

The Companion to Richard Berengarten

NORMAN JOPE has published four books of poems: *For The Wedding-Guest* (Stride Publications, 1997); *The Book of Bells and Candles* (Waterloo Press, 2009), *Dreams of the Caucasus* (Shearsman Books, 2010) and *Aphinar* (Waterloo Press, 2011). With the late Ian Robinson, he co-edited the anthology *In the Presence of Sharks: New Poetry from Plymouth* (Phlebas, 2006) and has edited the literary/cultural magazine *Memes*. His poetry and criticism have appeared in many magazines, webzines and anthologies, including *Tears in the Fence*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Terrible Work*, and his poems are currently being translated into Romanian. Born in Plymouth, Norman Jope has lived in other UK cities, most recently Swindon and Bristol, and in Budapest. He currently works as an administrator at University College Plymouth St Mark & St John.

PAUL SCOTT DERRICK is a Senior Lecturer in American literature at the University of Valencia. His main fields of interest are Romanticism and American Transcendentalism and their manifestations in subsequent American literature and art. He has published two collections of essays in English and has co-authored a number of bilingual, critical editions of works by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson and Henry Adams. He is co-editor of *Modernism Revisited: Transgressing Boundaries and Strategies of Renewal in American Poetry* (Rodopi, 2007). His most recent book-length publication is *La tierra de los abetos puntiagudos* (Biblioteca Javier Coy, 2008), a translation and critical study of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. He has published translations into English of poems by Jorge Luis Borges, Luis Cernuda and Pablo Neruda, and co-translations of Richard Berengarten's poems into Spanish.

CATHERINE E. BYFIELD is a graduate of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, where she read Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic. Her main scholarly interest is Medieval Welsh dialogue literature. Her publications include a study of the *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, and Welsh translations of the *Ioca Monachorum* (co-authored and co-edited with M. J. Bayless), in journals such as the *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* and *Studia Celtica*. She is currently preparing editions and translations of four more Medieval Welsh texts, with critical commentaries, while working on her first novel. Born in Ohio, she moved permanently to the UK in 1978. She currently works as an administrator for graduate studies in the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge.

The Companion to Richard Berengarten

Edited by
Norman Jope,
Paul Scott Derrick
and
Catherine E. Byfield

Shearsman Books

Published in the United Kingdom in 2015 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
50 Westons Hill Drive
Emersons Green
BRISTOL
BS16 7DF

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30-31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-447-5
Second Edition

First published in 2010 by Salt Publishing, Cambridge.

The selection and introduction © Norman Jope, Paul Scott Derrick and
Catherine E. Byfield, 2010

Individual contributions © the contributors, 2010
The right of Norman Jope, Paul Scott Derrick and Catherine E. Byfield to be
identified as the editors of this work has been asserted by them in
accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to provisions of
relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of
Shearsman Books Ltd.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii
Norman Jope	1
Introduction: Everywhere Centre	
PART I	
Paul Scott Derrick	11
A Poet for a Time of Need	
Simon Jenner	31
Janus Masks: On the Many Facets of Richard Berengarten's Work	
Mario Nicolao	43
The Ghost of the Mediterranean	
Tessa Ransford	48
Love's Integument: The Poetry of Richard Berengarten	
Răzvan Voncu	59
A Poet Like a Tree: Some Comments on the Poetry of Richard Berengarten	
Jeremy Hooker	68
Richard Berengarten's Art of Transformation	
Antoinette Moses	81
From Silence to Song: Richard Berengarten – speaking for the dead	
philip kuhn	92
"Tis Death is dead, not he" or Reading Richard Reading Richard Reading	

PART II

Neli Moody	119
A Syntax of Stones: Pre-Text, Edifice, and the Sacred Space in Richard Berengarten's 'Avebury'	
P. S. Sri	135
Richard Berengarten's 'The Rose of Sharon': "...by any other name . . ."	
John Gery	144
Explicit and Implicit: Ezra Pound's Influence on Richard Berengarten's 'Angels'	
Stefano Maria Casella	164
Roots and Rings: Under the Shade of Richard Berengarten's 'Tree'	
Nasos Vayenas	175
The Black Light of the Poets	
Paschalis Nikolaou	181
In Light of Hellas	
Maria Filippakopoulou	193
Foreign in Our Own Country	
Dídac Llorens Cubedo	211
All Art Ever Meant: Richard Berengarten's 'Against the Day' and Johannes Vermeer's <i>The Guitar Player</i>	
Craig Woelfel	221
The Descent through Croft Woods	
Angus Calder	233
A Spectacular Variety of Registers	
Manana Gelashvili & Temur Kobakhidze	240
<i>The Manager</i> : Tradition and the Individual Talent	

