Named one of the Ten Best Books of 2016 by the New York Times, a spirited account of a major intellectual movement of the twentieth century and the revolutionary thinkers who came to shape it, by the best-selling author of How to Live Sarah Bakewell. Paris, 1933: three contemporaries meet over apricot cocktails at the Bec-de-Gaz bar on the rue M ontparnasse. They are the young Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and longtime friend Raymond Aron, a fellow philosopher who raves to them about a new conceptual framework from Berlin called Phenomenology. "You see," he says, "if you are a phenomenologist you can talk about this cocktail and make philosophy out of it!" It was this simple phrase that would ignite a movement, inspiring Sartre to integrate Phenomenology into his own French, humanistic sensibility, thereby creating an entirely new philosophical approach inspired by themes of radical freedom, authentic being, and political activism. This movement would sweep through the jazz clubs and cafés of the Left Bank before making its way across the world as Existentialism. Featuring not only philosophers, but also playwrights, anthropologists, convicts, and revolutionaries, At the Existentialist Café follows the existentialists' story, from the first rebellious spark through the Second World War, to its role in postwar liberation movements such as anti-colonialism, feminism, and gay rights. Interweaving biography and philosophy, it is the epic account of passionate encounters--fights, love affairs, mentorships, rebellions, and long partnerships--and a vital investigation into what the existentialists have to offer us today, at a moment when we are once again confronting the major questions of freedom, global responsibility, and human authenticity in a fractious and technology-driven world.

The work of German poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) has inspired poets and philosophers from Paul Celan to Rainer Maria Rilke to Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Nietzsche. His hymns and elegies are known for their lyric style and innovative approach to Greek myth. But his work was not widely celebrated during his lifetime. Diagnosed with a severe case of hypochondria at a young age, he was beset by mental illness for much of his life, living the final decades in the care of a carpenter. This book presents a biography in the form of a two-act drama.

"What is the meaning of being?" This is the central question of Martin Heidegger's profoundly important work, in which the great philosopher seeks to explain the basic problems of existence. A central influence on later philosophy, literature, art, and criticism— as well as existentialism and much
of postmodern thought—Being and Time forever changed the intellectual map of the modern world. As Richard Rorty wrote in the New York Times Book Review, "You cannot read most of the important thinkers of recent times without taking Heidegger's thought into account." This first paperback edition of John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's definitive translation also features a new foreword by Heidegger scholar Taylor Carman.

From the distinguished polymath George Steiner comes a profound and illuminating vision of the inseparability of Western philosophy and its living language. With his hallmark forceful discernment, George Steiner presents in The Poetry of Thought his magnum opus: an examination of more than two millennia of Western culture, staking out his claim for the essential oneness of great thought and great style. Sweeping yet precise, moving from essential detail to bracing illustration, Steiner spans the entire history of philosophy in the West as it entwines with literature, finding that, as Sartre stated, in all philosophy there is "a hidden literary prose." "The poetic genius of abstract thought," Steiner believes, "is lit, is made audible. Argument, even analytic, has its drumbeat. It is made ode. What voices the closing movements of Hegel’s Phenomenology better than Edith Piaf’s non de non, a twofold negation which Hegel would have prized? This essay is an attempt to listen more closely.”

This volume traces the ways in which Heidegger's philosophical thinking has been taken up, critically re-appropriated, and disseminated in literary and poetic writing since the middle of the 20th century.

A new reading of justice engaging the work of two philosophical poets who stand in conversation with the work of Martin Heidegger. What is the measure of ethics? What is the measure of justice? And how do we come to measure the immeasurability of these questions? Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice situates the problem of justice in the interdisciplinary space between philosophy and poetry in an effort to explore the sources of ethical life in a new way. Charles Bambach engages the works of two philosophical poets who stand as the bookends of modernity—Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and Paul Celan (1920–1970)—offering close textual readings of poems from each that define and express some of the crucial problems of German philosophical thought in the twentieth century: tensions between the native and the foreign, the proper and the strange, the self and the other. At the center of this philosophical conversation between Hölderlin and Celan, Bambach places the work of Martin Heidegger to rethink the question of justice in a nonlegal, nonmoral register by understanding it in terms of poetic measure. Focusing on Hölderlin’s and Heidegger’s readings of pre-Socratic philosophy and Greek tragedy, as well as on Celan’s reading of Kabbalah, he frames the problem of poetic justice against the trauma of German destruction in the twentieth century.

