



THE NEW  
**AMERICAN  
POETRY**

FIFTY YEARS LATER

Edited by **John R. Woznicki**

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## The New American Poetry



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# The New American Poetry

*Fifty Years Later*

John R. Woznicki

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## CHAPTER ONE



# *The New American Poetry: Fifty Years Later*

*John R. Woznicki*

I am happy to introduce you to this collection of critical essays on Donald Allen's 1960 seminal anthology, *The New American Poetry*, an anthology that Marjorie Perloff called in her 1995 essay, "the fountainhead of radical American poetics."<sup>1</sup>

As you may have recognized, Allen's anthology has reached its fiftieth anniversary, providing a unique time for reflection and reevaluation of this preeminent anthology. *The New American Poetry* is referred to in every literary history of post-World War II American poetry. As we know, Allen's anthology was radical in the sense of bringing about change—it was the first to widely distribute the poetry and theoretical positions of poets such as Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg and the Beats, and it was the first to categorize these poets by the schools (Black Mountain, New York School, San Francisco Renaissance, and the Beats) by which we know them today. Over the course of fifty years, one might agree that this categorization of poets into schools has become one of the major, if not only way, that *The New American Poetry* is remembered or valued; one certain goal of our collection is to, in some way, "pry The New American Poetry out from the hoary platitudes that have encrusted it."<sup>2</sup>

Since the publication of both Allen's original anthology and his updated edition, *The Postmoderns*, there have been a few major critical treatments of *The New American Poetry*, considered as a whole, most notably by Alan Golding (*From Outlaw to Classic* and "The New American Poetry Revisited, Again"), Marjorie Perloff (briefly, in a number of her works, but more markedly in her essay, "Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the

Nineties”), and Jed Rasula (*The American Poetry Wax Museum*). To this point critics mostly have examined *The New American Poetry* as an anthology; former treatments of *The New American Poetry* look at it intently as a whole. Though the almost singularly focused study of its construction and, less often, reception has lent a great deal of documented, highly visible and debated material in which to consider, we have been left with certain notions about its relevance that have become imbued ultimately in the collective critical consciousness of postmodernity.

With all due respect to these critics and their touchstone pieces, which have proven to be invaluable in our certain understanding of *The New American Poetry*, our volume, however, goes beyond the analysis of construction and reception and attempts something distinctive, extending those former treatments by treading on the paths they create. This book aims to discover another sense of “radical” that Perloff articulated—rather than a radical that departs markedly from the usual, we invite consideration of *The New American Poetry* that is radical in the sense of root, of harbouring something fundamental, something inherent, as we uncover and trace further elements correlated with its widespread influence over the last fifty years.

We might begin with Perloff, who in her book *21st-Century Modernism* sees the poets and poetry of Allen’s anthology as continuing the line of avant-garde work that had begun in modernity.<sup>3</sup> Allen’s “modest” anthology is a beginning point for a conceptual examination of anthologies. Allen offers a comparative study of mostly warring anthologies who attempt, like *The New American Poetry*, to be the definitive anthology of its day.<sup>4</sup> Even so, these contemporary anthologies suffer from the “malaise of the midcentury” where, implied by Perloff, an ineffectual struggle ensues as to what and who to include, ending with Perloff’s proposition of a model anthology, as one “admit[ing] to a degree of provisionality” that inevitably may resemble Peter Gizzi’s *Exact Change Yearbook No. 1: 1995*.<sup>5</sup> As a result, such anthologies can no longer claim to evolve from a simpler environment in 1960 where the raw can separate itself from the cooked, the anti-academic from the academic.<sup>6</sup>

