

Penguin Modern European Poets

Advisory Editor: A. Alvarez

Paul Celan: Selected Poems

Paul Celan was the pseudonym of Paul Anczel, who was born in Romanian Bukovina in 1920. His home town was occupied by Russian troops in 1940 and by the Germans in 1942. Both his parents were deported to an extermination camp, and Celan himself was sent to a labour camp.

He survived, and moved to Paris in 1948 where he lived until his death. His first book of poems, *Der Sand aus den Urnen* (1948), was withdrawn after publication; his main work is contained in the collections *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952), *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955), *Sprachgitter* (1959), and *Die Niemandsrose* (1963). He also published translations of, among others, Rimbaud, Valéry and René Char.

Paul Celan committed suicide in 1970.

Paul Celan: Selected Poems

*Translated by Michael Hamburger and
Christopher Middleton, with an
Introduction by Michael Hamburger*



Penguin Books

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, England
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood,
Victoria, Australia

This selection first published 1972

The poems by Paul Celan were first published in German in the following books: *Mohn und Gedächtnis* and *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, copyright © Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1952, 1955; *Sprachgitter* and *Die Niemandsrose*, copyright © Fischer Verlag, 1959, 1963; *Atemwende*, *Fadensonnen*, *Lichtzwang*, and *Schneepart*, copyright © Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971. The translations *Fugue of Death* and *The Jugs* were first published in English by MacGibbon & Kee, copyright © MacGibbon & Kee Ltd, 1962. The translation *Matière de Bretagne* is copyright © Christopher Middleton, 1967. All other translations and the Introduction are copyright © Michael Hamburger, 1972.

Made and printed in Great Britain by
C. Nicholls & Company Ltd
Set in Monotype Bembo

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

Contents

Introduction	9
From <i>Mohn und Gedächtnis</i> (1952)	
Tallow Lamp	22
Your Hand Full of Hours	23
Aspen Tree . . .	24
Sand from the Urns	25
In the Cherry-Tree's Branches . . .	26
Memory of France	27
Chanson of a Lady in the Shade	28
Night Ray	30
The Years from You to Me	31
Corona	32
Fugue of Death (C.M.)	33
Crystal	35
The Jugs (C.M.)	36
From <i>Von Schwelle zu Schwelle</i> (1955)	
From Darkness to Darkness	38
With a Variable Key	39
In Memoriam Paul Eluard	40
Shibboleth	41
Speak, You Also	43
From <i>Sprachgitter</i> (1959)	
Homecoming	46
Below	47
Tenebrae	48
Flower	49
Language Mesh	50
Night	51

Matière de Bretagne (C.M.)	52
All Souls	54
Draft of a Landscape	55
An Eye, Open	56
The Straitening	57
From <i>Die Niemandrose</i> (1963)	
There was Earth	66
Zürich, the Stork Inn	67
So Many Constellations	68
Dumb Autumn Smells	69
Psalm	70
Alchemical	71
... Plashes the Fountain	73
Radix, Matrix	74
Afternoon with a Circus and Citadel	76
In the Daytime	77
Crowned Out ...	78
From <i>Atemwende</i> (1967)	
To Stand ...	82
Thread Suns	83
Etched Away From	84
On the White Philactery	85
Go Blind Now	86
In Prague	87
Once	88
From <i>Fadensonnen</i> (1968)	
You Were My Death	90
To My Right	91
Irish	92
Dew ...	93
Powers. Dominions.	94
Think of It	95

From *Lichtzwang* (1970)

Night Rode Him 98

I Can Still See You 99

Wide-Open Tomorrow 100

Sprinkle Ochre into My Eyes 101

Leap-Centuries 102

From *Schneepart* (1971)

The Broached Year 104

Illegibility 105

I Hear that the Axe has Flowered 106

Largo 107

A Leaf, Treeless 108

Note: The translations marked (C.M.) are by
Christopher Middleton. The others are by
Michael Hamburger.

Introduction

From whichever direction we approach it – as plain readers of poetry, as critics or literary historians, as biographers or sociologists, or as translators – Paul Celan's work confronts us with difficulty and paradox. The more we try to concentrate on the poem itself, on its mode of utterance, which includes both theme and manner, the more clearly we see that difficulty and paradox are of its essence. As for 'placing' his work within the body of German literature after 1945, or against the larger background of international modernism, all we can be certain of at this point is that it occupies a prominent, isolated and anomalous position. With Nelly Sachs, this German poet, born of a Jewish family in Romania, shared an obvious preoccupation with the holocaust which he survived in body but not in spirit; and a not so obvious debt to Jewish history, tradition and mystical thought. Yet, apart from their essential differences in poetic practice, Nelly Sachs was a German poet before the holocaust turned her into a Jewish one. Like other assimilated German Jews she had to look for her Jewish heritage – with the help of Gentile friends, as it happened. Paul Celan spent his formative years in a Jewish community that had recently ceased to be within the boundaries of the Austrian Empire; and most of his productive years were spent in France. His poetic affinities were French, Russian and even English, as well as German. Among his German contemporaries, the one closest to him in sensibility and manner was Johannes Bobrowski, a resident in East Germany with distinctly Christian allegiances. Literary scholars and historians have only begun to survey Celan's background, to unravel his

complex affinities and uncover the sources of many seemingly cryptic allusions in his poems.

As a translator I have profited by their researches, particularly by those of Dietlind Meinecke and of Joachim Schulze, to whom my thanks are due. As a translator, again, and as a reader of Celan's work, I insist on the essential difficulty and paradox of his poetry. It is the difficulty and the paradox that demand a special attention to every word in his texts, and this attention is something other than what is normally meant by understanding. I am by no means sure that I have 'understood' even those of his poems – a very small part of his total output – which I was able to translate. But the darkness in Celan's poems, their leaps and bounds, their haltingness and their silences, all these are inseparable from their authenticity and their fascination.

