry of World War I, and Regionalism

Simultaneous with the emergence of modernist poets in the 1910s were the solitary and introspective Georgian poets, so called because they began writing soon after George V acceded the English throne in 1910. They continued a nonmodernist line of English pastoral poetry that reaches back to the Romantics and forward to, in the 1950s, the Movement poets such as Philip Larkin, who claimed them as an authentically English alternative to the bookish complexity of international modernists such as Pound and Eliot. The Georgian poets had learned from Hardy's colloquialism and narrative realism, and they also drew inspiration from A. E. Housman's melancholy lyricism and feeling for nature. In spare, pastoral lyrics set near the hills of Shropshire, Housman had sadly and stoically meditated on human transience, thwarted love, and failed lives. But Georgian poetry is less bleak than Housman's and less arrestingly contorted than Hardy's.

Appearing in the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, edited by Sir Edward Marsh and published five times from 1912 to 1922, the Georgian poets infused nature with nationalist feeling. Among those participating in the anthologies were Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, and for a time even D. H. Lawrence. The most popular of the Georgians was Rupert Brooke, who before dying in World War I, literalized death as an act of national possession in his sonnet

"The Soldier": "If I should die, think only this of me: / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England." At first these poets, with their celebration of the English countryside and its people, seemed to open a window onto a more wholesome outdoors, in reaction against the art-for-art's-sake claustrophobia of late nineteenth-century Aestheticism, associated with writers such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. Those who wished to preserve rural England in traditional prosody received the movement enthusiastically. But soon the Georgians were under critical attack—the principal targets in the *Wheels* anthologies of Edith Sitwell, who regarded them as insipid and pretentious. Graves, Sassoon, and Lawrence all outstripped the mode's limitations, and nearly all the Georgians who remained Georgians seem quaintly escapist by comparison with their modernist contemporaries and have faded into obscurity. Edward Thomas—omitted by the editor from the Georgian anthologies—has ironically had the most staying power. The poet who perhaps best epitomized Georgian ideals, Thomas ruminates over meadows, birds, and "Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain / On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me / Remembering again that I shall die." Thomas combines inward pastoral reflection with the accents of real speech in poems such as the semidramatic "The Gypsy": "Give a penny / For the poor baby's sake." His poetry is deepened by the consciousness of imminent death—his own and the multitudes killed in World War I hovering just outside his lyric frame.

Thomas began writing during the war and was killed in 1917. His poems are not directly about the carnage of World War I, but other soldier-poets who began as Georgian pastoralists, such as Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, wrenched this late Romantic mode to make it reflect the violence that engulfed them. In the first phases of World War I, even the most famous war poets were writing reminiscences of idyllic English landscape. But innocent greenery came to seem too much at odds with trench warfare and mass slaughter. The soldiers' experiences in what Eliot called "rat's alley" withered away their conventional patriotism and stirred them to devise a bitter new rhetoric to express their disillusion, grief, and anger.

The international destruction between 1914 and 1918 was completely unexpected and unprecedented in scale: thirteen million civilians died because of massacres and military battles, starvation and exposure, and the world's most destructive outbreak of influenza. Eight and a half million soldiers were killed. In a single day, the British suffered 57,470 casualties at the 1916 Battle of the Somme, and they eventually lost 780,000 lives in the war. The battle line along the Western Front through Belgium, France, and Germany remained largely stagnant for years, despite the introduction of new technologies of war, such as tanks and, perhaps most horribly, poison gas—Owen describes a gassed soldier "guttering, choking, drowning," a man with "white eyes writhing in his face," in "Dulce et Decorum Est." The most gifted of the war poets, Owen jarringly conveys the war's mad slaughter by viewing it through the estranging lens of John Keats's lush and sensual Romanticism: "Red lips are not so red / As the stained stones kissed by the English dead" ("Greater Love"). Sassoon befriended Owen in a war hospital and encouraged his war poetry, but Owen was killed a week before the war ended, while Sassoon survived. He is a more journalistic, less densely literary poet, whose mainstays are ironic juxtaposition and satire. Of Sephardic Jewish descent, Sassoon recognized in another Jewish war poet, Isaac Rosenberg, the prophetic quality of the Hebrew Bible, which Rosenberg, like

Owen, brought into combination with a Keatsian sensuality. Rosenberg was killed in the war; he had served in it as a common soldier, like Ivor Gurney but unlike the officers Owen and Sassoon. Gurney's poetry, too, is rooted in the typically Georgian preoccupations with landscape and memory, but its distortions of sense and syntax, its irregularities in rhyme and rhythm, are recognizably "modern." Indeed, the war's absurd slaughter helped make the asymmetries and skepticism of prewar modernism more acceptable to postwar audiences.

Civilian poets were also deeply moved by the war. Even Rudyard Kipling, much of whose verse had been that of "a jingo imperialist," in George Orwell's phrase, grew horrified by the war in which his son died. He composed the disturbing World War I sequence "Epitaphs of the War," one spoken by a headless "Unknown Female Corpse," another by a woman "Raped and Revenged." The war was more distant, even abstract, for most American poets, but Stevens describes himself, in a 1918 letter, as obsessed by the war deaths; he elegized an archetypal soldier in "The Death of a Soldier": "Death is absolute and without memorial, / As in a season of autumn, / When the wind stops." Eliot, afflicted by his intimate friend Jean Verdenal's being "mixed with the mud" of the Dardanelles, obliquely mourned him in *The Waste Land,* and Pound, disturbed by the death of a sculptor friend, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, grieved bitterly in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, "There died a myriad . . . // Quick eyes gone under earth's lid."

During these years, the war fronts were not the only scenes of violent conflict. Launching the Easter Rising of 1916, sixteen hundred Irish nationalists, impatient with British rule and broken promises of independence, took over the central post office, a park, and other buildings in Dublin, and proclaimed an Irish Republic. One after another, fifteen leaders were executed by firing squad. Yeats was, like most of the Irish, at first dubious of the rebellion, but after the leaders whom he knew personally were martyred by the British, his dormant nationalism was reawakened. In "Easter, 1916," he yoked together both his awed appreciation and his doubts, his nationalism and his antinationalism, fashioning a newly complex kind of public yet private verse. Two years later, when the only child of his friend Lady Gregory was killed flying for the British Royal Flying Corps at the Italian front, he wrote four poems commemorating him. Yeats decried war poetry such as Owen's as being too passive, realistic, and unheroic—"all blood, dirt and sucked sugar stick," he said in a letter. But his poems about the ensuing Irish Civil War and the Anglo-Irish War bitterly evoke the house-to-house carnage: "a drunken soldiery / Can leave the mother, murdered at her door, / To crawl in her own blood" ("Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen"). In 1922, the Irish Free State became the first nation to emerge from British colonial rule in the twentieth century, decades before the decolonization of the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Robert Frost had long admired Yeats, and while Frost was living in England from 1912 to 1915, Pound introduced the two poets. During this time, Frost also met the leading Imagists and Georgians, and he befriended Edward Thomas and persuaded him to write poetry. In England, Frost found his first sympathetic audience and published his first two books, in 1913 and 1914, but because of the war, he returned to the United States. Traces of Georgian tendencies can be found in his work, but Frost renewed pastoral by toughening it. When he returned from England, he bought a farm in New Hampshire and consolidated his reputation as America's greatest pastoral poet. On

the one hand, he tapped the seasoned country wisdom of New England; on the other, he converted his self-disgust and loneliness into verses of classical Roman dignity phrased in the accents of New Hampshire and Vermont. Tormented and lonely men and women, "stiff and sore and scarred," often speak his dramatic monologues, experiencing "hurt" that their homely folk wisdom cannot assuage: "Now no joy but lacks salt / That is not dashed with pain / And weariness and fault" ("To Earthward"). Though he little resembles the polyglot, craggily allusive high modernists, he too shifts mercurially in tone and complicates poetry with undercurrents of rhythms half heard and meanings half spoken.

During the first two decades of the new century, American regionalists explored their local environments with little regard for the more disruptive innovations of the modernists. But their poetry also reflects indirectly the tradition-effacing forces of modernization: they sought to capture and preserve the particular character of local settings, often in the inhabitants' distinctive idiom and sensibility. Edwin Arlington Robinson exposed the life of Tilbury Town, and Edgar Lee Masters that of Spoon River, imparting public lessons from private scandals. Robinson's compressed character sketches, like those of his English counterpart, A. E. Housman, are melancholy in tone, telling of lives misshapen, cut off, or squandered. Preferring Whitmanian free verse to Robinson's formally taut stanzas, Masters nevertheless shares with Robinson an economical style. The more brazen Carl Sandburg wrote of Chicago: "Stormy, husky, brawling, / City of the Big Shoulders." His ebullient rhetoric in free verse about the city and its workers constituted the most "modern" literature to gain much public acceptance in the United States, at a time when most American readers thought he, Masters, and other regionalists represented the future of modern poetry. Many poets who wished a more radical break with tradition left the United States to find it, while the early poems of others, such as Williams, were printed either privately or abroad.

Although he was neither an English nor an American regionalist, D. H. Lawrence—who left England after World War I and traveled for much of his life across Continental Europe, Mexico, the American southwest, Australia, and elsewhere—shared with the Georgians and with most American regionalists a preoccupation with nature. Both the Georgians and the Imagists sought to claim him and included him in their anthologies. His praise for the Georgians in a 1913 review was more accurate as a description of his own purposes than of their accomplishments: "If I take my whole, passionate, spiritual and physical love to the woman who in return loves me, that is how I serve God. . . . All of which I read in the anthology of *Georgian Poetry.*" Lawrence sought to break through superficialities with his burning honesty and directness, and centered his own verse in the passions of tortoises and elephants as well as of men and women. Unlike the Georgians, Lawrence worked mostly in free verse. He thought that an interest in form usually accompanied an interest in imitation and preferred to let his subjects command their own shape. Lawrence remained an isolated figure, almost an outcast, beset during his short life by the public's unfounded notion that his often erotic writings were pornographic. Robinson Jeffers, whose long-lined, incantatory poetry was centered in the wild beauty of the California coastline, pursued like Lawrence an interest in nature and passion, though he sought to "break out of humanity" and embrace even nature's cruelty and indifference.

Symbolism

Unlike American and English regionalism and pastoralism, which hymned native landscapes (and, occasionally, cityscapes), an idealist poetry had emerged that found truth in the mind rather than in the outside world. Symbolism began in France with Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* (1857). Keenly acknowledging the anonymity and filth of the modern city, the visible corruption of the body in life and death, Baudelaire in resistance invents a symbolic world of "wholeness, harmony, and radiance." In the words of a later French poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, who pursued symbolist philosophy as far as anyone, this invented symbolic world is "the mind's native land." The term *symbolism* became popular in France about 1886 and after about ten years crossed the English Channel, when the English critic and poet Arthur Symons began writing about these French poets in his book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899). Symons was persuaded by his friend Yeats, with whom he shared rooms for a time in the mid-1890s, that this late nineteenth-century literature—in which the mind is supreme over fact, suggestion over statement, mood over external reality—constituted a literary movement.

Yeats refashioned symbolism for English-language poetry. In his essay "The Autumn of the Body" (1898), he wrote that the era of externality was over—that is, of naturalism, materialism, scientific realism—and that a new movement that should renew imaginative control over the environment (the world's body) was now afoot. He developed this position in "The Symbolism of Poetry" and other early essays. *The Wind among the Reeds* is about a second, human-centered nature, in which all outward things were internalized. The four elements became aspects of feeling; bird and beast alike were bent on expressing human passion rather than retaining their own identity.

Early in the new century, Yeats wearied of his early lugubrious, disembodied symbolism, declaring his intentions, in a 1901 letter, to make "everything hard and clear" and, in another of 1904, to leave behind "sentiment and sentimental sadness." He began working toward verse that, if still symbolist, exhibited the whole person thinking and feeling, not only the suitor ecstatically languishing. Verse must be "athletic," with leaps instead of dying falls. Lust, rage, and the body; war, violence, and the city—he now embraced materials he eschewed earlier as imperfect and unpoetic. He enacted his self-transformation in poems such as "The Fisherman" and "A Coat," in which his more austere diction and passionate syntax enact his will to leave behind the poetic "embroideries" of his youth and walk "naked." Restless, he continued to remake himself in one book of poems after another, his visionary intensity, complex ambivalences, and subtle but emotionally charged music remaining unmistakably his own to the end.

Imagism

In his development, Yeats found unexpected company in a young American, Ezra Pound. Pound arrived in London in 1908, at twenty-three, convinced that Yeats was the best poet then writing in English and determined to learn from him. Yeats also discovered how much this young man could tell him of new ideas and techniques, and from 1913 to 1916, they spent three winters

together in a stone cottage south of London. Pound's generosity and gregariousness, his propagandizing for the avant-garde, made his apartment in Kensington for a time the headquarters of innovative verse for both England and America. Pound's early poems are full of Yeats's early symbols and Robert Browning's mannered rhetoric—"stale creampuffs," he later called them—but in 1912–13, he adopted the more epigrammatic and ironic mode that became Imagism. Imagism evolved from symbolism and shared its antipathy for explanatory discourse, but it shifted the emphasis from the musical to the visual, the mysterious to the actual, the ambiguously suggestive symbol to the clear-cut natural image. Pound was helped to chart the new course in his writing by Ford Madox Ford, an American expatriate novelist who insisted on precision and efficiency in writing, on presenting facts without commenting on them. The philosopher-poet T. E. Hulme, who led a literary group Pound joined in April 1909, also offered guidance. In "Romanticism and Classicism," Hulme denounced Romantic poetry as so much whining and moaning, and he proposed instead "a period of dry, hard, classical verse"; by 1912, Pound, too, was calling for "harder and saner" verse, "like granite" ("A Retrospect"). Hulme said the poet must render "the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind" ("Romanticism and Classicism"), and Pound demanded, through F. S. Flint's introductory synopsis (partly incorporated in "A Retrospect"), "Direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective." In his poetry volume *Ripostes* (1912), Pound published an appendix of five poems, "The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme," prefaced by a note that printed the term *Imagistes* for the first time. That year, in a London teashop, Pound had announced to the poets Richard Aldington and H. D. (then called Hilda Doolittle) that they were "Imagistes," and two years later he included their and his work in the first Imagist anthology, *Des Imagistes*.