*The New American Poetry* does indeed attempt to set itself apart from what was perceived to be the stronghold of taste held by academe, thereby positioning itself as an “aesthetically revisionist anthology.”<sup>7</sup> Alan Golding reminds us that in the construction of *The New American Poetry*,<sup>8</sup> the milieu was not as simply defined by a desire for something new and a clear path toward reaching whatever new was. The process is complicated by the very notion of newness and, for example, what was considered to be anti-academic (versus perhaps what some thought of as scholarly).<sup>9</sup> Golding’s valuable archival work into Allen’s letters reveals great vacillation on

“evolving ambitions, contents and organization” of the volume,<sup>10</sup> such as whether to include modernist precursors and “continuers,”<sup>11</sup> and the competing influences of poets such as Charles Olson and Robert Duncan, for starters, which shaped the final version.<sup>12</sup> Golding goes on to reveal the conflicts between the expressed groups of the edition, most notably between the Black Mountain and San Francisco poets.<sup>13</sup> Golding also adduces the exclusion of African American poets writing at the time<sup>14</sup> as well as the conflict between Allen and the female poets such as Joanne Kyger who thought themselves worthy to be included and the prevailing male poetic.<sup>15</sup> All of these insights are valuable and interesting and all shed a light on the politics of anthology making in general and for this specific one, in particular.

When Golding does focus on the anthology’s reception, admittedly briefly near the end of his essay, he brings up a valuable point: that contemporary readers continue to define *The New American Poetry*’s identity as early critics did, by what he calls the negative mirror critique.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, *The New American Poetry* is unable to shed the simplistic view that it is merely an oppositional anthology, one whose value only rests in its “Anti” (largely anti-academic stance) and therefore does not or cannot formulate a positive identity separate from its oppositional claim. Here Golding suggests that “all resistance becomes merely reactive, shaped by its opposite, and indeed the critique itself can function as a way of denying cultural resistance any seriousness.”<sup>17</sup>

Yet many of us sense that this idea, though a valid one, cannot be solely true. That is, recent commentary that continues to focus on the anthology’s development (as if it is stuck in some neurotic, unrealized Lacanian stage) to the exclusion of everything else misses a unique opportunity. Certainly the groundwork that Rasula, Perloff, and Golding lay for us as they focus on the construction of the anthology, its reactive beginnings, its place in the historical and political process of anthologizing, and its indirect, almost reflective role in canon-formation, permit us to see *The New American Poetry* as a fully realized mature entity that can, and should, be seen as possessing generative powers. *The New American Poetry* has a positive identity, a primary progenitor of not just canon-fodder but also many new movements, styles, poets, etc. This book investigates not only how it was entirely shaped but also how it has shaped us, as critics, readers and students of poetry—shaped our identity. When we do look back at its construction, we are readers who have already been influenced by its contents. I would like for readers to see our volume as one that extends in greater fashion the study of *The New American Poetry*’s reception rather than construction, its positive rather than negative value, its proactive rather than reactive activity, a generative rather than a reflective work, and ultimately accepting its own self-exclaimed premise of its

being. *The New American Poetry* is a visionary anthology of our time with a vision that extends beyond the boundaries of opposition, one that has not only shaped the canon and continues to do so, but shaped a culture—of critics, students, readers and writers of poetry.<sup>18</sup>

To do so we consider not only the anthology but also the last fifty years of its existence, from matters exchanged in the anthology's conceptual stage to today. We look anew at archival evidence, reread significant poems in new ways, delve deeper into key relationships with key contributors, revise our view of the interactions among these poets to re-contextualize *The New American Poetry* with reference to precursors, contemporaries, successors, and the development of the poets included within it.

To start, Paul Cappucci's essay "Trying to Build on Their Elders' Work': The Correspondence of Donald Allen and William Carlos Williams" characterizes this correspondence in the two years prior to *The New American Poetry*'s publication. Cappucci's essay focuses on Williams's essay "Measure," which Allen sought to publish in *Evergreen Review* and considered for *The New American Poetry*. Cappucci's archival work is itself reflective in nature, offering further insight into Allen's decision-making process regarding the inclusion of an important precursor such as Williams. Moreover, Cappucci demonstrates, through a careful reading of "Measure," the level of influence Williams had on the New American poets, especially poets such as Gary Snyder who is not usually critically connected to Williams. Though Allen does identify Williams as the most important precursor poet in his introduction, Cappucci's essay implies through its argument how difficult a decision it must have been for Allen to exclude him, while explicitly leaving us with Williams's generative power he had on Allen and *The New American Poetry* poets, and with new legacies to consider.

