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CLAYTON ESHLEMAN: The Gospel According to Norton

"When you write mystery stories, you have to know something; to be a poet, you don't have to know anything."

—Richard Hugo (NAMP, p. 1121)

Once upon a time, there was a great, great poet named Yeats [55].[1] Yeats was so great, in fact, that he "dominates this century's verse as Wordsworth dominated that of the last." Indeed, a year before this century even began, with *The Wind among the Reeds*, Yeats "set the method for the modern movement." Drawing upon the discoveries of Romanticism—"diversified expression of the self," "the primacy of the imagination,"—as well as upon French Symbolism—"truth in mental operations rather than in the outside world"—Yeats became the poetic overlord of the twentieth century. Furthermore, he inserted his own symbology, as well as his mortal body, into his second, or mature, phase, and dwelling "boldly upon lust and rage, mire and fury, he envisaged more passionately the state of completeness to which incompleteness may attain."

In the shadow of what might be called French-Symbolism-become-Yeatsean-Symbology, several other great but clearly (and unexplainedly) lesser poets were picking around the ruins, trying to make sense out of the new (though from a Yeatsean viewpoint, finished) century. Both Pound [31] and Eliot [28] "wrote about the modern world as a group of fragments." Pound believed in " 'direct treatment of the thing,' " and in this way he was an ally of Williams [34] and his "no ideas but in things." Since "the general framework within which modern poets have written is one in which the reality of the objective world is fundamentally called into question," the reader is to understand that Pound, Eliot, and Williams were unable to achieve the completeness achieved by Yeats. Eliot's "sifting and fusion ended in a surprisingly orthodox religious view." Pound ceases to be of much interest after being found mentally incompetent to stand trial for treason after WW II, and in spite of his attempt in the *Cantos* to find a pattern, "the total impression may rather be one of shifting, intersecting forms, coming into being and then retreating on the page." Williams, who "agreed with the poets Verlaine and Rimbaud in opposing 'literature' as a phenomenon created by the 'establishment,' " felt that the poem should be "allowed to take its own shape." "He sees most writing as having taken a wrong turn and regards his own efforts, even if stumbling, as at least in the right direction." The few British poets "who followed the lead of Eliot and Pound made relatively little impact on their readers." Exceptions are Sitwell [5], MacDiarmid [4], Jones [10], and Bunting [6]—but they are all of minor importance and worth only a handful of pages. "For in England as in America, the influence of strongly programmatic poetry" (Pound, Eliot, Williams, or anyone with a new poetics) "was balanced by much more traditional modes of verse."

Thus not only was 1922 "the year of *The Waste Land* and of Joyce's [8] *Ulysses* . . . it was also the year when a group of teachers and students at Vanderbilt University brought out a literary magazine called *The Fugitive*." Up to this point, all the poets were introduced under the Yeatsean canopy called "Symbolism." We are now in a period described as "Elegant and Inelegant Variations," presumably on Yeats and his lessers. While Lawrence [22] "centered his own verse in the passions of tortoises and elephants," and Frost [24] "converted his self-disgust and loneliness into verses of Horatian dignity," such Georgians as de la Mare [3], Graves [10], Sasson [5], and Edward Thomas [5] "wished to preserve rural England in traditional prosody." In this regard, they were compatible with *The Fugitives* (Ransom [11], Tate [11], and Warren [11]), "who hoped to keep for the South some of its traditional values." *Fugitive* ramifications are Empson's [5] *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), Ransom's *The New Criticism* (1941), and Warren and Brook's *Understanding Poetry* (1938), the latter which "had a vast influence on the teaching of verse at American colleges in the forties, fifties, and early sixties; the influence was even greater on the many imitative textbooks it spawned." "In England during the late twenties and early thirties, the most important young poets were W.H. Auden [22], Stephen Spender [7], Louis MacNeice [11], and C. Day Lewis [4]," who "eager to express radical political attitudes, preferred to do so through older verse techniques."

