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## Black Mountain Poets

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### ABSTRACT

The New American Poetry was an anthology engendered by poet Donald M. Allen in 1960. The New Poets of England and America was edited by the poets Donald Hall, Robert Pack, and Louis Simpson just three years prior. These publications, while each claimed to represent a comprehensive review of contemporary poetry, did not apportion a single poet. Academic poets who primarily inscribe in traditional form, influenced by the relishes of T. S. Eliot and Robert Frost, made up The New Poets of England and America. There were popular poets like Richard Wilbur, John Hollander, and Adrienne Affluent. However, Allen's anthology gave the several experimental poets active in the US a platform. He visually perceived these poets as the heirs to the developments made by William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. The only ways this new generation's work had antecedently reached its expanding audience were through readings, publication in diminutive magazines, and independent presses. There were poets from the New York School and the San Francisco Renaissance, as well as the Beats, which included Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. Allen additionally gave a group of writers who were anteriorly hard to relegate a new name: the Black Mountain School of poetry. Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, Edward Dorn, Joel Oppenheimer, Paul Blackburn, Jonathan Williams, Paul Carroll, Robert Duncan, and Larry Eigner were among the individuals he delegated to this school. They bore the designation of the ephemeral but illustrious Black Mountain College, whose rector Olson accommodated from 1951 until its dissolution in 1956.

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### Introduction

*The New American Poetry* was an anthology engendered by poet Donald M. Allen in 1960. The New Poets of England and America was edited by the poets Donald Hall, Robert Pack, and Louis Simpson just three years prior. These publications, while each claimed to represent a comprehensive review of contemporary poetry, did not apportion a single poet. Academic poets who primarily inscribe in traditional form, influenced by the relishes of T. S. Eliot and Robert Frost, made up The New Poets of England and America. There were popular poets like Richard Wilbur, John Hollander, and Adrienne Affluent. However, Allen's anthology gave the several experimental poets active in the US a platform. He visually perceived these poets as the heirs to the developments made by William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. The only ways this new generation's work had antecedently reached its expanding audience were through readings, publication in diminutive magazines, and independent presses. There were poets from the New York School and the San Francisco Renaissance, as well as the Beats, which included Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. Allen additionally gave a group of writers who were anteriorly hard to relegate a new name: the Black Mountain School of poetry.

The Black Mountain poets were a group of American avant-garde or postmodern poets centered on Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the mid-20th century. Albeit the works of these poets were very diverse, they shared an ingenious philosophy that came to be kenne'd as "projective poetry." The Black Mountain School of Poetry is often associated with Beat poets and San Francisco Renaissance poets, including Robert Duncan, many of whom were collaborators. Apart from their strong ties to the Beats, the Black Mountain poets influenced the direction of later American poetry through their importance for poets later identified with the Language School. Since the 1960s, they have also played an important role in the development of innovative British poetry, as demonstrated by poets such as Tom Raworth and J. H. Prynne. The Black Mountain poets influenced the Vancouver-based TISH group, which included George Bowering and Daphne Marlatt. Charles Potts is a modern projectivist poet.

Black Mountain College, located in the Churches of Black Mountain, North Carolina, was an edification experiment that lasted from 1933 to 1956. It was one of the first schools to accentuate the consequentiality of edifying the ingenious arts and the credence that art, coupled with technical and analytical skills, is essential to human understanding. In 1933, John Andrew Rice and Theodore Dreier founded Black Mountain College. Despite low enrollments, perpetual financial difficulties, and sometimes vicious convivial hierarchies, the school absorbed many European avant-garde artists during WWII, most eminently Josef and Anni Albers, and it perpetuated to host artists, choreographers, composers, and poets. Albeit some Black Mountain poets attended and others never visited, the college provided a consequential context for kineticism. Black Mountain College remains a vibrant historical episode as an experiment in communal living and making art. However, the preoccupations of the Black Mountain poets may be its most lasting legacy to contemporary poetry: poetics and poetics verbal expressions, process and techniques such as sequences, the poem as a field in which disparate energies, systems of cognizance, and personal experience converge, all of which perpetuate to engage poets to this day. Many Black Mountain poets went on to have prosperous and diverse vocations. These culls are primarily from the 1950s and early 1960s. The Black Mountain School was officially closed in 1970, the year Charles Olson died.

