



# Poetry and the Fate of the Senses

*Susan Stewart*

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## **Poetry and the Fate of the Senses** Susan Stewart

What is the role of the senses in the creation and reception of poetry? How does poetry carry on the long tradition of making experience and suffering understood by others? With *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, Susan Stewart traces the path of the aesthetic in search of an explanation for the role of poetry in our culture. The task of poetry, she tells us, is to counter the loneliness of the mind, or to help it glean, out of the darkness of solitude, the outline of others. Poetry, she contends, makes tangible, visible, and audible the contours of our shared humanity. It sustains and transforms the threshold between individual and social existence.

Herself an acclaimed poet, Stewart not only brings the intelligence of a critic to the question of poetry, but the insight of a practitioner as well. Her new study draws on reading from the ancient Greeks to the postmoderns to explain how poetry creates meanings between persons. *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* includes close discussions of poems by Stevens, Hopkins, Keats, Hardy, Bishop, and Traherne, of the sense of vertigo in Baroque and Romantic works, and of the rich tradition of nocturnes in visual, musical, and verbal art. Ultimately, Stewart explores the pivotal role of poetry in contemporary culture. She argues that poetry can counter the denigration of the senses and can expand our imagination of the range of human expression.

*Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* won the 2004 Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism in Memory of Newton Arvin, administered for the Truman Capote Estate by the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. It also won the Phi Beta Kappa Society's 2002 Christian Gauss Award for Literary Criticism.

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