Paul Anczel – 'Celan' was an anagram adopted in 1947 when his first poems appeared in a Romanian periodical – was born at Czernowitz (now Chernovtsy), Bukovina, on 23 November 1920. After attending school there he paid his first visit to France in 1938, as a medical student in Tours, but returned to Czernowitz in the following year to study Romance languages and literatures. In 1940 his home town was occupied by Russian troops, but he was able to continue his studies until the following year, when German and Romanian forces took over and the Jews were herded into a ghetto. In 1942 his parents were deported to an extermination camp. Paul Celan managed to escape, but remained in a Romanian labour camp until he was able to return to Czernowitz, which had been re-occupied by the Russians, in December 1943. In the following year he took up his studies again until 1945, when he left the Soviet Union and settled in Bucharest as a translator and publisher's reader. In December 1947 he moved to Vienna,

and in July 1948 – after the publication of his first book of poems, which he later withdrew – he settled in Paris, where he took up the study of German literature, obtaining his *Licence ès Lettres* in 1950 and becoming a teacher of German literature at the *École Normale Supérieure*. After his marriage that year to Gisèle Lestrangé, Paris remained his home until his suicide in April 1970, at the age of forty-nine.

Most of the poems in his first collection were reprinted in *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, which appeared in West Germany in 1952 and won him immediate recognition, confirmed by an invitation to the Gruppe 47 in the same year. His next collection, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, followed in 1955. Between 1957 and 1967 Celan received a number of prizes and awards, including the Georg Büchner Prize in 1960. A speech delivered by Celan on that occasion, *Der Meridian*, is one of the very few prose pieces which he published and an important comment on his own work. With the publication of *Sprachgitter* (1959) and *Die Niemandsrose* (1963) Celan's work moved into a second phase. These two crucial and central collections were followed by *Atemwende* (1967), *Fadensonnen* (1968) and, posthumously, by *Lichtzwang* (1970) and *Schneepart* (1971). Celan's many translations into German included poems by Rimbaud and Valéry, Apollinaire, Michaux and André du Bouchet; a selection from Shakespeare's sonnets, and poems by Emily Dickinson and Marianne Moore; and selections of poems by Blok, Mandelstam and Yesenin. At an earlier period he published translations into Romanian of Russian prose works.

These basic facts of Celan's biography may indicate something of the anomaly and extremity of his position as a poet. What the facts do not reveal, and his productivity seems to belie, is that the loss of his parents and his early

experience of persecution left indelible scars. Throughout his later years he suffered acute crises and breakdowns that seriously affected both his personal and his professional life. One such crisis occurred soon after his emergence as a poet, when he was accused of having plagiarized the work of Yvan Goll, the Franco-German poet with whom Celan became personally acquainted in 1949. Since Celan's early poems linked up both with German Expressionism and French Surrealism, movements with which Goll had been associated, certain stylistic features were bound to be common to both poets. If Celan had not been predisposed towards paranoia, the foolish and protracted controversy that ensued could not have hurt him; as it was, it obsessed and unbalanced him to a degree far in excess of the cause. I recall a later meeting with Celan when he was similarly obsessed with the 'treachery' of one of his publishers, who had decided to re-issue the poems of a ballad-writer popular during the Nazi régime. Towards the end of his life the crises became more violent and more disruptive.

Paul Celan was not a confessional poet. Even in the early *Fugue of Death*, his most famous and most widely anthologized poem, the personal anguish is transposed into distancing imagery and a musical structure so intricate that a kind of 'terrible beauty' is wrested from the ugly theme. Realists and literalists among Celan's critics objected to this 'aestheticizing' of the death camps. Yet the power of the poem arises from the extreme tension between its grossly impure material and its almost pure form. A great deal has been written about the impossibility of writing poems after Auschwitz, let alone about Auschwitz. Even Celan could not do so directly, realistically, but only by an art of contrast and paradox that celebrates beauty and energy while commemorating their destruction. Though he turned against his *Fugue of Death* in later years,

refusing permission to have it reprinted in more anthologies, it was because he had refined his art in the meantime to a point where the *Fugue of Death* seemed too direct, too realistic. Yet the anguish, the darkness, the shadow of death are present in all his poems, early and late, including the most high-spirited and sensuous.

The aspiration towards a pure or absolute poetry was pervasive in France among poets of almost every school, and it was not necessarily felt to be incompatible with political and ethical commitments. Like Paul Eluard and René Char, among the French poets to whom Celan felt close, he did not feel constrained to sacrifice the freedom of his art to an 'engagement' beyond it. At his most difficult, most elliptic and paradoxical, he insisted that he was not a hermetic poet but one out to communicate, describing his poems as 'ways of a voice to a receptive you', a 'desperate dialogue' and 'a sort of homecoming'. Another way of putting it is that his poetry never ceased to be rooted in experience, extreme experience that could not be enacted in any manner less difficult than his. The hiatuses, the silences, the dislocations of normal usage belong to what he had to say and to the effort of saying it.

If Celan's poems were meant to be hermetic they would be less difficult, since they would save us the effort of making sense of them. That is why the earlier verse, though purer, is less difficult than the later. Any reader familiar with the kind of poetry whose progression is one of imagery rather than argument will know how to read the earlier poems, whose diction too is closer to established conventions. From *Sprachgitter* onwards the images grow sparser and more idiosyncratic, the syntax more broken, the message at once more urgent and more reticent. The existing resources of language become inadequate. Celan begins to coin new words, especially compound words,

and to divide other words into their component syllables, each of which acquires a new weight. The process of condensation and dislocation is carried further in the following collections. Both verse lines and whole poems tend to grow shorter and shorter.

One exception, the long poem *The Straitening*, exemplifies the change. Its German title, *Engführung*, is a technical term for a device employed in the composition of fugues. Its counterpart in English usage would have been the Italian word 'stretto'. This points to the precedent of Celan's earlier poem *Fugue of Death*, and a comparison between the two longer poems shows just how daring, condensed and cryptic Celan's art had grown in the thirteen years separating them. Although the form of the later poem is an even closer approximation to fugal composition with words, I decided not to use the technical term for the title. (The French translation by Jean Daive, which was authorized by Celan, does use the technical term, *Strette*.) A German reader of the original text not versed in the art of counterpoint would take the title more literally as a 'narrowing' or reduction; and since this wider, thematic connotation would not be conveyed by the strictly musical term, I looked for an English word that would at least suggest it. Ambiguity, in any case, occurs throughout this poem.