H. D. had arrived in London in 1911, and her verse, written under the spell of ancient Greek lyrical fragments, so impressed Pound that a year later he sent her poems, signed "H. D. Imagiste" at his insistence, to Harriet Monroe, the founding editor of *Poetry*, the Chicago clearinghouse for modern verse. He told Monroe that H. D.'s poems were "modern" and "laconic," though classical in subject: "Objective—no slither; direct—no excessive use of adjectives, no metaphors that won't permit examination. It's straight talk, straight as the Greek!" Except for poems such as his two-line, haikulike "In a Station of the Metro," written in 1912, Pound's Imagist pronouncements tended to run ahead of his practice, but H. D.'s early poems—lucid, economical, often centered in a single metaphor—best exemplified the theory. When Amy Lowell, a poet living in Boston, read these poems of H. D.'s in a 1913 issue of *Poetry*, she decided, "Why, I too am an *Imagiste*," and soon left for London, where she sought out Pound and allowed him to revise her work. Before long, Pound and Lowell rivaled each other for leadership of the Imagists, and after a squabble, Lowell published in 1915 the first of her three anthologies with a newly anglicized name, *Some Imagist Poets*. The preface to the first edition influentially spelled out the Imagist principles of exactitude in diction, inventiveness in rhythm, and clarity in images. Long after the dispersal of the Imagists, these precepts remained a generative force in modern poetry.

After abandoning Imagism as too static and insufficiently rigorous in 1914, Pound helped create a new movement, Vorticism, that emphasized not the do's and don'ts of style, such as those he had enumerated in "A Few Don'ts

by an Imagiste," but the dynamism of content. Pound conceived the vortex—an image of whirling, intensifying, encompassing energy—as the movement's emblem. Like Imagism, Vorticism lasted only for a few years, finding its most raucous embodiment in Wyndham Lewis's journal *Blast* and its main aesthetic achievements in Lewis's painting and Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture rather than in verse. After its demise, Pound quit founding movements and, a few years later, left London for Italy.

Though the Imagist movement formally came to an end in 1917, when Lowell published the third of her anthologies, both Pound and H. D. went on to write long, complex, many-layered poems that recall Imagism in their musical cadences, sharp juxtapositions, and free-ranging content. In the 1920s, other American poets, such as E. E. Cummings and Archibald MacLeish, cut their teeth on Imagism. Also influenced by Gertrude Stein's experimentalism and by Cubism in the visual arts, Cummings invented flamboyant typographical oddities to tantalize, disconcert, and amuse. For all his pyrotechnics, however, he sustained the ancient themes of lyric poetry, such as love, grief, and innocence. Although MacLeish eventually denounced modernism for its political and ethical ineffectiveness, he distills, in his early poem "Ars Poetica," the antidiscursive credo of Imagism: "A poem should not mean / But be."

High Modernism: For and Against

Pound's closest confederate was T. S. Eliot, whom Pound can be said to have discovered. The two men met in 1914, when Eliot came to England to study philosophy at Oxford University; Pound was astonished by the poems that Eliot showed him, among them "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," observing that Eliot had "modernized himself *on his own*." Introduced by Symons's book to French Symbolist poets such as Jules Laforgue, Eliot had found in them models for his early free verse lyrics of inner suffering viewed with ironic detachment. At first, Eliot and Pound seemed to be moving in the same direction. They both wrote about the modern world as a group of fragments, Pound in the first Cantos that he published in *Poetry* and Eliot in *The Waste Land,* which Pound had helped Eliot complete. Only gradually did it become clear that these poems embodied divergent views: for Eliot, the disjunctiveness of the world was intolerable, and he was determined to mend it (as his eventual conversion to Anglican Christianity helped him do). Pound preferred to accept and exploit this disjunctiveness. In the canceled first version of Canto 2, Pound contrasted himself with the Victorian Robert Browning, who had "one whole man," whereas he himself had only "many fragments." But he went on to ask defiantly, "Less worth? Less worth?" He saw how he might accept the fragments and make them material for a modern epic, *The Cantos,* which would, like Dante's *Divine Comedy,* plumb its hell and purgatory and ultimately achieve its paradise.

As a result, *The Waste Land,* with the poems by Eliot that became its sequels, and *The Cantos,* which Pound continued to write until his death, may be seen as rival eminences of early modern verse. The fragments that Eliot wished to reconcile and reintegrate Pound was willing to keep scattered and unchanged. Pound wrote Eliot that he envied him his sense of form, but he did not emulate it. For Pound, Eliot's sifting and fusing ended in a surprisingly orthodox religious view that Pound regarded as based on too limited a number of particulars. Pound developed his own "ideogrammatic method,"

as he called it, in which he heaped up the components of thought so that they would eventually cohere as if without artistic intervention. His image for this method was one of iron filings that, drawn toward a piece of glass by a magnet, assume the pattern of a rose. "Hast 'ou seen the rose in the steel dust?" he asks. He realized that such a rose might serve him as the rose of beauty had served Yeats, the Christian rose had served Eliot. *The Cantos* gather slices of time and space, fable and fact, images from aboriginal tribes and effete cultures. The poet achieves his effect not by purifying, but by collocating diffuse materials. Eliot consolidated his innovations, while Pound restlessly extended his.

The initial reaction to *The Waste Land* was violently mixed. Most poets, while admiring its technical inventiveness and finish, found it hard to like. Yeats felt it was dour and despairing. Robert Graves clung to traditional forms, disparaging their disintegration by Eliot. John Crowe Ransom wrote an adverse review of the poem, to which his sometime pupil Allen Tate published a refutation. Hart Crane was moved by *The Waste Land,* but thought that Eliot's despair was exaggerated and that his own mission, assisted by Walt Whitman's example, must be to effect a redemption of Eliot's disintegrated or corrupted world. While owing a debt to Eliot's symbolism, cityscapes, and generic mixture, Crane made what he called "an almost complete reverse of direction" from Eliot's "pessimism" toward an "ecstatic goal." Crane's major poem, *The Bridge* (1930), takes the reader backward in time, across the American continent in space, and down emotionally into a modern subterranean hell; but its overriding movement is across the arc of the Brooklyn Bridge, and it passionately and emphatically expresses secular hope against all odds.

In his prologue to *Kora in Hell,* written in 1918, William Carlos Williams, a doctor living in New Jersey, attacked the expatriates Eliot and Pound for merely warming over European conventions and for betraying American life and speech. Williams sought to express neither what the cosmopolitan Eliot called "the mind of Europe," nor the distinctive character of a limited region, as Frost, Masters, and Sandburg were doing, but a national experience. "Our own language is the beginning of that which makes and will continue to make an American poetry distinctive," he said. After the publication of *The Waste Land,* Williams campaigned against it: its sinister merit was so powerful that it might well block the movement toward an indigenous American verse. It was, he said in his *Autobiography* (1948), "the great catastrophe" that by its genius (a quality he admitted) interrupted the "rediscovery of a primal impulse, the elementary principle of all art, in the local conditions." "It wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it. . . . Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself—rooted in the locality, which should give it fruit." Published a year after *The Waste Land,* the title poem of Williams's *Spring and All* opens with a "waste of broad, muddy fields / brown with dried weeds," but things that seem dead in Williams's poem, unlike those in Eliot's waste land, are slowly reborn into their particular lives: "clarity, outline of leaf." Williams felt that Eliot had imposed a shape on material that should have been allowed to take its own shape. He most famously expressed his conception of poetry in the poem beginning "so much depends / upon // a red wheel / barrow," as if objects in the world should be allowed to retain their nature without being conceptualized into abstract schemas and literary archetypes. The

poet, Williams believed, should work "particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him." "No ideas but in things" was the credo he espoused in his epic, *Paterson*, which, like Pound's Cantos, extends the principles of Imagism, and also rebukes those symbolists who invest "things" with foreign significance. In *Paterson*, he called his poetry "a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands"; his work, unlike Pound's or Eliot's, is all but devoid of "literary" English. Its distinctiveness comes, as he insisted, from contact with native materials. He founded a magazine with *Contact* as its defiant title.

In a review, Wallace Stevens called Williams's work "anti-poetic." In contrast to Williams, Stevens, who made his living as an insurance company executive, adapted the richly suggestive patterns of sound and color in the French Symbolism of Mallarmé and Valéry, and in the Romanticism of Keats and Shelley. Despite a mutual debt to the French Symbolists, Stevens said in letters that he regarded Eliot "as a negative rather than a positive force": "Eliot and I are dead opposites." Stevens rejected especially the religious presuppositions of *The Waste Land*. In *Harmonium* (1923) and later books, he presented the death of the old gods as a liberation of the imagination. In contradistinction to Eliot's return to Christianity, Stevens called for a new religion closer to physical life and willing to encompass death, as well as life, in its conception of being. Instead of yearning for an "imperishable bliss," he embraced mortality as the meaning-granting limit: "Death is the mother of beauty," he writes in "Sunday Morning"; "hence from her, / alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams / And our desires." Any paradise must be found within the world. The poet's task, Stevens indicates in "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," is ultimately to replace religion with imaginative literature: "what makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it." The creation of poetic fictions—fictions he changed and questioned even as he affirmed—occupied Stevens steadily.

Modernist Poetry and the Visual Arts

Williams and Stevens were both inspired by the European avant-garde visual artists of their time. For all his advocacy of poetry rooted in American experience, Williams was fascinated with the Cubist dissection of space and the Dada use of "found" objects, as expressed in his prologue to *Kora in Hell* and exemplified by his experiments in verbal collage. Stevens blends Cubism's multiperspectivism with haikulike concision in a poem such as "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Other poets of the period register the impact of the new mass art form of cinema. Crane was so impressed by Charlie Chaplin's "genius" after seeing *The Kid* in 1921 that in the poem "Chaplinesque" he sought to capture the "arrested climaxes and evasive victories of [Chaplin's] gestures in words." At the beginning of *The Bridge*, Crane writes, "I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights," implicitly comparing his own verbal panoramas to those of a new rival, the "flashing" screen. Gertrude Stein saw her seeming repetitions as analogous with the frames of motion pictures: "the emphasis is different," she said in "Portraits and Repetition," "just as the cinema has each time a slightly different thing to make it all be moving."

Of all the modernist poets, Stein and Mina Loy had the most direct contact with the European avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century. In her "Transatlantic Interview" (1946), Stein traced her radically nonhierarchical style, in which each word is laid against another and given equal weight, to Cézanne, the painter who most influenced Cubists such as her friend Picasso. Just on the verge of his Cubist style, Picasso painted Stein's portrait in 1906; she returned the favor when she published her portrait poem "Picasso" (1912) in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work*, the journal most responsible for exposing Americans to Cubism. Like the fragmented space of a Cubist painting, Stein's fragmented language threw the emphasis back on the artist's materials—the rhythms, sonorities, and grammatical norms that make up language. The experimental prose poems of *Tender Buttons* (1914) recall and parallel the Cubist disfiguration of the still life. "Act so that there is no use in a centre," she wrote in that influential poetic series; her decentering of language has inspired the Language poets and other avant-garde writers into the twenty-first century.

A regular guest in Stein's Paris salon, the English-born poet Mina Loy, whose early creative work was in the visual arts, lived in France, Italy, and New York during the period of greatest avant-garde ferment in Futurism, Cubism, and Dada. She was closely associated with artists working in these different styles, such as the Italian Futurists F. T. Marinetti and Giovanni Papini—the subject of her then-scandalously frank and edgy "Songs to Joannes" (1915–17), in which she depicts the god of love as "Pig Cupid his rosy snout / Rooting erotic garbage." But whereas Marinetti's Futurist manifesto (1909)—amid glorifications of speeding machines, cleansing wars, and aesthetic revolt—had attacked feminism and women, Loy responds in her "Feminist Manifesto," written in 1914, with a call for women to make themselves virtually independent of men. The 1922 issue of *The Dial* that published *The Waste Land* also included Loy's poem about a bird sculpture by Constantin Brancusi, suggestive of her own poetic yearning for abstraction, and the next year she published her first book of poetry, *Lunar Baedecker*. Her long semiautobiographical poem *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose* (1923–25) brought satiric allegory and introspective self-examination into a dissonant new amalgamation.

In 1916, Loy moved to New York City, the center of avant-garde art in America, where she was seen as rival to another poet living there, Marianne Moore. Moore had considered becoming a painter, and, in 1915, had first visited Stieglitz's gallery in New York, 291, with its collection of art by Picasso, Man Ray, and others. Like the other New York modernists, Moore took seriously the challenge of avant-garde artists to fashion a new relationship to the artistic medium and to the world. Her insistent use of quotation can be seen as a poetic corollary to the synthetic phase of Cubism, in which various media were brought together in pictorial and sculptural conglomerations that radically questioned the relation of part to whole, of representation to reality. In the verbal collage of Moore's "An Octopus," snatches of language from tourist guides, journalism, science, philosophy, and conversation are shoved up against one another, intersecting in unexpected ways. In her ambitiously modernist verse, the stanzas sprawl in jagged formations across the page, the syntax tumbles across lines in strict syllabic units, the rhymes burrow in almost undetectably discrete positions, and insistently nominalist descriptions evoke nature's dense particularity. Like her friend Williams, Moore was a sharp observer, and upholder, of the physical world; but where Williams's world is familiar, hers includes not only steamrollers

and baseball players but also unusual creatures, such as the anteater called a pangolin and the mollusk called a paper nautilus—animals faithful, like her poems, to their individualizing quirks and idiosyncracies.

The Fugitives, the New Critics, and the New York Traditionalists

The year 1922 saw many important tendencies in modern writing put into motion. It was the year of *The Waste Land*, of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (published in Paris), and, at the start of the Harlem Renaissance, of Claude McKay's *Harlem Shadows* and James Weldon Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. It was also the year when a group of teachers and students at Nashville's Vanderbilt University brought out a literary magazine called *The Fugitive*, in which they published their own and others' poems and urged an alternative to the cosmopolitan modernism centered in London. The dominant figure of the group was John Crowe Ransom, and the younger members included Allen Tate and Robert Penn Warren. These writers saw their southern identity, defined in part by their provincial remoteness from metropolitan culture, and their sense of rootedness in time and place as sources of strength for their writing. They cultivated an astringent wit as an antidote to southern nostalgia; politically, through the agrarian movement—which opposed industrialization and standardization, and affirmed Christian agricultural society—they hoped to keep for the south some of its traditional values. The magazine ceased publication in 1925; Tate had already moved to New York; Warren (after graduate study at Berkeley, Yale, and Oxford) went to Louisiana State University to teach; and Ransom joined the faculty of Kenyon College and founded the *Kenyon Review*. As writers, teachers, and critics, these and other poets speaking from the university, such as Yvor Winters, continued to compose in a style that younger poets liked for its aloofness and its complexity of motives and materials.

