



Pierce the Skin: Selected Poems, 1982-2007

Henri Cole

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A GENEROUS SELECTION FROM ONE OF OUR GREATEST LIVING POETS

Henri Cole has been described as a "fiercely somber, yet exuberant poet" by Harold Bloom, who identifies him as the central poet of his generation. Cole's most recent poems have a daring sensitivity and imagistic beauty unlike anything on the American scene today. Whether they are exploring pleasure or pain, humor or sorrow, triumph or fear, they reach for an almost shocking intensity. Cole's fourth book, Middle Earth, awakened his audience to him as a poet now writing the poems of his career.

Pierce the Skin brings together sixty-six poems from the past twenty-five years, including work from Cole's early, closely observed, virtuosic books, long out of print, as well as his important more recent books, The Visible Man (1998), Middle Earth (2003), and Blackbird and Wolf (2007). The result is a collection reconsecrating Cole's central themes: the desire for connection, the contingencies of selfhood and human love, the dissolution of the body, the sublime renewal found in nature, and the distance of language from experience. "I don't want words to sever me from reality," Cole says, striving in Pierce the Skin to break the barrier even between word and skin. Maureen N. McLane wrote in The New York Times Book Review that Cole is a poet of "self-overcoming, lusting, loathing and beautiful force." This book will have a permanent place with other essential poems of our moment.



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