



Morning in the Burned House

By Margaret Atwood

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These beautifully crafted poems - by turns dark, playful, intensely moving, tender, and intimate - make up Margaret Atwood's most accomplished and versatile gathering to date, "setting foot on the middle ground / between body and word." Some draw on history, some on myth, both classical and popular. Others, more personal, concern themselves with love, with the fragility of the natural world, and with death, especially in the elegiac series of meditations on the death of a parent. But they also inhabit a contemporary landscape haunted by images of the past. Generous, searing, compassionate, and disturbing, this poetry rises out of human experience to seek a level between luminous memory and the realities of the everyday, between the capacity to inflict and the strength to forgive.

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Morning in the Burned House By Margaret Atwood Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In her first poetry collection since 1987's *Selected Poems II*, Atwood brings a swift, powerful energy to meditative poems that often begin in domestic settings and then broaden into numinous dialogues. In "In the Secular Night," the speaker, who has wandered through her house talking to herself of the "sensed absences of God," realizes "Several hundred years ago/this could have been mysticism/ or heresy. It isn't now." In five roughly thematic sections, Atwood often displays incisive humor ("Ava Gardner Reincarnated as a Magnolia"). The most vivid poems forge an apprehensible human aspect from scholarly fields of science, history and religion: in "Half-hanged Mary" a woman who was being hanged for witchery, survives and tolls each hour until she is cut down. The final grouping seems compiled from the charred remains of a deeply examined life, where only "the power of what is not there" may transcend. Atwood's lean, free-verse style renders these apocryphal poems intimate and immediate.

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From Library Journal

This is Atwood's first poetry collection in a decade, and its publication (her 12th overall) is a reminder that she is as prolific a poet as she is a novelist. As in her fiction, these poems are written with an arched eyebrow toward the foibles of the sexes, but she is at her most barbed when mocking the constraints society imposes on women. In an acerbic series of poems on famous femmes fatales, she empowers her women by lampooning "men and their mournful romanticisms/that can't get the dishes done." Atwood's satiric side is balanced by a darker, almost melancholy lyricism, shadowed by loss and a growing awareness of mortality. One section of the book is devoted to a group of moving poems on the death of her father and how the dead?"especially those we have loved the most"?return "from where we have shoved them/from under the ground, from under the water/they clutch at us,/we won't let go." Recommended for contemporary poetry collections and libraries with a strong Atwood following. Christine Stenstrom, Brooklyn P.L., N.Y.

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From [Booklist](#)

The blood of a sexually liberated generation ran cold at Atwood's lancing epigraph to *Power Politics* (1971): "You fit into me / like a hook into an eye // a fish-hook / an open eye." No poet better expressed the could-be-lethal frisson of deep love-lust, the tart, equivocal successes and failures of late-twentieth-century romance. In the first section in her new collection, she returns to the love dance, middle-aged and more experienced if not wiser, and gives us poems as right-sounding, memorable, and pithy as her best a quarter-century ago. In later sections, she turns to goddess myths, history, archaeology, family stories, and dreams--all subjects she has taken up before--and if she is not consistently persuasive, she is always vital, powerful, magnetically readable. Political, too, although never propagandistic. Rather, she is a contemporary, female Whittier or Kipling--technically adroit, imagistically rich, immediately accessible. She is a popular poet of the very first water. Readers who know only her novels really owe it to themselves to read her poems. *Ray Olson*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Perry Payne:

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Kathleen Blackwood:

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