



Jackdaw Jiving: Selected Essays on Poetry & Translation

Christopher Middleton

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Christopher Middleton in his third book of criticism includes sixteen essays and three reviews, drawing on two decades' writing. This is neither a monograph nor a patchwork miscellany: certain motifs develop from one piece to the next: there is (almost) common ground, outlined in the opening piece called 'Imagination and Lyric Voice'. 'Middleton is easily the most intelligent and serious of our innovators,' writes John Lucas in the *New Statesman*, 'a poet with a disconcerting knack of making it new in almost every poem.' He brings to his prose the inventive wisdom of the verse practitioner, so that when he writes on translation, it's about the art of translating rather than theories of the craft. 'It is the action, of the original, of the translator, that I was exploring.' The conclusions he reaches are always provisional: what matters is the process of imagination and analysis by which they are reached, the journey rather than the point of arrival. 'The essays are neither strictly theoretical, nor empirical, nor scholarly -- nor even literary, come to that.' Middleton's most celebrated essays 'The Viking Prow', 1 and 2, are reprinted here, along with 'The Pursuit of the Kingfisher'. Among authors specifically considered are Shakespeare, Coleridge, Holderlin, Mallarme, Blake, Brecht, Eich and Celan.

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