



Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved

Gregory Orr

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“The heart of Orr’s poetry, now as ever, is the enigmatic image . . . mystical, carnal, reflective, wry.”—*San Francisco Review*

This book-length sequence of ecstatic, visionary lyrics recalls Rumi in its search for the beloved and its passionate belief in the healing qualities of art and beauty.

Concerning the Book that is the Body of the Beloved is an incantatory celebration of the “Book,” an imaginary and self-gathering anthology of all the lyrics—both poems and songs—ever written. Each poem highlights a distinct aspect of the human condition, and together the poems explore love, loss, restoration, the beauty of the world, the beauty of the beloved, and the mystery of poetry. The purpose and power of the Book is to help us live by reconnecting us to the world and to our emotional lives.

*I put the beloved
In a wooden coffin.
The fire ate his body;
The flames devoured her.
I put the beloved
In a poem or song.
Tucked it between
Two pages of the Book.
How bright the flames.
All of me burning,
All of me on fire
And still whole.*

There is nothing quite like this book—an “active anthology” in the best sense—where individuals find the poems and songs that will sustain them. Or the poems find them.

Gregory Orr is the author of eight books of poetry, four volumes of criticism, and a memoir. He has received numerous awards for his work, most recently the Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Orr has taught at the University of Virginia since 1975 and was, for many years, the poetry editor of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. He lives with his family in Charlottesville, Virginia.

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