Patrick Query	251
Form and Redemption in <i>The Manager</i>	
Mark Pirie	259
A Reading of <i>Book With No Back Cover</i>	
Chee Lay Tan	268
Cross-cultural Numerology and Translingual Poetics: Chinese Influences on the Poetry of Richard Berengarten	
PART III	
Francis R. Jones	287
In a Balkan Light: Richard Berengarten and the South Slav Cultural Space	
Svetozar Ignjačević	305
Wonderland Through a Cracked Mirror: An English Poet in Yugoslavia	
Slobodan Rakitić	319
Poet in the Power of the Butterfly: An English Poet in the Balkans	
John LucaS	329
Richard Berengarten: The Lyrical and the Political	
Andrew Frisardi	341
Black Suns on the Scales: on Richard Berengarten's <i>The Blue Butterfly</i>	
Aleksandar Petrov	351
The Blue Butterfly Effect	
Stephen Wilson	361
Hath Not a Jew Hands?	
Andrija Matić	374
'Do vidjenja Danitsé': the beauty of complexity	

PART IV

Mick Gowar	389
Richard Berengarten and the Cambridge Poetry Festival: A Vision of Community	
Zdeňk Krivský	398
Language Teaching and Poetry through the Iron Curtain: Richard Berengarten in Czechoslovakia / The Czech Republic	
Margaret Setchell	404
Richard Berengarten in School: A Teacher's Perspective	
<i>Richard Berengarten: A Bibliography</i>	407
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	417
<i>Index</i>	430

Acknowledgements

Several essays in this volume have been published, some of them in variant forms, as follows:

Paul Scott Derrick (2010), 'A Poet for a Time of Need', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

Maria Filipakkopoulou (2009), 'Foreign in Our Own Country', in the *International Literary Quarterly* 9 (November) <http://interlitq.org/issue9/filippakopoulou/job.php>

Andrew Frisardi (2008), 'Black Suns on the Scales', in *Contemporary Poetry Review: Archive* <http://www.cprw.com/archive-plugnpay>

philip kuhn (2010), 'Tis Death is dead, not he' or Reading Richard Reading Richard Reading', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

Andrija Matić (2007), 'Do vidjenja Danitse': the beauty of complexity', *Sibila* <http://www.sibila.com.br/index.php/sibila-english/362-goodbye-balkan-belle>

Neli Moody (2010) 'A Syntax of Stones: Pre-Text, Edifice, and the Sacred Space in Richard Berengarten's "Avebury"', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

Paschalis Nikolaou (2010), 'In Light of Hellas: Experiences of Greekness, Versions of Memory and Roles for Translation in Richard Berengarten's Poetry', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

Aleksandar Petrov (2009), 'The Blue Butterfly Effect' (translated by Vera V. Radojević), *International Literary Quarterly* 7 (May) http://www.interlitq.org/issue7/aleksandar_petrov/job.php

Mark Pirie (2010), 'A Reading of *Book With No Back Cover*' in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>.

Simon Jenner, 'Janus Masks: on the Many Facets of Richard Berengarten's Work', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

Chee-Lay Tan (2010), 'Cross-cultural Numerology and Translingual Poetics: Chinese Influences on the Poetry of Richard Berengarten', in *Jacket* (March) <http://jacketmagazine.com/40/index.shtml>

—. (2010). 'Cross-cultural Numerology and Translingual Poetics: Chinese Influences on the Poetry of Poet Richard Burns', in C. L. Tan, *A Delicate Touch: Essays on Chinese Influences and Chinese Genres*. McGraw Hill Education (Asia): Singapore, pp. 1–17

Stephen Wilson (2009), 'Hath Not a Jew Hands?', *International Literary Quarterly* 8(August) http://www.interlitq.org/issue8/stephen_wilson/job.php

Two essays first appeared as follows:

Svetozar Ignjačević (2000) 'U znaku plavog leptira' ['At the sign of the Blue Butterfly'], *Zemlja čuda u izlomljenom pogledalu – ponovo* [*Wonderland Through A Cracked Mirror – Again*]. Belgrade: Filološki Fakultet i Narodna Knjiga (171–186)

Slobodan Rakitić (2007) 'Pesnik u vlasti leptira' ['Poet in the power of a butterfly'] in Richard Burns, *Plavi Leptir* [*The Blue Butterfly*], Plava tačka, Belgrade and Kragujevčki octobar, Kragujevac (151–156).

