



Among the Believers

Ron Rash

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Ron Rash's second book of poetry is based on the historical realities of the mountains of western North Carolina, where Mr. Rash's ancestry goes back for at least five generations. These skillfully crafted and highly compact poems capture the spirit and feeling, the beauty and cruelty, of a place and time which has now largely faded from the American Landscape.

Among the Believers Details

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Author : Ron Rash

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From Reader Review Among the Believers for online ebook

Tanyadee Reyes says

I love love LOVE Ron Rash's poetry, and this may be his finest work. I haven't been able to get into his fiction, though-- anyone else have that problem?

Captain Sir Roddy, R.N. (Ret.) says

Ron Rash's poetry is a powerful American voice in modern poetry, and I somehow believe that one day he will be comfortably companioned on the shelf with Whitman, Dickinson, Emerson, Eliot, and Frost. Just sayin'!

Sandy Reisenauer says

this book of poetry is un-like most I have ever read. I have read this many times, and have read poems from it to others who usually do not care about poetry, and they loved it. these poems are strange, weird, and wonderful, and sometimes they make you cry. "plowing on moonlight" will make your toes curl up when first you sense the hidden sexual meanings. I re-read it several times at first to see if i was right. he read that aloud at our Pulpwood Queen bookclub meeting, and even though he is a small , plain man, he had all the women there in the palms of his hands as he read that poem slowly in his deep accent.

Jim says

Although not my favorite style of poetry, as I prefer lyrical, his works are evocative and often include nice slices of life in Appalachia.

Larry Bassett says

This is the second book of collected poetry by Ron Rash and was published in this book format in 2000. Many of the poems were previously published in journals and magazines.

It was a stretch for me to buy this book because I am not religious and, from the title, I assumed that this book likely leaned in that direction. I am not very fond of religion and am not very patient with it.

I was brought up in a Missouri Synod Lutheran church chosen by my Baptist father and Episcopal mother because we could walk to the church from our suburban home. My mother eventually stopped attending, stayed home on Sunday morning and listened to church on the radio. But my father and sister and I were faithful to the Sunday call. My father was the church treasurer for many years and I went to sleep with the sound of the adding machine totaling the columns. I practiced holding my breath with my wrist watch during

the Pastor's twenty minute sermons. I went to catechism but did not join the church when it ended with too many unanswered questions that demanded obedience to faith. My father did not object, probably after a heated discussion with my mother. I still have my Sunday school attendance pin just short of the four year attendance bar. I have saved it for possible future necessity. When I moved away from home to go to college, I mostly did not go to church and campaigned for Democrats.

I like to understand what I am reading and poetry sometimes eludes me. I do occasionally remember that it helps to read poetry out loud, listening to myself speaking the words. But I have to have a quiet time when I am alone, a circumstance that I usually overlook. Sunday morning occasionally offers itself, ironically.

In an introduction to the book, Anthony Hecht writes:

His family has lived in the southern Appalachian mountains since the mid-1700's, and a knowledge and feel for this region, its folklore, faiths, superstitions, loyalties and culture, is an abiding presence in his poems.

...

His family background is Welsh, and he knows as much as Robert Graves about Welsh poetics and *The Mabinogion*, and has aimed at times at that kind of alliteration the Welsh call *cynghanedd*.

Since I had not let the threat of religious verse scare me off, I was certainly not likely to tremble at the threat of Welsh! I just admit to being under duress as I listened to what seemed to be beautiful (if incomprehensible) sounds. Probably duress is not the right word. It is more accurate to say that I was somewhat under the spell of Ron Rash verses. I notice linkages between his prose and his poetry that I think will grow as I become more familiar with them by reading his growing work.

So I have rationalized the fact that I do not understand a lot of this poetry and rely on that AA slogan "Take what you like and leave the rest." There are a lot of lovely words in this book even if the entirety might not be as accessible as would be ideal. This book could use some more than the seven explanatory notes on page 73 for the less erudite among us.

But let me close with one poem that I think requires no notes:

AMONG THE BELIEVERS

Even the young back then died old.
My great-aunt's brow at twenty-eight
was labored by a hardscrabble world
no final breath could smooth away.
They laid her out in her wedding dress,
the life that killed in her arms, the head
turned to suckle her cold breast
in eternity. A cousin held
a camera above the open casket,
cast a shadow the camera raised
where flesh and wood and darkness met,
a photograph the husband claimed.
Nailed on the wall above his bed,
smudged and traced for five decades,
a cross of shadow, shadowing death,

across an uncomprehending face.

Ron Rash has captured the history of his family and his region and left it for us to ponder and enjoy.
