



DELPHI  
CLASSICS

C. Day-Lewis  
Collected Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

D E L P H I P O E T S S E R I E S

**C. Day-Lewis**

(1904-1972)



**Contents**

*The Life and Poetry of C. Day-Lewis*

Brief Introduction: C. Day-Lewis  
Beechen Vigil and Other Poems (1925)  
Country Comets (1928)  
Transitional Poem (1929)  
From Feathers to Iron (1931)  
The Magnetic Mountain (1933)  
A Time to Dance and Other Poems (1935)  
Noah and the Waters (1936)  
Overtures to Death (1938)  
Word over All (1943)  
Poems (1943-1947)  
An Italian Visit (1953)  
Pegasus and Other Poems (1957)  
The Gate and Other Poems (1962)  
The Room (1965)  
The Whispering Roots and Other Poems (1970)  
Miscellaneous Poems

*The Poems*

List of Poems in Chronological Order  
List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

*The Nigel Strangeways Books*

A Question of Proof (1935)  
Thou Shell of Death (1936)  
There's Trouble Brewing (1937)  
The Beast Must Die (1938)  
The Smiler with the Knife (1939)

Malice in Wonderland (1940)  
The Case of the Abominable Snowman (1941)  
Minute for Murder (1947)  
Head of a Traveller (1949)  
The Dreadful Hollow (1953)  
The Whisper in the Gloom (1954)  
End of Chapter (1957)  
The Widow's Cruise (1959)  
The Worm of Death (1961)  
The Sad Variety (1964)  
The Morning after Death (1966)

*Other Novels*

A Tangled Web (1956)  
A Penknife in My Heart (1958)  
The Deadly Joker (1963)  
The Private Wound (1968)

*The Non-Fiction*

A Hope for Poetry (1934)  
Revolutionaries and Poetry (1935)  
The Colloquial Element in English Poetry (1947)  
The Poet's Way of Knowledge (1956)

*The Autobiography*

The Buried Day (1960)

*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Day Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the name.

© Delphi Classics 2024

Version 1

DELPHI POETS SERIES

**C. Day-Lewis**



*By Delphi Classics, 2024*

# COPYRIGHT

*C. Day-Lewis - Delphi Poets Series*



First published in the United Kingdom in 2024 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2024.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 186 0

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

United Kingdom

Contact: [sales@delphiclassics.com](mailto:sales@delphiclassics.com)

DELPHI  CLASSICS

[www.delphiclassics.com](http://www.delphiclassics.com)

## NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

## The Life and Poetry of C. Day-Lewis



*Cecil Day-Lewis was born on in Ballintubbert, on the Athy and Stradbally border, Queen's County, now known as County Laois, Ireland*



*The birthplace, Ballintubbert House*





*Day-Lewis as a young man, 1921*

## Brief Introduction: C. Day-Lewis



Cecil Day-Lewis was born in 1904 in Ballintubbert, on the Athy and Stradbally border, Queen's County, Ireland. He was the son of Frank Day-Lewis, a Church of Ireland rector, and Kathleen Blake (née Squires). Some of his family were originally from Hertfordshire, England and had settled in Ireland in the late 1860's. His father took the surname "Day-Lewis" as a combination of his own birth father's (Day) and his adoptive father's (Lewis) surnames. After the early death of his mother in 1906, when he was two years old, Cecil was brought up in London by his father, with the help of an aunt, while spending summer holidays with relatives in County Wexford. He was educated at Sherborne School and at Wadham College, Oxford, where he became part of the circle that gathered around the British-American poet W. H. Auden. Auden's poetry is noted for its stylistic and technical achievement, its engagement with politics, morals, love and religion, and its variety in tone, form and content. Poets like Auden sought in their verses to adopt a left-wing political solution to the ills of the day.