The influence of this style began to take shape during the later 1920s and the 1930s, when a number of important critical works were published that John Crowe Ransom applauded in his book *The New Criticism* (1941), whose title became a byword for the entire movement. Some years earlier, in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927), by Laura Riding and Robert Graves, Riding had been perhaps the first to try the experiment of reading a poem apart from any historical or linguistic context; her intense appreciation of the semantic complexities of a Shakespeare sonnet encouraged the young English poet and critic William Empson to discover the value of exploring every nuance of meaning, with the aid of psychology and sociology. The result was his famous study *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), which sought to characterize the semantic strategies of multiple meanings that distinguish imaginative writing from straightforward exposition. Empson's teacher, the English critic I. A. Richards, was another creator of the New Criticism; he urged that poems be read with active and exclusive attention to what they said, without distortion by the reader's subjective preferences and presuppositions. Eliot, whose admiration for the Metaphysical poets' fusion of idea and fact influenced the movement, agreed that what was needed in reading poetry was "a very highly developed sense of fact." These prescriptions for readers, and by extension for writers, were codified by the Americans Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks in their textbook, *Understanding Poetry* (1938), which had a vast influence on the teaching of verse at American colleges in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s; the influence was even greater

on the many textbooks it spawned. Taken to extremes, the New Criticism implied that the essence of poetry was not to convey ideas or feelings as such but to create intricate structures of language that would manifest the density of psychophysical experience. Some of Empson's own poems are among the most thoroughgoing exemplifications of this principle; few other poets went so far, but they understood his goal. During and immediately after World War II, most poets living in the United States came to write in a way that poets of the 1920s and critics of the 1930s had prepared for them.

Despite her participation in the Fugitive group and influence on the New Criticism, Riding composed poems distinctive for their resistance to metaphor, rhetoric, and other forms of artifice. Fiercely self-questioning as a poet, she quit writing poetry altogether in 1941. Riding, a New Yorker, wrote most of her significant poetry while living abroad with Graves, largely in England and off the Spanish coast. Other women writers, more traditional in form than Riding, flourished in the New York area in the 1920s and 1930s. These poets commanded a larger following and garnered more prizes than their modernist contemporaries. In 1923, for example, the Pulitzer Prize for poetry went not to *The Waste Land* but to two books and a sonnet sequence by Edna St. Vincent Millay, the first woman to win the prize. Living in the then-bohemian Greenwich Village from 1917 to 1921, Millay wrote in fixed forms such as the sonnet and in diction close to the Romantics, but her poems capture "modern" sensibilities in that they mock prudence, endorse ephemeral love, and flout conventional femininity. Partly under Millay's influence, another New York poet, Dorothy Parker, also rode the gap between formal constraint and social unconstraint, or what she called "a disciplined eye and a wild mind"; but whereas Millay's verse is elegiac, Parker's is ascerbically comic. Elinor Wylie, who entered New York's vibrant literary scene in 1921, wrote rhyming poetry nourished by the examples of Shelley and Keats, but at her best she countervails Romantic opulence with an austerity comparable to Imagism. In 1919, Louise Bogan moved to New York, eventually becoming the poetry editor of *The New Yorker*; she, too, strongly advocated poetry in traditional meter and rhyme, but her polished poems explore terrors and griefs that elude strict control. Most of these traditionalists paradoxically articulated in their tightly controlled poems more "liberated" views than those of the formally radical but socially conservative modernists Eliot and Pound.

The Harlem Renaissance

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Great Migration brought millions of African Americans from the rural south to northern cities in search of economic opportunity and racial tolerance. The number of such migrants rose dramatically, from 213,000 in 1900–1910, to 572,000 in the 1910s, to 913,000 in the 1920s. This massive influx helped precipitate a burst of creativity in African American letters in the 1920s and early 1930s. Though not exclusive to Harlem, it is called the Harlem Renaissance. Along with southern blacks, Caribbean migrants were among those moving north, including Claude McKay, later declared the national poet of Jamaica. Arriving in the United States in 1912 and abandoning the Jamaican English of his early verse, McKay was politically the most militant if prosodically among the more conservative of the new African American writers. In *Harlem Shadows* (1922), he preferred the sonnet among European lyric forms, but if the genre

was traditional, McKay's use of it—dislocating its norms of intimacy to express racial fury and estrangement—was not. Living mostly in France and Morocco for eleven years after 1922, he inspired francophone poets such as Léopold Sédar Senghor—African and Caribbean poets of the Negritude movement, who beginning in the 1930s asserted black pride and resistance to colonial assimilation. Like McKay, another poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Countee Cullen, whose first book of poetry was *Color* (1925), also adhered to European forms and diction, but he enacted in his verse the conflict between such Eurocentric allegiance and racial alienation.

Other Harlem Renaissance poets sought to adapt African American oral forms for use in literary poetry. They rejected, on the one hand, exclusively European poetic models and, on the other, the "Uncle Remus" dialect and the exoticism of Paul Laurence Dunbar. In his preface to the first edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), James Weldon Johnson pointed to the example of the Irish literary renaissance, saying the African American poet "needs to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without, . . . a form that is freer and larger than dialect, but which will still hold the racial flavor; a form expressing the imagery, the idioms, the peculiar turns of thought, and the distinctive humor and pathos, too, of the Negro." In *God's Trombones* (1927), Johnson brings the rhetorical forms, cadences, and structure of the African American sermon into literary verse. The preeminent poet of the Harlem Renaissance was Langston Hughes. Hughes's major formal innovation was to adapt for poetry the rhythms and rhymes, the rhetoric and gritty humor of the blues, as well as other music-based genres such as jazz and spirituals. His first two volumes, *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927), hybridized the blues with resources gleaned from Whitman, Sandburg, and other Euro-American poets. His later book *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951) assimilated into poetry the fast-paced, dissonant style of jazz called bebop: "Listen closely: / You'll hear their feet / Beating out and beating out a—/ *You think / It's a happy beat?*" Inspired by Hughes, Sterling Brown helped import into printed verse such African American oral forms as the blues, worksongs, ballads, spirituals, sermons, and tall tales. But whereas Hughes drew inspiration from black urban life, Brown looked to the rural south. His *Southern Road* (1932) blends African American rhetorical devices, syncopated rhythms, blues repetition, vernacular idiom, and call-and-response structure with Whitmanian free verse. These poets, like the Euro-American modernists, crafted a spare, nonornamental style of poetry, though its major source was the bitter wisdom and wry humor of black "folk" genres. Whereas the Euro-American modernists shattered formal traditions that seemed worn out and remote from modern life, Brown, Hughes, and Johnson extended and reinvented African American forms that had lacked a secure place in "literary" tradition.

Other African American poets drew simultaneously on the techniques of Euro-American modernism and of black "folk" culture. In poems of the loosely knit collection *Cane* (1923), Jean Toomer pays homage to a disappearing African American way of life in the rural south, drawing on the ritualistic repetitions of black oral culture. Sometimes, Toomer takes up and recasts Imagist technique in free verse poems of metaphoric juxtaposition: "Portrait in Georgia" begins, "Hair—braided chestnut, coiled like a lyncher's rope," and continues to oscillate violently between a description of a white woman's face and the lynching of a black man. Melvin Tolson, who began

his career in the Harlem Renaissance but wrote his best poetry later, fused the folk-based, oral aesthetic of poets such as Hughes and Brown with the allusive strategies of Euro-American modernism in *Harlem Gallery* (1965), one of the last great high modernist poems. If high modernism is often grim, Tolson evinces a high-spirited delight in his ability to master, manipulate, and shift among different styles and idioms. He nimbly leaps rhetorical registers, from the curt abbreviations of slang to the over-elaborations of pedantry. Stuffed-shirt classicism jostles alongside racy innuendo. Since high modernism is already itself a culturally mixed aesthetic, and since Harlem Renaissance poets such as Hughes and Brown harness both black and white influences, Tolson further hybridizes two distinct yet already hybrid modes of poetry.

English, Scottish, and Irish Poetry after Modernism

In the 1920s, few English poets followed the lead of Eliot and Pound, and those who did made relatively little impact on their first readers. An exception to this as to many other rules was Edith Sitwell, whose highly abstract, sound-centered sequence, *Façade* (read to the music of her friend William Walton), scandalized its first public audience, in 1923. At about the same time, in Sitwell's anthologies called *Wheels*, she was vigorously attacking poetry less experimental than her own, and she also brought to light the war poems of Wilfred Owen. David Jones, a painter as well as a poet, published two book-length poems, *In Parenthesis* (1937), perhaps the most important poem to express the disaster of World War I, and *The Anathémata* (1952), for which the inspiration and sometimes the model was Eliot's poetry, particularly *The Waste Land*. He was the only British World War I poet to write in the high modernist tradition of polyglot, densely textured, myth-laden verse. Jones's contemporary Basil Bunting spent World War I in jail as a conscientious objector and then lived away from England for many years, some of them in Rapallo, near his mentor and friend Ezra Pound. When Bunting returned to England, he came to wider notice, especially among younger poets in the north of England, after the publication of his long poem, *Briggflatts* (1966).

In 1919, in his early twenties, Edwin Muir left Scotland for London. There and in Europe, he composed archetypal poems that fuse dreamscapes, partly gleaned from his experience in psychoanalysis, with the narrative momentum of Scottish ballads. In "The Horses," he imagines the world after nuclear war: "the strange horses came. / We heard a distant tapping on the road, / A deepening drumming; it stopped, went on again / And at the corner changed to hollow thunder." Whereas Muir adopted the diction and rhythms of English poetry, Hugh MacDiarmid wrote in a synthetic Scots dialect of his own invention. "I'm famished, but fegs!" he protests in "In the Pantry," "What's here for a man / But a wheen rubbish that's lain / Sin' Time began?" MacDiarmid achieved fame and notoriety in Scotland—fame for his lyric poems and notoriety for his activities on behalf of the Communist and Scottish Nationalist parties. He aligned himself with Pound and especially with James Joyce, whose linguistic experiments in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) he praised and imitated.

Irish poets after Yeats were less attracted to the problems raised by symbolism and modernism than were Americans. Yeats, an Anglo-Irish Protestant, cast a long shadow, and Catholic poets Austin Clarke and Patrick

Kavanagh sought to distinguish their own efforts. While pursuing an interest in Irish myth and local legend, as Yeats had, Clarke wrote poems more strongly colored by the assonantal effects of Gaelic poetry and less beholden to the Protestant narrative of Irish history. Kavanagh debunked the early twentieth-century Irish literary movement led by Yeats for its elitist, "English" mystifications of the land and the peasantry. An influence on Seamus Heaney, Kavanagh brought into Irish poetry an idiom closer to Irish English speech, a sensibility more intimate with rural Irish experience.

Objectivism

Founded in the 1930s, twenty years after Imagism, Objectivism was its second-generation modernist descendent. The Imagist precept "Direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective" can be seen as its point of origin: Objectivism prescribed a poetry of austere directness. In the view of the Objectivists, the world should not be subordinated, as in symbolism, to the poet's sentiments, figurative language, or preconceived forms, but should be presented in its objective otherness. "In the small beauty of the forest," writes George Oppen in "Psalm," "The wild deer bedding down—/ That they are there!" As a correlative, the Objectivists saw the poem itself as having material substance worthy of respect—as object, as thing in the world, not only as symbol of a reality elsewhere. Louis Zukofsky proposed "thinking with the things as they exist"—things both worldly and linguistic (*Prepositions*).

Pound and Williams were the encouraging elder statesmen to the Objectivists. It is one of the great ironies of modern literary history that Pound, an anti-Semite living in and supporting Benito Mussolini's Fascist Italy, inspired the left-wing Objectivist American Jews—Oppen, Zukofsky, and Charles Reznikoff—as well as Bunting, the one prominent British member of the Objectivist group, and the American Lorine Niedecker, the only woman. When Pound persuaded Harriet Monroe to publish a special issue of *Poetry* magazine in 1931, Zukofsky coined the word *Objectivists* for the group. Referring to himself in letters as the "sonny" and to Pound as his "papa," Zukofsky put Pound's methods to work in forging a second-generation modernist aesthetic that could include Yiddish song and humor, as in "Poem Beginning 'The.'" This poem adapts Pound and Eliot's high modernist technique of multilayered allusion and abrupt juxtaposition, but it rejects Eliot's pessimism in *The Waste Land*, instead celebrating in a carnivalesque spirit the possibilities of an urban, interethnic, progressive modernity. Zukofsky admired Reznikoff and wrote an essay about him in the Objectivist issue of *Poetry*. Reznikoff's 1930s poems adapt Imagist precision and understatement to the Jewish American experience of the modern city. In his later long poem *Holocaust*, Reznikoff borrows Pound's practice in *The Cantos* of using raw documents, except that the texts he edits and presents without authorial comment are from the postwar Nuremberg and Eichmann trials of the Nazis—not the sorts of materials Pound was likely to use.

Together with Zukofsky and Reznikoff, Oppen founded the Objectivist Press in the early 1930s. His work exemplifies an ethic of poetic economy in writing. The poet must try, he remarked, "to write carefully, lucidly, accurately, resisting the temptation to inflate." An organizer for the Communist Party during the Great Depression, Oppen nevertheless eschewed political rhetoric in his poetry, and for twenty-five years he gave up poetry writing for

political activism. His late modernist poetry came to its finest fruition in publications of the 1960s, as did Niedecker's. Niedecker did not appear in Zukofsky's 1931 issue of *Poetry*, but when she read it, she traveled to meet him in New York. Niedecker's free verse, like Oppen's, exhibits precision and compression, silence and riddling ellipses. Some of her crystalline poems are about nature, while others are made of "found" materials—collagelike sequences that fit together quotations from historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Charles Darwin.

The Auden Circle

In England, the most significant movement contemporary with the Objectivists was made up of poets who also came to maturity in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Like the Objectivists, they were faced with the question of what to do with the legacy of modernism and, also like the Objectivists, they diverged from right-wing modernists such as Eliot and Pound in being political leftists. W. H. Auden, whose obvious brilliance daunted his contemporaries, was the central figure in this group. At various times during his time at Oxford, he befriended fellow students Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis, and made the acquaintance of Louis MacNeice. These poets were given a collective identity when Michael Roberts published them together in an anthology, *New Signatures* (1932). They prided themselves on understatement and "social concern." Since the early part of their careers coincided with the Great Depression across the industrialized world and the rise of fascism in Europe, they were eager to express radical political attitudes, but they often did so through older verse techniques. Except for their preference for inherited poetic forms, they were strenuously ahead of their time, not least in their use of the specialized vocabularies of politics, psychiatry, and the social sciences. They proclaimed their support for a socialist revolution. After World War II led to the cold war, they became more centrist in their political views.

Auden's generation was the first in England to grow up in the shadow of the first-generation modern poets. Hopkins's attention to sonorities, Hardy's experiments in stanzaic patterns, Yeats's civic poetry of psychic ambivalence, Eliot's satiric treatment of a mechanized, urbanized world, and Owen's slant-rhymed poems of pity influenced Auden and the other poets in his circle. But the new generation needed to distinguish itself, particularly from the towering presences of Yeats and Eliot, both of whom continued to write important poems through the 1930s. Thus whereas Yeats's tone was at times hortatory, theirs tended to be low-pitched, almost flat. And whereas Eliot aspired to impersonality, they presented themselves as flesh-and-blood individuals in history, responsive to and active in the secular world.

