ForeWord Reviews

POETRY

Selected Poems
Dara Wier
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The words *adventure* and *poetry* are rarely used in the same sentence, but are certainly apropos in Dara Wier's *Selected Poems*. There are so many surprises in her work-the ideas, the imagery, the simple and imaginative use of language. Don't get too relaxed, though, there are complexities in the Weir's work that require one's attention and thought, but the payoffs are well worth the efforts.

Selected Poems is a retrospective of Ms. Wier's work from 1977 up to 2006 and provides an interesting literary trajectory of the author's approach to poetry. It underscores how lyrical and well-developed her voice was, even as a young poet. Later poems reflect the added wisdom one would expect of such an adventurous (there's that word again) mind. She examines the world around her as if she is seeing it for the first time and there's a confidence in her vision that only years of writing instill in a poet's voice. Wier is unafraid to push the envelope as well. In one of her later poems, there are over twenty pages of parenthetical phrases utilized, yet the notion of gimmickry never arises.

In an earlier poem, "Winslow Homer's Blues," Wier pays homage to the artist in ways that seem so right-stanzas of *mot juste*-yet have never been heard quite this way before. Here are the opening three stanzas:

Though the book was not meant
for me, it's hard to resist
a man's good art,
like resisting a sweet
and secret kiss, stolen
from or meant for another.

The poet sums up so succinctly the way much great art is viewed-that is to say, intimately, though the distance from art and the viewer is never denied. And isn't that one of the

great litmus tests of any poem? Or as Archibald MacLeish said in *Ars Poetica: A poem should not mean / But be*.

There are challenges here, to be sure. Plenty of humor, but no jokes. Prepare to dig into these poems, read them twice, three times if necessary. That kind of commitment from the reader will pay off with poems resonating throughout the days to follow. Let's let Wier have the final say from her poem "Hidden Assets:"

The collapsed barn
down on Cemetery Road
has been burned down.
I love how you call it
desuetude.
Crumbling slates slake off
the broken-down rooftop
over the bedroom
where through its window
there by the bedside,
a glass of milk,
an open storybook.