The later poems included in the present selection are those that were not rendered totally untranslatable by ambiguity, play on words or a degree of uncertainty as to what the poem is about that would have made translation little more than guesswork. It was a question not of whether I could catch this allusion or that – many must have escaped me even in poems which I did translate – but whether I could respond to the gesture of a poem as a whole. If the gesture of the poem made sense, the oddities

of diction and usage, including the ambiguities, could usually be reproduced in English, with certain modifications due to the different characters of the two languages. German, for instance, lends itself to the formation of compound words in a way that English does not. German also permits nouns to be preceded by complete clauses that qualify them, a peculiarity of the language that was especially congenial to Celan when the movement of his poem had come to be governed by breath units rather than by metrical or syntactic units.

*Und du:
du, du, du
mein täglich wahr- und wahrer-
geschundenes Später
der Rosen -:*

where the German capitalization of nouns helps to bring out that the adjective 'später' has been turned into a noun, has had to be transposed as follows:

*And you:
you, you, you
my later of roses
daily worn true and
more true -:*

A structurally faithful rendering would have demanded:

*And you:
you, you, you
my daily true- and truer-
worn later
of (the) roses -:*

with the added substitution of a stronger word than 'worn' to convey the sense of misuse or abuse implied by the German word 'geschunden'.

Those lines are from a poem of Celan's middle period.

More puzzling neologisms abound in the later collections, as in this short poem, *Once*:

Once
I heard him,
he was washing the world,
unseen, nightlong,
real.

One and Infinite,
annihilated,
ied.
Light was. Salvation.

The German word corresponding to 'ied' is 'ichten'. Since it comes after 'vernichtet' (annihilated) it could be the infinitive of a verb that is the positive counterpart of 'annihilate', and that is how it was construed by a reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement*, who translated it as 'ihilate'. This new verb would not be more far-fetched than other neologisms of Celan's, since in Middle High German, which he knew, there was a positive 'iht' (aught) corresponding to the negative 'niht' (nought). My authority for 'ied' is Paul Celan himself. When I last met him, in April 1968, he was convinced that I was the author of the anonymous review in question and would not accept my repeated denial. He explained that 'ichten' was formed from the personal pronoun 'ich', so that it was the third person plural of the imperfect tense of a verb 'ichen' ('to i'). An equally ambiguous word formation is to be found in the poem *Etched Away From*, but Celan did not comment on the translation offered by the same reviewer of *Atemwende*. I refer to

das hundert-
züngige Mein-
gedicht, das Genicht

rendered there as

the hundred-
tongued my-
poem, the noem.

'*Mein-gedicht*' could indeed mean 'my-poem', but it could also mean 'false poem' or 'pseudo-poem', by analogy with the German word '*Meineid*', a false oath. Possibly Celan had both senses in mind when he coined the word. In translation the ambiguity had to be resolved, and after much pondering I decided in favour of 'pseudo-poem', although '*Meineid*' is the only modern German word that preserves this sense of '*mein*'. Paul Celan was a learned poet with an outstandingly rich vocabulary derived more from reading than from practice in the vernacular, since he spent little time in German-speaking countries. Since he also knew Yiddish, he was closer to the medieval roots of the German language than contemporaries who grew up in Germany.

Negation is a strikingly recurrent feature not only of Celan's new word-formations but of his later poetry in general. The seemingly negative theology of his great poem *Psalm* has been shown to have antecedents in both Jewish and Christian mysticism, and Celan is known to have been well versed in both. Less explicitly than in *Psalm*, something of this theology is prefigured in early poems like *The Jugs*. Celan's religion – and there can be no doubt as to his profoundly religious sensibility, whatever he may have believed or not believed – had to come to grips with the experience of being God-forsaken. Negation and blasphemy were the means by which Celan could be true to that experience and yet maintain the kind of intimate dialogue with God characteristic of Jewish devotion.

At the same time negation and paradox served him as a

basic stylistic principle, as expounded in the early poem *Speak, You Also*. In that poem he exhorts himself to 'keep yes and no unsplit', to admit enough darkness into his poems, because 'he speaks truly who speaks the shade'. With its dialectic of light and darkness, life and death, this poem anticipates the whole of Celan's subsequent development, as well as linking the formal aspects of that development – the reduction carried further from book to book – with the inner necessity from which they arose:

Thinner you grow, less knowable, finer.

This applies to the poems as much as to the poet; and so does the star image, towards the end of the poem, that stands for the urge towards the transcendence and resolution of paradox present in Celan's work right up to the posthumous collections.

One thing sets Paul Celan's work apart from that of most of his German coevals: he had hardly any use for realism of a kind that merely imitates and reproduces, for what Northrop Frye has called 'the low mimetic'. Direct social comment is not to be found in his work, though it became increasingly realistic in a different sense – the widening of its vocabulary to include twentieth century phenomena and technologies. From *Die Niemandrose* onwards invective becomes prominent in Celan's poems, though the invective is as rich in cryptic allusions and intricate word-play as every other mode that he employed. He was realistic, too, in doing full justice to 'the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart'. Yet the 'inwardness' of his poetry places it in a line of descent that runs from Hölderlin through Rilke to Expressionism. As a very short late poem attests, he found Brecht's poetry of social and political comment too 'explicit'. One reason is that he wanted poetry to be open to the unexpected, the unpredictable,

the unpredictable. His poems were 'messages in a bottle', as he said, which might or might not be picked up. That element of risk was as necessary to them as the need to communicate. On the few occasions when he spoke about poetry in public he spoke of it as a process, a groping forward, a search. Paradoxically once more, he spoke of its practice, and the practice of any art, as a driving of the practitioner into the 'inmost recess of himself', his narrowest place, and as a 'setting free'. That, incidentally, is one reason why the title of his poem *Engführung* means more than the technical term 'stretto' could possibly convey to an English reader.

No feature of Celan's later poems is more characteristic of their openness and mysteriousness than their unidentified personal pronouns, the 'you' that can be the woman addressed in a love poem or an *alter ego* or a deity; the 'he', 'she' or 'they' that enters a poem without any introduction or explanation. Most of these persons have no existence or significance outside the poem. It is the poem that creates them or discovers them. A reader can either relate himself to them through his own experience and imagination or he can not, in which case the message in the bottle has not reached him. If it does reach him it will tell him something of which he was not aware before reading it. That is the distinction of poetry like Celan's, poetry always close to the unutterable because it has passed through it and come out on the other side.

