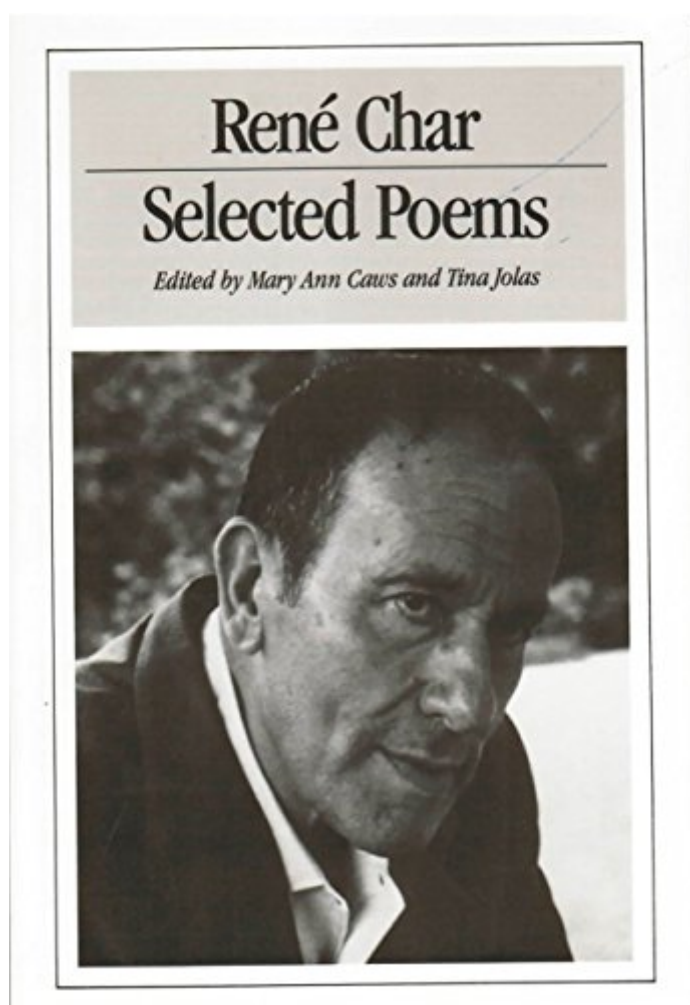


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Selected Poems Of René Char



Synopsis

“This is a fine, bilingual edition of the works of one of the great French Surrealists. . . . The translations, by several hands, serve Char well—full of insinuating rhythms and unusual verbal couplings, they come close to the piercing beauty of the originals.” Pat Monaghan, Booklist

The Selected Poems of René Char is a comprehensive, bilingual overview reflecting the poet’s wide stylistic and philosophical range, from aphorism to dramatic lyricism. In making their selections, the editors have chosen the voices of seventeen poets and translators (Paul Auster, Samuel Beckett, Cid Corman, Eugene Jolas, W.S. Merwin, William Carlos Williams, and James Wright, to name a few), in homage to a writer long held in highest esteem by the literary avant-garde.

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Customer Reviews

Though highly respected by the International Avant Garde, Rene Char’s poetry is not as widely available in English translation as it should be. Part of this is probably due to a reputation for obscurity or difficulty. But, as this volume shows this, has been exaggerated. There are many poems of amazing simplicity - not to mention beauty. As this selection contains poems from all periods of Char’s life one is able to make a full assessment. Char wrote mainly prose poems and free verse. He

had a gift for imagery that is often conveyed lyrically, though this is fractured by occasional violence. Many also have a zen-like simplicity and compression. This is especially so in nature poems such as "the Swift" or "the First Moments" . This violence is often elemental but also revelatory. This makes for an interesting contrast with the English poet, Ted Hughes. Except Char believes that human beings should engage with nature both by being friend and opponent rather than just resigning to it. Char's vision is essentially that of the great Tao, or the Unknown as he calls it. He sums this up with the phrase "How can we live without the unknown before us?" This also appears in many of his very sensual love/muse poems. As with Graves, connection with women has an almost mystical significance for Char. There is a particularly beautiful prose piece about an encounter with a woman on the Paris Metro. This, to him is confirmation that he is in full connection with reality at that moment. A confirmation of his strong sense of vocation. The translations are placed along side the French originals. For readers with some French this will help navigate some of Char's difficulties of phrase.

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