

Haun Saussy

Lyric Lost and Found
(Abstract)

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A tenacious tradition considers the lyric as the manifestation of a subjectivity, whether personal or universal. But folk traditions as well as the twentieth-century avant-gardes offer the counter-example of poetry that arises from the collocation of verbal fragments, of artificial languages, of subjects in name only, and dare to present these as a new-style lyric. Less startling versions of this displacement of the lyric subject occur in such artifacts as the overheard poem. For such poems, the fact of publication replaces the mythic occasion of utterance as the poem's moment of truth. This foregrounding of the moment of production is a feature linking the so-called primitive, oral, or folk poetry of many cultures to the purportedly post-humanist poetry of the different avant-gardes, and it links them, not through an irony, metaphor or coincidence, but through a model of the function of the artwork that indeed puts the act of signifying temporally and axiologically before the signified meanings

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