With legacy in mind, Joshua Hoeynck's "Without a Mammalia Maxima" is an investigation of the interplay between two of the leading poets of *The New American Poetry*, Charles Olson and Robert Duncan, as Golding reminds us of their large parts played in shaping the volume. Hoeynck sees the correspondence between Olson and Duncan as producing a crucial, transformative outcome that, in time, most likely influenced the conceptual development of *The New American Poetry*. As a result, *The New American Poetry* might be seen as an epistemological pivot point for Olson and for the New American poets between an older, Poundian notion of history as the actions of great men and a newer, Whiteheadian notion of cosmos as an interpenetration of physical events and imagination unfolding in time. The essay presents Duncan as midwife to Olson's moving away from the Poundian concept and toward the Whiteheadian one, with Duncan's poem "Appre-

hensions” and the correspondence between them that surrounds it as a key event. A major outcome of this shift in Olson’s thinking was his resolve to drop the character of Maximus from the third volume of *The Maximus Poems* and, by implication, an impetus for Olson’s desire to leave the past behind regarding the direction of *The New American Poetry*, as outlined by Golding.

Terence Diggory’s essay, “Why *The New American Poetry* Stays News,” plots that future direction Olson may have indeed had in mind. Diggory reminds us of *The New American Poetry*’s generative, and thus lasting, quality as a dynamic collection that spoke to many constituents as it tackled, in broad form, the “how to write?” question. There is a subtle discussion of the issue of “intention” in *The New American Poetry*, moving from Olson’s dogmatic objective to the more materialist intentions found in many of the poets, thereby providing the background for the emergence of Language poetry. Diggory then goes on to consider how women poets have harvested linguistic “intentionality.” Despite the dearth of women poets in the anthology, *The New American Poetry* has proven extremely influential to subsequent generations of women poets like Kathleen Fraser, Alice Notley, and Anne Waldman. They have found value in an anthology that included only four women among forty-four contributors. Rather than finding reflections of themselves in the anthology, these female poets were drawn to new possibilities for writerly practice. Diggory ends his essay with a section on pedagogy, again to emphasize how *The New American Poetry* gave birth to writerly approaches to poetry in the classroom, and prompting us to acknowledge the overwhelming reception of *The New American Poetry* as, one might call, an “instructional” volume, especially on its native ground.

The theme of reception emerges again, albeit more globally, in Ben Hickman’s “A Big Kiss for Mother England.” Hickman’s essay summarizes the reception and influence of *The New American Poetry* in Great Britain, marking the first time since Whitman that U.S. poetry penetrated deeply into British literary circles. Hickman discusses the considerable impact the anthology had on the British avant-garde, which was in many ways liberatory and salutary. Hickman also raises some issues of polarization and “poetry wars” in Great Britain that were impossible to resolve. Ultimately, *The New American Poetry* helped legitimize a large body of poetry that countered the influence of the Movement poets of the 1950s and the poetry that followed in its conservative wake.

Just as Hickman’s essay orients the reader to the contributions of *The New American Poetry* to British poetry, Joe Moffet’s essay, “*The New American Poetry* and the Development of the Long Poem,” points out the contribution of *The New American Poetry* to the long poem as a genre. Moffett argues that



if the long poem is the measure of poetic ambition (in place of the epic) in American poetry after Whitman, then it is important to look at long poems by the New American poets to see how to value their contribution to American poetry. This essay explores a variety of long poems and a variety of types of long poems by major figures in *The New American Poetry*. Most of the poems discussed did not actually appear in the anthology. Even so, they represent extensions of the principles of the anthology into the most ambitious poems written by the poets. The essay argues for the success and variety of these poems, and thus implicitly for the generative success of *The New American Poetry*.

