

Continental Divide

Alex Myers

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Alex Myers's compelling and poignant coming-of-gender novel *Continental Divide* is set in Wyoming and delves into the difficult decisions that a trans person has to face—and how challenging the process of transitioning can be, both for trans people and those close to them.

Ron, a nineteen-year-old student at Harvard, decides that he needs to leave the East coast, and everyone he knows, behind. Heading West with the self-directive to “be a man,” he lands in Cody, Wyoming. As soon as he gets off the bus, he is offered a job by Gus, who runs a ranch.

Gus assumes that Ron is a man; Ron feels that it's a sign to take his kitchen job for free room and board and a few extra dollars. His time on the ranch results in several challenging situations, including with an alcoholic boss, a potential love interest, and the expectations of those who take him at face value. He's forced to decide what transitioning means to him.

Moving at a brisk pace, the story includes a few interesting twists, though its coming-of-age elements are easier to predict. Ron is sympathetic and developed as he tries to figure out what it means to be masculine, according to himself and others; what he really wants in life; and how his honesty can sometimes result in pain and loss. Other characters are less dimensional; some stand in as representatives of outside viewpoints regarding transgender people.

As Ron reveals his inner truths, the story comes to shine. His deep conversations about being transgender stand out; they are honest, enlightening, natural, and moving. *Continental Divide* is a unique novel about what it means to be a man, no matter where you start.

MONICA CARTER (November / December 2019)

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