The editors would also like to thank the following translators: Vera V. Radojević for the three essays from Serbian, by Svetozar Ignjačević (pp. 305–318), Aleksandar Petrov (pp. 351–360) and Slobodan Rakitić (pp. 319–328); Michael Eleftheriou, for the essay by Nasos Vayenas from Greek (pp. 175–180); and Adrian Poole and Vladimir Scott, for the essay by Mario Nicolao, from Italian (pp. 43–47).

Finally, the editors wish to express their thanks to Richard Berengarten who, from the beginning of this project has been unstinting with advice, encouragement and friendship. We hope this book does justice to him and to his work.

NJ, PSD & CEB
February 2010

Abbreviations

GENERAL

AAE	<i>Academic American Encyclopedia</i> (1980)
Corr.	correspondence
NDQ	<i>North Dakota Quarterly</i> . See also <i>OOY</i> below.
RB	Richard Burns / Richard Berengarten
TES	<i>Times Educational Supplement</i>

TITLES OF WORKS

For the following titles, the authorial name under which the work was published is shown in parentheses. Full publication details of each title are provided in the *Bibliography*, pp. 407–415.

ALF	‘A little further? Twelve propositions’. http://www.berengarten.com/site/A-little-further.html (Berengarten, 2005)
ALF1	‘A little further? Twelve propositions’, <i>Serta</i> 9: 7–12 (Burns, 2006–7)
AP	<i>Against Perfection</i> (Burns, 1999)
AVI	<i>Avebury</i> (Italian version, tr. Roberto Sanesi. Burns, 1976)
AVE	<i>Avebury</i> (Burns, first edition, 1972)
BB	<i>The Blue Butterfly</i> (Berengarten, second edition, 2008)
BB1	<i>The Blue Butterfly</i> (Burns, first edition, 2005)
BL	<i>Black Light: Poems in Memory of George Seferis</i> (Burns, first edition, 1983)
BWNBC	<i>Book With No Back Cover</i> (Burns, 2003)
CRDT	Ceri Richards, <i>Drawings to Poems by Dylan Thomas</i> (Burns, ed., 1980)
DF	<i>Double Flute</i> (Burns, 1972)
DVD	‘Dovidjenja Danitsé’ (in <i>UBL</i> below). Also at: http://sibila.com.br/sIbyl91balkanbelle.html
EVW	‘Elegy for Vernon Watkins’, poem by Roberto Sanesi, in <i>Poetry Wales</i> 17(2): 52–33 (Burns, tr. 1981)
FL	<i>For the Living</i> (Berengarten, second edition, 2008)

