

American Sublime

***American Sublime* Named One of 25 Notable Books of 2005 by the American Library Association**

Sparkling with humanity and unexpected grace, Alexander's poems reflect on art, dreams, history, and the African American experience.

— www.ala.org

***American Sublime*: One of Three Finalists for 2006 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry**

2006 Pulitzer Prize Winners for Poetry: For a distinguished volume of original verse by an American author, Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000). Awarded to "Late Wife" by Claudia Emerson (Louisiana State University Press). Also nominated as finalists in this category were: "American Sublime" by Elizabeth Alexander (Graywolf Press), and "Elegy on Toy Piano" by Dean Young (University of Pittsburgh Press).

— www.pulitzer.org/year/2006/poetry

Barbecues, midwives, "Soyinka and Senghor," "Etheridge Knight, from prison," grand-parents, students, "not Congo but Zaire," mom, "aggressive magic," jail, "my book," "children, fathers, brothers" collection, Alexander traces shifting global histories, family alliances, ways of working and being trapped, and means of escape in four broad parts. The first, "American Blue," takes in the U.S.'s post-'60s history alongside Alexander's child-, student-and adult-hood (with stops at Ellington/Strayhorn's '40s, Monk's '50s and a dream of Krishna along the way). A selection from a larger series titled "Ars Poetica" covers the ways poetry confronts history: "'Poetry,' I shouted, 'Poetry,'/ I screamed, 'Poetry,/ changes none of that/ by what it says/ or how it says, none./ But a poem is a living thing/ ... and as life/ it is all that can stand/ up to violence.'" "Amistad," the third section, channels the black Atlantic convincingly, while the last section, "American Sublime," consists of just two short lyrics; the latter ends "light that carries/ possibility, illuminates,// but can promise nothing but itself." This collection makes similarly restrained promises and delivers lucidly. (Oct. 1)

— ***Publishers Weekly***