



## Magical Negro

*Morgan Parker*

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*Magical Negro* is an archive of Black everydayness, a catalog of contemporary folk heroes, an ethnography of ancestral grief, and an inventory of figureheads, idioms, and customs. These American poems are both elegy and jive, joke and declaration, songs of congregation and self-conception. They connect themes of loneliness, displacement, grief, ancestral trauma, and objectification, while exploring and troubling tropes and stereotypes of Black Americans. Focused primarily on depictions of Black womanhood alongside personal narratives, the collection tackles interior and exterior politics—of both the body and society, of both the individual and the collective experience. In *Magical Negro*, Parker creates a space of witness, of airing grievances, of pointing out patterns. In these poems are living documents, pleas, latent traumas, inside jokes, and unspoken anxieties situated as firmly in the past as in the present—timeless Black melancholies and triumphs.

## Magical Negro Details

Date : Published February 5th 2019 by Tin House Books

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Author : Morgan Parker

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## From Reader Review Magical Negro for online ebook

### jo says

The poetry in this book is stunning. It's lyrical but also punchy and also so very cutting. If you are white, like me, you need to read this. You need to know all the ways in which Black folks are dehumanized. You need to learn how nano-atomic it is. How string-molecular. How, not daily, but minuteLY. You need to know that every time you say "all of us" you are cutting out millions. You need to learn a new way of thinking. You need to turn yourself around. This will help. I promise it will help. But you have to put yourself through it. Do it now.

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### Emily Polson says

RTC

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### Dominic says

*This ARC was provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.*

Parker's previous collection has been on my radar for a long time, and has evaded my grasp on a few occasions. When the opportunity to review this new collection appeared (thank you, NetGalley!), I jumped on it. While there are some strong poems here and there in the book's center section, on the whole I never did catch the wave or rhythm of this book.

While there are some moments that pack a punch, I wanted to love this from beginning to end. Just glance at the table of contents and you'll see Parker's way with titles. Utterly brilliant ones: "If you are over staying woke" and "We Are the House That Holds the Table at Which Yes We Will Happily Take a Goddamn Seat" and "My Sister Says White Supremacy Is Turning Her Crazy." And how can you resist of title of her debut collection, *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*? You can't.

But for all the shots of fire and defiance throughout this book (and there is plenty to provoke and celebrate), too often I was left a little cold once I made it to the end of a poem.

My favourite poems were probably "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" and "Who Were Frederick Douglass's Cousins, and Other Quotidian Black History Facts That I Wish I Learned in School." "Matt" is also a stand-out. I guess I preferred, in this book at least, the more narrative poems to the abstract ones.

Parker is definitely a talent, and these images are going to sing to readers. I just wish I was one of them. I would not be against reading more of her work.

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### Drew says

I wish I liked this collection more. I love individual poems of Morgan's, and there are some GREAT ones in this book. But there are also plenty that didn't grab my pulse. That's just the thing about poetry, I suppose: sometimes it hits, sometimes it doesn't, and there really isn't an objective explanation for either.

(the last poem in this collection, ps/it should be noted, is one of the best goddamn poems I've ever read -- just in case anybody was wondering)

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### **James says**

Through the lenses of pop culture, hip hop, and black history, Morgan Parker delivers a devastating series of poems about the current state of affairs for Black Americans. While there is humor in it, the humor is black and always sets the reader on edge. A powerful, disturbing, and important collection.

[I received an advanced e-galley of this book through Netgalley. It is due to be released February 5, 2019.]

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### **Jonathan says**

Wow, just wow, what a way to start 2019. This collection is a must read for everyone. Especially white people, more importantly white men.

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### **Stacie C says**

Actual Rating 3.5 stars. Review will come later.

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### **Rebecca Stoner says**

Morgan Parker wasn't playing around before. In *Magical Negro*, she goes deeper, wilder, shows her power. She's full of righteous rage. Parker's especially devastating when she talks about the intimate uses of power (even if you don't read the whole book, definitely read the poem about white boys named Matt...they're always named Matt) and the way the history of brutality towards black people echoes in seemingly mundane interactions today. A really affecting book.

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### **Lacey says**

I read and loved Morgan Parker's previous collection, *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*, and was so excited to hear that she had another one coming out. Her writing calls you for you sit and savor her words and form.

This one was a bit harder for me to enjoy. I appreciated the emotion behind her words, the sharpness of the lines that she aims toward the media, politicians, the police and any other source of anti-blackness in

America. And there definitely are individual lines that I love. (I've been quoting "My body is an argument I didn't start" since I read it.) But I don't know if I truly understand the collection as a cohesive whole. It feels like there is something big I'm missing and it took a bit away from my enjoyment of her work.

I'd still recommend her work, especially for non-black readers. Morgan Parker expresses the anger and frustration of being black so viscerally, it would serve you well to experience it.

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### **Luke Gorham says**

I should love this, but I don't. I should have loved Parker's last collection, but I didn't. The disconnect is somewhere in her scattershot approach to language, individual lines and images landing but the whole always feeling a little pasted together. I don't quite have my pulse on why she doesn't register with me more affectingly.