Such poetry demands a special kind of attention and perhaps a special kind of faith in the authenticity of what it enacts. Without a similar attention and faith it could not have been written, since the risk is shared by writer and reader. Speaking about poetry, Celan quoted this definition by Malebranche: 'Attention is the natural prayer of the soul.' It was this quality of attention that I had in mind

when I referred to Celan's religious sensibility. The more we read Celan's poems, the more his kind of attention imposes itself as the only adequate response to them.

The present selection from Celan's successive collections, with its inevitable concentrations on poems more easily accessible than many others, could not encompass the full range of his work, which becomes most rewarding when read in its entirety. We need to know his recurrent images before we can appreciate their modifications and transmutations from poem to poem. This book will serve its purpose if it permits English readers to make a start. It seems very likely that Celan's work will be widely translated, for a long time to come.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

from *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952)

Tallow Lamp

The monks with hairy fingers opened the book:
September.

Now Jason pelts with snow the newly sprouting grain.
The forest gave you a necklace of hands. So dead you
walk the rope.

To your hair a darker blue is imparted; I speak of love.
Shells I speak and light clouds, and a boat buds in the
rain.

A little stallion gallops across the leafing fingers –
Black the gate leaps open, I sing;
How did we live here?

Your Hand Full of Hours

Your hand full of hours, you came to me – and I said:
Your hair is not brown.
So you lifted it lightly on to the scales of grief; it
weighed more than I . . .

On ships they come to you and make it their cargo, then
put it on sale in the markets of lust –

You smile at me from the depth, I weep at you from the
scale that stays light.

I weep: Your hair is not brown, they offer brine from
the sea and you give them curls . . .

You whisper: They're filling the world with me now,
in your heart I'm a hollow way still!

You say: Lay the leafage of years beside you – it's time
you came closer and kissed me!

The leafage of years is brown, your hair is not brown.

Aspen Tree. . .

Aspen tree, your leaves glance white into the dark.
My mother's hair was never white.

Dandelion, so green is the Ukraine.
My yellow-haired mother did not come home.

Rain cloud, above the well do you hover?
My quiet mother weeps for everyone.

Round star, you wind the golden loop.
My mother's heart was ripped by lead.

Oaken door, who lifted you off your hinges?
My gentle mother cannot return.

Sand from the Urns

Green as mould is the house of oblivion.

Before each of the blowing gates your beheaded
minstrel turns blue.

For you he beats his drum made of moss and of harsh
pubic hair;

With a festering toe in the sand he traces your eyebrow.
Longer he draws it than ever it was, and the red of your
lip.

You fill up the urns here and nourish your heart.

In the Cherry-Tree's Branches . . .

In the cherry-tree's branches a crunching of iron shoes.
Summer foams up for you out of helmets. The blackish
cuckoo
with diamond spurs draws his image on to the gates of
the sky.

Bareheaded the horseman looms up from the foliage.
On his shield he bears the dusk of your smile,
nailed on to the enemy's kerchief of steel.
The garden of dreamers was promised to him,
and spears he keeps ready, so that the rose will climb . . .

But unshod through the air comes he who resembles
you most;
iron shoes buckled on to his delicate hands,
he sleeps through the battle and summer. It's for him
that the cherry bleeds.

Memory of France

Together with me recall: the sky of Paris, that giant
autumn crocus . . .

We went shopping for hearts at the flower girl's booth:
they were blue and they opened up in the water.

It began to rain in our room,
and our neighbour came in, Monsieur Le Songe, a lean
little man.

We played cards, I lost the irises of my eyes;
you lent me your hair, I lost it, he struck us down.

He left by the door, the rain followed him out.

We were dead and were able to breathe.

Chanson of a Lady in the Shade

When the silent one comes and beheads the tulips:

Who wins?

Who loses?

Who walks to the window?

Who's the first to speak her name?

He is one who wears my hair.

He wears it much as one wears the dead on one's hands.

He wears it much as the sky wore my hair that year
when I loved.

He wears it like that out of vanity.

That one wins.

Doesn't lose.

Doesn't walk to the window.

He does not speak her name.

He is one who has my eyes.

He's had them since gates have shut.

He wears them like rings on his fingers.

He wears them like shards of sapphire and lust;

Since the autumn he has been my brother;

He's counting the days and the nights.

That one wins.

Doesn't lose.

Doesn't walk to the window.

He's the last to speak her name.

He's one who has what I said.

He carries it under his arm like a bundle.

He carries it as the clock carries its worst hour.
From threshold to threshold he carries it, never throws
it away.

That one doesn't win.

He loses.

He walks to the window.

He's the first to speak her name.

With tulips that one's beheaded.

Night Ray

Most brightly of all burned the hair of my evening loved
one;
to her I send the coffin of lightest wood.
Waves billow round it as round the bed of our dream
in Rome;
it wears a white wig as I do and speaks hoarsely:
it talks as I do when I grant admittance to hearts.
It knows a French song about love, I sang it in autumn
when I stopped as a tourist in Lateland and wrote my
letters to morning.

A fine boat is that coffin carved in the coppice of
feelings.
I too drift in it downbloodstream, younger still than
your eye.
Now you are young as a bird dropped dead in March
snow,
now it comes to you, sings you its love song from
France.
You are light: you will sleep through my Spring till
it's over.
I am lighter:
in front of strangers I sing.

The Years from You to Me

Your hair waves once more when I weep. With the
blue of your eyes
you lay the table of love: a bed between summer and
autumn.

We drink what somebody brewed neither I nor you nor
a third; we lap up some empty and last thing.

We watch ourselves in the deep sea's mirrors and faster
pass food to the other:
the night is the night, it begins with the morning,
beside you it lays me down.

Corona

Autumn eats its leaf out of my hand: we are friends.
From the nuts we shell time and we teach it to walk:
then time returns to the shell.

In the mirror it's Sunday,
in dream there is room for sleeping,
our mouths speak the truth.

My eye moves down to the sex of my loved one:
we look at each other,
we exchange dark words,
we love each other like poppy and recollection,
we sleep like wine in the conches,
like the sea in the moon's blood ray.

We stand by the window embracing, and people look
up from the street:
it is time they knew!
It is time the stone made an effort to flower,
time unrest had a beating heart.
It is time it were time.

It is time.

