

POEMS, POETS, POETRY

An Introduction and Anthology

Helen Vendler

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press
Boston

Contents

Preface: About This Book *v*

About Poets and Poetry *ix*

Part I

Poems, Poets, Poetry:

An Introduction *1*

1. The Poem as Life *3*

The Private Life *4*

WILLIAM BLAKE, *Infant Sorrow* *4*

LOUISE GLÜCK, *The School Children* *4*

E. E. CUMMINGS, *in Just* — *5*

WALT WHITMAN, *Hours Continuing Long* *6*

EDMUND WALLER, *Of the Last Verses in the Book* *7*

The Public Life *8*

MICHAEL HARPER, *American History* *8*

CHARLES SIMIC, *Old Couple* *9*

ROBERT LOWELL, *Skunk Hour* *9*

Nature and Time *11*

ANONYMOUS, *The Cuckoo Song* *11*

DAVE SMITH, *The Spring Poem* *12*

JOHN KEATS, <i>The Human Seasons</i>	12
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 60 (Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore)</i>	13
In Brief: The Poem as Life	14
Reading Other Poems	14
SIR THOMAS WYATT, <i>They Flee From Me</i>	15
JOHN MILTON, <i>On the Late Massacre in Piedmont</i>	16
BEN JONSON, <i>On My First Son</i>	16
JOHN KEATS, <i>When I Have Fears</i>	17
EMILY DICKINSON, <i>A narrow Fellow in the Grass</i>	17
LANGSTON HUGHES, <i>Theme for English B</i>	18
ROBERT HAYDEN, <i>Those Winter Sundays</i>	19
DYLAN THOMAS, <i>Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night</i>	19
SYLVIA PLATH, <i>Daddy</i>	20
RITA DOVE, <i>Flash Cards</i>	23
YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA, <i>Facing It</i>	23
2. The Poem as Arranged Life	25
The Private Life	25
WILLIAM BLAKE, <i>Infant Joy</i>	26
WILLIAM BLAKE, <i>Infant Sorrow</i>	26
LOUISE GLÜCK, <i>The School Children</i>	30
E. E. CUMMINGS, <i>in Just —</i>	33
WALT WHITMAN, <i>Hours Continuing Long</i>	35
EDMUND WALLER, <i>Of the Last Verses in the Book</i>	37
The Public Life	41
MICHAEL HARPER, <i>American History</i>	41
CHARLES SIMIC, <i>Old Couple</i>	42
ROBERT LOWELL, <i>Skunk Hour</i>	44
Nature and Time	47
ANONYMOUS, <i>The Cuckoo Song</i>	47
DAVE SMITH, <i>The Spring Poem</i>	48
JOHN KEATS, <i>The Human Seasons</i>	49
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 60 (Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore)</i>	51
In Brief: The Poem as Arranged Life	53
Reading Other Poems	54
ANONYMOUS, <i>Lord Randal</i>	55
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 29 (When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes)</i>	56

CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE, <i>Tichborne's Elegy</i>	57
JOHN DONNE, <i>A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning</i>	57
ROBERT HERRICK, <i>Upon Julia's Clothes</i>	58
GEORGE HERBERT, <i>Love (III)</i>	59
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, <i>I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud</i>	59
JOHN KEATS, <i>La Belle Dame sans Merci</i>	60
WALT WHITMAN, <i>A Noiseless Patient Spider</i>	61
EMILY DICKINSON, <i>Because I could not stop for Death</i> —	62
THOMAS HARDY, <i>The Convergence of the Twain</i>	63
ROBERT FROST, <i>The Road Not Taken</i>	64
LOUISE ERDRICH, <i>Windigo</i>	65

3. Poems as Pleasure 67

Rhythm 68

Rhyme 72

BEN JONSON, *On Gut* 74

Structure 76

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, *Poem* 77

GWENDOLYN BROOKS, *We Real Cool* 79

Images 81

WILLIAM BLAKE, *London* 82

Argument 83

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* 83

SIR WALTER RALEGH, *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* 84

Poignancy 85

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *A slumber did my spirit seal* 85

Wisdom 86

A New Language 87

Finding Yourself 88

In Brief: Poems as Pleasure 89

Reading Other Poems 89

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet 130 (My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun)* 91

