

THE COWHERD'S SON

Poems by Rajiv Mohabir

Winner of the Kundiman Prize, honoring exceptional work by Asian American poets

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.

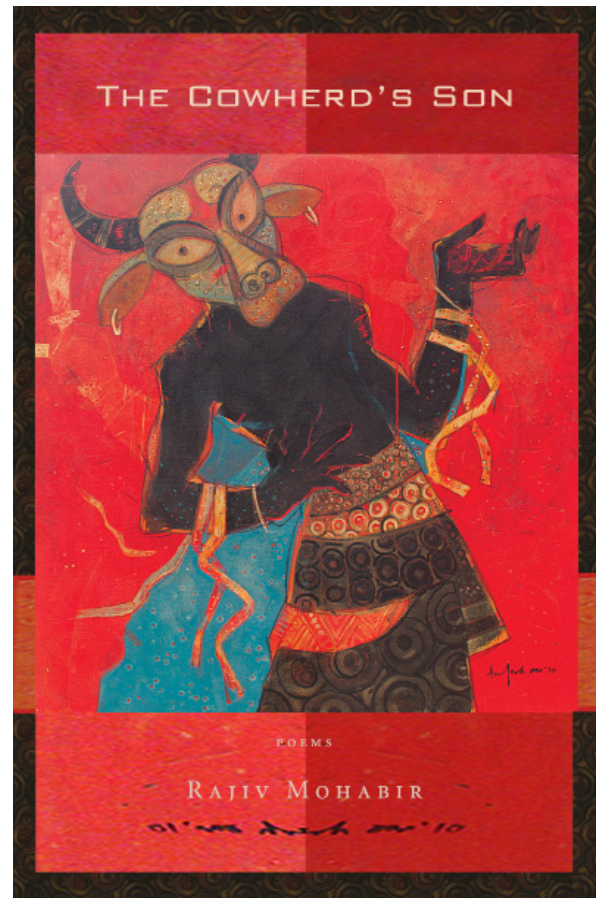
HENNA

Why throw your bangles
in the river at all? Melt the gold
into a charm to keep you safe.
Henna is darkest before dawn
as mud that clings to the palm.
This is not a story of watermarks
or river lines. Your gold nose ring
has fallen amongst the reeds,
surely bringing shame to your father.
What use is remorse when the leaf
will stain you in red anyway?
Tie your sari to your love's fabric.
Today everything you touch
turns to beauty.



RAJIV MOHABIR's 2016 book of poems *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 Arts Foundation,

Kundiman, and the American Institute of Indian Studies language program. He received his MFA in Poetry and Translation from Queens College, City University of New York, where he was editor-in-chief of *Ozone Park Journal*. He received a PhD in English from the University of Hawai'i, where he teaches poetry and composition.



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“... MOHABIR ILLUMINATES HIS OWN WOUNDS, AND AS THE READER WATCHES HIM DRESS AND STITCH THOSE WOUNDS, ‘A QUEER FLUTTER KNOCKS ABOUT YOUR RIBS.’”

—praise for his previous book from *Publishers Weekly*