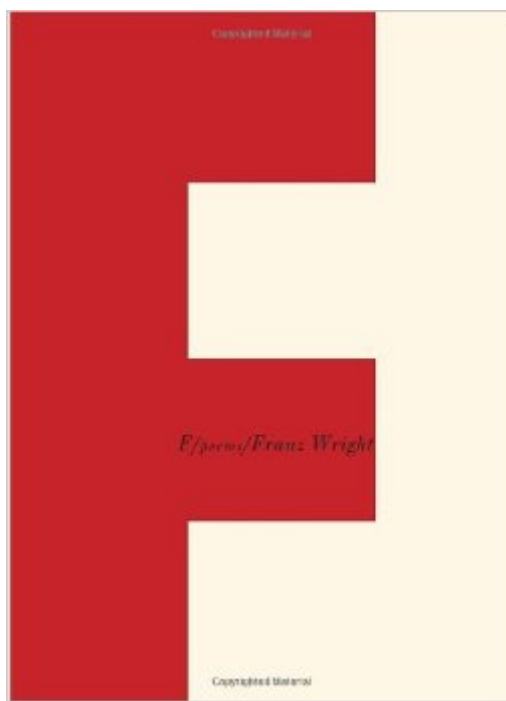


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F: Poems (Borzoi Books)



Synopsis

In these riveting poems, Wright declares, "I've said all that / I had to say. / In writing. / I signed my name. / It's death's move." As he considers his mortality, the poet finds a new elation and clarity on the page, handing over for our examination the flawed yet kneeling-in-gratitude self he has become. F stands both for Franz, the poet-speaker who represents all of us on our baffling lifelong journeys, and for the alphabet, the utility and sometimes brutality of our symbols. (It may be, he jokes grimly, his "grade in life.") From "Entries of the Cell," the long central poem that details the loneliness of the single soul, to short narrative prose poems and traditional lyrics, Wright revels in the compensatory power of language, observing the daytime headlights following a hearse, or the wind, "blessing one by one the unlighted buds of the backbent peach tree's unnoted return." He is at his best in this beautiful and startling collection.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is my first encounter with Franz Wright. I sense that it would have been better to be introduced to him through an earlier book. F -- the title is the sixth letter of the alphabet, and when Wright comes across it in an old disintegrating notebook he wonders whether the capital letter stands for his name or his grade in life -- is a disorienting, discomfiting, bitter and anguished jeremiad. It reflects a man whose life, at least in the main, has not been happy, one who has been visited with insanity, illness, and drugs. It is intensely personal and often inscrutable. Reading it was something

like walking along a city street and being accosted, suddenly, by a street corner preacher haranguing passersby with garbled threats of doom and visions of glory. The passion is manifest, but the message is impenetrable. *F* is divided into three parts. The first contains fifteen pieces, seven in the form and format of free verse and eight being short pieces of prose. With the exception of two pieces, I found the contents of Part I without meaning or merit. I was projecting a two-star assessment. Part II, entitled "Entries of the Cell", is eighteen pages long; it is a mélange of prose and verse and what are perhaps jottings in a journal. It reveals enough of the author's disturbed world to engender a sense of empathy and to begin sweeping into one pile the shards from Part I. Part III contains seventeen pieces, again roughly divided between free verse and short pieces of prose. About half of these pieces touched me sufficiently to mark them to return to in the future. Perhaps by Part III I was better prepared for the weirdness of Wright's world or perhaps its pieces are simply better and less intractably personal.

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