Auden helped Day-Lewis to edit his early verses and by 1925 his first collection of poems, *Beechen Vigil*, appeared in print. A few years later in 1928, Day-Lewis married Constance Mary King, the daughter of a Sherborne teacher. The marriage was not a success. During this early period, he worked as a schoolmaster in three schools. Throughout the 1940's, he had a long and troubled love affair with the novelist Rosamond Lehmann, to whom he dedicated his 1943 poetry collection *Word Over All*. His first marriage was dissolved in 1951, when Day-Lewis married the film actress Jill Balcon, daughter of Michael Balcon, a film producer well-known for his leadership of Ealing Studios. Day-Lewis had first met Jill at the recording of a radio programme in 1948 and began a relationship with her that year, despite being married to his first wife. He continued simultaneous relationships with Mary, who lived with their two sons in Dorset, his unmarried mistress Lehmann, who lived in Oxfordshire, and Jill who was his latest love. Day-Lewis eventually broke with both his wife and his mistress in order to be with Jill. Still, he was no more faithful to the actress Jill than he had been with Mary or Rosamond. Jill's father was deeply unhappy about the scandalous affair since she was named publicly as co-respondent in Day-Lewis' divorce. He disinherited Jill and cut off all relationships with the pair.

During the Second World War, Day-Lewis worked as a publications editor in the Ministry of Information, an institution satirised by George Orwell in his dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In this turbulent period, Day-Lewis's poetry was less influenced by Auden, as he developed a more traditional style of lyricism. Some critics believe that he reached his full stature as a poet in the collection *Word Over All* (1943), when he finally distanced himself from the influence of Auden. After the war, he joined the publisher Chatto & Windus as a director and senior editor.

In 1946, Day-Lewis served as a lecturer at Cambridge University, publishing his lectures in *The Poetic Image* (1947). He also became a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in the 1950 Birthday Honours. He later taught poetry at Oxford, where he was named as Professor of Poetry from 1951 to 1956. During 1962-1963, he was the Norton Professor at Harvard University. His most impressive recognition as a poet came in 1968, when he was appointed as Poet Laureate in succession to John Masefield. Geoffrey Handley-Taylor, chair of the

Poetry Society had stated that Day-Lewis was “a good administrative poet” and “a safe bet”.

Day-Lewis died from pancreatic cancer on 22 May 1972, aged 68, at Lemmons, the Hertfordshire home of Kingsley Amis and Elizabeth Jane Howard, where he and his family were staying. Having been a great admirer of Thomas Hardy, he had arranged to be buried near the author’s grave at St Michael’s Church in Stinsford, Dorset.

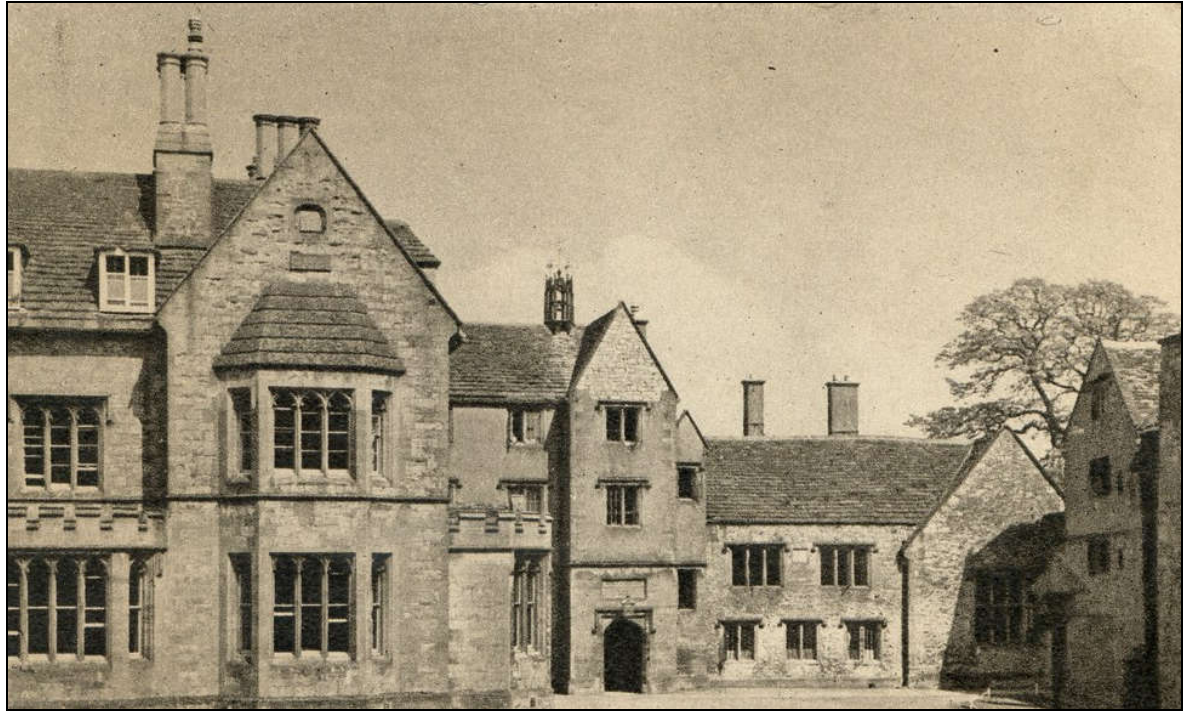
His career as a poet is something of a contradiction: he had been a radical poet of the 1930s, though by the end of his life he was regarded as a traditional poet. His native poetic temperament was romantic, even Georgian, with ideological overtones. The tendency toward Georgian nature verse is suggested by the title of his first collection, *Beechen Vigil*, revealing both the derivative character of his early poems and the influence of his first love, Mary King. His second collection, *Country Comets* (1928) is more mature than its predecessor, with verses that reflect his love for Mary and his philosophical studies at Oxford. Yet, it is a volume of juvenilia and Day-Lewis chose to exclude the poems in later editions of his verse.