For all their resemblances, the poets seen as a single corporate entity, "Daylewisaudenmacneicespender," in Auden's humorous collocation, are distinctive. Day Lewis, of an Anglo-Irish Protestant background, is the most lyrical and traditional poet of the group; he was a member of the Communist Party longer than the others—Stephen Spender also joined briefly in the 1930s. MacNeice is of a similar Anglo-Irish background, but his verse is less ceremonious, more alert to historical particularities and his ambivalent participation in them. Spender's self-presentation is the most vulnerable in the group: he admits to perplexities and regrets, though he admires trains, heroes, and other emblems of unwavering certitude. Auden projects sheer

mastery, though he masters paradoxically, through witty self-deprecation and ironic deflation, ambivalent praise and ethical self-questioning. In a reversal of Eliot's emigration, he left England for the United States just before World War II and wrote sharply and sympathetically about the problems of community in a divided world—where "the living nations wait, / Each sequestered in its hate" ("In Memory of W. B. Yeats"). His early verse had been unrhymed and knotted with modernist difficulty, but as the social crisis of the 1930s worsened, he wrote less cryptic, more direct poems in a prodigious variety of rhymed, metered, and syllabic forms. He successfully met a challenge that has baffled many other modern and contemporary poets—how to write about intimate experience without betraying public responsibility, how to write about political exigencies without subsuming the complexities of personal feeling. In his later years, he became more religious in his Christian beliefs, and more tender, friendly, and conversational in his verse. He wittily hails even the microorganisms that make their homes on his body's surface. Living largely in New York and presiding from 1947 to 1959 over the Yale Series of Younger Poets, he became a primary influence on the next generation of American poets, whether they wrote in free verse or intricate forms.

Beyond Modernism

To summarize: in the 1920s and 1930s, emerging groups or schools of poets in the English-speaking world, as well as individual writers, defined themselves by varying degrees of affiliation with or reaction against modernism. Williams and Crane urgently felt the need to work their way out from under the weight of *The Waste Land*'s learned cynicism, while the New Critical poets elaborated Eliot's complex modernist combination of Metaphysical and symbolist poetics. Some of the Harlem Renaissance poets enthusiastically embraced Imagist or high modernist styles, while others renovated traditional European forms and African American oral genres. Born for the most part in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Objectivists and the Auden circle rejected the authoritarian politics and elevated tone of much high modernist poetry, but the Objectivists wrote "hard" and "clear," Imagist-descended poems in open forms, whereas the Auden circle often wrote in strict forms, imbued with modernist allusiveness, tonal complexity, and urban or industrial landscapes.

While all of these poets were wrestling with the legacy of modernism, they were also charting a number of distinct routes for contemporary poetry. The first-generation New Critical poets enabled the dominant mid-twentieth-century style of poetry, the elegant and complex formalism practiced by the next generation of poets in the New Critical style, such as Richard Wilbur and the early Robert Lowell, as well as the New Formalism of the 1980s. The innovations of Auden and his confederates in socially and historically responsive formal verse influenced postwar poets in England (e.g., Philip Larkin), Ireland (e.g., Paul Muldoon), and America (e.g., Frank O'Hara). The Objectivists linked first-generation experimental, open-form modernism with postwar avant-garde movements such as Charles Olson's Black Mountain school in the 1950s and the Language poets in the 1980s. In the 1960s, African American poets of the Black Arts Movement were able to look back to the orally and musically inspired poetry of some members of the Harlem Renaissance, as had identity-centered Negritude poets in Africa and the Caribbean.

Other poets born in the first decade of the twentieth century helped lay the groundwork for contemporary poetry. Stanley Kunitz began writing in the highly wrought Metaphysical mode championed by the New Critics and the modernists, but in the 1950s began to turn, with Robert Lowell and other so-called confessional poets, toward a more intimate style. Adapting Imagist precision and a Poundian interest in East Asian and classical literature to more personal utterance, Kenneth Rexroth, the patron saint of the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1950s, also helped guide the Beat movement and the Black Mountain school, countercultural movements that shared overlapping interests in open-form, orally inspired poetry. Rexroth resigned from the board of *The Black Mountain Review* in 1954 because of "unfair" criticism of Theodore Roethke, whose verse helped some postwar poets shed Eliot's ideal of impersonality. Like his friend Kunitz, Roethke began writing in highly formal verse, but in time broke into more open, self-exploratory poetry that, like the confessionalism with which he is often associated, is shaped by a psychoanalytic interest in childhood, personal development, and the unconscious.

Reacting like the American confessional poets against modernism, the English poets of the Movement in the 1950s, such as Philip Larkin, looked favorably on the traditionally metered and rhymed formal verse of John Betjeman. Like them, he tried to write poems that, avoiding arcane references and formal fragmentation, were accessible to, and pleasurable for, a wider public. Betjeman and Stevie Smith began publishing books of poetry in the 1930s, but took decades to achieve their widest readership. Smith wrote quirkily profound poems that mix theological ponderings with nursery-rhyme humor. Like Sylvia Plath, she frequently invokes death, though for Smith, death is strangely tame, almost civil. Yet another sort of death—this time on the battlefield—is the subject of Keith Douglas's poetry. The preeminent English poet of World War II, Douglas was admired by later English and Irish poets such as Geoffrey Hill and Michael Longley for his skillful yoking of powerful feeling to verbal restraint. He was killed in the war that is often seen as marking the boundary between modern and contemporary poets.

Poets in the first modern generation, such as Eliot and H. D., and those in the second, such as Auden and Oppen, wrote powerfully about World War II. But even as the unprecedented carnage of World War I was formative for many of the first moderns, World War II was a defining experience for the first contemporary generation, which begins with Elizabeth Bishop and Charles Olson, poets who came to maturity in the war's shadow. Attending college thanks to veterans' educational subsidies, many soldiers-turned-poets studied modern verse under the guidance of the close-reading strategies of the New Criticism. The challenge for these postwar poets was to transform and adapt creatively this increasingly institutionalized inheritance, to "make it new" for the contemporary world. Whether formalists or antiformalists, rebels or traditionalists, nativists or cosmopolitans, they could look back to their modern precursors for fertile soil in which to root their own consolidations and experiments.

Introduction

The poetry of our own time is characterized by its pluralism, by its welter and crosscurrents. No longer can any single group or individual claim centrality, since contemporary poets in English have proliferated a vast array of idioms, forms, and movements. They have sometimes competed noisily, at other times forged surprising alliances across boundaries of ethnicity, nationality, and aesthetics. They have offered irreconcilable visions of what it means to be contemporary, have deployed many different kinds of English, and have drawn on their unique historical and geographic experiences. But while listening to their own muses, they have also heard one another's voices in the raucous babel of the contemporary—the transnational literary village after World War II.

This volume's point of departure is the generation of poets who published their first books largely after World War II, since poetry today grows out of the debates, innovations, and consolidations of this first postwar generation (roughly, born in the 1910s and 1920s) and the second (born in and around the 1930s and 1940s). Some of these immediately postwar poets are still active; others wrote poems that can be still considered "contemporary" because vitally present as models and antagonists for emerging poets. Even though World War II did not completely divide the poetry written before it from that written after, it is a useful historical marker for the period's beginnings. Other events and trends were also formative for poets born after 1910—the Great Depression, the political polarization of the 1930s, the increasing economic and political might of the United States, the cold war, the weakening and eventual disintegration of the British Empire. But the war had perhaps the greatest aggregate influence. More than twice the number of Americans were killed in it (292,000) than in World War I (117,000). Although fewer than a third the number of British combatants died than in World War I (264,000), the war came home in the Nazi bombing of English cities. Altogether, World War II resulted in the highest death toll of any war—between forty and fifty million. Its destruction was cataclysmic, its scope was international, and its aftershocks reverberated long afterward.

World War II haunts the work even of poets not directly involved. In her 1941 meditation "Roosters," Elizabeth Bishop vividly, if somewhat obliquely, evokes aerial combat, which played a far greater role in this war than in any before: "Now in mid-air / by twos they fight each other," and when one bomberlike rooster falls, "his torn-out, bloodied feathers drift down." Sylvia Plath, a young adolescent when planes dropped atomic bombs on Japanese cities, takes "Hiroshima ash" as an integral part of her psychic experience ("Fever 103°"). In "Poem," Muriel Rukeyser declares her time: "I lived in the first century of world wars." Indeed, the first of the century's world wars had a comparable, defining effect on first-generation modern poets, including

those not at the Western Front; Ezra Pound had famously lamented, "There died a myriad / And of the best, among them."

Many more American poets served directly in World War II than in World War I, and a brief survey of their participation in the armed forces indicates the broad impact of World War II on men of the first contemporary generation. Randall Jarrell was a celestial navigation tower operator, William Meredith a naval aviator; Howard Nemerov was in the Royal Canadian Air Force and then, like James Dickey and Alan Dugan, in the U.S. Army Air Corps; Karl Shapiro, Richard Wilbur, and Anthony Hecht were all in the U.S. Army. Louis Simpson served in an army tank corps and then as a combat infantryman, Kenneth Koch as an army rifleman; and Richard Hugo flew thirty-five missions as an army bombardier. Toward the end of the war, W. D. Snodgrass, A. R. Ammons, David Wagoner, Frank O'Hara, Robert Bly, and Galway Kinnell served in the American navy, James Merrill and James Wright in the army. After the war, many of these veterans, with millions of others, were able to attend college thanks to the educational subsidies of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, which helped turn soldiers into poets. In Britain, Kingsley Amis served in the army, Donald Davie in the navy. The war was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the first muse for a number of these budding writers. "Men wash their hands, in blood, as best they can," writes Jarrell in "Eighth Air Force," suggesting that the war stains everything in the combatants' lives. The war also conspicuously affected the lives of men who didn't serve. A conscientious objector, William Stafford worked in public service camps, where pacifists performed nonmilitary work under civilian direction, and Robert Lowell, another conscientious objector, spent six months in a federal prison in 1943–44, after he wrote a "manic statement, / telling off the state and president," condemning the bombing of German civilians and American demands for Germany's unconditional surrender. Robert Duncan was discharged from the army in 1941 as, in his ironic words, "an officially certified fag."

Of all the devastating wartime events that affected poetry—the massive bombing of London and firebombing of Dresden, the nuclear annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the horrors of the Holocaust cast the longest shadow. The German philosopher and social critic Theodor Adorno declared it barbaric to write poetry after the Holocaust, and, indeed, in much post-Holocaust verse, poets worry about the ethics of beauty in an age of mass murder, about how to evoke industrialized genocide without exploiting it or dishonoring the dead. They imprint art with the disfiguring marks of the times. In caustically self-ironizing poems, Geoffrey Hill addresses victims of the Nazis while acknowledging the unavoidable failure of such address: "Undesirable you may have been, untouchable / you were not" ("September Song"). In Plath's "Daddy," an American daughter's address to her German father is warped and fractured by the knowledge of the concentration camps: "I never could talk to you. / The tongue stuck in my jaw. / / It stuck in a barb wire snare." Poets cannot fall entirely silent and still be poets, of course, but post-Holocaust poets such as Hill and Plath, Anthony Hecht and Derek Walcott embed within their poetry an intensified skepticism about the redemptive capacities of language and art.

Modern and Contemporary

Postwar poets were acutely conscious of coming after the modern poets. The major achievements of the first-generation moderns—W. B. Yeats, Gertrude Stein, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, T. S. Eliot—loomed like a massive edifice over postwar poets, who sometimes worried that all routes to innovation had already been explored and exhausted. As they looked back on the groundbreaking works of the 1910s and 1920s, postwar poets were apt to see as fixed what was once experimental. They sought out areas of creativity and awareness, both commonplace and exotic, neglected by their predecessors, and in the process launched a series of iconoclastic movements. Meanwhile, Stevens, Williams, Pound, and Moore continued to publish important new collections of poetry into the 1950s and 1960s, seeming at once titans who dominated the earth in the distant past and contemporary rivals extending their reign into the present.

Contemporary poetry is often distinguished from modern poetry according to general tendencies, and these distinctions help reveal broad similarities and differences among poets, schools, and movements. As such, they are worth stating at the outset, though individual poets often work against or outside these trends, though the periods are profoundly interwoven, and though these differences can also be found within the periods.

Contemporary poetry is generally seen as more personal than modern poetry. According to T. S. Eliot's famous modernist doctrine, the "emotion of art is impersonal." The first-generation modernists, in reaction against what they saw as the slushy, self-expressive Romanticism of the nineteenth century, often ironized, allusively contextualized, or symbolically transmuted their most personal feelings. By contrast, many of the best-known poets after World War II reclaimed a fiercely personal poetry for the late 1950s and the 1960s. Reflecting the pervasive influence of psychoanalysis in elite and mass culture, many a poet explored the formation of personal identity within the matrix of the family, writing candidly about childhood trauma, guilt, and desire. "They fuck you up, your mum and dad," Philip Larkin wryly summarized ("This Be The Verse"). It would be difficult to imagine Eliot or Pound, Yeats or Moore writing poems about childhood anger toward a weak father, as did Robert Lowell, or incestuous desire for a father, as did Anne Sexton, or combined desire and revulsion toward a mother's naked body, as did Allen Ginsberg. Sylvia Plath's explosive line "Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through" does not express the sort of impersonal emotion that Eliot had in mind. Even Charles Olson, though protesting egocentric poetry, remembers his mother and father as "the precessions / / of me, the generation of those facts / which are my words" ("Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 *[Withheld]*"). Chafing against the conformist and consumerist ethos of what Lowell called the "tranquillized *Fifties*," perhaps fearing the quashing of individuality by massive organizations, bureaucracies, laboratories, and businesses spawned by the war and by postwar prosperity, these writers made poetry not a space for "the extinction of personality," as Eliot put it, but for its passionate expression.

Even so, this distinction between modern and contemporary can be overdrawn. Critics have increasingly seen Eliot's supposedly "impersonal" art as steeped in personal losses—*The Waste Land* as an elegy for his failed marriage, his dead father, and his close friend Jean Verdenal, killed in World War I. Modernism's Romantic literary roots have likewise been increasingly exposed, including Eliot's debts to the nineteenth-century poets he sternly repudiated in prose, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Walt Whitman. Nor do poets such as Olson, Lowell, and Plath spring free from their modernist inheritances: they deliberately mediate their experiences through the artifice

of personae, myth, archetype, irony, and other such modernist devices. Plath said poets, instead of offering mere "cries from the heart," must "control and manipulate experiences." In "The Colossus," she presents herself and her father through classical archetypes; in "Cut," she metaphorically transforms physical pain; and in "Lady Lazarus," she ironizes her poetic marketing of suffering: "There is a charge / / For the eyeing of my scars." Some contemporary poets, such as Richard Wilbur and Geoffrey Hill, are even more mistrustful of personal self-expression, or, such as Michael Palmer and Lyn Hejinian, deconstruct notions of personal subjectivity altogether.

