

## Modernist poetry

### T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Poet, literary critic, dramatist, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948. He settled in London in 1915 and became a British citizen in 1927.

Basic features of his poetry: completely fragmented narrative; heavy role of symbolism in keeping the poem together; frequent references to the old literary works; a mosaic form of a poem

*The Waste Land* (1922) – a long poem in 5 parts; Eliot in it expressed his conception of the sterility in contrast with societies of the past. The organizing principle of the poem is the myth of death and rebirth. The theme of the poem is the quest for regeneration in a landscape of sexual disorder and spiritual desolation

*Four Quartets* (1943) – the four quartets represent the four seasons and the four elements. They are concerned with time past and present and with the wartime London. In these poems Eliot also expressed the process of arriving at belief

*Murder in Cathedral* (1935) – verse play, based on the 12th century martyrdom of Thomas Becket

### Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

Avantgarde poet, critic and translator. For some time he lived in London, Paris, in various cities of Italy. In Paris he became a leader of the American expatriate literary circle. He influenced and assisted to many writers around him (Eliot, Joyce, Yeats, H. D., Hemingway, Williams). He was the leading figure of the imagist movement (He coined the word Imagism). Pound believed that authors should experiment and draw attention to the language. His phrase „Make it new“ became a modernist slogan. In 1924 he settled in Italy and became more extreme in his views. He admired Benito Mussolini and during World War II he offered his services to the Italian government. After the war, he was charged of treason, spent 25 days in an open wire cage at the prison camp near Pisa, then he was taken to a hospital for insane criminals in Washington, D.C., in 1958 he was released, he returned to Italy and in 1972 died in Venice.

*Cantos* (1925) – Pound drew his themes from Confucian ethics, classical mythology, economic theory, and other seemingly disparate sources in his effort to interpret cultural history. The cantos were separate poems of varying lengths, combining meditation, description, and transcription from the books Pound was reading. Ultimately, Pound wrote 116 cantos.

*Pisan Cantos* (1948) – written during his imprisonment

### H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) (1886-1961)

A lover of Ezra Pound. As an imagist, she wrote characteristically short, precise verse in extremely free form. Like most of the imagist, she eventually abandoned imagism and sought new style. She chose mythic, psychologically oriented subject. (She was Sigmund Freud's friend).

*Sea garden* (1916) – a collection of imagist poems

### Wallace Stevens (1875-1955)

studied in his poems the interrelationship of reality and imagination. He believed in the power of metaphor which interprets the world. According to Stevens, reality has no meaning, people put meaning into it.

Quotations: „Not ideas about the thing, but the thing itself.“ „Life is the reflection of literature.“

### William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

wrote in ordinary speech about everyday situations. He was influenced by the imagist movement.

### e. e. cummings (1894-1962)

poet and painter, one of the most radically experimental and inventive writers of the 20th century. His style is characterized by eccentric and playful typography, deliberate capitalization and punctuation, unusual exploitation of language and syntax, and a frequent use of jazz rhythms. His verse abounds with wit, irony, sarcasm. But he also wrote lyrical poems about love, death, pleasure, natural beauty. Visual aspect of his poetry is very important.

*XLI Poems* (1925)