The first part of this Introduction offers a brief chronology of Anne Dudens’s life and publications and surveys topics in her poetological essay, ‘Vom Versprechen des Schreibens und vom Schreiben des Versprechens’ and in the critical essays gathered in this volume, most of which were first delivered as papers at a symposium on the work of Anne Dudens held at the University of Nottingham in May, 2001. The second part explores places and spaces as poetic motifs in a recent essay by Anne Dudens on the topic of Heimat, ‘A mon seul désir’, and in her volume of poems, Hingegend.

Authorial Poetics and Readers’ Responses
Anne Dudens had the nomadic childhood of many Germans of her generation. She was born in 1942 in Oldenburg where her mother had come from Berlin to be with her war-wounded husband who was in hospital there. The family returned to Berlin towards the end of that long first year - Anne Dudens was born on 1 January - but as the city came under increased bombardment, the mother with her two young children moved in 1944 to Ilsenburg in the Harz region where Dudens’s father, who had relatives in Ilsenburg, joined them later in the year after their house in Berlin had been bombed. Following the foundation of the two German states in 1949, a pass was needed to enter or leave the militarily sensitive no-go area along the border with West Germany where Ilsenburg was situated. In 1953, Anne Dudens’s mother, by then separated from her husband, applied for a pass, ostensibly to visit East Berlin. Once there, the family then sought refuge in West Berlin. After some months in refugee camps in West Berlin, they were flown to a reception camp in Uelzen near Hanover, moving later in the year to Anne Dudens’s birthplace of Oldenburg where she lived from 1953 to 1962 and went to school. Writing in the essay ‘Zungengewahrsam’ of this childhood of sudden disruptive departures and border-crossings, Dudens stresses not the external facts but their traumatic internal impact on the child’s imagination: ‘das Trauma ist nicht der Zonenwechsel, Wechsel vom Osten in den Westen, von denen ja ohnehin nur der Osten die Zone war. Das Trauma ist/war eine Verschiebung der Herzen, des Herzens.’ (Z 22) Such early memories along with later painful knowledge of the history of the Third Reich would feed into Dudens’s writing both thematically and in pervasive metaphors of
physical and psychic border-crossings. Moving in 1962 to West Berlin following her school years, Duden trained initially as a bookseller and studied literature and sociology. She lived through the turbulent years of student unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when she had various jobs, then joined the publishing house Wagenbach in 1972 and became co-founder of the left-wing publishing house Rotbuch which broke away from Wagenbach in 1973. There followed a time of intense collaborative work to build up Rotbuch, years marked also by a sequence of personal and public crises which ultimately led to Duden’s decision to move from Berlin to London. In 1975, Duden suffered a terrible injury to the lower part of her face when the car she was in was attacked by a group of drunken American soldiers and an iron pole was thrust through the windshield. This proved to be the beginning of a turning point in her life, setting in train with growing urgency the wish to devote more time to writing, for Duden had been writing since her teens. In 1977, Duden took three-month leave from Rotbuch to visit London and to find the time to reflect on her life, returning in September to Germany for the Frankfurt book fair. It was just at this time that the events of the so-called German Autumn were unfolding. The assassinations of Siegfried Buback, the Chief Prosecutor, in April and of the banker Jürgen Ponto in July, and the abduction in September and subsequent murder in October of Hanns Martin Schleyer, chairman of the West German Confederation of Employers, led to hugely increased police activity. The day before Schleyer’s dead body was found in the boot of a car, the deaths in obscure circumstances in Stammheim prison of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe of the Baader-Meinhof terrorist group and the violent storming of the hijacked Lufthansa plane in Mogadishu added fuel to the mood of public hysteria, intensifying calls for political and security measures which seemed to many liberal and leftist intellectuals to threaten the survival of democratic rights and freedoms in West Germany. For a mix of reasons, then, Duden decided to move to London to find the distance from Germany and the time for reflection which the hectic life in the Rotbuch publishing collective scarcely allowed. With help from friends in London and with generous encouragement especially from the poet Erich Fried, who also lived in London and who urged her to publish, Anne Duden gradually found her way into life as a writer.

Since 1978 Anne Duden has lived in London, but returning frequently to Berlin and other German cities. Her literary reputation was immediately established in 1982 with the publication of Übergang, a