The sun continues to set. We are now in that period called "Poetry from 1945 to 1975," which is introduced as follows: "During and immediately after the Second World War, most poets living in the United States came to write in a way that poets of the twenties and critics of the thirties had prepared for them." I believe we are to understand here that *The Fugitives* and the Auden group were the overwhelming influence on post WW II American poetry. In reaction to Dylan Thomas's [9] "apocalyptic mode," "a loose association of university poets who called themselves, baldly, 'The Movement' "—Amis [6], and Larkin [14]—"favored wit over prophecy and extravagance, urban and suburban realities over the urbane." "For some years after the war the esthetic of the New Criticism helped to shape most new American verse." "The qualities it enshrined, such as metaphysical wit, an irony too complex to permit strong commitments, and a technique which often calls attention to its own dexterity, are characteristic elements of what its detractors called an academic style." Effected were: Jarrell [10], Eberhart [6], Shapiro [5], Roethke [11], Lowell [16], Berryman [6], Bishop [14], Wilbur [13], Nemerov [7], Miles [6], Simpson [6], Hecht [8], and Hollander [7]. In reaction, under the "subversive influence" of Williams and Pound, we find Ammons [14], Ginsberg [14] and Creeley [6]; the latter was also "one of the poets who gathered around Charles Olson [7] at Black Mountain College, an experimental and unaccredited school in North Carolina." The Beats—Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti [5]—who "tended to dismiss the Black Mountain poets as too much at ease with authority figures," "found a congenial milieu in San Francisco, where a poetic renaissance had already been fomented within 'the alternative society.' " It included Rexroth [4], Duncan [7], and Snyder [10]. "This kind of poetry came to be known as 'confessional.' " There was also the New York school—O'Hara [6], Ashbery [12], and Koch [14]—these poets "practiced a calculated effrontery and discontinuity of perception." A "new surrealism" (Surrealism being defined as "a mode which exploits as material the distortion imposed upon reality by the unconscious") is found in the poetry of Bly [5], Wright [13], Merwin [8], Strand [5], and Wakoski [11]. By 1959, "it seemed at first that Lowell might himself be becoming a Beat, but in fact his verse is more controlled than it appears." "Other poets who wrote in this intensely autobiographical vein"—Snodgrass [9], Roethke,

Clayton Eshleman: photo by Nina Subin

Berryman, Plath [10], and Rich [17]—"either played against conventional form or wrote free verse in a peculiarly unrelaxed way. These poets are generally melancholy." Black poets of this period are Brooks [13], Baraka [6] and Lorde [8].

We have now reached the present—"Poetry Since 1975"—a decade with no new poetics, experimentation, or American poets of more than modest significance. The late David Kalstone[2] identifies this period (which, quoted, becomes the Norton definition) as one of "personal absences." He means that the main events of this period are: "the deaths of Bishop, Lowell, Wright and Hugo"; "the comparative silence of others"; and the fact that only "four of the more prominent post-1945 writers"—Ashbery, Ammons, Merrill [18], and Rich—"have continued to develop." In summary, "the major poetic innovations and consolidations earlier in the century are now simply history." The closest to anything new is a kind of "regionalism . . . a vigorous use of vivid experience in a particular place: what Richard Hugo [9] called a 'triggering town.' " Other than Carolyn Forché [7], who "places herself and us, strongly, in El Salvador," all of these "regionalists" are Black, Chicana, Chicano, or Native American poets: "Gary Soto [10] in the San Joaquin Valley, Rita Dove [10] in Akron, Ohio, and Cathy Song [10] in small Hawaii towns." Younger women poets "do not always seem impelled to take gender as their central subject." Some, like Cathy Song or Rosanna Warren [4] "make poems out of visual art"; others—Rich, Lorde, Marilyn Hacker [6], and, "in 'Kalaloch,' " Forché—"write about women's love for women." "With all this diversity, it would be hard, if not impossible, to point to poetic trends." "The personal is a prominent subject." "A significant mode is that of the dramatic monologue." "Many recent poets are writing longer poems or poetic sequences, such as Stanley Kunitz's [6] "The Wellfleet Whale," William Everson's [10] "The Poet is Dead," James Dickey's [9] "Falling," and Frank Bidart's [8] "Golden State."[3] The commentary ends with several paragraphs on contemporary Canadian, English, and Irish poets. Al Purdy [5], born in 1918, is identified as Canada's "foremost countercultural spokesman." James Fenton [9] is identified as "having explored the Cambodian wars in terms of a battlefield dinner party." About the leading Ulster poet we are told: "Seamus Heaney [19] has said that the Irish poet cannot hate the English, because without them he would not have their language, his chief resource as a poet."