Concerned with the intermingled thematic and formal preoccupations of Romantic thought and literary practice in works by twentieth-century British, Irish, and American artists, this collection examines the complicated legacy of Romanticism in twentieth-century novels, poetry, and film. Even as key twentieth-century cultural movements have tried to subvert or debunk Romantic narratives of redemptive nature, individualism, perfectibility, and the transcendence of art, the forms and modes of feeling associated with the Romantic period continue to exert a signal influence on the modern moment—both as a source of tension and as creative stimulus. As the essays here show, the exact meaning of the Romantic bequest may be bitterly contested, but it has been difficult to leave behind. The contributors take up a wide range of authors, including Virginia Woolf, F. Scott Fitzgerald, W. H. Auden, Doris Lessing, Seamus Heaney, Hart Crane, William Faulkner, Don DeLillo, and Jonathan Franzen. What emerges from this lively volume is a fuller picture of the persistence and variety of the Romantic period’s influence on the twentieth-century.

Renunciation as a creative force is the animating idea behind Ross Posnock’s new book. Taking up acts of abandonment, rejection, and refusal that have long baffled critics, he shows how renunciation has reframed the relationship of writers, philosophers, and artists to society in productive and
An arresting memoir of the final years and tragic suicide of one of twentieth-century Europe’s greatest poets, published on the centenary of his birth. “Jean Daive's memoir of his brief but intense spell as confidant and poetic confrère of Paul Celan offers us unique access to the mind and personality of one of the great poets of the dark twentieth century.”—J.M. Coetzee

Paul Celan (1920–1970) is considered one of Europe's greatest post-World-War II poets, known for his astonishing experiments in poetic form, expression, and address. Under the Dome is French poet Jean Daive's haunting memoir of his friendship with Celan, a precise yet elliptical account of their daily meetings, discussions, and walks through Paris, a routine that ended suddenly when Celan committed suicide by drowning himself in the Seine. Daive's grief at the loss of his friend finds expression in Under the Dome, where we are given an intimate insight into Celan's last years, at the height of his poetic powers, and as he approached the moment when he would succumb to the debilitating emotional pain of a Holocaust survivor. In Under the Dome, Jean Daive illuminates Celan's process of thinking about poetry, grappling with questions of where it comes from and what it does: invaluable insights about poetry's relation to history and ethics, and how poems offer pathways into a deeper grasp of our past and present. This new edition of Rosmarie Waldrop's masterful translation includes an introduction by scholars Robert Kaufman and Philip Gerard, which provides critical, historical, and cultural context for Daive’s enigmatic, timeless text. "Under the Dome breathes with Celan while walking with Celan, walking in the dark and the light with Celan, invoking the stillness, the silence, of the breathturn while speaking for the deeply human necessity of poetry."—Michael Palmer, author of The Laughter of the Sphinx

"The fragments textured together in this more-than-magnificent rendering of Jean Daive’s prose poem by this master of the word, Rosmarie Waldrop, grab on and leave us haunted and speechless."—Mary Ann Caws, author of Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism and editor of the Yale Anthology of Twentieth Century French Poetry

"Rosmarie Waldrop's brilliant translation resonates with her profound knowledge of both Celan's and Daive's poetry and the passion for language that she shares with them. The text brings these three major poets together in a highly unusual and wholly successful collaboration."—Cole Swensen, author of On Walking On

"Rosmarie Waldrop takes up Celan’s question to Jean Daive as her own. I cannot unread her inimitable ease in these pages. This is a book that contends with time."—Fady Joudah, author of Footnotes in the Order of Disappearance

"Daive's writing is a highly punctuated recollection, a memoir, perhaps a testimony, but also surely a way of attending to the time of the writing, the conditions and coordinates of Celan’s various enunciations, his linguistic humility. ... Celan’s death, what Daive calls ‘really unforeseeable,’ remains as an ‘undercurrent’ in the conversations recollected here, gathered up again, with an insistence and clarity of true mourning and acknowledgement."—Judith Butler, author of The Force of Nonviolence

An analysis of the historical position of Paul Celan's poetry, this book addresses the question of a lyric language that would not be the expression of subjectivity. Lacoue-Labarthe defines the subject as the principle that founds, organizes, and secures both cognition and action, a figure not only of domination but of the extermination of everything other than itself.

