



## Beyond Silence

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*Beyond Silence: Selected Shorter Poems, 1948-2003* contains selections from seven of Daniel Hoffman's previous volumes, and it proves to be a provocative collection of meditations about nature, history, and art. Arranged thematically rather than chronologically, it allows the reader to trace the major veins of Hoffman's work. The eight sections provide a rich variety of shorter (not necessarily short) poems on literary figures, historical figures, places, personal passages, and other subjects. The mingling of personal and mythic, external and interior landscapes makes the poems emotionally rewarding, and their careful craft—many of them flexibly formal, some free verse—make them appealing to the mind's ear.

The collection includes more than fifty years of poetry and came out in the poet's eightieth year. It is rewarding to compare early and late poems on the same theme, and so see how Hoffman's perspective has changed and how it has not. The tone, its quiet restraint yielding glimpses of passion, does not change; the sense of balance and order in the poems extends throughout the volume.

To many the most rewarding section may be the poems addressed to other artists, in which he seems to evoke the shades of earlier poets, writers, and musicians only to cajole them and argue with them. The title of one captures the spirit: "Instructions to a Medium, to be transmitted to the shade of W. B. Yeats, the latter having responded in a seance held on 13 June 1965, its hundred birthday." Poems to Mark Twain, William Carlos Williams, Walt Whitman, Charles Ives and others give credit for some of the poet's own music but also interrogate his forefathers.

These are poems to reread and meditate upon.

## Review Sources

*Booklist* 99, no. 15 (April 1, 2003): 1369.

*The New York Times Book Review*, May 25, 2003, p. 16.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 13, 2003.

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