

THE QUALITY OF THE AIR

MERWIN'S ONGOING ECOLOGICAL SONG

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*I begin, after about a week in university, I begin to feel the oxygen's
going out of the air very fast and I have to go somewhere else.*

W. S. Merwin to Bill Moyers, 2007

One of W. S. Merwin's most recent poems, "Neither Here nor There," is an examination of how "An airport is nowhere," a nowhere in which we nonetheless spend a lot of time, perhaps as punishment "for something you have done / which you do not entirely remember / like the souls in Purgatory." In that nowhere where you are always "on your way / to somewhere,"

you sit there in the smell
of what passes for food
breathing what is called air
while the timepieces measure
their agreement¹

Such a poem reminds us how often Merwin has been attentive to the stark realities and trivialities of the contemporary world. The poet Mark Halliday has commented, sarcastically, that "a devoted Merwin reader is marvelously ready to be lifted away from the level of quotidian irritation, competition, sexual desire, economic need, envy, humor, cars, movies, blogs, and turnips, up to the level of safely unspecific archetypes."² But poems like this one shock us into the realization that, nestled among the haunted and haunting natural imagery in Merwin's work, among the shadows and absences and fading light, irritating quotidian things like airports exert their own haunted presence. And this particular poem

draws our attention to one of the many vital invisibilities that Merwin so often evokes: here, perhaps, the ultimate vital invisibility—air itself. An “airport,” after all, is not just a port for airplanes, but, like airplanes themselves, a port for air. We all know the odd, unsettling, and dangerous quality of the compressed air we breathe while on a plane and the insulated and recirculated air of the aptly named “terminal” itself (sealed off from the fumes of the jet fuel outside and from the heat or cold of the vast concrete wasteland surrounding the terminal), air which contains that pervasive processed “smell / of what passes for food.” Merwin has long been intrigued with this artificial air: his 1958 “Flight Home,” recording his return to the United States after seven years in Europe, recalls the environment of airplanes and airports as “organized and sterilized and herded and heated and air-conditioned” and recalls how on the plane “the voices” are always “coming from far away, as through the sleep of a child, over the noise of the engines; the pressure of everything seeming to build up in the plane.”³ It is air so artificial it can only really be described as “what is called air.”

David Foster Wallace, in his now famous 2005 commencement address at Kenyon College, told the old story about two younger fish swimming past an older fish, who says, “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” The two younger fish swim on for awhile, and finally one says to the other, “What the hell is water?” “The point of the fish story,” Wallace says, “is merely that the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about.”⁴ These invisible and obvious realities, of course, are the ones Merwin has always written about, and the air is that all-pervasive reality we humans move through unthinkingly, like fish through water. Merwin alludes to his own version of Wallace’s fish story in “Still Morning” in *The Shadow of Sirius*, where, turning the fish to birds and the water to air, “the flying birds know / nothing of the air they are flying through.”⁵ That air the birds unknowingly fly through, like the water that the fish are oblivious to, has been altered by humans over the years so that the invisibilities the birds, the fish, and we humans move through are increasingly toxic, and the old fish’s question in Wallace’s

joke is no longer an innocent one: “how’s the water” and “how’s the air” are now urgent concerns.

Throughout his career, and especially from *The Lice* forward, air has permeated Merwin’s work.⁶ Think of “The Widow,” a poem about how the earth—widowed after the extinction of her husbandmen the humans—manages to get along just fine without us:

How easily the ripe grain
Leaves the husk
At the simple turning of the planet

There is no season
That requires us

In that poem, we find the haunting line about how we humans are those “Not seeing the irony in the air” (*MG* 122–23). Part of what is contained in the word *irony* is, ironically, *iron*, and there’s certainly *iron* in the air, a key component of the toxic atmosphere humans have created (iron oxides in the air are one of the main vehicles for transporting carcinogens and sulfur dioxide into the lungs), and part of what allowed humans to begin to *see* the air. The deteriorating quality of the air, after all, increasingly apparent in the late nineteenth century with the development of the iron and steel industry, was the initial and most frightening sign of pollution, of environmental degradation. But the *irony* in the air has to do with what David Foster Wallace was getting at when he said “the most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see.” We typically don’t *see* air, so it is not something we represent and thus it seems not “real” (again from “The Widow”: “You confide / In images in things that can be / Represented which is their dimension you / Require them you say This / Is real”).