- FLI *For the Living* (Burns, first edition, 2004)
- GTGS 'A Grove of Trees and a Grove of Stones'. In *Tel Aviv-Review* (Burns, 1989–90) and in *OOY/NDQ* See also: <http://www.berengarten.com/site/Grove-of-trees.html>
- GTGS1 'A Grove of Trees and a Grove of Stones' (Jadrana Veličković, Serbian tr., 'Gaj kamena i gaj drveća'). (Bernz, 1988)
- IMW Address to the plenary Session of the 36th International Meeting of *Writers Bilingual* (Burns, 1999)
- INR 'IsNATORighttoBombYugoslavia?' http://www.yurope.com/kosovo/articles/Richard_Burns.htm (Burns, 1999)
- ITD *In a Time of Drought* (Berengarten, second edition, 2008)
- ITD1 *In a Time of Drought* (Burns, first edition, 2006)
- IVI *In Visible Ink: Selected Shorter Poems* by Roberto Sanesi (Burns, ed. and tr., 1982)
- JL Limburg, Joanne. 1992. 'Human above all: Richard Burns's *The Manager*'. *The Jewish Quarterly* 185 (Spring): 17–23.
- JLI 'Interview with Joanne Limburg' (Burns, 2001, unpublished typescript)
- KT *Keys to Transformation: Ceri Richards and Dylan Thomas* (Burns, 1981)
- LT *Learning to Talk* (Burns, 1980)
- MAF "'My" Anne Frank, a memoir', unpublished typescript (Burns, 2007)
- MF *Mavro Fos* (Nasos Vayenas and Ilias Lagios, trs., Greek version of *Black Light: Poems in Memory of George Seferis*, 2005)
- MN *Menadžer* (Vladimir Sekulić and Jasna B. Mišić, trs.) (Serbian version of *The Manager*, Bernz, 1990)
- NA 'Notes on Avebury', Unpublished typescript (Berengarten, 2008)
- OOY *Out of Yugoslavia*. Special issue of the *North Dakota Quarterly* (NDQ) 61(1). (Burns and Stephen Markovich, guest eds, 1993)
- PL *Plavi leptir* (Serbian version of *The Blue Butterfly*, tr. Vera V. Radojević, 2007)
- PRV 'With Peter Russell in Venice, 1965–66' (Burns, 1996, 1997)
- PS 'Poems from *Book With No Back Cover*'. Bilingual text, with Chinese translation by Chee Lay Tan, *Poetry Sky: Blue Sky Quarterly* (Burns) <http://www.poetrysky.com/quarterly/quarterly-5-richardburns.html>
- RL *The Return of Lazarus* (Burns, 1971)
- RR *Roots/Routes* (Burns, 1982)
- RS 'Roberto Sanesi: An Italian Among Welshmen', *Poetry Wales* 17(2): 42–51 (Burns, 1981)
- RSI 'Introduction' to Roberto Sanesi, *In Visible Ink: Selected Shorter Poems, 1955–1979* (Burns, 1982)

<i>SLJ</i>	‘Statement for <i>Love and Justice</i> ’ (Unpublished typescript, Burns, 2002–3)
<i>TDP</i>	‘Ten Drachmas for a Pound’ (Unpublished typescript, Berengarten, 2008)
<i>TM</i>	<i>The Manager</i> (Berengarten, second edition, 2008)
<i>TM1</i>	<i>The Manager</i> (Burns, first edition, 2001)
<i>UBL</i>	<i>Under Balkan Light</i> (Berengarten, 2008)
<i>UVS</i>	<i>U vreme suše</i> (Vera V. Radojević, tr., Serbian version of <i>In a Time of Drought</i> , 2004)

Introduction: Everywhere Centre

NORMAN JOPE

This Companion aims to guide readers through the many-faceted poetic output of Richard Berengarten (formerly Burns¹): an output that has appeared, over the past five decades, in a wide variety of places and contexts but which nonetheless is perhaps only now achieving the degree of attention it deserves in the UK. The fact that thirty-three contributors can each approach that work from a slightly different angle is in itself a testimony to the breadth of Berengarten's output. And since more than a third of these contributors have a first language other than English, and with over a dozen nationalities represented in this volume, it is also a testimony to the recognition of his work by fellow writers and critics across cultural, linguistic and geographical boundaries and frontiers. The sheer range of poetic canons to which Berengarten's oeuvre responds – and whose influence, as I shall discuss later in this introduction, has enabled him to put down 'multiple roots' in a number of literary traditions – may even have served to hamper his reception in the UK as a poet of stature. However, the collections recently re-published in the *Selected Writings* series will surely help to redress this state of affairs. For some readers, this Companion will accompany those editions, although its target readership also includes those who might not have encountered Berengarten's work at all or have done so in snatches and fragments. None of the essays in it, therefore, assumes a detailed knowledge of Berengarten's poems

¹ In June 2008 Richard Burns changed his name to Richard Berengarten. This change was announced in notes in the first five volumes of his *Selected Writings* (2008, Salt, Cambridge; reissued by Shearsman Books, 2011): "Richard Berengarten used to be known as Richard Burns ... [H]e now repossesses the family name of his father, the cellist and saxophonist Alexander Berengarten" (e.g. *FL* inside back cover). Henceforward, all references to the poet himself will use the name Berengarten.

and extensive quotation seeks to encourage readers to delve further. Like Berengarten's work itself, this *Companion* also seeks to be readable – indeed, hospitable – to anyone with a working knowledge of literary issues and concepts. Hospitality is a key poetic virtue for Berengarten: he writes:

Ancient laws of reciprocity, hospitality and magnanimity are necessary to the poetry of this time and this place too. Anything else or less is not good enough and will not serve adequately. A poet without such qualities can only be second-rate, however clever, skilled and cunning. (ALF, RB online²)

How do these virtues translate into poetry, and Berengarten's poetry in particular? They relate above all to his openness to past and present poetic practice across cultural, linguistic and geographical boundaries. That openness is traceable not only in Berengarten's poems, but in his related activities as translator, pedagogue, cultural ambassador and poetry activist. He is the least confined of writers and this in itself sets him apart from the constructors and aficionados of cliques and coteries.

