

THE BOOK AS OBJECT AND CONCEPT IN AMERICAN POETRY AFTER MODERNISM



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Author

Jennings, Chelsea

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that the printed book—as a unit of meaning, a sculptural and visual object, and a consumer good—has been important to American poetry after modernism, and in particular to writers who directly engage the materiality of language in their poetry. In postwar poetry criticism, the “material text” is much discussed but often remains abstract: an emphasis on language as a medium tends to eclipse the literal sense in which texts are made of matter. This dissertation contends that in American poetry a self-consciousness about the materiality of language has been intimately related to experiments with the physical features of the book. It focuses on the work of four poets—Ezra Pound, Jack Spicer, Susan Howe, and Anne Carson—who exemplify this dual interest in materiality, and who, because they move beyond the isolated lyric toward book-length compositions, also implicate the conceptual force of “the book” in their poetry. The dissertation's first section, “Production,” is situated in the small press printing revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. Its chapters on Pound and Spicer demonstrate how the material features of book-objects (including paper, binding, typography, and images) point to production and distribution contexts and, in so doing, to larger systems of literary and economic value that become an interpretive framework for reading the poetry these books contain. The second section, “Reproduction,” turns to recent texts by Howe and Carson that exploit for aesthetic purposes the slippage between the reproducible visual features of the page and the non-transferrable material features of the book. As such, these texts challenge conventional definitions of textuality and highlight the visual and haptic potential of the printed book in the digital age. Together these sections suggest that the printed book has been, and continues to be, a key site for extending the available conditions of possibility for American poetry.

URI

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Modernism in literature is synonymous with literary modernism or modernist literature. Although many critics disagree on the origin and “death” of literary modernism, almost all of them agree that it enjoyed its peak during the years 1910-1925. It began in France, spread to England and America and finally came back to Europe. Although many critics disagree on the origin and “death” of literary modernism, almost all of them agree that it enjoyed its peak during the years 1910-1925. Literary Movements in Modernism. The term “modernism” refers to a genre in art and literature that makes a self-conscious break with the previous genres and traditional style of writing; it expresses new sensibilities of the time. Modernity is a period in human history, roughly from the enlightenment (late 18th century and early 19th century) marked by the division of the religious and the secular, the increasing mechanization of the world, the rise of industrial capitalism, the increased role of the state, the increased regulation of time and space, and the discourses of emancipation of women, working classes. Etc. It may be taken to refer to a Euro- American trend in literature of 1920's with the works of James Joyce, T.S.Eliot, Hilda Doolittle, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett and Ezra Pound. The literature of the time Post-modern art and criticism, however, challenge modernism's adherence to an ideology of artistic autonomy, individual expression, and the elitist splitting off of art from mass culture and everyday life. The concern of post-modern art and criticism is to “decenter” and to unfix these rationalist, humanist assumptions about what is “natural” or essential. The actuality of the investigation is in the lack of studies dedicated to the study of American postmodernism in literature and the development, peculiarities of postmodern literature itself. As we know modernism and Modernism in Literature does not mean contemporary. In fact, modernism encompasses works of the early 20th century. Read more about this literary movement. Modernist authors felt betrayed by the war, believing the institutions in which they were taught to believe had led the civilized world into a bloody conflict. They no longer considered these institutions as reliable means to access the meaning of life, and therefore turned within themselves to discover the answers. [caption id="attachment_130648" align="aligncenter" width="640"] Modernism is just one recent literary movement[caption] Their antipathy towards traditional institutions found its way into their writing, not just in content Literary modernism, or modernist literature, has its origins in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, mainly in Europe and North America, and is characterized by a self-conscious break with traditional ways of writing, in both poetry and prose fiction. Modernists experimented with literary form and expression, as exemplified by Ezra Pound's maxim to “Make it new.” This literary movement was driven by a conscious desire to overturn traditional modes of representation and express the new sensibilities