Megan Swihart Jewell's "Becoming Articulate: Kathleen Fraser and *The New American Poetry*" perhaps announces this volume's first suggestion of *The New American Poetry*'s potential *degenerative* impact. The apparent masculinity of the volume, in many ways, defined the paths of the avant-garde while virtually excluding the feminine principle. The poetic dictums of *The New American Poetry*'s emergent literary schools (as Diggory's essay discusses) instructed contemporary poets in ways of "how to write" while largely excluding radical women poets like Fraser who sought to write outside the gendered poetic narratives engendered by anthologies such as *The New American Poetry*. Innovative women poets have responded to their exclusion by struggling to "unravel their buried history" and to "become articulate," in part by resisting the gender bias and the group construction of poetics and language for which *The New American Poetry* was known.

David Herd's essay "In the Dawn that is Nowhere": *The New American Poetry* and the State of Exception" anticipates, in theme, a condition of "exception" that also addresses the gender and racial make-up of the contributors to *The New American Poetry*. Herd adduces Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as an analog, in that the work permeated global culture at the time, leading states and nations to homogenize culture and standardize reality through totalitarian practices of exclusion and "conglomeration." Despite Allen's claim to the contrary, his practice as editor did not match the deliberate action toward inclusiveness that Arendt demanded, geo-politically, and in what *The New American Poetry* poets actually practiced poetically. Although the poets in *The New American Poetry* were culturally aware and politically active, led by Olson, they sought a "new stance toward reality" in their deliberate attempt to address the mid-century crisis of nation-hood and, in Herd's view, "articulat[ed] a significant challenge to the assumption of a relation between the practices of art and the apparatuses of the nation-state."

Other critics, as well, have noted the influence of universal cultural phenomenon of the mid-century on the formation of the anthology and the ac-

tivity of its poets. Peter Middleton fashions an argument that focuses on the later companion anthology to *The New American Poetry*, *New Writing in the USA*, which Donald Allen and Robert Creeley produced as a lens for looking more closely at *The New American Poetry*. In the later anthology's slight revision—which includes prose as well as poetry—there was a chance for the editors to reassess the principles of *The New American Poetry*. Middleton points out that the two introductory essays to *New Writing in the USA* are more explicit about the criteria for anthologization, and so they address more directly some of the tacit assumptions at work in *The New American Poetry*. In particular, Creeley focuses on the issue of how poetry responds to the increasingly scientific culture of America, and draws attention to the degree of interest in the sciences in *The New American Poetry* group. Middleton employs this altered perspective on *The New American Poetry* to notice just how much the poets are interested in such issues. He concludes that, although the alignment with the radical politics of liberation poetics is the main cause of *The New American Poetry*'s success, the repeated engagement with the issues raised by the increasing scientization of American culture is another reason for its continuing relevance.

In this light, Seth Forrest considers a scientific experimental investigation of phenomena as a topic and as a critical methodology in his essay “Aural-ity and Literacy” which reflects on the “aural” aspects of *The New American Poetry*, as aided by technology such as the tape recorder. Using techniques such as acousmatic listening, Forrest interprets tape recordings of a number of poems from *The New American Poetry*, and demonstrates how the listening of poets to their own recordings became an element in the composition of the poems. In this sense, recording is transformed from a means for preserving a performance for posterity into an active element in the composition of a poem. The essay makes the point that the New American poets offer an incredibly rich and barely attended to archive of sound performances, now easily available for critical consideration through online streaming. What we learn in part is “how audio recordings have added to the literal textual condition with which editors and scholars need to engage.” The principles of recording and the habits of listening are instrumental in understanding the New American poetry.

