

Preface

Poetics, the theoretical and practical study of poetry, is among the oldest disciplines in the West, one of those founded by Aristotle along with ethics, logic, and political science. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* is the comprehensive guide to this rich field. This edition of the *Encyclopedia* significantly develops the past three editions of 1965, 1974, and 1993. Of the more than 1,100 articles, some incorporate and expand their antecedents in those editions, bringing their topics into the present with fresh scholarship and new perspectives. Some 250 entries are entirely new, in response to the changes that poetry and poetics have undergone in the last twenty years. Most articles on major topics have been not only made current but reconceived, in most cases to accommodate a closer attention to poetics. The scope of the *Encyclopedia* has always been worldwide, concerning (as the original editors put it) the history, theory, technique, and criticism of poetry from earliest times to the present.

The Plan of the Encyclopedia

The solid foundation of the previous editions has offered us the opportunity to enhance coverage without compromising the traditional attention to European and especially English-language poetry and poetics. This edition expands coverage of international poetics, avant-gardes and movements, and the many phenomena, from cognitive poetics to poetry slams to digital poetry that have gained momentum since 1993. Latin America, East and South Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe are represented here by an infusion of new entries and specialist contributors who present not only the broad canvas of national and regional literary history but the granular detail of informed scholarship.

For instance, to complement the general article on the poetry of the United States, new entries address such topics as the Black Mountain school, the Fireside poets, confessional poetry, and the San Francisco Renaissance. Spanish America is represented by a general essay on the hemispheric tradition in poetry as well as by discrete entries on the poetics of Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Chile, and many other countries. And both sets of articles converse with an authoritative new entry on the poetry of the indigenous Americas, which is in

turn augmented by pieces on Guaraní, Inuit, and Navajo poetics, among others. Asian poetry and poetics receive substantial new investments in critical discussion, notably in entries concerning the popular poetry of China, Chinese poetic drama, the influential tenth-century Japanese collection known as the *Kokinshū*, and the poetry of Cambodia, among others. The coverage of India now involves not only a general entry on the poetry of the subcontinent but many more articles on the history and tradition of poetic forms and styles in various languages from Hindi to Gujarati to Sanskrit. Africa and Eastern Europe see a new measure of attention to countries, languages, movements, and styles.

This wave of locality and specificity changes the character of the *Encyclopedia*, and brings into the book a wide-ranging cast of contributors, new approaches, and topics of different dimensions. It permitted us to reduce the size and scope of many of the larger entries on national poetics. Free of the obligation to define every episode and movement, the authors of articles on topics such as the poetry of England or the poetry of Spain have been encouraged to delineate a literary history in bold strokes; their narratives are complemented by new items on the particular histories of such topics as Georgianism and neo-Gongorism, respectively. The perspectives of omnibus entries on the poetry of Spanish America or of India still have an important place in this edition, offering the reader both a wide view and a close focus.

Moreover, we have challenged the tacit assumption of many handbooks that general poetic terms may be treated through English-language examples only. A large number of general entries here are written by scholars of poetics other than English—a Hispanist on pastoral, a scholar of the French Renaissance on epideixis, a Persianist on panegyric.

The *Encyclopedia* includes five kinds of entries: terms and concepts; genres and forms; periods, schools, and movements; the poetics of nations, regions, and languages; and poetry in relation to other cultural forms, disciplines, and social practices such as linguistics, religion, and science. It does not contain entries on poets or works, but discusses these in the context of the larger topics to which they are related. While the A-to-Z format tends to obscure the integrity of these five

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categories, each one entails certain obligations and challenges.

Terminology makes for one of the most technically exacting aspects of the project. The *Encyclopedia* remains the authoritative source for brief definitions of particular terms or expansive treatments of broad topics, such as the exhaustive treatment of rhyme. Entries on concepts such as structuralism or speech act theory are designed to engage with poetry over other kinds of literature or writing. This category is home to transhistorical terms such as cento, eclogue, and *gai saber*; fundamental topics in the history of criticism such as emotion and imagination; and critical concepts of wide application such as ethnopoetics and organicism. From its entries one could assemble a history of ideas in and about poetry.

The rubrics of genre and form often shade into one another, but at the same time they tend to follow complementary logics of openness and limitation, respectively. Most entries on genres, such as those on the *alba* and the *paraclausithyron*, follow the evolution of their objects to the present day, while many entries on forms locate them in their original settings of language, epoch, and culture. Nonetheless, the reader will encounter a number of entries that do both, as well as bracing new essays on the concepts of genre and form.