ROBERT HERRICK, *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time* 91

WILLIAM BLAKE, *The Sick Rose* 92

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *The Solitary Reaper* 92

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, *Pied Beauty* 93

THOMAS HARDY, *The Darkling Thrush* 93

D. H. LAWRENCE, <i>Bavarian Gentians</i>	94
THEODORE ROETHKE, <i>My Papa's Waltz</i>	95
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, <i>The Dance</i>	95
DEREK WALCOTT, <i>The Season of Phantasmal Peace</i>	96
LUCIE BROCK-BROIDO, <i>Domestic Mysticism</i>	97
ELIZABETH ALEXANDER, <i>Nineteen</i>	98
4. Describing Poems	101
Poetic Kinds	101
Narrative versus Lyric; Narrative in Lyric	101
ADRIENNE RICH, <i>Necessities of Life</i>	102
PHILIP LARKIN, <i>Talking in Bed</i>	104
Classifying Lyric Poems	105
Content Genres	105
EMILY DICKINSON, <i>The Heart asks Pleasure — first —</i>	106
Speech Acts	108
CARL SANDBURG, <i>Grass</i>	110
Outer Form	111
Line-Width	111
Rhythm	112
Poem Length	113
Combinatorial Form-Names	113
Inner Structural Form	113
Sentences	114
ROBERT HERRICK, <i>The Argument of His Book</i>	114
Person	115
Agency	116
RANDALL JARRELL, <i>The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner</i>	116
Tenses	117
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, <i>A slumber did my spirit seal</i>	117
Images, or Sensual Words	118
EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON, <i>New England</i>	118
Exploring a Poem	119
JOHN KEATS, <i>On First Looking into Chapman's Homer</i>	119

In Brief: Describing Poems	128
Reading Other Poems	129
GEORGE HERBERT, <i>Easter Wings</i>	130
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 129 (Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame)</i>	131
ANDREW MARVELL, <i>The Garden</i>	131
JOHN MILTON, <i>When I Consider How My Light Is Spent</i>	133
JOHN KEATS, <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i>	134
MATTHEW ARNOLD, <i>Dover Beach</i>	136
ROBERT FROST, <i>Mending Wall</i>	137
EZRA POUND, <i>The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter</i>	139
MARK STRAND, <i>Courtship</i>	140
SEAMUS HEANEY, <i>From the Frontier of Writing</i>	140
JORIE GRAHAM, <i>San Sepolcro</i>	141
SHERMAN ALEXIE, <i>Evolution</i>	142

5. **The Play of Language** 145

Sound Units 145

Word Roots 146

Words 147

Sentences 147

ROBERT FROST, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* 148

EMILY DICKINSON, *The Heart asks Pleasure — first —* 150

Implication 150

The Ordering of Language 152

GEORGE HERBERT, *Prayer (I)* 152

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet 66 (Tired with all these, for restful death I cry)* 153

MICHAEL DRAYTON, *Since there's no help* 155

In Brief: The Play of Language 159

Reading Other Poems 159

JOHN DONNE, *Holy Sonnet 14 (Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You)* 160

GEORGE HERBERT, *Redemption* 161

JOHN KEATS, *To Autumn* 161

ROBERT BROWNING, *My Last Duchess* 162

HENRY REED, *Naming of Parts* 164

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, *The Wild Swans at Coole* 165

WALLACE STEVENS, *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* 165

H. D., <i>Oread</i>	166
E. E. CUMMINGS, <i>r-p-o-p-h-e-e-s-s-a-g-r</i>	166
ELIZABETH BISHOP, <i>One Art</i>	167
JOHN BERRYMAN, <i>Henry sats in de bar & was odd</i>	167
LORNA DEE CERVANTES, <i>Poema para los Californios Muertos</i>	168

6. Constructing a Self 171

Multiple Aspects 171

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 30 (When to the sessions of sweet silent thought)</i>	172
--	-----

Change of Discourse 173

Space and Time 174

SEAMUS HEANEY, <i>Mid-Term Break</i>	174
--------------------------------------	-----

Testimony 175

Motivations 176

Typicality 176

Tone as Marker of Selfhood 177

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, <i>Spring and Fall</i>	178
---	-----

Imagination 180

EMILY DICKINSON, <i>I heard a Fly buzz — when I died —</i>	183
--	-----

Persona 185

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, <i>Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop</i>	186
---	-----

In Brief: Constructing a Self 188

Reading Other Poems 188

JOHN DRYDEN, <i>Sylvia the Fair</i>	190
WALT WHITMAN, <i>I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing</i>	191
EMILY DICKINSON, <i>I'm Nobody! Who are you?</i>	191
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, <i>An Irish Airman Foresees His Death</i>	192
THOMAS HARDY, <i>The Ruined Maid</i>	192
T. S. ELIOT, <i>The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock</i>	193
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, <i>To Elsie</i>	197
COUNTEE CULLEN, <i>Heritage</i>	199
MARIANNE MOORE, <i>To a Steam Roller</i>	202
ELIZABETH BISHOP, <i>Crusoe in England</i>	202
ANNE SEXTON, <i>Her Kind</i>	207
CHARLES WRIGHT, <i>Self-Portrait</i>	208
CARL PHILLIPS, <i>Africa Says</i>	208