Berengarten has lived and worked outside the UK (mainly in Italy, Greece, former Yugoslavia and the USA) for much of his adult life: distanced, literally, from the rifts and schisms of the contemporary British poetry scene. Moreover, if the common British distinction between the two competing camps of the 'mainstream' and the 'avant-garde' can be applied, it is certainly hard to fit Berengarten into either one. Although his openness to modernist poetries in other European languages is arguably more often associated in the UK with the oppositional avant-garde (in opposition, that is, to the 'little-England' tendencies of The Movement and its successors), his use of traditional form and rhetoric, often derived from pre-20th century sources in English literature, makes it equally difficult to relate his work to that of so-called 'linguistically innovative' writers. Rather, Berengarten's most characteristic work almost always involves an engagement with the manifold legacies of the past, as if from an intention to produce something that might turn out (who knows?) to be of value to succeeding generations. This process of hosting-and-guesting is defined by Berengarten, as follows:

² Editors' note: 'RB online' will be used throughout this volume to refer to RB's website at www.berengarten.com. ALF refers to RB's essay 'A Little Further?', on his website.

Whenever the guest arrives, the host is reciprocally hosted. The particular interior that encompasses both guest and host is the anterior timespace that itself first gave welcome to the host. Poetry, being itself a gift, flourishes in that generous presence of arrivals, meetings and gift-givings (ALF, RB online).

Since the range of accessible canons has become, potentially, international, the traditions of English and North American literature are no longer hegemonic for any adventurous writer. This widening of options can help such a writer to avoid the tropes of the 'received' canon in his or her language of expression and to encourage fresh and distinctive blends. The newness in Berengarten's work, therefore, derives not from disjuncture but from synthesis.

§

As already indicated, the number and range of contributions in this volume reflects not only the breadth of Berengarten's output and his appeal, but the multiplicity of critical approaches that his work sustains. Furthermore, it has been impossible to arrange these contributions into tidy, self-contained sections. Essays about particular pieces inevitably cover wider themes; essays on wider themes draw their evidence, as they must, from particular pieces; and coverage of Berengarten's ancillary activities sheds light upon the core of his work. As he puts it himself, in the final section of 'Avebury': 'now every / where centre' (*FL* 50); and this is eminently true of this volume. Clearly, a collection such as this requires a running order, even if readers are, as ever, at liberty to wander back and forth as if each essay existed in parallel to the others. However, chronological patterning has also informed its arrangement and, in particular, readers who approach the essays in the second section in sequence will acquire some sense of Berengarten's development.

Whether considered separately or together, the first eight essays offer an overview by ranging across the entire span of Berengarten's published oeuvre to date. They cover such diverse themes as Berengarten's Jewish heritage and influences (Moses and kuhn); his Mediterranean affinities (Nicolao and Voncu); his deep and long-lasting interest in symbol, myth and Jungian psychology (Hooker and Ransford); the multiplicity of voices he adopts and masters (Jenner); and the relationship that exists, in his work, between mortality and the poetic impulse (Derrick). But this is to simplify matters almost to vanishing point. Each of these essays

ranges widely in its own right, drawing together sources and influences and suggesting points of departure for further reading and scholarship. Taken as a whole, they present a sophisticated analysis of where this poet has come from, what he has accomplished so far and the comparative measure of his achievement. Here, in particular, one also gets a sense of the empowerment (rather than Bloomian anxiety) of influence in Berengarten's oeuvre. These pieces reveal him as a poet who has always been willing to tap into multiple canons and diverse heritages; who is open, in the words of Octavio Paz, to the "wind from all compass points" (Paz 1991: 258–269) that is available to refresh and inspire all writers of ambition and curiosity. This first group of essays, then, throws down a challenge to all notions of exclusivity and the closure of borders, in the spheres of both poetry and life as a whole.

