FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The World Is Round
Nikky Finney
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When the poet bites into her first taste of shark, the flesh in her mouth turns blood-rich and the moment suddenly, devastatingly, becomes cannibalistic as she eats what she imagines to be a shark made large on the bodies purged from ships during the Middle Passage. This book, unexpected and always aware, is the story of an individual living as a black woman, a lover, a daughter, a granddaughter, a poet, a lover of music, an inheritor of all these forms and histories.

Finney, an associate professor at the University of Kentucky, is the author of three volumes of poetry, a volume of short stories, and a forthcoming novel. This volume oscillates between prose and poetry as it oscillates between public and private memories. Finney probes the notion of identity to suggest that it is a type of bricolage, culled from national events, ancient stories, and everyday living. She moves with equal ease between the words of racist senators to savvy blues singers, from an elephant ride in a local parking lot to an hours-long shopping spree at the Salvation Army Thrift Store with her grandmother, and with each story reveals a little more about what makes her so sure that the world will be all right, that the righteous fight is still raging. She learns this, in a small way, from her grandmother as she wanders around the thrift shop, instructing:

> *'I do hope that you are paying attention because everything that you need to know about recycling, about what to save and what to throw away in your life is right here.' She wobbles off down the aisle giggling to herself and running over everything in her way.*

This book is warm, the author smart and empathetic as she tells a suffering woman that no, she does not think God is not punishing her for being mean all those years, although both the reader and the writer know she is lying. It deals in cycles, lineage, birth, death, history, and what happens when one chooses to defy those cycles by not having children, or a husband, or even status as a battered woman. In one poem, a black woman approaches the author, stunned to discover that Finney has never been hit. She wants to know how the author avoided it:

“Women’s bodies / brown, black and blue, / laying right where coal, cars, / and cattle usually do. / she needed my answer / for herself and for them too.”

A life safe from physical abuse is unfathomable for this woman. Instead of condemning the woman or pitying her, Finney chooses to include her, this fellow fighter, her audience at large, in the round world that is her life.

Camille-Yvette Welsch