At least until recently, the dominant formal trend in contemporary poetry has been toward looser, more discrete, more organic kinds of aesthetic structure, and so contemporary poetry is often said to be more "open" than modern poetry. Contemporary poets have wanted to make their forms more responsive to accident, flux, and history, less inwardly molded and self-enclosed. Instead of plotting an inner trajectory toward finality in meaning, form, and emotion, their lyrics often end raggedly, in irresolution or distraction. Their long poems, instead of unfolding sequentially toward a destination, are often organized serially, in modular units that have a tentative relation to one another. Prose genres such as the diary or notebook are the model for many such poems, sometimes dated to indicate their contingency, their immersion in history. The contemporary poem places itself within—not above or outside or beyond—the open-ended course of everyday experience. Instead of aspiring to be a single, coherent utterance, a contemporary poem may be a collage of disjointed discourses or perceptions. Contemporary poets, typically refusing regimentation and overt order, have often patterned their poems on the natural rhythms of personal experience and the body. They have sought to mirror the unpredictable process of composition, as exemplified by what Frank O'Hara called his "I do this I do that" poems. Taking as his motto "First thought, best thought," Ginsberg also epitomized this premium on "spontaneous improvisation": "I really don't know what I'm doing when I sit down to write. I figure it out as I go along (and revise as little as possible)" ("Poetics: Mind Is Shapely, Art Is Shapely").

But statements about this trend also need to be qualified, since it is far from monolithic. Even Ginsberg, as the manuscripts of "Howl" and "Kaddish" reveal, carefully revised and refashioned his major poems for years before publishing them. Moreover, the scattered and extemporized structures of modernist works such as Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All*, and Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* have provided strong precedents for contemporary poets interested in further opening up poetic form. And whereas some modern poets, such as Williams, inveighed against the prototypically "closed" form of the sonnet, some contemporary poets, such as James Merrill, Thom Gunn, Anthony Hecht, Marilyn Hacker, and Agha Shahid Ali, have written brilliantly in this fixed form and others—the sestina, the villanelle, the canzone, the ghazal, even the heroic couplet.

Contemporary poets are often said to write poems less hierarchical in outlook, form, or ideology than are modern poems. Most postwar poets take a democratic view of language and of poetry's function in society, and they are open to a variety of discourses and even popular genres. By contrast, Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and H. D. see the poet as playing an almost priestly or ritualistic role in society, amalgamating and creating myths, purifying and renovating the verbal icon. Eliot and Pound often satirize less cultivated genres and uses of language. The difference is stark between modernism at its most sacramental and contemporary poetry at its most egalitarian—the deliberately

flat, campy, and self-parodic poetry written, for example, by O'Hara and James Tate. Contemporary poets seem to feel little of Yeats's or Eliot's revulsion toward the urban, the popular, the utterly heterogeneous. In A. R. Ammons's sequence *Garbage*, about an enormous trash heap seen from an interstate highway, poetry and garbage come to seem inextricable. A further contrast with modern poetry's transcendent thrust is with contemporary poetry's frequent politicizing and historicizing of art. Witness such forcefully political contemporary poems as Amiri Baraka's "Poem for Black Hearts," Carolyn Forché's "The Colonel," Mark Doty's "Homo Will Not Inherit," and Margaret Atwood's "Footnote to the Amnesty Report on Torture," in which a man cleans the floor of a torture chamber: "every morning the same vomit, / the same shed teeth, the same / piss and liquid shit, the same panic."

But here, too, the difference should not be overstated. Modern poets also wrote poems immersed in the particulars of politics and history. Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, and—perhaps surprisingly, given his southern agrarian affiliations—Allen Tate all wrote searing poems about lynchings. And some of the most resonant and rust-proof twentieth-century political poetry is Yeats's about the Easter Rising of 1916, Wilfred Owen's about World War I, and W. H. Auden's about the Spanish Civil War. Furthermore, contemporary poets in revolt against a belief in art as transcendent and hierarchical have been able to look to modern precursors, such as Marianne Moore, who welcomed travel guides and science into her poems, and Langston Hughes, who turned to the then-disreputable forms of jazz and the blues as poetic models. Nor is all contemporary poetry antihierarchical. Seeking the aesthetic, even visionary power afforded by exacting uses of language and form, some contemporary poets, including Ammons, Jorie Graham, James Merrill, Philip Larkin, Derek Walcott, Louise Glück, Rita Dove, and Anne Carson, have extended traditions of high-art lyricism, even if such traditions run counter to the temper of the times.

Less ambiguous are the changes in poetry brought about by postwar demographic trends, such as globalization, ethnicization, and feminization. After World War II, as national self-consciousness increased in anglophone areas of the globe outside American and British centers of power, more poets wrote distinctive poetry in the former white settler colonies or "dominions," such as Australia and Canada, and in the decolonizing British outposts in the "underdeveloped world," such as Barbados, Uganda, and India. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, the range of poets in the United States and elsewhere in the so-called First World became more ethnically diverse, including non-European immigrants and their descendents. And as educational access increased across gender lines, more women throughout the anglophone world published poetry after 1945 than in the fifty years before. Writers who identified with national, ethnic, or sexual groups not formerly part of the literary mainstream were inspired by identity-centered political movements, such as, in the 1950s and 1960s, the civil rights movement and, in the 1960s and 1970s, the movements for women's rights, gay rights, and political rights and cultural recognition for Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.

The New Criticism and Poetry

One form in which modernism survived World War II was the New Criticism—a movement initiated in the 1920s and 1930s by, in America, poet-critics such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and

Yvor Winters, and, in Britain, by I. A. Richards and William Empson. The New Criticism, which consolidated and complicated the ideal of the well-wrought poem, shaped the dominant style in American poetry at mid-century. Drawing heavily on T. S. Eliot's critical essays, the movement enshrined certain complex literary values: paradox irreducible to logical paraphrase; irony too intricate to permit strong commitments; metaphysical wit (as exemplified by John Donne) that yoked together opposites; impersonality that regulated strong feelings; and self-conscious technique of great dexterity. These aspects of modernism lent themselves to the New Criticism's more rigorous classroom teaching of literature. New Critical pedogogy in turn created audiences receptive to this institutionalized form of modernism; it also fostered writers eager to write economical, internally coherent poems that rewarded New Criticism's signature strategy of close reading. In a 1961 interview, Robert Lowell indicated the influence of the New Criticism on poetry, saying that when he was learning to write poetry, the New Critics "were very much news. You waited for their essays, and when a good critical essay came out it had the excitement of a new imaginative work." At the same time, the poets in the New Critical style often set aside less readily assimilated aspects of modernism—formal fragmentation, cross-cultural syncretism, polyglot assemblage, and ambitious mythmaking. Many of the major American poets of the time—Lowell, Plath, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, John Berryman, W. S. Merwin, and Gwendolyn Brooks—began to write in accordance with New Critical principles, though they were violating them in earnest by the late 1950s and the 1960s.

But not all the poets who began within this framework discarded it. The verse of Randall Jarrell, William Stafford, Richard Wilbur, Howard Nemerov, Anthony Hecht, and John Hollander exemplifies the wry, cultivated qualities associated with the New Criticism. Their work displays fertility and deftness in its imagery and phrases; it is unsentimental and yet alive to the senses and sympathies, well made and careful not to become repetitive or predictable. And it enriches individual utterance with traditional poetic resources such as meter and rhyme, stanzaic forms and rhetorical patterning. "I am for wit and wakefulness," announces the speaker of Wilbur's "Ceremony," adding, "What's lightly hid is deepest understood." These learned, polished poets gravitated to careers as critics and college teachers, and partly as a result their work was often disparaged as "academic." Formally and psychologically extending the range of such tightly controlled verse, Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Hayden, May Swenson, Donald Justice, Amy Clampitt, and James Merrill also shared broad affinities with the restraint, compression, and formal discipline favored by the New Criticism.

The Black Mountain School

In contrast to the postwar formalists, American proponents of the most revolutionary aesthetic movements of the 1950s and 1960s rejected the legacy of T. S. Eliot and the New Critics. Not that the rebels dispensed altogether with first-generation modernism: they affiliated themselves with the more subversive and at that time less academically respectable work of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. Williams continued to live the life of a doctor in Rutherford, New Jersey, and was the object of pilgrimages by young poets including A. R. Ammons and Allen Ginsberg. Pound, under indictment for treason because of his wartime radio broadcasts from Fascist Rome, was

extradited to the United States in 1945, bringing with him the manuscript of *The Pisan Cantos*. Found mentally incompetent to stand trial, he was committed to a Washington sanatorium, and until his release (as incurably insane but harmless) twelve years later, he attracted younger American poets who sought in his work an immersion in the welter of experience that they found lacking in the poetry of Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, and their followers. Drawing strength from their association with the old impresario of experimental verse and the even older physician in Rutherford, they preferred "open" to "closed" poetic forms, agreeing with Robert Creeley that "Form is never more than an extension of content."

Creeley was one of the poets who gathered around Charles Olson at Black Mountain College, an experimental and unaccredited school in North Carolina that was to become one of the centers of new American poetry. Olson's essay "Projective Verse" (1950) provided the theoretical manifesto for the Black Mountain poets and for others with similar aims: in it, he offers a conception of "open-field" form and champions a dynamism like that of Pound's Vorticist doctrine of heightened energy in the arts. Here, and in his *Maximus Poems* of the 1960s, Olson cast himself as the heir of Pound and Williams. Like Williams, he emphasized the breath, rather than the iamb, as the basis of rhythm. Like Pound, he mixed colloquialism and farflung learning, and made poems out of juxtapositions. Against subjective verse, Olson offered what he called "objectism," a form of verse in which the ego is washed away and the poet "fronts to the whole of reality." The poet is wholly immersed in and energized by the surrounding environment. "I, Maximus," declares his central character, "a metal hot from boiling water."

After joining the faculty of Black Mountain College, Creeley edited *The Black Mountain Review*; during its short run of seven issues (1954–57), it was a major outlet for the anti-academic verse that was to explode into prominence in the late 1950s. In 1956, Robert Duncan came from San Francisco to join the college staff, and though she never joined the faculty, Denise Levertov published in the *Review*. Her influential essay "Notes on Organic Form" conceives of form not as a predetermined shape arbitrarily imposed on experience but as a coherent whole that closely reflects the inner distinctiveness of an experience. A. R. Ammons's poetry has much in common with the organic form, environmentalism, typographic experimentation, and prosodic velocity of "projective verse." The leader of the Black Arts Movement, Amiri Baraka acknowledged the fundamental influence of Olson on his poetry, as did Adrienne Rich, the preeminent feminist poet after World War II.

The Raw and the Cooked

In the 1950s and 1960s, the central divide in American poetry was between the formalists in the New Critical style and poets in "open" forms, including the Black Mountain poets, the Beats, and the New York poets. Accepting the 1960 National Book Award for *Life Studies*, Robert Lowell most famously encapsulated the situation in a wryly anthropological distinction: "Two poetries are now competing, a cooked and a raw. The cooked, marvelously expert, often seems laboriously concocted to be tasted and digested by a graduate seminar. The raw, huge blood-dripping gobbets of unseasoned experience are dished up for midnight listeners. There is a poetry that can only be studied, and a poetry that can only be declaimed, a poetry of pedantry, and a

poetry of scandal." Although Lowell admitted to some exaggeration, this competition among poets for recognition, influence, and publication was intense; one of its early manifestations was the so-called battle of the anthologies. In *New Poets of England and America* (1957), American poets Donald Hall, Robert Pack, and Louis Simpson gathered formalist poets whose work—most of it in rhymed and metered stanzas—could be understood largely within New Critical terms, including Richard Wilbur and the early Lowell, as well as English poets of the Movement, such as Philip Larkin, Donald Davie, and Thom Gunn. The American critic Donald Allen included none of the same poets in the anthology widely seen as a response, *The New American Poetry* (1960), which influentially grouped and distinguished anti-academic American poets, including the Black Mountain school, the New York school, and the Beats. Ensuing anthologies took sides with the "raw" or the "cooked," or attempted to bridge the distance, but in either case could not ignore the rift.

To clarify this postwar divide in American poetry, it may be useful to focus comparatively on the first two poets in this volume. Charles Olson and Elizabeth Bishop became fountainheads of these very different kinds of contemporary poetry. Born just six weeks after Olson, Bishop is nearly his opposite in matters of form and taste. If he is the first major postwar exponent of "open" form, she masters and remakes inherited poetic models. Though not a disciple of the New Criticism, Bishop created an outstanding example of a body of poetry consonant with New Critical principles. In the 1950s and 1960s, she was less influential than other formalist poets, but her eminence mounted after her death, and her verse remains a strong model for emerging poets attentive to studied craft, precise description, personal memory, and understated but intense lyric feeling. If Olson hectors and proclaims, Bishop speaks in a steely whisper. Intent on kinetics and propulsion, Olson practices a mobile and shaggy giganticism; Bishop, an exacting and exquisite miniaturist, is more interested in the still life. While Olson thinks of poetry as breathing, Bishop conceives of it as looking. Olson's cascading free verse and rhapsodic vistas can be traced back to Walt Whitman; the nineteenth-century foremother of Bishop's controlled measures and pain-stubbed lines is Emily Dickinson. The more immediate, modernist legacy that Olson transmits is that of the fragmentary long poems of Pound and Williams; Bishop extends instead, in poems such as "The Fish," the precise physical descriptions and poetic self-reflections of Marianne Moore (who wrote a poem with the same title):

> I looked into his eyes
> which were far larger than mine
> but shallower, and yellowed,
> the irises backed and packed
> with tarnished tinfoil
> seen through the lenses
> of old scratched isinglass.

But for all their differences, both Bishop and Olson develop permutations of modernism, respond energetically to their environments, and expand the geography of American verse into South and Central America. Distinctions between the "raw" and the "cooked," the "open" and the "closed," provide a basic framework for understanding postwar poetry, but that framework extends only so far, since contemporary poets from Gwendolyn Brooks and

Adrienne Rich to Susan Howe and Henri Cole have straddled the gulf. Major poets such as John Ashbery and Seamus Heaney have written as skillfully in free as in metered verse, in organic as in inherited forms. Indeed, at the time he gave his acceptance speech, Lowell was formally somewhere between the "raw" and the "cooked," having uncoiled his densely wrought New Critical style through the influence of Williams and the Beats.

The Beats and the New York School

The Beat poets, like the Black Mountain poets, aligned themselves with the "open" prosody of Pound and especially of Williams, who wrote an introduction for Allen Ginsberg's *"Howl" and Other Poems* (1956). The Beats were featured in the last issue of the *Black Mountain Review*, of which Ginsberg was a contributing editor. They tended, however, to dismiss the Black Mountain poets as too much at ease with authority figures; their own consistent opposition to authority made their poetry the most notorious and conspicuous of the 1950s. They rejected the stuffy majority culture, the anti-communist inquisitions, and the formalist poetry of the times, and decided to drop out and create among themselves a counterculture based on inspired improvisation, whether through jazz, drugs, or East Asian mysticism. Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, exiles from New York, found a congenial milieu in San Francisco, where a poetic renaissance had already been fomented within "the alternative society," as Kenneth Rexroth, doyen of the San Francisco poets, called it. Robert Duncan returned to the San Francisco scene after Black Mountain College collapsed in 1956; Gary Snyder returned to his birthplace after years in the lumber camps of Oregon and more years studying Zen Buddhism in a Japanese monastery.

