



Heaven

Rowan Ricardo Phillips

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Long-listed for the National Book Award in poetry

A spectacularly vibrant and continually surprising collection from one of the poetry world's rising young stars

"Who the hell's heaven is this?" Rowan Ricardo Phillips offers many answers, and none at all, in *Heaven*, the piercing and revelatory encore to his award-winning debut, *The Ground*. Swerving elegantly from humor to heartbreak, from Colorado to Florida, from Dante's *Paradise* to Homer's *Iliad*, from knowledge to ignorance to awe, Phillips turns his gaze upward and outward, probing and upending notions of the beyond.

"Feeling, real feeling / with all its faulty / Architecture, is / Beyond a god's touch"--but it does not elude Phillips. Meditating on feverish boyhood, on two paintings by Chuck Close, on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, on a dead rooster by the side of the road in Ohio, on an elk grazing outside his window, his language remains eternally intoxicating, full of play, pathos, and surprise.

"The end," he writes, "like / All I've ever told you, is uncertain." Or, elsewhere: "The only way then to know a truth / Is to squint in its direction and poke." Phillips--who received a 2013 Whiting Writers' Award as well as the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award--may not be certain, but as he squints and pokes in the direction of truth, his power of perception and elegance of expression create a place where beauty and truth come together and drift apart like a planet orbiting its star. The result is a book whose lush and wounding beauty will leave its mark on readers long after they've turned the last page.

Heaven Details

Date : Published June 16th 2015 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux

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Author : Rowan Ricardo Phillips

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From Reader Review Heaven for online ebook

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Read this because it was longlisted for the National Book Award for poetry in 2015.

Themed volumes of poetry can either be a hit or miss, and unfortunately I did not really enjoy heaven repeated throughout these poems. I think Phillips shines when he writes about real people in real places, the people he knows, rather than the gods of mythology, classical literature, and scriptures. Most of these poems are aiming higher than reality and they feel forced to me.

My favorites were:

The Beatitudes of Malibu

Pax Americana

"It looks like life, or its oasis."

Daniel Klawitter says

Apollo and Marsyas was my favorite poem in this short collection. Rowan has an engaging cadence and use of diction in his lines and several shining verses stand out in this volume and grab the eye and ear. It's just that he is a bit hard to follow at times in some of his lines...he uses "it" in a couple places and due to the preceding lines of the poem, it's hard to tell what "it" he is actually referring to. Poems don't have to make any logical sense to be arresting or enjoyable, but when confusion is due to grammar and line placement, it breaks the conscious flow of the poem for me and turns the poem into a kind of halting problem that detracts from its trajectory.

Kristin says

Loved everything about this collection of poems.

Jenna Nov says

Some really beautiful work with mesmerizing imagery. As someone who is a lover of classical lyrical poetry, this selection really suited my palette. Would high-key recommend.

James Murphy says

These are poems about Heaven. They're either directly about Heaven as a physical and spiritual location or

they describe a human situation or natural spot we'd think of in that way. They're sometimes about inhabitants of Heaven, though not always Christian as in the poem in which Apollo descends to earth. Others invoke Shakespeare and Dante. In some only the title lets the reader know where he is, as "The Primum Mobile." In the final poem Heaven can even be the bed of lovers and the "inner thigh / Of empyrean buttermilk and gold..." which I thought was my favorite kind of Heaven. I thought these were fine poems.

Mike Hammer says

A decent collection, Heavenly themes, usually pleasant, sometimes beautiful and astounding, but overall just kinda pretty not absolutely memorable, there were some really nice poems but this is not a book I'd buy.

Kenyatta Garcia says

Wow. Every poem hits a different part of my soul. Just seeing ODB in a poem makes me happy then reading lines like "Who the hell's Heaven is this?" just make me crack up. A great follow-up to the Ground.

Kevin says

I recall seeing RRP read circa 2006 at Univ. of ND's Black Poetics conference and thinking that as the new kid he stood out. This is a solid collection, particularly the first half. At times there are some lazy bardic turns ("Nature: This is what it sounds like when I'm thinking" . The pastoral moments are strong, as are the understated autobiographical poems like "Boys". Lots of ideas and well-wrought lines-interested to see what's down the road. Thinking perhaps of the meteoric improvement of a guy like Terrance Hayes, just exponential improvement across the first 3-4 collections. (Prolly a 3.5, but the bump for poets)

Roxane says

A clearly talented poet. These just weren't my cup of tea. Too fancy. Cold. I didn't feel anything. There are a couple excellent poems: Boys and Beatitudes of Malibu stood out for me as well as the last poem which was slick.

D.A. says

Phillips' poems are like diamonds with sharp edges, they'll cut you before you know it and damn, they brilliantly shine. Reaching back to the Greek underworld and Dante's paradise, these poems embroden the unknowable afterlife and its earthly manifestations, its metaphors, its uncertainties. This is a book of magnitude, summoning all the force of a star in its eternal journey into deep space. "Heaven" is heaven indeed.

NicAlba says

It was okay. Nothing really grabbed me except for "Sin Verguenza"--that poem was good. I liked that one alot, but the rest of the poems didn't speak or call out to me or invoked in me much emotion.
