



## Selected Poems

*Mark Strand*

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### Selected Poems Mark Strand

In this compilation of older and newer poems, Strand demonstrates his mastery of cadence and narrative style.

### Selected Poems Details

Date : Published September 26th 1990 by Knopf (first published 1980)

ISBN : 9780679733010

Author : Mark Strand

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There is absolutely nothing  
to be happy about.  
And in this world there is a man,  
I believe his name is Mark Strand,  
he lives in strange dreams.  
But he was right when he said  
that nothing, everything wants to be born,  
and everything must die.

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### Mary Lynn says

Amazing collection. Simple language, profound insight. "Black Maps" and "Courtship" alone are worth more than double the cover price of the whole book.

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### Rick says

There is a 2004 date on the title page but all the poems contained herein are from no later than 1980 so I think this is a simple re-issue of the 1980 Selected Poems. I liked the most recent poems the best and got lost in the middle when craft and a detached abstractness seemed to dominate his work. All his poems have the precision of a still-life painter, like Cezanne, and sound good when read aloud. But only a few stay with you past the last syllable read aloud. "The Story of Our Lives," "The Coming of Light," "For Jessica, My Daughter," "From The Long Sad Party," and "Nights in Hackett's Cove" were my favorites.

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### Aishah waleed Abuqare says

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### Robert says

Every couple of years I go back and read Strand. I open the book at random and read a poem once, twice, sometime three times and then put down the book. A day or so passes, I pick up the book again. Simple words, simple images that strike each other like pieces of flint and a spark becomes a flame and sometimes you understand both what it is to be warmed by fire and set afire.

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### Jimmy says

Here are some examples of his poetry:

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The End  
By Mark Strand

Not every man knows what he shall sing at the end,  
Watching the pier as the ship sails away, or what it will seem like  
When he's held by the sea's roar, motionless, there at the end,  
Or what he shall hope for once it is clear that he'll never go back.

When the time has passed to prune the rose or caress the cat,  
When the sunset torching the lawn and the full moon icing it down  
No longer appear, not every man knows what he'll discover instead.  
When the weight of the past leans against nothing, and the sky

Is no more than remembered light, and the stories of cirrus  
And cumulus come to a close, and all the birds are suspended in flight,  
Not every man knows what is waiting for him, or what he shall sing  
When the ship he is on slips into darkness, there at the end.

When the Vacation Is Over for Good  
by Mark Strand

It will be strange  
Knowing at last it couldn't go on forever,  
The certain voice telling us over and over  
That nothing would change,

And remembering too,  
Because by then it will all be done with, the way  
Things were, and how we had wasted time as though  
There was nothing to do,

When, in a flash  
The weather turned, and the lofty air became  
Unbearably heavy, the wind strikingly dumb  
And our cities like ash,

And knowing also,  
What we never suspected, that it was something like summer  
At its most august except that the nights were warmer  
And the clouds seemed to glow,

And even then,  
Because we will not have changed much, wondering what  
Will become of things, and who will be left to do it  
All over again,

And somehow trying,  
But still unable, to know just what it was  
That went so completely wrong, or why it is

We are dying.

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## **rahul says**

I have never been the one to rate the books objectively. I don't understand how objectivity works when it comes to rating poems.

So, the other day I got this book from a Used Book Store ( for 2 dollars . I dug Strand out from a pile of other books which he was buried under ).

Found a couple of my favorite poems within its pages. And here are 5 stars even before the book is read completely.

Because poems can carry the burden of expectations as well surprise you when you least expected them to.

## **Keeping Things Whole**

*In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing.*

*When I walk  
I part the air  
and always  
the air moves in  
to fill the spaces  
where my body's been.*

*We all have reasons  
for moving.  
I move  
to keep things whole.*

Damn it!!

## **Eating Poetry**

*Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.*

*The librarian does not believe what she sees.  
Her eyes are sad  
and she walks with her hands in her dress.*

*The poems are gone.  
The light is dim.  
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.*

*Their eyeballs roll,  
their blond legs burn like brush.  
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.*

*She does not understand.  
When I get on my knees and lick her hand,  
she screams.*

*I am a new man.  
I snarl at her and bark.  
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.*

Fuck me!!

:)

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## **Emm says**

### Keeping Things Whole

In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing.

When I walk  
I part the air  
and always  
the air moves in  
to fill the spaces  
where my body's been.

We all have reasons  
for moving.  
I move  
to keep things whole.

(I also really liked "For Jessica, My Daughter")

## Alexis says

I don't remember if the following two poems are contained in this 1980 collection of poems by Strand but they should suffice as evidence of why this volume, any volume of Strand's poetry, is worth your time.

### "Keeping Things Whole"

In a field  
I am the absence  
of field.  
This is  
always the case.  
Wherever I am  
I am what is missing.

When I walk  
I part the air  
and always  
the air moves in  
to fill the spaces  
where my body's been.

We all have reasons  
for moving.  
I move  
to keep things whole.

### "Coming To This"

We have done what we wanted.  
We have discarded dreams, preferring the heavy industry  
of each other, and we have welcomed grief  
and called ruin the impossible habit to break.

And now we are here.  
The dinner is ready and we cannot eat.  
The meat sits in the white lake of its dish.  
The wine waits.

Coming to this  
has its rewards: nothing is promised, nothing is taken away.  
We have no heart or saving grace,  
no place to go, no reason to remain.

## Stephen Davis says

"The Prediction" is by far my favorite poem of the last fifty years. Deceptively simple and haunting...the image of the moon turning the lake to milk is brilliant!

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## ????? ?????????? says

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## Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Includes some of my favorites, published the year he was selected as the Poet Laureate, now 20 years ago!

I loved Eating Poetry with the foot-stamping librarian, The Room, Lines for Winter, and of course - The Remains and Coming to This, two of my favorites.

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## Dawn says

I picked up Mark Strand because Misty said that he and Jimmy wrote similarly. Jimmy, it's true. He can write very simple, very quiet, very understated poems. The themes like absence/presence and time are very clear and done very well. However, there's one marked difference. Strand does not have a sense of humor. This guy is very very sad. His poems are constantly about 'death' or 'nothing' or 'stillness.' The poems seem to slow everything down. The stories are not really stories. Even when he's talking about a character, the character feels like an object among other objects. You get the sense that something very heavy is resting on top of you. It's a neat feeling, but it's also exhausting. Since it's the selected poems, I would recommend reading The Story of Our Lives and skipping The Late Hour. However, I do have to say that I finished this sucker in one day, so the last two sections really seemed to repeat what I'd already heard. I'll have to go back and read them after I've taken a break from my dear sad friend.

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## Hadeel yaser says

mysterious and deep. perfect combination.

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