Following Whitman's example, Beat writers such as Ginsberg shaped their public utterances out of the private experiences that some of their first readers found shameful and appalling, others thrilling and liberating. They presented, often as visionary experiences, confidences that were once uttered only to priest, doctor, or closest friend. Ginsberg, for example, in one of the rhapsodic long lines of "Howl," writes of those "who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy."

Another major force behind the opening of poetic form was the so-called New York school of poets. It included Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch, who had met at Harvard University and were associated with the Poets' Theatre, an experimental drama group of the early 1950s. Inspired by the paintings of abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, they went to New York City and immersed themselves in contemporary art—Ashbery and O'Hara wrote for *Art News* and O'Hara worked for the Museum of Modern Art. Like the abstract expressionists, they represented art not as a finished product but as a process. In a 1980 interview, Ashbery credited the influences of "the simultaneity of Cubism" and "the Abstract Expressionist idea that the work is a sort of record of its own coming-into-existence; it has an 'anti-referential sensuousness.' " The New York poets practiced in their sometimes montagelike verse a calculated diffidence and discontinuity of perception. Unlike other pioneers of "open" form—such as the Beats and the Black Mountain poets—they spoke not in prophetic or religiously ecstatic tones but through layers of irony. Their work, as Ashbery writes in "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," is "pure / Affirmation that doesn't affirm anything." "All we know," he says in the same poem,

Is that we are a little early, that
Today has that special, lapidary
Todayness that the sunlight reproduces
Faithfully in casting twig-shadows on blithe
Sidewalks. No previous day would have been like this.

Highspirited but knowing, these poets celebrated New York and recorded its landscape, as when O'Hara, characteristically looking from the window of an art gallery, says that "the warm traffic going by is my natural scenery." Partly because of his early death, O'Hara was the first of these poets to become famous. By the 1970s, Ashbery had become the most prominent member of the group, poetically manipulating reality and fantasy, humor and intricate perceptions, and in the process rapidly assuming different selves. No other contemporary poet has been such a strong influence on both "experimental" poets, most interested in his collagelike structures and decentered consciousness, and "mainstream" poets, impressed by his unsentimental lyricism, quick shifts of tone and sense, and dreamlike vividness.

Deep Image Poetry and Confessional Poetry

Surrealism, a mode that uses the unconscious and its distortion of reality, had until the 1960s been more common to the visual arts, and to European and South American writing, than to Anglo-American poetry. Now, this changed: French surrealism was among the influences on the irrational sequences of images in the poetry of the New York school. Along with French surrealism, Spanish surrealism was an even more central influence on another group of American poets, known as the Deep Image poets (a term coined by Robert Kelly in his 1961 essay "Notes on the Poetry of the Deep Image"). They drew on surrealism to compose elemental, psychologically archetypal poems. Robert Bly's magazine *The Fifties* (subsequently renamed for successive decades) made available new translations of surrealist poets including the South Americans Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, and his poems helped establish a "new surrealism," as did those of James Wright, W. S. Merwin, Philip Levine, Louis Simpson, Galway Kinnell, Mark Strand, and Charles Simic. Others, such as Charles Wright, Robert Hass, and Louise Glück, were also periodically attracted to the surrealist dislocation of sense and image. In "Fork," Simic reimagines a fork as the foot of a bird, its head "large, bald, beakless, and blind." "The dead," says Charles Wright in his "Homage to Paul Cézanne, "are constant in / The white lips of the sea." The reader is invited to experience such visions without the effort of logical construction. In Strand's work, the very mysteriousness of what is going on contributes to a mounting effect of uncanny power.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, another group of poets became interested in writing deeply psychological verse, though they relied less on psychic archetypes than on self-analysis. They came to be known as the "confessional" poets—a term that the reviewer M. L. Rosenthal first applied to Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959) and that eventually became a general label for intensely personal poetry about once-taboo subjects. As a young man, Lowell had left Harvard to study at Kenyon College with John Crowe Ransom; Lowell and his older friend Allen Tate, like Ransom a leading New Critic and poet, became Roman Catholics at the same time. Lowell's Pulitzer Prize–

winning second book, *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946), showed technical mastery of rhyme, meter, and complex symbolism, and established his eminent place among young poets. Lowell fused the New Critical tradition of elaborate structure and the Whitmanesque tradition of radical contact with subject. Then, teaching at the University of Iowa, Lowell was struck by the unabashed self-revelations and open form of Beat poetry, and by the self-exploration in the poetry of one of his students, W. D. Snodgrass. Lowell had come to feel that poetry written under the influence of the New Criticism, as he said in a 1961 interview, "can't handle much experience. It's become a craft, purely a craft, and there must be some breakthrough back into life." Although Lowell's loosening of form and psychic self-excavations in *Life Studies* at first made it seem as if he might be becoming a Beat, his verse remained meticulously controlled, his tone still marked by the wit and irony preferred by the New Criticism. If, as he says in *History*, "imperfection is the language of art," his constant revisions showed his lingering allegiance to the well-made poem.

Other poets who wrote in this intensely autobiographical vein, such as Snodgrass, John Berryman (who invented an "anti-sonnet" of three six-line stanzas for his *Dream Songs*), Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Adrienne Rich, either played against conventional form or wrote free verse in a peculiarly unrelaxed way. These poets wrote about key moments of revelatory pain more often than of pleasure, and they saw such moments as epitomizing the general condition of their time. As they turned against New Critical norms of impersonality and formal regulation, Plath, Sexton, and Rich increasingly rooted their poetry in female bodily and psychic existence. Rich reflects in her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision": "In the late fifties I was able to write, for the first time, directly about experiencing myself as a woman. . . . Until then I had tried very much *not* to identify myself as a female poet." Rich, Sexton, and Plath harnessed the confessional mode to express feelings and insights that violated literary and social strictures on American women. They presented their lusts, hatreds, and suicidal urges in extraordinarily charged and intimate terms. In "Ariel," Plath strips herself of mundane responsibilities and ecstatically rides her horse into the sunrise:

The child's cry

Melts in the wall.
And I
Am the arrow,

The dew that flies
Suicidal, at one with the drive
Into the red

Eye, the cauldron of morning.

Such writing sometimes came at a high personal cost: three of the confessionals—Plath, Berryman, and Sexton—committed suicide; others, Lowell included, endured repeated breakdowns, hospitalizations, addictions, which led to early deaths. But Rich, who publicly denounced female self-destructiveness after Sexton's death, attested to the energizing potential of poetry in which "at last the woman in the poem and the woman writing the poem become the same person," in which women "are speaking to and of women . . . out of a newly released courage to name." Women, gay and les-

bian, and "ethnic" American poets—previously impeded from naming their experiences in their own literary voices—thus turned so-called personal or confessional poetry into a tool of collective self-definition and liberation.

The Black Arts Movement and Later African American Poetry

From the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, poets of the Black Arts Movement also focused their poems on agony, rage, and love, but these emotions had a stronger political dimension in their openly polemical, politically revolutionary work. These African American poets were inspired by the Black Power movement, whose leaders had grown impatient with the integrationist, nonviolent ethos of the civil rights movement and emphasized instead black nationalism, economic power, and self-determination. "Black Art," wrote the exponent Larry Neal in "The Black Arts Movement" (1968), "is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept." Amiri Baraka, at that time called LeRoi Jones, gave the movement its name when he coined the term *Black Arts*, founding in 1965 the Black Arts Repertory Theater. Having absorbed the improvisatory aesthetics of the Beat and Black Mountain poets, Baraka left the white avant-garde during the 1960s to move toward a distinctively black aesthetic, which insisted on a commitment to the needs of the African American community and to the discovery of artistic resources in it. In "The Myth of a 'Negro Literature' " (1963), Baraka ridiculed black artists who were "content to imperfectly imitate the bad poetry of the ruined minds of Europe." Proposing the blues and jazz as alternatives to Euro-American forms, he modeled his poems on the explosive energy and polyphonic voicing of post-bebop jazz.

In keeping with the Black Arts Movement, Audre Lorde, Lucille Clifton, and June Jordan, all born, like Baraka, in the 1930s, also wrote poems inveighing against racial injustice and drawing on black experience and poetic tradition, poems steeped in the speech rhythms and rhetorical verve of the black vernacular. But resisting the masculinist tenor of the Black Arts Movement, they put the black female body and their personal emotional histories at the center of their art. Theirs are poems about social identity as seen from within the experiences of storytelling, erotic passion, and physical loss. Clifton writes homages to her hips, her uterus, her last period; childbirth is Lorde's subject in "Now that I Am Forever with Child": "I bore you one morning just before spring— / My head rang like a firey piston / My legs were towers between which / A new world was passing."

Meanwhile, older African American poets, born in the 1910s, were forced to choose sides by the Black Arts Movement. Gwendolyn Brooks had already been writing poems such as "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till," about an African American teenager murdered for whistling at a white woman: Emmett's mother "sits in a red room, / drinking black coffee. / She kisses her killed boy. / And she is sorry. / Chaos in windy grays / through a red prairie." Deeply impressed by the radical younger generation, Brooks shifted in the 1960s from such understated, tightly controlled poetry to "wild, raw, ragged free verse," as she called it. She dated her transformation to the Second Fisk University Black Writers' Conference, in 1967. A year earlier, at the first of these conferences, Robert Hayden found himself sidelined and spurned by black nationalists. Still, he kept to his universalist Baha'i faith and international modernist affinities, and later African American poets have championed his indirect, dramatic approach to black history and social injustice. In the sequence "Middle Passage," for example, he ironically adopts the voices of white slave-ship officers to evoke the atrocities of the slave trade.

Since the Black Arts Movement broke up in 1974, splintering into nationalist, Marxist, and Pan-Africanist factions, many African American poets have departed from its nationalism, but the movement's emphasis on African American oral, literary, and musical genres has remained influential. African American poets such as Michael S. Harper and Yusef Komunyakaa have continued to draw sustenance from African American musical forms, capturing in their verse the melancholy starkness of the blues or the abrupt shifts and syncopations of jazz. Whereas the Black Arts Movement sought cultural self-sufficiency, they hybridize indigenous models in surprising ways with forms adapted from other cultural sources. Thylias Moss invokes the black preacher's technique of "making text" by meditating on a central concept—rapture, slavery, God—but she gives the strategy a new strangeness by combining it with surrealist profusions of discontinuous images. Rita Dove reenters moments of violation and injustice in the history of African Americans, but she makes them haunting, ironically, by adapting such European fixed forms as the sestina and the villanelle, in her poem "Parsley," or such "mainstream" American modes as confessional lyricism and semidramatic, semipersonal portraiture, as in the sequence *Thomas and Beulah*.

The New Apocalypse and the Movement

During World War II, a number of British poets emerged whose response to the "age of anxiety," as W. H. Auden called it, was vehement and extreme. Among the poets of this late Romantic movement sometimes called the New Apocalypse, Dylan Thomas was the major figure. In opposition to the analytic understatement of W. H. Auden and his British circle of the 1930s, Thomas reintroduced openly expressed emotion and rhetoric into English verse, with the most spectacular display of language since Hart Crane. In ordinary situations the Welsh poet heard extraordinary reverberations, and like William Wordsworth, William Blake, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he tried to restore a radiance lost to English nature poetry since the seventeenth century.

Reacting against this apocalyptic mode was a loose association of university poets who, in the 1950s, came to be known as the Movement. Its leading figures were Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, and Thom Gunn, all included in Robert Conquest's *New Lines* (1956), an anthology that put them on Britain's literary map. The Movement had affinities with developments in the other British arts, in fiction, in the "kitchen-sink" school of painting, in "ordinary language" philosophy, and in plays by "angry young men" such as John Osborne. While objecting to what they saw as the Romantic excesses of the New Apocalypse, the poets of the Movement also rejected Yeats's symbolism and Pound and Eliot's high modernism, and favored wit over prophecy and extravagance, urban and suburban realities over myth-making. "A neutral tone is nowadays preferred," as Davie summarized in "Remembering the 'Thirties." These poets tried to reclaim a native English line of civil, rational, and accessible poetry that bypassed the complexities of a supposedly imported modernism and went back through Robert Graves and William Empson to Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, and the Georgian pastoralists of the 1910s. "Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are," Larkin said, implicitly contrasting his work with the supposed "insanity" of the modernist Pound and the confessionals Lowell and Plath.

Through deliberately deflated language, the Movement poets aimed to consolidate the achievements of the Auden circle, without its leftist political commitments, to write a poetry that in its diction and tone, subjects and regular meters, would express rather than overthrow the restrictions of ordinary life. Even so, their poetry sometimes quietly bridges the distance between the mundane and the sublime, as in Larkin's "Sad Steps," which begins, "Groping back to bed after a piss / I part thick curtains, and am startled by / The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness."

British Poetry after the Movement

Not everyone in Britain followed the lead of Larkin and the Movement. Although Charles Tomlinson resembled Movement poets in rejecting Dylan Thomas's apocalyptic Romanticism, and though he also prized precision and clarity, his points of reference in crafting a poetry respectful of the world as other, as irreducible to human symbols, included the American modernists and the Objectivists. Other British poets rejected the Movement's notion of a limited, rationalist, polished poetics. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, Ted Hughes began to write poems in which he presented the world as a Darwinian world of violent struggle and himself as having a savage role to fill. He found emblems of violence in the outer world of animals, weather, and his physical work as a sheep and cattle farmer. Also in contrast to the Movement, Geoffrey Hill saw a rationalist humanism as inadequate to the atrocities of twentieth-century war and genocide; he has investigated political, religious, and personal turmoil in a style knotted with allusions and fierce in its demands, its strenuous language recalling both the high modernist tradition and Metaphysical poetry.

Stylistically closer to the reserve of the Movement, another group of British poets nevertheless sought to dislocate normal habits of perception, presenting the familiar world through the defamiliarizing lens of an alien or an anthropologist. Craig Raine's "The Martian Sends a Postcard Home," in which an alien invader describes ordinary life in an English home, was this group's signature poem; its title was adapted for fellow poets who were called the Martian school. Casting his net beyond the domestic world, James Fenton adapts the Martian strategy in a poem such as "Dead Soldiers," in which the Cambodian wars he witnessed as a journalist are presented in terms of a battlefield dinner party.

Since the 1980s, the spectrum of Britain's poets has become more diverse in class, ethnicity, gender, and region than ever before, bringing new voices into the English literary tradition. Born in the Northern industrial city of Leeds, Tony Harrison often writes as a "remembering exile" from his working-class origins; in "Turns," he says that his poet persona is that of a street entertainer for "the class that broke" his working-class father. His long poem *v.* synthesizes traditional verse—Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is the obvious precursor poem—with a local vernacular, the oral energy and resonance of Harrison's Yorkshire idiom and rhythms exploding on the page. Born in Scotland to an Irish mother in a left-wing, working-class Catholic family, Carol Ann Duffy grew up amid Irish, Scottish, and Standard varieties of English, and this youthful experience helped equip her to speak in different voices in dramatic monologues. Having moved from Guyana to England in her twenties, Grace Nichols, code-switching between West Indian Creole and Standard English, celebrates the erotic energy and force of the black female body. Like other "Black British" poets from England's former colonies, she has helped bring into British poetry a vibrant new imagery, diction, and cultural sensibility.