These poets emulated William Carlos Williams' freer style, departing from T.S. Eliot's poetic tradition. The group's manifesto was Charles Olson's

essay *Projective Verse* (1950). Olson emphasized the ingenious process of transferring the poet's energy to the reader through poetry. There was a clear reliance on American slang in this incipient poem. *Origin* magazine published a plethora of the group's early work (1951–56). Creeley and Olson founded *the Black Mountain Review*. There were works by William Carlos Williams, Paul Blackburn, Dennis Levertov, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and many other poets who went on to become famous. Today, Black Mountain poetry seems to encompass a wide variety of styles and themes. Nonetheless, the poems have some mundane features that are eminent: precise utilization of language, direct verbalizations, often simple (straightforward) wording, and metonymy rather than metaphors or metaphors. These tendencies developed in replication to earlier poetry, with tight prosody, rhyming cessations, a profuse use of grandiose language, and monumental themes. The Black Mountain Poets' Replication was a continuation of the poetic revolution initiated by the Imagist and later Objectivist schools. In general, Black Mountain poets conventionally abstain from commenting on the evaluation of scenes evoked in their poems, and this strategy may withal include evading adjectives and adverbs.

As Ezra Pound proclaimed at the commencement of the century, poetry should be "brief words," "objective," "not sloppy and direct," and "contain no metaphors that sanction no verification." (Pound) Aside from its subsequent leanings toward objectivism, Black Mountain poetry can be verbalized to descend from 19th-century New England writers such as Henry David Thoreau and especially Ralph Waldo Emerson, who categorically turned to individualism. As Edward Foster inscribed, Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance" was passed on to many Black Mountain poets. Poetry can be an extension of oneself as a person, as an individual different from the orthodox ideals of the past. (Edward Halsey Foster)

From a philosophical standpoint, Black Mountain poetry shares a view of reality derived from scientific forms of kineticism of the time, forms of kineticism that contradicted earlier views of a stable and prognosticable macrocosm held by ruminators such as Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and, later, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Olson, Creeley, Duncan, and others were intrigued by Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and Werner Heisenberg's theory of uncertainty relations. Corporeal authenticity, according to Einstein, was relative to time; according to Heisenberg, it was simply indeterminate and incomplete.

After the cessation of World War II, the activities of the Beats and other anti-establishment poets amassed steam, ushering in an incipient era in American poetry. *Origin* and *The Black Mountain Review* both contributed to the formation of a cohesive group of writers who visually perceived themselves as involved in redirecting the trajectory of American poetry from the high ground of modernism. Both magazines, with the keen insight of their editors, played a paramount role in sanctioning poets like Charles Olson and Robert Duncan to formulate 'open field' poetics and to publish those poetics with numerous poetic examples that have subsequently emerged as the key texts of the kineticism by the generation's leading poets.

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## Black Mountain College

John Andrew Rice, the college's founder, envisioned an institution that would take John Dewey's progressive" model and push it further toward an incipient vision of edification within the democracy. It was not an art institute. Rather, in line with Dewey's conceptions, the college's goal was to provide a well-rounded curriculum that prioritized the arts. Jonathan Creasy cites Rice's quote in 1936 Harper's Monthly article about Black Mountain in his *Black Mountain Poems: An Anthology*:

Here our central and consistent effort is to teach method, not content, to emphasize process, not results; to invite the student to the realization that the way of handling facts and him amid the facts is more important than the facts themselves ...

