



# **Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy)**

*Jacques Derrida*

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This book brings together five powerful encounters. Themes central to all of Derrida's writings thread the intense confrontation between the most famous philosopher of our time and the Jewish poet writing in German who, perhaps more powerfully than any other, has testified to the European experience of the twentieth century. They include the date or signature and its singularity; the notion of the trace; temporal structures of futurity and the to come; the multiplicity of language and questions of translation; such speech acts as testimony and promising, but also lying and perjury; the possibility of the impossible; and, above all, the question of the poem as addressed and destined beyond knowledge, seeking to speak to and for the irreducibly other. The memory of encounters with thinkers who have also engaged Celan's work animates these writings, which include a brilliant dialogue between two interpretative modes-hermeneutics and deconstruction. Derrida's approach to a poem is a revelation on many levels, from the most concrete ways of reading-for example, his analysis of a sequence of personal pronouns-to the most sweeping imperatives of human existence (and Derrida's writings are always a study in the imbrication of such levels). Above all, he voices the call to responsibility in the ultimate line of Celan's poem: The world is gone, I must carry you, which sounds throughout the book's final essay like a refrain. Only two of the texts in this volume do not appear here in English for the first time. Of these, *Shibboleth* has been entirely retranslated and has been set following Derrida's own instructions for publication in French; *A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text* was substantially rewritten by Derrida himself and basically appears here as the translation of a new text. Jacques Derrida's most recent books in English translation include *Counterpath: Traveling with Jacques Derrida* (with Catherine Malabou). He died in Paris on October 8, 2004. Thomas Dutoit teaches at the Universit de Paris 7. He translated *Aporias* and edited *On the Name*, both by Jacques Derrida.

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