



Steal Away: Selected and New Poems

C.D. Wright

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Now in paperback, *Steal Away* presents C.D. Wright's best lyrics, narratives, prose poems, and odes with new "retablos" and a bracing vigil on incarceration. Long admired as a fearless poet writing authentically erotic verse, Wright—with her Southern accent and cinematic eye—couples strangeness with uncanny accuracy to create poems that "offer a once-and-for-all thing, opaque and revelatory, ceaselessly burning."

from "Our Dust"

You didn't know my weariness, error, incapacity,
I was the poet
of shadow work and towns with quarter-inch
phone books, of failed
roadside zoos. The poet of yard eggs and
sharpening shops,
jobs at the weapons plant and the Maybelline
factory on the penitentiary road.

"Wright has found a way to wed fragments of an iconic America to a luminously strange idiom, eerie as a tin whistle."—*The New Yorker*

"Wright shrinks back from nothing."—*Voice Literary Supplement*

"C.D. Wright is a devastating visionary. She writes in light. She sets language on fire."—*American Letters*

C.D. Wright has published nine collections of poetry and earned many awards, including the Lannan Literary Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. She teaches at Brown University and in 1994 was named State Poet of Rhode Island. With her husband, Forrest Gander, she edits Lost Roads Publishers.

Steal Away: Selected and New Poems Details

Date : Published September 1st 2003 by Copper Canyon Press (first published 2002)

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From Reader Review Steal Away: Selected and New Poems for online ebook

Simone says

Though this selected compiles complete versions of a few of her books, the excisions made to *Deepstep Come Shining* are problematic. . . i think most people that are introduced to *Deepstep* via this collection won't be encouraged to read the complete text. . . and it should be read in its entirety as it's fabulous!

Jessie says

I've taken a daily drink from this book of selected for the last couple of months, just before sitting at the writing desk. ("Something about writing by the kingly light" (from CDW's "Voice of the Ridge"))
I remain hungry for her work -- it's atmospheric, erotic, unflinching, storied. She's a guru for me. She is all texture.

from "Ozark Odes":

"I can still see Cuddihy's sisters
trimming the red tufts
under one another's arms."

from the "Girlfriend Poems":

"Awake ye and come to our house
Come running fly if you can"

from "Remarks on Color":

"shacks ringed with day lilies, then a columned house in shade"

Bobby says

Her earlier poetry from the first half of the collection was too opaque for me. Phrases so seemingly random or personal that they could mean anything to anybody and therefore meant nothing. I responded more to her work from the mid-90's on, and the Louisiana prison poems. I'd like to see the photography that I understand went with that project.

Her work is not hard to read, but demands attention to get the most from it as it is very non-linear. I learned about Wright after hearing about her recent death. I'm now going on to read "Rising, Falling, Hovering" (2009).

Elizabeth says

She has a way of capturing me in each poem one way or another she is brilliant. its the form and the subjects,

so easy, so graceful.

P says

Radios are turned up to beat thunder,
Translations of the gospel
Back into tongues.

Wright is singular among poets for being able to capture the sadness, creepiness, and beauty of the South: its music, its color, its fierce feminism. This doesn't, of course, mean she should be pigeonholed as a "Southern poet;" e.g., in her early, modernist verse, she shows such disparate interests as Wittgenstein, Sven Nykvist, and William L. Shirer. Her later experiments conclude, in this collection, with excerpts from *One Big Self*, a poetic document of life inside Louisiana's prison-industrial complex, where "solitary confinement ... / can alter the ontological makeup of a stone." It's here she realizes there's no exculpatory note to be written for these forgotten faces, those "not a part of, apart from. // Cropped out of the picture." But don't worry, years before she'd already noticed the same thing can happen *because* of poetry, albeit on a much smaller scale:

Even in touching retouching
steeped in words in the proliferation and cancellation
of words one tends to forget one forgets
the face the human face ...

Doris Raines says

Great. Title. Great. Book.

