

Migration: New & Selected Poems

By W.S. Merwin

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Named one of the 100 Notable Books of the Year by *The New York Times*.

Winner of the National Book Award for Poetry

Named by *O* as one of the "20 Books of Poetry Everyone Should Own"

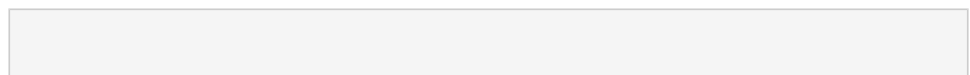
“The poems in *Migration* speak a life-long belief in the power of words to awaken our drowsy souls and see the world with compassionate interconnection.”—National Book Award judges’ statement

“The publication of W. S. Merwin’s selected and new poems is one of those landmark events in the literary world.”—*Los Angeles Times*

W. S. Merwin is the most influential American poet of the last half-century—an artist who has transfigured and reinvigorated the vision of poetry for our time. *Migration: New and Selected Poems* is that case. This 540-page distillation—selected by Merwin from fifteen diverse volumes—is a gathering of the best poems from a profound body of work, accented by a selection of distinctive new poems.

As an undergraduate at Princeton University, Merwin was advised by John Berryman to “get down on your knees and pray to the muse every day.” *Migration* represents the bounty of those prayers. Over the last fifty years, Merwin’s muse has led him beyond the formal verse of his early years to revolutionary open forms that engage a vast array of influences and possibilities. As Adrienne Rich wrote of Merwin’s work: “I would be shamelessly jealous of this poetry, if I didn’t take so much from it into my own life.”

W. S. Merwin is the author of over fifty books of poetry, prose, and translation. He lives in Hawaii, where he raises endangered palm trees.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Mystical formalist, elegant romantic, Vietnam-era protester, translator, maker of sweet memoirs and uneasy dreamscapes, and ecological activist, Merwin has been so prominent for so long that it's hard to believe this rich selection represents the work of just one man. The earliest Merwin—a melancholy 1950s craftsman—gets the first 70 pages, including the bejeweled verse fairy tale "East of the Sun and West of the Sun." The haunting free verse of the next two decades includes the sad, urgent protest poems of *The Lice* (1967) and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Carrier of Ladders* (1970). Merwin's attraction to instinct and mystery drew his poems toward totemic, resonant images, in lines which imitated chants and prayers. *The Rain in the Trees* (1988) concerned the forests and coasts of Hawaii, where the poet still lives. His longer, more recent works offer personal memories; "Testimony" (from 1999's *The River Sound*) takes 56 pages to run through the poet's whole life. Even there—and in the few, lyrical, controlled new poems at the very end of the volume—Merwin retains a sense of terse whispering, and a graceful attraction to silence; his verse comes, if anyone's does, from "the eye of the mind where we know/ from the beginning that the darkness/ is beyond us." (*Apr.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Migration is an apt title for this generous collection, given that Merwin has migrated far from his boyhood home in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he studied with R. P. Blackmur and John Berryman at Princeton, and W. H. Auden chose his first book, *A Mask for Janus*, as the 1952 Yale Series of Younger Poets winner. But rather than dwell within the precincts of the American academy, Merwin left for Europe, became an adept and prolific translator, and eventually settled in Hawaii, where he cultivates endangered palm trees and works to restore and preserve the wild, endeavors that deepen his already profound rapport with nature, the soul of his work. Merwin has migrated within the universe of poetry, too, moving from solidly constructed, tactile, and dramatic works to airy, abstract, unpunctuated, and contemplative poems, a journey beautifully mapped here in selections from 15 previous collections, capped by a gathering of new poems. Complex, spiritual, and evocative, Merwin is a major poet, and this is a sublime measure of his achievements. *Donna Seaman*

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About the Author

W.S. Merwin is one of America's leading poets. His prizes include the 2005 National Book Award for his collected poems, *Migration*, the Pulitzer Prize, the Stevens Award, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and Lannan Foundation. He is the author of dozens of books of poetry and translations. He lives in Hawaii, where he cultivates endangered palm trees.

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