



If They Come for Us

Fatimah Asghar

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Poet and co-creator of the Emmy-nominated web series "Brown Girls" captures the experience of being a Pakistani Muslim woman in contemporary America, while exploring identity, violence, and healing.

In this powerful and imaginative debut poetry collection, Fatimah Asghar nakedly captures the experiences of being a young Pakistani Muslim woman in America by braiding together personal and marginalized people's histories. After being orphaned as a young girl, Asghar grapples with coming-of-age as a woman without the guidance of a mother, questions of sexuality and race, and navigating a world that put a target on her back. Asghar's poems at once bear anguish, joy, vulnerability, and compassion, while exploring the many facets of violence: how it persists within us, how it is inherited across generations, and how it manifests in our relationships with friends and family, and in our own understanding of identity. Using experimental forms and a mix of lyrical and brash language, Asghar confronts her own understanding of identity and place and belonging.

If They Come for Us Details

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Author : Fatimah Asghar

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From Reader Review If They Come for Us for online ebook

Michael says

The poetry in Fatimah Asghar's debut collection, *If They Come for Us*, alternates between addressing the autobiographical and the historical: Asghar writes raw short poems exploring the individual and collective meanings of topics such as trauma, loss, solidarity, racialized violence, sexuality, diaspora, and Pakistani identity. Many of the strongest poems in the collection deal with the poet's loss of her parents, the India-Pakistan Partition, and the intersection between personal and social history. Regardless of topic, though, Asghar's work tends to read as a montage of succinct but powerful images, lending her work a photographic, even cinematic, quality. Favorites included "If They Come for Us," "Super Orphan," and many of the poems entitled "Partition."

Thanks to the publisher and NetGalley for an eARC of the collection in exchange for a review.

l. says

Some strong poems. Some eh diaspora poetry.

Partition, from, haram, boy.

Monica (Tomes Project) says

from *How We Left: Film Treatment*

[Narrative Device: Flash Forward]

In America, they slaughtered a temple of Sikhs because they thought them us. Here we all become towelheads, amorphous fears praying to a brown god. Others that become others that look like others. They don't know our history, its locked doors & heavy whispers.

in this poetry collection, Fatimah Asghar beautifully brings together stories of her own experiences as a Pakistani Muslim in America and the history of the partition, 9/11, and the current American administration.

Emily Polson says

V good. Love how she plays with form (like crosswords and bingo!!) in some of these poems. May come back later to add a list of my favorite ones.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Poems about Partition and its lifelong effects on family and identity, growing up in America with brown skin, and more. Ashgar dedicates specific poems to Nikki Giovani, Danez Smith, and Safia Elhillo - I find her to be in good company with these poets. Highly recommended!

Until it comes out, you can see a bit of her approach and tone in a performance of Pluto Shits on the Universe.

The poet is the writer and co-creator of the web series Brown Girls, which I can also recommend.

Thanks to the publisher for providing access to this title that comes out August 7.

Tori (InTorilex) says

Content Warning: Genocide, Rape, Domestic Abuse

Well written, hard hitting, these poems put me through a roller coaster of emotions. The author explains how she has existed in a world pulled towards conflicting loyalties. Partition was the division of India into India and Pakistan, it caused at least 14 million to forcefully migrate to escape ethnic cleansings and retributive genocides. During this time 75,000 to 100,000 women were abducted and raped. The author explores the effects of Partition as well as how it has shaped her identity. She is from nations that America has villianized and her oppression is described in a multitude of ways. The topics of poems range from descriptions of the Partition to exploring her racism, gender norms, family and sexuality. Besides the serious topics some poems focused on funny ways that the author has assimilated.

"land that mispronounces my grief land that skins my other land that laughs when my people die & paints targets on my future children's faces land that steals and says mine."

The social commentary included descriptions of what America stands for and how it's hypocrisy infects our ability to exist. The author had poems in the form of crossword puzzles clues, grids of meaning and upside down paragraphs. The different formatting worked well and helped me to stay engaged. The author struggles to balance viewing her comfort in America as a betrayal to her past. . I emotionally connected with feelings of being pulled by multiple identities but never finding solace in one. I'm still thinking on the intimate ways the author comes to terms with her life and I will be reeling from reading it for a long time.

We know this from our nests-
the bad men wanting to end us. Every Year
we call them something new:
British. Sikhs. Hindus. Indians. Americans. Terrorists.

Recommended for Readers who

- enjoy poetry about identity and belonging
- can deal with reading about genocide and death
- want to reflect on how marginalized communities exist in America

Kay says

Full review forthcoming via Rebel Women Lit

Luke Gorham says

Poetry so personal it is borderline memoir, threading diatribe poetics into those of confessional histories, and condemnations. Perfect fusion of rawness and refined lyricism, tightroping between abstraction and realism, thematically orbiting (and sometimes interweaving) issues of sexual and gender identity, western exceptionalism, American xenophobia, and the short-term memory of history. Loses a bit of steam as it goes on and starts stronger than it finishes (tightening up the collection a tick would have helped), but every seeming lull is quickly roundhoused by yet another knockout poem. Bonus points: likely to feature the most perfect line of poetry from 2018:

*...but I
live
in a country whose sun is war
we keep rotating around its
warmth
our faces, sun-kissed, each &
every morning.*

-From "100 Words on 45's 100 Days"

Krystal says

This powerful collection of poetry gutted me right open, as Fatimah Asghar delves into the brown American experience with precision and insight, interrogating the depth of its low points!