Poetry of Ireland and Northern Ireland

In the early 1960s, a group of aspiring young writers, all of them born and brought up in Northern Ireland, began to meet in the apartment of Philip Hobsbaum, then a Lecturer at Queen's University, in Belfast. Some of them were Catholic by background, others Protestant; all agreed that the endless guerilla warfare between religiously and politically divided populations in Ulster should not divert them from their writing or become their sole subject. If the Troubles in Northern Ireland were to be treated in poems, they felt, it must be by indirection. Seamus Heaney, who became a Nobel laureate in 1995, is the oldest among these poets. Between his birth, in 1939, and Paul Muldoon's, in 1951, Ulster produced an extraordinary number of strong poets for its small population. Viewing bloodshed through the obliquities of metaphor, myth, allusion, and strict formal pattern, they created one of the most significant bodies of poetry about political violence in the English-speaking world.

"I grew up in between," writes Heaney in "Terminus," and the consciousness of intercultural strife and yet cross-cultural abundance has helped to fuel his poetry and the poetry of other Ulster writers. Seen by many as the most gifted English-language poet of his generation, Heaney has said that Irish poets cannot hate the English, because without them they would not have their language, a poet's chief resource; indeed, he has ransacked the English literary tradition from *Beowulf* to William Wordsworth, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Ted Hughes. Heaney welds this inheritance from centuries of English rule to indigenous Irish genres (such as the *aisling*, or vision poem), Irish sonorities (gutturals, alliterations, assonances of Gaelic), and an Irish sensibility (an earthy, rural, tough-mindedness combined with an almost mystical sense of the unseen). In his poetry about the violence in Northern Ireland, he grapples courageously with the ethics of representation—how to write about public suffering without appropriating, simplifying, or aestheticizing it.

Unlike Heaney, who is a Catholic by background, his near-contemporaries Derek Mahon and Michael Longley came, like Yeats, from Protestant families. Out of the tension between a sense of participation in, and alienation from, the island's predominantly Catholic culture, they have forged poetry that is tonally complex, formally accomplished, and unfailingly elegant. Medbh McGuckian and Paul Muldoon, both of Catholic origins, were among Heaney's students. McGuckian's poetry is the most dreamlike and evocative to come out of Ireland since Yeats's. Muldoon's influential poetry displays great skill in eerily distorted fixed forms, multiple screens of irony, numerological patterning, and a combination of experimental zaniness with formal reserve. Born in the Irish Republic, Eavan Boland has centered her career on making a space within the largely male tradition of Irish verse—with its standard, mythical emblems of femininity—for Irish women's historical experiences of survival and suffering, even including the "scream of beaten women."

Canadian and Australian Poetry

After World War II, the geographical contours of poetry written in English began to change more than at any time since the first publication of American poets, three centuries earlier. One shift of the literary center of gravity was from England to America, a shift that Auden and Denise Levertov seemed to confirm when—in a reversal of the expatriation of Stein, Pound, and Eliot to Europe a generation earlier—they came to the United States. Another was the emergence of new literatures in English from the dominions of the British Empire, such as Canada and Australia. With a few exceptions, such as the Australian A. D. Hope, earlier writers of the British Commonwealth wrote poems derivative of metropolitan fashion. While still drawing on their English inheritances, these writers now began to assert the terms of their own literatures. One of the changes came with greater fidelity to locale. Though indebted to Auden, the Canadian poet P. K. Page strongly roots her imagistic verse in the local landscape. Thus rooted, too, is the work of contemporary Australian poet Judith Wright, which is haunted by the absent presence of a partly destroyed Aboriginal civilization. The Australian poet Les Murray adapts Aboriginal song techniques in his poetry, fusing them with the witty defamiliarizing strategy of the Martian school. Self-conscious about being at the margins of the former empire, Murray fashions a brash, playful, overbrimming poetry that mines the British and classical traditions while remaking them in what he styles his "redneck," Australian manner.

In her introduction to *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (1982), Margaret Atwood observes that in Canada "the modern movement took some time to build a following . . . [because] puritanism and the colonial worship of imports still restricted taste." Atwood writes of isolation and survival as distinguishing preoccupations of Canadian literature, and her poems display a divided vision—both attachment to the Canadian landscape and the sense of being estranged from it. "We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here," remarks one of her characters. Even as Canadian poetry has become increasingly independent, it has continued a dialogue with its British literary origins. Anne Carson, for example, imaginatively engages the British Victorian writers Charlotte and Emily Brontë in her poem "The Glass Essay," transplanting their voices to a Canadian landscape. But Carson, like Atwood, also illustrates a heightened interest in U.S. poetry and popular culture, reflecting Canada's postwar shift in political and cultural orientation from Britain to the United States. Indeed, she brings into the literary mix influences that range from ancient Greek poetry to Pound and Plath, television and video. This diversity of inheritances can also be seen in the work of other Canadian poets. Reflecting the increasing multiculturalism of Canada due to the large-scale immigration that began in 1948, Michael Ondaatje fuses the American confessional mode adapted from Robert Lowell with his classical Sri Lankan inheritance of verse cut in spare, imagistic lines.

Postcolonial Poetry of Africa, India, and the Caribbean

The most dramatic geographic shift in literary activity after World War II was the rise of new literatures from the former colonies of the British Empire in the so-called Third World, particularly in Africa, India, and the Caribbean.

Britain had the largest, most powerful, best organized of the modern European empires, and had expropriated enormous quantities of land, raw materials, and labor from its widely scattered overseas territories. The emergence of new literatures in English coincided loosely with the wave of decolonization that began after World War II: India and Pakistan became independent in 1947; Ghana in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, and Uganda in 1962; Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, Barbados and Guyana in 1966, and Saint Lucia in 1979. Unlike the literatures of the former white settler colonies, which extended and adapted the British literary inheritance to new settings, postcolonial literatures brought together more disparate traditions of colonizer and colonized, European and native. Born under British rule and undergoing a colonial education that repressed or denigrated native languages and traditions, these poets grew up with an acute awareness of the riches of their own cultural inheritances. Searching through oral histories and personal memories, postcolonial poets sought to give voice to a cultural past that colonialism had degraded and gagged. They expanded the range of possibilities in English-language poetry by hybridizing it with their indigenous images and speech rhythms, creoles and genres.

In the middle of the twentieth century, when colonial prejudices still branded West Indian English, or Creole, a backward language, a "corruption" of English, the Afro-Jamaican poet Louise Bennett claimed its wit, vibrancy, and proverbial richness for poetry. In the late 1960s, the Barbadian Kamau Brathwaite (then Edward Brathwaite) wrote the three long sequences, gathered as *The Arrivants*, that revalue the linguistic, musical, and mythic survivals of Africa in the Caribbean—resources long repressed because of colonial attitudes. Whereas Bennett and Brathwaite have emphasized Afro-Caribbean inheritances, the most eminent West Indian poet, Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, has drawn largely on British, American, and classical European models. But in poems such as "The Schooner *Flight*" and *Omeros*, he, like Bennett and Brathwaite, creolizes the rhythms, diction, and sensibility of English-language poetry. "I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me," declares the mulatto hero of "The Schooner *Flight*," "and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation." A leading West Indian poet of the next generation, the Jamaican Lorna Goodison sinuously interweaves Creole and Standard English, Afro-Caribbean and European cultural resources, exclaiming, "It all belongs to me."

In poetry as well as fiction, Nigeria was the most prolific anglophone African nation around the time of independence, said to be the "golden age" of letters in sub-Saharan Africa. In musically cadenced verse, Christopher Okigbo synthesized Igbo myth and imagery with the Anglo-modernist allusive strategies of Pound and Eliot. Another Nigerian, Wole Soyinka, later the first black African to win the Nobel Prize, stretched English syntax and figurative language in poems dense with Yoruba-inspired wordplay and myth. Okot p'Bitek, the preeminent East African poet after independence, Africanized English with literally rendered Acoli images, metaphors, and idioms; his long poem *Song of Lawino* (1966) embodied the conflict between westernization and nativism in an Acoli village woman's boisterous attacks on her Europeanized husband. Working in a language imposed by missionaries and governments that considered them culturally and racially inferior, these African poets transform a tool of oppression into a vehicle for voicing and exploring their rich cultural identities.

Poets from India have brought its great variety of indigenous cultures into

English-language poetry. A. K. Ramanujan drew primarily on traditions of the Hindu majority in sharply etched poems that interfuse Anglo-modernist principles with the south Indian legacies of Tamil and Kannada poetry. Of the Shi'a Muslim minority, the Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali, who like Ramanujan emigrated to the United States for graduate study, interwove first Eliot's modernism, then James Merrill's formalism, with the music, tonality, and fixed forms of Urdu poetry. A poet from the Catholic community in the former Portuguese colony of Goa, whose speech rhythms and diction she echoes, Eunice de Souza employs the confessional mode to explore the often painful experience of growing up female in a patriarchal society. All of these poets respond with emotional ambivalence and linguistic versatility to the experience of living after colonialism, between non-Western traditions and modernity, in a period of explosive change in the relation between Western and "native" cultures.

Postconfessional Poetry, New Formalism, and Language Poetry

In the United States, the late 1970s were marked by the deaths of Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell, two towering figures in the older generation of contemporaries; and by the early deaths of James Wright and Richard Hugo. But other prominent post-1945 writers continued to develop and change. John Ashbery wrote daring long poems and lyrics, employing not only free verse but also fixed forms, such as the sestina and couplet. A. R. Ammons blended his descriptive and meditative modes with more personal introspections in works that meditate on landscape, ecology, and poetry. James Merrill, in *The Changing Light at Sandover*, produced an American cosmological epic unlike anything before him. Adrienne Rich, continuing to forge afresh her "dream of a common language," wrote poems about collective experience, especially that of women, while probing the ethics and meaning of intimate relationships with family, friends, and lovers. Amy Clampitt, an unknown contemporary of the confessionals, began publishing in 1983 some of the most finely embroidered and verbally dazzling poetry of the late twentieth century.

During this period, the postwar movement of American poetry into the academy accelerated. In the first postwar generation, poets such as Robert Lowell and John Berryman took temporary posts as itinerant writers in residence and competed for grants. The next generation's entry into graduate education and university employment was more permanent and pervasive. With few exceptions, American poets born from the 1930s on have received some training in creative-writing programs. Charles Wright, Mark Strand, James Tate, and Jorie Graham, for example, all studied with Donald Justice at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and they, like most of their contemporaries, went on to teach creative writing. Similarly, a group of teacher-poets of the Pacific northwest had all studied with Theodore Roethke, whether at Pennsylvania State University (David Wagoner) or at the University of Washington (James Wright and Richard Hugo). A sign of the changing relation of poetry to the academy was the routinization of the campus poetry reading in the 1980s as a social activity, in contrast to the 1970s, when it had been a psychedelic or revolutionary event.

After the late 1970s, American poetry splintered anew, this time into several distinct factions. As in the 1960s, these factions continued to be bridged by some poets, such as John Ashbery and Jorie Graham, whose work can be

seen as both "experimental" and "personal," "avant-garde" and "formal." At the center, attacked by both literary conservatives and radicals, is the dominant mode in M.F.A. programs, anthologies, publishing houses, national awards, and magazines such as *American Poetry Review*: a modified form of confessional free verse, sometimes called "postconfessional" or "neoconfessional," though in an age of relentless confession on radio, television, and the Internet, the personal revelations tend to be less shocking to today's readers than those of the first-wave confessionals and Beats were to their early audiences. At its best, the mode's introspective lyricism is complicated and enriched. Exploring personal guilt, ambivalence, and psychic distress, Graham often puzzles out personal feelings through deliberately strained comparisons between her inner states and public history—the Holocaust, imperialism, and so forth. Charles Wright also enlarges the postconfessional mode, his Deep Image background widening the scope of personal references, his grids of syllable and line count binding his free verse, and his postreligious melancholy casting the natural world in shadow. Robert Hass has brought to the personal lyric the discipline of the East Asian haiku. Louise Glück has deepened the mode through the use of archetypes and myths. Poets of gay experience, such as Mark Doty and Henri Cole, redeploy confessionalism to resist the humiliations of homophobia, mourn the collective ravages of AIDS, and probe marginal sexual identities. And Sharon Olds, perhaps the clearest example of a late confessionalist, writes poetry so erotically vehement, psychologically intent, and metaphorically rich that she, too, exceeds the bounds of the merely personal.

In reaction against what they see as the slackness of free verse lyricism, a group of poets known as the New Formalists, who published anthologies and manifestos largely in the 1980s, has championed a return to meter and rhyme, which they believe have the potential to restore the tattered social contract between poet and common reader. Their first anthology, Philip Dacey and David Jauss's anthology *Strong Measures: Contemporary American Poetry in Traditional Forms* (1985), recalled the formalist collections in the "battle of the anthologies" twenty-five years earlier. Because their agenda is recuperative, insistent on the virtues of narrative and stanzaic structure, the New Formalists are often assumed to be neoconservatives in politics as well as form. But this is not so. Marilyn Hacker, belatedly adopted into the group, plays the "nontraditional" content of her lesbian feminism within and against forms such as the sestina, the rondeau, the villanelle, and the sonnet, forms renewed by her respectful skewing of prosodic and stanzaic strictures. Other noted poets associated with the group include Gjertrud Schnackenberg, Dana Gioia, Brad Leithauser, and Vikram Seth. During the emergence of the New Formalists, some of the preeminent formalists of the earlier generation—James Merrill, Richard Wilbur, Donald Justice, Anthony Hecht, John Hollander—continued to produce masterful poetry in "closed" verse forms, setting a high standard for such poetry. Within an international context, many contemporary poets have also exemplified formal brilliance and skill in meter and rhyme, including Northern Irish poets such as Seamus Heaney, Derek Mahon, and Michael Longley, English poets such as Tony Harrison, James Fenton, and Carol Ann Duffy, and such postcolonial poets as Louise Bennett, Derek Walcott, and Agha Shahid Ali.