Jacks McNamara says

one of my all time favorite collections of poetry

Mat Murdoch says

"her warmth, her terrible warmth flooded the tone." Southern, white woman who knows whiteness is a race. Voice. Adult sex and love stories. Mysterious. "An unsmiling blond." That's good enough for me.

Patrick Duggan says

I love C.D. Wright, and I'm not afraid to say it. For over twenty years, she's been at the forefront of verse, form, and language.

Steal Away collects selected verse from 1982 until the present, showcasing her early wit and play with form and language, her movements marrying narrative and image, and her perfection of the list poem. She changes form and style as easily as you or I might our socks. Her partnering of line to form, her use of punctuation as line break and line break as punctuation, and space as breath, are the building blocks of her work. The things many poets struggle to combine in their own poetry kitchens, C.D. Wright wields with ease and grace.

Her subjects are as varied as her approaches. In one poem she may weave the day to day of motherhood as a literal laundry list, and in another may confront the body politic with a series of periodless prose blocks. She muses on seasons and urban streetscapes in semi-traditional line and meter on one page, only to then launch into twenty pages of post-surrealist Oppenesque lines which using no space and changing twenty aesthetic approaches across the entire span.

The reason I myself love C.D. Wright, is because I can see in her the poetic ingredients that I love to reach back into for my own work; Language Poetry, New York School, Black Mountain, Surrealism, Modernism, Imagism (not to mention a political feminism so subtle as to be screaming), she is the culmination of 20th century American poetry. This book is a must read for anyone writing today, one of the pivotal benchmarks for we younger poets as we look to write our way into the next century.

N says

Many of C.D. Wright's poems would probably turn off novice poetry readers. They're opaque. Wright's poetic strategy is tough love: get comfortable with disorientation or go away. To say it another way, get lost or get lost. She claims space with energy, creating gaps in lines and deep indents, commanding you to translate what you see into sound and rhythm, making you figure out how to breathe and do it all. At times irritating but almost always impressive, Wright seizes language and the page, refusing to leave them as you thought they were.

Peter Landau says

Do I have a high opinion of poetry because I don't understand it? It's like watching a telenovela, is it so entertaining because I don't understand Spanish and fill in the blanks of my knowledge with the promise of something better? Sometimes I think so, and sometimes I think not, but it doesn't matter because at the end of the page I'm having a good time. Only bits and pieces of *STEAL AWAY: SELECTED AND NEW POEMS* by C.D. Wright were comprehensible for me. I picked up on the eroticism, but it was masked in imagery far less explicit than I'm familiar with from my days editing porn mags. That's a good thing. I could use more subtly and an organic intimacy over narratives that operate like a penis pump. There are stories here as well as verse, cryptic yet specific, evocative, personal and political. I rode Wright's fine language and was never disappointed where it took me. There's something I love about reading what I don't get but gets me to keep reading.

Carrie says

In a week of very sad deaths of beloved figures, C.D. Wright's was quietly reported, little noted outside the literary world. I was only passingly familiar with her poetry but was reminded of just how elegant, bold, and surprisingly funny her work is as it was reproduced in obituaries and tributes. This is a marvellous collection - there is something fine in nearly every poem, and some are downright perfection.

Hansen Hillary says

Pretty great collection - recommend it as a good headway into C.D. Wright

Tara says

CD was really the first poet I ever read that swept away all the (old, musty) ideas about poetry I had. Sharon Olds did not shock or disturb me half as much as CD - what she does with content and form are incredible. All in all, her poems are to be experienced, much like a great movie or crazy dream.

Clay says

I fear that I started this collection with overblown hopes. It was good and I enjoyed it. However, I fear I may have to compare C.D. Wright to Pearl Jam; a large portion of her work did not resonate with me, but when it did, it vibrated my bones.

Her rural yet eloquent approach to language was rewarding, and she handled uncomfortable aspects of humanity with skill.

Some of her stuff was too experimental for me, and in some poems she seemed to punctuate the poem to make it intentionally unreadable.