* * *

In the above condensation/pastiche of the Introduction to the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (second edition, 1988; henceforth, NAMP), I have attempted to raise the primary features into a stark topology. It is worth doing so, because at 1,865 pages (fifty-five lines to the page), given Norton's distributional effectiveness along with the classroom tendency to rely on a single big anthology to be used all semester long, the NAMP, over the next decade, may very well reach more classes than all the individual collections by twentieth-century English language poets combined. Before considering omissions and misrepresentations, I'd like to make a few observations based not only on the 10,000 word Introduction, but on the contents.

In his thoughtful essay on American Poetry Anthologies,[4] Alan Golding, considering the 1975 Norton *Anthology of Poetry*, writes: "they never discuss what governs their choices. Distinctions between 'major poets' and 'their interesting contemporaries' are assumed to be clear and not open to question." Golding also points out that "you can't read a Charles Olson poem in the same way that you read a Richard Wilbur poem. But the structure and purpose of the teaching anthology limit these new ways of reading, perpetuating old ways of reading the new poetry." Both of these objections still hold true for the NAMP, and the limitations they address are a good deal more formidable than they might appear.

Other than the generalization (quoted in the first part of my essay) concerning the fundamental questioning of the objective world, "modern poetry" is not defined, let alone pondered, in the NAMP. If one considers the Objectivists (omitted en masse), Williams, much of Pound, Rexroth, Bunting, Bishop, Snyder, etc., the generalization falls apart. The terms "Modernist" or "Post-Modernist" do not even occur in the Introduction; instead we have such phrases as "modern verse," "the modern movement," which, under the vague precursor categories of Romanticism and Symbolism are used to include such clearly Victorian figures as Carroll, Bridges, Wilde, Housman, and Kipling, as well as the Georgians, *The Fugitives*, the New Criticism, and ultimately the writing of young writing workshop apprentices whom we are told have no relationship to the past, whatever it is. In the NAMP context, "modern" means little more than the poetry written in English over the last 100 hundred years. This means that anything that appeals to the editors' taste can come in.[5] It means that the book is shipwrecked from the start, because there is no working definition from generation to generation to distinguish the sheep from the goats. And since there is none, and since "teachability" (more on this later) anchors the editors' taste, "traditional verse" (not even "poetry") becomes the book's common denominator. Certainly Whitman, Dickinson, and Hopkins are there, at the beginning, but they are islands in a sea made up of rhymed "verse," much of which is doggerel.

By the 1930s, in order to advance their taste for traditional verse, the editors use the New Criticism, or classroom-oriented professor-poetry, to provide a criterion for mainstream poetry up through the 1980s. The

new is continually set up as a reaction to the traditional (with token page allotments to innovative figures who are used to promote a fake "diversity"). There is no glint of awareness that such poets as Olson and Duncan were not reacting to Hardy or Tate, but were building on, advancing in their own ways, the work of such emanational figures as Williams and Pound. A sense of "making it new" is never allowed a foothold as an ongoing transformational force in poetry, and because of this the NAMP emits black light. I have forced myself to read it twice over the past year and a half; never before have I had such difficulty in continuing to read a book. The message is that from Yeats onward, the energy in modern poetry is entropic; while there are occasional disturbances (*The Wasteland, The Cantos,* etc.), the calm we should depend on consists of story-like verse in which a first-person speaker describes an event from the past. If there is any essential change between 1900 and now, it is that flat, conversational workshop poetry has replaced rhymed verse.

