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NOTES TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY POETICS OF COTEXT AND ITS CULTURAL LITERARY CONTEXTS

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Abstract: *The universal concept of context as well as the more specialized – linguistics or bible studies related – one of cotext can and to a certain extent have already proved quite useful in analyzing, assessing, and even writing contemporary poetry. The article comments on the poetics of Robert Duncan, Elizabeth Bishop, Denise Levertov, Adrienne Rich, Jay Parini, and David Baker in circumscribing the cultural and literary contexts for engaging with a proposed new definition of cotext in poetry and poetics, drawn on the acceptance it has in biblical studies. Cotext is thus redefined as a set of contexts for certain elements/themes/topics (including the topic of “context” itself) as they evolve within a oeuvre or poetics (Bishop’s, Rich’s, Baker’s, etc.) and/or develop in various sections (contexts) of the same text or versions of that text. Given its millennium-long background – under this definition – and the spectacular evolution towards a major element in writing poetry, a lyric mode, and even a genre (Eliot’s Waste Land, Pound’s Cantos, the profusion of contemporary renditions of Greco-Latin classics in English “original” versions, from Robert Hass to C.K. Stead to Dan Chiasson and onward) in modernism and postmodernism, poetic cotext has generated an enormous corpus of literature, and with the more recent flarf, google, and assemblage-like modes of “composition” and performance, it seems to gain more and more ground in wider and wider contexts that both poets and audiences come across and can draw on every day.*