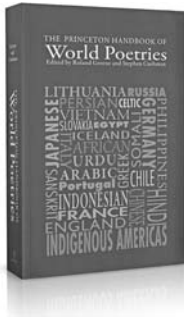


REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



The Princeton Handbook of World Poetries

Edited by Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. Website: <https://press.princeton.edu>. 2017. 720 pp. \$35. PB. ISBN 9780691170510.

The creation of dictionaries is the need of the hour. Ronald Greene and Stephen Cushman have done the impossible by creating one of the best dictionaries in recent times. The book under review is one of its kind and has entries ranging from ‘Newar Poetry’ to the poetry of Ecuador. In recent times such a wide-ranging book has not been published within world poetries. Apart from accommodating lesser known poetries; this book is indispensable for having up-to-date bibliographies at the end of each entry. For instance, within the entry of the poetry of England, we have references to both offline critical texts and to functional websites (175). Terry Eagleton’s *How to Read a Poem* (2007) is mentioned as well as weblinks given to the *Perdita Manuscripts*. The beauty of this handbook is that each entry is similarly well annotated. The entry on Hebrew poetry is a case in point. The misconception of Hebrew poetry being homogenous is erased and the definition of poetry by Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s *Poetic Closure* (1968) is germane to all poetry written everywhere: ‘As soon as we perceive that a verbal sequence has a sustained rhythm, that it is formally structured according to a continuously operating principle of organization ... we are in the presence of poetry’ (249). This is found within the entry of Hebrew poetry which is not merely Biblical poetry as E Spicandler points out.

The book under review maps this ‘verbal sequence’ found all over the world. This includes

‘digital poetry’ (584), the antecedents of which are meticulously traced in the entry on the poetry of the United States: ‘If the “little magazine” revolution of the 1960s was a poetry of the page in which typography and lineation represented expressive intent, the digital revolution of the 1990s and after inaugurated new forms of digital poetry ... [and] aleatory ... composition ... [including] Flarf’ (ibid.).

The editors and contributors rightly understand that it is no longer possible to predict what turn poetry will take in every extant language in the world because the Internet has changed the creation and dissemination of poetry. Poetry is being read more than ever before because of the Internet and there can be no sense of an ending in our simulated world. The entries in this reprint, unlike the first print of this book in the late 1950s, are all therefore, open-ended. If the first edition of this book and the edition under review are read synoptically, then one knows the labour with which this edition has been updated. A Herculean task that nonetheless is the proper task of academic *littérateurs*.

This book should be in literature departments and with every poetry lover. It is refreshing to find that jargon has not been used in this book. Poetry has been studied here without bombast and redundant reliance on other non-literary disciplines. To use Derek Attridge’s phrase, *The Princeton Handbook of World Poetries* reasserts and reinstates ‘the singularity of literature’. The translations of non-English poems within most entries are unexpected treats for the reader. This is how literature should be practised, and this *Handbook* is a strong rebuttal to those who are entangled with dumbed-down philosophy that goes by the name of literary theory within academic literary circles.

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