Like many other poets, Day-Lewis was fascinated by Auden’s restless energy, undisputed intelligence and air of authority. Auden and Day-Lewis served as joint editors of *Oxford Poetry 1927*, for which they wrote a manifesto-like preface, fusing dogmatic overstatement and burlesque that made it clear that Auden was the dominant partner. Borrowing ideas from T. S. Eliot, the new psychology and socialism, they called for a new kind of poetry, with “lineaments that are impossible to replicate in prose”. Day-Lewis’ own ideas about the shape of this new form of poetry are embodied in his landmark work *Transitional Poem* (1929). Most of this volume was written during the winter of 1927-1928, when he was teaching at a preparatory school in Oxford. The lyric sequence is organised into four parts, employing a variety of stanza forms. When it was first published, it was accompanied by abstruse notes in the manner of Eliot’s notes to *The Waste Land*. The unity of the whole text is thematic rather than narrative, and the book does not so much develop a theme as circle around it. In his notes, Day-Lewis describes this theme as the “pursuit of wholeness”. *Transitional Poem* is also, in many respects, a love poem to the poet’s wife-to-be. There is an unusual blend of conventional romantic sentiments with the radical poetry ideas that Day-Lewis was struggling to make his own.

His next volume, *From Feathers to Iron* (1931), is a lyric sequence inspired by the birth of his first son. This birth serves as the climax of the collection, while many of the lyrics are meditations or poems addressed to the poet’s wife or unborn child. The first four lyrics introduce the metaphor of the journey – the child’s journey toward life. The volume culminates with “Epilogue: Letter to W.H. Auden,” which again summons up the imagery of a journey and exploration, though this time it is applied to the poet’s task. This important collection is held together by a simple narrative line, providing a sense of unity that was lacking in *Transitional Poem*. The influence of Auden is apparent, but seems beneficial, stiffening Day-Lewis’s use of rhythm while sharpening his diction.

His next notable work was a political allegory, titled *The Magnetic Mountain* (1933). The mountain itself is a somewhat obscure symbol of an ideal world that lies beyond the horizon, hinting at the promise of a new beginning and a new world in which body and spirit can be “as one”. The collection celebrates the mountain’s attraction for the pure of heart in thirty-six lyrics, arranged in four parts. The

publication of this work immediately confirmed Day-Lewis's standing as one of the revolutionary young poets of the "Auden group."