Yet, ironically, air is the most real of all things, the thing on which life depends, the thing we cannot *not* walk through and breathe in. And, ironically again, when we *do* begin to see the air, it may be too late to

continue to live in it. When humans started to *see* what they had thought of as invisible, when they could *see* what they were breathing, air pollution or smog (as the smoky industrial fog over cities began to be called in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) became words and became all too real. By the 1950s, when photochemical smog was identified, “air quality” started to become an environmental issue, and now we have bureaucracies like the Environmental Protection Agency producing up-to-the-minute air quality maps and forecasts: the quality of the air we breathe is now a standard part of our daily weather reports, the pollution index nearly as familiar as the temperature. But smog comes and goes, and most of us go on breathing, so the improvement of the air (or the argument that the air is not really so unhealthy after all) remains a divisive political issue, when it gets talked about at all. We finally have no choice but to breathe what is there to breathe. And on the days we can’t see the air, the toxic particulates nonetheless continue to enter our lungs and what we don’t see still goes on killing us: that’s the “irony in the air.”⁷⁷

One of Merwin’s most searing and sarcastic poems, “When the War Is Over,” also from *The Lice*, contains a complex and, again, ironic statement about the air:

When the war is over
 We will be proud of course the air will be
 Good for breathing at last

* * *

The dead will think the living are worth it we will know
 Who we are
 And we will all enlist again (*MG* 134–35)

Many years ago, Robert Scholes offered a brilliant reading of this poem, and he analyzed the difficulties of the slippery syntax created by the lack of punctuation and the destabilizing line breaks, which combine to cre-

ate what Scholes calls a “potential zeugma, with its semantic absurdity, [that] haunts the second line of the poem without insisting that we attend to it.”⁸ The zeugma (a rhetorical yoking) is formed by the way “will be proud” seems to adhere to both “We will be proud” (presumably the claim of the victors of the war) and “the air will be [proud],” a zeugma encouraged by the wavering “of course,” which can equally conclude the first phrase in the line or open the second phrase. But, as Scholes notes, the statement that “of course the air will be proud” is absurd, so we proceed by instead attaching the second phrase to the third line: “the air will be / Good for breathing at last.” This statement makes more sense, and Scholes suggests it may be a kind of defamiliarizing of the cliché “We will breathe easier.” Now that the war is over, in other words, we will of course be proud and breathe easier.

But (of course) the text does not say that. What the poem *does* allow is precisely the absurd claim, one of the endless empty claims of progress and cleansing that we regularly hear in political campaign after political campaign and that always seem to result in more regress and fouling. “This is the war to end all wars” is the endless claim of warriors who use the claim to tame the populace while always preparing for the next war (“And we will all enlist again”). So go the claims of the politicians who promise to clean the air and the waters, or the ones who claim that we cannot give in to the global warming zealots because the Bible gives humans dominance over the earth (and, by extension, gives corporations dominance over its resources). It is that ever-migrating, ever-shifting “silence of heaven” that allows humans to invent what the heavens say and then use that invention to destroy the earth while claiming that the destruction itself will make the earth peaceful and safe and clean. We will be proud of how we make the air good for breathing again even as we undermine the most anodyne of efforts (like carbon emissions cap and trade) to control the growing toxicity of what we breathe.



The air, though, is not only what we breathe into our lungs; it also carries what we take into our ears. There are voices in the air, and when they are broadcast they consider themselves to be “on the air,” or just—as the iconic studio signs have it—“on air.” Merwin’s poetry is full of voices heard and unheard, voices that are in the air but detached, seeking a speaker or seeking a listener or both. These are the voices he often speaks of as those we don’t know are there and that may suddenly come to voice, seemingly from nowhere. In a 2009 interview with Bill Moyers, Merwin talked about those invisible voices, the aural shadows that are cast throughout his poetry: “I think that poetry and the most valuable things in our lives, and in fact the next sentence, your next question to me, Bill, come out of what we don’t know. They don’t come out of what we do know. They come out of what we do know, but what we do know doesn’t make them. The real source of them is beyond that. It’s something we don’t know. They arise by themselves. And that’s a process that we never understand.” This interview focused on *The Shadow of Sirius*, which had just won the Pulitzer Prize. Moyers asked Merwin about what seemed to him the obscure title: “Now, Sirius is the dog star. The most luminous star in the sky. Twenty-five times more luminous than the sun. And yet, you write about its shadow. Something that no one has ever seen. Something that’s invisible to us. Help me to understand that.” Merwin answered:

That’s the point. The shadow of Sirius is pure metaphor, pure imagination. But we live in it all the time. . . . We are the shadow of Sirius. There is the other side of—as we talk to each other, we see the light, and we see these faces, but we know that behind that, there’s the other side, which we never know. And that—it’s the dark, the unknown side that guides us, and that is part of our lives all the time. It’s the mystery. That’s always with us, too. And it gives the depth and dimension to the rest of it.⁹

Merwin’s work has been filled with voices in the air. Helen Vendler characterizes his very style as a voice “spoken to nobody within hearing

distance, spoken to the air.”¹⁰ His 1978 *New Yorker* story called “Air” explores an evocative memory of building a boat in an old edifice that had been a church, a movie house, a barber shop, a barn; it’s a place where the speaker hears voices start and stop, of children outside and of friends conversing inside, voices that may be of the dead or the living, the past or the present, all in the air: those voices “fly up, fly up. I stop hearing them. They go out. Then I hear them again, those voices.” The story ends with the narrator “here in midair,” putting up the mainsail of the boat for the first time and hearing “the breeze distinctly, and for a moment I catch my breath, afraid that the conversation behind me has really stopped, and that the voices of the children outside the window were long ago. But no, they are both still there” (RM 85, 87). Even earlier, in *The Moving Target* (1963), Merwin included a poem entitled “Air,” where the air is a song (“Under the overturned lute with its / One string I am going my way / Which has a strange sound”) that the poet sings while “Walking at night between the two deserts” in the dusty air (“This way the dust, that way the dust”) (MG 95–96). And then, from *The Pupil* (2001), there is “The Name of the Air,” about the “old dog” who, finding it hard to breathe, comes to “ask whether there is something that can / be done about it” and does ask “without asking,” as if the silent air itself is the deathly answer (MG 517). The “air” is what we breathe in to live and what we breathe out to create song, poetry, voice. And the name of all songs, all airs, is ultimately the same, as voices are always silenced, one after another, while new ones go on the air and old ones continue to circulate on the silent waves, waiting for someone to bring them to voice again.



Merwin, then, is concerned with the quality of the air in at least a double sense—the quality of the air we breathe and the quality of the airs we sing and hear. It’s ultimately all the same air, and toxic air cannot help but produce toxic poems. Air is at the heart of *The Shadow of Sirius* as well, and I want to explore its appearance there, but first we need to think about the title of the volume, a title that—like many Merwin ti-

ties—has caused some consternation among readers. Bill Moyers is not the only one who has asked Merwin to “help me to understand that.” Gilbert Wesley Purdy expresses a general frustration that the title seems cut off from the book: “First of all, Sirius doesn’t make an express appearance at all, throughout the volume, unless it is in a single reference [‘the star is fading’] in the first poem, ‘The Nomad Flute’;” he says, noting that Sirius is “also known as ‘The Dog Star’ due to its prominence in the constellation *Canis Major*”:

The “dog days” of summer are the days in which the constellation appears in the night sky. The dog days being the hottest days of the year, Sirius has long been symbolic of the sultriest days of human passion. In “The Nomad Flute” . . . the star is, only now, during Merwin’s early 80s, “fading.” The symbol, the metaphor, that is to say, has been expanded. Sirius is passion itself, blazing in the sky of youth and palely glimmering in the octogenarian sky.¹¹

Elizabeth Lund proposes that the poetry in this volume “lingers with readers the way light from Sirius reaches the earth—long after leaving its source,” and she goes on to note that “the book’s second section recalls Merwin’s beloved dogs, a fitting choice in a collection named after the Dog Star.”¹²

