

Trust the Bluer Skies: Meditations on Fatherhood

paulo da costa

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paulo da costa's heartbreaking memoir *Trust the Bluer Skies* is a bittersweet ode to memories of lost times and places.

The book explores da costa's relationship with his four-year-old son, Koah, during a months-long, pivotal trip from Canada to da costa's birthplace in rural Portugal, undertaken in an effort to expose Koah to his heritage and extended family life. The book is intentional in considering how traditions are passed from one generation to another, as from a loving father to his son.

In Portugal, da costa himself was eager to find the home he remembered before it crumbled under the demands of economic progress and cultural change. Images of aging family members leading simple lives and celebrating age-old holidays are used to show what could be lost. And da costa's depictions of the lush landscape and its people are haunting and beautiful, featuring "pigeon-filled skies" and century-old irrigation ditches moved to make way for tract homes and modernization. His poignant rambles with his son—treated like a family archaeological expedition—are covered too.

The extended holiday informs the text's tight organization: it begins with da costa's family's arrival and ends with them packing their luggage to return home. The brief trip results in a further sense of loss, emphasizing the shortness of childhood and its special pleasures. Indeed, the family discovers that home is not as timeless as da costa remembered. And just as the past has the power to transform the present: because of their presence, changes are made to the wider family's saga.

Reaching backward can be both grounding and transformative according to *Trust the Bluer Skies*, a haunting memoir about the perils and promise of returning home and the joy of leaving it forever changed.

JEREMIAH ROOD (March / April 2024)

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