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The Cowherd's Son: Poems (Kundiman Prize)



Synopsis

Poetry. LGBTQIA Studies. Winner of the Kundiman Poetry Prize. Rajiv Mohabir uses his queer and mixed- caste identities as grace notes to charm alienation into silence. Mohabir's inheritance of myths, folk tales, and multilingual translations make a palimpsest of histories that bleed into one another. A descendant of indentureship survivors, the poet- narrator creates an allegorical chronicle of dislocations and relocations, linking India, Guyana, Trinidad, New York, Orlando, Toronto, and Honolulu, combining the amplitude of mythology with direct witness and sensual reckoning, all the while seeking joy in testimony. Praise for Rajiv Mohabir's previous book: "In his excellent debut, Mohabir exposes desire and inner turmoil through the measured incantations of a queer, Indian-American voice that refuses the burdens of a homophobic and racist world. He eloquently describes how the brown body survives, clinging vigilantly to longing, lust, and love... Mohabir illuminates his own wounds, and as the reader watches him dresses and stitches those wounds, 'A queer flutter knocks about your ribs.'"--Publishers Weekly

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Languid fire or tumultuous storm, mythic cow herder or drunken Queens teenager -- these poems by Rajiv Mohabir will not let up and won't let you go. Be fierce, dear reader, and join him in celebrating the queer, colored diaspora that begins in the gut and continues in the heart. Mohabir is one of the most urgent poets to break into the scene. Hands down." -- Kimiko Hahn --Advance

Praise" In this Kundiman Prize winning follow-up to 2016's *The Taxidermist's Cut*, Mohabir continues to demonstrate an uncanny ability to compose exacting, tactile poems that musically leap off the page. These poems modulate between tales of Hindu deities, recollections of history and folklore: these are complicated family dynamics, queer intimacy ('My love tasted of sea/ and relics'), acts of resistance, and accounts of shifting geographies and displacement. Mohabir's candid work is steeped in the realities of being a mixed-caste, queer Indian-American; his speaker sings these lived experiences into verse--moving between pleasure, sensuality, hunger, alienation, and injury: 'It shocks me to dream my body/ as a cut pomegranate.' Mohabir even uses the quarter rest symbol from sheet music in the breaks between sections to make explicit the collection's musical nature and the poetic silences the work necessitates. Each of the book's seven sections approaches identity from a different angle, including that of the ancestral grief passed down through the Indian indenture system and chronicles of conquest and empire channeled through the mythical El Dorado. Mohabir offers much to appreciate, and even among the strife he records, there is a yearning for and pursuit of joy: 'In this building of shattered whispers// I say your words at night to taste you.'" --Publishers Weekly Starred Review

Rajiv Mohabir's *The Taxidermist's Cut* was Winner of the AWP Intro Journal Award and the 2014 Intro Prize in Poetry from Four Way Books. Recipient of a PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant, he has also received fellowships from the Voices of Our Nation's Artist foundation, Kundiman, and the American Institute of Indian Studies language program. He received his MFA in Poetry and Translation from at Queens College, City University of New York, and his PhD in English from the University of Hawai'i, where he teaches poetry and composition.

This collection speaks to me. It's pulsing with emotion, and somehow dark, bright, quiet, and pulsing all at the same time. It is struggle and love, discord and acceptance. Mohabir's work is lyrical, and I can hear the melody in my head as I read each poem. He uses the page deftly as well, changing between different forms to serve the stories he tells. The stories span continents and centuries, myths, legends, and the experience of growing up and into who Mohabir is now. Brilliant.

A beautiful book of poetry. Please read this book!

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