To explicate the title, Jerry Harp turns to Merwin’s fascination with how “every word” has “a history that we don’t know,” and so “the *shadow* of Sirius . . . is composed of the stories, lore, and ideas that have become intertwined with it,” from the star’s prominent place in “the mythologies of many cultures” to current astronomical research that has revealed Sirius as two stars (Sirius A and Sirius B) locked in orbit with each other. “Sirius is shadowed by these rich associations,” Harp suggests, and thus forms “a vivid metaphor of the associations that may accompany a given thing—whether a word, a star, or a tree—even if the associations have receded into shadow.”¹³ Helen Vendler deals with the mystery of the title by moving first to astronomy and then to biography:

There is no poem . . . called “The Shadow of Sirius,” and the phrase does not appear anywhere in the book. Some readers may recall a 2005 poem called “To the Dog Stars,” beginning “But there is only one of you / they say,” which sheds light on the re-appearance of Sirius here. The curious reader can turn to Google, and discover that Sirius A, the brightest star in the sky, has a small, dim (but much hotter) companion called Sirius B, a “white dwarf,” which in the past was more massive and luminous than its brother, Sirius A, but which has now exhausted its nuclear fuel.

Even the brightest illumination, for Merwin, arrives, like Sirius A, accompanied by a perpetual shadow, perhaps because Merwin’s own life was shadowed by his knowledge of the harrowing death of his elder brother, Hanson (born a year before Merwin), who lived only a day. And throughout his work, Merwin alludes to the many shadows of inexplicability cast over his youth by the unwillingness of his parents, even under questioning, to explain how things came to be in family relations, and whither they were tending.¹⁴

All of these suggestions are evocative, even compelling, but there is another Sirius that took to the air just a few years before Merwin’s volume appeared. In 2002, with great fanfare, Sirius Satellite Radio began filling the air with voices and songs twenty-four hours a day through over 130 streams—endless voices discussing politics, sports, sex, religion, cars, voices singing from the past (a Sinatra channel, a 60s channel, a 70s channel) and the present. Even Merwin’s voice, in an interview with Terry Gross on (fittingly) *Fresh Air*, was broadcast on Sirius. Beamed down from an invisible satellite, these silent voices filled the airwaves and became audible to anyone willing to pay the subscription fee and buy a receiver that would decode the signals and turn the silence to sound. “Sirius” is also the name of a constellation of communications satellites launched in the late 1990s and early 2000s that has been beaming pay television to eastern Europe and Africa. In the years preceding *The Shadow of Sirius*, then, humans around the world were living more and more in the shadow of Sirius, surrounded by a ceaseless stream of

invisible voices in the air, radiating from a distant object, begging to be heard for a fee. They were another part of the irritating quotidian, simply part of what we learned to take in, listen to, on “what is called air.” Along with the countless other voices of the media-saturated world, they cast poetry itself into a vast cacophonous shadow.

Halfway through *The Shadow of Sirius*, in the section largely devoted to his dogs, Merwin includes an odd and surprising poem called “A Ring,” in which he gives us an image of the earth ringed with “a fine veil // of whispered voices groping the frayed waves” (*Sirius* 50). That ring around the earth is perhaps the atmosphere itself, that fragile and small pocket of air that lets us live, breathe, and sing, the same air that carries the endless waves of voiced sound:

At this moment
 this earth which for all we know

is the only place in the vault of darkness
 with life on it is wound in a fine veil

of whispered voices groping the frayed waves
 of absence they keep flaring up

* * *

without being able to tell whether
 they are addressing the past or the future

or knowing where they are heard these words
 of the living talking to the dead

This ring of voices now beamed from orbiting satellites (and carried over the Web)—an endless babble of voices, a “static of knowledge,” unsure about what or whom they are addressing—is at once an image of the commercial, diminished, time-killing state of what passes for voice in today’s voice-drenched environment *and* an image of the voices of poets

and singers alive and dead, who continue transmitting their airs amidst the increasingly crowded noise that permeates the “frayed waves” of air in that ring of atmosphere around the earth. These voices that emanate from what might be “the only place in the vault of darkness / with life on it” are always “addressing the past or the future,” are always the voices of “the living talking to the dead,” never sure where or if or by whom they are being heard. Like the air in airports, the Sirius-infested air of the past couple of decades—artificial stars beaming voices profitable to the corporations that pay them—reminds us of the deteriorating quality of the air we not only breathe but listen to.

