



Forest Primeval

Vieve Francis

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"Another Anti-Pastoral," the opening poem of *Forest Primeval*, confesses that sometimes "words fail." With a "bleat in [her] throat," the poet identifies with the voiceless and wild things in the composed, imposed peace of the Romantic poets with whom she is in dialogue. Vievee Francis's poems engage many of the same concerns as her poetic predecessors—faith in a secular age, the city and nature, aging, and beauty. Words certainly do not fail as Francis sets off into the wild world promised in the title. The wild here is not chaotic but rather free and finely attuned to its surroundings. The reader who joins her will emerge sensitized and changed by the enduring power of her work.

Winner, 2016 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award in the Poetry category

Finalist, 2015 Balcones Poetry Prize

Shortlist finalist, 2015 PEN Open Book Award for an exceptional book by an author of color

Forest Primeval Details

Date : Published November 30th 2015 by Triquarterly

ISBN : 9780810132436

Author : Vievee Francis

Format : Paperback 104 pages

Genre : Poetry, Cultural, African American

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From Reader Review Forest Primeval for online ebook

Kate says

Vievee Francis is here to fuck you up magnificently & afterward you will thank her.

Erika says

3.5 stars

An absolutely beautiful collection--a little bit about growing up, being a woman, and folklore, faith, and fairytales. Highly recommend.

Keith Taylor says

Most recent book by this very important poet. Vievee F. puts herself in places where she needs to transform to find a new comfort. Complex but rewarding poems. The language in these poems will make you shiver at its beauty. See a short review I did for The Ann Arbor Observer here

<https://annarborobserver.com/articles...>

Kasandra says

I read this once, slowly, and then again, only a little faster - it's a collection rich with song, folklore, fairy tale, myth, magic, and a clear kinship with the natural world that isn't forced or overly clever, merely felt and lived and described in a voice you can hear breathing next to you. Poems like "Taking It" and "Skinned" took my breath away, illuminating family history in a way that put me there. "Cake Baby" and "Wolf" surprised with their humor and inventiveness. And her handling of other myths and fairy tales is masterful. A gorgeous book that takes the reader along for its discoveries.

e says

vibrant and wonderful

SA says

I've been eager to read this since it was published, and ended up playing nearly a year of lost book bingo with the library to get it. I think I came in with some expectations as a result of the wait, which I try never to have with poetry.

Francis is a talented poet, very raw in her presentation; that I wasn't expecting the poems in this volume in no way took from their power. I felt like I was on a back porch, listening to a friend work through their problems, drinking whiskey from a jelly jar; not looking over to give them privacy to weep. Confessional, I suppose, but not confessional in the typical context; these poems are more like ripped from a mouth when the kitchen door is closed, with only the women to hear. Like a diary with a cheap lock stuffed between the mattress and box spring.

I need to take some time and then circle back, because the impact was greater than my ability to process at the time.

Sally says

Amazing.

Jude Brigley says

I particularly liked this collection. Two of my favourites were 'A song of the ridge' and 'All kinds of howl in'. I love the structures of some of these such as the listing of 'Happy?' and the 'given' structure of 'Altruism.. These poems reverberate in the mind and snatches come back at odd moments.

Sam says

This is a wild collection of poems and the opening poem, "Another Antipastoral," gives the reader a good idea of how the poetic speaker describes herself throughout the rest of the book: "Don't you see? I am shedding my skins. I am a paper hive, / a wolf spider, / the creeping ivy, the ache of a birch, a heifer, a doe" (3). One of the most prominent themes is reflection on how she does not conform to idealized white beauty standards. The subsequent pursuit of love is a rocky road, in poems like "Taking It" and "Approaching Fifty," but one that eventually leads to the husband in "How Delicious to Say It" and "Husband Fair."

Lisa Ladd says

This book of poetry is one to be savored, and read, again and again. Each poem left me wanting to stop and ponder, before turning to the next one.

Jenna says

Most reviews of *Forest Primeval* will probably focus on the many poems herein that are based on fairytales, reimaginings of Snow White and Bluebeard and Circe and incubus myths and the like filtered through a totally unique sensibility, raw and queasy and horror-filled yet also wiry and potent (e.g.: "Overcome / with curiosity, my fear was your blue beard / between my legs-- / a nightmare I couldn't shake, / and now must receive, the feather of it, / each hair's nightly collapse against my own / webbing"). A kind of defiant

reclaiming of the grotesque. And it's true that those fairytale-themed poems are great, as this entire book is as a whole. But damn if this isn't one of the most powerful, *sui generis* poems I've ever encountered:
<http://www.muzzlemagazine.com/vieeve-...>

Michele says

Excellent book. I checked this one out from the library, and have decided that Vievee Francis' antipastoral (as she names it) is going to be purchased and given its own place on my shelf. Complex, prickly, fearless, luscious. This book needs to be read and re-read.

Here's a link to the Poetry Foundation's entry on Francis:
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poet...>

Eli Brooke says

gorgeously lyrical, if more than a little disturbing. lots of reworkings of fairy tales made even darker & more psychologically complicated than the originals.

Naomi says

These poems are take-my-breath-away gorgeous. Far ranging, surprising in turn of phrase and direction, carefully and originally structured, I could reach each poem again and again and find something new each time. There are poems inspired by myth, by fairy tales, by the blues, by love, by wounds of heart, body and soul. Howlin' Wolf prowls these pages. From a distance he howls through each word: a low growl, fangs bared, the plaintive wail of a harmonica. This is urgent, important work, so worthy of the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award it won.

Ramblinglea says

These poems speak to the deep connection we have with place.