Like Forrest's essay, Burt Kimmelman's “*The New American Poetry*'s Objectivist Legacy: Linguistic Skepticism, the Signifier, and Material Language” brings us into and keeps us in the twenty-first century. The essay offers us a poet-critic's perspective of the success of and variety contained within what he calls the neo-Objectivist movement that was launched by *The New American Poetry*. Kimmelman moves from Ron Silliman's well-known essay,

“Third Phase Objectivism,” to recognize not only one trajectory of neo-objectivism, Language poetry, but also to acknowledge a second trajectory. This includes poets Armand Schwerner, Michael Heller, Harvey Shapiro, and younger poets like Norman Finkelstein and Kimmelman himself, who hearken back to the Objectivists but have not felt the need to repudiate their immediate forbears as do the language poets. Kimmelman acknowledges a third group, to include Rachel Blau DuPlessis and John Taggart, who don’t fit easily into the two “schools.” However, like the others, they trace themselves from the older Objectivist poets through the mid-century *New American Poetry* poets and share the love of written language as a material phenomenon and a healthy skepticism toward the possible efficacy of language. In some important ways these neo-Objectivists have superseded their *New American Poetry* forbears. Kimmelman finally examines the most recent avant-garde movements in poetry, Flarf and Conceptual Poetry, both of which claim origins in Language poetry. As they are at once contextualized in *The New American Poetry*, these young poets apparently do not fully know why this lineage exists as it does.

Lastly, Carla Billitteri’s afterword shows *The New American Poetry* in both a retrospective and a prospective context. That is, Billitteri discusses *The New American Poetry* as both a historical chronicle and as a touchstone to influence future generations of poets—a “beginning” that might be read as an “implex” that carries with it, in Edward Said’s idea of the term, both the transitive and intransitive that interoperate at once. As our essayists focus on the anthology’s transitive aspects, Billitteri in her commentary looks at the intransitive, seeing the anthology closely resembling a Whiteheadian “prehension” that “respond[s] to the conditions of its own occasion” and produces, ultimately, an interconnected, self-reflexive and sustaining “society.”

Though Perloff and Golding’s reflections are important and influential parts of the “nexus of occasions” that function within Billitteri’s idea of the society that forms around *The New American Poetry*, it is Jed Rasula’s work, *The American Poetry Wax Museum*, with which this volume is more closely aligned and dialogues with most directly. Like Rasula, I would consider Allen’s original project more intransitive than transitive and have come to see our own project, this anthology of essays, more from this perspective as well. As stated on the book’s jacket, Rasula’s book is a long and appropriately meandering documentary, a study of “the canonizing assumptions and obsessions” that inform American poetry from 1940–1990. Rasula then separates from the prevailing assumptions on canon-making and goes further than Perloff and Golding in opening up a pathway for less-chartered exploration of *The New American Poetry*. Self-admittedly running between a literary

history and a polemic,<sup>19</sup> Rasula expounds on the dangers and detriments of anthologizing in general while citing *The New American Poetry* as a specific example of such hazardous terrain. He sees American poetry as “a matrix of lives lived, not a Jurassic Park of spectacular behemoths”<sup>20</sup> that the literary establishment attempts to make of our poetry, through activities such as anthology-making and canonization. Rasula alerts us of the trouble that ensues in such activities; he speaks of the “anthology war” between the academy-endorsed, “cooked” and “institutionalized” Hall-Pack-Simpson-edited *New Poets of England and America* and the rebelliously “raw” *The New American Poetry*. Rasula’s intention, however, as is ours, is neither to recreate “spectacular behemoths” nor to “rerun” the battle as it has been since the battle has begun, but to instead “readjust [ . . . ] stereotypes.”<sup>21</sup>

