

PRAISE FOR
MORGAN PARKER

“Morgan Parker’s bombastic second book profoundly expresses a black millennial consciousness with anger and appetite. Everywhere Parker looks, she sees a wildly messed-up world—‘There’s far too many of me dying’; ‘The President be like / we lost a young boy today.’ She also answers a personal and public mandate to re-envision it through humor and confrontation.”

—**NPR**

“A brash, risqué collection that explores what it means to be a black woman in contemporary American culture. Parker . . . is as self-assured as the women who appear in these pages, including Queen Latifah, Nikki Giovanni, and Michelle Obama . . . Each woman in this fierce collection wants to be seen for who she is, not what society wants her to be, and each demands respect.”

—**THE WASHINGTON POST**

“For Parker, there is no divide between what can and cannot exist as poetic language. . . . Parker’s brilliance is found in her ability to complicate the gaze on black womanhood. By depicting the varieties of experience, from Hottentot Venus to Michelle Obama, Parker is able to reclaim black womanhood as beautiful in its entirety.”

—**THE NATION**

“Morgan Parker’s second book of poetry, *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*, isn’t just the most ferocious collection to be published this year. It’s also an antidote to the culture of hate and white supremacy reincarnated by our new administration. . . . It’s part psychic excavation, part historical exorcism. Having watched Nina Simone in concert on YouTube most of my adult life, I’ve finally found an experience to compare that to.”

—INTERVIEW

“Parker’s poems brings heat to the art of Mickalene Thomas, the racial politics of Barack Obama’s presidency, the body politics of Beyoncé, and the danger of moving through America in a black body: ‘I walk into a bar. / I drink a lot of wine and kiss a Black man on his beard. / I do whatever I want because I could die any minute. / I don’t mean YOLO I mean they are hunting me.’”

—TIME

“Easily one of the most compelling poetry collections of the past few years, *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé* is fresh, unexpected, and intimate; an equally devastating and uplifting exploration of black womanhood; and a tender and lovely celebration of life.”

—SHONDALAND

“Parker’s poetry is a sledgehammer covered in silk, exposing black women’s vulnerability and power and underscoring what it means to be magical and in pain.”

—**BUZZFEED**

“The first thing you have to understand is that Morgan Parker is one of the most fascinating poets working today. She writes poems that are clever, beautiful, political, playful, breathtaking. . . . I know I’m excited to see what happens and thrilled to watch Parker continue killing it on the page.”

—**BOOK RIOT**

“Employing fierce language and eschewing fear of unflattering light, Parker pays homage to the deep roots and collective wisdom of black womanhood. . . .

Parker’s poems are as flame-forged as a chain locked around soft ankles.”

—**PUBLISHER’S WEEKLY**

Starred Review

“These words, brilliant, lovely, and sharp like a diamond, cut me deeply and left me in awe of Parker’s writing. This book is an exciting contribution to the rich legacy of Black feminist art, literature, poetry, and music that daily adds more complex representations of Black American womanhood.”

—**BITCH**

“Outstanding collection of poems. So much soul.
So much intelligence in how Parker folds in cultural
references and the experiences of black womanhood.

Every poem will get its hooks into you. And of
course, the poems about Beyoncé are the greatest
because Beyoncé is our queen.”

—**ROXANE GAY**

“There are more beautiful things than Beyoncé
in these pages because, as Morgan Parker writes in
poems channeling the president’s wife, the Venus
Hottentot, and multiple Beyoncés: ‘We’re everyone.
We have ideas and vaginas, / history and clothes and a
mother.’ The kind of verve the late New York school Ted
Berrigan would have called ‘feminine marvelous and
tough’ is here, as well as the kind of vulnerability that
fortifies genuine daring. This is a marvelous book. See for
yourself. Morgan Parker is a fearlessly forward
and forward-thinking literary star.”

—**TERRANCE HAYES**

“There is not a more daring artist, or anyone I’d rather
read in the twenty-first century, than Morgan Parker.”

—**KIESE LAYMON**

**MAGICAL
NEGRO**

**MAGICAL
NEGRO**

POEMS

**MORGAN
PARKER**



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It was summer now and the colored people came
out into the sunshine, full blown with flowers. And
they shone in the streets and in the fields with their
warm joy, and they glistened in their black heat,
and they flung themselves free in their wide
abandonment of shouting laughter.

—GERTRUDE STEIN, *Three Lives*

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I.
**LET US NOW
PRAISE FAMOUS
MAGICAL NEGROES**

I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background

after Glenn Ligon after Zora Neale Hurston

Or, I feel sharp white.

Or, colored against.

Or, I am thrown. I am against. Or, when white. I sharp. I color.

Quiet. Forget. My country is a boat.

I feel most colored when I swear to god.

I feel most colored when it is too late.

When I am captive.

The last thing on my mind is death.

I tongue elegy.

I color green because green is the color of power.

I am growing two fruits.

I feel most colored when I am thrown against the sidewalk.

It is the last time I feel colored.

Stone is the name of the fruit.

I am a man I am a man I am a woman I am a man I am a
woman I am protected and served.

I background my country.

My country sharp in my throat.

I pay taxes and I am a child and I grow into a bright
fleshy fruit.

White bites: I stain the uniform.

I am thrown black typeface in a headline with no name.

Or, no one hears me.