There is a technic [sic] to be learned, a grammar of the art of living and working in the world. Logic, as severe as it can be, must be learned; if for no other reason, to know its limitations. Dialectic must be learned: and no feelings spared, for you can't be nice when truth is at stake ... Man's responses to ideas and things in the past must be learned. We must realize that the world as it is isn't worth saving; it must be made over. These are the pencil, the brush, the chisel. (Creasy, *Black Mountain Poems*)

However, Black Mountain was not immune to the political realities of the time. A group of European émigrés fleeing authoritarian regimes shaped the college's progressive experiment from the commencement. Among these figures were Josef Albers, a German painter and former Bauhaus master, and his wife, Anni Albers, a weaver and pedagoga. Anni was Josef's student, and the two immigrated to America together after the Nazis coerced the German art school to close.

Interactions and relationships were a component of Black Mountain's shared artistic concerns, but they were additionally simple facts of life in the community. Aside from the Black Mountain poets, there is an incredible list of artists who spent time living, edifying, and studying at the college: Willem de Kooning, Elaine de Kooning, Franz Kline, Ruth Asawa, Dorothea Rockburne, Elizabeth Jennerjahn, Pete Jennerjahn, Robert Rauschenberg, Kenneth Noland, Ray Johnson, Arthur Penn, Hazel Larsen Archer, Jacob Lawrence etc.

Relationships between these artists engendered incipient works on the grounds of Black Mountain College. Creeley, for example, worked with painter Dan Rice on the book *All That Is Lovely in Men*, which contains some of Creeley's finest early work. Creeley and Rice were college roommates who shared a deep love of jazz, which influenced the rhythms and stuttering syntax of Creeley's lyric poems.

Olson took part in a "glyph exchange" with artist Ben Shahn and dancer-choreographer Katherine Litz, as well as some of Merce Cunningham's dance classes. A list of the college's advisers included William Carlos Williams, Albert Einstein, and John Dewey. This demonstrates how vibrant the artistic, astute, and convivial interactions were at Black Mountain. It inspired focused attention and groundbreaking work, while it withal bred resentments and schisms that ineluctably led to its demise, as any diminutive, tightly knit community does.

Josef and Anni were central to life at Black Mountain for sixteen years, beginning in 1933. Josef Albers' modified Bauhaus curriculum became the gold standard for college edifying. His goal as an edifier, he verbalized, was to "open eyes," which was the focus of inculcation at Black Mountain: discovering incipient perspectives, incipient ways of optically discerning and contemplating the world. These were aesthetic, pedagogical, and, affirmative, political betokens. Josef Albers' role as the teacher later strongly affected Black Mountain poets.

Many of Black Mountain's well-kenned figures indited poetry, and when we glance at the college's life from 1933 to 1956, we visually perceive a much wider perspective of what might deem Black Mountain poetry. Josef Albers is at the core of Black Mountain pedagogy, and he functioned as a link between both the Bauhaus and Black Mountain, broadening the influence of those schools in U.S. higher cognition through his later connections to

Harvard and Yale. Albers' poems, like the majority of his oeuvres, were indeed simple, prompt, as well as economical.

John Cage edified at the college for a brief time in the summer and spring of 1948, as well as the summers of 1952 and 1953, and he and his collaborator Merce Cunningham had a paramount impact on the community. Among the most eminent things in Black Mountain's history and mythology is Cage's Theater Piece No. 1 (withal referred to as the first "happening"). Olson and Richards read poems, with paramount contributions from Cunningham, Rauschenberg, and Tudor, among many others, at the impromptu event. Cage's mostly chance-derived inditing, an abundance of which was written to be undertaken as lecture poetry, broadens the space-time experimentations of his musical works.

Paul Goodman also briefly edified at Black Mountain. He was a fine poet who published pioneering prose engenderments of the time, such as *Growing Up Absurd*, *Communitas*, and *Gestalt Therapy*. Goodman's project provides insight into the profound convivial changes that occurred in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Black Mountain played a paramount role in this evolving cultural landscape, and its initiatives, such as Goodman's inscribing, opened the door for counter-culture movements in the 1960s.

