

From the collection, STEADY

LADY BIRD

In my day, women had their sphere,
and men had theirs. I became an observer,
concealing myself behind public duties.
Some people mocked me for my devotion
to wildflowers. Let her occupy herself,
they said, with a cause of little importance,
leaving us free for matters of consequence.

There is a damaged place in each of us.
With me, Lyndon never had to be ashamed
of the gawky farm boy yoked to poverty
as a result of his father's foolish dreams.

I come from a long line of women
who learned to look the other way.
They lived with what they couldn't change.
It didn't mean they liked it. I knew
he'd never risk his career to leave me.
He was a disappointing husband,
but I would never leave him.

There's a reason I love wildflowers.
They're not glamorous or flashy.
They have a modest prettiness
that's worth a second look.
The seeds may lie dormant for years,
settled or buried, blown by the wind,
but one day they will take hold and bloom.
Then they will be everywhere.

LATE SUMMER, BLOCK ISLAND

The air gray, still, and parched.
The rain, when it comes, is a sprinkle
dripping silently on the ground.
The mourning dove's call is backdrop

to the sea's suck and ripple
that speaks of longing
and sadness, buried hopes
like lost wrecks off rocky shores.

From the marshes comes the trilling
of red-winged blackbirds, in the thicket
the cardinal's chirp, the meadow lark's whistle,
chatter of a hawk chased by crows.

In the afternoon, sunlight behind
banked clouds glints off a sea
as pale as isinglass, reflecting back
my memories as I write,

until the day when words will be
all that are left of me,
words and images
and other people's memories.

Bury my body deep in the earth,
but may my soul roam free
in the shadows under the trees,
in the dancing hearts of flowers,

the setting sun and the rising moon,
the barred clouds and winds that move them,
the waters where I love to swim,
beloved haunts of my essential solitude.

Links to reviews of *Steady*

Andrew Taylor-Troutman reviews *Steady* in *Ebibliotekos*, September 2023.

<https://www.ebibliotekos.com/2023/09/anne-whitehouse-poetry-book-steady.html>

Tiffany M. Storrs reviews *Steady* in *Roi Fainéant*, November 2023.

<https://roifaineantarchive.wixsite.com/rf-arc-hive/post/review-of-anne-whitehouse-s-steady-by-tiffany-m-storrs>

Eric Jennings reviews *Steady* in *Exist Otherwise*, November 2023.

<https://existotherwise.cc/review-steady-by-anne-whitehouse/>

Nancy Owen Nelson reviews *Steady* in *Alabama Writers Forum*, January 2024.

<https://writersforum.org/steady/>

S.E. Page reviews *Steady* in *The Luniferous Gazette*, August 2025.

<https://theluniferousgazette.substack.com/p/what-emily-knew-about-pearls>