New & Selected Poems

Peggy Pond Church

Introduction By
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Abstract
Peggy Pond Church spent nearly her whole life among the mesas and mountains of New Mexico, and her love of that landscape permeates many of the poems in this collection. Born in 1903, Church authored four volumes of poems between 1933 and 1954, and this book makes twelve additional uncollected works available.

“Mrs. Church’s poetry is distinctly of this time, the work of a fine human being, concerned with the terror of the hour,” wrote William Rose Benét, reviewing the book Ultimatum for Man for Saturday Review of Literature in 1946, the year of its publication. As T.M. Pearce notes in his introduction to this volume, “Ultimatum for Man is ... an adjustment to a new point of view in which the poet sees individuals as units in a social group.”

In 1943 the Los Alamos Ranch School, a preparatory school for boys where her husband taught for more than twenty years, was taken over by the United States government for the nuclear physics laboratory which was to design the atomic bomb. In perhaps one of the earliest poems to chronicle nuclear destruction, “The Nuclear Physicists,” Church wrote movingly of “the shape of evil, towering leagues high into heaven/ in terrible, malevolent beauty” and men “with eyes that have seen too far into the world’s fate.”

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