Coverage of periods, schools, and movements has been deepened for this edition, both as a category in itself and within the other categories. For example, postmodern poetry of the United States entails new entries on (among other topics) projective verse, composition by field, Language poetry, and absorption, some contributed by poet-critics in the tradition of William Carlos Williams's entry on the "variable foot" for the 1965 edition. Again, the focus is on poetics. Our entry on naturalism, skewed toward the poetic application of that concept, is very different from an article of the same title in a handbook of general literary criticism or theory.

The fourth category, the poetics of nations, regions, and languages, is a customary strength of the *Encyclopedia*; many readers have found the past editions a reliable source for introductions to unfamiliar literatures. In this edition we have tried to devise topics that accommodate the histories of national poetics while taking account of local or transnational differences, and that follow languages out of national borders. The results for our nomenclature are described below. Multiple language traditions found within a nation or region are treated as much as is practical, though never fully enough to trace the poetic complexity of modern, multicultural societies.

Finally, the articles concerned with poetry in relation to disciplines, culture, and society—for titles, such entries often take the form of "religion and poetry" or "science and poetry"—have been focused on the implications for the history of poetry as opposed to history in a more general sense. (Depending on the topic and the contributor's approach, some conceptual entries draw a relation to poetics rather than to poetry: thus "anthropology and poetry" but "linguistics and poetics.") From these articles, one could build a history of poetry's relations to the intellectual and cultural world at large.

Of course, these five rubrics are provisional, and many items could move among them. All of the main categories now include entries that reflect on category making, such as "colonial poetics" and "national poetry." A longstanding rubric, "Western poetics," has been answered not by a corresponding omnibus entry for the non-Western world but by new articles on Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, and other poetics. Many items are tacitly engaged with one another and might be read in counterpoint (e.g., "criticism," "interpretation," and "hermeneutics," or "imitation," "mimesis," and "representation"); some of these, such as the new set called "poetry as artifact," "poetry as fiction," "poetry as information," and "poetry as knowledge," make a sweeping overview of complementary approaches. (Several other entries continue that overview under various titles: poetry as commodity in "Frankfurt school" and as object of faith in "belief and poetry," and the several entries on terms such as "poem," "text," and "work.") And many important items, such as "politics and poetry," "postcolonial poetics," and of course "poetry," straddle the divisions of the book.

As every reader will notice, this book has been conceived to enable cross-coverages and contradictions insofar as these facts register the current condition of poetry studies. The significance of Whitman or Ḥāfīz, the idea of poetic genius, and the continuing implications of the New Criticism are too multifarious to fit into one or two entries. The reader will find these and many other topics in several articles, often from the perspectives of distinctive fields or interests. An index, the first in the history of the *Encyclopedia*, makes such collations part of the experience of this book.

As the fourth edition of a book that has been in print since 1965, this project carries its history within itself; many entries include the names of past contributors whose entries have been augmented and brought up to date. Every item in the 1993 edition was evaluated by the team of editors.

Some were dropped, while many more were assigned to readers and prospective contributors who were invited to assess the received material. In some cases an old entry stands on its substance while requiring only a new bibliography, which the editors have provided. In others, we publish a collaboration between past and present contributors that could take place only between the covers of this *Encyclopedia*. The majority of articles, and nearly all of the most prominent ones, have been entirely reconceived by new contributors.

Some six years in the making, this project is also the portrait of a discipline—the worldwide field of poetry studies—in the process of development. It attempts to address the permanent questions in the field, such as the nature of the poetic, while giving some attention to topics that seem to belong to the present and the near future, such as conceptual writing and documentary poetics; it also involves a decided effort on the editors' part to devote resources to topics, such as exegetical interpretation and archetypal criticism, that are currently unfashionable but seem likely to be revived in new manners. No doubt in twenty years the values of this fourth edition will appear in a historical light, but in any case we have chosen both to acknowledge and to transcend the present moment as far as possible. Finally, however, such a project can be only what its population of authors—a cross-section of scholars of poetry around the world—want it to be.

The Conventions of the Fourth Edition

One of the longstanding strengths of the *Encyclopedia* is its coverage of the poetics of the world. The present edition attempts to make a distinction between poetics that are based in nations or territories and those that are based in language, international cultures, or diasporas—no doubt sometimes an ambiguous difference, but nonetheless one that seems worth making. The entry on the poetry of France is discrete from those on the various francophone poetics of Africa, Canada, or the Caribbean, while Persian poetry is best approached as a single topic with international ramifications. The “poetry of England” and the “poetry of the United States” as topics are preferable to “English” or “American” poetry, with their uncertain but expansive outlines. In its coverage of the British Isles, the former entry is complemented by articles on Welsh, Scottish, and Irish poetics, while the latter is cross-referenced to companion pieces on U.S. poetics wholly or partly in other languages that can claim their own fields of study,

such as French-language, Chicana/o, and Asian American poetry. An entry such as “German poetry” takes a linguistic rather than a national approach, but is complemented by entries on Austria, Switzerland, and the Low Countries that follow geopolitical contours and discuss discrete languages within those outlines. In many cases the contributors made the final determination of what to call their entries, which no doubt produces some asymmetries that reflect the differences in the fields represented here.