M. C. Richards and Hilda Morley have been underappreciated for years and years. Richards was a well-relished preceptor at Black Mountain. She established the Black Mountain Press in 1948 and relinquished the very first edition of *The Black Mountain Review*. After departing Black Mountain in 1954, Richards joined Cage, Cunningham, and Tudor in Paul Williams' Stony Point community in Rockland County, New York. Olson alluded to Stony Point as a "continuing limb" of Black Mountain College. Morley specialized in metaphysical poets while edifying poetry at BMC. In 1952, she wedded Stefan Wolpe, a German composer who imparted music at Black Mountain and is mentioned by Olson in the first lines of "The Death of Europe." Wolpe experienced astringent Parkinson's disease for over a decennium until he died in 1972, and Morley authored a brilliant book of elegies for him, *What Are Winds & What Are Waters*.

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## Charles Olson

Charles Olson, full name Charles John Olson, was a poet and literary theorist from the United States. Olson was born into a low-income family. He spent his summers with his parents in Gloucester, Massachusetts, which became both his adopted hometown and the inspiration for much of his work. He received his edification at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. He spent two years edifying at Clark University in his hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1936, he enrolled at Harvard University and commenced edifying while pursuing a Ph.D.; he left three years later after obtaining a Guggenheim Fellowship to turn his M.A. thesis on Herman Melville into a book.

Albeit Olson is often credited with coining the term "postmodern" to describe postwar American poetry, many dispute that and say that the honour belongs to poet Randall Jarrell. Whatever the term's inceptions, Olson championed American poetry that was "postmodern" in the sense that its authors moved beyond not only the artificial subjectivism and symbolism of Romantic and tardy-nineteenth-century poetry but additionally beyond the Modernism of American poets such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Olson's poetics were influenced by a wide range of sources, which include mythology, Gloucester's history, and geography, and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy. Olson surmised that the act of engendering poetry must be linked to a fundamental aspect of human authenticity. In contrast to the "closed form" of traditional poetic metre, Olson suggested an "open field" which "projects" organically from the poem's content—that is, the poet's sense of interacting with and yet being an essential component of his physical vicinity. Olson quantified a poetic line by the length of a human breath, a rudimentary human activity that expressed a poet's life - force. The *Maximus Poems* (numerous editions published in 1960, 1968, and 1975; first published in its entirety in 1983), a lengthy work encompassing letter poems and philosophical musings attributed to "Maximus of Gloucester," Olson's alter ego, was his masterpiece and fitting encomium to his projective poetics. Apart from *The Maximus Poems*, Olson's works include *In Cold Hell, in Thicket* (1953), *The Distances* (1960), and *Letters for Origin, 1950-1956*. (1969). *A Nation of Nothing but Poetry: Supplementary Poems*, edited by George F. Butterick (2000), and *Collected Prose*, edited by Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander, are two posthumous accumulations of Olson's work (1997).

He was the last rector of Black Mountain College, is best kenneled for developing the concept of "projective verse" and coining the phrase in 1950. The concept of projective verse fixates on process rather than product, and it was pellucidly influenced by objectivists like William Carlos Williams and modernists like Ezra Pound. This poetry style inspirits poets to abstract their subjectivity from their work while withal projecting the energy of their work directly to the reader. Reason and description are thus superseded by spontaneity and the physical act of inditing and verbalizing the poem.

Charles Olson did not invent the concepts that underpin "Projective Verse" or "Open Field" poetry; rather, he was the latest in a line of "Objectivist" poets such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams who brought this theory of poetry to the forefront.