One such stereotype that Rasula readjusts as he carefully entertains the ideas of *The New American Poetry* poetry’s contributors is the idea that, in the rebellion, there is a certain and strategized abandonment of tradition. Rasula shows us in his reading of Creeley’s, Duncan’s and Gary Snyder’s ideas of poetics that their dedication to open form that “stresses form as a biological event,” commits them to a “decisively extraliterary sense of ‘tradition’.”<sup>22</sup> This custom of considering poetry as an extension of the human mind and of human experience has been practiced by the Romantics who have decidedly influenced those who followed—the demarcation, for some, of an American poetic tradition.<sup>23</sup> For Rasula, tradition is acknowledgment,<sup>24</sup> acknowledgment of something wider than what the academy proscribed in the days leading up to *The New American Poetry* and after, “a much vaster assembly now billowed into sight—borne aloft by renegade autodidacts.”<sup>25</sup> This breadth of scope, provoked by the idea of poetry as an extension of human experience, looks back into the past and takes into account the entirety of the world, anticipating Rasula’s final point in his section on the Anthology Wars that *The New American Poetry* demonstrated the “impetus” to “engage” an “enticing” world poetry whose “circumambient pressure [ . . . ] overflowed the boundaries of partisan squabbles.”<sup>26</sup>

Tradition in this sense is the acknowledgment of everything, everything human, as progenitors of our reality and its effects. This encompasses everything of this world, including that which does not yet exist but only in possibility. This acknowledgment includes the tension and conflict that Perloff, Golding, and Rasula reveal in their historical studies of American poetry of the mid-to-late twentieth century—a “dynamic volatility”<sup>27</sup> that, in essence, does not exclude but, instead, spins like a vortex, productively rather than destructively, to capture all within its path. Perhaps it is this tradition, this breadth of scope, which we might find that is radical in *The New American*

*Poetry*—a certain expanse that we are hesitant to acknowledge in something so circumscribed as an anthology.

As we have seen, anthologizing is a dangerous business. The capturing and collecting of work, whether artistic or critical, risks creating a Rasula-ian waxen shrine and further politicizing the poetic scene. It is in the light of dynamic volatility, however, with a further nod to Perloff's call for provisionality, that these essays are presented and held together in this anthology. *The New American Poetry* is part of our tradition, as a progressive, generative anthology with the dynamics to produce as an entity that spans and spawns human experience. We look back into the past, distant and recent, and are acknowledging in Rasula's sense only a fraction of some of *The New American Poetry's* effects.

In this sense then, I eschew formal categories for this book that may be construed as an attempt to politicize our findings. To speak to an inherent logic of organization would be futile, save the natural logic of time that we are guided by as humans. This book's essays therefore are presented in a loosely chronological fashion that initially address the pre-forming of the anthology and then progress toward more contemporary ideas. In this way too I wish to reflect that over the course of fifty or so years since *The New American Poetry's* initial publication, we should have neither the desire nor the ability to present here a comprehensive summary of critical thoughts on *The New American Poetry*. The very idea of being comprehensive ironically suggests adherence to a standard that *The New American Poetry* poets themselves would have rejected for being absurdly vain or narcissistic.

It is therefore my hope that such an edition will be seen as valuable in adding greatly to poetry scholarship today due to the monumental influence the original collection has had. This volume is a tribute to the endurance and resilience of Allen's anthology. Scholars to this day continue to find *The New American Poetry* and its poets still viable—the work still influential, the echoes still reverberating. I do believe that, in another fifty years, another collection of essays will mark the yet-to-be-conveyed and developed influences that this anthology will have on us as a centennial volume that will celebrate this anthology's contribution to poetry everywhere.

### Notes

1. Marjorie Perloff, "Whose New American Poetry? Anthologizing in the 90s," *Diacritics* 26, no. 3–4 (Fall-Winter 1996), 104.

2. Though the idea conveyed here, to reassess *The New American Poetry* for the sometimes misconstrued theoretical and practical legacy it has bequeathed, was a central provocateur in our mounting this project some seven years ago, I was com-

pelled to restate the words of an anonymous editorial reader who said it much more compellingly than I ever could.