For example, Walther von der Vogelweide, a poet who wrote in Middle High German, is treated in “German poetry” as the first important political poet in the language, in “poetry of Austria” for his residence in Vienna and service to Duke Frederick I, in “Minnesang” and “Spruchdichtung” for his generic affiliations, in “Meistersinger” for his influence—and in “biography and poetry” as the subject of one of the first biographies of a medieval poet. The result is a comprehensive, multivocal account of many of the signal events in world poetry, from the Occitan troubadours to the *modernismo* of Rubén Darío to the visual and material poetics of the past fifty years.

Translations are generally given within parentheses, without quotation marks if no other words appear in the parenthetical matter, but set off within quotation marks when some qualification is needed, as in the form of many etymologies: e.g., *arsis* and *thesis* (Gr., “raising and lowering”). Translated titles generally appear in the most comprehensive articles, such as those on national poetics or important developments such as “modernism”; entries of smaller scope often give original titles without translation, although contributors have the discretion to translate titles where it clarifies the argument to do so. (We tolerate inconsistency that reflects to some degree the field at hand: thus some major entries, such as “baroque” or “Renaissance poetics,” do not translate titles at all; others such as “love poetry” give only translated titles.) Translated titles of books are given in italics when the title refers to an actual English translation: e.g. the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli's *Vepkhis tqaosani* (*The Man in the Panther's Skin*). For poems, translated titles are given with quotation marks when the translation has been published under that title, but without quotation marks when the translated title is ad hoc.

This convention sometimes entails reproducing a non-literal rendering that appears in a published translation, such as Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante* as *Life of Dante*, or the Guatemalan poet Otto René Castillo's *Vámonos patria a caminar* as

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Let's Go! We believe that the value of indicating an extant translation outweighs the occasional infelicity. At the same time, it is likely we have overlooked some published translations, and many new ones will appear over the life of this book.

Dates of the lives and works of poets and critics often appear in the most comprehensive entries on a given topic (e.g. a regional entry such as “poetry of the Low Countries” or a major movement such as “poststructuralism”), showing up less often as topics become narrower. Dates of works in the age of print refer to publication unless otherwise indicated.

Articles contain two types of cross-references: those that appear within the body of an entry (indicated with asterisks or in parentheses with small capitals), and those that follow an entry, just before the bibliographies. If the former are often topics that extend the fabric of the definition at hand, the latter often indicate adjacent topics of broader interest. Of course, both kinds of cross-reference hold out the danger of infinite connection: nearly every entry could be linked to many others, and the countless usages of terms such as *line*, *metaphor*, and *poetics* cannot all be linked to the entries concerned with those terms. Accordingly we have tried to apply cross-references judiciously, indicating where further reading in a related entry really complements the argument at hand.

The bibliographies are intended as guides to relevant scholarship of the distant and recent past, not only as lists of works cited in the entries. The bibliographies have been lightly standardized, but some entries—say, those that narrate the development of a field—gain from citing works of scholarship in their original iterations (John Crowe Ransom’s essay “Criticism, Inc.” in its first appearance in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* of 1937) or in their original languages—while many others choose to cite later editions or translations into English as a convenience for the reader.

The deliberately limited standardization of the volume allows the reader to observe the conditions and assumptions that are native to each national literature, topic, or approach represented: something as fundamental as what “classical” or “hermeticism” means, or as technical as where one finds an important essay by Roman Jakobson, may appear differently at several places in the book. One might learn a great deal by noticing these facts—in effect, by interpreting the *Encyclopedia* itself as a living document of the discipline that unites us across languages, periods, and methods, namely the study of poetry and poetics.

The State of the Field

As a discipline, poetics is undergoing a renewal. In the past it was sometimes conceived as an antiquarian field, a vehicle for broadly theoretical issues in literature, or a name for poets’ reflections on their practice. Recently, however, the discipline has turned more explicitly toward historical and cross-cultural questions. In the United States, research groups on poetics at several universities have contributed to this momentum, as have digital projects that render the materials of historical and international poetics readily available and make new kinds of conversation possible. Ventures such as this *Encyclopedia*, new and old at once, contribute to this conversation by introducing scholars to one another, by opening local topics to comparative attention, and most of all by providing information and perspective.

For two generations *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* has been the common property of the worldwide community of poetry scholars. We are proud to bring it, renewed, to another generation.