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Book review

Fear of Dreaming: The Selected Poems Of Jim Carroll

Penguin Books, \$15.99 paper

by
RICHARD SUTHERLAND

Forget that Jim Carroll ever sang a note, forget that he penned *The Basketball Diaries*, the finest account of juvenile junkiedom ever, take him solely on his merits as a poet and you're still left with the fine body of work from which *Fear Of Dreaming* is selected. Even if you already have *Living At The Movies* and *The Book Of Nods*, there's a lot of more recent writing here that's as least as strong as the early work.

What *Fear Of Dreaming* shows above all is that Carroll is more versatile than his reputation might suggest. Sure, there's the expected junk imagery, numerous references to his Catholic boyhood and an overall New York state of mind in many pieces, but there's much more besides. Carroll's range has broadened to take in other less urban contexts and subjects. His style has also evolved from the hallucinatory, slightly wise-ass tone of *Living At The Movies* to a more meditative and thoughtful approach, best seen in those poems on Bill Clinton and MTV.

What hasn't changed is that Carroll is almost always able to draw his readers deep into the hermetic and exotic worlds he creates.