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Red Hen Press

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Under a Future Sky

POETRY BY
Brynn Saito

Under a Future Sky is a gathering of generations, a performance with ghosts anchored in Brynn Saito's journey with her father to the desert prison where, over 80 years ago, her grandparents met and made a life.

Born of a personal ache, an unquenchable desire to animate the shadow archive, Saito's journey unfolds in lyric correspondences and epistolary poems that sing with rage, confusion, and, ultimately, love. In these works, descendants of wartime incarceration exchange dreams, mothers become water goddesses, and a modern daughter haunts future ruins. To enter this book is to enter the slipstream of nonlinear time, where mystical inclinations, yellow cedars, and sisterhood make a balm for trauma's scars. Altogether, the work enacts a dialogue between the past and the present; the radical ancestor and the future child; and the desert prison and the family garden, where Saito's father diligently gathers stones.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"The stark beauty and physicality of the Arizona desert, where Saito's paternal grandparents were imprisoned during World War II, are ever-present in her latest book. Using the framework of letters to and from her father and other family members, she honors the "riverstream of ancestors" and, in a celebration of ghosts, recovers stones for the living. Saito's fearless entry into her "gate of memory" is a radical guide for us all to make meaning from the past."

—Amy Uyematsu, author of *Basic Vocabulary*

"Brynn Saito writes with a rare, inimitable grace in her most personal and politically engaged book to date. The epistolary poems for family and the impact of internment and inheritance are imagined with music and wisdom. I feel more alive after these poems and her reminder, 'Beautiful prayer animal, rise to the occasion of your living.' *Under a Future Sky* is a masterpiece."

—Lee Herrick, author of *Scar and Flower*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brynn Saito is the author of *Power Made Us Swoon* (2016) and *The Palace of Contemplating Departure* (2013), winner of the Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award from Red Hen Press and a finalist for the Northern California Book Award. She has received grant support from Densho, Hedgebrook, and the Santa Fe Arts Institute. Her poems have appeared in the *New York Times* and *American Poetry Review* among other journals and anthologies. She was a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize and the Milt Kessler Poetry Book Award. Brynn lives in Fresno, CA, where she is an Assistant Professor at California State University, Fresno and co-director of Yonsei Memory Project.



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MORE PRAISE FOR *UNDER A FUTURE SKY*

“Through gorgeous epistles to family, friends, and even a dragonfly, Brynn Saito quests through the Western landscape and questions the past. She searches the animal of the body, each cell an intergenerational archive, and finds ‘who you’ve been can no longer carry you. / That is the miracle.’ Lyrically lush and deeply wise, this book is both an intimate portrait and a summoning, a chance to hunt memory and recover history, still burning, still stone.”

—**Traci Brimhall**, author of *Come the Slumberless to the Land of Nod*

FROM *UNDER A FUTURE SKY*

Given Name

No one tells me how to name it, I name it
animal. I tell it *never come*. I watch it
strengthen on the fever farm, take tendon

after tendon, lift its own spoon
at the family table, taste. I watch it grow tall
with the family’s starch and salt,

the sweat and the family’s wide-awake
eyes staring like light beams
at the all-night ceiling, fear fuel.

No one tells me how to name it,
I name it *animal*. I name it clean-crushed
beer can, cop-outfit calling, binge dawn.

I tell it *come here*, come willing to dance, say:
take me by the eyes and explain
yourself and your blood time

with this blood life—this river family,
that valley farm. I say, What took us down
that day, river-worn, wordless?

What takes us down, animal? Explain you.



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