Fugue of Death

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
drink it and drink it

we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete

he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter
he whistles his dogs up

he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in
the earth

he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the mornings at noon we drink you at
nightfall

drink you and drink you

A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete

Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the
sky it is ample to lie there

He shouts stab deeper in earth you there and you others
you sing and you play

he grabs at the iron in his belt and swings it and blue
are his eyes

stab deeper your spades you there and you others play
on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at nightfall
we drink you at noon in the mornings we drink you at
nightfall
drink you and drink you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play sweeter death's music death comes as a
master from Germany
he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you
shall climb to the sky
then you'll have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie
there

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death comes as a master from
Germany
we drink you at nightfall and morning we drink you
and drink you
a master from Germany death comes with eyes that are
blue
with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit
you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
he hunts us down with his dogs in the sky he gives us a
grave
he plays with the serpents and dreams death comes as a
master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith.

Crystal

Not on my lips look for your mouth,
not in front of the gate for the stranger,
not in the eye for the tear.

Seven nights higher red makes for red,
seven hearts deeper the hand knocks on the gate,
seven roses later the fountain begins to splash.

The Jugs

At the long tables of time
the jugs of God carouse.
They drink empty the eyes that see and the eyes of the
blind,
the hearts of the mastering shadows,
the hollow cheek of the evening.
They are the most mighty carousers:
they carry empty and full alike to their mouths
and do not flow over like you or like me.

from *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955)

From Darkness to Darkness

You opened your eyes – I saw my darkness live.
I see through it down to the bed;
there too it is mine and lives.

Is that a ferry? Which, crossing, awakens?
Whose light can it be at my heels
for a boatman to appear?

With a Variable Key

With a variable key
you unlock the house in which
drifts the snow of that left unspoken.
Always what key you choose
depends on the blood that spurts
from your eye or your mouth or your ear.

You vary the key, you vary the word
that is free to drift with the flakes.
What snowball will form round the word
depends on the wind that rebuffs you.

In Memoriam Paul Eluard

Lay these words into the dead man's grave
which he spoke in order to live.
Pillow his head amid them,
let him feel
the tongues of longing,
the tongs.

Lay that word on the dead man's eyelids
which he refused to him
who addressed him as thou,
the word
his leaping heart-blood passed by
when a hand as bare as his own
knotted him who addressed him as thou
into the trees of the future.

Lay this word on his eyelids:
perhaps
his eye, still blue, will assume
a second, more alien blueness,
and he who addressed him as thou
will dream with him: We.

Shibboleth

Together with my stones
grown big with weeping
behind the bars,

they dragged me out into
the middle of the market,
that place
where the flag unfurls to which
I swore no kind of allegiance.

Flute,
double flute of night:
remember the dark
twin redness
of Vienna and Madrid.

Set your flag at half-mast,
memory.
At half-mast
today and for ever.

Heart:
here too reveal what you are,
here, in the midst of the market.
Call the shibboleth, call it out
into your alien homeland:
February. No pasaran.

Unicorn:
you know about the stones,

you know about the water;
come,
I shall lead you away
to the voices
of Estremadura.

Speak, You Also

Speak, you also,
speak as the last,
have your say.

Speak –
But keep yes and no unsplit,
And give your say this meaning:
give it the shade.

Give it shade enough,
give it as much
as you know has been dealt out between
midday and midday and midnight.

Look around:
look how it all leaps alive –
where death is! Alive!
He speaks truly who speaks the shade.

But now shrinks the place where you stand:
Where now, stripped by shade, will you go?
Upward. Grope your way up.
Thinner you grow, less knowable, finer.
Finer: a thread by which
it wants to be lowered, the star:
to float further down, down below
where it sees itself glitter: on sand dunes
of wandering words.

from *Sprachgitter* (1959)

Homecoming

Snowfall, denser and denser,
dove-coloured as yesterday,
snowfall, as if even now you were sleeping.

White, stacked into distance.
Above it, endless,
the sleigh track of the lost.

Below, hidden,
presses up
what so hurts the eyes,
hill upon hill,
invisible.

On each,
fetched home into its today,
an I slipped away into dumbness:
wooden, a post.

There: a feeling,
blown across by the ice wind
attaching its dove- its snow-
coloured cloth as a flag.

Below

Led home into oblivion
the sociable talk of
our slow eyes.

Led home, syllable after syllable, shared
out among the dayblind dice, for which
the playing hand reaches out, large,
awakening.

And the too much of my speaking:
heaped up round the little
crystal dressed in the style of your silence.

Tenebrae

We are near, Lord,
near and at hand.

Handled already, Lord,
clawed and clawing as though
the body of each us were
your body, Lord.

Pray, Lord,
pray to us,
we are near.

Wind-awry we went there,
went there to bend
over hollow and ditch.

To be watered we went there, Lord.

It was blood, it was
what you shed, Lord.

It gleamed.

It cast your image into our eyes, Lord.
Our eyes and our mouths are open and empty, Lord.

We have drunk, Lord.
The blood and the image that was in the blood, Lord.

Pray, Lord.
We are near.

Flower

The stone.

The stone in the air, which I followed.

Your eye, as blind as the stone.

We were

hands,

we baled the darkness empty, we found

the word that ascended summer:

flower.

Flower – a blind man's word.

Your eye and mine:

they see

to water.

Growth.

Heart wall upon heart wall

adds petals to it.

One more word like this word, and the hammers
will swing over open ground.

Language Mesh

Eye's roundness between the bars.

Vibratile monad eyelid
propels itself upward,
releases a glance.

Iris, swimmer, dreamless and dreary:
the sky, heart-grey, must be near.

Athwart, in the iron holder,
the smoking splinter.
By its sense of light
you divine the soul.

(If I were like you. If you were like me.
Did we not stand
under one trade wind?
We are strangers.)

The flagstones. On them,
close to each other, the two
heart-grey puddles:
two
mouthsfull of silence.

Night

Pebbles and scree. And a shard note, thin,
as the hour's message of comfort.

Exchange of eyes, finite, at the wrong time:
image-constant,
lignified
the retina –:
the sign of eternity.

Conceivable:
up there, in the cosmic network of rails,
like stars,
the red of two mouths.

Audible (before dawn?): a stone
that made the other its target.