In a nutshell, Projective Verse is a method of expressing poetry that does not circumscribe the content of the poem (i.e., what the poet is inscribing about, endeavoring to verbalize, endeavoring to convey) to traditional, rigid poetic forms or standards (i.e., relying on beats, stanzas, iambs, rhyme schemes, typographic standards). Instead, "Projective Verse" makes the reader's and poet's "breath" the most paramount measure of a poem. In other words, the form a poem takes—what you optically discern represented on the page—is purposefully crafted in a way that inspirits reading the poem at a certain pace, with concrete points of accentuation and contrast naturally arising from the page both as one reads it and as one optically discerns it represented on the page. One of the motivating factors behind such a method was to forsake the notion of confining the contents of poetry to the straightjacket of traditional forms (such as a sonnet) and provide the poet, and the reader, with a newfound sense of liberation: reading poetry that evokes genuine feelings, authentic insight, with the avail of abstract forms, rather than merely gesturing towards what the reader ought to feel because he or she lays ocular perceivers on a sonnet and brings If this sounds a little too abstract, a little too nebulous to wrap your head around, don't worry: readers, poets, and philosophers have been wrestling with Olson's "Projective Verse" since its inception.

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## Robert Creeley

Robert Creeley, full name Robert White Creeley, was born on May 21, 1926, in Arlington, Massachusetts, United States. Creeley decided to drop out of Harvard University in the final semester of his senior year and ended up spending a year working as a driver for the American Field Accommodation in

India and Burma (Myanmar). He resided on a chicken farm in New Hampshire shortly after he came back to the United States in 1945. According to his account, he spent a plethora of time heedfully aurally perceiving jazz, and his later poems reflected that influence. Creeley spent the first moiety of the 1950s in France and Majorca, Spain, where he founded the Divers Press.

Creeley's poems from the 1950s and 1960s show William Carlos Williams' influence. Creeley surfaced as an expert technician in *For Love* (1962), an accumulation of poems inscribed between 1950 and 1960. Creeley's poems, like Williams', are concise and to the point. Creeley's verses are equitably self-contained in his subsequent poetry accumulations, most saliently *Pieces* (1968). Many younger poets were influenced by his poetry, which was marked by understatement, down-to-earth levity, and studious conformity to economical and precise language.

Like Olson, Creeley edified at Black Mountain College, but he was withal a student, a student, and Olson's colleague. As editor of the *Black Mountain Review*, Creeley expeditiously became a very influential figure. The work, predicated on the same theory that gave ascend to Olson's condensed, svelte column, was voluminous and page-filling. Creeley believed that poetry had reached a static point where it was impeccably indited to please the reprehender rather than reflect the veracity and life it was dealing with. Agog to move on to something more authentic, Creeley immersed himself in his poetry by fixating on categorical moments and phrenic conceptions while eschewing anything concrete and concrete. His poetry often fixates on emotion in a short, minimalist way. Creeley withal experimented with finding and developing music from a prevalent language. He used newlines and tested different sodalities to optically discern how the syntax transmuted. He utilized these patterns to strategically place key words to reveal multiple construals and music. He accentuated music in language predicated on variations in the language itself.

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## Denise Levertov

Denise Levertov, born on October 24, 1923, in Ilford, Essex, now in Greater London, was an English-born American poet, essayist, and political activist who authored deceptively straightforward verses on personal and political themes. Levertov's father was a Russian Jew who immigrated to the United Kingdom, converted to Christianity, wedded a Welsh woman, and ineluctably became an Anglican clergyman. Levertov, who was inculcated wholly at home, became a noncombatant nurse during World War II, accommodating in London throughout the bombings.

Her first amassment of poetry, *The Double Image* (1946), was a flop. She wedded American inscriber, Mitchell Goodman, in 1947, relocated to the Cumulated States with him in 1948, and became a naturalized American denizen in 1955. Levertov spent time in college and became an influential projectionist figure along with fellow poet Robert Duncan. Though close friends over the years, the relationship between the two became strained when Levertov deviated from Duncan's ideals regarding poetry and imbued her poetry with humanistic politics.

Levertov's poetry reflects nature, humanism, love, and faith in God. In her poetry, she became increasingly political and feminist, especially with the outbreak of the Vietnam War, and should be treated as cogitation for engendering content. The poet then has to engender a form categorical to its content. This is the conception of William Carlos Williams and is additionally cognate to his work.

