

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

A DIFFERENT SHADE OF GREEN

Rajib Chocroborty
PartridgeIndia (94 pp.)
\$6.99 paperback, \$4.99 e-book
ISBN: 978-1-5437-0794-6
July 14, 2021

BOOK REVIEW

A poet contemplates modern life through the lens of ancient mythology.

Chocroborty's debut collection of poems offers readers a candid, colorful journey through various emotional and political landscapes. The works, the author says, were composed "over a period of nearly a quarter of a century," and they deal with themes such as gender identity, the Indian political system, and how the digital age is one of loneliness and uncertainty. Many poems feature elements of Indian and Greek mythologies, but Chocroborty's language is both forthright and modern, deftly linking the ancient world to the fast-paced rhythms of contemporary life. In "Mardian in Mumbai," for example, the poet transports Mardian, the eunuch in Cleopatra's court in the Shakespeare play *Antony and Cleopatra*, to present-day Mumbai. Mardian walks the modern landscape, observing the inequities that still exist between humans: "The hollow men that haunt / my despicable fairyland / make me wallow in filth." Chocroborty also shows a knack for using technological imagery to symbolize human struggle. In "Three Technicians," a cassette tape represents confounding emotions as it becomes "so badly entangled / ...now you can't play, / record or even rewind." In "Liberation," the poet calls homophobia an "ingredient" in a "long cold face." Other poems that deal with the marginalization of the Indian queer community stand out as powerful reminders of ongoing discrimination; in "Durga," Chocroborty employs a hybrid poetic form of a ghazal and a sonnet to tell the sad tale of a transgender person who marries a young man only to be accused of sorcery and deception by "the whole town." The fusion of poetic forms cleverly represents the fluidity of gender as well as the fluidity of love. Overall, this is a well-crafted and generally affecting collection of verse, although some of the micropoems can read as puerile, as in "Silently," in which "eager ears and eyes" gorge on "gossip fries."

An often effective set of poems despite a few missteps.