



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S11. Anthologies and Challenges in 20th-Century American Poetry And Poetics

Saturday 2 September: 9.30-11.30am

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What is at issue in the construction and reception of avant-garde American poetry and poetics anthologies in the 20th century? How do they offer different perspectives notably on language and ideology, and how do they articulate poetry with other disciplines such as social theory, philosophy, linguistics, and art? From Imagism, or the Objectivists, to Ethnopoetics, Concrete Poetry, or Language, anthologies have been a locus for the redefinition of poetic art. This seminar will address questions of how anthologies mediate poetic intention, outline processes of acceptance or marginalization, and pursue the dialogue between Europe and the United States.

The Imagist Anthology of 1930

Christopher Bains (University of Paris 3, Sorbonne)

Taking advantage of historical distance, Glenn Hughes and Ford Madox Ford look back upon the movement in the two prefaces to *Imagist Anthology*. Hughes qualifies Imagism “as a militant mouvement towards a new poetry,” whereas Ford makes the case for the indeterminacy of imagism with other movements of its time. This paper will show how these two different recollections are faulty or incomplete. If they reflect but imprecisely the reality—the historical place and aesthetic ideologies of the movement—they tell us that Imagism was never composed of homogeneous elements but rather of variegating perspectives and agendas. Yet it is inarguably true that some historical narratives have weighed more than others in literary history, demonstrating staying power and historical determinacy. I will look briefly at the different accounts provided in the anthology of 1930 and how they relate to Imagist poems and poetics.

An “Objectivists” Anthology: from manifesto to tradition

Fiona McMahon (University of Burgundy)

The polemical vein of Louis Zukofsky’s anthology will be considered from the vantage point of its evolution as an editorial project (1931-32) and then as a marginalized site from which would emerge a tradition for the American avant-garde in the 1970s. The contention that this anthology shares some of the features and aims of a manifesto will be examined not only against appraisals identifying its ideological motives and discursive

combativeness but also from the perspective of the lasting influence some of its ideals have displayed in contemporary poetry both in the United States and in Europe.

The New American Poetry: an Anthology and a Guiding Light

Kevin Power (University of Alicante)

Donald Allen's anthology, *The New American Poetry*, materializes the truism that all interpretation is intertextually mediated. If Fredric Jameson's "always historicize" is the first move in a political critique of literary and critical texts, anthologies like this, by placing texts in relation to one another and in relation to their historical "context," begin the task of historicization in part by corroding the specious authority that clings to the then "canonical" works. Yet this is a slow process and it can be quickened by the inclusion of new voices to the decision-making process concerning the profiles to be given the curriculum we choose to teach. Students usually begin by asking why "more poetic" and translations of contemporary American poetry, for example, aren't available. We examine what it means to be "poetic" and whose "aesthetic" is being assumed in the use of such terminology.

Openness and Closure in Women's Poetry Anthologies: Experimentalism Vs Lyric Expression

Matilde Martín (University of La Laguna)

I will analyse the editorial principles of two radically different anthologies of contemporary American women's poetry and focus on the ways in which they articulate distinct conceptions of subjectivity, language and gender. *No More Masks!: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Women Poets*, edited by Florence Howe (1993), and *Moving Borders: Three Decades of Innovative Writing by Women*, edited by Mary Margaret Sloan (1998), represent the terms of an old division of women's poetry into two kinds: one which is concerned about rendering identity and experience through a transparent and univocal language; the other one, working in the belief that experience and identity cannot be expressed thoroughly but rather recreated through experimentation and a process-centred poetics.

Index of a Century: Verbal-visual Writing in *Poems for the Millennium*

Mandy Bloomfield (University of Southampton)

This paper will consider the role of verbal-visual writing in Pierre Joris and Jerome Rothenberg's *Poems for the Millennium*. My central claim is that poetic works in which the literary and the visual are intertwined perform a key function in this anthology. I shall argue that these hybrid works foreground an indexical materiality which carries a historical resonance. The merging of verbal and visual elements repeatedly produces dissonances and fractures in reception which create ghosts of signification of traumas, displacements, and radical cultural shifts that have fallen over the horizon of publicly available histories. These works also heighten readerly attentiveness to the indexical textuality of other apparently non-visual poems. Verbal-visual works, then, function as moments of particular intensity in an anthology that proffers the aesthetics and politics of avant-garde poetry as among the most sensitive gauges of our times.

