



Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969-1980

Lucille Clifton

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Finalist, 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. "Lucille Clifton is one of the four or five most authentic and profound living American poets."--Denise Levertov

Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969-1980 Details

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Author : Lucille Clifton

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Shelby Lynne says

Lucille Clifton makes my soul sing.

Joe says

Had so many reasons to think of Lucille Clifton and her early work lately. I've been in Buffalo, where she grew up (well, Depew), worked at SUNY Fredonia where she finished college. There one of the faculty had "homage to my hips" tacked onto a bulletin board. Drive past the empty steel mill where her father worked and which populates her marvelously compact memoir. & I've been trying to figure out what poetry is and should do--and she (w/Jeff Coleman) was an early inspiration at St. Mary's. So I picked up Cheryl's copy of Good Woman. This was overdue. Clifton sometimes gets characterized as celebrating relationships, blackness, and womanhood in an "elemental" way (see the 2010 New Yorker piece). I was struck by how unelemental some of her early poems and memoirs were in their situation in specific places and historical events--the scissor man crossing the line between white and black neighborhoods in "the 1st," specific intersections in "tyrone (1)" ("the buffalo soldiers / have taken up position / corner of jefferson and sycamore"), a strike by Polish steelworkers in Buffalo, poems to Malcom X, Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale. If she writes about relationships, blackness, and womanhood some of her poems are about what this meant in very specific times, places, and personal and political struggles. Anyway, just a small observation in this happy rereading. I walked away thinking of Clifton's work as far more multifaceted and as involving more transformations between books than I'd originally thought. Some poems I'd like to come back to, perhaps teach: "good times" (24-25), "flowers" (47-50), "adam and eve" (91), "in salem" (111), "she insists on me" (136), "august the 12th" (172).

Tanya Hallam says

I love everything about Lucille Clifton and her style of writing. If you've never read her works before this is the best place to start.

Rose Peterson says

the memoir > the poetry

Ian says

The book is a great collection not only for the poetry but also for the short memoir on her family and their history. Broken into several sections, the book offers a good overview of Clifton's early work. She is

definitely informed by tone and sound. In some places reminiscent of blues music, other places almost prayer like.

Tammy V says

Love the poetry of Lucille Clifton who worked in a local poetry group I belonged to for several years and taught at nearby St Mary's college. She had an amazing ear for what makes a poem sing, and a generous heart. She was not afraid of telling the truth, and let no one off the hook, even when she loved them. She died in 2010 and the world has lost a marvelous voice.

Glenda Bailey-Mershon says

There is no finer sensibility in American poetry than this rich, illuminating, caring poet's work.

Islam says

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[illegible]

Kerri Anne says

Once upon a time in undergrad a poetry professor told me various pieces of mine reminded her of Clifton and at that point not having read any Clifton I traipsed to the library and found her, and ultimately found *Blessing the Boats* and my poetic world was rocked and that collection was immediately owned, and happily read and re-read until the cover looked like it no longer wanted to remain attached to the rest of its pages.

[Five stars for this collection being like looking at Clifton's bones, and repeatedly beautiful without even showcasing some of her best poems.]

Marci McPhee says

Powerful poetry and memoir by contemporary black poet, with gems like these:

"Oh, slavery, slavery," my Daddy would say. "It ain't something in a book, Lue. Even the good parts was awful." (page 237), and this poem I can't get out of my head about Mary's mother:

anna speaks of the childhood of mary her daughter

we rise up early and
we work. work is the medicine
for dreams.
that dream
i am having again;
she washed in light,
whole world bowed to its knees,
she on a hill looking up,
face all long tears.
and shall i give her up
to dreaming them? i fight this thing.
all day we scrubbing scrubbing.

Thank you, Lucille, for inspiring me today.

Drabekate says

I love this book. I return to it again and again, reread parts of it. Clifton was in Portland recently, and I was able to hear her read, and she did so with great charm and humanness. Her language is so simple, and yet through repetition and arrangement on the page her work is so beautiful, pulling me in again and again. I like the simplicity, the way she captures a feeling in just a word or two.

Jessica says

I fell in love with Clifton through this book. This book made me stumble all over my words when I met her. So succinct, so powerful, so honest- both her words and the woman herself.

jewelthinks says

When I? picked up this book, I didn't realize it was actually a compilation of 4 books of her poetry and a memoir! It's a lot! A lot to read in a linear way, a lot to take in, digest, reflect on but it's every bit phenomenal and beautiful and tragic.

I'll be referring to this often... I've marked many pages.

The memoir is my favorite!

Rosa Cabrera says

Unbelievable. Clifton had just laid out the guide to being alive, female, and Black in the US through her poetry and memoir. Poetry has never moved me as much as this, and I've never read so much from and about a person in such a short amount of time. All the work of navigating the world, ourselves, our families, and loved ones is right there, delivered in easily digestible but sad, celebratory, and unashamed images, moments, observations. Much more I can say but this is clearly more of a response than a review.

Ariel Lynn says

Lucille Clifton is an amazing poet & her memoir was just icing on a very, very tasty cake. I saw her at a poetry festival in NJ many years ago, & I heard the passion in her voice with every word.

One note that I think is very important to keep in mind is that, & this is my opinion entirely, her poetry is meant to be read aloud. It makes more sense when it's spoken out loud, the rhythms are tighter, & I really felt the meaning of the words while picking up on her alliteration.
