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Titolo	A long essay on the long poem : modern and contemporary poetics and practices
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Sommario/riassunto	"In A Long Essay on the Long Poem, DuPlessis invokes a quote from Ronald Johnson: "Americans like to write big poems, even if people don't read them." It's a joke, in part, but also a telling indication of the difficulty of the subject. Long poems are elusive, particularly in the slippery forms that have emerged in the postmodern mode. DuPlessis quotes both Nathaniel Mackey and Anne Waldman in metaphorizing the poem as a Box: both in the sense of a vessel that contains, and as a machine that processes, an instrument on which language is played. To reckon with a particularly noncompliant variant of a notoriously slippery form, DuPlessis works in a polyvalent mode, a hybrid of critical analysis and speculative essay. She resists a single-focus approach to the long poem and does not venture a bravura, one-size-all thesis. Yet there is an arc of argument here, even as the book ranges across five chapters and a host of disparate writers. DuPlessis roughly divides the long poem and the long poets into three genres: epics, quests, and something she terms "assemblages." The poets surveyed will be familiar for most readers of twentieth-century American and English poetry: T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson, Alice

Notley, Anne Waldman, Nathaniel Mackey, Ron Silliman, and Robert Duncan. But rather than attempting a definitive treatment of such a long roster, DuPlessis assumes a certain familiarity in order to focus on key works. A standout example comes in the third chapter, in which DuPlessis reads Dante by way of the modern long poem to generate surprising insights. But she also carefully avoids the self-confirming search for genealogical patterns (e.g., Eliot to Pound to Williams to Zukofsky). Instead she deliberately seeks to see different but intersecting patterns of connection between poems, a nexus rather than a lineage. In doing so she works around the metatextual challenge of the long poem and of her own attempt to "essay" it: how to encompass "everything." The end result is a fascinating and generous work that defies neat categorization as anything other than essential"--