Matière de Bretagne

Gorselight, yellow, the slopes
fester to heaven, the thorn
woos the wound, bells ring
in there, it is evening, the void
rolls its ocean to worship,
the sail of blood is aiming for you.

Dry, stranded
the stream-bed behind you, reed-choked
its moment, above
by the star, the milky
creeks gossip in mud, stone-borer
below, bunched, gapes at blue, a shrub
of transience, beautiful, admits
welcoming your memory.

(Did you know me,
hands? I took
the forked way you showed, my mouth
spat its macadam, I walked, my time,
ambling patrols, cast its shadow – did you know me?)

Hands, the wound
wooed by the thorn, bells
ring, hands, the void, its oceans,
hands, in the gorselight, the
sail of blood
is aiming for you.

You

you teach
you teach your hands
you teach your hands you teach
you teach your hands
sleep

All Souls

What did I
do?

Seminated the night, as though
there could be others, more nocturnal than
this one.

Bird flight, stone flight, a thousand
described routes. Glances,
purloined and plucked. The sea,
tasted, drunk away, dreamed away. An hour
soul-eclipsed. The next, an autumn light,
offered up to a blind
feeling which came that way. Others, many,
with no place but their own heavy centres: glimpsed
and avoided.

Foundlings, stars,
black, full of language: named
after an oath which silence annulled.

And once (when? that too is forgotten):
felt the barb
where my pulse dared the counter-beat.

Draft of a Landscape

Circular graves, below. In
four-beat time the year's pace on
the steep steps around them.

Lavas, basalts, glowing
stone from the world's heart.
Wellspring tuff
where light grew for us, before
our breath.

Oilgreen, soaked with sea spray the
impassable hour. Toward
the centre, grey,
a stone saddle, and on it,
dented and charred,
the animal forehead with
its radiant blaze.

An Eye, Open

Hours, May-coloured, cool.
The no more to be named, hot,
audible in the mouth.

No one's voice, again.

Aching depth of the eyeball:
the lid
does not stand in its way, the lash
does not count what goes in.

The tear, half,
the sharper lens, movable,
brings the images home to you.

The Straitening

★

Driven into the
terrain
with the unmistakable track:

grass, written asunder. The stones, white,
with the shadows of grassblades:
Do not read any more – look!
Do not look any more – go!

Go, your hour
has no sisters, you are –
are at home. A wheel, slow,
rolls out of itself, the spokes
climb,
climb on a blackish field, the night
needs no stars, nowhere
does anyone ask after you.

★

Nowhere
does anyone ask after you –

The place where they lay, it has
a name – it has
none. They did not lie there. Something
lay between them. They
did not see through it.

Did not see, no,
spoke of

words. None
awoke,
sleep
came over them.

★

Came, came. Nowhere
anyone asks –

It is I, I,
I lay between you, I was
open, was
audible, ticked at you, your breathing
obeyed, it is
I still, but then
you are asleep.

★

It is I still –

years,
years, years, a finger
feels down and up, feels
around:
seams, palpable, here
it is split wide open, here
it grew together again – who
covered it up?

★

Covered it
up – who?

Came, came.

Came a word, came,
came through the night,
wanted to shine, wanted to shine.

Ash.

Ash, ash.

Night.

Night-and-night. – Go
to the eye, the moist one.

★

Go
to the eye,
the moist one –

Gales.

Gales, from the beginning of time,
whirl of particles, the other,
you
know it, though, we
read it in the book, was
opinion.

Was, was
opinion. How
did we touch
each other – each other with
these
hands?

There was written too, that.
Where? We
put a silence over it,
stilled with poison, great,
a
green

silence, a sepal, an
idea of vegetation attached to it –
green, yes,
attached, yes,
under a crafty
sky.

Of, yes,
vegetation.

Yes.
Gales, whirl of part-
icles, there was
time left, time
to try it out with the stone – it
was hospitable, it
did not cut in. How
lucky we were:

Grainy,
grainy and stringy. Stalky,
dense;
grapy and radiant; kidneyish,
flattish and
lumpy; loose, tang-
led –; he, it
did not cut in, it
spoke,
willingly spoke to dry eyes, before closing them,

Spoke, spoke.
Was, was.

We
would not let go, stood

in the midst, a
porous edifice, and
it came.

Came at us, came
through us, patched
invisibly, patched
away at the last membrane
and
the world, a millicrystal,
shot up, shot up.

★

Shot up, shot up.
Then –

Nights, demixed. Circles,
green or blue, scarlet
squares: the
world puts its inmost reserves
into the game with the new
hours. – Circles,
red or black, bright
squares, no
flight shadow,
no
measuring table, no
smoke soul ascends or joins in.

★

Ascends and
joins in –

At owl's flight, near
the petrified scabs,

near
our fled hands, in
the latest rejection,
above
the rifle-range near
the buried wall:

visible, once
more: the
grooves, the

choirs, at that time, the
psalms. Ho, ho-
sannah.

So
there are temples yet. A
star
probably still has light.
Nothing,
nothing is lost.

Ho-
sannah.

At owl's flight, here,
the conversations, day-grey,
of the water-level traces.

★

(-- day-grey,
of

the water-level traces -

Driven into the
terrain

with
the unmistakable
track:

Grass,
grass,
written asunder.)

from *Die Niemandrose* (1963)

There was Earth

There was earth inside them, and
they dug.

They dug and they dug, so their day
went by for them, their night. And they did not praise
God
who, so they heard, wanted all this,
who, so they heard, knew all this.

They dug and heard nothing more;
they did not grow wise, invented no song,
thought up for themselves no language.
They dug.

There came a stillness, and there came a storm,
and all the oceans came.
I dig, you dig, and the worm digs too,
and that singing out there says: They dig.

O one, o none, o no one, o you:
Where did the way lead when it led nowhere?
O you dig and I dig, and I dig towards you,
and on our finger the ring awakes.

Zürich, the Stork Inn

For Nelly Sachs

Of too much was our talk, of
too little. Of the You
and You-Again, of
how clarity troubles, of
Jewishness, of
your God.

Of
that.

On the day of an ascension, the
Minster stood over there, it sent
some gold across the water.

Of your God was our talk, I spoke
against him, I
let the heart that I had
hope:
for
his highest, death-rattled, his
quarrelling word –

Your eye looked on, looked away,
your mouth
spoke its way to the eye, and I heard:

We
don't know, you know,
we
don't know, do we?,
what
counts.