*Sherborne School, where Day-Lewis was educated*



*Day-Lewis's long-time friend and fellow poet, W. H. Auden, 1939*

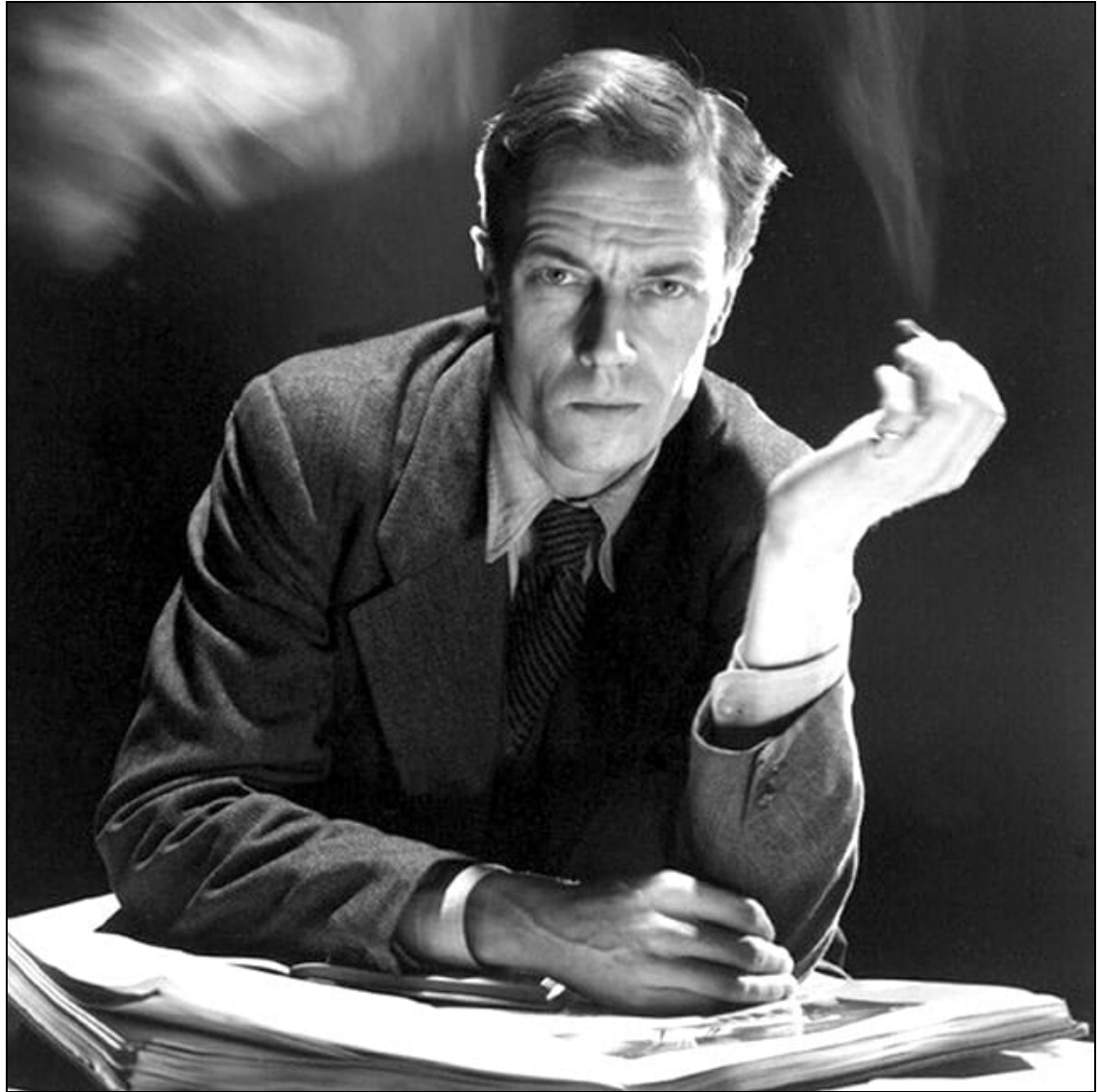


*Rosamond Lehmann — during the 1940's, Day-Lewis had a long and troubled love affair with the novelist Rosamond Lehmann.*