* * *

Omissions: all of the Objectivists (in the introduction to the six-page Bunting section, Zukofsky is mentioned as one of Bunting's "associates"). All of the figures who kept avant-garde possibilities open between 1914 and 1945, e.g., Arensberg, Brown, Duchamp, Freytag-Loringhoven, Hartley, Loy, Crosby, Fearing, Henri Ford, Gillespie, Jolas, Lowenfels, Cage, Mac Low, Patchen, and Riding.[6] While Post-Modernism is mentioned once, it is not discussed, and there is no indication that such poets as Olson, Ginsberg, Snyder, and Rothenberg represent a turning away from the Anglo-American tradition (toward Third- and Fourth-world cultures, primitives, and the East) that goes beyond the Modernist preoccupation with the Other. Deep Image, Ethnopoetics, Concrete and Visual Poetry, Performance Poetry, and Language Poetry are not mentioned (meaning that none of their practitioners are included or mentioned either). Such a list of omissions only begins to indicate the NAMP's distortion of twentieth-century American poetic action,[7] and while I dislike making lists of omitted, important poets, I have to do so here to illustrate not just how the Objectivists and the Language Poets have been erased, but how many other innovative directions have had their principle figures omitted, and how movements in part acknowledged by the NAMP editors ("the Black Mountain poets," "the San Francisco poets") have been undermined and diminished through the refusal to include most of the poets who gave such movements their solidity.

Zukofsky	**Lamantia**	**Wieners**
Oppen	**McClure**	**Tarn**
Reznikoff	**Whalen**	**Padgett**
Rakosi	**Corman**	**Coolidge**
Riding	**Corso**	**Sobin**
Loy	**Guest**	**Sanders**
Bronk	**Bukowski**	**Simic**
Blackburn	**Schuyler**	**Taggart**
Eigner	**J. Williams**	**Bromige**
Dorn	**E. Williams**	**Cortez**
Kerouac	**L. Anderson**	**Ortiz**
Niedecker	**Berrigan**	**Reed**
Cage	**Rothenberg**	**Henderson**
Mac Low	**Kelly**	**Cruz**
Spicer	**Antin**	**Irby**
Blaser	**Lansing**	**Howe**
Palmer	**Silliman**	**R. Johnson**
C.K. Williams	**Hejinian**	**Yau**
Bernstein	**Perelman**	**Kleinzahler**
Schwerner	**DuPlessis**	**Grahn**

Thirty years ago, it was customary to make a simplistic, dualistic distinction between academic, or closed, poetry and experimental, or open, poetry. In his 1960 acceptance speech for the National Book Award, Lowell appropriated Claude Levi-Strauss's distinction between the raw and the cooked. One wonders how Lowell saw himself. For the author of *Life Studies,* raw poetry was "huge blood-dripping gobbets of unseasoned experience dished up for midnight listeners," while cooked was "a poetry that can only be studied." Even for the early sixties, Lowell's distinction is suspect, if not outright sloppy. *Howl* might have some blood in it, but the experience was hardly unseasoned; is Oppen cooked or raw? Spicer? Corman? Implicit in the old distinction is the idea that the experimental is thoughtless, and inappropriate for study. Thus, a false distinction, loaded as usual against the new.

In the NAMP section introduction to Wilbur, this distinction is referred to with the following elaboration: "Wilbur's poetry is elaborately cooked, or, to elevate the metaphor, he is Apollonian while Lowell is Dionysian: that is, he centers his work in the achievement of illuminated, controlled moments rather than in sudden immersions in chaos and despair." Again, a fake distinction (even for Lowell: all of *Life Studies* is "illuminated, controlled moments" regardless of Lowell's neuroticism). The new twist here is that "chaos and despair" have now been added to the experimental's burden of unseasoned experience, or thoughtlessness, and its failure to reward study. It is as if we are now watching anything that is confrontational, up front about experience (meaning some of it is bound to be negative, or despairing, given the world we all live in) sink out of sight, with the outright lie that such poetry does not reward study.

Anyone aware of post WW II poetry knows that certain avant-garde poetries, based on international research, are more ideological than academic mainstream writing (writing found in *The New Yorker, APR, Poetry* (Chicago), the Knopf series, the last 200 pages of NAMP, etc.). From all this I conclude that the contemporary equivalent of *The Waste Land* or "Canto VII" would not stand a chance of getting into the NAMP (or virtually any other teaching-oriented anthology). I take Hugo's remark that I have used as an epigram to this essay very seriously: if one expects to be anthologized (and taught, etc.), one's poetry should know very little—it should not be emotionally confrontational, seriously critical of government and society, or imaginatively dense. While one may find mid-career Ivor Winter's too logical and dry, it is, in comparison to the last several hundred pages of the NAMP, extraordinarily thoughtful, and "difficult." In 1960, it would have been considered "academic." Today, textbook-anthology-wise, while it would not be thought of as raw or experimental, it would be dismissed, and were its intensity to be performed without regular rhythms, stanzas, and rhymes, it would be judged chaotic, and in effect be judged, and treated, like the poetry of William Bronk, Robert Kelly, or Ron Silliman.

