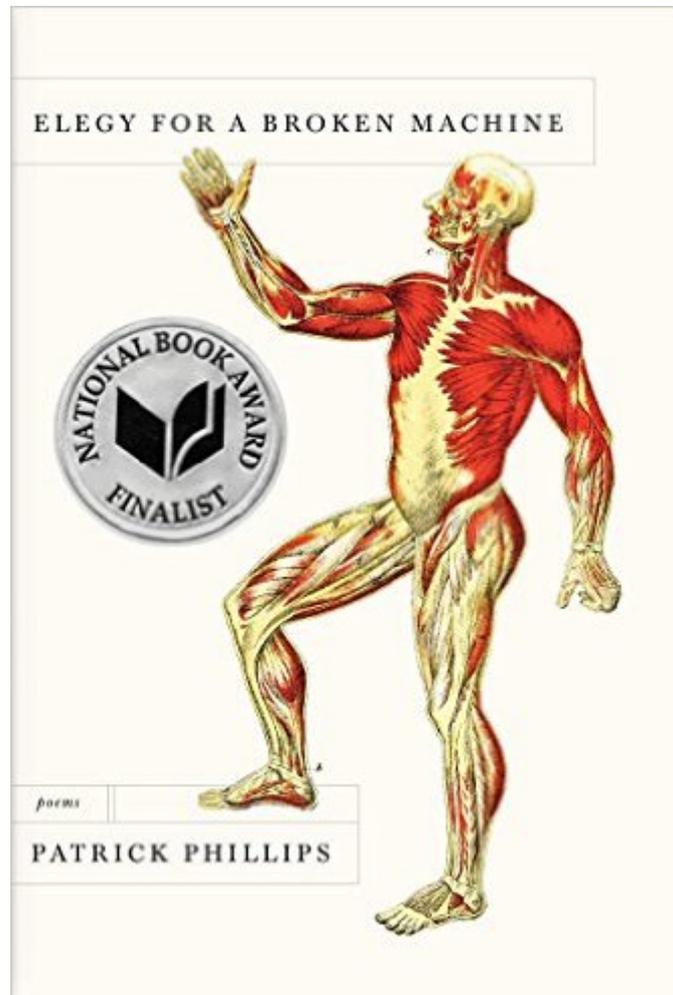


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Elegy For A Broken Machine: Poems



Synopsis

The poet Patrick Phillips brings us a stunning third collection that is at its core a sonâ€™s lament for his father. This book of elegies takes us from the luminous world of childhood to the fluorescent glare of operating rooms and recovery wards, and into the twilight lives of those who must go on. In one poem Phillips watches his sons play âœMercyâ• just as he did with his brother: hands laced, the stronger pushing the other back until he grunts for mercy, âœa game we played // so many times / I finally taught my sons, // not knowing what it was, / until too late, lâ™d done.â• Phillips documents the unsung joys of midlife, the betrayals of the human body, and his realization that as the crowd of ghosts grows, we take our places, next in line. The result is a twenty-first-century memento mori, fashioned not just from loss but also from praise, and a fierce love for the world in all its ruined splendor.

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Customer Reviews

I recently attended a poetry reading of Patrick Phillips' and fell in love with his style of writing. His poems say/show more than what is actually written and as a young author I admire this tremendously. Elegy for a Broken Machine deals with subject matters surrounding his personal life but are events shared within the human experience making each piece relatable in some way. Amazing Poet on the Rise, I highly recommend this collection.

Some poetry collections you give a single read. Some, much fewer you realize if you read a lot of

poetry, are masterworks of voice, tone, subject, verbal brilliance. Phillips' most recent warrants holding onto, for second readings and beyond. He brings a focused consideration for matters closest to his heart; his previous books have touched on much of the same emotional geography. Phillips brings some formal poetics to bear, but not in a contrived, forced manner; it always adds to the content rather than say to the reader, "see what I can do!" Over the years of reading poetry (several decades now) I've grown weary of the first person, 'dramatic' poems that seem to ask for credit for unearned emotions. You know usually how to spot them: the concluding line of each poem will routinely go for the gut shot, or brilliant epiphany. Sorry...you can only realize you must change your life once or twice. Phillips though, he gives us genuine stuff of life in words only possible in true poetry. I may even memorize one or two of them.

This sparse poetry builds a very private rhythm of sadness. After I read it waiting for a friend and the sadness climbs a small ladder into my throat. Patrick Phillips writes like he has already departed this world and maybe in some ways he has. After he mourns his father's death and reflects on memory of his childhood friend as he goes through chemo - it seems the graveyard and what it can produce is the most intimate space for him. Life is death for Phillips and death is death for him as well. Maybe death is a place where he finds the most comfort. We enter Phillips' poise world as undisturbed as we leave it. There is nothing more to say, but to enter this river and begin mourning as fast and as soon as possible. Outside the corridor of death is another corridor. And, it's death too. This book was the finalist for the National Book Award.

The sublimely passionate poetry written by Patrick was conceived because he had a father, who was a father, unapologetically, bombastic, boisterous and profane. In other words a really good man who begat another really good man. It just gets better and better.

At the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, their collection includes Stephen Kaltenbach's *Portrait of My Father*. This portrait depicts the dying father and the grief is palpable. Like the portrait, these intense poems take us through a close up of a parent's dying process. The language is deceptively simple, but the feelings are complex. It is such a joy to find a poet who is direct and complicated. His command of language and the resonance of words is totally engaging. In an interview, Phillips said that he introduces himself as a teacher, which he is, because saying "I'm a poet is pretentious." That is such a clue to the language and insights that this poet has. These are poems about a friend whose father died and shows up at the soccer field. In another

poem, the seamstress alters her husband's clothes and wraps herself in them to sleep. In another poem, the father leaves his son at kindergarten which becomes, for the son, the beginning of death. This is Phillips's third book of poetry and as a reader; I intend to read them all. Phillips has a unique and compelling style and it is not pretentious for him to join the saintly wordsmiths we call poets.

Patrick Phillips deserves all his accolades and more. His poetry is so alive, so gripping! It moves me deeply.

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