Medford lives on a neat, orderly island called—simply—Island. Islanders like names that say exactly what a thing (or a person) is or does. Nothing less. Islanders like things (and people) to do what their names say they will. Nothing more. In fact, everything on Island is named for its purpose, even the people who inhabit it. But Medford Runyuin is different. A foundling, he has a meaningless last name that is just one of many reminders that he is an outsider. And, to make matters worse, Medford has been keeping a big secret, one that could get him banished from Island forever. When the smelliest, strangest, unruliest creature Island has ever seen comes barreling right into his rigid world, Medford can’t help but start to question the rules he’s been trying to follow his entire life. A whimsical fantasy debut about belonging, the dangers of forgetting history, and the Usefulness of art, The Unnameables is one of the funniest stories of friendship you’ll ever read, with a cast of characters you’ll never forget.

My Personal Review:
Ive been trying to write down my thoughts on this book for some time, and failing. It’s not because I didn’t enjoy the book -- in fact quite the opposite. But its a very different book from any other I’ve read. Its a fantasy, yes, with the wonderful character of the Goatman popping his horned head into the scene, summoning up his winds and wreaking change in the world of Medford Runyuin. But its quirky, and philosophical, and oddly old-fashioned (in a good way, in a classic way, even).

My favorite thing about this book is the setting itself, and the themes and questions that are explored: What is the value of work? What is useful? Is anything truly useless? These are important questions to ask, and I fully enjoyed seeing them play out on the landscape of the Island. I furthermore appreciated that the Traditions of the Island, while in some respects the enemy of the narrative, are not depicted as entirely bad. There is plenty to admire and respect in the way of life embraced by the Islanders, though as a reader I feel for Medfords plight, as his creative impulses urge him to do what is forbidden.
This is a book that may demand a certain attentiveness while reading, but the right reader will find a rewarding tale of tradition and creativity.

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