* * *

Not only is the idea of the new and the old perverted in the NAMP, but the seemingly clear distinction between the omitted and the included has several subtexts. The NAMP is able to perpetuate old ways of reading new poetry not only by setting up the new as an unsatisfactory reaction against the old, but also by leaving out key new texts, that, were they to be present, would make it much more difficult for the new to be misread. To this we must also add the number of pages alloted to each author which, more often than not, is used to imply that uncanonized authors of the new are worth less attention than more traditional and teachable poets. To examine this in detail would extend this essay beyond what seems appropriate here. What follows are some examples, which could be multiplied fourfold in terms of the book at large.

Whitman's [23] "Song of Myself," which understandably opens the book, lacks stanzas 15 through 45, or over half of a masterpiece that would have taken up all of 24 pages had the entire 1855 version been printed.

The Dickinson [8] section, includes several trivial poems, but omits a number of major works, including my candidate for the single finest nineteenth-century lyric, "My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun."

The four pages of Stein make her look like an oddball instead of a writer whose language and composition still test the limits of poetry.

The Stevens [23] section has all the early "teachable" poems we have seen in anthologies for years. It includes 21 lines from *Transport to Summer*, and 18 lines from *Auroras of Autumn*, his two greatest collections.

Both Bunting and MacDiarmid are utterly falsified. Bunting's section lacks the extraordinary "Chomei at Toyama," and MacDiarmid's gives no indication whatsoever that he is the author of "On a Raised Beach" and "In Memoriam James Joyce."

Keeping in mind that Olson's more traditional contemporaries (Auden and Lowell) are presented with their major works, it seems grossly unfair that the small Olson section omits "The Kingfishers" (the Post-Modernist equivalent to *The Waste Land*), "In Cold Hell," "The chain of memory is resurrection," and selections from the last three-quarters of *The Maximus Poems*.

In the table of contents, Ginsberg's *Howl* is listed as "Howl." One presumes this means the complete *Howl*. Turning to the Ginsberg section, we find that *Howl* Parts II and III are not there. Part II is arguably the finest two pages in all of Ginsberg. One wonders if the phrase "Cocksucker in Moloch!" kept it out of the NAMP.

The Duncan section is a disaster. Its seven pages include several early lyrics, a 10-line poem from *Bending the Bow*, and three of the slightest pieces from *Groundwork I*. Missing: "Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar," "My Mother would be a Falconress," "Uprising" (the greatest of the anti-Vietnam War poems), and everything from "The Tribunals" and "The Regulators," the two major sequences in *Groundwork*.

Looking at the NAMP from the viewpoint of page allotment, one encounters one bizarre juxtaposition after another. Is it possible that Rita Dove is more than twice as significant as Hugh MacDiarmid? Do Hopkins [16] and Richard Howard [16] really deserve the same number of pages? Is it possible that Gary Soto is more significant than Emily Dickinson? Lorna Dee Cervantes [6], the author of a single book (1981) is offered the same amount of pages as Bunting. Gavin Ewart [7], an English author of sexist doggerel, receives more than twice the pages alloted to Samuel Beckett [3].

* * *

One might inquire of John Benedict, the Senior Norton Editor whose presence is often felt in the NAMP (he appears in footnotes as the recipient of author query responses), why the late Ellmann and O'Clair were contracted to edit such a book. The superficial answer seems to be that both men co-edited the 1973 Norton *Anthology of Modern Poetry* and the 1976 Norton *Modern Poems: An Introduction to Poetry*. O'Clair appears to have been a Victorian scholar who never published a single book or article of his own (according to *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 77-80). The only clue in the NAMP as to why O'Clair was involved in such projects is the following sentence in the Preface: "In making

selections of all poets and poems, the editors were guided by the responses of the many teachers who have used the earlier edition, as well as by Robert O'Clair's unerring sense of how well a poem works in the classroom."[8] Other than offering a rather meager explanation for O'Clair's right to co-determine what millions of college students are to read in the name of poetry, the statement implies that the entire organization of the NAMP is primarily determined by what O'Clair and other teachers consider to be easy to teach, and secondarily determined by what the editors believe is the most masterful writing. Does this explain the omission of such poets as Zukofsky and Mac Low? In a publicity brochure for the Third Edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (1989), the slightly revised Olson section is identified as "an accessible offering of *The Maximus Poems.*"

As for Ellmann, most readers will know that he is an emminent scholar of Irish Literature, with several acclaimed books on Yeats and Joyce, and in his last period, a biography of Wilde. The uncomfortable question is: could Ellmann, in the 1980s, ill, living at Oxford, working on Wilde, have kept up with contemporary poetry?