The airs that Merwin still sings, like the airs of poets before him, are barely audible among the commercial din but nonetheless continue to work in their quiet ways to make the air better for breathing. While the increasing noise pollution of the world fills the airwaves, Merwin, with his insistent meditative voice (speaking, as Vendler says, to the air), writes in its shadow, the shadow of Sirius and all the other babble of the present (just as there are two stars—Sirius A and Sirius B—one bright and large, the other in its shadow, smaller and hotter, so are there the political and religious and commercial voices that scream at us, clamor for our attention, and then the poets’ voices that seem always quieter but ultimately more intense, insistent). *The Shadow of Sirius* will be read by far fewer than will hear Howard Stern on Sirius/XM, but it will last longer, will speak into the future—“if there is a future” to speak into, as Merwin’s final *Shadow of Sirius* poem puts it (*Sirius* 113). “A Ring” appears in *Shadow* immediately before Merwin’s remarkable translation of Hadrian’s brief poem called “Little Soul,” a single voice “all pale and all alone” that is heard “flaring up” again, more than two thousand years after Hadrian supposedly spoke it on his death bed, this time vocalized in English in 2006 (after it had been vocalized in English by countless other poets, from Henry Vaughan to Pope to Byron to Pound to Stevie Smith) as the living talk to and through the dead, the dead to and through the living.¹⁵ Sirius radios, for all their growing ubiquity, are not the only receivers making audible the invisible voices in the air.

Merwin's poetry and translations are continually channeling voices, too, and those voices bring news—not the news that the Sirius voices obsess over every day but rather William Carlos Williams' news, that “news / of something / that concerns you / and concerns many men,” the news “men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found” in “despised poems.”¹⁶

So it becomes clear why *The Shadow of Sirius* begins with “The Nomad Flute,” a poem evoking the Han Dynasty poet Cai Wenji, who was kidnapped by nomads and memorialized in Liu Shang's eighth century *Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute*.¹⁷ The air organizes this opening poem as Merwin tunes in to that ancient song, hearing its “long lifted note” as it travels the air to him in his present:

You that sang to me once sing to me now
 let me hear your long lifted note
 survive with me
 the star is fading
 I can think farther than that but I forget
 do you hear me

do you still hear me
 does the air remember you
 o breath of morning (*Sirius* 5)

Like the light from a distant star, Cai Wenji's song takes its time reaching us and (like Hadrian's “Little Soul”) is mediated through others, but, if we are attentive, we can still hear her voice, remembered by the air. All poems are nomad flutes, creating sonic patterns in the air—wandering airs that might reach ears in distant places at distant times. When the speaker of Merwin's poem asks “does the air remember you,” he is asking both about the poem (Cai Wenji's air) *and* about the air the poem travels through. Does a dead poet's work “remember” the poet, bring him or her back to the living? And do the living, those of us breathing the air in the present, “remember” the poet when we hear his or her

poem? Merwin believes that all poetry is, after all, finally vocal: “poetry *won’t* exist unless it’s heard. If you don’t hear it, there’s no poetry there.”¹⁸ Poetry is song, and it is made of breath; it is quite literally the waving air, unseen but sustaining—“let me hear your long lifted note / survive with me.” As long as the air is fit to breathe, poets will be in the air, on the air, living in the shadow of the commercial noise of airplanes and airports, of Sirius XM and all the broadcast voices that ultimately fail to drown out the “long lifted notes” of poetry that the air always holds and remembers for those attentive enough to receive them.

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Notes

1. W. S. Merwin, “Neither Here nor There,” *New Yorker* 88 (October 15, 2012), 34.
2. Mark Halliday and Michael Theune, “*The Shadow of Sirius*: A Critical Conversation,” in *Until Everything Is Continuous Again: American Poets on the Recent Work of W. S. Merwin*, ed. Jonathan Weinert and Kevin Prufer (Seattle: WordFarm, 2012), 150.
3. W. S. Merwin, “Flight Home,” in *Regions of Memory: Uncollected Prose, 1949–82*, ed. Ed Folsom and Cary Nelson (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1987), 183; hereafter cited parenthetically as *RM*.
4. Wallace’s 2005 speech is widely available on the Internet, including at [More Intelligent Life.com](http://MoreIntelligentLife.com).
5. W. S. Merwin, *The Shadow of Sirius* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2009), 7; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Sirius*.
6. “Air” is one of Merwin’s recurring tropes: his autobiographical long poem, “Another Place,” begins “When years without number / like days of another summer / had turned into air there” and continues for another sixty-one stanzas with endless rhymes on air (bare, stair, disrepair, square, prayer, pair, somewhere) and then culminates with the detritus of the house of his youth “all heaped up together / naked to the public air”—into which the totality of his childhood vanished (344–353). Merwin often uses “air” as simply, well, atmosphere: it is from “out of the age of the air” that the rain falls (“To the Rain,” 209), and it is what the snow falls through—“the

