

Breath Lines

How Poems Work and Why They Matter

Jan Schreiber



Breath Lines takes a fresh and down-to-earth approach to encounters with poetry. In these accessible, non-technical essays, Jan Schreiber offers insightful strategies for reading and understanding works that many people have found challenging. The essays address critical areas of poetic craft and interpretation: the content of poems, including narrative techniques and the voices a poet creates; the character and power of verse lines and the problems attending the translation of metrical poems; challenges of interpretation, including complex philosophies and obscure references; and a look at the future of the art, hinted by the competing styles and allegiances of contemporary writers.

Each essay offers pertinent verse examples to illustrate metrical, rhetorical, and stylistic issues. Schreiber's commentaries explain how a reader's careful attention can be rewarded with a deeper understanding of the multiple meanings embedded in apparently simple poems—and how readers can thereby experience an emotional impact not always perceived on a first reading.

Designed for writers, students, and passionate readers, *Breath Lines: How Poems Work and Why They Matter* offers guidance into some of the art form's more arcane mysteries, written by a distinguished poet and critic.

AVAILABLE FROM LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Jan Schreiber is a poet, translator, and prolific writer about poetry. His previous books include *Sparring with the Sun* (criticism), *Wily Apparitions*, *Peccadilloes*, and *Bay Leaves* (poetry), and *Poems of Paul Valéry* (translations). An advisory editor of *Think* journal, he teaches in the BOLLI program at Brandeis University and runs The Critical Path, an annual symposium on poetry criticism.