This peerless edition, first published in 1980, remains the English-language standard for the poetry of Paul Celan, the Holocaust's most haunting, and haunted, voice.

Publisher description

Interest in Martin Heidegger was recently reawakened by the revelations, in his newly published 'Black Notebooks', of the full terrible extent of his political commitments in the 1930s and 1940s. The revelations reminded us of the dark allegiances co-existing with one of the profoundest and most important philosophical projects of the twentieth century—one that is of incomparable importance for
literature and especially for poetry, which Heidegger saw as embodying a receptiveness to Being and a resistance to the instrumental tendencies of modernity. Poetry and the Question of Modernity from Heidegger to the Present is the first extended account of the relationship between Heidegger’s philosophy and the modern lyric. It argues that some of the best-known modern poets in German and English, from Paul Celan to Seamus Heaney and Les Murray, are in deep imaginative affinity with Heidegger’s enquiry into finitude, language, and Being. But the work of each of these poets challenges Heidegger because each appeals to a transcendence, taking place in language, that is inseparable from the motion of encounter with embodied others. It is thus poetry which reveals the full measure of Heidegger’s relevance in redefining modern selfhood, and poetry which reveals the depth of his blindness.

Offers an introduction to the German poet's life and work and presents in English translation and the original German, his poems about consciousness, mortality, and love.

The intense relationship between philosopher Martin Heidegger and his cabin in the Black Forest: the first substantial account of "die Hütte" and its influence on Heidegger's life and work. "This is the most thorough architectural 'crit' of a hut ever set down, the justification for which is that the hut was the setting in which Martin Heidegger wrote phenomenological texts that became touchstones for late-twentieth-century architectural theory." — from the foreword by Simon Sadler

Beginning in the summer of 1922, philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) occupied a small, three-room cabin in the Black Forest Mountains of southern Germany. He called it "die Hütte" ("the hut"). Over the years, Heidegger worked on many of his most famous writings in this cabin, from his early lectures to his last enigmatic texts. He claimed an intellectual and emotional intimacy with the building and its surroundings, and even suggested that the landscape expressed itself through him, almost without agency. In Heidegger's Hut, Adam Sharr explores this intense relationship of thought, place, and person. Heidegger's mountain hut has been an object of fascination for many, including architects interested in his writings about "dwelling" and "place." Sharr's account—the first substantive investigation of the building and Heidegger's life there—reminds us that, in approaching Heidegger's writings, it is important to consider the circumstances in which the philosopher, as he himself said, felt "transported" into the work's "own rhythm." Indeed, Heidegger's apparent abdication of agency and tendency toward romanticism seem especially significant in light of his troubling involvement with the Nazi regime in the early 1930s. Sharr draws on original research, including interviews with Heidegger's relatives, as well as on written accounts of the hut by Heidegger and his visitors. The book's evocative photographs include scenic and architectural views taken by the author and many remarkable images of a septuagenarian Heidegger in the hut taken by the photojournalist Digne Meller-Markovicz. There are many ways to interpret Heidegger's hut— as the site of heroic confrontation between philosopher and existence; as the petit bourgeois escape of a misguided romantic; as a place overshadowed by fascism; or as an entirely unremarkable little building. Heidegger's Hut does not argue for any one reading, but guides readers toward their own possible interpretations of the importance of "die Hütte."

A hermeneutics of language after Auschwitz.

The first book to document Heidegger's close connections to Nazism—now available to a new generation of students.

Martin Heidegger is widely regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth-century, and his seminal text Being and Time is considered one of the most significant texts in contemporary philosophy. Yet his name has also been mired in controversy because of his affiliations with the Nazi regime, his failure to criticize its genocidal politics and his subsequent silence about the holocaust. Now, according to Heidegger's wishes, and to complete the publication of his multi-volume
Get Free Paul Celan And Martin Heidegger An Unresolved Conversation 1951 1970

