



Günter Eich

Collected Poems

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Sample translation by Ken Cockburn

Game Trails

for Nelly Sachs

Enough of the hunters!
I have sat at their campfires,
I understood their language.
They know the world inside out
and do not suffer doubt in the forest.
Nod when they answer,
even their fire-smoke is right,
and they are practised
in not hearing the call
rescinding their orders.

No, we want to be out
and let death astonish us,
gather inconsolable gasps,
walk slap-bang across the trail
and move the barrels of the shotguns.

[Wildwechsel, p.205]

Unfamiliar Expression

One day
subject
to the justice of fish:
the trout's verdict
might be uncontentious,
but what will
the eels unveil,
and the sharks?

[Ungewohntes Wort, p.225]

In Closing

And let the snow
come in through the chinks in the door,
the wind blows, that's its job,

and let Lena be forgotten
a girl who
drank spirit from the lamp.

Went into the il-
lustrations from Meyer's Lexicon,
Brehm's Life of Animals.

Entrails, types of mountains, Tisza mayflies,
and let the snow
come in through the chinks in the door

as far as the bed, the spleen,
where memory sits,
where Lena sits,

the leopard, the ravenous gull,
number games in yellow
installments and subscribed to.

And let the wind blow,
because it can't do otherwise,
and grant Lena

another glug from the lamp,
and let the snow
come in through the chinks in the door.

[Abschliessend, p.252]