

In Cadence

C. Rodney Pattan

Lance B. Brender

AuthorHouse (Oct 6, 2016)

Softcover \$13.99 (126pp)

978-1-5246-4069-9

Pattan and Brender have created a thoughtful, dynamic collection of poetry.

In C. Rodney Pattan and Lance B. Brender's poetry collection, *In Cadence*, the authors work to draw back the curtain of expectations surrounding a soldier's life. Combining experiences from at home and abroad, each poem uncovers its own universal truths.

From "The Last Great Kiss" to "Night Watch," Pattan and Brender manage to capture the full spectrum of emotion in their respective lifetimes of stories. The two authors' poems alternate throughout the book as complementary dialogue. This back and forth, combined with various tasteful experimentations with grammar and punctuation, keeps the momentum of the collection going.

Each poem includes a brief preface that offers either an interesting anecdote or a necessary explanation. This works to the advantage of the poems. For instance, "Cuckoo," which initially comes off as overly simplistic with the lines "tick / tock / knick / knock," takes on a new, deeper meaning when it's revealed that the lines' origin is Brender's older son. This relates back to an earlier poem, "'Cause I Do," which references a cuckoo clock while grappling with the difficulty of watching his son grow up through a computer screen while he was away, rather than in person. It's this kind of insightful, connective conversation that drives the work.

One of the greatest joys in the book is "The Joyful Smile," a poem by Pattan. The piece captures the "intimidating and intoxicating" effects that a smile has on a person. He touches briefly on famous smiles like Mona Lisa's, but is in the end grounded by that of a childhood friend, Valerie. Pattan writes that he has remembered her smile for fifty years, a sentiment that comes through in his work when he writes, "It checked me first as a mere child / A decade later t'would drive me wild."

Another highlight is Brender's "Subway Car," its short five lines speaking volumes when coupled with the preceding description. He finishes the poem with "by your side, on the subway car," after explaining that he rode the subway with a woman he was in love with who "would go through periods of debilitating sadness."

While the book is based heavily on military experiences, its content proves universal since it meditates on all facets of life, with the occupation of a soldier loosely threading poems together. The simple rhyme scheme of most pieces makes the poems easy to read. It's this ease that allows the authors' military experiences to creep up unexpectedly in the book, with the complexities of loss coming out in something as simple as a dog's eulogy.

With *In Cadence*, Pattan and Brender have created a thoughtful, dynamic collection of poetry that is made accessible and appealing to anyone by way of everyday experience. The book ultimately celebrates what it means to be not just an American, but also a human.

LILLIAN BROWN (August 16, 2017)

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