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Commons (New California Poetry)

COMMONS

MYUNG MI KIM



Synopsis

Myung Mi Kim's *Commons* weighs on the most sensitive of scales the minute grains of daily life in both peace and war, registering as very few works of literature have done our common burden of being subject to history. Abstracting colonization, war, immigration, disease, and first-language loss until only sparse phrases remain, Kim takes on the anguish and displacement of those whose lives are embedded in history. Kim's blank spaces are loaded silences: openings through which readers enter the text and find their way. These silences reveal gaps in memory and articulate experiences that will not translate into language at all. Her words retrieve the past in much the same way the human mind does: an image sparks another image, a scent, the sound of bombs, or conversation. These silences and pauses give the poems their structure. *Commons*'s fragmented lyric pushes the reader to question the construction of the poem. Identity surfaces, sinks back, then rises again. On this shifting ground, Kim creates meaning through juxtaposed fragments. Her verse, with its stops and starts, its austere yet rich images, offers splinters of testimony and objection. It negotiates a constantly changing world, scavenging through scraps of experience, spaces around words, and remnants of emotion for a language that enfolds the enormity of what we cannot express.

Book Information

File Size: 156 KB

Print Length: 122 pages

Publisher: University of California Press; 1 edition (March 4, 2002)

Publication Date: March 4, 2002

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B007X5INR2

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #775,046 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #12

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > American > Asian American

#109 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > United States > Asian

American #1496 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Inspirational &

Customer Reviews

I hardly know what to say about the book because I can't stop reading it--every time I finish I just right over again. The individual's voice rises to the surface of Kim's ocean of language, then sinks back into the musical rapture. The other reviewer likened this to a painting--it is like a painting of sound to me, a symphony of voice, and music, the background drones of culture, nation, and war, but always the individual spirit sounds out of it in musical intensity. What a brilliant, amazing book--not really a book, really an EXPERIENCE. Not just "phenomenal" but actually a "phenomenon."

This book is one of greatest books of poetry I've ever read. It's as much a painting of words as it is a written work. Kim uses negative space with such skill even silence screams.

It's an ok book if you aren't a poet and don't mind everything being so depressing and repetitive

Wonderfully complex-ed and deeply textured. Ms. Kim is a Beast with a pen.

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