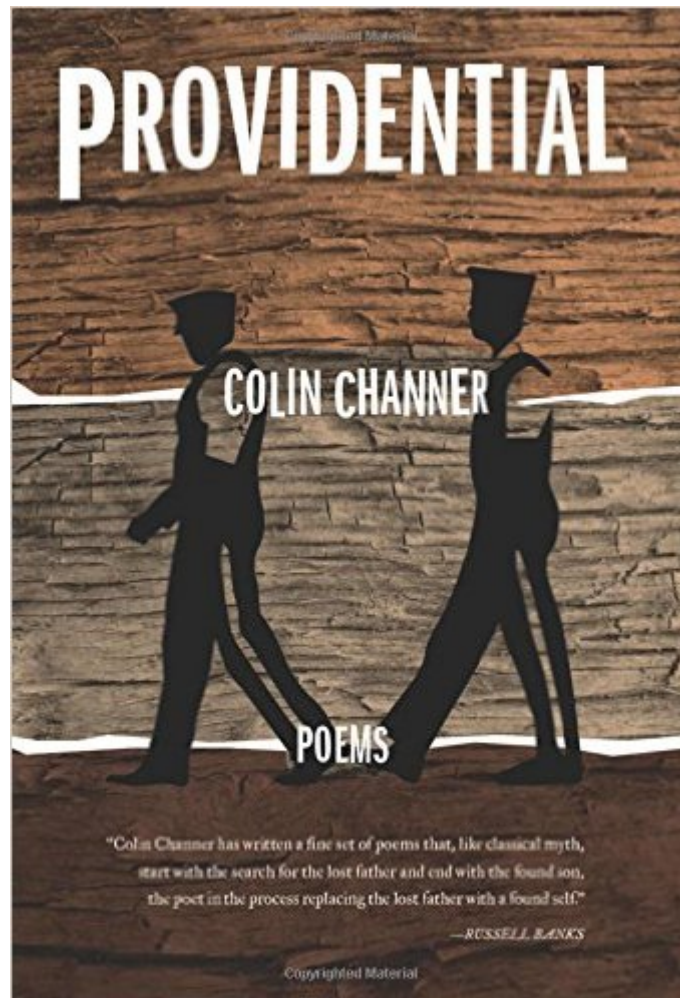


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# Providential



## Synopsis

Longlisted for the 2016 OCM Bocas Prize for Poetry "The Caribbean policeman is a character both foreign and familiar at the center of this intimate debut poetry collection. Combining Jamaican patois and American English, it tells the story of violence, loss, and recovery in the wake of colonialism."--O, the Oprah Magazine One of LargeUp's Ten Great Books by Caribbean Authors in 2015 "Jamaican-born Channer draws on the rich cultural heritage of the Caribbean and his own unique experience for this energetic, linguistically inventive first collection of poetry....Channer's lyrics pop and reel in sheer musicality....A dextrous, ambitious collection that delivers enough acoustic acrobatics to keep readers transfixed 'till the starlings sing out."--Booklist "Channer...skillfully examines the brutality that permeates Jamaica's history in this moving debut poetry collection....Channer's poems rise to present the reader with a panoramic view of a place 'built on old foundations of violence,' of 'geographies where genocide and massacre/hang like smoke from coal fires.'"--Publishers Weekly "[Channer's] technique and foresight bring the underlying story of the collection, and the history he expounds, into full daylight and the collection succeeds in revealing a life and history as an essay might, but with the beauty of lyric added to narrative in an exercise that is cohesive in its ability to maintain its trajectory. It is a notable accomplishment."--New York Journal of Books "Jamaica's Colin Channer has been mixing patois in his romantic tales since his 1998 debut novel, *Waiting In Vain*. In 2015, he blessed us with *Providential (Akashic)*, a poetry collection that touches on the full range of Jamaican languages and dreams."--LargeUp "[Channer's] strongest offering yet....*Providential* perfectly clothes the written word with matching tone and atmosphere. Welcome to the hallowed halls of Fine Poetry!"--Kaieteur News (Guyana) "Channer has written a fine set of poems that, like classical myth, start with the search for the lost father and end with the found son, the poet in the process replacing the lost father with a found self."--Russell Banks, author of *The Sweet Hereafter* "The voices and irrepressible human dance of the clan pulsing at this book's center leave me breathless and I realize how close the voices are to my own, how much I crave this dance."--Patricia Smith, author of *Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah* Channer's debut poetry collection achieves an intimate and lyric meditation on family, policing, loss, and violence, but the work is enlivened by humor, tenderness, and the rich possibilities that come from honest reflection. Combined with a capacity to offer physical landscapes with painterly sensitivity and care, a graceful mining of the nuances of Jamaican patwa and American English, and a judicious use of metaphor and simile, *Providential* is a work of "heartical" insight and vulnerability. Not since Claude McKay's *Constab Ballads* of 1912 has a writer attempted to tackle the unlikely literary figure of the Jamaican policeman. Now, over a