The second group of essays covers specific works and is arranged in the chronological order of those works' completion. With the exception of Berengarten's 'Balkan Trilogy', they cover Berengarten's major poetic achievements. Of the fourteen pieces in this section, three consider 'Black Light' (Filippakopoulou, Nikolaou and Vayenas) and three, *The Manager* (Calder, Gelashvili and Kobakhidze, and Query). In the view of the editors, this emphasis happens to mirror the comparative importance of these sequences. The other works discussed in this section are 'Avebury' (Moody); 'The Rose of Sharon' (Sri); 'Angels' (Gery); 'Tree' (Casella); 'Against The Day' (Llorens Cubedo); 'Croft Woods' (Woelfel); and *Book With No Back Cover* (Pirie and Tan).

The three pieces on 'Black Light' are all written by Greeks, including Nasos Vayenas, one of Greece's most respected contemporary poets. Taken together, these essays present an informed examination of the Hellenic influence on Berengarten, in particular that of the poetry of George Seferis. Indeed, these critics locate 'Black Light' within a living context, constructed both out of life-experience in Greece and from Greek literary models, that is in large part recognisable 'as being Greek' to Greeks themselves. This parallels the readings of four Serbian critics later in the volume (Matić, Rakitić, Petrov and Ignjačević), which not only locate 'The Balkan Trilogy' within the geopolitical zone of former Yugoslavia, but confirm it as an accurate depiction of Balkan life-experience and culture. Such responses not only embed Berengarten's work in literary traditions other than that of English: they also suggest a wider, 'European' importance for his work, as well as the establishment of literary canons that transcend geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Most of the pieces in the second section are concerned with issues of form and subject their texts to close analysis. Among other things, this highlights the fact that Berengarten's oeuvre contains some startlingly 'traditional' poems – startling, that is, to anyone who believes that the old forms are discredited. However, these pieces also indicate clearly that Berengarten makes these forms work, because he has the sophistication and skill required to do so – and that, in skilled hands such as his, their resonance remains undiminished. And, no less, these contributions show that it would be inaccurate to portray his approach to form, in its entirety, as solely concerned with salvage and renewal. Formal innovation is at the heart of his poetry and expresses itself in a multiplicity of ways, from the tight rhyme-schemes of 'The Rose of Sharon' (*FL* 91–96) and the villanelles that form 'The Death of Children' (*BB* 17–25) through to the jagged open forms of 'Avebury' (*FL* 23–50), the verse-paragraphs of *The Manager*, and the expansive long lines of 'Flight of the Imago' (*BB* 73–101). Other key themes are explored in this part of the book too, such as myth and spirituality (Moody, Sri, Casella and Woelfel); Chinese cultural traditions, particularly the *I Ching* (Tan); visual art (Llorens Cubedo and Woelfel); typography and book design (Pirie); the influence of 'Sarf-Eastern' colloquial parlance (Calder); postmodernism (Query); and Berengarten's relationships with Pound and Eliot (Gery, and Gelashvili and Kobakhidze). Once more, however, it might be argued that a summary of this kind risks simplifying and even trivialising the complex concerns with which these essays engage.

The third section consists of eight essays which focus entirely on the 'Balkan Trilogy': *The Blue Butterfly*, *In a Time of Drought* and *Under Balkan Light*. Although placing these essays together does not necessarily amount to a claim, on our part, that this trilogy represents the apex of Berengarten's poetic achievement to date, it certainly reflects the comparative enthusiasm that contributors have displayed for it (bearing in mind, also, the extensive references to the trilogy contained in the first section). Readers will also note that there is a considerable degree of overlap within this section, particularly among three of the four Serbian writers (Rakitić, Petrov and Ignjačević). However, the angles and areas of concurrence this uncovers leads, in our view, to a deeper reading of the trilogy. The other pieces in this third section are written by Anglophone critics (Jones, Lucas, Frisardi and Wilson), all of whom approach the trilogy from unique perspectives. Jones draws upon his own extensive knowledge of the languages, history, culture and literature of the former

Yugoslavia; Lucas focuses on the political and historical dimensions of the work; Frisardi highlights the influence of the post-Jungian writer and thinker, James Hillman; and Wilson, by approaching *The Blue Butterfly* from Jewish perspectives, complements the earlier contributions of Moses and kuhn by emphasising specifically Jewish currents and associations within Berengarten's work. Finally, this section also contains an in-depth study of a particular piece, 'Do vidjenja Danitsé', by the fourth Serbian writer (Matić), which, in its close textual attention, relates to some of the essays in the second section. Together, these pieces not only build up a composite picture of this particular area of Berengarten's work, but also illustrate how a poetry of ambition and risk can elicit different, yet complementary responses from critical readers.