So Many Constellations

So many constellations that
are held out to us. I was,
when I looked at you – when? –
outside by
the other worlds.

O these ways, galactic.
O this hour, that weighed
nights over for us into
the burden of our names. It is,
I know, not true
that we lived, there moved,
blindly, no more than a breath between
there and not-there, and at times
our eyes whirred comet-like
toward things extinguished, in chasms,
and where they had burnt out,
splendid with teats, stood Time
on which already grew up
and down and away all that
is or was or will be –,

I know.

I know and you know, we knew,
we did not know, we
were there, after all, and not there
and at times when
only the void stood between us we got
all the way to each other.

Dumb Autumn Smells

Dumb autumn smells. The
marguerite, unbroken, passed
between home and chasm through
your memory.

A strange lostness was
palpably present, almost
you would
have lived.

Psalm

No one moulds us again out of earth and clay,
no one conjures our dust.
No one.

Praised be your name, no one.
For your sake
we shall flower.
Towards
you.

A nothing
we were, are, shall
remain, flowering;
the nothing-, the
no one's rose.

With our pistil soul-bright
with our stamen heaven-ravaged
our corolla red
with the crimson word which we sang
over, o over
the thorn.

Alchemical

Silence, cooked like gold, in
charred
hands.

Great, grey
sisterly shape
near like all that is lost:

All the names, all those
names
burnt with the rest. So much
ash to be blessed. So much
land won
above
the light, so light
rings
of souls.

Great, grey one. Cinder-
less.

You, then.
You with the pale
bit-open bud,
you in the wine-flood.

(Us too, don't you think,
this clock dismissed?)

Good,

good, how your word died past us here.)

Silence, cooked like gold, in
charred, charred
hands.

Fingers, insubstantial as smoke. Like crests, crest of air
around --

Great, grey one. Wake-
less.
Re-
gal one.

. . . Plashes the Fountain

You prayer –, you blasphemy, you
prayer-sharp knives
of my
silence.

You my words being crippled
together with me, you
my hale ones.

And you:
you, you, you
my later of roses
daily worn true and
more true –;

How much, O how much
world. How many
paths.
You crutch, you wing. We. –

We shall sing the nursery rhyme, that one,
do you hear, that one
with the hu, with the man, with the human being, the
one
with the scrub and with
the pair of eyes that lay ready there as
tear-upon-
tear.

Radix, Matrix

As one speaks to stone, like
you,
from the chasm, from
a home become a
sister to me, hurled
towards me, you,
you that long ago
you in the nothingness of a night,
you in the multi-night en-
countered, you
multi-you -:

At that time, when I was not there,
at that time when you
paced the ploughed field, alone:

Who,
who was it, that
lineage, the murdered, that looms
black into the sky:
rod and bulb -?

Root.
Abraham's root. Jesse's root. No one's
root - O
ours.)

Yes,
as one speaks to stone, as
you

with your hands grope into there,
and into nothing, such
is what is here:

this fertile
soil too gapes,
this
going down
is one of the
crests growing wild.

Afternoon with a Circus and Citadel

In Brest, before hoops of flame,
in the tent where the tiger leapt,
there, Finite, I heard you sing
there I saw you, Mandelshtam.

The sky hung above the roadstead,
the gull hung above the crane.
What is finite sang, what is constant –
you, gunboat, are called 'Baobab'.

I saluted the tricolore
speaking a Russian word –
things lost were things not lost,
the heart was a place made fast.

In the Daytime

Hare's pelt sky. Even now
a clear wing writes.

I too, remember,
dust-
coloured one, arrived
as a crane.

Crowned Out . . .

Crowned out,
spewed out into night.

Under what
stars! So much
grey-beaten heart-hammer silver. And
Berenice's head of hair, here too. – I plaited,
I unplaited,
I plait, unplait.
I plait.

Blue chasm, into you
I drive the gold. Bringing that too
wasted on whores and harlots
I go and go. To you,
beloved.

And with curses and prayer. And with each
of the cudgels whirring
over me: they too fused
into one, they too
phallically bunched towards you,
both sheaf and word.

With names, watered
by every exile.
With names and seeds,
with names dipped
into all
the calyxes that are full of your

regal blood, man, – into all
the calyxes of the great
ghetto-rose, from which
you look at us, immortal with so many
deaths died on morning errands.

(And we sang the Warshawyanka
with lips grown reedy, Petrarca.
Into tundra-ears, Petrarca.)

And an earth rises up; ours,
this one.
And we'll send
none of our people down
to you,
Babel.

from *Atemwende* (1967)

To Stand. . .

To stand, in the shadow
of the scar up in the air.

To stand-for-no-one-and-nothing.
Unrecognized,
for you
alone.

With all there is room for in that,
even without
language.

Thread Suns

Thread suns
above the grey-black wilderness.
A tree-
high thought
tunes in to light's pitch: there are
still songs to be sung on the other side
of mankind.

Etched Away From

Etched away from
the ray-shot wind of your language
the garish talk of rubbed-
off experience – the hundred-
tongued pseudo-
poem, the noem.

Whirled
clear,
free
your way through the human-
shaped snow,
the penitents' snow, to
the hospitable
glacier rooms and tables.

Deep in time's crevasse
by the alveolate ice
waits, a crystal of breath,
your irreversible
witness.

On the White Philactery

On the white philactery – the
Lord of this hour
was
a winter creature, for
his sake
happened what happened –
my climbing mouth bit and locked, once again,
looking for you, smoke trail
above me, you,
in the shape of a woman,
you on your way to my
fire thoughts in the black shingle
on the other side of dividing words, through
which I saw you walk, long-
legged and
your thick-lipped own
head
on my body
alive
by dint of my deadly
accurate hands.

Tell your fingers that
accompany you down into
chasms even, how
I knew you, how far
I pushed you into the deep, where
my most bitter dream
slept with you from the heart, in the bed
of my undetachable name.

Go Blind Now

Go blind now, today:
eternity also is full of eyes –
in them
drowns what helped images down
the way they came,
in them
fades what took you out of language,
lifted you out with a gesture
which you allowed to happen like
the dance of the words made of
autumn and silk and nothingness.

