

“seeing the opportunity in tomorrow”:

An Interview with Jason Mott
by Jennifer Larson



COURTESY OF PARK ROW BOOKS

With his critically acclaimed and wildly popular debut novel, *The Returned* (2013), Jason Mott quickly became one of North Carolina’s brightest literary stars. *The Returned*

centers around Harold and Lucille, an elderly couple, and Jacob, their eight-year-old son. Jacob died in 1966, but suddenly reappears, along with countless others around the world. The family’s small hometown of Arcadia, North Carolina, becomes a microcosm of the world’s disorientation and prejudice when the government establishes a military installation there to detain “The Returned,” who come to represent both the past’s most painful wounds and the future’s potential for healing those wounds.

Mott’s popularity grew with the adaptation of *The Returned* into the ABC drama *Resurrection* and with the success of his second novel, *The Wonder of All Things* (2014), which is slated to become a Lionsgate film adaption by acclaimed director Cheryl Dunye. Again, set in North Carolina, *The Wonder of All Things* tells the story of a young girl with miraculous healing powers that harm her as she helps others. Mott has also published two volumes of poetry, *We Call this Thing Between Us Love* (2009) and *... hide behind me ...* (2011), and he was nominated for a 2009 Pushcart Prize.¹

Mott’s most recent novel, *The Crossing*, was released in 2018.² The novel follows two runaway orphaned twins, Virginia and Tommy, as they journey to Cape Canaveral to watch the launch of a probe that will explore Jupiter’s moon Europa. The mission represents the last glimmer of hope in a world devastated by plague and war.

Amidst all this success, Mott still remains firmly connected and committed to his home state. He hails from Bolton, a small town in Eastern North Carolina. He earned a BA in fiction and an MFA in poetry from UNC Wilmington, where he is currently a Writer-in-Residence.

This interview was conducted in early August 2018, and was minimally edited to streamline questions and consolidate answers.

JENNIFER LARSON: *How do you think your work has changed – or perhaps evolved is a better word – between *The Returned* and *The Crossing*?*

JASON MOTT: That’s actually a pretty tough question. My work has definitely changed, but it’s a little tricky defining exactly how it’s changed. In the time between *The Returned* and *The Crossing*, I’ve had a lot of personal changes. I’ve gone from working a job I hated

¹ Jason Mott, *The Returned* (Mira, 2013); *The Wonder of All Things* (Mira, 2014); *We Call This Thing Between Us Love* (Main Street Rag, 2009); *... hide behind me ...* (Main Street Rag, 2011).

² Jason Mott, *The Crossing* (Park Row, 2018; reviewed in *NCLR* 2018); subsequently cited parenthetically.