The final section, containing three essays, hints at the range of Berengarten's ancillary roles: as literary activist (Gowar), TEFL/TESOL teacher / entrepreneur (Křivský) and teacher of poetry to children (Setchell). This section, regrettably, is incomplete in coverage despite our best efforts to expand it; for example, there is nothing about Berengarten's work as a translator (although the bibliography at the end of this volume includes some basic information), or about his literary and art criticism and other prose writing, or his role as a teacher to adults. However, in highlighting some of the other 'hats' that Berengarten has worn (to allude to the 'Hatman' persona that he has adopted, at times, in his pedagogical activities with children), this section suggests the range and consistency of his concerns. Around the inner core of his life's work – the poems themselves – there is an outer ring of diverse, yet compatible concerns and activities, and a record of achievement in all of them. These activities have also influenced much of the writing; after all, if Berengarten had not gone to Serbia to earn a living, then his 'Balkan Trilogy' would have either not existed at all or taken a very different form.

§

I have sought, in surveying the contents of this *Companion*, to touch upon the multiple themes of Berengarten's work. However, I would argue that what distinguishes him most, and marks him out as a writer of importance, is his courage in engaging with the subject of mortality. Indeed, Berengarten writes under the gaze of death to a remarkable extent, playing for high stakes by comparison with some more favoured writers. Whereas a great deal of writing about death, particularly

in the contemporary ‘mainstream’, is actually about bereavement – the experience of separation and loss, in which one’s own survival is (almost as if) taken for granted – Berengarten takes the fact of his own mortality to heart, beats poetry out of himself with it, works through to a realisation of what is worth the living, precisely because he has displayed the requisite courage. By deliberately placing his writing under the shade of that threat, Berengarten is able to write more deeply and vividly. And the way in which death haunts and deepens his writing suggests the works of other artists and musicians as well as writers: Mahler is one such comparison that springs to mind, not least for the role that erotic love also plays in much of Berengarten’s work.

Moreover, Berengarten is also prepared to confront death’s agents: the killers of love, who are not only the agents of entropy but traitors and deserters in the face of our common enemy as human beings. From the first poem in *For the Living*, ‘The Easter Rising 1967’ (*FL* 1–14), to the recent work on twentieth-century conflicts collected in *The Blue Butterfly* and *Under Balkan Light*, Berengarten conducts a many-faceted dialogue with ‘Master Death’ – whether by way of an interrogation of His foot-soldiers and their works, or by arraigning the Adversary himself. In this, his mindset is reminiscent of the Knight in Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal*: both the Knight/Bergman and Berengarten, in their own ways, explore a psychic space in which they are able, for just long enough, to stave off Death and its intractable demands. As Berengarten puts it:

Poetry is a challenge to mortality and a criticism of Death. Crossing deaths, poems are spacetime-travellers: they encapsulate a non-self-defeating irony, the only defeat Death might admit, if Death had words. (ALF, RB online).

“Crossing deaths, poems are spacetime-travellers” brings us back to the idea of gift-giving encapsulated in one of the earlier quotations from ‘A Little Further’ and the hope that, in writing poetry, one might be handing on something of value, not only to one’s contemporaries but to generations to come. This is not, perhaps, a fashionable approach to take. In the face of a media-driven culture of instant gratification, of the erosion of historical context from contemporary discourse and of the overwhelming ecological threats we confront, it is safer to hope, at best, for the pleasure of a task well done and the respect of our immediate peers. However, Berengarten’s self-imposed challenge is to write as if a legacy remained possible; not from megalomania, because posthumous

reputations are of no use at all to the dead, but from love towards those as yet unborn.

Whether or not this legacy is accepted remains to be seen – as in the case of any other living writer – but Berengarten’s courage, in daring to address the deepest aspects of the human condition, is exemplary. We hope very much that this courage comes through in what follows, and that the importance of his work – as well as the extent to which it invites further dialogue, rather than seeks hierarchical closure – is conveyed to this Companion’s readers.

REFERENCES

- Joep, Norman. 2005. ‘Range and Resonance: review of *For the Living* by Richard Burns (Cambridge: Salt, 2004) and *Book With No Back Cover* (London: David Paul, 2003)’, *Tears In The Fence* 42: 116–120.
- Paz, Octavio. 1991. *The Collected Poems 1957–1987* (ed. Eliot Weinberger). London: Paladin.