



Romey's Order (Phoenix Poets)

Atsuro Riley

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Romey's Order is an indelible sequence of poems voiced by an invented (and inventive) boy called Romey, set alongside a river in the South Carolina lowcountry.

As the word-furious eye and voice of these poems, Romey urgently records--and tries to order--the objects, inscape, injuries, and idiom of his "blood-home" and childhood world. Sounding out the nerves and nodes of language to transform "every burn-mark and blemish," to "bind our river-wrack and leavings," Romey seeks to forge finally (if even for a moment) a chord in which he might live. Intently visceral, aural, oral, Atsuro Riley's poems bristle with musical and imaginative pleasures, with story-telling and picture-making of a new and wholly unexpected kind.

"Atsuro Riley's astonishing and original debut collection, *Romey's Order*, thrives off its music. The poems are about the attempt to make sense of the world, to account for all the strange and disparate details that enthrall consciousness, and to hold them in some kind of right relation. . . There's a lot to marvel at here. . . The tension between the world of fact into which each of us is born and the desire to forge our own new worlds results here in beguiling music, a music that brings these poems alive, with all their sinew and subtlety."

--Peter Campion, *Poetry*

Atsuro Riley's indelible first-book masterpiece--opens with "Once upon a time," and thereafter an entire world emerges. . . *Romey's Order* presents a world teeming with mystery, natural wonder, childhood discovery, and--everywhere under the surface--the secret, almost magical power of language. Throughout the book, Riley's evocative abilities are flat-out astonishing.

The handcrafted poems of *Romey's Order* bear the mark of a fully developed, highly idiosyncratic sensibility--a sensibility that lends a from-out-of-nowhere quality to this collection, and that results in poems that are a pure delight to read. Riley's debut is a blast of fresh air for poetry, leaving one with the almost unsettling question: what would happen if his next collection outdid this one?

--*The Believer* magazine, May 2011 (*The Believer* Poetry Award citation)

"Atsuro Riley's *Romey's Order* is a dazzling first book. . . among the year's best. . . The lexical fireworks

power the narrative with physicality. The pleasures of *Romey's Order* are wondrous and manifold."
--*Dallas Morning News*

"One of the most exciting and distinctive debut collections in years . . . the relation of language to the actual experience of perception is 100 percent pitch-perfect here."
--*The Believer*

"A stunning first book of poems. . . . Even read silently, Mr. Riley's delicious words roll and roil in the mouth."
--*New York Times*

"Originality is easier said than done. Most works of art, like most consumer goods, are versions or outright imitations. In contemporary poetry, even the so-called experimental often seems derivative and weighted with conventions. But when a new book of poems is as different from precedents as Atsuro Riley's *Romey's Order*, readers should take special notice."
--*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"Atsuro Riley's *Romey's Order* is a first book with rare, powerful distinction--experimental in its forms and syntax, yet familiar as an old-time fiddle for its Appalachian twang, landscape, and imagery."
--*Kenyon Review*

"Atsuro Riley's strange, beautiful and unsettling debut is like nothing else you will read this year."
--*Hudson Review*

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