Going back to the Preface, we also read: "We have provided liberal annotation, translating phrases from foreign languages and explaining allusions when they are not common knowledge, so that every poem can be read without recourse to reference books." The intention here seems to be to save the student from his dictionary and ultimately from the library itself. Such "translations" and "explanations" often result in one word synonyms. In Stevens's "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman," nine words are footnoted: they are nave, citherns, peristyle, masque, bawdiness, palms, flagellants, muzzy, and spheres. I have several problems with this annotation. The movement from poem to reference book takes time; such time is valuable for assimilation and exploration of the unknown word. To glance down at the bottom of the NAMP page takes a second. One looks down from "muzzy," spots "3. Confused" and bounces back into the Stevens line. "Muzzy," I propose, has not registered in the way it might had an International Dictionary been opened to the appropriate page. In my Second Edition Websters, I find: "Dull-spirited; muddled or confused in mind; stupid with drink," and I also note that "muzzy" is connected with "to muzzle:" "Dial Eng. *a)* To root or grub with the muzzle, or snout; said esp. of pigs. *b)* To muffle, esp. church bells. *c)* To make muzzy. *d)* To handle roughly; maul; thrash." In the next Stevens poem, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," the phrase "cups concupiscent curds" is footnoted as "Literally, lustful milk solids." All

the work has been taken away from the reader; he can say, oh, that is what that mysterious phrase means—and glide on. Such a "translation" erases the difficulty, and releases the reader from the crucial activity of recomposing the metaphor on his own terms (or finding it opaque, or silly, or whatever). On the other hand, it is approrpriate to footnote "Bickfords" in "Howl I," and to offer some information on words that are not in International Dictionaries. NAMP's procedure wavers in these respects: at times, fairly common words are footnoted—at other times, very esoteric words receive no annotation. I counted over two dozen typographical errors, and some errors in verifiable information, such as Hart Crane's death year, and the misidentification of the Martinician poet Aimé Césaire as "a Congolese writer."

* * *

Beckett's three pages in the NAMP are filled with his early poetry, of some interest, but only tangential to the vision by which he is recognized. Joyce is also in the book; his eight pages are split between early verse, and the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" passage from *Finnegans Wake*, with footnotage rising like water in a sinking ship. The presence of Beckett and Joyce cause me to question: should they even be in a book that purports to cover "modern poetry," and if so, shouldn't they be represented by their pathbreaking writing? An insight of Hugh Kenner's is useful to bring in here. In his essay, "The Making of the Modernist Canon,"[9] he cites F.R. Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1931) as the first attempt to canonize Hopkins, Eliot, and Pound, and then points out that Leavis's subsequent dismissal of Eliot and Joyce was based on an ignorance of two things of great scope: 1) the unprecedented interdependence of prose Modernism and verse Modernism, and 2) awareness that the English language, by 1931, had split four ways, leaving English natives in control of but a fraction. Kenner proposes that by 1925, three countries—Ireland, America, England—were conducting substantial national literatures and that by mid-century there was a fourth center, "locatable in books but on no map: International Modernism." For Kenner, the four masterpieces of Modernism are *Ulysses, The Waste Land*, the first 30 *Cantos*, and *Waiting for Godot* (two Americans—two Irishmen—no Englishmen). Kenner's "split" illuminates the extent to which the energy of the new had left geographical England. Like Leavis, the NAMP appears to be ignorant of this development (in 1988).