Complete Works, his highly controversial and secret ‘Black Notebooks’ have been released to the public. These notebooks reveal the extent to which Heidegger’s ‘personal Nazism’ was neither incidental nor opportunistic, but part of his philosophical ethos. So, why would Heidegger, far from destroying them, allow these notebooks, which contain examples of this extreme thinking, to be published? In this revealing new book, Peter Trawny, editor of Heidegger’s complete works in German, confronts these questions and, by way of a compelling study of his theoretical work, shows that Heidegger was committed to a conception of freedom that is only beholden to the judgement of the history of being; that is, that to be free means to be free from the prejudices, norms, or mores of one’s time. Whoever thinks the truth of being freely exposes themselves to the danger of epochal errancy. For this reason, Heidegger’s decision to publish his notebooks, including their anti-Jewish passages, was an exercise of this anarchical freedom. In the course of a wide-ranging discussion of Heidegger’s views on truth, ethics, the truth of being, tragedy and his relationship to other figures such as Nietzsche and Schmitt, Trawny provides a compelling argument for why Heidegger wanted the explosive material in his Black Notebooks to be published, whilst also offering an original and provocative interpretation of Heidegger’s work.

Here, Gunter Grass writes of great events and seemingly trivial ones, of technical developments and scientific discoveries, of achievements in culture, sport, of megalomania, persecution and murder, war and disasters and of new beginnings.

These brief and enlightening explorations of our greatest thinkers bring their ideas to life in entertaining and accessible fashion. Philosophical thought is deciphered and made comprehensible and interesting to almost everyone. Far from being a novelty, each book is a highly refined appraisal of the philosopher and his work, authoritative and clearly presented. Each of these little books is witty and dramatic and creates a sense of time, place, and character. I cannot think of a better way to introduce oneself and one’s friends to Western civilization. --Katherine A. Powers, Boston Globe. Well-written, clear and informed, they have a breezy wit about theme. I find them hard to stop reading.


Heidegger’s politically motivated use of poetry and its relation to currents of modern thought

This is the third posthumous volume of Celan’s poetry, never before published in English.

Over the course of his life (550-460 BC), the Greek poet Simonides produced poetic work of every kind then extant. Unfortunately, Simonides’ corpus has survived only in fragments, though classical scholars have been studying his work for generations. The 1992 discovery of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri revolutionized the study of Simonides, casting particular light on the epic of Plataea. This edited volume gathers the best of the recent research on Simonides’ newly expanded oeuvre into a single collection that will be an important reference for scholars of Greek poetry.

This volume traces the ways in which Heidegger’s philosophical thinking has been taken up, critically re-appropriated, and disseminated in literary and poetic writing since the middle of the 20th century.

What do we mean by ‘voice’ in poetry? In this work, David Nowell Smith teases out the diverse meanings of ‘voice’ - from a poem’s soundworld to the rhetorical gestures through which poems speak to us – to embark on a philosophical exploration of the concept of voice itself. His study encompasses renaissance lyrics and concrete poetry, analyses of metre and discussions of technological treatments of voice, and radical and far-reaching readings of Augustine, Baudelaire, Derrida, Hopkins and Kristeva alongside contemporary poets such as Sean Bonney, Lisa Robertson, and John Wilkinson. It places voice at the crux of debates including political representation through rhythm and melody, the
'origin' of languages and the psychology of language acquisition. Throughout, this informs a reflection on how sounds come to have meaning, and on the ways in which we articulate ourselves as subjects.

La première rencontre entre Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger eut lieu en 1967, à l'occasion d'une lecture publique de Celan en Allemagne. Dès le début des années 1950 pourtant, le poète lit le philosophe et le philosophe lit le poète. L’œuvre correspondante l’atteste, et aussi les notes de lecture que chacun porta sur les écrits de l’autre : ces deux œuvres se sont fécondées. Ce livre est un travail de restitution et de mise au point. Il est surtout une réflexion, presque quarante ans après, sur une rencontre dont le sens doit aujourd’hui encore nous requérir. Le dialogue de la poésie et de la pensée prend une résonance étrangement actuelle, en notre temps de deuil et de péril.

Dominique Janicaud claimed that every French intellectual movement—from existentialism to psychoanalysis—was influenced by Martin Heidegger. This translation of Janicaud’s landmark work, Heidegger en France, details Heidegger’s reception in philosophy and other humanistic and social science disciplines. Interviews with key French thinkers such as Françoise Dastur, Jacques Derrida, Éliane Escoubas, Jean Greisch, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Marion, and Jean-Luc Nancy are included and provide further reflection on Heidegger’s relationship to French philosophy. A n intellectual undertaking of authoritative scope, this work furnishes a thorough history of the French reception of Heidegger’s thought.