dust falling in the air” (“Snow,” 282)—and what in winter becomes “the white air” (“To the Grass of Autumn,” 526); it is what carries the songs of birds to our ears—“I hear the same / linnet notes in the morning air” (“Testimony,” 420); it is one of the fleeting things of life—“the brief air the vanishing green”—that comprise “only the age that is left / to be together” (“Before Us,” 277); it is one of “the elements”—“the air for touch”—that the morning makes him remember (“Coming to the Morning,” 279); it is the invisible constant in life that makes “the going / of the age” seem so gradual, because “the air we could not hold had come to be there all the time / for us and would never be gone” (“The Speed of Light,” 382–83); and it is the place where a shed snakeskin—“a shade out in the air”—becomes a sign of “the silent rings in which a life had journeyed” (“Through a Glass,” 512). Air is, for Merwin, like the present, the thing that sustains life but is also invisible to language: if the past, for Merwin, is absence that can only be retrieved by words, the present is absence that can only be accessed in language when it becomes past. The poet’s airs, then, have a complex and intimate connection to the air we breathe. All references are to W. S. Merwin, *Migration: New & Selected Poems* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2005); hereafter cited parenthetically as *MG*.

7. Looming images of smog appear early in Merwin’s work, as in the 1969 story “The Flyover,” recording a walk through the city on a “flyover,” an elevated road to facilitate commuting; the protagonist, ironically, leaves his flat “to go out again where at least there was some air,” only to find he is surrounded by “the blue cloud of car exhaust that filled the avenues,” so he seeks refuge on the traffic-congested flyover, which he assumes will take him above that poisoned air, but he finds that “the pressures over the city are full of surprises and the exhaust on the flyover was worse from the start” and that up there was a “permanent exhaust-cloud.” See “The Flyover” (*RM* 73). Merwin’s story is a kind of precursor of the “airborne toxic event” in Don DeLillo’s 1985 novel, *White Noise*, one of the best bizarre evocations of an ecological disaster.
8. Robert Scholes, “Reading Merwin Semiotically,” in *W. S. Merwin: Essays on the Poetry*, ed. Cary Nelson and Ed Folsom (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1987), 72.

9. *Bill Moyers' Journal* (PBS, June 26, 2009). [Transcript and recorded interview available online.](#)
10. Helen Vendler, "Defender of the Earth," *New York Review of Books* (March 26, 2009).
11. Gilbert Wesley Purdy, "The Silence That I Hear Now," *www.electia.org*, (October/November 2008), accessed 15 February 2010.
12. Elizabeth Lund, "The Shadow of Sirius," *Christian Science Monitor* (May 7, 2009).
13. Jerry Harp, "All of Memory Waking: Word and Experience in W. S. Merwin's *The Shadow of Sirius*," in Weinert and Prufer, 173, 175–176.
14. Vendler, "Defender."
15. "Little Soul" appears in *Shadow of Sirius*, 51, and was originally published in *Poetry* (April 2006).
16. William Carlos Williams, "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, Volume 2: 1939–1962, ed. Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1991), 318.
17. See Jerry Harp's excellent reading of the poem in "All of Memory Waking," in Weinert and Prufer, 176–178; and see Mark Irwin's analysis of "The Nomad Flute" in his "Origin, Presence, and Time in the Works of W. S. Merwin," in Weinert and Prufer, 35–36.
18. Jeanie Thompson and Jonathan Weinert, "Raw Shore of Paradise: A Conversation with W. S. Merwin," in Weinert and Prufer, 118.