I am thrown bone, “Unarmed.”
I feel most colored when my weapon is I.
When I get what I deserve.
When I can't breathe.
When on television I shuffle and widen my eyes.
I feel most colored when I am thrown against a mattress,
 my tits my waist my ankles buried in.
White ash. Everyone claps.
I feel most colored when I am the punchline. When I am
 the trigger.
In the dawn, putrid yellow, I know what I am being told.
My country pisses on my grave.
My country bigger than god.
Elegy my country.
I feel most colored when I am collecting dust.
When I am impatient and sick. They use us to distract us.
My ears leak violet petals.
I sharpen them. I sharpen them again.
Everyone claps.

Magical Negro #217: Diana Ross Finishing a Rib in Alabama, 1990s

Since I thought I'd be dead
by now everything
I do is fucking perfect walking wreck
reckless and men
I suck their bones until they're perfect
I don't sleep with accolades I don't get touched
in the night all men do is cry
and ask me to be their mama I can't
get a decent fuck to save my
when I think about their feelings I don't care
It's cool it's cool come to mama there is so much
death here she is casual and almost fragrant like
the word *kill* doesn't sound as bad as it is
All my friends are sisters and husbands I'm afraid
to be uncharted I want an empire in my teeth but I can't
be bothered to wear anything but silk
I have grown up less mysterious than my myth
All men do is think I'm looking at them
When I think about them tasting me I don't
I mean don't Google my tits when you can just
Unfortunately I have a body and I'm the only
one in charge of it you know what I eat the bones too
I'm in the world I'm in the world
nobody cares where I came from

Everything Will Be Taken Away

after Adrian Piper

You can't stop mourning
everything all the time.

The '90s, the black Maxima with a tail,
CD wrappers, proximity to the earth.

Glamour and sweating in your sheets.
Speaking tongues. Men, even.

You are a woman now
but you have always had skin.

Here are some ways in which
you are not free: the interiors

are all wrong, you are a drought
sprawling. When you see god

you don't like what you see.
It is never enough to be born

again and again.

You like it at church when
strangers hold your hand.

You have a mouth men bless.
You look good enough to bury.

Magical Negro #3: The Strong Black Woman

She likes it rough. When you open her up through the
mouth hole, the dumb
cunt hole. You could stomp around in there. It's fine. She
won't feel nothing.

That played-out scene she loves so much so she can feel like
she got a dick:

Angela Bassett at the end of the movie smoking
a cigarette, smug bitch burning

our cities down, cleavage always only a tease, with a face
like Can I help you.

Yes, bitch, you can. You can strip down to tears and dry cum.

You can be
more naked.

Stop crying. I'll give you something to cry about.

She thinks she's better. She think she cute. She's holding out.
She is nothing to hold. She is no one to worship.

Inventory of her body: hair she cut to look like a man,
too-dark nipples,
the way she waves those tits around, asking for it. She's
always crying.
That uppity face. Holy grail pussy, a mountain peak.
Her pussy self-defense.
A lack of serotonin. A lack of vulnerability. No chill. Nothing
real.
No need to have her back because she don't have one. Just
a mountain
in a dark blue wilderness. She aches from the captivity.

The High Priestess of Soul's Sunday Morning Visit to the Wall of Respect

The Impressionism wing strikes me as too
dainty for my mood, except for one oil painting
by Gustave Caillebotte, *Calf's Head and Ox Tongue*,
which is described in the wall text as
“visually unpleasant.” A bust of an African woman
bums me out. This year, I cried
at everyone's kitchen table,
I spit on the street and was late on purpose and stepped
in glass and my dog died and I saw
minuses over and over. I'll figure it out.
I let a man walk away and then
another one. It has taken me exactly this long
to realize I could have done something else.
I'm being repetitive now but do you ever
hate yourself?

AND COLD SUNSET

How I feel about you is smoking a cigarette in the rain.

I think about walking into traffic, and suddenly, your dick.

I think about a yellow line and then a road and then an animal.

And nothing rises up. And horror is a verb.

I want to forgive myself for overindulging.

Food-delivery men see me without a bra more than anyone else.

My body is an argument I did not start.

In a way I am not aware who made me.

I bow down to a deep plea.

When strangers call my name I feel like a white girl.

Skin in reverse and a quiet pussy.

Nothing helps me not think about universes.

I'm funny because I know nothing matters.

Nancy Meyers and My Dream of Whiteness

I can't be sorry
enough. I have learned
everything is urgent.
Road closings, animal lungs.
I am working hard to be
as many people as possible
before I can't.
I know my long, dark movie
is fistfuls
of gravel in a brown bottle.
My storyboards fill me
with calculated sorrow.
A full plate and burnt sage.
Dollar signs, breaking news.
I work two and three jobs.
I am honorable and brave.
The ensemble cast
whittles down.
Maybe I am a slave.
I make ends meet.
I don't get kissed.
Behold my wide smile.
Octavia Spencer cooks in a small
apartment. She serves joyfully

and doesn't eat. She wipes her palm
on her apron, forehead.
Angela Bassett is sick and tired
of being. Denzel Washington
reminds us how often
we are afraid. We get arrested.
Someone narrates.
What you look like
is sheer fabrics and ivory shells.
Alec Baldwin is smoking a joint
in the bathroom of a CEO's
birthday party. Steve Martin
tastes the goat cheese
and considers nothing.
You never get arrested.
There is no question
that god waits at the end
of your staircase curling
softly like wood-finished ribbon.
Anne Hathaway hires a decorator.
Diane Keaton makes midnight
pancakes, tops them with
lavender ice cream.
What is beautiful

does not need to be
called beautiful.
No one talks about money.
In our house, the sky
is upside down.
None of us find unlikely love.
I do not revel in my luxury.
I would rather serve than eat.
If it seems like I desire you,
you're right. I want my whole
mouth around your safety.
I want to be buried
side by side.