In my view, if one adds Post-Modernism, there is a fifth split-off, as of 1949, the year of "The Kingfishers." Or we could say that International

Modernism turns out to have a much wider thrust in time and space than Kenner calculates. Whether one sees Post-Modernism as a distinct "new wave" of Modernism, or the two as facets of International Modernism, one thing is clear: the movement is not confined to the English language alone. If we agree with Kenner regarding the interdependence of prose and verse, then sections of *Ulysses* and *Waiting for Godot* are prime candidates for a text that addresses the "split" English language. If we acknowledge that the domain of International Modernism is a "floating world" of the imagination, then we may salute 1922 not only as the year of Eliot's and Joyce's masterpieces, but also of Vallejo's *Trilce* and Rilke's *The Duino Elegies*. And with these two new additions, we may also agree that any representative International Modernism text would also have to represent the likes of Breton, Césaire, Artaud, Mayakofsky, Mandelstam, Cendrars, Neruda, Paz, Celan, Radnoti, Holan, Lorca, Borges, and Genet. To do so would be to shrink the English-language list to only those writers who have made genuinely innovative contributions to International Modernism. What a grand book—or two books—it could be. All of the above have been by now, at least in part, excellently translated. My guess is that the phenomenon could be displayed in a NAMP-sized book, and were they to spend a year with it, students might well emerge with a revolutionarily complete sense of the diversity and range of twentieth-century writing.

While I believe that such a book might be possible by the end of the century, it still does not seem just around the corner, and until we get to it, there are a couple of lesser but quite meaningful American anthology projects (I am not going to argue here against anthologies per se; while I don't currently use them myself, I know that thousands of professors do, and will continue to; I propose instead that they be offered something more dynamic than the anthologies that are available right now).

1. An expanded and updated version of Don Allen's *The New American Poetry* (1960)[10]—a book that would cover 1960 to 1990. Besides poets whose work began to appear in this period, it might resourcefully contain advances by writers who broke new ground earlier. The fact that no book like this exists now shows to what extent the NAMP and its kin dominate the poetry textbook anthology market.

2. An expanded and updated version of the Leary/Kelly *Controversy of Poets* (1965). It would be very interesting for students to have twenty pages of the best Olson set side by side with twenty pages of the best Lowell, etc., in such a way that the cards were not stacked in favor of one writer against another.

Until such books appear, the anthology atmosphere is grim indeed. For the NAMP, the sun rose and set a long time ago, leaving poets in a kind of changeless Scandinavian winter light. As we sit at our desks, a figure shuffles by our window daily with Kantian regularity. It is the spectre of Philip Larkin, intoning:

Give me your arm, old toad;
Help me down Cemetery Road.

■

Notes

1. The bracketed numbers are the number of pages given a specific author in the NAMP. I include opening and closing pages even though they may not be full pages. Such page allotments clearly represent the NAMP hierarchy (Yeats at 55 is 21 pages more than Williams at 34—with 3 pages, Edwin Honig, Bernard Spencer, and Beckett are the low—the average allotment must be around 10 pages). Contemporary American poets with 10 pages or more are: Merrill, Howard, Rich, Everson, Brooks, Wilbur, Levertov, Koch, Ammons, Ginsberg, Ashbery, Wright, Walcott, Wakoski, Harper, Pinsky, Soto, Dove, and Song.

2. Kalstone is quoted here probably because along with Patricia B. Wallace he was co-editor of the "American Poetry Since 1945" section of the 1989 *Norton Anthology of American Literature* (Third Edition, Volume 2). While there is, because of understandable space limitations, less post WW II American poetry in the NAAL than in the NAMP, someone—Wallace perhaps—has added Niedecker, a couple of late *Maximus* poems, Duncan's "Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar," Creeley's "The Finger," and Snyder's "The Blue Sky." Although the overview of post WW II poetry is essentially that of the NAMP, such additions are a start in offering a more realistic picture of the period's innovations. However, on the back of the volume, as part of the blurb material announcing changes and amplifications, we find the following line: "Poets of the 'Objectivist school'—Lorine Niedecker, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley." When it comes to the avant-garde, it is as if Norton can never get things right.

3. What the Introduction does not tell the reader is that these "long poems" are 138, 190, 175, and 270 lines long, not even "middle length" poems by current long poems standards. This is a typical NAMP maneuver, to identify and at the same time utterly misrepresent a genre. We live in an era that includes Zukofsky's 803-page *A*, Olson's 634-page *The Maximus Poems*, and Kelly's 415-page *The Loom*.

