

SAMPLER

*Translations*

ALSO BY DAVID WEVILL

*Penguin Modern Poets 4* (with David Holbrook & Christopher Middleton, Penguin Books, 1963)  
*Birth of a Shark* (Macmillan / St. Martin's Press, 1964)  
*A Christ of the Ice-Floes* (Macmillan / St. Martin's Press, 1966; Tavern Books, 2016)  
*Firebreak* (Macmillan / St. Martin's Press, 1971)  
*Where the Arrow Falls* (Macmillan, 1973; St. Martin's Press, 1974; Tavern Books, 2016)  
*Casual Ties* (Curbstone, 1983; Tavern Books, 2010; Shearsman Books, 2022)  
*Other Names for the Heart: New & Selected Poems 1964–1984* (Exile Editions, 1985)  
*Figure of Eight: New Poems and Selected Translations* (Exile Editions, 1987)  
*Figure of Eight* (chapbook; Shearsman Books, 1988)  
*Child Eating Snow* (Exile Editions, 1994)  
*Solo With Grazing Deer* (Exile Editions, 2001)  
*Departures: Selected Poems* (Shearsman Books, 2003; 2013)  
*Asterisks* (Exile Editions, 2007)  
*To Build My Shadow a Fire: The Poetry and Translations of David Wevill* (edited by Michael McGriff, Truman State University Press, 2010)  
*Collected Earlier Poems* (Shearsman Books, 2022)  
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AS TRANSLATOR:

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The Pessoa translations and six of the Lacerda translations were first collected in David Wevill's *Figure of Eight: New Poems and Selected Translations* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1987). These were republished with the additional Lacerda poems featured here, with the Pindar translations and with a large selection of poems by Ferenc Juhász, in David Wevill, *Collected Translations* (Portland, OR: Tavern Books, 2014). The Juhász poems will be republished by Shearsman Books as a separate volume.

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## CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) was one of the founding spirits of modernism, and a leading French symbolist poet. He introduced Edgar Allan Poe's work to Europe. His poetry, prose pieces and critical essays have had a lasting influence on European literature. He published one book of poems, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, which remains a classic. His poems, traditional in form, are revolutionary in content, exploring, with striking imagery, the world of the unconscious in all its beauty and perversity, a sensuous world where all the senses come together in a dance of emotion and imagination. His sonnet 'The Owls', printed here, is my stripped-down version of his elegantly formal original.

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## The Owls

Beneath the black yews that hide them

the owls take up their stations.  
Their eyes flash red. Like strange  
visitor gods, they meditate.

Nothing moves. They wait there  
until, the flattened sun now  
pushed under by shadows,  
the dark takes over.

From their posture, the wise learn  
to shy clear of this world's  
turbulence & restlessness –

men, maddened by shadows that pass  
bearing always the punishment  
of wanting some place else.

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## FERNANDO PESSOA

These Pessoa translations are the work of Alberto de Lacerda and myself equally, and appeared originally under both our names. A native of Portugal, Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) claimed that Álvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro, and Ricardo Reis were not pseudonyms but deep, uncontrollable expressions of his personalities, or *heterónimos* [heteronyms] as he called them. The names of the presiding *heterónimos* have been noted at the bottom of each of the Pessoa poems in this volume.

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## After the Fair

They wander down the road  
Singing for no reason,  
A final gift: of hope  
For the ultimate illusion.  
They don't mean anything.  
They are only fools and mimes.

They go, together and  
Singly through the moonlight,  
Lost in some dream  
They will never know,  
Singing the words of these poems  
That come to mind.

Pages from some dead myth,  
So lyrical, so lonely!  
No cry breaks their voices,  
The voices are scarcely their own.  
And the infinite has never  
Heard of them, or of us.

*Fernando Pessoa*

## [ Every Day I Discover ]

Every day I discover  
The incredible reality of things.  
Each thing is what it is,  
Intact; and it's hard to explain to someone how much  
This delights and fills me.  
To exist is enough to be whole.

I have written so many poems.  
Of course I shall write many more.  
Every poem of mine says this,  
And none of my poems is the same,  
Since everything that exists is another way of saying it.

Sometimes I'll look at a stone.  
I am not concerned whether a stone can feel.  
The stone is not my sister –  
I like it because it is a stone,  
Because it feels nothing  
And is no relation of mine.

Other times I hear the wind passing.  
I think it is worth being born, to hear the passing wind.

I don't know what the world will make of this.  
But I feel it is true, because thinking this way  
Is my nature; and no one



Can hear me thinking.  
My thoughts live only in words.

Once I was called a  
“Materialist poet” – surprised  
That my soul had a name.  
I am no poet, I just have eyes.  
If my words matter, the matter is there  
In my poems, not in me. My will  
Is no part of my poems. They exist.

*Alberto Caeiro*

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