



## Wheeling Motel

*Franz Wright*

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## Wheeling Motel Franz Wright

In his tenth collection of poetry, Franz Wright gives us an exquisite book of reconciliation with the past and acceptance of what may come in the future.

From his earliest years, he writes in “Will,” he had “the gift of impermanence / so I would be ready, / accompanied / by a rage to prove them wrong / . . . and that I too was worthy of love.” This rage comes coupled with the poet’s own brand of love, what he calls “one / strange alone / heart’s wish / to help all / hearts.” Poetry is indeed Wright’s help, and he delivers it to us with a wry sense of the daily in America: in his wonderfully local relationship to God (whom he encounters along with a catfish in the emerald shallows of Walden Pond); in the little West Virginia motel of the title poem, on the banks of the great Ohio River, where “Tammy Wynette’s on the marquee” and he is visited by the figure of Walt Whitman, “examining the tear on a dead face.”

Here, in *Wheeling Motel*, Wright’s poetry continues to surprise us with its frank appraisal of our soul, and with his own combustible loneliness and unstoppable joy.

## Wheeling Motel Details

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Author : Franz Wright

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## From Reader Review Wheeling Motel for online ebook

### Becky Boyle says

"You weren't born that way.

And it didn't happen to you overnight, no, you had to work hard all your life to achieve it;

a power over you steadily increasing in direct proportion to your disbelief in it,

to the very fulfillment of your greatest fear:

you're going to live. when you wanted to quit

you could not, and when you could--

when you could you weren't about to."

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### Zara Raab says

The novelist Denis Johnson said of an earlier collection Franz Wright's poems, "They're like tiny jewels shaped by blunt, ruined fingers--miraculous gifts." I think of them as thimbles of raw carrot juice, intense and flavorful--experiences served up to us straight, pulled from the dream worlds of sleep or altered states, and grated to juice, like the bright orange carrot juice behind the glass refrigerated case in my favorite organic yoghurt store on Fillmore Avenue in San Francisco. Wright's poems are a quick drink with a short shelf life. Yet they retain an undisputed place in our vast, complicated cannon of the lost soul, as raw slices of American life in the waning days of empire. Wright writes with immediacy about his trials by the fire of drugs and insanity, as if he wakes in the morning with a fountain pen in his throat, ready to etch the words of his demon brain onto his skin.

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### Mary says

I loved this book. Some of my favorite poems were: Pediatric Suicide, Hospitalization, To a Boston Poet, My Pew and The Call. I'm looking forward to reading more of Wright's work.

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### mwpm says

I breathed on the window and made my initial.

It's true, and then there was the dream  
of being present  
at my parents' wedding.

That's right: I breathed  
on a little black fly-  
husk there on the sill  
and it came back to life,  
why?

My body is lying in bed  
all this time,  
I know that.

I can see.

You say it's been there for a while?  
You have no idea.

- **Why Do You Ask?**, pg. 14

\* \* \*

A pretty girl asks  
for my autograph,  
delighted! Except  
it's her cigarette  
she wants signed,

then lighted. Think about it.  
I do. And am  
for a moment  
the happiest man  
that I have ever known -

I have seen my end  
and it is someone else's  
body, breath,  
and lovely  
inspiration.

- **Günter Eich Apocrypha**, pg. 33

\* \* \*

The universe is mostly made of thought,  
a few weirdly simple equations

known and still unknown.

Sentient beings are numberless  
and I promise to save them,  
when you are old and I am a story.

It is all contained  
in a few words  
written and unwritten.

Winter, thank God. I will wander  
from room to room, window to window,  
a fictional person gazing at fictional skies.

- **Unwriting**, pg. 43

\* \* \*

Remember us, you not

yet here. Of the sparrow-coloured  
fields

of mid-November, we the  
perceivers, the  
sayers  
and rememberers -

call us  
to mind, say the words  
in our name:

they are our name, who breathed

here in these underground cloud-  
darkened wind-uttered  
fields, and spoke  
like you

each object's word.

- **Address**, pg. 47

\* \* \*

The sick wold wandered off  
grazing  
in his wound's limping shadow,

sidereally alone and immune  
to self-pity,  
with no need  
to describe how he felt  
and no need of doctors to die.

Dear Fear,

Fuck off -

I can write to Valzhyna.

Dear Valzhyna,

I woke up this morning  
groping around for a pen  
to write these words down  
on my hand;

I don't know what they mean.

It's just what we do.

The wolf woke with steel teeth  
of the trap laid by men  
clenched on his wrist  
and did what was necessary  
and wandered off.

- To a Young Poet, pg. 79

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### John Matt says

Franz Wright's latest collection of poems, "Wheeling Motel", shows the poet on a more reflective quest concerning his past; the Catholic faith is a sort of cradle for these broken diamonds of poems and reveries about both Wright's own past and some of his original poetic inspirations. Out of the millions of poems written about poor Charles Baudelaire, about whom W.H. Auden once wrote, "a strong man, yet weaker than any woman who has ever walked the earth", I think Wright transcends most of them with his calm yet firm judgment of the poet and his quest to probe the malevolent side of existence: "Evil isn't hard to comprehend/it is nothing/but unhappiness/in its most successful disguise/Evil is hated and feared at least/It is possessed/Unlike mere misery, of a dark glamour nobody pities." These two stanzas speak worlds not only about the legendary Dandy and lyric poet, but is a quietly epic commentary on the nature of evil as a whole.

