
have learned to express that position in what is heretically its purest form. Freed from the tradition of the great poet-critics from Dryden to Eliot, poetry according to Bloom and Vendler speaks for the soul's liberation from human nature and from God, the soul's discovery of its supremacy to the created order.

Here Oser most succinctly expresses his definition of Gnosticism—"the soul's discovery of its supremacy to the created order"—but it remains questionable whether such a view of literature accurately characterizes the criticism of either Bloom or Vendler, without a more thorough examination of their work as a whole.

Chapter 6 of *The Return of Christian Humanism* concludes with a reference to Eliot's comment in a 1933 lecture that "we are still in Arnold's period" and the suggestion that "By way of Chesterton, Eliot was able to connect Arnoldian liberal humanism to the spiritual decay of the academy" (101). And even Bloom and Vendler, Oser admits, "may owe something of their literary faith to Arnold, but they denied what is most lasting in this thought: his sense of tradition, his true pragmatism, his appeal to reason and nature." Thus while Oser's characterizations of contemporary academic culture and the critics who most prominently represent it may be distorted and overly shrill in places, the book as a whole convincingly identifies these most lasting elements of Arnold's thought as accounting for the durability of Oser's chosen subjects. ✱

Rebecca Beasley. *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound*. London: Routledge, 2007. 144p.

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This slim volume in the "Routledge Critical Thinkers" series concentrates not on one figure but on three. Students of modernism are less likely to discover much new about T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as they are to be reminded of the enduring relevance of T.E. Hulme, whose thought here is properly contextualized amongst that of his more prolific contemporaries. In *Theorists of Modernist Poetry*, Rebecca Beasley argues not just that the theoretical writings of these three modernists framed the most important cultural questions of the twentieth century, but that Hulme's thought in its first decade was essential to the imagist movement and, hence, to the poetic development of Eliot and Pound themselves. As a result, the core of this book is organized around a half-dozen questions that trace disparate threads of the modern movement, each ending with a summary useful for classroom discussion.

Beasley's initial emphasis on *fin-de-siècle* culture succeeds both in stressing the rupture between Victorian and modern thought while also pondering what debt

the latter owes the former. She finds in modernism the resonance of nineteenth-century aestheticism, for example, but judges the symbolist desire for a new verse more influential, its legacy manifested in Hulme's "A Lecture on Modern Poetry." While no one could argue that Hulme was using the term "modern" to mean anything more than "contemporary," his essay effectively privileged verse over prose and suggested how innovations in poetry would help frame a new literature. Indeed, in its economy and directness, imagism shared many of the same values as Hulme's thought, though Pound would deny the influence years later. That Pound's poetry relied on the evocative sense of objects as much as those objects themselves reflects the same skepticism of linearity Eliot worked through in his "objective correlative," where a number of images can together evoke the response of the reader. Beasley shrewdly juxtaposes this fundamental emphasis on the smallest units of verse with poets' increasing fascination with longer forms, from Eliot's *Waste Land* and *Quartets* to Pound's *Maundering* and *Cantos*.

Despite the legacy of aestheticism, utilitarian thought also lingered throughout the twentieth century in the modernist engagement with politics. So, while Beasley traces the influence of Henri Bergson on the poetic values of Eliot, Hulme, and Pound, she is obliged to explain how Bergson's view of time belied an emphasis on the so-called "classical" values that would, in time, manifest themselves in a political conservatism. Though the poetry returned to regular meter, Beasley stops just short of connecting form to the politicization of modern letters, granting only that artists' reaction to the First World War demanded a commitment to social change. That for Pound, and perhaps also Eliot, this sort of engagement with society led to anti-Semitism is the real tragedy of modernism, of course. But this study does not seek the roots of such narrow thinking in political involvement, not even in Pound's lamentable fascism.

Ultimately, *Theorists of Modernist Poetry* adds to the recent interest in the thought of T.E. Hulme, but this book seeks also to attribute both the rejection of close reading and a wider postmodernist skepticism of the whole modernist project to a reaction against the kind of poetry written by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. While Hulme's position here contributes to a more heterogeneous reading of modernism, his importance to the early work of two canonical modernists of such longstanding reputation and representative influence positions him as part of an old guard, even as his underappreciated contribution to the movement is thus revived. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of modernist thought in this fashion, Rebecca Beasley contributes more to the broadening of our understanding of the movement than she would have done by simply restoring the reputation of one of its neglected figures. ✱