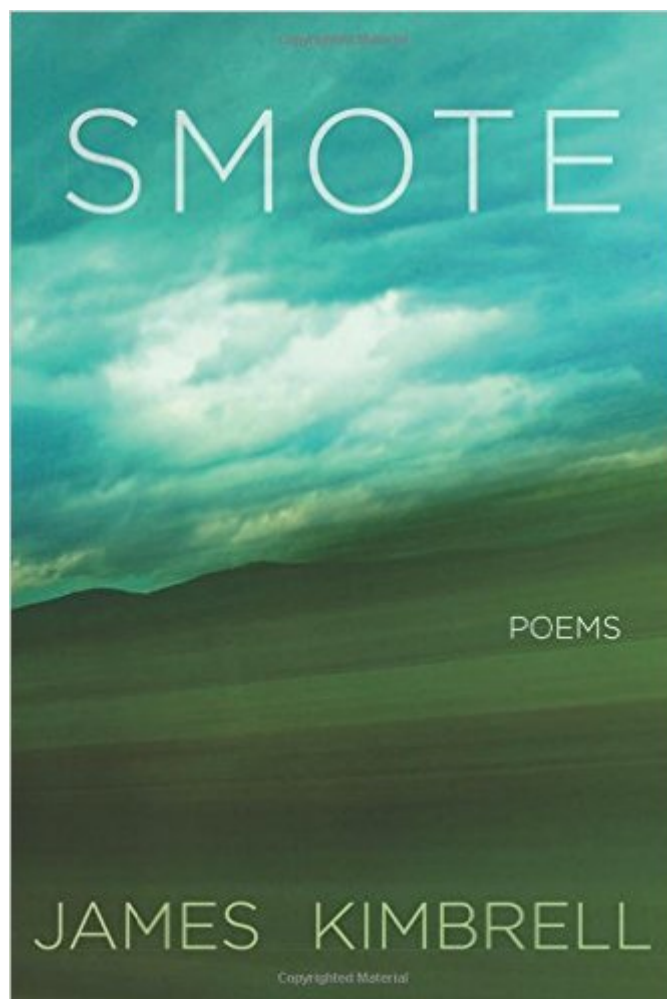


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Smote



Synopsis

"Smote is a book of the dark reality of our daily existence; it is a book of abiding grace." —Robert Olen Butler
I release you like the crank-addled truck driver releases his cargo at the midnight dock until the warehouse is one in a trail of crumbs, little light left on behind him. James Kimbrell is the author of *The Gatehouse Heaven* and *My Psychic*, and the co-translator of *Three Poets of Modern Korea*. He has been the recipient of the Discovery/The Nation Award, a Whiting Award, a fellowship from the NEA, and a Morton Prize.

Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #878,217 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #81 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Places #124 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Nature #156 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Themes & Styles > Death, Grief & Loss

Customer Reviews

James Kimbrell embodies a pain and a region that I know too intimately, but he obviously feels it deeper and the personal tragedy that explodes into the book makes it more felt. Kimbrell teaches and Florida and grew up in Jackson, Mississippi—his language is infused with the racial tensions of poor white kid in a black neighborhood, the explosions of barbecue sauce and blood, and a manic tension that open in explodes in absurdity. Growing up in Georgia in the 1980s and 1990s, I know this world which Kimbrell is inhabiting. His visceral and frantic voice peeks out into teenage rutting, small acts of kindness and disappointment, crank-addled trunk drivers, houses that small of "critter piss." Kimbrell's weakness and strength in the book is that he doesn't let up, and his exploding verse renders him extremely vulnerable. When you think there is going to be a break in the personal and regional tragedy, you get more. It's manic quality pushes you on while its pummeling you trains you at points. It mimics one a lot of the extreme of the emotions that Kimbrell is digging into. Kimbrell

verse starts out looking like fairly standard, if linguistically dense, free verse; however, as Smote continues, punctuation drops away a points, lines become more erratic, and there are often multiple columns in the poem in dialogue with each other. While not entirely original, it is particularly effective and makes the way pain in breaks the narrator down in a lot of the poem seem to be analogous in the form of the poems. Kimbrell's poetic voice is dynamic, unrelenting, but in the end, incredibly, painfully honest.

This collection is superb, tackling topics ranging from class, race, heartbreak, and grief. Combining gentility and grit, every poem from start to finish leaves the reader feeling punched and aching, yet wanting more just to FEEL something. "There's Nothing Wrong With You" is gut wrenching and beautiful and the title poem "Smote" sets the tone for this wonderful look into the deep South in all of its ugliness and resounding beauty.

Not only does Smote introduce us to a swirling landscape of high and low, the elevated and the colloquial, these poems harness the power of narrative in both traditional and new forms. Smote contains probably the best poem published in English in the past 10+ years, "So Many Stories," and it will absolutely devastate you. I keep buying copies of this book and giving them away, saying: you have to read this. So: you have to read this.

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