From the opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum arose another prominent challenge to "official verse culture," as Charles Bernstein calls the lyrical "mainstream." In rejecting postconfessional free verse, the New

Formalists buttoned up form in strict patterns, whereas the Language poets scattered it wildly. The Language poets emerged in the 1970s and burst into full view in the 1980s with manifestos and magazines such as *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E,* which Bernstein coedited with Bruce Andrews. They centered their critique on the notion that poetry expresses lyric feeling and subjectivity. In their writing, they enact the poststructuralist view that the coherent self is an ideological illusion. "Various *selves*" create a poem, according to Michael Palmer, and Lyn Hejinian states that writing begins "not in the self but in language," in "the not-I." Taking the Marxist view that normative syntax and grammar enforce political oppression, these poets try to make visible the contradictory discourses hidden within language and the restrictive norms that threaten to homogenize speech. Rejecting rationalist transparency in communication, they foreground the materiality of language—its sounds, shapes, and structures, the look of words on the page. A poem, in Susan Howe's view, is not a seamless discursive unity but a collage-like assemblage, and its sutures should be left frayed and exposed. For her, as for other Language poets, the linear or narrative flow of language needs to be interrupted, even garbled, to reveal its multiple vectors, its hidden multiplicity, fractures, and instability. Despite their radicalism and iconoclasm, the Language poets—many now in university positions, some in the Academy of American Poets—build on long-standing practices and theories of "open" form, including avant-garde modernism, surrealism, Dada, Objectivism, the Black Mountain school, and the New York school, as well as the Russian formalist theory of "defamiliarization."

Latino, Native American, and Asian American Poetries

Another development in English-language poetry beginning in the wake of identity-centered political movements of the 1960s and 1970s and intensifying since the 1980s has been the rise of various poetries by ethnic American minorities. Some of these poetries emerged initially from specific regions. Chicano and Chicana literature is centered in the American southwest, where vast Mexican territories were ceded to the United States in 1848—what became California, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and western Colorado. The Mexican American residents in these areas officially became American citizens, but the "Anglo" majority shunted them into ghettos called *barrios.* Other Mexicans made their way north in search of economic opportunity. The descendents of these immigrants and natives came to be known by the word *Chicano* in 1954 and, for women, *Chicana* in 1967. In the 1960s, as a result of heightened political and ethnic self-consciousness after the civil rights movement, the nationalist Chicano movement, *La Causa,* urged greater rights for the Mexican American minority. A protest literature developed, which prepared the way in turn for various kinds of Chicano poetry to emerge in the late 1970s. In his early work, for example, Gary Soto vividly details the often grim circumstances of migrant life and manual labor in the San Joaquin Valley. His later work centers on the intimate life of the Chicano family.

Perhaps the most striking linguistic feature of Latino poetry—which includes poetry by Chicanos and others descended from Spanish-speaking nations in the Americas—is its direct or indirect incorporation of Spanish. This linguistic hybridization at once enriches contemporary poetry and challenges the norm of American poetry written exclusively in English. In her poems, Chicana writer Lorna Dee Cervantes intersplices Spanish words and phrases with English, echoing the bilingual texture of Latino life in the United States. Other poets, such as Alberto Ríos, absorb Spanish less directly into their poetry, capturing in their use of English the music, oral rhythms, and rhetorical forms of Spanish. Ríos and other Latino poets also draw on the Latin American literary tradition of magical realism, blurring boundaries between fantasy and fact. In his "A Man Then Suddenly Stops Moving," an old man spits out a plum, only to watch it metamorphose into a younger version of himself: the old man "puts him onto his finger / like a parakeet / and sits him on the shelf / with the pictures." Not all Latino poets thematize ethnic experience. Dionisio D. Martínez, for example, an immigrant from Cuba, avails himself of the traditions of European surrealism, American abstract expressionism, and the New York school. But he, too, obliquely refers to questions of ethnic identity in his frequent images of displacement and dispossession. The sense of being between languages, between cultures, between identities informs the work of all these poets.

Native American poetry in English originates in the American west, where numerous regional tribes flourished, each with its own rich set of tales, traditions, and ways of seeing the world. While there were earlier twentieth-century precursors, the flowering of Native American poetry in English dates to the 1960s and 1970s, a period of renewed cultural self-expression, new publishing opportunities, and intense political activism—led by the American Indian Movement (AIM), a militant civil rights organization (1968–78) that worked to restore tribal lands and revitalize traditional cultures. As in Latino poetry, questions of cultural in-betweenness also pervade Native American poetry. Sherman Alexie, a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian who grew up on a reservation in eastern Washington, has said that the sense of "living in both worlds"—that of the dominant Euro-American culture and a minority culture—is "part of who I am." His poems juxtapose, always ironically, popular American icons such as Marilyn Monroe with Native American practices such as the ritual use of the sweat lodge. Louise Erdrich, partly of Chippewa descent, switches back and forth between Roman Catholic and Native American points of reference. The poetry of Joy Harjo (Creek) and Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) leaps the gap between "dream time" and the sordid present, between narrative realism and an elemental mysticism. Acutely aware of the colonial devastation of their indigenous languages and cultures, Native American poets vividly detail the grim circumstances—poverty, alcoholism, unemployment—of contemporary life on the reservation. But their poetry aesthetically recuperates and revitalizes elements of Native American culture, such as storytelling, tricksterism, animism, and cyclical time consciousness. For all their similarities, these poets belong to different indigenous populations and reflect different fusions of Native and Euro-American cultures, inflected by their individual sensibilities. Alexie, for example, continually recalls the Native American trickster aesthetic in his wily poems, while Harjo is more of a seer; his skeptical poems are like caustic banter, hers more like supplications or blessings, centered on the sacred, the mythical, and the natural.

American poets of the East Asian diaspora also fuse and juxtapose their divergent cultural inheritances. The number and variety of Americans of East Asian descent increased dramatically after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished quotas favoring immigrants from northern Europe. In the wake of this watershed legislation and of the civil rights movement, a

large population of East Asian Americans in the 1970s began to search for ways to embody poetically their complex cultural identities. Indonesian-born poet Li-Young Lee, who immigrated to the United States as a grown boy in 1964, writes about the painful childhood experience of being in between Mandarin Chinese and English, at home in neither. Yet his poetry brings together the imagistic influence of Tang dynasty poetry and the psychological drama of American confessional poetry. Another East Asian immigrant, born in Hong Kong, Marilyn Chin incorporates traditions such as the Chinese quatrain into a brashly American feminist neoconfessionalism. Her blunt irreverence—toward both Chinese and American culture—contrasts sharply with Lee's more elegiac sensibility, as also with Cathy Song's more delicately lyrical poetry. Of both Korean and Chinese descent, Song explores intercultural perception in economical poems that draw on her Asian cultural inheritances without idealizing or exoticizing them. Born to a Japanese father and a mother of African American, Native American, and European descent, Ai—who is especially skilled in the use of dramatic monologue—exemplifies the difficulty of ethnically defining contemporary poets, many of whom cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, and nation, whether in their familial or cultural inheritances.

Transnational and Cross-Ethnic Poetry

There are good reasons for reading postwar poets in national or ethnic clusters. Many of these poets have taken their first cultural bearings from ethnic movements and national experiences. Their sensibilities and uses of the English language have been enriched and formed by distinctive cultural styles, political histories, and educations. Moreover, the gap between English and American poetry is often said to have widened after World War II, in contrast to the earlier transatlantic modernism of Pound, Eliot, Stein, Mina Loy, the Objectivists, Auden, and others. American poets of "open" form—the Black Mountain poets, the Beats, the New York poets—had no equivalent in Great Britain or Ireland during the late 1950s or the 1960s. "Ethnic" poets gained a strong foothold in American poetry much earlier than in British.

But in their lives and literary influences, contemporary poets have continually crossed lines of nationality and ethnicity. Strong linkages exist, for example, across the transatlantic divide. Reflecting a general postwar mood of exhaustion with the extremist politics that had devastated much of the world, American poets in the New Critical style had much in common with British poets of the Movement. Both groups rejected sharply political poetry; both refused the self-revelatory and utopian drives of late Romanticism; both privileged irony and understatement; both preferred well-made poems in rhyme, meter, and stanzaic patterns; and both adhered to a rational syntax and grammar. Although the leading figure of the Movement, Philip Larkin, was a self-declared English nativist, he took an American musical form—jazz—as his model of all that was best (traditional jazz) and worst (bebop and free jazz) in poetry and art. He and other Movement poets wanted to reestablish a "native" English line of poetry that went back to Thomas Hardy and the Georgians of the 1910s. But their willful provincialism can be understood only in a transnational context—that of reaction and resistance to the supposedly "alien" modernism of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound. Similarly, American poets of "open" form, such as Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, and Amiri Baraka, cannot be understood outside the transnational context of the "closed" forms that they, like Williams before them, associated with a British imperial legacy in America and that they were trying to supplant, even while reclaiming prophetic English poets such as William Blake.

A number of English, Irish, and American poets crossed the Atlantic after World War II, in the process cross-pollinating poetic forms and idioms. Having moved to the United States just before the outbreak of the war, Auden, who presided over the Yale Series of Younger Poets, became one of the strongest influences on a generation of form-hungry American poets, including Robert Hayden, Adrienne Rich, James Merrill, John Ashbery, and Anthony Hecht. Even without moving to England or Ireland, Robert Lowell influenced key poets such as Geoffrey Hill and Seamus Heaney, who muscled up their style after reading him. Sometimes postwar British poetry is presented as if no British poet were reading American verse, but Charles Tomlinson, who traveled to the United States, took Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and the Objectivists as his models. Donald Davie, originally a poet of the Movement, and one of Tomlinson's students, migrated to the United States and complicated the rationalist Movement paradigm with asymmetries drawn from Pound's aesthetic. Thom Gunn, who also began as a Movement poet, decamped to California, where he studied with Yvor Winters and later wrote some of the best poetry about the effects of AIDS in the American homosexual community. Geoffrey Hill, later a migrant to the United States, took some of his first cues from the tonal, linguistic, and ethical complexity of the American New Critical poet Allen Tate. One of the most eminent poets of the Black Mountain group, British-born Denise Levertov, was a migrant from English forms to an American organicism that recuperated and updated, ironically, an English Romantic conception of poetry. Sylvia Plath, who settled in England, wrote poetry influenced by the violent primitivism of verse by her husband, Ted Hughes, England's future poet laureate. She, along with other American women poets whose work reflects what became an international women's movement, had a strong liberating influence on Irish poets such as Eavan Boland, who now teaches at Stanford University, and Indian poets such as Eunice de Souza. Among later Euro-American poets, Charles Simic, born in the former Yugoslavia, arrived in the United States at sixteen, and Jorie Graham, who grew up in Italy and France, moved to New York in her twenties. Many postwar American poets lived for long periods in Europe or other parts of the world, such as Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil, Gary Snyder in Japan, John Ashbery and Marilyn Hacker in France. Many more traveled widely and regularly. All of this physical mobility has echoed the increasing globalization of film, print, video, telecommunications, computers, and other such technologies, which, flowing across national boundaries, have exposed contemporary poets to an accelerated circulation of images, words, and experiences from around the world.

Although Irish poetry is often said to be more "conservative" than American poetry, the two national streams have frequently come together in the contemporary period. After a year at the University of California, Berkeley, Seamus Heaney wrote his important volume about Ulster's violence, *North*, in the short-lined free verse he discovered in American poets such as Robert Creeley and William Carlos Williams—a tubular style that subsequently disseminated widely in British and Irish verse. Even his earliest poetry does not flow from an exclusively Irish origin: he has credited Ted Hughes with being a key initial influence in helping him find his voice. While Heaney has spent part of many years at Harvard University, his former student Paul Muldoon

has been teaching at Princeton University, both poets absorbing and returning American influences. Having lived much of his mature life in New York and London, and feeling inherently awkward in relation to Ireland because of his Protestant background, the poet Derek Mahon questions—as might perhaps all these contemporary poets—"what is meant by home" ("Afterlives"). The ample record of transatlantic crossings, migrations, and entanglements should remind us that, even if we cannot abandon altogether conceptions of contemporary poetry as "British," "Irish," or "American," we should at least qualify and complicate what is meant by home.

Postcolonial poets are even less possible to understand within strictly limited identity- or nation-based paradigms, since their lives, histories, and poetry have persistently crossed such boundaries. Growing up in the interstices of indigenous and imposed colonial cultures, most of the prominent first- and second-generation postcolonial poets had British educations at home and then ventured to the imperial "motherland" or to the United States for higher education, even including the "nativist" poets who put the strongest emphasis on their local cultural resources: Jamaican poet Louise Bennett, though writing almost entirely in West Indian English, studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, in London; the most influential Afro-Caribbean-centered poet, Kamau Brathwaite, studied at Cambridge University and the University of Sussex; and Okot p'Bitek, though reclaiming the idioms, tales, and perspectives of East African village culture, was trained as an anthropologist at Oxford University. A. K. Ramanujan, who completed a dissertation at Indiana University, wryly noted that Indology was a Western invention. Those who stayed at home for higher education, such as Derek Walcott and Christopher Okigbo, were, paradoxically, among the most internationalist in their poetry, Walcott drawing on the Elizabethan and modernist traditions, Okigbo intermingling high modernist strategies with Igbo praise songs. Because of the economic imbalance between the First World and their homelands, many postcolonial poets have lived, taught, and written for long periods in Britain—Grace Nichols and Wole Soyinka—and/or in North America—Brathwaite, Ramanujan, Walcott, Michael Ondaatje, Lorna Goodison, and Agha Shahid Ali. The ironies of postcolonial literary influence reveal the limitations of a nationalist approach to contemporary poetry: the High Church royalist T. S. Eliot was, for example, one of the strongest early influences on Brathwaite, Walcott, and Ali, helping free them from the dead hand of Victorian colonial models. Although many contemporary American and British poets have seen Anglo-modernism as compromised by the reactionary politics of its leading figures, poets of the formerly colonized world have often embraced it as profoundly enabling and subversive, borrowing modernist principles such as juxtaposition, montage, compression, allusion, and psychic ambivalence to fashion their own hybrid art.

Finally, "ethnic" American poetries are by definition cross-cultural, as poetries of national, ethnic, and linguistic in-betweenness. Many Latino and East Asian American poets were born abroad, such as Dionisio D. Martínez, Li-Young Lee, and Marilyn Chin. Still more of these "ethnic" poets are the children of parents who spoke another language at home, including Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Native American languages. Arising out of this interlingual and intercultural matrix, the cross-cultural texture of this poetry, interweaving indigenous and Anglo-American traditions, has much in common with the hybridity of postcolonial and of African American poetry. While the strongest impulse in "ethnic" American poetries has been

to reclaim indigenous cultural resources, these poetries are also, in turn, closely interlinked with one another and with the dominant Euro-American traditions in English-language poetry. An Asian American poet such as Chin clearly draws on the African American feminist poetics of June Jordan and others who came out of the Black Arts Movement, and African American poets have drawn, in turn, on other ethnic traditions—Thylias Moss, for example, on the neosurrealist style Simic made partly out of Serbian and Slovene sources. The neoconfessional mode that seems to have lost much of its force for Anglo-American poets has been renewed and adapted by poets such as Lee, Alberto Ríos, and Joy Harjo, who write poems that straddle the introspection of confessional poetry and the communal reach of "identity poetry." We can only anticipate with excitement the new intercultural forms and connections that the next generation of poets will forge in an increasingly transnational and cross-ethnic world.