



Commons (New California Poetry)

By Myung Mi Kim

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Commons (New California Poetry) By Myung Mi Kim

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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

While much poetry has been written out of the many diasporas that have U.S. outposts, few collections capture the cultural and linguistic displacement of immigration with as much poise and resonance as Kim's fourth book, her most outstanding. The poems here are attentive to, as she writes in the concluding note, what "the polyglot, porous, transcultural presence alters and what is around it." Composed of a series of aphoristic phrases or individual words scattered across the page, the three longish poems in Commons explore the relations between languages, using Korean and English as paradigms, and finding lyric play between the two. (Kim was born in Korea and immigrated to the U.S. when she was a child; the poems often include Hangul and Romanized Korean.) In the poem "Lamenta," one section juxtaposes testimony about life during military turmoil from Kwangju and Sarajevo, while another section has two people speaking to each other, or not, in two different languages: "Unendurable, said one/ cho-goph-dah, said one." "Works" begins with a child telling a story of a mother's soup then mutates to address the devastating consequences of colonialism: "It burn skin to bone/ Scar tissue on top of nerve ending/ Ugly power of military/ I scream too hot too hot/ Naked where clothes were a second before." Articulating our often hidden and difficult ties to each other without righteous indignation or fanfare, these poems are profoundly important and affecting. (Mar.) Forecast: Kim (Under Flag) has taught for years at San Francisco State University and has been part of the loose-knit Bay Area avant-garde community, which includes Lyn Hejinian, Kevin Killian and Nathaniel Mackey. Kim's books are often assigned on campus, and this, her title first with a larger house, should garner review attention within the academy as well as the poetry community.

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Review

"Articulating our often hidden and difficult ties to each other . . . these poems are profoundly important and affecting." -- *Publishers Weekly*, *starred review*

"The result is gnomic, austere and obliquely intense." -- *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 4/14

From the Inside Flap

"The poems in Commons are at once global and intensely personal and emotional. An immensely talented poet, Myung Mi Kim loves language - its internal rhymes, alliterations, and diverse rhythms. Caught off guard by the beauty and precision of Kim's language and the exquisite images she so deftly conjures, we are drawn unwittingly into a web of fragmentary memories that subvert what we think we know about the violent history that haunts her and never ceases to demand recognition."—Elaine Kim, author of *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, and co-editor of *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jane Garner:

Typically the book Commons (New California Poetry) will bring someone to the new experience of reading

some sort of book. The author style to clarify the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to learn, this book very acceptable to you. The book Commons (New California Poetry) is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can more easily to read the book.

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Elliott Preciado:

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Henry Slaughter:

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