



Rising, Falling, Hovering

C.D. Wright

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C.D. Wright is one of America's leading poets, an artist of idiosyncratic vision who demands ever more from words and poems. As Dave Eggers wrote in *The New York Times*, "C.D. Wright has been writing some of the greatest poetry-cum-prose you can find in American literature."

Rising, Falling, Hovering is a work of profound social, political, and cultural consequence, a collection that uses experimental forms to climb within the unrest teeming around the world and inside the individual. "We are running on Aztec time," she writes, "fifth and final cycle."

In short lyrics and long sequences, Wright's language is ever-sharpened with political ferocity as she overlays voices from the United States, Oaxaca, Baghdad, and the borderlands between nations, to reveal the human struggle for connection and justice during times of upheaval and grief.

*If a body makes 1 centavo per chile picked or
5 cents for 50 chiles can Wal-Mex get it down to 3 cents. Pass the savings on to US.
Will they open a Supercenter in Falluja once it is pacified. Once the corpses
in the garden have decomposed. Once the wild dogs have finished off the bones.
Does the war never end. Is this the war of all against all.
Who will build the great wall between us, the illegals, the vigilantes, the
evangelicals. . .*

C.D. Wright, author of twelve collections of poetry and prose, is a professor of English at Brown University and received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2005. She lives outside Providence, Rhode Island.

Rising, Falling, Hovering Details

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From Reader Review Rising, Falling, Hovering for online ebook

Joe says

Poetry
Doesn't
Protect
You
Anymore

Jason says

A woman who is spending time in Mexico, but she can't focus on anything because her son is about to go to Iraq. The "Rising, Falling, Hovering" of the situation is the inconsistency she has with settling; she has no bearing. Everything appears at once, time is no longer linear. She sees her teenage son as a child and her lover as a veteran with PTSD. She sees all the possible problems, every different facet and she can't sleep as she hallucinates the war-zone and its poverty in Mexico.

That is my take, at least. This may only be an aspect.

She is mottled by a private obsession of fear for her son's death:

*In front of a donut shop someone's son is shot dead
A witness on condition of anonymity
The slow open vulgar mouth drawing on a cigarette
In a face once called Forever Young
Now to be known as Never-a-Man
Gone to the world of the working and the prevaricating
Of the warring world of drywalling of lousy test scores
Of fishing from a bridge on a brilliant afternoon*

Belt buckle blown undone

Every death becomes a layer of catharsis enveloping her psyche, infiltrating the possibility of someone she loved being a casual victim. She can't even read the paper or make love without the terror of war perpetrating her intercourse:

*He slept with the dead then nothing roused him
Did she mention a missing spleen had she warned him
She shaved down there the night before*

*One glimpse of the paper was too much
The number of their dead to remain unknown*

So the sleepless one hectored the sleeper;

This living "Un-Dead" doctors zombies out of the people she knows and the things she sees. The landscape of Mexico appears to be a desolation, an apocalypse settled by the poor and émigrés-from-the-soul with no

hope, no way of life:

*The burros are not young the macho a balcer
the trail frays every which way
Coffee comes from bark
Tortillas made at dawn with a base of dust
Niguas bore into the soles
The brindle dog deserts*

Fleas

*Cloth on the ceiling to catch scorpions
A mattress is unheard of
When there's no rawhide
A catre stretched with saplings*

Flies

*A hot wind beats us off course
Warm beer or warm soda for supper
Ascent without end
Rumor of tigres and leones
These maps are worthless*

No supper

*Fire moving this way
No corn for the burros*

Though when she comes to, she realizes that Mexico is a reality. This is the hard truth of US imperialism, it makes desolation out of population. The zombie-like lethargy of Mexico's half-dead peasants is no requiem after Armageddon, it is gradual torture by the powers that be. Suckling the resource and not paying back what's due. What hurts the most is denial. This is the politics. That the government can not admit what they are doing is scandal, they too are "rising, falling, hovering" in limbo, just out of reach of condemnation and just above actual liberation. They are censoring:

Just once I'd like to watch a movie up here that contains graphic language torture simulated sex cruelty to animals rape library-burning white-phosphorous shelling illegal military recruiting wanton profiteering artifact-looting and more

What I want is a closed-captioned-surround-sound-UV-protected Armageddon

Rage could be my issue

And she is the one complying with this genocide of humanity. Allowing her son to be its soldier:

