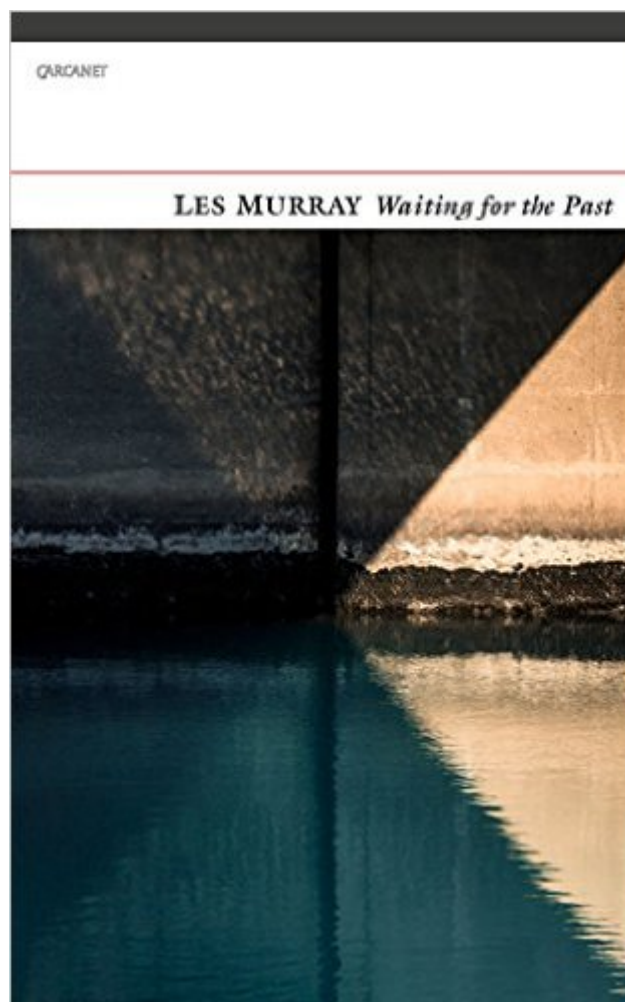


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Waiting For The Past



Synopsis

The clearly focused lyrics of Les Murray's *Waiting for the Past* are rich in topographies and the languages peculiar to them – wonga vines, lyre birds, gum trees, shrike thrushes, tallow boughs, boab trees, the octopus in Wylies Baths killed by sterilising chlorine. With the erasures the modern world brings, words, landscapes, and lives descend to the Esperanto of the modern. The poet, with a salutary resistance, rejects the computer and the incursions of the leveling Modern in favor of old-fashioned typewriters, unlikely saints, lived-in places, farming in the spirit of ancestors. This is the past he waits for in scenes unmade by human carelessness, not only in his rural place but across the world. The poems speak of the unspeakable, including old age, vertigo, illness, and the durable resilience of married love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Les Murray dedicates each of his books 'To the Glory of God', a slight tweak on the Jesuit's motto. If I were God, I'd grade this latest offering B minus. Murray's standing isn't in doubt. He has won the T.S Eliot Prize, the Petrarch Prize and the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, and many feel his flight to Sweden is long overdue. His poems enjoy a proverbial status in his native Australia, particularly 'The Dream of Wearing Shorts Forever', 'The Tin Wash Dish' and 'The Quality of Sprawl.' Blake Morrison ranked him in the same league as Heaney, Walcott and Brodsky; Brodsky himself said 'Murray is 'quite simply, the one by whom the language lives.' Murray's language is unforgettable. It needs to be: his eyes are like telescopes. No one else could describe the Taj Mahal thusly: In a precinct of liver stone, high on its dais, the Taj seems bloc hail. Or water gardening: Blueing the blackened water that I'm widening with my spade as I lever up water tussocks and chuck them

ashore like sopping comets is a sun-point, dazzling heatless acetylene, under tadpoles that swarm wobbling, like a species of flies and buzzing bubbles that speed upward like many winged species. Unwetterable green tacos are lotus leaves. Waterlily leaves are notches plaques of the water. When Murray looks at something - an Emu, a firework, a woman's flowing hair - he makes you feel like you've never seen one before. No one who cares about the health of poetry can ignore him and expect to be taken seriously. There are strong similarities with his 2004 collection *Poems the Size of Photographs*, in its lean, often imagist style.

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