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New Selected Poems

"A body of work that energetically engages the full breadth of the Australian experience . . . [Murray] has ventured far on the prow of his continent and made its language his own."
—ALBERT MOBILIO, *The New York Times Book Review*

N E W
S E L E C T E D
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L E S
M U R R A Y



Synopsis

A fresh selection of the finest poems some previously uncollected by one of our finest English-language poets "Why write poetry? For the weird unemployment." "For the painless headaches, that must be tapped to strike" "down along your writing arm at the accumulated moment." "For the adjustments after, aligning facets in a verb" "before the trance leaves you. For working always beyond" "your own intelligence." from "The Instrument" "New Selected Poems" contains Les Murray's own gathering from the full range of his poetry from the 1960s through "Taller When Prone" (2004) and including previously uncollected work. One of the finest poets writing today, Murray reinvents himself with each new collection. Whether writing about the indignities of childhood or the depths of depression, or evoking the rhythms of the natural world; whether writing in a sharply rendered Australian vernacular or a perfectly pitched King's English, his versatility and vitality are a constant. "New Selected Poems" is the poet's choice of his essential works: an indispensable collection for readers who already love his poetry, and an ideal introduction for those who are new to it."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As an article in the May 2016 issue of The Atlantic said, Les Murray may be the best poet in the world. That is, of course, debatable. But he is clearly one of the greats of the last 50 years and anyone who loves poetry needs to be familiar with him. He is a magician with words and images, and no one captures the essence, the physical sense, the culture of Australia better. This collection is the one to get; published in revised form in 2014, it's a greatest hits of his career.

I've kind of stayed away from Murray for years because he seemed too conservative. What a mistake. The man can write poetry. Wonderful sense of language, of timing, hits emotional and thoughtful notes with precision.

The greatest living poet writing in English. Of that, there is no doubt. His only real rival, Geoffrey Hill, to often lapses into mannered obscurantism. Murray's abilities with language are, at times, of a sublimity, emotional complexity, and technical accomplishment that put him in the first rank of poets of the last 125 years--in league with Yeats, Eliot, Frost, and more recently, Larkin. Larkin especially comes to mind. Murray has his same savage wit, his daring to mix the quotidian and mundane with the speculative and metaphysical, and his cynicism, but not, ultimately, his despair. There are "old fools" in Murray's work, but their lives have meaning and somewhere in them, a dignity. His unfashionable sacramental view of the universe, a universe that is filled with things that are not of themselves, but are charged with supernatural significance, looks decidedly out-of-date. We live in a post-post modern age now, as the shape shifting deconstructions of Derrida and Foucault fade and as a kind of brutal, deterministic biologism more and more seems pervasive. Murray is a throwback, yes, but also an alternative: of how to write poetry, and maybe even of how to live.

Les Murray: a master of refined and unrefined intelligence -- a blend so rare that he is a star all by himself in the galaxy of his own making. Although it makes you want to know more of the Australia and the Australians -- that breed of the non-understood folks, you don't read him for him being an Australian -- far from it -- but from what he is taken from his life, his landscape and for the alchemy of turning his world into his poetry.

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