ENGL 310 Modern Poetry Professor Langdon Hammer

Lecture 1 Introduction

1.

---Syllabus and requirements.

---This course will use visual images from Sterling and Beinecke libraries to suggest some of the material, historical, and biographical dimensions of modern poetry. ---Modern poetry was first published in Little Magazines (examples: <u>Blast</u>, <u>Rogue</u>, <u>Broom</u>, <u>The Criterion</u>). Contrast the covers of Yeats's <u>The Wind Among the Reeds</u> (1899), Eliot's <u>Prufrock and Other Observations</u> (1917), and Hughes's <u>The Weary Blues</u> (1926); self-conscious Irishness, lavishness and romance of Yeats's book v. the flat, impersonal design of Eliot's, v. the honky-tonk singer on Hughes's.

2.

---Poems always project an image of the poet who creates them. While the poet is creating her or his poems, she or he is also creating a poet, a public image of the poet, and this is an evolving project, a work in progress.

---Examples: photographs of Pound in 1913 (London), 1923 (Paris), 1946 (intake photo at St Elizabeth's Hospital), and 1971 (Rappallo); Eliot as Harvard student (1907) and as editor of Faber and Faber (c. 1950); Pound's descent into infamy and indignity and Eliot's rise to cultural power and prestige: these are key, interlocking stories in modern poetry, and two versions of the fate of modern poetry as a whole.

---Moore old and young.

3.

---Moore: poetry should include "business documents and school-books" ("Poetry"); Eliot: macaronic quotation from the end of <u>The Waste Land</u>; modern poetry "must be <u>difficult</u>" ("The Metaphysical Poets"); modern poetry comes out of the Babel, the special linguistic environment, of the modern metropolis (image from <u>Blast</u> by Wandsworth of "Rotterdam")

---the metropolis is a symbol of the ambivalence of modernity: its simultaneous promise and threat (Hughes's "125th Street" and "Harlem"; cover of <u>Blast</u> "War Number"; Alfred Stieglitz's photo of Manhattan, "City of Ambition"; photos of Brooklyn Bridge by Walker Evans).

4.

--- for Crane, the modern city promises "new thresholds, new anatomies"

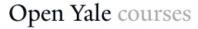
("The Wine Menagerie"); he asks Brooklyn Bridge "to lend a myth to God" ("Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge," <u>The Bridge</u>; photo of Crane by Evans);

---for Stevens as for Crane, when modernity takes away God, it reveals the poet's Godlike power to create the world through imagination, which created God in the first place (photos of Stevens as choirboy and as insurance executive)

---Modern poetry in most of our poets is utopian, Promethean, seeking absolutes, primary truths. But there are alternatives, skeptical poetries that subject modernism to critique and

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