

Creation's Assortments

Timothy R. Race

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Written with warm intentions toward fellow human beings, the poems of Creation's Assortments work to bridge the space between one person's inner life and the inner lives of others.

Timothy R. Race's poetry collection *Creation's Assortments* dissects the emotional aftermaths of experiences via mysterious images.

Working to translate subjective experiences of love, exhilaration, and suffering into general advice for those who struggle with their emotions, the poems move around abstract concepts of kindness, friendship, and personal purpose. The opening poem, which is written in italicized couplets, runs for three pages to introduce the collection's central philosophy: it is essential to be true to yourself. The poems that follow employ a variety of other formats, though they still reach to connect to the opening poem with references to illustrative internal and external events.

Some poems are written in stanzas, which function as containers for their scenes and ideas. Still, their line breaks are arbitrary, interrupting their contents in a jarring way and rendering their rhymes less visible. And the book's apparent prose poems are centered on the page in blocks of text, a format that obscures the poems' sonic nature; when they're read aloud, metrical patterns, rhymes, and slant rhymes appear, revealing musicality that their presentations belie. The meter most often used is dactylic, a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables: "Sweet in the making, I wrap up my wish, tied in a bow and sealed, with a twist." In longer poems that adhere to this meter without variation, sing-song echoes arise.

A recurring subject of the collection is a specific, perhaps romantic, relationship, with an address to a particular "you," whose identity is blurred along with the nature of the relationship. Hints of a narrative appear in the connected poems, though the stories remain amorphous, with both the people and the settings addressed in vague terms. Other entries are addressed to a more generic "you," delivering predictable, encouraging advice like "All moments are precious, so, try to have fun." These straightforward, literal statements are often interrupted by misuses of commas that create unnecessary pauses and obscure meanings.

While there's some fresh imagery to relieve the book's general reliance on abstract concepts (the wind "hollows out caverns and clears, dirt covered roads"), many of the book's images are too cryptic to do more than distract from their poems. Images of shoes recur often enough to accumulate the weight of symbol, but without any discernible, consistent meaning in the book itself. Other recurring images include "the Aire" and "the Adventure," both of which are given places of importance in the poems wherein they appear. Still, the collection's clear organizing principle is that courage and encouragement are linked and can improve people's life experiences. On the whole, its work is supportive and uplifting, envisioning the possibility of composure in the face of danger.

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MICHELE SHARPE (March 28, 2023)

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