INTRODUCTION

‘AFTER’ OBJECTIVISM:
SINCERITY, OBJECTIFICATION, CONTINGENCY

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A monster owl
out on the fence
flew away. What
is it the sign
of? The sign of
an owl.¹

For the beginning is assuredly
the end—since we know nothing, pure
and simple, beyond
our own complexities²

The entire matter involves the process of active literary omission
and a discussion of method finding its way in the acceptance of
two criteria: sincerity and objectification.³

Among the many literary and poetic schools, movements, and epochs, Objectivism is perhaps the most inchoate and influential because of its indeterminate and intersectional ethos, in the midst of multiple new directions for contemporary poetics and praxis in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom from the 1930s onward. By ‘poetics’ we mean discourses of writing, or making; by ‘praxis,’ forms of making, or, more fundamentally, action—two interconnected artistic principles central to literary production generally, and to the tradition at the heart of this book, which we underscore in our volume’s title and elaborate in the pages that follow.

Whereas Romantic poets were concerned with ego and imagination, Symbolists with symbols, Imagists with images, Surrealists with the surreal, Projectivists with projected breath and voice, and Postmodernists with varieties of repetition within inescapable structures, the Objectivist poets weren’t exclusively concerned with objects per se. They were con-