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### **Michelle says**

#### ***Released Today!***

"No one can serve two masters like we can, be future and what they threatened to forget."

My first time reading Morgan Parker's work was when I received an ARC for The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 2: Black Girl Magic. To say that I LOVED this anthology would be an understatement. See review here: Black Girl Magic So when I came across this title on NetGalley I was super excited.

**Magical Negro** is radical, elegiac, witty and intimate. Using cultural and historical references, Morgan Parker unabashedly confronts the traumas of our past and our present. Her prose speaks to both the collective experience and to crimes committed against oneself. **Magical Negro** has transformative power, one that you can return to time and again and be moved.

As with any anthology there were some poems I liked better than others.

My favorites were:

*Nancy Meyers and My Dream of Whiteness*

*Magical Negro #84: The Black Body*

*A Brief History of the Present*

*What I Am*

*after Terrance Hayes*

*If you are over staying woke*

*We Are the House That Holds the Table at Which Yes We Will Happily Take a Goddamn Seat*

*after Solange*

*Magical Negro #80: Brooklyn*

I am looking forward to Morgan Parker's upcoming YA novel **Who Put This Song On?** that is due out later this year.

*Special thanks to NetGalley, Tin House books and Morgan Parker for advanced access to this book.*

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### **Leah Rachel von Essen says**

Morgan Parker's newest poetry collection, **MAGICAL NEGRO**, is an incredible catalog of everyday despair, hope, fear in Black life, in Black womanhood. The book is divided between three parts: "Let Us Now Praise Famous Magical Negroes," "Field Negro Field Notes," and "Popular Negro Punchlines." Parker evokes the voices of figureheads and folk heroes; Parker calls back to the deepest, oldest grief and black traumas while talking about her sexuality, her fear, her hurt today in its vivid pop culture and color.

Titles of poems include "Who Were Frederick Douglass's Cousins, and Other Quotidian Black History Facts That I Wish I Learned in School," "I TOLD MY THERAPIST I TRIED TO MEDITATE AND SHE LAUGHED," "My Sister Says White Supremacy Is Turning Her Crazy," and "We Are the House That Holds the Table at Which Yes We Will Happily Take a Goddamn Seat." Her poems are about power, personal, intimate, public, institutional. She writes about every white boy she's ever dated in "Matt." In the poems "The History of Black People" and "The History of the Present," Parker brutally but simply tells stories of hope, despair, of the need to just survive ("I worry sometimes I will only be allowed a death story."), and "Now More Than Ever" tears into white guilt with her repeating "and ever and ever"s. My two favorite poems were "Let's Get Some Better Angels at This Party," a poem about seeing angels everywhere ("There is one who looks like your brother."), and "Two White Girls in the African Braid Shop on Marcy and Fulton," a poem full of questions, wondering, the invisible shaking of heads.

It's a superb, quick collection that once again shows Parker's incredible talent. **MAGICAL NEGRO** is out February 5.

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### **Kimberley says**

Morgan Parker plucks at the most powerful emotions and unsaid experiences of black women and lays them bare on the page. **Magical Negro** carefully scatters pop culture references and humour into the trauma. Each poem is perfect and honest.

She plainly makes the case that race is at the core of every interaction.

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### **Adam Dalva says**

Terrific book - lives up to the high standards of Parker's earlier poetry collections, while branching out in new, incisive directions.

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### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I read these poems twice, before and after a historical novel about racism in Oregon, and it strikes a chord with me that this collection is published by Tin House. One of the poems even talks about how it's too late

for her to try to live in Portland or Brooklyn (the two homes of her publishing house.) And so the poetry settles into the reality of our existence, and the need to confront discomfort if we are really going to talk about race.

Since I had a review copy I can't quote any poems directly, but I want to, so much. Morgan Parker is in conversation with many of these topics, with current events, with other poets and poems, with the white gaze, the male gaze. Several poems are titled *Magical Negro #x* and imagine the perspective of several key figures in history; some are broader like the one about "the black body" (it repeats "the body is a person" to great effect.)

I can't decide which collection I like more - this, which seems more of a direct response to recent events, or *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*, which gave me my first introduction to the strength and unpandering resistance of her words.

Favorites from this collection:

*Everything Will Be Taken Away*

"...You are a woman now

but you have always had skin...."

*Whites Only*

*Magical Negro #84: The Black Body*

*Ode to Fried Chicken's Guest Appearance on *Scandal**

If you are over staying woke (and here in audio)

*I Told My Therapist I Tried to Meditate and She Laughed*

*We Are the House That Holds the Table at Which Yes We Will Happily Take a Goddamn Seat*

"...The difference between worth

and worthless without them

is science: how it feels to not be  
able to see a person, and the number

of instances when we believed  
we should die. ..."

*Magical Negro #80: Brooklyn*

"...Lead us not into white neighborhoods.

Deliver us from microaggressions...."

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