7. Poetry and Social Identity 211

- ADRIENNE RICH, *Mother-in-Law* 212
 ADRIENNE RICH, *Prospective Immigrants Please Note* 216
 LANGSTON HUGHES, *Genius Child* 219
 LANGSTON HUGHES, *Me and the Mule* 220
 LANGSTON HUGHES, *High to Low* 221
 SEAMUS HEANEY, *Terminus* 222

In Brief: Poetry and Social Identity 225**Reading Other Poems 225**

- ROBERT SOUTHWELL, *The Burning Babe* 226
 THOMAS NASHE, *A Litany in Time of Plague* 227
 JOHN MILTON, *To the Lord General Cromwell* 228
 ANNE BRADSTREET, *A Letter to Her Husband Absent upon Public
 Employment* 229
 WILLIAM BLAKE, *The Little Black Boy* 229
 EDWARD LEAR, *How Pleasant to Know Mr. Lear* 230
 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, *Felix Randal* 231
 SYLVIA PLATH, *The Applicant* 232
 GARRETT HONGO, *The Hongo Store / 29 Miles Volcano / Hilo, Hawaii*
 233
 DAVID MURA, *An Argument: On 1942* 234
 RITA DOVE, *Wingfoot Lake* 234

8. History and Regionality 237

- WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *A slumber did my spirit seal* 237

History 238

- HERMAN MELVILLE, *The March into Virginia* 239
 ROBERT LOWELL, *The March 1* 241
 LANGSTON HUGHES, *World War II* 243
 WILFRED OWEN, *Dulce Et Decorum Est* 245

Regionality 246

- SHERMAN ALEXIE, *On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City* 247
 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Composed upon Westminster Bridge,
 September 3, 1802* 250

In Brief: History and Regionality 251**Reading Other Poems 252**

- SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *Kubla Khan* 253
 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern
 Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour* 255

JOHN KEATS, <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i>	259
WALT WHITMAN, <i>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd</i>	260
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, <i>Easter 1916</i>	268
WALLACE STEVENS, <i>Anecdote of the Jar</i>	270
ROBERT LOWELL, <i>For the Union Dead</i>	270
ELIZABETH BISHOP, <i>Brazil, January 1, 1502</i>	273
ROBERT HAYDEN, <i>Night, Death, Mississippi</i>	274
W. S. MERWIN, <i>The Asians Dying</i>	275
DEREK WALCOTT, <i>The Gulf</i>	276
SIMON J. ORTIZ, <i>Bend in the River</i>	279
JORIE GRAHAM, <i>What the End Is For</i>	280

9. Attitudes, Values, Judgments 283

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, <i>Sonnet 76 (Why is my verse so barren of new pride?)</i>	285
ROBERT LOWELL, <i>Epilogue</i>	288

In Brief: Attitudes, Values, Judgments 292

Reading Other Poems 292

JOHN MILTON, <i>Lycidas</i>	293
BEN JONSON, <i>Still to Be Neat</i>	299
RICHARD LOVELACE, <i>To Lucasta, Going to the Wars</i>	299
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, <i>How Do I Love Thee?</i>	299
WALT WHITMAN, <i>When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer</i>	300
WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, <i>Meru</i>	300
ROBINSON JEFFERS, <i>Shine, Perishing Republic</i>	301
ROBERT FROST, <i>The Gift Outright</i>	301
ALLEN GINSBERG, <i>Sunflower Sutra</i>	302
LOUISE GLÜCK, <i>Mock Orange</i>	304
RITA DOVE, <i>Parsley</i>	305
MICHAEL S. WEAVER, <i>The Picnic, an Homage to Civil Rights</i>	307

Part II Anthology 309

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER, <i>Ode</i>	311
SHERMAN ALEXIE, <i>Reservation Love Song</i>	311
PAULA GUNN ALLÉN, <i>Zen Americana</i>	312
A. R. AMMONS, <i>The City Limits</i>	313
A. R. AMMONS, <i>Easter Morning</i>	313
ANONYMOUS, <i>Sir Patrick Spens</i>	316
ANONYMOUS, <i>Western Wind</i>	317