



A Coast of Trees

A.R. Ammons

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This collection of shorter poems won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1981.

Of this volume, the noted critic Harold Bloom has written, "*A Coast of Trees* represents A. R. Ammons at his strongest and most eloquent in the lyric mode. The book is an achievement fully comparable to his *Uplands* and *Briefings*. Among the poems likely to assume a permanent place in the Ammonsian (and American) canon are the majestic title lyric and 'Swells,' 'Easter Morning,' 'Keepsake,' 'Givings,' and 'Persistences.' Again Ammons has confirmed his vital continuities with the central Whitmanian tradition of our poetry, and his crucial place in that panoply."

A Coast of Trees Details

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Jay says

So I read this whole book. Ammons' 'naive' style wore me down after a while. Maybe I'm in a middle ground -- reading the poems in bulk so they don't seem as fresh; not having read close enough to see the breakthroughs each represent.

Here's Stephen Burt's note on Ammons's style.

"The German poet, playwright, and critic Friedrich Schiller thought there were two kinds of poets: 'sentimental' and 'naive' (and neither term, for Schiller, was an insult). Sentimental poets, he said, are self-conscious and retrospective; they 'look for lost nature' in the people and things they write about. Their characteristic works, Schiller believed, sound carefully wrought, conclusive, even if written at high speed. Naive poets, on the other hand, seem to 'be nature'—poetry seems to come out of them as wind from the sky, or leaves from the trees, as if it were their native speech. Naive poets often sound as if they never revise, even when we know they've worked hard on many drafts; their poetry seems to flow and does not want to end.... A.R. Ammons (1926-2001) was in Schiller's sense the most 'naive' of America's very good poets. His poems, written over nearly 50 years, include almost every kind of speech-act a person can say, from shrugs to prophecies, and they sound spontaneous even when it's clear they reflect decades of thought."

Caroline says

I love Ammons but this book was more of a miss for me.