4. "A History of American Poetry Anthologies," in *Canons*, ed. Robert von Hallberg, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984, p. 302.

5. In 1928 Robert Graves and Laura Riding published *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies* a 200-page book that, while dated, is very well written and filled with pithy observations that are still pertinent. Here is their paragraph on "taste": "The greater the integrity of the private anthology, particularly when the author is a well-known poet, the more dangerous it is when put on the market: by its publication it appears to be an act of criticism instead of a mere expression of taste. Taste is the judgment an individual makes of a thing according to its fitness in his private scheme of life. Criticism is the judgment that an individual makes of a thing according to its fitness to itself, its excellence as compared with things like itself, regardless of its application to his private scheme of life. With taste, a poem is good because it is liked; with criticism, it is good because it is good. Now, it is not objectionable for a person who has not sufficient originality to make his own criticism to accept another's; for criticism, unlike taste, which is arbitrary opinion, can be tested. The criticism of one person thus accepted can become another person's taste. But for one person to accept another's taste deprives the former of self-respect. Our charge against anthologies is, then, that they have robbed the poetry-reading public of self-respect."

6. I am indebted to Jerome Rothenberg's *Revolution of the Word* (Seabury Press, New York, 1974—now out of print) for a mapping of American avant-garde poetry between the two World Wars. Some of these writers also appear in the Rothenberg/Quasha *America a Prophecy* anthology (Random House, New York, 1973—also out of print), which displays an even larger dimension of poetic activity. The current teaching anthologies offer little or no indication that the poetic spirit is originally, and essentially, bound up with song, dance, and ritual, and that for tribal societies it is communal and central to the life view of all involved.

7. I have focused on American poets in this regard because while NAMP makes gestures to Canadian, Irish, and Australian poetry, the anthology is essentially about American poetry with English poetry presented as a kind of "curtailing angel" around American writing. I should point out, however, that the NAMP gives no indication of any innovative non-American based poetry after Lawrence, Bunting, and MacDiarmid. A more complete "omission list" would have to include such non-American poets as Peter Redgrove, Jeremy Prynne, Allen Fisher, Pierre Joris, Daphne Marlatt, Steve McCaffrey, BP Nichol, Roy Fisher, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Tom Raworth, Edward Brathwaite, and Kofi Awoonor, among others.

8. Hugh Kenner's remarks on the New Criticism in his "The Making of the Modernist Canon" (*Mazes*, North Point Press, San Francisco, 1989, p. 38) contextualize O'Clair's classroom activities: "It was in 1947, under Marshall McLuhan's informal tutelage, that I first became aware of my own century. Such a lag was perhaps possible only in Canada. By then an American movement called the New Criticism was enjoying its heyday. Like most critical stirrings on this self-improving continent, it was almost wholly a classroom movement. Stressing as it did Wit, Tension, and Irony, it enabled teachers to say classroom things about certain kinds of poems. Donne was a handy poet for its purposes; so tentative and an ironist. But when Pound was working in his normal way, by lapidary *statement*, New Critics could find nothing whatsoever to say about him. Since 'Being-able-to-say-about' is a pedagogic criterion, he was largely absent from a canon pedagogues were defining. So was Williams, and wholly. What can Wit, Tension, Irony enable you to say about 'The Red Wheelbarrow'? 'So much depends . . .,' says the poem, and seems to *mean* it; for a New Critic that was too naive for words. I can still see Marshall chucking aside a mint copy of *Paterson I*, with the words 'pretty feeble.' "

9. "The Making of the Modernist Canon," pp. 31-34.

10. Allen's anthology was updated, with the help of George Butterick, as *The Post-Moderns* (Grove Press, New York, 1982). Rothenberg argues in a review of the new version (*Sulfur* #6, 1983, pp. 181-90), that it is not successful. Not only are a number of significant individual poets left out, but according to Rothenberg many of the new "alternative poetic strategies. . . ." "Concrete & Visual Poetry, The New Performance Poetry, The 2nd or 3rd Generation New York School, The New Black Poetry, Indian Poetry, Latino Poetry, The 'Language' Poets, and The Poem in Prose: The 'New Sentence' (R. Silliman)" are not included.