*When she came back to US
They sent her son to Baghdad*

Whom she vowed to protect if it kills her she will

There's not a troy ounce of compassion in this scenario

There is the inhuman dimension

*The bridges breaking off in chunks
Of grey libraries folding*

School buildings indistinguishable from penitentiaries

Like I said to the doorman the other night

Some moon, huh

You should have seen it before the war Miss

We must not get used to this

You can see the woman smoking a cigarette, waiting at the window. Cold coffee in an old cup making skidmarks on the inner-half of her mug. Grey bags under her eyes. And all these images flash before her,

*Requests for him not to be photographed
In this position not the flash of flesh
The powder burns that pepper the chest*

And amazing, palpable images of her child squirming even in infancy as testament to his denial of such a fate:

*In the corn crib
He will cut the cord he will
Cut it with his teeth*

Though, it is not all her suffering. Part of the genius of C.D. Wright is that she uses projection to allow anonymous people in her poems to feel her plight. Random peasants are taken up with fear or wracked with war-injuries. People die in the poverty of Mexico city streets and the power of the explosion results in *Belt blown undone wrecked down there* ...it is the sickness of an inability to cope with trauma:

At the level of policy their kids don't exist

Never did will never reach the sun-drenched shore

And now it's Monday again

I have been to Pilates I found my old coat

I took my will to the notary I found my good glasses

I have filled my tank I am going to the market

Then I think I'll cut my hair off with a broken bottle

She allows this symbol to take shape, a phrase, *Está comiendo mi coco* or *He is eating my head*. It is a combination of things; it is a Mexican phrase so it has shape in its Mexican. But also an undeniable image of

her son. And if we look at the Mother-Son relationship, we see him born out of her bottom and feeding on her top, the wracking infestation of Ouroboros. And this image, with its cruel depiction of goblins and memories, it attacks her at every step:

*Could she make it stop
(It was eating his head)
A pitch said the astonished woman
Only dogs are supposed to hear
A chain of tiny explosions
In the direction of the fiesta
Reveals a moon under construction*

This book is about the relationship of trauma. How the Iraq War has its damning centered on three peoples: The Dying Peoples, The Coalition of Soldiers, and The People who Care about the Coalition of Soldiers. This hierarchy (if you could call it that) (or food chain, really) serves as an emblem to disembowel our current separation from a war we are responsible for, but to a large extent, still have little part in. It is a seed that is damaging our natural ability to sustain mental health (and to some extents, physical health) and this poem is about the un-dead fixation on the slow burning effect the war is having on this country's population.

That it is set in Mexico has set a wise connotation, in that the dryness of Baghdad couples the sleepy, thirsty heat of Mexico. It allows for desolation to open its eyes in a world where food is scarce and scorpions are everywhere. The pacing is in short breaths, real breathing. It is actual storytelling because it moves like distracted conversation, from phrase to phrase, unsure when she's going to quit speaking. Sometimes she cuts herself off. Sometimes there's a non-sequitor. When her son takes the poem and begins to speak it is the same consequence, an uncertainty of continuation. But, inevitably, as it must go on, we are signaled, time and again, with an unfortunate sign,

To be cont.

Brian says

C.D. Wright is an intellectual poet with passion that peaks through in interesting ways. She has been called a "political" poet, I suppose because of the references to U.S. wars and foreign policy. There are some powerful poems in this collection where indirect references and images from Iraq/Afghanistan are mixed with the perspective of a U.S. citizen viewing these events from Mexico, as well as an almost insider's view looking within Mexico. There are also starkly revealing images from the individual relationship level: "...Besides,/ he is adamant,/ you just go to sleep at night/ I go on a journey", along with excellent wordsmithing: "Whereas before things were all immanence,/ now were they all valence// in the breathing world where we met."

Helen says

Love the imagery, the raw heartbreak of motherhood, the child growing up, growing distant, getting into trouble in places you can't control. Hate the lack of punctuation that left me winded and didn't give me enough time to filter things before pushing on.

Mary says

Unfortunately this unwieldy, picture book size volume of "political poetry" was just not my cup of tea. Although there were five lines from the title poem Rising, Falling, Hovering (cont.) that just stood out for me:

and now it's Monday again

I have been to Pilates. I found my old coat

I took my will to the notary. I found my good glasses

I have filled my tank. I am going to the market

then I think I'll cut my hair off with a broken bottle

Michael Edgerton says

C. D. Wright just keeps getting better and better. I love that she's not afraid to take real risks in her writing--which is not to say, to be "experimental" (which I say as someone who is often labeled as such)--or, rather, it's to be experimental in the original sense, and not merely in conformity with how a certain type of poetry gets defined.