3. Majorie Perloff, *21st-Century Modernism: The "New" Poetics*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).

4. It is worth noting that on the cover of the reprinted 1999 edition of *The New American Poetry* [see Donald Allen, ed. *The New American Poetry, 1945–60*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)], it claims it is THE visionary anthology that influenced two generations of readers, a claim that in part led to the creation of our book, as we seek in part the ways in which that claim may be substantiated. Perloff is right, I think, when she suggests *The New American Poetry* is the last anthology able to make a claim such as this, as we are able to in some extended qualitative way, track the influences.

5. Perloff, "Whose New American Poetry," 119.

6. What comes to mind when reading Perloff's essay is an analogy: the contemporary poetry anthology as a contemporary "big-box" supermarket or home improvement center that increases its shelf space to fit every brand of every product in order to appeal to the entirety of the marketplace. Often times in these stores the consumer feels overwhelmed by the amount of choice available; there is no inherent logic to the aisle structure or ordering of the "product" nor are there convenient maps available; and consequently there is no available help to guide the consumer in the right direction or, if guidance is available, the guide's knowledge is suspect. Stores such as these sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity, inherent value for the sake of low cost and thus a new value based on sheer size and volume (a bigger is better phenomena not foreign to contemporary consumer culture.) In this analogy, as I read Perloff, Allen's anthology is the supermarket of past times, where consumers feel more at ease with the shopkeeper's more modest selection and the explicit logic that guided his choices and more careful attention he pays to his customers. Perhaps, when we think of these stores of yesteryear (or, when encountered today, a specialty shop) we are more inclined to think of quality and more apt to place value in the actual wares, rather than in the cheapened junk purchased at the big-box store. The great irony that exists, of course, is that the big-box store passes in our society as being THE place to shop, whether conforming to the bigger-is-better philosophy or, if for no other reason, than there are few specialty shops in existence with which to compete.

7. Alan Golding, *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 30.

8. Golding admittedly focuses his attention in his essay "*The New American Poetry Revisited, Again*" on construction rather than reception. See Alan Golding, "*The New American Poetry Revisited, Again*," *Contemporary Literature* 39, no. 2 (1998): 182.

9. Allen himself tells us in his introduction to *The New American Poetry* that, one of the only organizing principles for the poetry contained in his anthology was that it was anti-academic: "one common characteristic: a total rejection of all those qualities typical of academic verse" (see Allen, *The New American Poetry*, xi). And yet Golding reminds us that the term academic as used by Allen here "tends to become

muddled”; there was debate as to what was meant by academic by the contributors themselves. Golding, at length, carefully unpacks the various views on the issue, noting the competition for Allen from Hall, Pack, and Simpson’s *New Poets of England and America*, the conflation of the terms academic and scholarly (and educated) by critics, the different views of what constitutes “academic” by poets like Olson, Duncan and Spicer, etc. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 200.

10. Golding’s main focus of his essay is to demonstrate the “instability” of the categories such as “anti-academic” that we have come to accept regarding *The New American Poetry* and to emphasize the “contingences and impurities” that make up the construction of this anthology. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 205.

11. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 187. Golding reveals the major influence Charles Olson had on how the volume came into its final shape, especially with regard to the exclusion of certain poetic forerunners and then-current “objectivist” practitioners: in his archival work, Golding reveals Olson’s now-famous statement made in a letter to Allen that “I wldn’t myself add either of those two units: either the ‘aunties’ or the grandpas.” Also, Paul Cappucci’s essay in this volume reveals William Carlos Williams’s correspondence with Allen and the factor it played in Allen’s thinking as well as the living influence Williams had on the anthology’s contributors.

