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Pacific Light

POETRY BY

David Mason

Pacific Light is a book of transformations, history, love, endurance, and unfathomable beauty by a poet “at the height of his powers.”

David Mason was born in Washington State, forty-odd degrees north latitude, and now lives on the Australian island of Tasmania, forty-odd degrees south latitude. That Pacific crossing is the work of a lifetime of devotion and change. The rich new poems of *Pacific Light* explore the implications of the light as well as peace and its opposing forces. What does it mean to be an immigrant and face the ultimate borders of our lives? How can we say the word home and mean it? These questions have obsessed Mason in his major narrative works, *The Country I Remember* and *Ludlow*, as well as his lyric and dramatic writing. *Pacific Light* is a culmination and a deepening of that work, a book of transformations, history and love, endurance and unfathomable beauty, by a poet “at the height of his powers.”

ADVANCE PRAISE

As a poet of America’s Pacific Northwest, David Mason has found its mirror reflection in Australia’s Southeast. Turned upside down by love, he has learned “to walk upright under the Southern Cross.” Generously, he extends his feeling of renewal to all of us and urges us “to let all discovery / teach us to love the globe, that troubled child.” In *Pacific Light*, David Mason, one of our indispensable poets, shares his discovery of a new world—and amazingly, it turns out to be this one.

—Mark Jarman, author of *Dailiness* and *The Heronry*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Mason grew up in Bellingham, Washington and has lived in many parts of the world, including Greece and Colorado, where he served as poet laureate for four years. His books of poems began with *The Buried Houses*, *The Country I Remember*, and *Arrivals*. His verse novel, *Ludlow*, was named best poetry book of the year by the Contemporary Poetry Review and the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. It was also featured on the PBS NewsHour. He has written a memoir and four collections of essays. His poetry, prose, and translations have appeared in such periodicals as the *New Yorker*, *Harper’s Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Poetry*, and the *Hudson Review*. Anthologies include *Best American Poetry*, *The Penguin Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, and others. He has also written libretti for operas by Lori Laitman and Tom Cipullo, all available on CD from Naxos. In 2015 Mason published two poetry collections: *Sea Salt: Poems of a Decade* and *Davey McGraw: Tales to Be Read Aloud to Children and Adult Children*. *The Sound: New and Selected Poems and Voices*, *Places: Essays* appeared in 2018. *Incarnation and Metamorphosis: Can Literature Change Us?* appeared in 2022. He lives with his wife Chrissy (poet Cally Conan-Davies) in Tasmania on the edge of the Southern Ocean.



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MORE PRAISE FOR *PACIFIC LIGHT*

“In the last stanza of the last poem in David Mason’s startling and soulful new book of poems, *Pacific Light*, the poet writes:

The effort of a life, the wasted hour,
the kind word given to a stranger’s child
are understood as kin and disappear.
Time to be grass again. Ongoing. Wild.

This stanza testifies to last things: the last journey, the last shape shifting, the last immigration in a book filled with such arrivals and departures. The formal rigor of the poems—handled with an easy and almost offhand poise—only accentuates the sense of almost constant movement, which is at the heart of the book. This book is the story of a life’s deepening and reconfiguration. As such, it both inspires and challenges the reader in ways that only poetry can do. What a pleasure to read a book of poems by a poet at the height of his powers, a poet whose life has been transformed and whose poems are the embodiment of that transformation.”

—**Jim Moore**, author of *Underground: New and Selected Poems*

FROM *PACIFIC LIGHT*

On the Shelf

On the kitchen shelf a huntsman spider has left
its skin, which looks so much like itself
I thought twice before touching it. It was still.

The body left and left behind the soul,
feather-light and eight-legged, able to frighten
even when all it wanted was new life.

Perhaps you’ll come upon my own shed skins
in houses where my name has been removed,
the habitations I once thought were home,

or find some words of mine in an old book.
I meant them. The words. Every one of them,
but left them on the shelf to go on living.



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