In Prague

That half-death,
suckled big with our life,
lay around us, true as an ashen image –

we too
still drank, soul-crossed, two daggers,
sewn on to stones of the sky, born of word blood
in the night bed,

bigger and bigger
we grew interlaced, there was
no longer a name for
that which drove us (one of the how many
and thirty
was my live shadow
that climbed the delusory steps towards you?),

a tower
the halved one built for himself into where,
a Hradshin
made of pure gold-makers' No,

bone-Hebrew
ground into sperm
ran through the hourglass
through which we swam, two dreams now, chiming
against time, in the squares.

Once

Once

I heard him,
he was washing the world,
unseen, nightlong,
real.

One and Infinite,
annihilated,
ied.

Light was. Salvation.

from *Fadensonnen* (1968)

You Were My Death

You were my death:
you I could hold
when all fell away from me.

To My Right

To my right – who? The deathwoman.
And you, to my left, you?

The travelling-sickles at the extra-
celestial place
mime themselves whitish-grey
into moon swallows,
into star swifts,

I dip to that place
and pour an urnful
down you,
into you.

Irish

Give me the right of way
over the corn steps into your sleep,
the right of way
over the sleep path,
the right to cut peat
on the heart slope,
tomorrow.

Dew. . .

Dew. And I lay with you, you, amid garbage,
a mushy moon
pelted us with answers,

we crumbled apart
and crumbled into one again:

the Lord broke the bread,
the bread broke the Lord.

Powers. Dominions.

Behind them, in the bamboo:
barking leprosy, symphonic.

Vincent's posted
ear
has reached its destination.

*Think of It**

Think of it:
the bog soldier of Massada
teaches himself home, most
inextinguishably,
against
every barb in the wire.

Think of it:
the eyeless with no shape
lead you free through the tumult, you
grow stronger and
stronger.

Think of it: your
own hand
has held
this bit of
habitable
earth, suffered up
again
into life.

Think of it:
this came towards me,
name-awake, hand-awake,
for ever,
from the unburi-able.

* The poem associates a remote event in Jewish history, the last attempt of the Jews to hold out against the Romans at Massada in 70 A.D., which ended with the suicide of those besieged in the fortress there, with the Prussian concentration camp at Börgermoor, whose inmates composed a song known as the *Börgermoor-Lied*. This song gave them a sense of identity, of home, and it was finally adopted even by the guards at the camp.

from *Lichtzwang* (1970)

Night Rode Him

Night rode him, he had come to his senses,
the orphan's tunic was his flag,

no more going astray,
it rode him straight -

It is, it is as though oranges hung in the privet,
as though the so-ridden had nothing on
but his
first
birth-marked, se-
cret-speckled
skin.

I Can Still See You

I can still see you: an echo
that can be groped towards with antenna
words, on the ridge of
parting.

Your face quietly shies
when suddenly
there is lamplike brightness
inside me, just at the point
where most painfully one says, never.

Wide-Open Tomorrow

I bite my way into you, my silence nestles into you,

we sound,
alone,
pastily
eternity's tones drip away,
croaked at by
the hodiernal
yesterday,

we travel,

largely
the last amplifier
received us:

the boosted heart pace
outside
in space,
brought home to the axis
of Earth.

Sprinkle Ochre into My Eyes

Sprinkle ochre into my eyes:
no longer,
you live in them,

be sparing,
of graveside
supplements, be sparing,

walk up and down the stone rows
on your hands,

with their dream
graze the debased coinage,
the scale of
my temporal bone,

at the
great
road fork tell
yourself to the ochre
three times, nine times.

Leap-Centuries

Leap-centuries, leap-
seconds, leap-
births, novembering, leap-
deaths,

stacked in honeycomb troughs,
'bits
on chips',

the menora poem from Berlin

(Unasylumed, un-
archived, un-
welfare-attended? A-
live?),

reading stations in the late word,

saving flame points
in the sky,

comb lines under fire,

feelings, frost-
mandrelled,

cold start
with haemoglobin.

from *Schneepart* (1971)

The Broached Year

The broached year
with its mouldering crusts
of delusion bread.

Drink
from my mouth.

Illegibility

Illegibility
of this world. All things twice over.

The strong clocks justify
the splitting hour,
hoarsely.

You, clamped
into your deepest part,
climb out of yourself
for ever.

I Hear that the Axe has Flowered

I hear that the axe has flowered,
I hear that the place can't be named,

I hear that the bread which looks at him
heals the hanged man,
the bread baked for him by his wife,

I hear that they call life
our only refuge.

Largo

You of the same mind, moor-wandering near one:

more-than-
death-
sized we lie
together, the time-
less one teems
under our breathing eyelids,

the pair of blackbirds hangs
beside us, under
our whitely drifting
companions up there, our

meta-
stases.

A Leaf, Treeless

A LEAF, treeless
for Bertolt Brecht:

What times are these
when a conversation
is almost a crime
because it includes
so much made explicit?

More about Penguins

Penguinews, which appears every month, contains details of all the new books issued by Penguins as they are published. From time to time it is supplemented by *Penguins in Print*, which is a complete list of all available books published by Penguins. (There are well over three thousand of these.)

A specimen copy of *Penguinews* will be sent to you free on request, and you can become a subscriber for the price of the postage. For a year's issues (including the complete lists) please send 30p if you live in the United Kingdom, or 60p if you live elsewhere. Just write to Dept EP, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, enclosing a cheque or postal order, and your name will be added to the mailing list.

Note: *Penguinews* and *Penguins in Print* are not available in the U.S.A. or Canada



Poet to Poet

The response of one poet to the work of another can be doubly illuminating. In each volume of this new Penguin series a living poet presents his own edition of the work of a British or American poet of the past. By their choice of poet, by their selection of verses, and by the personal and critical reactions they express in their introductions, the poets of today thus provide an intriguing insight into themselves and their own work whilst reviving interest in poetry they have particularly admired.

To be published in 1972:

Crabbe by C. Day Lewis

Henryson by Hugh MacDiarmid

Herbert by W. H. Auden

Tennyson by Kingsley Amis

Future volumes will include:

Arnold by Stephen Spender

Johnson by Thom Gunn

Marvell by William Empson

Wordsworth by Lawrence Durrell

Whitman by Robert Creeley

Wyatt by Allen Tate