12. Golding documents Olson’s explicit influence and, very astutely, portrays Duncan’s influence as transmitted through his initial resistance to Allen’s anthology, a resistance that Golding shows to be multi-faceted. Joshua Hoeynck’s essay in this volume explores the relationship between Duncan and Olson, revealing Duncan’s deep-seated philosophy on poetry through the lens of his relationship with Olson that may inform us even further Duncan’s initial resistant stances against *The New American Poetry*.

13. Again it is Duncan who, in his resistance, outlines the problems in Allen’s regional categories, posturing that he, himself, was a “coterie” and not a “regional” poet and, if needed to be categorized by region, was disassociating himself with the San Francisco “scene” and aligning himself with those poets from Black Mountain, based on aesthetic and not geographical associations. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 193.

14. Amiri Baraka, as sole African American contributor in the original *The New American Poetry*, points out the exclusivity of the “club” anthologies like *The New American Poetry* represent (see Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 196), an idea Golding queries, if not substantiates, in his deliberations of other Afro-American poets with whom Allen was familiar and in contact at the time of his compilation.

15. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 199. Like African American poets, Golding admits to other reasons, other than the predominately white male circles in which haunted, for the lack of women poets in his volume, poets such as Diane di Prima and Joanne Kyger, who directly confronted Allen in a 1959 letter. Michael Davidson has called the phenomenon a “compulsory homosociality” that dominated the milieu—Rachel Blau DuPlessis suggests that the exclusion of the fe-

male voice was needed to preserve a projective poetics extolled by Olson to “reclaim poetry for masculine discourse” to make poetry a “serious discourse of assertive, exploratory and aggressive manhood.” With this in mind, Megan Swihart Jewell’s essay in this volume suggests that *The New American Poetry*’s exclusion of women writers challenged contemporary women’s writers such as Kathleen Fraser to “become articulate,” perhaps in direct response to the lack of women writers in Allen’s first edition.

16. See Golding, “New American Poetry Revisited,” 206. Golding refers to both former critics such as John Robert Colombo and Karl Shapiro, and more contemporary critics such as Daniel Hoffman, Vernon Shetley and Walter Kalaidjian who see no value presented other than rebellion itself, suggesting that in their rebellion, the poets and its editor become much like that which they rebel against (in terms of its academic formalism in its presentation, the negative criterion for inclusion in the anthology, its negative version of culture poetry, its dependence on traditions its seeks to repudiate, etc.)

17. Ibid.

18. See Golding, *From Outlaw to Classic*, 32–33. Golding himself, in his historical reportage of *The New American Poetry* and its outlaw, avant-garde status that inevitably loses power as it moves toward canonization, is moved to consider “the more positive implications of this process, involving the potential to address, from within, the institutions with which an extracanonical poetics is nominally at odds.” Golding addresses some “positive implications” in his last chapter on Language Writing and the Institutions of Poetry, an essay, and one of the few, which examines *The New American Poetry* in this more novel, positive fashion by tracing a lineage from *The New American Poetry*, one that would fit well in our volume.

19. Jed Rasula, *American Poetry Wax Museum: Reality Effects 1940–1990* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1996), 58.

20. Ibid.

21. Rasula, 227. Rasula employs an interesting analogy making the battle between Allen’s and Hall-Pack-Simpson anthology a “syndicated television program” where, “in the hijinks of the rerun” what he deems earlier in his essay, the “Squares” and the representative “Beats,” “face off in 1960 to duke it out for poetry’s golden glove award.”

22. Rasula, 243.

23. Many critics have traced this influence, most notably Roy Harvey Pearce in his 1962 study *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

24. Rasula, 246.

25. Ibid.

26. Rasula, 247.

27. This term emerges at the end of Rasula’s section on Literary History as Demonology, a section that aims to demonstrate how literary criticism can, has and continues to partake in the simplification and marginalization of certain poetries. With use of this term, Rasula suggests conflict not to be used to demonize and thus polarize, but to be considered a continuous and productive activity.



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