

# Poetry as Re-reading



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Rereading and rewriting our understanding of the poetics of modernism and postmodernism, this truly revisionary work identifies a significant counter-tradition in twentieth-century poetry. Postmodernism, Ming-Qian Ma argues, does not so much follow from modernism as coexist with it, with postmodernists employing the anarchic poetics introduced by Gertrude Stein in countering the rationalist method of high modernists such as T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Grounded in a detailed and compelling account of the philosophy guiding such a project, Ma's book traces a continuity of thought and practice through the very different poetic work of objectivists Louis Zukofsky, George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, and John Cage and language poets Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, Bruce Andrews, and Charles Bernstein. His deft individual readings provide an opening into this notoriously difficult work, even as his larger critique reveals a new and clarifying perspective on American modernist and post-modernist avant-garde poetics. Ma shows how we cannot understand these poets according to the usual way of reading but must see how they deliberately use redundancy, unpredictability, and irrationality to undermine the meaning-oriented foundations of American modernism--and to force a new and different kind of reading. With its unusually clear explanation of the philosophy informing postmodern practice, and its unique insights into some of the more interesting and vexing poets of our time, this book points to a reading of an important strain of postmodern American poetry that is likely to develop well into the twenty-first century.

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