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# The Moon Before Morning



## Synopsis

"Merwin has attained a transcendent and transformative elevation of beaming perception, exquisite balance, and clarifying beauty." "Booklist, starred review" In his personal anonymity, his strict individuated manner, his defense of the earth, and his heartache at time's passing, Merwin has become instantly recognizable on the page." "Helen Vendler, The New York Review of Books" W.S. Merwin's legacy is unquestionably secure." "Poetry" Merwin is tackling the mysteries of life and impending death with a grace and dexterity of imagination that leaves one of any age wondering if this is more than simply poetry, but bordering on prophecy." "Eliot Schain, Poetry Flash" Two-time Pulitzer winner W.S. Merwin is one of the best-selling poets in America. In his new book, *The Moon Before Morning*, Merwin examines everything from minute flowers to oceanic destruction, and weaves our complex relationship with the natural world with his own youth, memory, and intense engagement with the passing of days. With considered reverence, subtle might, and generous poetic imagination, Merwin presents a masterful collection. From "Antique Sound": There was an age when you played the records with ordinary steel needles which grew blunt and damaged the grooves or with more expensive stylus tips said to be tungsten or diamond which wore down the records and the music receded but a friend and I had it on persuasive authority that the best thing was a dry thorn of the right kind and I knew where to find one of those | W.S. Merwin served as Poet Laureate of the United States and has received every major literary accolade, including two Pulitzer prizes, most recently for *The Shadow of Sirius*, and the National Book Award for *Migration: New and Selected Poems*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I don't buy many poetry collections about which I can say that I would gladly pay even more money for it, but this volume merits that claim. It is a highly worthy follow-up to its predecessor, *The Shadow of Sirius* (which won the Pulitzer Prize), and might arguably even be better. Again, Merwin delves into both his present life in Hawaii and his past, and the poems are richly steeped in memory and the past, with a good bit of tenderness that never lapses into sentimentality. That Merwin continues, at age 86, to write poetry at all is impressive, but that he is writing some of the best poetry of his life is truly astounding. Were there not a deep bias against American poets among the voters of the Nobel Committee, Merwin should have won it long ago for a distinguished career. If a reader wants to sample American poetry at its highest level, this is a good place to start.

This is a book of reflections and recollections of a life lived simply, gratefully and reverently with all that surrounded him. It is a gentle book, free of melancholy, accepting what came and leaving more than what was given. Its timbre is seasoned by meditation and reflection on life, time, and place. If you read this book you will be affected by its inner peace and enriched by its wisdom. I will return to this one often.

Exquisite in presentation, *THE MOON BEFORE MORNING* is polished to a high sheen and still simple and direct. The "deeps" are encountered here in profusion; the "place" that the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitaro described as the platform, the base that undergirds the most profound reality. In Nishida's terminology, the "basho." Speaking the unspeakable, Merwin writes, oh gossamer gossamer breathmoment daylight life untouchable by no name with no beginning (from *The Wonder of the Imperfect*, p 92) To traverse these deeps one needs to go beyond. But how? Who will be our Virgil? Only a contemplative poet speaks the unspeakable and only those with ears hear. As in Tomas Tranströmer's prose poem, "At Funchal," the beyond is made manifest in crisp lines which escape the half-awake reader: "The innermost paradox, the underground garage flowers, the vent toward the good dark. A drink that bubbles in an empty glass. An amplifier that magnifies silence. A path that grows over after each step. A book that can only be read in the dark." Thus the contemplative poet speaks in riddles to the man or woman of materialism and speaks to the soul of those who are paying attention. Merwin's latest collection may indeed be his best by a variety of standards; it is among the most profoundly subliminal of all his layered work. The poems encounter the Tao in that place where all is incubating, all is pregnant with joy and darkness intertwined. Merwin is a scholar of the secret flowers of the East, haiku and T'ang poetry, and it

shows here again in THE MOON BEFORE MORNING. The fine point of haiku and the antinomian, contemplative philosophies of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu meet in his verse. An airport is nowherewhich is not something generally noticed yet some unnamed person in the past deliberately planned it and you have spent time there again for something you do not entirely remember like the souls in Purgatory (from Neither Here Nor There, p 70) After a day and a night with Merwin in this transcendent collection, I can only encourage: let him take you to the place where moonlight pierces the branches, that place just before dawn, "le pointe vierge." Gone beyond the beyond. Michael S Beverco-author THE ART OF PAUSING

Deep thought and feeling found in impeccably worded poems. I like to read Merwin's poems several times, not because they're difficult to compute but because what they give is worth savoring. He's the emperor of line breaks, his aren't obvious or arbitrary but always mean and sound just right. I'd read his poems just for those if nothing else -- but there is of course much else to read them for.

First poetry book I have purchased in years. I'm so glad I saw a local review which piqued my interest. I will read and re-read W.S Merwin's collection of poems many times. His poems have an enchanting flow.

Merwin is a classy poet, maybe the best contemporary American poet. He writes from his experience of common life, helping us to discover the beautiful, the original, the hopeful, the cosmic and the authentic. It reads like a dance. Handsome presentation.

I just got my copy. It is wonderful: Elegant, beautiful, rhythmic! Definitely one of his finest, and an excellent sequel to the two volume Library of America edition of his poetry.

This author's writing is exceptional....you feel you are right in the place and experiencing the same feelings expressed in his poetry. Recommend this book.

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