His tenderness and quest for an answer for a metaphysical question regarding the doomed, addicted, and mentally ill in particular continues on a more serene note. His "No Answer No Why" stares these phenomena full in the face without blinking, also grouping ourselves within this tribe who differ perhaps only slightly from us. "Everyone who wakes up insane/with window and mirror wintry portrait of nowhere/Everyone Lord who wakes up in a cell/Everyone Lord who wakes up in the cancer bed/Everyone walking the streets with no home and intense frowning features of feigned occupation, feigned destination.." Isaiah's "plea for the widow" is here in abundance.

I think it should be stressed that Franz Wright is not a nay-sayer, for all his reflection upon the extremes of misery in human life--there are moments of hilarious dark humor in this collection which betray an artist

who knows better than to take himself all that seriously. His mockery of the simplicity of the mental health system, which often reduces the wealth of the human psyche to a few simple questions and answers, can be seen in "Intake Interview", a farcical poetical detournement of the questions asked when one is admitted to a mental hospital. His struggle with and yet firm resolution to Christ's presence in the world and in the human heart is best embodied in "The Pew", I believe, one of the best poems about faith I have ever had the fortune to read.

These poems reflect like a miniaturist mirror, a la James Tate combined with the dark aestheticism of Gunter Eich, of a poet with an agonizingly exquisite sensibility trying to reconcile a chaotic past and a present into which the divine has peered. The most worthwhile poetry collection of 2009.

Wright can be heard reading 20 of these pieces with beautiful ambient background music on the CD "Wheeling Motel", also available from Amazon.com.

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### **Richard says**

Borges said that music was poetry, but even the esteemed Jorge didn't quite predict the songs of Franz Wright - little peeps and chuckles that echo from vast, dark rooms. Plus, Borges couldn't with his affliction couldn't have quite gotten a handle on Wright's power of image, how even the seemingly static image of a rider on the bus quivers down to the soul in Wright's hands, not to mention how a black lake can have a "still cumulus surface." Wright's poetic feet stand between thought and image when his poems are at their sharpest, and the thought is all crammed into the most base of conclusions. What you won't find in Wright is the meandering musing of the lightly poetic mind, but the rock-solid end result that punches one in the face or gut or balls with some of the purest intensity to be found out there right now. In this collection, like so many others, Wright touches on the humorous ("Professor Alone During Office Hours" or "Intake Interview") while others are clearly hard-hitting from the start ("Pediatric Suicide" or "Abuse: To My Brother"), but even in these extremes, Wright touches on the opposite extreme simultaneously. When Wright is on-target, he puts out some of the most viscerally, brutally honest work to be found in poetry today, and this collection has a good number of those to scour through.

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### **Will says**

After the disappointment I felt reading "Walking to Martha's Vineyard," I was reluctant to even read this slim book of poetry. But I'm glad I did. Whereas "Walking" seemed a cheesy (if not kneejerk) reaction to his recent conversion to Catholicism, "Wheeling Motel" is a more mature exploration of faith and compassion in the modern world, from drug-inflicted deathbeds to humble pleas to God for direction. This is the type of book you can read in an hour and re-read again and again. So glad I revisited Franz Wright, and I recommend "Wheeling Motel."

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### **Charlane Brady says**

How can you not like a talented poet telling fear to f\*!@# off? Franz Wright is brilliant. I haven't loved reading a book of poems this much since To Bedlam and Part Way Back by Anne Sexton. I look forward to reading more...

My favorites:

The World of Senses  
Solution  
Thirteen Lines  
Wheeling Motel  
The Catfish  
To a Young Poet  
The Soul Complains

Selections from Wheeling Motel were put to music.

More on Franz Wright at Blue Flower Arts and Poetry Foundation.

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### **Marco says**

«Why Do You Ask

I breathed on the window and made my initial.

It's true, and then there was the dream  
of being present  
at my parents' wedding.

That's right: I breathed  
on a little black fly-  
husk there on the sill  
and it came back to life,  
why?

My body is lying in bed  
all this time,  
I know that.

I can see.

You say it's been there for a while?  
You have no idea.»

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### **Jeremy says**

Don't get to read a lot of poetry, especially newer folks, but have become a big fan of Franz Wright over the past few years. Just got this. Finished it last night; liked the poems towards the end better.

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### **Nick says**

A little windy ("wind" like air that moves) compared to his other recent books, and therefore it's missing some of the terse vitality that made those books brilliant. A strong work compared to much of what's out there, though, as Wright's effortless spirituality overcomes his moments of largesse. Altogether, a good read for fans of Wright, but probably not the best starting point for those new to his work.

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### **Paul says**

In *Wheeling Motel*, Franz Wright's poems reel from and deal with fear, delusion, and affliction. For whatever oblivious reason, perhaps, oblivion, Wright's stuff reminds me of Christian Wiman's poems in *Every Riven Thing* and Frank Schaeffer's thought processes in *Why How*. Now, in memory palace, Franz Wright returns his books to God.

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### **Jeffrey Wright says**

A river of loneliness disguised as humanity's voice.

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### **Shannon says**

My admiration for Franz Wright grows.

In this collection, Wright wrestles with his personal suffering, with God, and with the balance of joy and depression; the structure of the poems vary from long lines asking questions, to brief, almost two-word fragments that run like stream-of-consciousness for pages.

My favorite line, from "The Our Father":

"What final catastrophe sent  
to wean me from this world."

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### **Jamie says**

If you're in the mood for dark moments exploding into bright poems of remorse and redemption, then this should not be missed. My favorites were: *Why Do You Ask*, *Pediatric Suicide*, *The Problem*, *The Call*, *My Peace I Leave*, *Day One*, and from "Anniversary":

how little say I had in what I said:  
the best years came to me at the end, and  
love, the next best thing to being dead.

