

THE CITIZEN and the making of City, ed. Peter Robinson
(288pp, £14.99, Bloodaxe)

Roy Fisher's *City* was one of the first poetry books I remember reading as a teenager (others would be *Crow*, and *The Waste Land*, as well as Adrian Mitchell's and Brian Patten's work). My friend the poet Brian Louis Pearce lent me his 1961 Migrant Press copy to encourage me to use the actual world around me in my poetry; around the same time a school friend showed me Edwin Morgan's *Instamatic Poems*. Both books were full of physical description, mood, history, clear-sighted observation, and what we might now call psychogeography: the feel and mood of a place, dependent upon its history and use. Both felt quite distanced and disengaged from their subjects, yet were involving and innovative reads.

Whilst I knew that Fisher had revised *City* for future editions, I was unaware – like many others, I am sure – that it had been assembled from a previous work, perhaps still-in-progress at the time, perhaps abandoned, called *Citizen*, and that the version published by Migrant Press had been selected and ordered for publication by somebody else, in a way that its author was not particularly happy with, despite the fact he felt unable to finalise the work himself. He would continue to tinker with, edit, annotate, resequence and reshape the sequence for several years before settling upon a definitive version for republication in various Selected and Collected Poems.

This new book not only offers the reader the first ever publication of *Citizen* (transcribed from a handwritten notebook), a prose work mostly in numbered sections, but also 1962's rare *Then Hallucinations: City II*, all the published versions of *City*, along with uncollected and associated poems. There is also an astute introduction by Peter Robinson, and some useful published quotes by Fisher himself about the work, as well as excerpts from 'a *Citizen* notebook'.

As I get older I am more and more fascinated by the writing process: ideas and inspiration, source material, revisions, the editing process, and interior and exterior intertextualities (although I still want the work to stand on its own). This new volume is a fantastic compendium of the various incarnations of an important text whose construction took Fisher many years to resolve to his own satisfaction. Despite some clumsy typesetting (too narrow and too deep a text for the page, with too much space between the lines) it's an informative and useful book. It hasn't, truth be told, made me prefer later versions to the original, but it reinforces the fact that, along with writing by Allen Fisher, T.S. Eliot, Edwin Morgan and Ken Smith, Fisher is one of the best writers when it comes to articulating urban experience.

Rupert Loydell