Berrigan stated in his review of *Light up the Cave* about Levertov's social and political consciousness: Our options [in a tremulous world], as they say, are no longer large. ... [We] may choose to do nothing; which is to say, to go discreetly or wildly mad, letting fear possess us and frivolity rule our days. Or we may, along with admirable spirits like Denise Levertov, be driven sane; by community, by conscience, by treading the human crucible. (*Poetry Foundation*)

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## Robert Duncan

Robert Duncan, full name Robert Edward Duncan, pristine name Edward Howard Duncan, adopted name Robert Edward Symmes, was an American poet who was a member of the Black Mountain group of poets in the 1950s.

Duncan went to the University of California, Berkeley, from 1936 to 1938 and again from 1948 to 1950. From 1938 to 1940, he edited the *Experimental Review* and then travelled extensively, giving lectures on poetry in the United States and Canada throughout the 1950s. In 1956, he was authoritatively mandated at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. He had lived in San Francisco for many years and was active in the city's poetry scene.

He vowed to follow Olson into incipient poetic activities, as designated by Olson's famous essay on "projective verse," which was first published in 1950. Duncan draws on transformative experiences under the stars, designating constellations, to evoke the impact of Olson and Black Mountain in *The H.D. Book* a legendary amassment of inscriptions commenced in 1959 but only opportunely published in book form in 2011 by the University of California Press:

The figure of the giant hunter in the sky brings with it, as often, the creative genius of Charles Olson for me. Since the appearance of *Origin* a decade ago, my vision of what the poem is to do has been transformed, reorganized around a constellation of new poets – Olson, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley – in which Olson's work takes the lead for me. This man, himself a "giant" – six foot seven or so – has been an outrider, my own Orion. It was the same time of year, with Orion overhead, in 1955 (2), when Olson read aloud to Jess and me the beginnings of a new sequence of poems, O'Ryan. The scene in the bare room at Black Mountain with its cold and the blazing winter sky at the window springs up as I write. The fugitive hero of that sequence was drawn from Robert Creeley. (Duncan et al.)

Duncan edified poetry and theatre at Black Mountain. Duncan established a Black Mountain theater group in San Francisco as a component of Olson's strategy to establish a "college on wheels" following the shutdown of the North Carolina campus. Duncan commenced developing his distinct, messianic voice as a poet in Northern California in the 1940s. Together with his companion, artist Jess Collins, he was a key figure in the "Berkeley Renaissance" and the Bay Area arts scene. However, his actions at Black Mountain exposed him to conceptions and pedagogical practices that he would not have encountered otherwise. For instance, Josef Albers' edifying provided Duncan with a clear example as cited by Lisa Jarnot and Michael Davidson in their book *Robert Duncan, the Ambassador From Venus: A Biography*:

I just had what would be anybody's idea of what Albers must have been doing. You knew that [Albers's students] had color theory, and that they did a workshop sort of approach, and that they didn't aim at a finished painting ... I thought "Well, that's absolutely right" ... I think we

had five weeks of vowels ...and syllables ... Numbers enter into poetry as they do in all time things, measurements. But ... [with] Albers ... it's not only the color, but it's the interrelationships of space and numbers. (Jarnot and Davidson)

Duncan's poetry is expressive and musical, with an opulent tapestry of connotations and visuals whose interpretations are sometimes equivocal. Much of his poetry is influenced by myths and visionary mysticism, but his conceptual considerations additionally include potent gregarious and political assertions. His early poems were accumulated in *The Years as Catches: First Poems, 1939-1946* (1966), and his 1950s poems were published in *Derivations: Culled Poems, 1950-56* (1956). (1968). His best poems are accumulated in *The Aperture of the Field* (1960), *Roots and Branches* (1964), *Bending the Bow* (1968), and *Ground Work* (1984). He withal indited plays, such as *Medea at Kolchis* (1965).

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