Despite his predominance in twentieth-century philosophy, no intellectual biography of Martin Heidegger has yet appeared. This account of Heidegger's personal relations, originally published in German and extensively corrected by the author for this translation, enlarges our understanding of a complex figure. A well-known art historian and an intimate friend of Heidegger’s, Heinrich Wiegand Petzet provides a rich portrait of Heidegger that is part memoir, part biography, and part cultural history. By recounting chronologically a series of encounters between the two friends from their meeting in 1929 until the philosopher's death in 1976, as well as between Heidegger and other contemporaries, Petzet reveals not only new aspects of Heidegger's thought and attitudes toward the historical and intellectual events of his time but also the greater cultural and social context in which he articulated his thought.

Publisher description

“In a rift of time the corner of the universe appears to consciousness.” — Ernst Meister

Featuring original interviews with three of the most important theorists of the 21st century, this volume clarifies the relationship between contemporary French philosophy and poetry. The interviews demonstrate how Rancière, Milner, and Badiou are all in conversation with one another on various points.

What is it the legacy that humankind has been living with since 1945? We were once convinced that time was the agent of change. But in the past decade or two, our experience of time has been transformed. Technology preserves and inundates us with the past, and we perceive our future as a set of converging and threatening inevitabilities: nuclear annihilation, global warming, overpopulation. Overwhelmed by these horizons, we live in an ever broadening present. In identifying the prevailing mood of the post-World War II decade as that of "latency," Gumbrecht returns to the era when this change in the pace and structure of time emerged and shows how it shaped the trajectory of his own postwar generation. Those born after 1945, and especially those born in Germany, would have liked nothing more than to put the catastrophic events and explosions of the past behind them, but that possibility remained foreclosed or just out of reach. World literatures and cultures of the postwar
years reveal this to have been a broadly shared predicament: they hint at promises unfulfilled and obsess over dishonesty and bad faith; they transmit the sensation of confinement and the inability to advance. After 1945 belies its theme of entrapment. Gumbrecht has never been limited by narrow disciplinary boundaries, and his latest inquiry is both far-ranging and experimental. It combines autobiography with German history and world-historical analysis, offering insightful reflections on Samuel Beckett and Paul Celan, detailed exegesis of the thought of Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre, and surprising reflections on cultural phenomena ranging from Edith Piaf to the Kinsey Report. This personal and philosophical take on the last century is of immediate relevance to our identity today.

Paul Celan, Europe's most compelling postwar poet, was a German-speaking, East European Jew. His writing exposes and illumines the wounds that Nazi destructiveness left on language. John Felstiner's sensitive and accessible book is the first critical biography of Celan in any language. It offers new translations of well-known and little-known poems--including a chapter on Celan's famous "Deathfugue"--plus his speeches, prose fiction, and letters. The book also presents hitherto unpublished photos of the poet and his circle. Drawing on interviews with Celan's family and friends and his personal library in Normandy and Paris, as well as voluminous German commentary, Felstiner tells the poet's gripping story: his birth in 1920 in Romania, the overnight loss of his parents in a Nazi deportation, his experience of forced labor and Soviet occupation during the war, and then his difficult exile in Paris. The life's work of Paul Celan emerges through readings of his poems within their personal and historical matrix. At the same time, Felstiner finds fresh insights by opening up the very process of translating Celan's poems. To present this poetry and the strain of Jewishness it displays, Felstiner uncovers Celan's sources in the Bible and Judaic mysticism, his affinities with Kafka, Heine, Hölderlin, Rilke, and Nelly Sachs, his fascination with Heidegger and Buber, his piercing translations of Shakespeare, Dickinson, Mandelstam, Apollinaire. First and last, Felstiner explores the achievement of a poet surviving in his mother tongue, the German language that had passed, Celan said, "through the thousand darknesses of deathbringing speech."

Chronicles the German philosopher's life while exploring his education, schism with the Catholic Church, relationship with the National Socialist revolution, antisemitism, and life and teaching after World War II.

