



# The Crown Ain't Worth Much

*Hanif Abdurraqib*

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## **The Crown Ain't Worth Much** Hanif Abdurraqib

*The Crown Ain't Worth Much*, Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib's first full-length collection, is a sharp and vulnerable portrayal of city life in the United States. A regular columnist for MTV.com, Willis-Abdurraqib brings his interest in pop culture to these poems, analyzing race, gender, family, and the love that finally holds us together even as it threatens to break us. Terrance Hayes writes that Willis-Abdurraqib "bridges the bravado and bling of praise with the blood and tears of elegy." The poems in this collection are challenging and accessible at once, as they seek to render real human voices in moments of tragedy and celebration.

## **The Crown Ain't Worth Much Details**

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Author : Hanif Abdurraqib

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# From Reader Review *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* for online ebook

## Francis Cooke says

Hanif Abdurraqib is so, so great - it's easy (for me, anyway) to get caught up in the music references that the collection is steeped in at first (Nina Simone, Whitney Houston, ATCQ, Elliot Smith, Drake, Pete Wentz, Jay-Z, the gloriousness of opening the contents page and finding poems titled 'Dudes, We Did Not Go Through the Hassle of Getting These Fake IDs for this Jukebox to Not Have Any Springsteen' and 'Ode to Kanye West in Two Parts, Ending in a Chain of Mothers Rising from the River'), and the love that he has for all of this music and musicians is real and present, but - especially in the virtuosic final section of this collection, and in common with the structure of 'They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us' - the way in which he uses these common touch points to draw you into deeply personal poems of nostalgia, pain, grief, fear, love and anger is incredible. Along with 'They Can't Kill Us...', one of the best books I've read this year.

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## Amy says

I am drawn to the utterly honest voice in these poems, and the pop culture references, including music, and the prominent deaths of Mike Brown, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland. I would love to hear this poet read his work.

Favorite poems are:

-1995. After the Streetlights Drink Whatever Darkness Is Left (no basketballs for Xmas in order to save the Black boys from danger on the court)

-All of the Black Boys Finally Stopped Packing Switchblades (the reality of the frequency of Black boys being shot because anything in their possession is viewed as a gun/weapon by cops)

-College Avenue, Halloween, 2002 (That last line=WHOA--"Sorry. We thought you were someone else." It works so, so well in terms of 1. the Halloween costume concept, not being recognized in your costume--and this, too, is racially charged, in that the white partygoers couldn't see a Black man as Buddy Holly; he's just a Black guy in an old suit, and 2. with the BS cops use to explain away the constant stopping of All Black Men Because No One Can Tell Them Apart)

-The Ghost of the Author's Mother Has a Conversation With His Fiancee About Highways (Voice from the grave concept, sharing the hard, heartbreaking life of a Black child in the old south)

-The Ghost of the Author's Mother Teaches His Wife How to Cook Fried Chicken (What happens to chicken skin as it's cooked is likened to the violence against Black bodies. Love the final line: "'Til another woman loved him enough to rip every stove out of the wall")

-On Sainthood (Black funeral, for the whole of the atrocities committed against this group)

-The Crown Ain't Worth Much (elegy, ode, praise, sorrow. "I say Mike and a cardinal lands on my shoulder. I say Trayvon and a rainbow stretches over a city where it doesn't rain. I say Sandra and a new tree grows in

my father's front yard."

-The "Dispatches From the Black Barbershop, Tony's Chair" series (What a wonderful way to show the passage of time in a neighborhood, in a country. Tony delivers in his own voice news about the changes in the neighborhood while giving direction to a customer to tilt his head this way and that. Spans the years 1996, 2003, 2011, and 2015.)

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### **Christine says**

If you want to blow the dust off of your brain, or your heart, pick up this breathtaking book of poetry.

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### **Lucas Miller says**

Abdurraqib was another guest on Bookfight. He, Tom, and Mike read a collection of Lester Bangs music writing. It was the same one that I had read at least a decade ago. I was very excited. Who knew that MTV would re-enter my adult life through a crop of extremely talented young writers focusing on current events, politics, and only occasionally music. In the wake of the ep, I scoured the internet (went to his website) and read as much of Abdurraqib's essays as I could. This led to a knee jerk purchase of his first poetry collection. It ripened on my shelf for a few months, and got pulled down to be an occasional read. It didn't work out that way.

The last book of poetry I read was Citizen. This undoubtedly affected my reading of The Crown Ain't Worth Much. I fear being a poseur, a hack, of being a tourist. At first, I feared this collection wasn't written "for" me, but that is not the best way to approach poetry. Not that I've got it all figured out.

A few years ago, I read a "manifesto" by David Shields, and the thing that has really stuck in my mind, was that poetry is a type of nonfiction, and people tend to approach it the same way they do fiction, and this is why it is confusing.

I don't think that all of these poems are autobiographical or true to life for Mr. Abdurraqib, but they feel true, and that kept me reading, feeling, turning the pages. Recommended.

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### **J & J says**

1.5

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### **jenni says**

hanif just embodies excellence - as a writer, as a poet, as a human being, as a handler of his personal twitter account. this is poetry with street views, with pop punk boyhood and neighborhood violence, with riffs on blackness, memory, and motif.

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**Jane says**

*I wrote my heart in a poem. it took up the whole bedroom. it doesn't pay rent. it stays up watching cities burn to the ground.*

I am speechless — there are no words to describe the beautiful, devastating emotion in Abdurraqib's poems.

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**Brian Patrick says**

Here for every pop punk reference. But also we have to keep poetry in our souls otherwise we might die

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**Ann Marie says**

Every single poem of this collection punches with some sort of power: recognition, nostalgia, grief, empathy, anger. I loved every piece in this collection.

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**Nafiza says**

Just about destroyed me.

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**Ebony Rose says**

This is getting 3 stars not because I enjoyed this collection (I didn't). It gets 3 stars because it's objectively good writing tackling difficult but important subject matter.

But for me, this poetry felt really inaccessible and really hard to understand. Maybe it flew over my head but it was so jam packed full of metaphors and twisty wording and concepts that it felt tedious to get through a relatively slim collection. Perhaps I am just not smart enough for this one. And that's ok. Everything ain't for everybody.

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**Merritt K. says**

Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib is such a versatile and skilled poet -- he covers a range of tones, topics, and forms here that's truly incredible. I usually speed through poetry collections but this book took me months to read because I had to put it down so frequently to give the pieces space to breathe. The best collection of poems I've read in a long time.

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### **Dana Sweeney says**

Reads like a eulogy, like music, like a condemnation, like damnation, like a damned nation. This is a stunning collection of trauma transcribed into art, of pain that can be transformed but never erased. It is poetry that sits heavy on the chest, a poetry of open wounds. Reader beware, but reader: read it.

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### **Caitlin Conlon says**

4.5 stars. I'm feeling breathless after reading this. I don't think any review I give will do justice to these words. one of the most powerful collections, if not the most, I've ever read.

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### **Tam\_ the\_ med\_ bookie says**

Totally feeling the pain and all the bitterness as well as the good and bad memories of being born as a black in the 1990s.

The book has been written as poetry and prose in a short and concise pattern.

The main themes include bullying, discrimination and the many things that the author had to face while growing up.

I loved the way the book has been written in such a transparent manner. All kinds of emotions just keep pouring out page after page.

I just loved how effortlessly every tiniest feel has been expressed in this one.

One of those books where the author expresses exactly what he wants ?

And yes, him being a great music lover and expressing it in this one made me love the book more?

I love his expressions on his wedding and his wife?

He is just so real?

\*I love the cover so much!!!

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