Katherine Mary says

Fatimah Asghar's *If They Come for Us* is a raw, emotional, richly constructed poetic composition. Fatimah's moving and poignant poems bust open the hurt and scars left from the Partition of India. Fatimah offers her insight and experience of her ancestor's history, her lack of parental support/guidance, and questions of sexuality. Though at times uncomfortable, the reader connects to Fatimah's heart wrenching experiences of growing up with the scars of racial insensitivity, struggle and finding one's place (and voice) in today's world.

♥Emm♥ says

More poetry, reviews and others here on my blog.

Composed of raw emotion, memory and urgency, *If They Come For Us* examines the injustice of war and division. Bloodshed is something that shakes and dismantles the roots of generations, leaving scars on even those who only recall it faintly, or don't recall it at all. The aftermath doesn't fade easily – what is lost and the price of what is gained must never be forgotten.

Asghar speaks rich lyrics also on culture, sexuality, and the delicate, haphazard art of growing up. They are unabashed, honest and hint at deeper intricacies. Her words also take a strong stance against all that leads to partition and war – namely misunderstanding or fearing another because their culture is different, without trying to understand them. Prejudice only leads to further prejudice, never to any sense of harmony.

Some were not to my personal taste, as is with any compilation, but I enjoy the collection's earnest voice as a whole, especially with the earlier poems and the ones with feminist touches. Particular resonant poems for me were "For Peshawar", "When the Orders Came", "Boy", and the disarming "WWE".

If They Come For Us is sometimes painful and sometimes passionate, even the poems that weren't my preference are never watered-down or weak in their meaning or choice of words. (The cover artwork is also beautiful, to boot.) I recommend.

Quotes

--"Aren't I a miracle? A seed that survived the slaughter & slaughters to come. I think I believe in freedom I just don't know where it is. I think I believe in home, I just don't know where to look."

--"From the moment our babies are born are we meant to lower them into the ground? To dress them in white? They send flowers before guns, thorns plucked from stem. Every year I manage to live on this earth I collect more questions than answers."

--"All the people I could be are dangerous. The blood clotting, oil in my veins."

--"Even nature is fractured, partitioned. I want to believe in rebirth, that what comes from death is life, but I have blood from someone's father's father on my hands & no memory of who died for me to be here."

[I received a copy of this book through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.]

⌘*? maria ?☆⌘ says

"From the moment our babies are born are we meant to lower them into the ground? To dress them in white? They send flowers before guns, thorns plucked from stem. Every year I manage to live on this earth I collect more questions than answers."

Adriana Martinez Figueroa says

Rating: 5/5 Stars

Description:

Poet and co-creator of the Emmy-nominated web series "Brown Girls" captures the experience of being a Pakistani Muslim woman in contemporary America, while exploring identity, violence, and healing.

In this powerful and imaginative debut poetry collection, Fatimah Asghar nakedly captures the experiences of being a young Pakistani Muslim woman in America by braiding together personal and marginalized people's histories. After being orphaned as a young girl, Asghar grapples with coming-of-age as a woman without the guidance of a mother, questions of sexuality and race, and navigating a world that put a target on her back. Asghar's poems at once bear anguish, joy, vulnerability, and compassion, while exploring the many facets of violence: how it persists within us, how it is inherited across generations, and how it manifests in our relationships with friends and family, and in our own understanding of identity. Using experimental forms and a mix of lyrical and brash language, Asghar confronts her own understanding of identity and place and belonging.

Review:

Fatimah Asghar is a poet on the rise and one you must read. Her words are like a good mango in the summer, juicy and flowing with greatness. *If They Come For Us* is incredible in the fact that it doesn't mince its words. It tackles generational trauma, the power of female friendship, learning how to survive in a world that isn't kind to brown girls... all with unflinching honesty and emotion that drips off its pages. It's also a book about memory and who's allowed to live long enough to remember the light ("Here's the image Auntie P gave me: the street a pool of spilled light & all the neighborhood children at my grandfather's knee," *How We Left: Film Treatment*) and the dark ("My uncle gifts me his earliest memory: a parking lot full of corpses," *For Peshawar*).

Asghar's words are a punch in the gut, especially with lines such as:

"From the moment our babies are born are we meant to lower them into the ground?" *For Peshawar*

"The past is a land I do not know." *How We Left: Film Treatment*

"I tried to learn Spanish so I could pretend I was the other kind of other." *The Last Summer of Innocence*

"My love for nature is like my love for most things: fickle & theoretical. Too many bugs & I want a divorce.

My love for the past is like my love for most things. I only feel it when I leave." *My Love for Nature*

Each of Asghar's pieces on Partition, be they constructed in the way she talks about her family, or in the historical process of the partitioning of India and Pakistan, are each a mark of the way such a moment has affected her throughout her life.

If They Come For Us is for certain the collection to cement Asghar as a force to be reckoned with in the contemporary poetry canon.

If They Come For Us comes out on August 7th.

An eARC was provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you!

Jerrie (redwritinghood) says

I received this via #netgalley in exchange for my review. This is a good, sparely-written poetry collection reflecting on a variety of topics related to the author's identity: the India/Pakistan partition and its effect on her family, being orphaned, being Muslim in the US after 9/11, and femininity. Some poems are direct and sometimes shocking, while others wistfully mourn the people from India/Pakistan, her youth and her family connections.

Lorryn Woodward says

**I received a copy through netgalley in exchange for an honest review. **

A collection of poems so powerful and emotional you must read. The truth that is written on these pages, it's intense. The poems are a combination of experinces and history and I think that's what makes it so raw.

I also just want to mention that this cover is beautiful and amazing and it was the reason (along with the title) that I wanted to read more.