In these essays, appearing for the first time in English, Gadamer addresses practical questions about recent politics in Europe, about education and university reform, and about the role of poetry in the modern world. This book also includes a series of interviews that the editors conducted in 1986. Gadamer elaborates on his experiences in education and politics, touching on the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the early Frankfurt School, Heidegger and the Nazis, university life in East Germany, and the prospects for Europe in the coming years. Hans-Georg Gadamer was probably Heidegger's leading interpreter in Germany, and in the 1950s and 1960s he became the world's leading exponent of hermeneutics. His hermeneutical theory explains how it is that ancient art and philosophy still speak to us today. His influential idea of the "fusion of horizons" also shows how it is that we understand what is remote form our own culture.

A new reading of justice engaging the work of two philosophical poets who stand in conversation with the work of Martin Heidegger. What is the measure of ethics? What is the measure of justice? And how do we come to measure the immeasurability of these questions? Thinking the Poetic Measure of Justice situates the problem of justice in the interdisciplinary space between philosophy and poetry in an effort to explore the sources of ethical life in a new way. Charles Bambach engages the works of two philosophical poets who stand as the bookends of modernity—Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and Paul Celan (1920–1970)—offering close textual readings of poems from each that define and
express some of the crucial problems of German philosophical thought in the twentieth century: tensions between the native and the foreign, the proper and the strange, the self and the other. At the center of this philosophical conversation between Hölderlin and Celan, Bambach places the work of Martin Heidegger to rethink the question of justice in a nonlegal, nonmoral register by understanding it in terms of poetic measure. Focusing on Hölderlin’s and Heidegger’s readings of pre-Socratic philosophy and Greek tragedy, as well as on Celan’s reading of Kabbalah, he frames the problem of poetic justice against the trauma of German destruction in the twentieth century.

In the aftermath of poststructuralist debates, Inflected Language proposes to rethink the ontological and ethical dimensions of language by rereading Heidegger’s work, more specifically his reflection on poetry, and by engaging Levinas’ ethics and contemporary poetics. Building on the readings of Heidegger, Levinas, Stevens, and Celan, the author contends that, against common misinterpretations, their approach to language forces us to reexamine the very basis of relations to alterity, whether that of the world, things, or people. According to the new view of language offered in these works, thought’s job is not, first and foremost, cognition in the sense of understanding, calculations, and definition, but in securing alterity against cognitive assimilation instead. In this context, Inflected Language reshapes the current philosophico-literary debate about language by showing how the apparently neutral differential play of signification is already invested with ethical and worldly signification. In order to avoid obliterating this elusive signification in theorizing language, Ziarek proposes following a new mode of reading—a post-Heideggerian “hermeneutics of nearness,” which foregrounds the poetic element in language and its ways of figuring the other.

Roots are good to think with—indeed most of us use them as a metaphor every day. A root can signify the hiddenness of our beginnings, or, in its bifurcating structure, the various possibilities in the life of an individual or a collective. This book looks at rootedness as a metaphor for the genealogical origins of people and their attachment to place—and how this metaphor transformed so rapidly in twentieth-century Europe. Christy Wampole’s case study is France, with its contradictory legacies of Enlightenment universalism, anti-Semitism, and colonialism. At one time, French nationalist rhetoric portrayed the Jews as unrooted and thus unrighteous people. After the two world wars, the root metaphor figured in the new French philosophy (notably Deleuze and Guattari). And recently, Caribbean thinkers in Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique have debated whether their roots were in Africa, France, the Caribbean, or in some pan-national network that could not be identified on a map. Wampole argues that while the metaphor was perhaps once useful in the establishment of communities and identities, that usefulness has expired. The longer we remain attached to the figure of rootedness, the more discord it sows. Giving up on the metaphor of rootedness, Wampole urges, allows us to see at last that we are in fact unbound by the land we inhabit.

This is a new, revised edition of an Anvil Classic. Paul Celan was one of the great poets of the twentieth century. Born into a Jewish family in a German enclave of Romania, his life and work were indelibly marked by the Holocaust: his parents perished in a camp, he was lucky to survive. The Jewish experience and the force of history stretched language, and Celan himself, beyond breaking point. Celan committed suicide in Paris in 1970, but not before he had remade and reclaimed German as a language fit for poets. Celan spoke of a language ‘north of the future’ and described his poems as messages in bottles that might never be received.