*The film producer and Day-Lewis's estranged father-in-law, Michael Balcon, c. 1952*





*Day-Lewis, c. 1946*



*Day-Lewis with his second wife, Jill Balcon, a British film and theatre actress, who was 21 years younger than him. The couple had two children: the food critic and TV chef Tamasin Day-Lewis and the world-famous actor Daniel Day-Lewis.*



*Cecil and Jill with their son Daniel and daughter Tamasin, 1969*



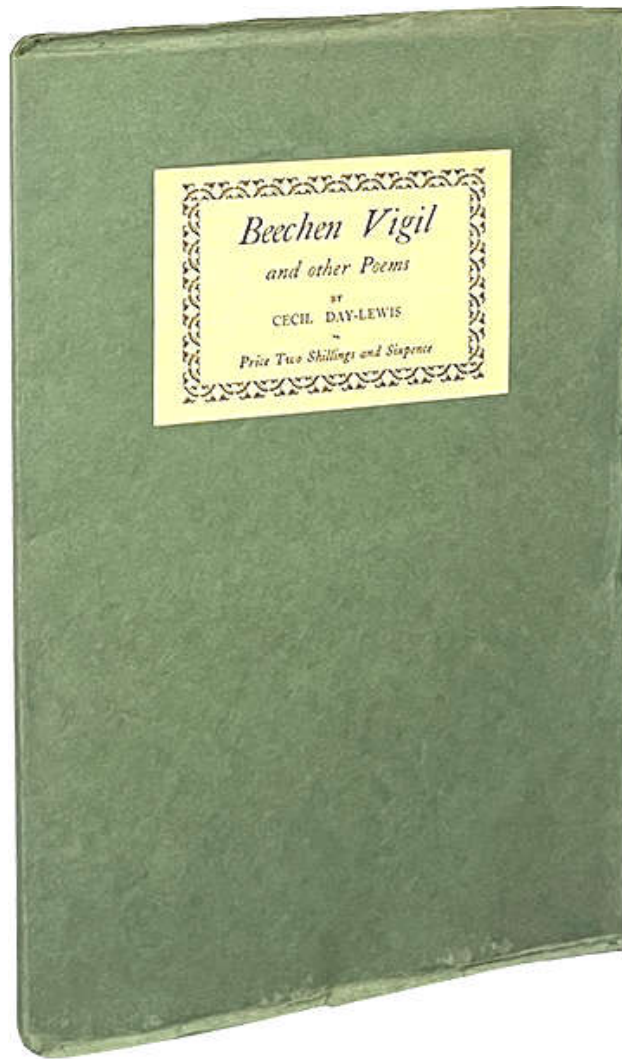
*Day-Lewis shortly after being appointed Poet Laureate in 1968*

## Beechen Vigil and Other Poems (1925)



### CONTENTS

The Net  
Beechen Vigil  
A Creation  
Rose-Pruner  
In a Wood  
Songs of Sirens  
Words  
A Rune for Anthony John  
Fairy to Children  
Song of Fairies  
Tapestries  
Lost  
Lines from the French  
No Meaner Quest  
Late Summer  
Dream-Maker  
Once in Arcady  
A Forest Piece  
Lines from Catullus  
Sanctuary  
An April Mood  
Eve  
He Thanks Earth for his Beloved  
The Fisher



*The first edition*

*For the Lady Dream-Maker*

'It is a little star-dust caught, a segment  
of the rainbow which I have clutched.'  
THOREAU

## The Net



Poet, sink the shining net  
In ebb and flow.  
Only there thy spoil is met  
Where all tides go.

Bend above the wavering net.  
Those silvery hordes  
Often shall o'erleap the cords,  
And thou shalt fret

For so much beauty unharvested.  
Some hour will bless,  
And thou one lasting gleam shalt add  
To loveliness.



DELPHI  CLASSICS

*End of Sample*