Dan says

I just finished reading Rising, Falling, Hovering, on Monday and had the opportunity to hear the poet read the first half of the title poem at the Seattle Public Library Wednesday Evening (060408). Although the book has some short poems they are dispersed throughout the book and break up the longer Title Poem 'Rising, Falling, Hovering.' The poet herself described the style of the poem as almost cinematic where the subject changes throughout the poem as in a film fading in and out of different scenes to complete the story. It covers the issues of immigration, empire building, and war with fragmented sentences on the pages. The style that she uses is different than what I usually read but I did find it enjoyable. The extra bonus was to be able to hear the poet read from her own book This has always helped me get more out of a book and see it in a different light then when just reading and interpreting on my own.

M Wiegers says

Just rec'd an advance copy of this from the printer yesterday. Sat down with it in book form for the first time last night, and then dreamt about it. CD superimposes the war on terror over the war on our southern border,

assessing the consequences of empire while reflecting upon daily considerations of more intimate relationships.

Robert Beveridge says

C. D. Wright, **Rising, Falling, Hovering** (Copper Canyon Press, 2008)

I have to say, the alarms started going off in my head when the inside flap copy called this book “politically ferocious”. Despite that, I was with her for a while, but eventually the message did overtake the medium, as I feared. In fact, it got to the point where we headed into the land of “this is prose ranting chopped up into little lines to make it look like poetry” by the second half of the title poem:

“According to the Gaia hypothesis, the earth is alive;

According to Lieutenant Colonel Venable white phosphorous
is not a chemical weapon, is an incendiary.

It is an obscurant, it is for illumination;
nor are we a signatory of any treaty restricting its use....”
(--“Rising, Falling, Hovering (cont.)”)

But for all that, I have to say that when Wright isn't using poetry to air political grievances, and instead concentrating on the good old dictum “no ideas but in things” (and thank you endlessly for that, Mr. Williams), she's quite a good writer. There's a lot to be gotten out of this book, especially the first half, but you've got to wade through a few swine to find the pearls here. Whether it's worth your time depends on how willing you are to do so. ** 1/2

S.D. Johnson says

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Travis says

I feel torn writing this review. My overall understanding of most of the poems was limited, I found her meaning and train of thought difficult to discern but I think that is mainly due to my limited experience with poetry. But even in my limited understanding I found so much of her imagery deeply beautiful, original and poignant that I am sad to finish the book even after three months. I'd recommend her, this book and especially her poem *Our Dust* (<http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/20...>) which is one of my favorite poems and which originally lead me to this book. She is someone I will always keep an eye out for at the used book store.

Sylvia says

Wright seems, with this collection of work, to have hit a confident stride. Yet again combining her taste for the lyrical and the vernacular, Wright turns her eye away from her more typical sexual poems and towards contemporary plights. The book focuses on the hardships of war, loss, immigration, etc on the global level, paralleled by their equivalents in the personal sphere. It seems as though through writing these poems Wright is trying to make sense of today's world... to expose the horrors... but also to purge them from herself.

Ann-marie says

I read the following poem, (only a segment included here)and I cried, knowing I had to do better, had to return to my own writing.

RE: Happiness, in pursuit thereof

It is 2005, just before the landfall.
Here I am, a labyrinth, and I am a mess.
I am located at the corner of Waterway
and Bluff. I need your help. You will find me
to the left of the graveyard, where the trees
grow especially talkative at night. . .

Mia says

I adore Wright's work. I read it in big savory shaking gulps. She is, as they say, one of our best poets. And of course all is fair subject matter for poetry and of course these shameful wars are too, but I'm tired of the easy trope from Afghanistan and Gulf Wars I and II of a poet who is upset by the news(paper). (NPR?) It seems to compound the shame. We killed all those people and our soldiers raped/got raped; were maimed ... and we're upset by the news.

Kent says

I like this book a lot, for what it reveals about the speaker, for its political stance, and for the qualification of that political stance by the speaker's everyday concerns. One of the reasons I think politics is avoided in poems is because people are usually self-conscious about preaching. And if they aren't self-conscious, they should be. What makes me appreciate the world view in this book is its honesty. The world goes on, and this speaker may be concerned with the war, but she also has to deal with the very real issues of her life. This doesn't mean these are diary entries. Instead, it feels to me an lyric investigation of normal life in light of extraordinary events.
