

Preface

What is “world poetry”? The term evokes at least two meanings. One suggests a rarefied canon of poetry by the few poets—for example, Homer, Sappho, Virgil, Dante, Rūmī, Ḥāfīz, Shakespeare, Bashō, and Neruda—whose work transcends their nations and languages. The other implies a vast, international corpus that gathers discrete canons into a network of connections and resonances: world poetry in large rather than in little. This volume both reflects and enables the latter sense of the term. Offering more than 165 entries that represent the traditions of about 100 national, regional, and diasporic poetries, *The Princeton Handbook of World Poetries* is intended for any student or reader who seeks to explore the scope and complexity of international poetry.

The entries here originate in the more extensive *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, in which the richness of world poetry is visible alongside poetic terms and concepts as well as larger, interdisciplinary topics. The poetries of nations, regions, and languages are a traditional strength of the *Encyclopedia*; many readers have found the past editions a reliable guide to introductions to unfamiliar languages or literatures. Both the *Encyclopedia* and the *Handbook* attempt to make a distinction between poetries that are based in nations or territories and those that are based in languages, international cultures, or diasporas—no doubt sometimes an ambiguous distinction, but nonetheless one worth making. The entry on the poetry of France is discrete from entries on the various francophone poetries of Africa, Canada, or the Caribbean, while Persian poetry is best approached as a single topic with international ramifications. The entry titles “England, poetry of” and “United States, poetry of the,” along with the topics they indicate, are preferable to the categories “English” or “American”

poetry, with their uncertain but expansive outlines. In its coverage of the British Isles, the former entry is complemented by separate entries on Welsh, Cornish, Scottish, and Irish poetries, while the latter is cross-referenced to companion pieces on US poetries wholly or partly in other languages that can claim their own fields of study, such as French-language poetry; still other related entries, such as those on Chicana/o and Asian American poetry, are found in the *Encyclopedia*. An entry such as “German poetry” takes a linguistic rather than a national approach but is complemented by entries on Austria, Switzerland, and the Low Countries that follow geopolitical contours and discuss discrete languages within those outlines. In many cases the contributors made the final determination of what to call their entries, no doubt producing some asymmetries that reflect the differences in the fields represented here. Moreover, the reader is encouraged to consult the *Encyclopedia* for further exploration of more granular topics such as poetic movements within nations and linguistically specific forms and genres.

This *Handbook* maintains several conventions of the *Princeton Encyclopedia*. Translations are generally given within parentheses, without quotation marks if no other words appear in the parenthetical matter, but set off within quotation marks when some qualification is needed, as in the form of many etymologies: for example, *arsis* and *thesis* (Gr., “raising and lowering”). Translated titles of works generally appear in the most comprehensive articles; entries of smaller scope often give original titles without translation, although some contributors have translated titles where doing so clarifies the argument. Translated titles of books are italicized when the title refers to a published English translation: for example, the Georgian poet Shota

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Rustaveli's *Vepkhis tqaosani* (*The Man in the Panther's Skin*). For poems, translated titles are given with quotation marks when the translation has been published under that title, but without quotation marks when the translated title is ad hoc.

This convention sometimes entails reproducing a nonliteral rendering that appears in a published translation, such as Boccaccio's *Trattatello in laude di Dante* as *Life of Dante*, or the Guatemalan poet Otto René Castillo's *Vámonos patria a caminar* as *Let's Go*. We believe that the value of indicating an extant translation outweighs the occasional infelicity. At the same time, it is likely we have overlooked some published translations, and many new ones will appear over the life of this book.

Dates of the lives and works of poets appear in most entries but are sometimes omitted when they are less relevant to the entry or cannot be indicated consistently. Dates of works in the age of print refer to publication unless otherwise indicated.

Articles contain two types of cross-references: those that appear within the body of an entry (indicated with asterisks or in parentheses with small capitals), and those that follow an entry, just before the bibliographies. The former are often topics

that extend the issue at hand; the latter often indicate adjacent topics of broader interest to the entire entry. Of course, both kinds of cross-reference hold out the danger of infinite connection, as nearly every entry could be linked to many others. Accordingly, we have tried to apply cross-references judiciously, indicating where further reading really complements the argument of a particular entry.

The bibliographies are intended not only as lists of works cited in the entries but as guides to relevant scholarship of the distant and recent past. The bibliographies have been lightly standardized, but some entries gain from citing works of scholarship in their original iterations or languages, while many others choose to cite later editions or translations into English as a convenience for the reader.

As world poetry in its most inclusive sense becomes more frequently anthologized and the Internet brings the widest variety of poetic production within the reach of every connected reader, now more than ever there is a need for a comprehensive guide by experts to national, regional, and diasporic traditions. We hope this *Handbook* will accompany many journeys of discovery and enjoyment.