century later, Channer draws on his own knowledge of Jamaican culture, on his complex relationship with his father (a Jamaican policeman), and frames these poems within the constantly humane principles of Rasta and reggae. The poems within *Providential* manage to turn the intricate relationships between a man and his father, a man and his mother, and man and his country, and a man and his children into something akin to grace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Reading this book was a powerful, moving experience. As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer who served in inner-city Kingston (1962-1964), I witnessed firsthand the complicated, contentious, and often combative relationship between the Jamaican police and the country's citizens. In *Providential*, Channer explores the complexities of the Jamaican policeman with the beautiful language he's known for. The first part of the collection gives poetic snapshots of the island's history, including the Morant Bay Rebellion (the year impatience with the free/wealthy got came out in an uprush) and the government's assault on Rastafarians in the 1960s. Then it moves to more personal topics, including the author's relationship with his cop father (his drunk police and wayward father/not enough cliché), and his own relationship with his son and the universal struggles of parenthood (We begin to fail the second we invest in the speck/that makes the children. We do right,/knowing we'll be mostly wrong). This book gave me new perspectives on a country I lived in for two years and am still struggling to understand. I highly recommend it not

only for people who want to better understand Jamaica, but for anyone who appreciates good poetry.

Colin Channer uses this body of work to retrace his steps as a youth growing up in Jamaica at the height of its transitory period, the 1970s ...stepping back to the seminal Revolutionary event the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion. This event celebrated the spirit of Jamaica in our Revolutionary spirit and gave birth to the Jamaican Constabulary...the institution that engaged Channer's dad as a cop, a job described by one of Channer's idol Perry Henzel's as Rangers and celebrated in "Revolution to Rass" employed by the landful against the landless. Channer makes no bones about the troubled relationship he had with his old man and Providential strips this bare. The language is rich, the images vivid as the writer takes us through the paces of life in Kingston's tough inner city communities where death is omnipresent, its untimely finality expressed in the fast lines of "Balls" The book of poetry is in three stages a progression of his father's drunken march through the Constabulary... through the ranks of life in a tough Jamaica and the family's transition to the USA and Providential where the author brings it all together. Colin Channer's Providential is a must have if you love Jamaica. It is a nostalgic gem that places him right up there with the leading Caribbean writers and a must have, period.

Colin Channer is Jamaican by birth, and this rings out clearly from Providential, his debut collection of poetry. The themes of most of the poems draw on the beautiful and often violent history of Jamaica, and his father "a flawed man, a drunk, unfaithful, and a policeman, dishing out criminal brutality as much as dealing with it. Standouts from the collection include "Funeral", "Balls", "Kik-Kik, Pak-Pak", and "Advantage": "She holding her head and bawling/just bawling and plaiting back her hair/which was an aggravated frazzle/patches ripped out from the root/But what hold me, what move me/was what was running down her legs/a mix of blood and substance/pink, see-through, and red." However, it's the last two, "Knowing We'll Be Most Wrong" and the title work, "Providential", deeply personal meditations on love, memory and loss, that bring the small book to a voluminous conclusion. In "Knowing We'll Be Most Wrong", Channer looks back on his memories of his father from the point of view of himself a father: "We begin to fail the second we invest in the speck/that makes the children. We do right/knowing we'll be mostly wrong", while the five cantos of "Providential" take an overarching view of his own history in light of the larger

remembrance of Jamaica (Jamaica, where I came from/is mostly a coral island/a rough-made sediment bed./Still, it feels volcanic/eruptive in the way of newish nations/build on old foundations of violence/geographies where genocide and massacre/hang like smoke from coal fires/mosquito nets. There but not there.) and the indelible awareness and longing its left in his soul.Providential is a moving, rewarding collection of poetry and deserves equal reading with the author's fictional works

Colin Channer's new volume of poetry "Providential" is a searing examination of police violence, culture, and family in Jamaica. Channer's poems echo the lyrics and themes of Bob Marley and Bruce Springsteen by leading us into the injustices of institutional power and the hopes of family allegiance. Channer's words are elegant and visceral. An important voice in global poetry.

This debut collection from Colin Channer, who grew up on the island of Jamaica. A lot of the poems focus on growing up in the island country, with a mostly distant and drunk father. With the violence from the police forces and the prevalent and unrelenting poverty. Colin Channer presents a different side of island life. My only real issue is with the language, many readers might find it difficult to follow, since it follows the rhythm and dynamic of growing up on a poor island.

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