

## ***LONG WALKS IN THE AFTERNOON, 1982***

The Lamont Selection for 1982 given by the Academy of American Poets

With a quiet eloquence, the poems in *Long Walks in the Afternoon* follow “the deep imagination’s long tap into the dark”—inward toward the still and radiant center of the self. But Margaret Gibson’s poetry is not self-serving or isolationist. She writes out of the firm conviction that our personal griefs hold energies that can move us to reach beyond ourselves and join with others in common struggle.

Beginning with poems that struggle against illusion, egotism, and emptiness, the collection progresses to poems that challenge violence—social violence against women, political violence in east Asia and Chile and in “Radiation,” the violence that still reverberates from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In a final section, the desire to know and claim the self is transformed in a sequence of elegies into “the passion to lose myself in work” and in love and in the world—to be “no one.” The meditative mood of Gibson’s poems becomes a movement against isolation, a wrestle with our roots and common bonds, and a way of challenging the self to be more openly aligned with creative forces, and to speak out against dishonesty, injustice, chaos, and war.

“Lyricism, her love of precise language and an overall harmony of sound . . . [but to say what characterizes Gibson’s poems} we must turn to the wisdom they essay, the truth derived from the poet’s intellectual and imaginative interaction with the natural world, the nature of life.” -- Peter Stitt