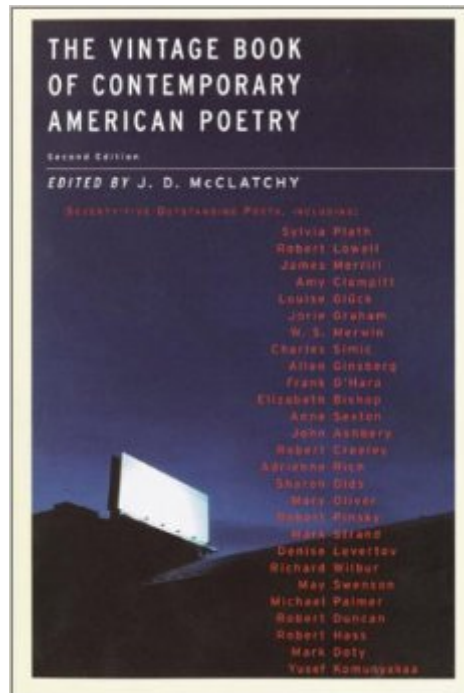


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# The Vintage Book Of Contemporary American Poetry



## Synopsis

Dazzling in its range, exhilarating in its immediacy and grace, this collection gathers together, from every region of the country and from the past forty years, the poems that continue to shape our imaginations. From Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop, John Ashbery and Adrienne Rich, to Robert Haas and Louise Gluck, this anthology takes the full measure of our poetry's daring energies and its tender understandings.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (28 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

This book is decidedly an anthology of poets rather than poems: everyone gets at least three pages and a half-page introduction. It's also fairly encyclopedic and catholic. The main use of an anthology of this type is to give the interested reader a quick idea of what, say, Merwin or Ashbery or Clampitt is all about. This task it discharges quite well. Now for the flaws. There are some idiosyncratic omissions, which hurt the book; regardless of what McClatchy thinks of Robert Bly, he should have included a few of his poems and let the reader judge for himself. Similarly with Stanley Kunitz. I assume McClatchy likes Thom Gunn and left him out for being British, which is a little silly because he spent most of his life in California. These omissions make the book a little less complete as a reference. More seriously, the anthology is a hard slog because so many of the poems are at least a couple of pages long. This means you can't dip in at random and read a poem and be surprised -- which is what anthologies are traditionally for. It would be a more readable book if there were fewer interminable blank verse meditations, many of them unengaging and not very characteristic -- e.g. one would not realize from the selections that Merrill and Hecht were masters of poetic form. That

said, one does get some idea of each voice if one persists. A persistent pattern in this period is the mid-career switch from highly formal verse to a distinctive personal style. (Lowell, Berryman, W.S. Merwin, James Wright, Plath...) It's fascinating to see the mature style next to the earlier style; the book does this sometimes, but not with Merwin. On the whole this anthology is a slightly unhappy medium.

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